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## Book Review: American Exception: Empire and the Deep State

By Devin Gillen

*American Exception: Empire and the Deep State*, published in 2022 by Aaron Good, a Ph.D. Political Science graduate of Temple University Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, focuses on “the relationship between expansive [United States] foreign policy and democratic decline.”<sup>1</sup> *American Exception* refines Good’s Ph.D. dissertation, “American Exception: Hegemony and the Tripartite State,” into an accessible yet thorough examination of the American empire, the deep state, elite criminality, and parapolitics, “a system or practice of politics in which accountability is consciously diminished” through American, world, economic, and intellectual history.<sup>2</sup> Demonstrating his tripartite state model, Good takes aim at the nexus of United States foreign policy and private wealth that has undermined the rule of law and accountability for high criminality, key characteristics of democracy.<sup>3</sup> Good argues the post-World War II national security state, publicly justified by Cold War anti-communism, “allowed for the securitization of politics...[which] is toxic or even fatal for democratic/republic institutions.”<sup>4</sup>

The exception the title refers to, or *exceptionism* as Good terms it, is not the standard formulation of American exceptionalism. It is defined by “the institutionalized abrogation of the rule of law...while practices of plausible deniability [have] preserved a degree of democratic legitimacy.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, democratic institutions are thoroughly corrupted but remain semi-functional as a rhetorical smokescreen to cover up the corruption

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<sup>1</sup> Aaron Good, *American Exception: Empire and the Deep State*, (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2022), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Good, *American Exception: Empire and the Deep State*, 42.

<sup>3</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 33.

and systematic criminality inherent in United States foreign policy post-World War II. Most ranking United States officials regularly commit high crimes against the Constitution itself, which the supremacy clause affirms ratified treaties as the “highest law of the land.”<sup>6</sup> Considering that the United Nations Charter outlaws aggression against other nations and the United States’ history of interventions, attacks, unilateral sanctioning, and political coups against supposed enemies, the high criminality of the political elite is glaringly apparent.<sup>7</sup>

Domestically, historic levels of economic inequality are enabled by socioeconomic elite criminality that goes unpunished, such as the “scores of unadjudicated crimes related to the financial crisis of 2008 and 2009.”<sup>8</sup> Good notes that free markets in a democratic system would theoretically spread the wealth of a nation and its industrial capacity to benefit the people. Interestingly, the opposite has happened in the United States, but China’s nondemocratic state has “pursued policies that have benefited the majority of the population in ways that theoretically mirror what would be predicted in a democracy.”<sup>9</sup> The United States’ neoliberal turn towards privatization instead resulted in a further decline of democratic characteristics, evident in policies that promoted deindustrialization and allowed historic levels of debt to accumulate for individuals but bailed out banks and funded profit-driven corporations to construct a historically enormous military.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, United States foreign policy continuity throughout supposedly independent and ideologically diverse presidential administrations suggests democratic institutions do not hold much decision-making power.<sup>11</sup>

Good asserts that the American deep state is one of three elements of his theoretical tripartite state, the others being the

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<sup>6</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 269.

<sup>10</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 3-4, 270.

<sup>11</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 69.

public/democratic state and the security state.<sup>12</sup> The concept of the deep state, bastardized during the Donald Trump Administration (2016-2020), originated in Turkey as “a closed network said to be more powerful than the public state:” but has since been expanded on by American government insiders like Mike Lofgren, former Senior Analyst for the Senate Budget Committee (amongst other congressional roles), as well as outsider critics like UC Berkeley professor Peter Dale Scott.<sup>13</sup> A fundamentally nebulous thing, “The institutions that exercise undemocratic power over state and society collectively comprise the deep state. The deep state is an outgrowth of the *overworld* of private wealth.”<sup>14</sup> It is not a conspiratorial hidden hand only visible to the third eye a la the Illuminati, institutions such as the Rockefeller-funded Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) “is a visible, partially transparent component of the deep state. It is a nominally non-governmental entity funded by Wall Street in order to cultivate and utilize foreign policy...[which] logically and demonstrably serve the interests of the Wall Street overworld which funds the organization.”<sup>15</sup>

According to Good’s tripartite model, expanding on Michael Glennon’s double government analysis, the public state consists of the outward-facing democratic governmental institutions and policies taught to most of the public in schools as the defining aspect of the state. Glennon calls this sect the Madisonians, who appear in control but are not capable of checking what he termed the Trumanite Network, and Good refers to as the security state.<sup>16</sup> The Trumanite Network refers to “hundreds of executive branch officials who make national security policy,” consolidated under the National Security Act of 1947 that centralized military control under the Secretary of

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<sup>12</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> “Michael “Mike” S. Lofgren,” *C-span.org*, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://www.c-span.org/person/?67009/MichaelMikeSLofgren>

<sup>14</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 230.

