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Secrecy, Spooks and Ghosts: Memoirs and Contested Memory at the CIA

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The CIA is increasingly symbolic of major controversies in American foreign policy. It also presents the academic researcher with a fascinating paradox – since it is simultaneously secret and yet high-profile. In part, this is due to the CIA's willingness to allow former operatives to write memoirs. We argue that the memoir literature, authored by CIA personnel both high and low, together with others who worked alongside them, is now so dense that this allows us a degree of triangulation. Yet these memoirs are increasingly collective productions, involving censors, ghostwriters and teams of researchers, introducing conflicting voices into the text, and adding layers of separation between author and reader. We suggest that these ghosted memoirs, therefore, operate on several levels. For good or ill, these books shape the American public's perception of the CIA and should be studied closely, especially by those interested in the subjectivities of image management. This essay seeks to explore these issues by comparing four memoirs by CIA directors and acting directors who have served since 9/11.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is increasingly symbolic of wider debates in American foreign policy. Whether the issues are about interventionism versus isolationism, presidential versus democratic control of foreign policy, or core values versus national security imperatives, the CIA is often centre stage. Its recent trajectory is highly contested and the arguments over signature strikes, torture and secret prisons which have raged for nearly two decades are but recent examples. Yet, while the CIA has frequently been on the front pages of national newspapers since 9/11, and while the volume of academic research in this area, especially around ethics, has also grown rapidly, the troubling question of hard evidence remains.[1] Where do we go for reliable information when discussing an agency that has historically prided itself on plausible deniability and often resolves to say nothing? Unlike the National Security Agency or the State Department, CIA whistle-blowers have not endowed us with vast volumes of leaked documents.

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[1] See David Omand and Mark Phythian, *Principled Spying: The Ethics of Secret Intelligence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

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While energetic bodies such as the National Security Archive have pressed hard for declassification, their success has necessarily been limited and our documentary record relating to the CIA remains patchy.[2]

For over fifty years, much of our knowledge about the recent activities of the CIA has come from memoirs and insider books, often written by its former chiefs.[3] Allen Dulles was the first; frustrated by the way the Bay of Pigs hastened the end of his career and finding himself increasingly the victim of personal attacks in print by both the political left and the KGB, he resolved to publish a book defending his profession and the agency.[4] Dulles was the first, but as Wesley Wark has observed, former directors of the CIA increasingly took "up the pen to 'complete in public the unfinished business of a career in espionage.'"[5] Remarkably, the CIA has enjoyed a de facto public-relations office for more than half a century. Former serving officers are still allowed to write memoirs, once the volumes have been suitably dry-cleaned and officially approved. In June 1977, George H. W. Bush created the CIA's Publications Review Board partly for this purpose.[6] Some of these memoirs, like those of Richard Helms, have been agency coproductions, with extensive support from the CIA's in-house historical staff.[7] Others have been largely independent works, helped along by ghostwriters at the behest of the corporate trade press rather than by government.

Dulles was a pioneer of this increasingly popular ghostwriting. His memoir *The Craft of Intelligence*, for example, was partly written by CIA veterans Howard Hunt and Howard Roman with the assent of John McCone, who had succeeded Dulles as director of central intelligence (DCI).[8] From the

[2] Zachary Karabell and Timothy Naftali, "History Declassified: The Perils and Promise of CIA Documents," *Diplomatic History*, 18, 4 (1994), 615–26; Thomas F. Troy, "Writing History in CIA: A Memoir of Frustration," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 7, 4 (1994), 397–411.

[3] By contrast, the history of the early CIA is increasingly driven by forensic archival research. See, for example, Hugh Wilford, *America's Great Game: The CIA's Secret Arabists and the Shaping of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2013); Kaeten Mistry, *The United States, Italy, and the Origins of Cold War: Waging Political Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[4] See Allen Dulles, *Craft of Intelligence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

[5] Wesley K. Wark, "Struggle in the Spy House: Memoirs of U.S. Intelligence," in George Egerton, ed., *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), 302–29, 315.

[6] Christopher R. Moran and Simon D. Willmetts, "Secrecy, Censorship, and Beltway Books: The CIA's Publications Review Board," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 24, 2 (2011), 239–52.

[7] Christopher R. Moran, "From Confession to Corporate Memory: The Memoirs of CIA Director Richard M. Helms," *International History Review*, 36, 1 (2014), 70–88.

[8] Christopher R. Moran, *Company Confessions: Revealing CIA Secrets* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2015).

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preface, it is clear that Dulles wished to alter public perceptions of the agency, for the former director in 1965 it was 'high time that someone … should tell what properly can be told about intelligence."[9] The ghosts that Allen Dulles used were ethereal and invisible, but now they are more frequently acknowledged. Dulles set a growing trend, with iconic figures like William Colby and Dick Helms eventually taking up the official pen. With intelligence chiefs recently reported to have earned advances of up to $4 million dollars, financial gain following a career in public service provides further incentive for former directors in their quests to set the record straight.[10] However, one of the most baffling questions about all Washington discourse, whether it is memoirs or speeches, is who actually wrote what.[11] Intelligence historians have even questioned whether spy memoirs by former directors ought to be classified as "memoirs" at all precisely, because of the presence and frequency of ghostwriters.[12]

The prevalence of these spectral wordsmiths is by no means unique to the memoirs of former CIA directors. Some literary agents estimate that more than half of nonfiction titles, nominally written by well-known public figures, were not completely "written" by those people.[13] For example, in Hillary Clinton's "memoir," she thanks a three-person "book team" who wrote *Hard Choices* with her.[14] Indeed, ghostwriters and endless polishing by an army of copy-editors is only to be expected when major companies like Penguin and Random House are paying up to $14 million dollars in advances for the memoirs of former US government officials. This is the figure widely reported to have been paid for *Hard Choices* and some have quipped that the title reflected the anguish of publishing executives as they tried to calculate whether they would ever get their money back – by all accounts they did not.[15]

[9] Dulles, ix

[10] Tim Shorrock, "What You Won't Find in the Ex-CIA Chief's Book: George Tenet Cashes in on Iraq", *Der Speigel*, 8 May 2007, at www.spiegel.de/international/what-you-won-t-find-in-the-ex-cia-chief-s-book-george-tenet-cashes-in-on-iraq-a-481674.html, accessed 5 April 2019.

[11] Robert Schlesinger, *White House Ghosts: Presidents and Their Speechwriters* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008).

[12] Moran, "From Confession to Corporate Memory," 85.

[13] Anne VanderMey, "It's a Great Time to Be a Ghostwriter," *Fortune Magazine*, 5 Dec. 2015, at https://fortune.com/2015/12/05/ghostwriting-books, accessed 3 March 2019.

[14] See Paul Farhi, "Who Wrote That Political Memoir? No, Who Actually Wrote It?", *Washington Post*, 9 June 2014, at www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/who-wrote-that-political-memoir-no-who-actually-wrote-it/2014/06/09/8e89ccae-f00a-11e3-9ebc-2ee6f81ed217_story.html, accessed 14 March 2019. Hillary Clinton's approach recalls that of Churchill, Eden and Macmillan, who employed teams of researchers to produce fifteen volumes of memoirs between them.

[15] Philip Bump, "'Hard Choices' Is a Good Example of Why Publishers Don't Disclose Advances," *New York Times*, 26 June 2014, at www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/06/26/hard-choices-is-a-good-example-of-why-publishers-dont-disclose-advances, accessed 28 March 2019.

