to help them formulate strategies great and small.

Shortly before defining *grand strategy* as the "alignment of potentially unlimited aspirations with necessarily limited capabilities," Gaddis makes the case for common sense— "Common sense, in this sense, is like oxygen: the higher you go, the thinner it gets."

To much criticism from both the political left and the right, President Barack Obama famously asserted that his first task as President was "Don't do stupid shit"—a pungent shorthand for "use common sense." It seems that a U.S. President with little formal training in strategic affairs had stumbled upon a truism Professor Gaddis developed over a lifetime of study. Rather than simply do something that conventional wisdom insisted was required, Obama tried to keep his options open, a strategy that Gaddis calls "pivoting." The President took so long to make a decision, however, that he was openly accused of dithering. He pivoted to the point where he even changed his policies when he realized the implications of earlier decisions, such as when he decided not to enforce his proclaimed red line against Syria's continued use of chemical agents.

President Obama might be classified as a proverbial "hedgehog" with an overarching idea that dissatisfied many professional national security scholars and politicians. He pursued what he understood to be common sense and applied Gaddis's preferred "proportionality," even in the face of many foreign policy crises and emerging geopolitical developments. He applied this strategy among his many advisors and the Department of Defense, as well.

As frustrating as that was to many observers, Mr. Obama was simply demonstrating the ability to be both fox and hedgehog by combining approaches. This flexibility, Gaddis claims, is the "strategist's keys to victory." **JFQ**

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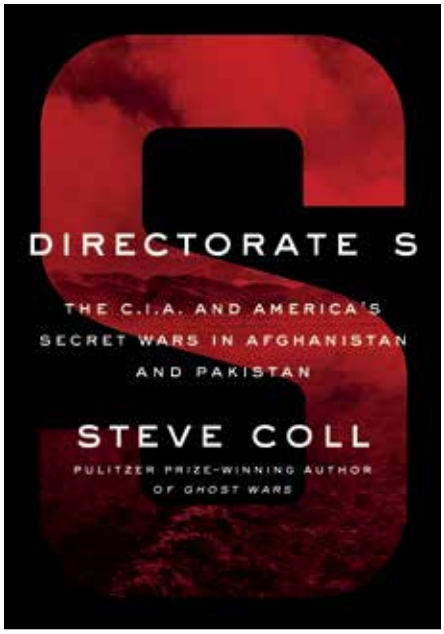

Directorate S: The C.I.A. and America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan

By Steve Coll
Penguin Press, 2018
$35.00 784 pp.
ISBN: 978-1594204586

Reviewed by Thomas F. Lynch III

Directorate S by longtime *Washington Post* journalist, former think tank president, and now dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University, Steve Coll, is a seminal book. It is a highly worthy successor to the author's Pulitzer Prize–winning 2004 work *Ghost Wars*. *Directorate S* is impressive in its scope, level of detail, and readability. It successfully fills much of the gaping void in prior literature on the controversial topic of the U.S. role in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As a reference for scholars and policymakers, this book is first rate. Although it will not be the final word on the strategic trajectory of South Asia and the future arc of complex U.S. policy choices in that region, Coll's work makes an indelible mark.

Published in early 2018, *Directorate S* picks up the story of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan on September 11, 2001—the day after *Ghost Wars* culminated—and takes the saga through 2014. In its more than 750 pages, Coll chronicles the complex web of tensions, rivalries, suspicions, and miscalculations that prevented strategic success for the United States and thwarted a long-planned U.S. departure from Afghanistan. Coll shows how a lack of trust and a misappreciation of deeply held security and cultural narratives among the United States, Pakistan, and Afghanistan—as well as between frequently competing U.S. national security and intelligence agencies—made America's search for decisive victory in Afghanistan languish unrealized for more than a decade and a half.

Directorate S provides an extremely valuable reference for scholars and policymakers working on the complexities of South Asia security. Coll's story is based on at least 100 interviews with a myriad of critical U.S., Afghan, and Pakistani policymakers and their supporting staffs. His interview-based writing is leavened with the experience of a journalist boasting 3 years as a reporter in South Asia and another three decades tracking and writing astute shorter works on the most critical security topics for the region. The number and quality of sources accessed by Coll during the years of his research are remarkable and unique, going well beyond the tell-all political texts of those like journalist Bob Woodward, or political figures Bob Gates and Hillary Clinton.

Directorate S accurately captures the complexities of strategic analysis and the conflicting policy perspectives from Washington to Kabul to Rawalpindi (the home of Pakistan's military and intelligence leadership). Coll logically identifies that the relationship between the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) was the most critical in the multimodal strategic dynamic, but one based on a paradox. The CIA needed the ISI and Pakistani army to gain intelligence on the movement and recruitment of Taliban and al Qaeda militants. Yet the ISI was covertly enabling its Taliban proxies from semi-feudal towns, refugee camps, and jihadist safe havens inside Pakistan

to attack Afghan government and international forces there. In this "double game," the ISI continued Pakistan's decades-long security imperative of facilitating and managing Islamist militant groups like the Afghan Taliban—groups deemed essential to Pakistan's existential struggle with India.