<sup>16</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 66.

Defense, established the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Joint Chiefs of Staff, and National Security Council, signed off by President Harry S. Truman (1884-1972)—who also created the National Security Agency (NSA).<sup>17</sup> By 1949, the Hoover Commission revealed civilian control of the military “scarcely existed” in particular departments and noted the Joint Chiefs’ ability to act “virtually [as] a law unto themselves.”<sup>18</sup> The Joint Chiefs even secretly created their own response to potential conflict, hidden from the president and any other agency, detailed in a document known as the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP).<sup>19</sup> The JSCP called for nuclear strikes against the Soviet Union and China “that if triggered, would have likely destroyed human civilization.”<sup>20</sup> In under five years, aspects of the security state already undermined democratic oversight.

However, “Since the Trumanites (deep and security state) power flows from the legitimacy of the Madisonian (public) institutions and since the Madisonian institutions’ legitimacy depends upon the perception that democratically elected leaders are in charge, both institutions have strong incentives to foster the illusion of Madisonian control.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, the security state uses public institutions to grant its power but is able to act without public or democratic oversight. Fundamental aspects of this Trumanite Network, or security state, are then co-opted or corrupted by wealthy interests, forming the deep state. Examples of those who capitalize on connections between the security state and the overworld of private wealth, thus instruments of the deep state, include former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, previously an executive at Booz Allen, “a private intelligence firm that is dependent on government contracts for nearly all its revenue,” and perhaps most infamously brothers, John

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<sup>17</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 66, 47.

<sup>18</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 48.

<sup>19</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 49.

<sup>20</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 49.

<sup>21</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 52.

Foster Dulles (1888-1959) and Allen Dulles (1893-1969).<sup>22</sup> From an elite political family, the brothers were both previously lawyers at the Wall Street firm Sullivan & Cromwell, where they did business with “key figures in Nazi Germany” as well as assisted in the orchestration of multiple business coups as Secretary of State and Director of the CIA (DCI) respectively.<sup>23</sup>

Here, Good breaks with Glennon’s dual state analysis. According to Good, Glennon’s analysis never touches on the core motivations of United States foreign policy, driven increasingly by aspects of the security state which are subservient to wealthy interests—the deep state aspect of the tripartite state model. This model of the state and the conclusions which Good arrives at through logical materialist analysis are heavily indebted to the works of C. Wright Mills and his seminal 1956 work *The Power Elite*.<sup>24</sup> Mills, unfortunately, died before many of his theories and assumptions on the function of American corporate, military, and political power were reaffirmed by declassified documents. In Mills’ formulation, it was the government, the military, *and the corporation* that functioned as “command posts of modern U.S. society.”<sup>25</sup> Where Glennon, and most mainstream analysts, fail to factor material and financial motives into theory, “the sustained and often coordinated influence of what Mills calls *the corporate rich* (i.e., the *overworld*) best explains the pathological inertia and tragic continuity of U.S. foreign policy.”<sup>26</sup> The interplay of private wealth and policy that *seemingly* eluded other scholars, or was derided as a conspiracy theory, is evident through logical materialist analysis.

Good’s thorough cross-examination of other thinkers, ideologies, strategists, and intellectuals ultimately skewers mainstream historiography’s abandonment of materialist analysis since the Cold War, critiquing those nominally on the left, such as

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<sup>22</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 107.

<sup>23</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 107.

<sup>24</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 1.

<sup>25</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 76.