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Much the same approach is taken with celebrities and soccer players to make sure texts are tight and compelling. Indeed, there even seems to be an increasing public preference for a silken voice over veracity, when the *New Yorker* magazine reviewed the rumbustious memoir of Michael Hayden, America's longest-serving intelligence chief of recent decades, it was criticized for being "badly written, with no trace of a ghost-writer or editor."[16] But what happens if, in the process of text tightening, the line is crossed into editing content? One of the best-known veteran ghostwriters in the UK – author and journalist Hunter Davies – likened his role to that of the "ventriloquist" as the ghost attempts to capture the voice of the top-line author.[17] Davies points out that a ghost "can't make up any facts" but that they can "take liberties with thoughts they didn't quite have, not in the exact form you decide to express them. After spending hours with them, you feel you know how they think."[18] Perhaps memoirs are similar to speeches, which are often written underlings, yet routinely quoted by historians and political scientists as a reliable record of the thoughts of the person who spoke.[19] Presidential speeches can take months to circulate around the Beltway, with each sentence being argued over by different departments.[20]

Political-communications specialists have tended to suggest that the rise of the ghostwriter is about a long-term historic trend towards complex committees and bureaucratic specialization.[21] But we suggest that, in the realm of the memoir, the corporate influence seems to have been increasingly important. Either way, these complex motivations, combined with the influences and close editing of publishers protecting their investments – and the CIA protecting their secrets – raise several poignant questions: how seriously should these complex coproductions be taken? With the common use of ghostwriters, just who writes all these lucrative intelligence memoirs? Most importantly, does the presence of ghosts impinge on the value of the memoir as a source for the serious student of American foreign policy?

Fortunately, it is not only former directors of the CIA who can write memoirs. The CIA's Publications Review Board now considers thousands of items a year, and the backlog is mounting.[22] Many of these publications are

[16] George Packer, "Can You Keep a Secret?", *New Yorker*, 7 March 2016, at www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/07/michael-hayden-comes-out-of-the-shadows, accessed 23 Nov. 2018. [17] Hunter Davies, "Kiss and Tell," *The Guardian*, 17 May 2008. [18] Ibid.

[19] Christopher D. McKenna, "Writing the Ghost-Writer Back In: Alfred Sloan, Alfred Chandler, John McDonald and the Intellectual Origins of Corporate Strategy," *Management & Organizational History*, 1, 2 (2006), 107–26, 108.

[20] Robert Schlesinger, *White House Ghosts: Presidents and Their Speechwriters* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008). [21] Ibid.

[22] Harlow notes if you submit a novel in 2018 the PRB write back saying it will get back to you in a year's time. David Priess interview with Marie Harf and Bill Harlow, 19 Feb. 2019, at www.lawfareblog.com/lawfare-podcast-marie-harf-and-bill-harlow-cia-public-relations.

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small, such as blogs. Some are frivolous and have even included a CIA cookbook, a digest of recipes used by CIA special operators in the field. Nevertheless, the dreadnought-sized memoirs of former directors, sometimes running to six hundred pages, are accompanied by a flotilla of autobiographies by CIA lawyers, middle managers, analysts and field operators, even starry-eyed trainees who left in disillusionment in the years after the expansion of the CIA after 9/11. These can, in turn, be set alongside a vast armada of other official memoirs from the last decade, not least by many who served in the White House.[23] Some of these deal with intelligence or special operations in some detail.[24] What these vast literary outpourings make clear is that there is no single CIA and every possible viewpoint is represented in this fascinating and diverse organization. For the indefatigable reader, these offer the possibility of triangulation; moreover, in an environment populated by many dozens of memoirs, it is simply harder to mislead.[25] Memoirs are often reviewed – and fact-checked – by insiders. On contentious issues like torture, we have even seen what might be called "memoir wars" with competing factions. Together with other sources, formal and informal, we argue that important insights into intelligence and various stages of the "war on terror" can gradually be built up.[26]

For good or ill, these finely honed books shape the American public's perception of the CIA. Often making their way into the *New York Times* bestseller lists, they compete with Hollywood films such as *13 Hours*, *Argo* and *Zero Dark Thirty* as an important source of America's public understanding of an agency that is simultaneously obsessive about secrecy and yet endlessly discussed, documented and dramatized.[27] There is a broad consensus that government secrecy is in decline, partly because of the ease of sharing information,

[23] Melvyn P. Leffler, "The Foreign Policies of the George W. Bush Administration: Memoirs, History, Legacy," *Diplomatic History*, 37, 2 (2013), 190–218.

[24] See, for example, chapter 27, "Special Operations," in Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (London: Penguin, 2011), 367–78.

[25] Philip H. J. Davies, "Spies as Informants: Triangulation and the Interpretation of Elite Interview Data in the Study of the Intelligence and Security Services," *Politics*, 21, 1 (2001), 73–80.

[26] See the optimistic note struck in Nicholas Dujmovic, "Getting CIA History Right: The Informal Partnership between Agency Historians and Outside Scholars," *Intelligence and National Security*, 26, 2–3 (2011), 228–45. For a less optimistic view see Shiva Balaghi, "Silenced Histories and Sanitized Autobiographies: The 1953 CIA Coup in Iran," *Biography*, 36, 1 (2013), 71–96. For more on triangulation in intelligence studies see Davies, "Spies as Informants"; and Jules J. S. Gaspard, "The Hidden Origins of Intelligence History: Rehabilitating the 'Airport Bookstall'," *History*, 102 (2017), 639–660

[27] On the CIA and film see Simon Willmetts, *In Secrecy's Shadow: The OSS and CIA in Hollywood Cinema 1939–1979* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Tricia Jenkins, *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television* (Houston: University of Texas Press, 2014).

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but also because of attitudinal changes.[28] Timothy Melley has suggested that we have begun to see a performative secrecy, with leaders boasting secret missions and bragging about covert action as a way of demonstrating resolve.[29] What he calls the "covert sphere" is expanding, but does this make it easier to establish the facts?

This essay seeks to explore these issues by comparing and contrasting four memoirs by CIA directors and acting directors who have served since 9/11. Despite the presence of ghosts, through wider triangulation, these memoirs provide valuable insights into the "war on terror" in its various iterations. George Tenet's memoir is informative on the limited response to al Qaeda under President Bill Clinton, and the invasion of Iraq under President George Bush. Michael Hayden's memoir details the advent of the use of drone warfare, and Leon Panetta's its rapid expansion. Michael Morell's ties all the memoirs together and finishes with ruminations on the controversy and blowback of aggressive US counterterrorism policy spearheaded by the CIA for over a decade. One of the linking themes is Bill Harlow, who served as director of the CIA's Office of Public Affairs for seven years from 1997 to 2004, and was keen to move beyond the "no-comment" approach. Over the last ten years, he has assisted the writers of three important CIA memoirs.[30]

GEORGE TENET, 1996–2004

George Tenet is the longest-serving DCI for half a century. His longevity in the post, serving both Clinton and Bush, is the most powerful testimony to his intelligence, charm and energy. His memoir, *At the Center of the Storm*, suffers from the expected problem of a spy memoir, namely that it is self-serving. However, the "self" with respect to this memoir is more complex. Tenet attributes and names his friendly ghost, Bill Harlow, who was the CIA's senior public-relations specialist under Tenet and highly regarded by the management at Langley as intelligent, articulate and a safe pair of hands.[31] Indeed, journalists who wished to interview Tenet about his book were referred to Harlow rather than to Tenet by the publisher.[32] Unsurprisingly, then, the memoir becomes a defence not only of Tenet's decisions and actions whilst at the top of the CIA, but also of the agency itself in the vast bureaucratic turf war that has come to define the US intelligence

[28] Mark Fenster, "The Implausibility of Secrecy," *Hastings Law Journal*, 65, 2 (2014), 15–41.
[29] Timothy Melley, *The Covert Sphere* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2012).
[30] Priess interview with Harf and Harlow.
[31] Harlow has also served as assistant White House press secretary for foreign affairs and national security during both the Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations.
[32] Shorrock, "What You Won't Find in the Ex-CIA Chief's Book."

