BOOK REVIEW

The Great War of Our Time: The CIA's Fight against Terrorism from Al Qa'eda to ISIS. Micheal Morell and Bill Halow. New York Boston: Twelve Publishers, 2015. Pp. 362.

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Micheal Morell in his new book titled *The Great War of Our Time: The CIA's Fight against Terrorism from Al Qa'eda to ISIS* presents an insight into the world of CIA operations. The book categorises CIA as one of the few organisations, which were directly affected by the rise of terrorism in the 21st century. The book, as it states in the beginning, has been reviewed by the CIA to prevent any disclosure of classified information. The book's narrative revolves around the terrorist threats the US has faced from al Qaeda to the rise of ISIS. Micheal Morell is perhaps the best authority to write on the subject since he has not only served with President Bush, and that too at the time of 9/11 attacks, but was also involved in the operation which led to the killing of Osama Bin Laden in 2011.

In his book, Micheal Morell pens down an appraisal of the CIA operations in the past two decades. He narrates that al Qaeda poses an undeniable threat to the US and the world at large; however, it does not end with it as the rising threat of ISIS has opened an all new arena for the CIA. The author divides the threats posed to the US in two categories: first and foremost, the threat posed by transnational terrorism, which equally threatens all Americans; and second, the threat posed by the major rising powers, like China and Russia, and rogue nations like Iraq and North Korea.

The author discusses in detail the US invasion of Iraq, calling it an unfortunate event which could have been avoided. The reason why it could not be avoided was because the events of 9/11 had resulted in a

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bellicose attitude in the Bush Administration and the atmosphere was of being "at war."

The author is of the view that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 alone changed the way CIA worked. Post 9/11, the core focus of the organisation was to keep close tabs on the terrorist organisations around the world to safeguard US interests. Here the author makes an interesting observation: before 9/11 the people within the CIA who dealt with terrorism were considered second class citizens within the organisation. 9/11, however, altered this perception.

While discussing the Iraq conundrum, Micheal Morell unveils the confusion which was there not only within the CIA, but also amongst the analysts and the decision takers. In the late 1990s, British intelligence shared information with the CIA regarding the build-up of "Weapons of Mass Destruction" in Iraq by Saddam Hussain. The information initially did not receive much importance by the CIA, but after 9/11, Saddam began to be seen as a threat to the US and its interests. Post-invasion Iraq, however, soon became a failure for the US, resulting in huge loss of resources and men. Morell categorises Iraq invasion as a pure intelligence and analytical failure by the US, resulting in immeasurable loss as it became a quagmire for the US.

Morell tells the readers about a certain amount of tension between the CIA and some other state organs. Regarding Bin Laden's escape from Afghanistan in 2002, Morell avers that the forces that would have been able to keep him from fleeing to Pakistan, had simply been not there.

The author also discusses in length the US-Pakistan cooperation in the War on Terror, which saw Pakistan providing intelligence and logistical support to the US. The gist of the author's argument is that transnational terrorist organisations have become a core national security challenge for the US.