<sup>26</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 76.

advocates of postmodern, culturalist, and social histories that entirely eclipsed materialist thinking. Given that by 1990 only ten percent of articles published in *Diplomatic History* focused on economic aspects of United States foreign policy, Good considers that “perhaps the decline of materialism in diplomatic history is, by and large, an example of “winners” getting to write the history.”<sup>27</sup> Good is not advocating for a Marxist turn, but that turning away from the rational explanatory reasoning that materialist analysis provides has harmed serious historical and political analysis. Instead, a cultural theory like Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* provides justifying myths for the United States’ myriad interventions in the Middle East.<sup>28</sup> Others suggest the benevolent promotion of democracy has suddenly taken hold of the world’s richest and most powerful people to explain the United States’ militarized global presence. Or, if the analysis of so many academics, the media, and politicians refuses to acknowledge material interests, then:

Maybe it does require an inferential leap to arrive at the assumption that wealthy and powerful elites seek to dominate their societies politically and economically in order to further aggrandize their wealth and power. The “leap” entails assuming the elites enjoy their status- a social circumstance at which they or their ancestors arrived intentionally and which they seek to maintain or improve.<sup>29</sup>

This tongue-in-cheek leap is made impossible for most observers by mainstream media outlets controlled by wealthy elites that have deep connections to elements of the deep and security state. Frank Wisner (1909-1965), Deputy Director of the CIA from 1950 to 1965, was “the creator of the CIA’s propaganda apparatus. He termed this CIA disinformation machine, “the Mighty

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<sup>27</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 28.

<sup>28</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 71.

<sup>29</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 27.

Wurlitzer,” and he ran it with the help of numerous journalists and media outlets.”<sup>30</sup> *The Washington Post* is singled out as an especially problematic contemporary example, owned by Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, which has a \$600 million contract with the CIA, “The *Post* would go on to promote the militarism of the GWOT [Global War on Terror] as well as subsequent wars and regime change campaigns...which offers readers a lively spectrum of opinions ranging from pro-war ‘liberal interventionist’ to pro-war neoconservative.”<sup>31</sup> As Good later puts it, “By now, it should be clear that mainstream journalists, social scientists, and historians cannot grapple with the dark realities of our historical epoch.”<sup>32</sup> This passage sums it up nicely: “In particular, the mainstream does not acknowledge the extent to which militarism, covert/paramilitary violence, state lawlessness in foreign policy, and exploitative international institutions are all of a piece-essential aspects of the U.S.-managed global capitalist system.”<sup>33</sup>

Much of the front half of the book is a rigorous recounting of key developments, conflicts, and intersections of intellectual and academic thought regarding the state, democracy, international relations, and history. The multidisciplinary analysis and synthesis of radically different thinkers from Plato (427-347 BCE), to John Locke (1632-1704), to Jurgen Habermas (b.1929), to Nazi theorist Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), to name a few, is more convincing than the schizophrenic postmodern rhetorical puzzle such a smattering of ideas could render.<sup>34</sup> This also grounds the tripartite state theory in a lineage of intellectual thought while contending with the challenges inherent to the study of the parapolitical, wherein “many of the most relevant actors actively strive to obscure their activities and thereby falsify contemporaneous journalistic accounts and the historical record.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, studies of the

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<sup>30</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 204.

<sup>31</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 205.

<sup>32</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 255.

<sup>33</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 20.

<sup>34</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 44, 85, 93.

<sup>35</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 42.



inherently covert are necessarily subject to difficulties surrounding the secrecy and obfuscation that typify covert operations, military and political.

Good does not attempt to hide the limits of his methodology. At the same time, the inclusion of well-known historical events and archival historiography complement the deep politics/deep historiography (where “public records are often falsified or nonexistent”); he recognizes that “it is not possible to assert that any account of such matters is unimpeachable or *the* definitive theory.”<sup>36</sup> However, this does not doom any inquiry, “one can study U.S. foreign policy and arrive at reasonable conclusions” through a critical reading approach similar to “Kremlinologists who studied the Soviet Union with considerable success during the Cold War.”<sup>37</sup> Political “realists” John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt’s 2007 *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* is also considered a successful example of deep political analysis as “part of the Israel Lobby’s success stems from the fact that its power had been seldom acknowledged or elaborated upon in the mainstream of academic and public discourse.”<sup>38</sup> As noted, the mainstream media and academics turning a blind eye to aspects of the deep state empower the deep state while hiding its influence in a similar fashion.

The back half of the book is a historical recounting of how the tripartite model aspects interacted and developed from World War II up to the present day, with examinations of the actors behind historical instances such as COINTELPRO, Watergate, and the Iran-Contra scandal, among other events.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the nucleus of the deep state, the State Department’s *War and Peace Studies Project*, guided by the CFR before and during World War II, “in essence, mapped out the plans for creating a U.S.-dominated postwar world.”<sup>40</sup> This required the creation of a massive military

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<sup>36</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 43.