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community.[33] The result is a smooth text, but one that lacks authentic texture. Yet if the intention was to craft a book for wide public consumption that would shape public attitudes to intelligence, Tenet succeeded. As Christopher Moran observes, the title reached as high as number two on the Amazon best-seller list, beaten to the top spot only by the seventh and final Harry Potter book.[34]

Despite his reputation for affability, *At the Center of the Storm* attracted criticism from many quarters.[35] It also divided former CIA officers, some of whom attacked it and some of whom defended it. Tenet's memoir was designed to portray himself as having been scapegoated by the Bush White House, which was determined to go to war with Iraq regardless of the intelligence picture. This exercise in mud-slinging rather recalls the tendency of the aides of Allen Dulles and of John F. Kennedy to point the finger at each other over the Bay of Pigs.[36] With Iraq, the question is whether the CIA allowed the intelligence to be politicized or whether the intelligence was simply wrong. Broadly, the emerging historical picture shows Tenet to be correct; the CIA was more bumbling than bullied – and in any case, Bush and his circle were not much interested in really detailed intelligence from any quarter. Nevertheless, the pious assertions of righteousness and principle from someone who clung to office amid the twin failures of 9/11 and WMD have not been received well.

The observations of Bob Woodward, one of Washington's well-connected journalists, have resonated widely.[37] Woodward's rather critical comments on the book were more about Tenet's strategic approach to his role as director. Woodward implied that Tenet managed to stay in the job so long because he was a subservient bureaucrat who did not confront the chief with inconvenient truths. Instead of establishing a frank relationship with the President, Tenet preferred to work with the national security adviser, who, in the case of Condoleezza Rice, was also somewhat passive. Washington's

[33] See Amy B. Zegart, *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the Origins of 9/11* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Mark Riebling, *Wedge: From Pearl Harbor to 9/11 – How the Secret War between the FBI and CIA Has Endangered National Security* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004).

[34] Moran, "From Confession to Corporate Memory," 70.

[35] George Tenet with Bill Harlow, *At the Centre of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperPress, 2007).

[36] Simon Willmetts, "The Burgeoning Fissures of Dissent: Allen Dulles and the Selling of the CIA in the Aftermath of the Bay of Pigs," *History*, 100, 340 (2015), 167–88; Richard J. Aldrich, "American Journalism and the Landscape of Secrecy: Tad Szulc, the CIA and Cuba," ibid., 189–209.

[37] Bob Woodward, "What We Have Here Is a Failure to Communicate", *Washington Post*, 6 May 2007.

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cognoscenti rather enjoyed watching Woodward criticizing Tenet's memoir. It is widely thought that Tenet was part of a charmed circle that briefed Woodward extensively to assist with his own best-selling multivolume account of the Iraq War and many assumed that they were on friendly terms.[38] At times, Woodward's extensive and unflattering commentary on his briefing partner comes close to an account of how things might have been different if only Woodward had been director of the CIA.[39] Tenet may also come to regret having been the first out with a major memoir from the Bush White House, for although it offers the advantage of laying down a narrative early, it has clearly allowed others to manoeuvre around him with their own subsequent autobiographical accounts, not least his arch-nemesis, Bush insider and undersecretary of defense for policy, Donald Feith.[40] The same is also true from within the CIA. Michael Scheuer, the head of the CIA CTC's Alec Station, who used his 2004 book *Imperial Hubris* to attack policymaking at the top of the agency, vigorously attacked Tenet's memoir as an exercise in blame-shifting.[41] Richard Clarke's *Against All Enemies* challenges Tenet's narrative by asserting a conflicting narrative for the failures that caused 9/11, as do former CIA operations officers Robert Baer and Gary Berntsen.[42] Nevertheless, despite Tenet's challenges from within his own agency, his memoir plays an important role not just as the first narrative but in a triangulation process with other high-level policymakers who have written, including former Presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush, former vice president Dick Cheney and former national security advisers and Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice.[43]

[38] Michael F. Scheuer, "Tenet Tries to Shift the Blame. Don't Buy It," *Washington Post*, 29 April 2007.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

[41] Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2004). See also Scheuer, "Tenet Tries to Shift the Blame."

[42] See Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: The Free Press); Gary Berntsen, *Jawbreaker: The Attack on Bin Laden and Al Qaeda. A Personal Account by the CIA's Key Field Commander* (New York: Random House, 2005); and Robert Baer, *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War against Terrorism* (London: Arrow Books 2002).

[43] Bill Clinton, *My Life* (London: Arrow Books, 2005); George Bush, *Decision Points* (London: Virgin Books, 2010); Dick Cheney, with Liz Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2012); Colin Powell, with Tony Koltz, *It Worked for Me: In Life and Leadership* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2012); Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Broadway Books, 2012). See also the official releases like the 9/11 Commission's report. See National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (authorized edn) (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011).

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At the Center of the Storm's most remarkable passage concerns the speech made by Colin Powell as Secretary of State in the United Nations. It praises the presentation, but then adds that "unfortunately the substance didn't hold up," as if Secretary of State Powell had simply been unlucky and had just encountered some rainy weather on the way to the General Assembly. The most inexplicable aspects of this episode are not addressed, for example the fact that some material on Iraq's biological and chemical weapons programmes was shown to consist of bad forgeries. Powell remains bitter about the UN debacle and still blames Tenet for his public humiliation. In turn, Tenet blames Tyler Drumheller, a CIA head of operations in Europe, and the German intelligence service for the tall tales from an Iraqi defector code-named "Curveball" which underpinned Powell's UN presentation. But he tells us little about other curious material provided by the Italians, the French and the British, some of which ended up in Bush's speeches.[44] Drumheller, in a memoir penned with ghostwriter Elaine Monaghan, a London *Times* journalist, fires back and insists that Tenet and his deputy director, John McLaughlin, were well aware of the concerns about "Curveball."[45]

Tenet's memoir also displays some self-contradictions, something that one might have expected Bill Harlow to have ironed out. Despite suggesting that the White House used him as a scapegoat, he nevertheless sings hymns of loyal praise to George W. Bush as an individual. More importantly, he reveals the heated disagreements between the CIA, the State Department and the Defense Department. He catalogues the bewildering range of factions which were not only ideological but also personal, exacerbated by an administration much taken with back-channel policymaking and on-the-sofa decision making. It's hard to square Tenet's fawning praise for Bush and his assertion that the commander in chief was in full control with his description of the chaotic and disorganized decision making that occurred on his watch, a problem that plagued the direction of the wars that America fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, many contemporary officials concur with Tenet's claims that the CIA had done good work both during the initial invasion of Afghanistan and in rolling up the proliferation network headed by the Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan.[46]

Moreover, Tenet demonstrates convincingly that he worked hard to rebuild the CIA's clandestine collection capabilities after years of neglect and tried to

[44] Tenet, *Center of the Storm*, 375–81. The word "unfortunately" appears frequently in the text.