Coll's conclusions are solid and well documented. He finds that the "failure to solve the riddle of the ISI and stop its covert interference in Afghanistan became, ultimately, the greatest strategic shortfall of the U.S. war" and that successive American Presidents "tolerated and even promoted stovepiped, semi-independent campaigns waged simultaneously by different agencies of American government." Coll also chronicles the divide that far too often bedeviled U.S. military interactions with Afghan culture and traditions, featuring the tragedies of Afghan civilians killed in U.S.-led military operations and American personnel killed by supposedly friendly Afghan military and government personnel.

Despite the myriad of personalities and region-specific organizations and terminology, *Directorate S* is crisp and engrossing. Even casual readers should find it to be a page-turner. But 14 years is a long period to cover in an interview-driven narrative and many readers may find 784 pages more than a bit daunting. The pacing slumps a bit with Coll's excursions into the personal stories of individual U.S. and British soldiers in Afghanistan. Understandably, Coll's editors may have wanted to interweave the human toll of complex policy decisions into the narrative, but the micro-level discussion of the personal and often tragic stories dragged on the otherwise crisp pace.

If there is a downside to *Directorate S*, it is found in two missing dimensions. Despite its commendable detail and voluminous, if often anonymous, use of first-person interviews, it seems to lack direct interviews with a couple of critical personae. Among them, Vice President Joe Biden, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan from 2007–2010 Anne Patterson, and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen stand out. These key characters have no written biography to consult for decisionmaking context or to balance against the impressions of subordinate staffers or the naked text Coll cites from Wikileaks cables. Yet as Coll writes, Admiral Mullen had 27 separate meetings and more than 100 phone calls with Pakistan's all-powerful army chief, General Ashfaq Kayani, from 2008 to 2011. Coll speculates about the degree to which Mullen knew about the Pakistani military's intransigence and duplicity. His speculation seems to derive from Wikileaks extracts and from the perspectives of other U.S. actors—few, if any, of whom were on Mullen's staff or in the meetings to see Kayani. Consequently, several critical elements of the U.S.-Pakistan interactions are poorly developed or untold, including the critical yearlong buildup to Mullen's famous call-out of Pakistan's duplicity with the Haqqani Network in front of Congress in September 2011.

Directorate S also is a bit misrepresented as chronologically complete. Coll's introduction advertises a comprehensive history of the U.S. role in Afghanistan and Pakistan from 9/11 to 2016. But its 35 chapters culminate in late 2014 as the United States was making good on President Barack Obama's 2013 decision to draw down almost all U.S. military forces by the end of 2015. Coll offers the reader a short epilogue that covers a couple of the major happenings in Afghanistan and Pakistan from 2015 to 2017. Despite the epilogue, *Directorate S* already feels dated in mid-2018. The story of the United States in Afghanistan and in bilateral relations with Pakistan has moved far, far along since 2014.

In fact, the full story has at least two other acts since 2014. In its next act, staged from 2015 to 2016, the Obama administration encountered the inconvenient truth that a too-rapid exit from Afghanistan led to alarming Taliban gains in territory across south and southwest Afghanistan. Later in 2015 and into 2016, fragments from Afghan Taliban and Pakistan Taliban units declared themselves to be affiliated with the so-called Islamic State and began low-level guerrilla operations across Afghanistan. Coll notes this, but not the fact that the alarm led Obama to freeze the drawdown of U.S. forces and make changes in rules of engagement to allow for greater pressure on these international terror groups.

U.S.-Pakistan relations also took a noteworthy turn beginning in early 2015. Pakistan's military undertook an extensive antiterrorist operation in its western North Waziristan Province that ran from 2014 to 2017. Simultaneously, U.S.-Pakistan strategic interactions withered and tense rhetoric between the two became far more common, but still with no real change in Pakistan's approach toward Islamist militant groups.

The Trump administration has added yet another major act to the arc of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan during 2017–2018. In August 2017, Donald Trump formally reversed the U.S. troop drawdown planned and then halted under President Obama, threatened greater pressure on Pakistan if it did not alter its policy toward the Afghan Taliban and Haqqani Network, and called for greater Indian economic engagement in Afghanistan. This strategy has yet to produce any major change in the general framework of the policy conundrum faced by the United States in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Thus, Coll's general conclusions about the vexations of U.S. strategy in the region remain largely germane. However, salient contemporary policy dimensions are left unaddressed in *Directorate S*, and many of its details already require updating. Coll's basic insights remain sound, but *Directorate S* already needs a chronological successor.

Its limitations notwithstanding, *Directorate S* is valuable. It is not quite as invaluable as Coll's *Ghost Wars*, but it is pretty close. *Directorate S* is readable, compelling, and an important contribution to the literature on the topic of U.S. strategy in an almost 20-year history across Afghanistan and Pakistan. *Directorate S* merits a prominent place among the most important books on U.S. national strategy published in 2018. **JFQ**

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