<sup>37</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 43.

<sup>38</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 19.

<sup>39</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 10, 66.

<sup>40</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 91.

bureaucracy that “with considerable influence from the corporate overworld...would eventually give rise to the globe-dominating postwar U.S. deep state.”<sup>41</sup>

These interests converged again after the war to solidify their power in the 1950 National Security Council (NSC) study known as NSC-68, “a grand strategic policy proposal...to institutionalize the military-industrial complex or—in a larger sense—to establish the privately incorporated permanent war economy.”<sup>42</sup> Written by Paul Nitze (1907-2004), a protege of defense secretary James Forrestal (1892-1949), under the direction of Secretary of State Dean Acheson (1893-1971), NSC-68 claimed Soviet aggression was a dire threat that necessitated rearmament despite strategists’ comments, like that of renowned Cold Warrior George Kennan (1904-2005), that, “Russia has only recently been through a tremendously destructive war; that the Soviet economy has far less that it can afford to lose than we have; and the Soviet leaders will not inaugurate a type of warfare bound to lead to great destruction.”<sup>43</sup> Though NSC-68 is commonly understood to have been precipitated by the Korean War (1950-1953), Good argues the faltering postwar aerospace industry, deeply connected to key sectors of the economy like steel and powerhouses such as the Rockefeller-owned Chase National Bank, was a key motivation to restart the war machine.<sup>44</sup> By 1948, the Secretary of the Air Force wrote to Winthrop W. Aldrich (1885-1974), chair of the President’s Committee for Financing Foreign Trade and Chase National Bank, as well as brother-in-law to John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937), asking for help to get “get the money to get what we want.”<sup>45</sup>

The 1953 CIA-backed coup in Iran further demonstrates the power this nexus of overworld wealth, or the deep state, has over democratic institutions. Codenamed Operation Ajax, it was

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<sup>41</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 118.

<sup>42</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 91, 130.

<sup>43</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 121.

<sup>44</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 123.

<sup>45</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 123.

essentially an oil company coup in which the MI6 and CIA were roped in by rogue elements of the agency acting against Truman's demands, later secretly approved by President Dwight Eisenhower (1980-1969).<sup>46</sup> Conveniently, Eisenhower received "substantial support from the oil industry" during his campaign for president.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, Truman's Justice Department attempted to prosecute oil cartels under antitrust legislation in 1952, and the case was quickly dropped from a criminal to a civil charge under Eisenhower.<sup>48</sup> The civil case was handed to John F. Dulles' State Department, which, "up to that point had never prosecuted an antitrust case."<sup>49</sup> Prior to being completely defanged, the investigation ordered Standard Oil of New Jersey (now largely Exxon) to release relevant documents, but the company's lawyer, Arthur Dean, refused.<sup>50</sup> Like the Dulles', Dean was a Sullivan & Cromwell man and refused to comply on the grounds of "national security" by invoking the Soviet menace.<sup>51</sup>

The Iranian coup that illegally deposed Iran's democratically elected head of state was a product of elements of overworld wealth and the semi-legitimate security state forming a demonstrable deep state, entirely untethered from democratic oversight.<sup>52</sup> This could be understood as, in other words, the military-industrial-complex that Eisenhower famously warned about in his farewell address in 1961.<sup>53</sup> That term itself is somewhat of a remix of C. Wright Mills' earlier "privately incorporated permanent war economy."<sup>54</sup>

Some conclusions may be controversial, even dismissed as conspiracy theorizing for dabbling in the realm of the parapolitical. However, factual explanations of now-confirmed plots that were

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<sup>46</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 133.

<sup>47</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 133.

<sup>48</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 133.

<sup>49</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 133.

<sup>50</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 132.

<sup>51</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 132.

<sup>52</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 132.

<sup>53</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 133.

<sup>54</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 124.

publicly denied and covered up for decades, such as the 1953 Iranian coup, could have been dismissed under the inherently derogatory rubric of conspiracy theory—and it necessarily *was* a conspiracy; it just happened to be factual. According to declassified memos, DCI James Schlesinger (1929-2014) said to President Gerald Ford (1913-2006), “There is a layer in the Agency [beyond] which you can never find out what is going on.”<sup>55</sup> Another DCI, Richard Helms (1913-2002), commented, “I don’t know everything which went on in the Agency; maybe no one really does.”<sup>56</sup> Considering the comments of ex-DCIs, and the history of coverups and falsehoods to cover the CIA’s tracks, it would seem the conspiracy theory label should not instantly disqualify them as false.