[45] Tyler Drumheller, with Elaine Monaghan, *On the Brink: An Insider's Account of How the White House Compromised American Intelligence* (New York: Carol & Graf, 2006).

[46] Jeffrey Goldberg, "Woodward vs. Tenet: The New Intelligence War," *New Yorker*, 21 May 2007.

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make terrorism a priority. He also shows that the CIA took a different position to the Pentagon on the US occupation of Iraq after 2003 and from the outset warned that it would not go well.[47] The CIA enjoyed a large station in Iraq. Tenet insists that the CIA's commander in Iraq was called a "defeatist" for flagging up the dangers of a growing Iraqi insurgency, even though it was apparent that the plans for postwar Iraq were lamentably inadequate. The CIA was already identifying the long-term trends, but in an atmosphere redolent of Vietnam, the military were reluctant to hear bad news. Tenet is correct that there was no strategy. Predictably, he saves his most acerbic criticisms for his intelligence rivals in the Pentagon who were close to Ahmed Chalabi, founder of the influential exile group the Iraqi National Congress, observing that they were "writing Chalabi's name over and over again in their notes, like schoolgirls with their first crush."[48]

MICHAEL HAYDEN, 2006–2009

George Tenet's short-lived successor, Porter Goss, previously a Republican Congressman, was perhaps the least popular director of the CIA since his equally short-lived predecessor James Schlesinger in the 1970s.[49] Under Goss, the agency descended into chaos, helping to accelerate and expand the recently created Office of the Director of National Intelligence. The creation of this new overlord ended the dual role of the CIA director as co-coordinator of Washington's many intelligence agencies and, no less hurtful, diminished the CIA's leading role as a liaison manager with the intelligence communities of foreign countries. Goss fought with its first incumbent, John Negroponte, and lost.[50]

The former director of the National Security Agency, Michael Hayden, was chosen to replace the failing Goss due to his success in the largest organization within the US intelligence community.[51] Taking over a technical spying organization that had struggled to deal with the exponential increase in global communications during the 1990s, he carried out dramatic reform and built new relationships with the ISPs and technology companies, creating twenty-first-century state–private networks.[52] Hayden argues that his task in

[47] Richard Best Jr., "What the Intelligence Community Got Right about Iraq," *Intelligence and National Security*, 23, 3 (2008), 289–302.

[48] Tenet, *Center of the Storm*, 434, 440.

[49] The parallels between Schlesinger and Goss as unpopular White House political appointees are fascinating.

[50] David Stoutmay, "C.I.A. Director Goss Resigns," *New York Times*, 5 May 2006.

[51] Michael Hayden, *Playing to the Edge: American Intelligence in the Age of Terror* (New York: Penguin Press, 2016).

[52] Ibid., 20. On the CIA and state–private networks see Scott Lucas, "Mobilizing Culture: The State–Private Network and the CIA in the Early Cold War," in Dale Carter and Robin Clifton, eds., *War and Cold War in American Foreign Policy 1942–1962* (New York:

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2006 was rather different and was more about restoring the CIA's sense of self-belief after the damage under Goss. In that respect, Hayden was perhaps the right person since confidence is something that he does not lack. While Tenet's memoir is apologetic and blame-dodging, the Hayden memoir is confident and even strident, articulated in his own "jock-bureaucratic" voice.[53] Importantly, it is Hayden's own voice in the most literal sense. Of the four memoirs reviewed here, Hayden is the only former director to dispense with a ghostwriter. This is a rarity when dealing with the memoirs of former CIA directors or Washington insiders. It accrues certain obvious advantages. Hayden does not pull his punches, tackling the vexed issues of rendition, torture and large-scale surveillance head-on and claiming to regret nothing. Its main disadvantage reminds us why ghostwriting is a lucrative business; his command of language is not at the level of a professional wordsmith. For the researcher, the lumpiness of the text and the presence of his characteristic bumptiousness is the best assurance that this is Hayden's true voice.

As director of the CIA, many of Hayden's tasks were external and included relations with Congress, the press and allied secret services. Clearly, he was not allowed to say much about foreign intelligence partners, the holiest of holies, but he cannot resist calling ISI, the Pakistan intelligence service, "the ally from hell."[54] If Hayden thought his path would be easier with 9/11 and the missing Iraqi WMDs some three years behind him, he was wrong. Although Edward Snowden had not yet leaked (Snowden's period of service in the CIA coincides almost exactly with that of Hayden), nevertheless there was already a developing climate of exposure in which leakers and whistle-blowers seem to enjoy "impunity."[55] Whistle-blowers had already begun to reveal the extent of the NSA's vast programmes that surveilled the emails, telephone calls, web-browsing habits and financial transactions of American citizens. These methods had been undertaken under war powers, but many American academic lawyers considered them unconstitutional and illegal. Reporters such as Dana Priest at the *Washington Post* had also revealed the existence of the CIA's three secret prisons in Europe. Hayden claims that since he left government, the Obama administration's persecution of leakers and those who facilitate them in the press has been more robust. In fact, too robust for him.[56] This claim, however, stands in stark contrast to claims more broadly made in the literature on whistle-blowers and leakers that note that he has been a "tireless" pursuer of leakers through Department of

Palgrave, 2002), 83–107; Scott Lucas, "Total Culture and the State–Private Network: A Commentary," in Jessica Gienow-Hecht and French Schumacher, eds., *Culture and International History* (New York: Berghan, 2003) 206–14; Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford, eds., *The US Government, Citizen Group and the Cold War: The State–Private Network* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[53] Packer, "Can You Keep a Secret?".

[54] Hayden, 348.

[55] Ibid., 125.

[56] Ibid.

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Justice attorneys.[57] Such deviations become more apparent as narratives form and scholars render their judgements on issues like the war on leakers.

Hayden's most contentious period of office was probably at the NSA. Publicly, he has been criticized over the expanded scale of intercepts and the decision to store all the metadata on calls made to, from and within the United States. Privately, inside the NSA, he is seen by some as dealing with the accelerating pace of technological change by expanding the use of consultants and private companies, a move that rescued the NSA but led to weakened security and allowed Snowden to slip in through a side door. By May 2006, when he arrived at Langley, the CIA effort to prosecute the war on terror had already begun to move away from rendition towards more drone strikes. Hayden is nevertheless a pugnacious fan of hard measures and regrets the fact some of the toughest techniques had been withdrawn, insisting that more intelligence would have been obtained had they been deployed. As such he is in diametric opposition to the view taken by a sizeable Senate Intelligence Committee report on torture, numerous journalistic investigations, and the contrary accounts of intelligence officers from other agencies, notably the FBI. Hayden resisted both the release of torture memos by the White House and strongly criticized the 2014 Senate Intelligence Committee report. By equal turns, the Senate Intelligence Committee insisted that Hayden had not been frank with them on many points – and all this is revisited in the memoir.

The case for torture in *Playing to the Edge* is not a convincing one, but his views are at least consistent. He rightly points out that some prominent members of the Senate raised few objections to the waterboarding of leading al Qaeda figures in private, but then later attacked him in public. Hayden made the same point when defending the CIA's toughest measures in front of a gathering of European ambassadors at the German Embassy in Washington in 2007. He pointed out that most of the operations had been carried out with European cooperation and that they had been happy to receive the resulting intelligence in private to protect their citizens. But in public, they enjoyed lambasting him and lecturing him on human rights. He then exchanged observations on the relative merits of Locke and Hobbes with the audience. Hayden attributes the retreat on interrogation methods and rendition to Congress and the American press, but in fact much of the pressure came from European allies. Liaison is an interesting

[57] See Lloyd C. Gardner, *The War on Leakers: National Security and American Democracy, from Eugene V. Debs to Edward Snowden* (New York: The New Press), 272.

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aspect of Hayden's memoirs, not least because it is mostly absent in the other volumes reviewed here.[58]

The best source for triangulating these memoirs is John Rizzo's *Company Man*. Rizzo, a famously snappy dresser who was addicted to sugar-pink ties, was a CIA senior lawyer for over thirty years and his memoir captures the fumbling of Goss and the sure touch of Hayden, but gives us fascinating details that Hayden omits. Having reviewed all the details on torture, and persuaded himself it was necessary, he then made the decision that it had to be "slimmed down" and made less secret if it was to survive. Rizzo offers an extraordinary account of the bizarre horse-trading under Hayden over what exactly torture might consist of. Waterboarding was obviously finished, but Condoleezza Rice also held out for nudity to be halted. The CIA defended their prize technique which was sleep deprivation.[59] None of the memoirs of the four directors discussed here gives an adequate account of the rise of "lawfare" that accompanied the range of extraordinary measures introduced after 9/11. The account by Jack Goldsmith of his brief time as assistant attorney general at the Office of Legal Counsel in the White House is perhaps the best "memoir" about the context of the CIA to come out of this period, even though Goldsmith was not in the CIA.[60]

Goldsmith has noted that the main enemy for Hayden was, in fact, the press, specifically the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.[61] His least favourite journalists include Jim Risen, whose book *State of War: The Secret History of the C.I.A. and the Bush Administration*, together with his articles, outed not only the matter of NSA domestic metadata collection, but also various CIA intelligence and deception operations against Iran. Other figures on Hayden's list of reviled reporters include Tim Weiner, who published a notably unfavourable history of the CIA that focussed on blowback from covert action. Hayden took the unprecedented step of allowing the CIA History Office to attack Weiner's book, which he describes as "a 600-page op-ed piece masquerading as serious history."[62] Hayden understands that the press can make or break an agency. He observes that "when someone runs a story that threatens to win a Pulitzer Prize … everyone holds their breath to see if the political leadership that told you to do this in the first place is going to man up and back you."[63] Bush did precisely

[58] Hayden, 220–22.
[59] John Rizzo, *Company Man: Thirty Years of Controversy and Crisis at the CIA* (New York: Scribner, 2014), 244–48.
[60] Jack Goldsmith, *The Terror Presidency: Law and Judgment inside the Bush Administration* (New York: Norton, 2007). See also Goldsmith, *Power and Constraint: The Accountable Presidency after 9/11* (New York: Norton, 2012).
[61] Goldsmith, *Power and Constraint*, 219. [62] Hayden, 92–117. [63] Ibid., 103–4.

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this and came to NSA and personally thanked those who worked on the controversial Stellarwind metadata collection programme. Hayden is unapologetic in attacking investigative journalists who specialize in intelligence, whom he insists have an agenda. To some degree, this entire series of memoirs by recent CIA directors might be seen as munitions in a growing war with investigative journalists who see it as their constitutional duty to encourage Congress to minimize the power of the intelligence agencies. Hayden's view comes close to saying that such journalists are unpatriotic, even a national security problem, and this, in turn, raises some interesting questions about how much they are watched and by what means.[64]

LEON PANETTA, 2009–2011

Hayden's memoir does not follow Tenet's pattern of fawning over the presidency. Instead, Hayden is fiercely critical of Obama, painting him as indecisive and a lawyerish temporizer when directing the war on terror. A year into his presidency, Obama replaced Hayden with Leon Panetta, who was a quieter figure. Although no less tough, he was more of a patient consensus builder, a skill learned through years in government finance. He was chair of the powerful House Budget Committee and then director of the Office of Management and Budget. So it is intriguing that Panetta, in his turn, also attacks Obama for weakness on Iraq and Syria and for not doing enough to strike at ISIS. Thus two very different CIA directors share the same verdict on Obama.[65]

Panetta's memoir, *Worthy Fights*, is a reflective text and also a smooth and easy read.[66] It is all the more enjoyable because, more than any of the other figures analysed here, he is a stranger to intelligence. This fresh perspective is compounded by the fact that Panetta "cowrote" his book with another outsider – veteran journalist Jim Newton, who spent twenty-five years at the *New York Times* as a reporter, editor, columnist and bureau chief. Panetta recounts the handover he received from Hayden as the incoming director of central intelligence at its Langley headquarters. He expected to take over an organization devoted to information gathering and analysis. However, when Hayden gave him a handover briefing, held deep inside a sensitive compartmentalized intelligence facility, Panetta was taken aback. "What really staggered me," he recalls, "were his revelations about the CIA's growing involvement in the effort to locate senior members of Al Qaeda." These

[64] Ibid.

[65] Leon Panetta, with Jim Newton, *Worthy Fights Memoir of Leadership in War and Peace* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 249–63. See also Felicia Schwartz, "Panetta Faults White House on Iraq Troop Presence," *Wall Street Journal*, 2 Oct. 2014.

[66] Panetta.

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were kill missions and Panetta suddenly realized that he was to be "the combatant commander in the war on terrorism."[67] Similarly, he also recounts how much help he received from John Brennan, a CIA veteran of thirty years, during the transition period. Brennan was Obama's first pick for CIA director and widely considered to be the architect of the CIA's drone programme. The pair shared desks six feet away from one another during the transition. Brennan highlighted for him that it was important for Panetta to "learn the culture of the agency" and that his focus had to be squarely on tackling terrorism.[68] Outside the CIA, he also had the transformation of the agency from gatherers to hunters made clear to him. In early 2009, he visited Tel Aviv for a conference with Meir Dagan, the long-serving and much-respected chief of Mossad, held at its base in a series of low-slung fortified metal buildings on the Israeli coast. Panetta asked Dagan for his advice on the right approach to al Qaeda. "I'd kill them," he said. "And then I'd kill their families."[69] It is in details of this type that memoirs shine. One wonders if the security reviewers at Langley missed this bit.

Panetta soon had to confront attendant ethical dilemmas from the CIA's aggressive proactive posture. He opens his book by remembering ordering the death of a terrorist at an opportune moment, even though it meant the death of the man's innocent wife. Panetta oversaw the launch of deadly drone strikes against two US citizens, Anwar al-Awlaki and Samir Kahn, both of whom were instrumental in al Qaeda's online radicalization publication *Inspire*. One also gets the sense that Panetta would like to tell us more, but this is an episode over which he battled with the censors, since the discussion of operations is forbidden and here he is ordered to forget.[70]

Panetta was clearly in favour of negotiating with the Taliban in Afghanistan, together with his British equivalent, Sir John Sawyers, chief of MI6, a close collaborator who makes no appearance in the memoir. His main opponent was the Pentagon, who pushed for a troop surge and believed in a war of counterterrorism (killing) rather than counterinsurgency (hearts and minds). Underpinning this was a special-forces belief in military victory, perhaps informed by their successful war against al Qaeda in Baghdad and the famous "Awakening" in Anbar Province.[71] Panetta was politically brave to argue that many of the Taliban were not a problem; instead it was merely their support for al Qaeda that needed to be addressed. Panetta believes

[67] Ibid., 189. [68] Ibid., 201. [69] Ibid., 204–5, 272–73. [70] Ibid., 12–16.
[71] J. A. Russell, "Innovation in War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, Iraq, 2005–2007," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 33, 4 (2010), 595–624.

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that Obama quietly accepted this view, but Pentagon officials believe precisely the reverse.[72]

Panetta's account of the "torture wars" with Obama and Congress is the most contested section. But the arguments between competing memoirs here are not so much about Panetta as they are more about a battle to control a particular historical narrative, where the meanings of "torture" and "terrorism" are closely debated. Here CIA memoirists are fighting over the CIA as a metaphor for wider issues in American foreign policy. Accordingly, in *Hard Measures*, José Rodriguez not only attacks Panetta and Obama, but also implicitly tries to undermine a 2011 memoir by ex-CIA operative Glenn L. Carle, *The Interrogator*, and *The Reluctant Spy*, written in 2009 by former agency man and whistle-blower John Kiriakou.[73]

Panetta was perhaps a less combative public defender of the agency than some of his predecessors, believing that the CIA had better things to do than preen its image. But on occasion he fought the CIA's opponents in Congress no less fiercely than did Hayden, and perhaps more skilfully. He recounts his battles with the House speaker Nancy Pelosi over the charges that the CIA had lied to the Senate Intelligence Committee about waterboarding. Pelosi found him a resourceful and persistent opponent. Panetta also recalls the "ugly struggle" with Dennis Blair, an energetic director of national intelligence, who clearly believed in chains of command rather than consensus building and wished to choose who became CIA overseas station chiefs.[74]

Panetta's CIA career reached its peak in May 2011. After years of patient work, the US discovered and then killed Osama bin Laden at Abbottabad inside Pakistan. Despite his general reservations about the President he served, Panetta gives Obama due credit for decisiveness here. He urged the President to press ahead – warning him that if he did not he would live to regret it. Obama was firm and once he had settled on an airborne assault he insisted everyone move very quickly. Oddly, even though the CIA declassified thousands of pages of documents to assist the filmmakers who created *Zero Dark Thirty*, Panetta had to fight the CIA to even mention this operation.[75] One of the many things that these memoirs underline collectively is the inconsistency of the Publications Review Board and of CIA declassification more generally. In 2018, five former CIA employees chose to challenge this

[72] Panetta, 286, 415–18.
[73] Glenn L. Carle, *The Interrogator* (New York: Nation Books, 2011); John Kiriakou, *The Reluctant Spy* (New York: Bantam, 2009).
[74] Panetta, 225–27, 229.
[75] Ibid., 315–31.

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process in court, citing efforts to redact banal information that was in the public domain.[76]

Given that *Zero Dark Thirty* implicitly justifies and indeed probably exaggerates the utility of torture, it's fascinating to compare what Panetta says about torture with the observations of his predecessor, Hayden. The Panetta memoir is a masterpiece of political fence sitting.[77] Panetta took over the CIA after many of the harsh measures had been banned in 2006, partly because of strong European pressure. But much of his time as director was spent managing the political blowback and addressing arguments between the Senate and the White House over the disclosure of the "torture memos." The White House was extremely displeased about the release of CIA internal material to the Senate committee's inquiry.

Panetta seems personally undecided about the value of torture. He insists that no one gave away bin Laden's location "while strapped to a waterboard." But equally, he insists that material from torture was part of gradual accumulations of leads that allowed the CIA to locate the secretive al Qaeda leader in May 2011. When reading through passages in *Worthy Fights* one wonders if the language here, which is carefully crafted, is that of Panetta or his ghostwriter, Newton, or a team that included lawyers. Nevertheless, it probably represents what Panetta wants to say. He argues that torture did produce valuable material on al Qaeda's leadership and operations, but cautions that softer techniques, applied over a long time period, might well have produced the same information or better. He probably captures a consensus emerging within the CIA by 2011.

Panetta's hand was forced by advocates of torture. Shortly after bin Laden was killed in Abbottabad, the retired Attorney General Michael Mukasey published an article claiming that waterboarding had provided important information for the raid. Mukasey insisted that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed provided the nickname of a bin Laden courier. In fact, it was later discovered that he was not quizzed about the courier until months after his waterboarding. Supporters of Mukasey counter that nevertheless what mattered was that waterboarding broke his resistance. Panetta similarly criticizes the memoir offered by José Rodriguez (again written with Bill Harlow), the CIA officer who managed some of the interrogations, insisting that he "underplays" intelligence gained from other sources. Historians will doubtless debate the matter for years to come, but most professional interrogators agree that detainees often provide false information to avoid torture.[78]

[76] Deanna Paul, "These Former Agents Say the CIA and NSA Are Censoring Them. Now They're Suing," *Washington Post*, 2 April 2019.

[77] Jeff Stein, "What Former CIA Head Leon Panetta Says Now about Torture," *Newsweek*, 9 Oct. 2014.

[78] Panetta, 222–23.

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MICHAEL MORELL, 2011, 2012–2013

Unlike the other memoir writers reviewed here, Morell was a lifelong career CIA officer. In that respect, he is more like William Colby and Richard Helms, two other famous directors who became memoir writers.[79] Following in the footsteps of these two famous Cold War directors, his memoir is as much a robust defence of the CIA as an institution as it is a biography.[80] Morell also follows Colby and Helms in employing a ghostwriter to help produce his memoir, choosing to work with the omnipresent Bill Harlow, who, as we have seen, also partnered George Tenet and José Rodriguez.

Thirty-three years of service at the CIA certainly gives the book a uniquely wide-ranging perspective. Morell started at the CIA out of college as an economic analyst, moved on to become an executive assistant to the director and then spent a year as President George W. Bush's daily intelligence briefer. Accordingly, Morell was with him on the fateful morning of 9/11. Subsequently, he ran the Directorate of Intelligence, then became the CIA's analytic liaison in the United Kingdom working with the Joint Intelligence Committee and the Cabinet Office. He served as deputy director of the CIA and twice as acting director before retiring in 2014.[81] Despite his long career in the CIA, Morell's memoir is the shortest of the four and focusses on the transformation of the CIA during its war with al Qaeda. Morell also provides a compelling account of Washington's bureaucratic battles, some of which seem almost as bitter as the real wars against insurgents and terrorists. Chief among these controversies are the Iraqi WMD failure in 2003 and the assault on the CIA and diplomatic compounds in Libya in 2012.

In the latter incident, both American compounds at Benghazi were overrun by fighters and the US ambassador was killed. Although the CIA had augmented its security (unlike the diplomats) it was still defeated by what Morell himself admits was an ill-prepared and opportunistic attack.[82] Morell argues that Republicans worked hard to politicize the Libyan disaster and misrepresented the CIA analysis of events. But he also shows that the White House did the same to a lesser degree and then stopped him from releasing an internal CIA study of the events to Congress. Morell eventually released this CIA

[79] Michael Morell, with Bill Harlow, *The Great War of Our Time: The CIA's Fight Against Terrorism – From Al Qa'ida to ISIS* (New York: Twelve, 2015).

[80] See Richard Helms and William Hood, *A Look over My Shoulder: A Life in the Central Intelligence Agency* (New York: Random House, 2003); William Colby and Peter Forbath, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA* (New York: Simon Shuster, 1978).

[81] Michael J. Morell, "The Turn to War: 11 September 2001. With the President," *Studies in Intelligence*, 50, 3 (2014), 23–34.

[82] David Sanger, "Ex-C.I.A. Official Rebuts Republican Claims on Benghazi Attack," *New York Times*, 3 May 2015.

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study just as he retired. One wonders whether the lengthy accounts of the wrangling with Congress over Benghazi reflect the presence of a ghostwriter with an even greater enthusiasm for "Beltway battles" than Morell. Benghazi also loomed large as a politicized issue in the 2016 election campaign.[83]

Morell is most interesting on the challenge of adapting intelligence to the era that followed the Arab Spring. The CIA had depended mostly on the fearsome security agencies of a few countries in the region, including Egypt and Jordan, to help them hunt for their enemies and also to interpret popular politics. But these respected regional services themselves had also misunderstood events. The CIA had made the classic mistake of overemphasizing secret material from its liaison relationships and not looking at open-source material. Since then, vast resources have been invested in the analysis of social media and new research projects have been launched that look more like quantitative social science than secret intelligence. He also admits that the CIA was wrong about the impact of the Arab Spring on al Qaeda, believing it would be marginalized by more mainstream liberal opinion. Instead, extremists poured into the power vacuums that opened up across both the Middle East and North Africa.[84]

Meanwhile, Morell offers fascinating sideways comments on the National Security Agency, an organization in which he never served. In retirement in 2013, Obama recalled him and asked him to join a team of five people conducting a review of the NSA in the light of the spectacular Snowden disclosures made in June of that year.[85] He concluded that "the N.S.A. had left itself vulnerable" and that many corporations had better cybersecurity than the government's security agencies. Morell's judgements are sober, unsensational and balanced. He agrees with many of the NSA's critics who argue that, with a bloated budget after 9/11, it had "largely been collecting information because it could, not necessarily in all cases because it should."[86] Of course, others have said this, but it is intriguing to hear this judgement confirmed by one of Washington's genuine insiders during the secret war on terror, and to see two contrasting opinions in two insider memoirs.

Ghostwriters rise up again when we reach the issue of torture. Privately, Morell downplayed the importance of torture as a technique when speaking to staff inside the agency, yet publicly the memoir defends the CIA's use of

[83] Robert Entman and Sarah Stonbely, "Political Scandals as a Democratic Challenge: Blunders, Scandals, and Strategic Communication in US Foreign Policy. Benghazi vs. 9/11," *International Journal of Communication*, 12 (2018), 24–26.

[84] Morell, *The Great War of Our Time*, 176–90.

[85] Fred Kaplan, *Dark Territory: The Secret History of Cyber War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016), 239–55.

[86] Morell, *The Great War of Our Time*, 282–301.

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torture and attacks the Senate's six-thousand-page report as mistaken and naive. Internally, Morell went out of his way to criticize the thriller *Zero Dark Thirty* and issued a statement to his staff on the matter which states trenchantly, "The film creates the strong impression that the enhanced interrogation techniques … were the key to finding bin Laden. That impression is false." Yet his memoir takes a quite different line – and this discrepancy has not gone unnoticed.[87]

One suspects the presence of at least one ghostly hand here, perhaps even a degree of team writing. After all, Bill Harlow has been a forceful presence in the torture debate, joining with José Rodriguez to write a defence of torture in 2012.[88] Indeed, more recently he has devoted his effort to a compendium publication defending torture.[89] Harlow was also part of a team that worked to rebut the Senate's torture report. This is not the place to explore this highly politicized debate, but it worth underlining the way in which the CIA and its activities have somehow become emblematic of much wider debates about American foreign policy and its values, serving as a kind of social symbol.[90] Predictably, Dianne Feinstein had much to say about this. Feinstein, who chaired the Senate Intelligence Committee and was the key US Senator behind the investigation into the agency's use of torture, suggests that the view put forward in Morell's memoir is not really his own. Feinstein charged Morell with a classic CIA press office response, opening its comments with a catalogue of specific errors, often rather minor, to distract from the main conclusions of the report. There is no question that this is a textbook CIA press office technique.[91]

As a result, on the issue of torture, Morell brings confusion instead of clarity, in contrast to Panetta. Nevertheless, if we put this vexed issue aside, it is a fine and incisive piece of writing that mixes honest criticism and recommendations for improvements with genuine awe of the CIA and the agency's employees, whom Morell describes as "the finest public servants."[92]

[87] Scott Shane, "Acting C.I.A. Director, Michael J. Morell, Criticizes 'Zero Dark Thirty'," *New York Times*, 23 Dec. 2012.

[88] José Rodriguez, *Hard Measures: How Aggressive CIA Actions after 9/11 Saved American Lives* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2012).

[89] James E. Mitchell and Bill Harlow, *Enhanced Interrogation: Inside the Minds and Motives of the Islamic Terrorists Trying to Destroy America* (New York: Penguin, 2016).

[90] Andrew Hammond, "Through a Glass, Darkly: The CIA and Oral History," *History*, 100, 340 (2015), 311–26.

[91] "Dianne Feinstein Slam's Mike Morrell's New Book for Defending CIA's Use of Torture," Associated Press, 11 May 2015.

[92] Morell, *The Great War of Our Time*, 6.

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CONCLUSION

Memoirs are clearly a space in which the CIA feels it can fight back against an unfair world. Bill Harlow has suggested that the CIA has had a hard time getting a fair hearing – partly because of the influence of Hollywood. The entertainment industry, he argues, is composed of left liberals who tend to view the intelligence community with "great suspicion" and see it as too harsh on civil liberties. Harlow recounts that during his time at the CIA, one of the greatest challenges was to persuade Hollywood to make a movie in which CIA officers were viewed positively because of the ideological prism of the entertainment industry.[93] John Hollister Headley, who ran the CIA Publications Review Board, makes a similar claim about book publishers, voicing his suspicion that their meta-narrative owes much to the persistence of publishers "in pandering to (and therefore perpetuating) stereotypes about the CIA." He admits to being annoyed that the media generally, including book publishers, believe that "the CIA must appear sinister, stupid, or scandalous for someone to read about it."[94] The world of books is complicated and it is hard to cast up generalizations. Equally, Harlow's proposition about Hollywood is also hard to test. Certainly, from *Scorpio* to *JFK* and onwards to the *Jason Bourne* series, many films about the CIA have been negative. But these have to be set against Tom Clancy's movies about Jack Ryan, including *The Hunt for Red October*, *Clear and Present Danger*, *Patriot Games* and *The Sum of All Fears* – all were positive portrayals of CIA officers.

Not all ghostwriters are the same and not all of them are former feisty CIA speechwriters. Because the memoirs of Tenet and Morell were coauthored with Harlow, someone who helped to craft Tenet's speeches while he was at the agency, both books have a similar tone. By contrast, Panetta, working with eminent journalist Jim Newton, finds perhaps the ideal partner to match his outsider persona. Newton is in the Department of Communication Studies at UCLA teaching courses in journalistic ethics, writing and California public policy. He is also a seasoned author who has produced biographies of Chief Justice Earl Warren and Dwight Eisenhower and so is in tune with life writing.[95] If the pairing of author and ghost is a judicious one then the boundary can be indistinguishable. However, for researchers, this

[93] Harlow quoted in Jenkins, *The CIA in Hollywood*, 44.

[94] John Hollister Hedley, "Three Memoirs from Former CIA Officers," *Studies in Intelligence*, 49, 3 (2007), available at www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol49no3/html_files/Three_Memoirs_10.htm.

[95] See Jim Newton, *Justice for All: Earl Warren and the Nation He Made* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006); Newton, *Eisenhower: The White House Years* (New York: Doubleday, 2011).

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neat pairing only compounds the scholarly dilemma of deciding who we are *really* dealing with in the text of a memoir.

What is clear is that we are increasingly dealing with multiple overlapping categories. Quite apart from deciding what is the opinion of the first-named author, what is that of the ghost and what is the that of the CIA, we now confront fascinating questions about the differences between memoir and biography. David Petraeus, who served as director of the CIA during 2011–12, has not written a memoir, but he cooperated with his biographer so closely that he allegedly handed over a good deal of classified material. Bafflingly, his biographer, Paula Broadwell, then in turn made use of a ghostwriter who was a more experienced professional wordsmith.[96] There is an argument that we might as well have included the Petraeus biography here, as most of these works fall into a mushy category of semiautobiography.[97]

The striking exception, of course, is *Playing to the Edge*, which seems to be all Hayden's own work. Hayden, while accepting that his staff "write great speeches," would also choose to write his own presentations when he felt strongly about something.[98] Admittedly, sometimes one yearns for a bit of editing by the crafty wordsmiths of the CIA's press office, for it is not all that readable.[99] But in some ways, it is a more honest account and as such is more interesting for the intelligence specialist – since it is not afraid to address legal, technical or controversial issues in detail with its bewildering blizzard of acronyms. Meanwhile, the memoirs that have been given the "Harlow treatment" tend to spend more time justifying mistakes and counterbriefings against the Congressional briefers and their least favourite journalists. The classic CIA director's memoir tends to be a mix of polemic and apologia, with an emphasis on the history of the institution rather than of the individual.[100]

This memoir is also fascinating because he is the most confident. While he is regretful about the Snowden leaks, he is upbeat about the general performance of the agencies over the last two decades, concluding, "we're actually pretty good at this spy stuff."[101] Hayden's views on CIA memoirs are consistent with this. He observes that one of the wider mistakes made by the agencies over the last ten years is not to give more time to their narrative. He is depressed by the extent to which government has ceded the ground to

[96] Paula Broadwell, with Vernon Loeb, *All In: The Education of General David Petraeus* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

[97] Adam Goldman, "How David Petraeus Avoided Felony Charges and Possible Prison Time," *Washington Post*, 25 Jan. 2016.

[98] Hayden, *Playing to the Edge*, 220.

[99] Rumsfeld's 800-page memoir was also undertaken without a ghostwriter; see Lloyd J. Matthews, "Known and Unknown: A Memoir," *Parameters*, 41, 1 (2011), 150–52.

[100] Wark, "Struggle in the Spy House," 315.

[101] Hayden, xiv.

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journalists, whom he perceives as infected with an anti-intelligence bias. But although Hayden insists there needs to be more public debate about intelligence, he clearly wishes it to be within a certain range and gets annoyed when others join that debate who do not agree with him.

However, this in turn raises other questions that are hard to answer. Hayden has maintained quite a high profile since stepping down at the CIA. How much attention should scholars pay to these more recent commentaries? One the one hand, he is uniquely experienced and often forthright. But on the other hand, how many of the appearances and op-eds are really an extension of marketing tours? Does a figure like this continue to speak for the intelligence community, or for his publisher? He would probably respond that he speaks for himself. Either way, there is something to be said for a long timeline explored in some of these memoirs. As with Helms and Colby in the previous century, we get a sense of an evolving entity. These four memoirs together trace the development of the war on terror, from the limited response under Clinton, to the excesses of rendition and secret prisons, to the birth of drone warfare, and finally to the rejection of these approaches in favour of Brennan's White House-centric targeted-killing strategy. We await a White House insider memoir that will give us a frank account of these things from the NSC perspective in the *longue durée*. Perhaps someone is working on it.

All these spy chiefs have clashed with their own government over declassification. Panetta is thought by some to have broken the rules by allowing his publisher to see copies of the manuscript before he had received permission to release the material to people without clearances. Yet while in office Panetta had publicly attacked other memoir writers who were then pursued for the proceeds of their books.[102] The other three directors certainly also had to deal with CIA edits and suggestions. Ironically, the sternest censor is sometimes the publisher who wants a racy read. As Christopher Moran notes in relation to Richard Helm's memoir *A Look over My Shoulder*, security censorship was practically nonexistent, which stood in "stark contrast to the cuts that were made" by Helms's publisher, Random House, to tailor the manuscript for the general reader.[103] Entire chapters disappeared and here the purpose of public education is clouded by the publisher's pursuit of profitability.[104]

Does all this matter to students and scholars of American studies? Should we discard memoirs that employ ghostly figures from the CIA public-relations

[102] George Egerton, "Politics and Autobiography: Political Memoir as Polygenre," *Biography*, 15, 3 (1992), 221–42.
[103] Moran, "From Confession to Corporate Memory," 74.
[104] Wark, 302.

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department, or indeed the autobiographies of former Cabinet figures like Hilary Clinton who have also employed multiple shadow writers? We suggest not. One of Harlow's first acts when hired to direct CIA public relations was banning novelty mugs with "no comment" across them.[105] A small act, but a hugely symbolic one. Without Harlow's direct influence in shifting the culture at the CIA the flotilla of memoirs we now have from former spooks would be smaller. Memoirs – even memoirs written with the aid of ghosts – are better than nothing, which is precisely what those who study British intelligence have with respect to former directors of both MI6 and GCHQ. After all, Presidents and other senior figures have employed armies of speechwriters for much of the twentieth century. In fact, few leaders have had the time or indeed the confidence to pen their own output. Yet their public orations are frequently quoted, and perhaps rightly, since they are, after all, representing wider organizations. It would be interesting to apply the sort of textual-analysis software increasingly used in English literature to a CIA director's memoir to try to discover just which parts are written by the lead figure and which parts consist of ectoplasm – perhaps this is the future.[106]

Spy memoirs have certainly been "weaponized" as part of increasingly angry debates over policy and practice in the war on terror. In fact, both spy memoirs and spy histories have been deployed as propaganda for over fifty years. This trend was begun by Britain's MI6 and the East German Stasi, but quickly taken up by both the CIA and the KGB during the early Cold War, with all sides sponsoring endless defector memoirs.[107] Kim Philby's waspish but well-written recollections are a prime example.[108] But as historians of psychological operations have repeatedly observed, good propaganda tends to be merely selective with its facts rather than simply untrue. Accordingly, with the CIA in particular, the sheer volume of memoirs means that triangulation is possible and so all this material, even with its retinue of ghosts, is to be cautiously welcomed.[109] The CIA – sometimes despite itself – has made more information available about its history than any other intelligence agency, and as a result most Americans are better informed about their secret services, and better equipped to debate these increasingly complex issues, than the citizens of Europe. The paradoxical openness of American secrecy remains a

[105] Priess interview with Harf and Harlow.

[106] Efstathios Stamatatos, "A Survey of Modern Authorship Attribution Methods," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 60, 3 (2009), 538–56.

[107] Paul Maddrell, "What We Have Discovered about the Cold War Is What We Already Knew: Julius Mader and the Western Secret Services during the Cold War," *Cold War History*, 5, 2 (2005), 235–58.

[108] E. D. R. Harrison, "More Thoughts on Kim Philby's My Silent War," *Intelligence and National Security*, 10, 3 (1995), 514–25.

[109] Davies, "Spies as Informants," 78.

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remarkable thing and, as one former CIA officer rightly observed, only in the United States could the intelligence memoir become a literary genre.[110]

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[110] Hedley, "Three Memoirs from Former CIA Officers," 2.

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