Perhaps most controversial, the publisher of the book, Skyhorse Publishing, has been criticized for publishing works by the likes of Roger Stone (b.1952), Woody Allen (b.1935), Alan Dershowitz (b.1938), and others questioning central claims around COVID-19.<sup>57</sup> When questioned by *Vanity Fair*, founder Tony Lyons insisted that Skyhorse published books that others would likely ignore, born out of a desire to question all assumptions and look at “both sides” of an argument.<sup>58</sup> If the concern is political partisanship, as sections of this *Vanity Fair* article seem to suppose, *American Exception* condemns the Trump Administration that Stone and Dershowitz worked for. If the concern is around the factual nature of the claims made, then the claims should be debunked on their merit, not the merit of an author or publisher. Perhaps the most condemning aspect about the end product of this Skyhorse book, in which Good admits that the study of the parapolitical cannot be definitive, is that the publisher could use more editors to catch the few minor grammatical errors found.

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<sup>55</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 160.

<sup>56</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 160.

<sup>57</sup> Keziah Weir, “Skyhorse Publishing’s House of Horrors,” *Vanity Fair*, September 17, 2020, <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2020/09/skyhorse-publishings-house-of-horrors>

<sup>58</sup> Weir, “Skyhorse Publishing’s House of Horrors.”

Building on works like journalist and founder of *Salon*, David Talbot's *The Devil's Chessboard*, the CIA's involvement in the assassination of John F. Kennedy (JFK) is taken for granted instead of relitigated. Good argues that JFK's attempts to wind down the Cold War, expressed in his Commencement Day speech in 1963, was the deep state actors' primary motive to kill him. As JFK said that day, anathema to militant hawks and weapons contractors, "What kind of peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war... not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women."<sup>59</sup> Kennedy's refusal to acquiesce to CIA planners' hopes to send overt military forces into Cuba to assist the purposely doomed Bay of Pigs operation (1961), the subsequent firing of Allen Dulles, and sympathy to Third World nationalists like Patrice Lumumba (1925-1961), already created deep antipathy between the administration and CIA by the time of the speech.<sup>60</sup> JFK's wish to Arthur Schlesinger (1917-2007) to "splinter the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it to the wind" was squashed with the bullet that killed him in Dallas on November 22, 1963.<sup>61</sup>

Suspicious actors and events surrounding the killing, like Allen Dulles' primacy over the Warren Commission investigation of JFK's assassination, are filtered through the tripartite framework to illuminate the theory. But this formulation also logically explains lingering questions about the assassination and investigations, such as the Warren Commission's findings that one 1976 Gallup poll suggested as low as eleven percent of the country found believable.<sup>62</sup> Law professor at Notre Dame and Cornell, chief counsel and staff director of the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA, 1977-1979), G. Robert Blakey (b.1936), remains convinced that JFK was murdered by the state and following investigations were coverups.<sup>63</sup> Former Senator and

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<sup>59</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 139.

<sup>60</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 137-138.

<sup>61</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 138.

<sup>62</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 140.

<sup>63</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 140.

HSCA committee member Richard Schweiker (1926-2015), one time Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) running mate, said in 1977 of the accused, Lee Harvey Oswald (1939-1963), “Everywhere you look with him, there are fingerprints of intelligence.”<sup>64</sup> Schweiker, particularly dismayed that Allen Dulles withheld information surrounding the CIA’s assassination plots, later told the BBC that “The Warren Commission has, in fact, collapsed like a house of cards. I believe it was... one of the biggest cover-ups in the history of our country.”<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, those who questioned the government’s official narrative surrounding 9/11 were reaffirmed by a slate of reporting in early 2023 that alleged the CIA knew that some of the hijackers had entered the United States but chose not to disclose the information to the FBI or public, and subsequently covered up their association with al-Qaeda.<sup>66</sup> These reports were based on an unearthed court filing of a 2016 affidavit signed by Guantanamo military commission investigator Don Canestraro, a veteran of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).<sup>67</sup> Regardless of the degree to which the CIA knew of the hijackers or infiltrated al-Qaeda, as Good argues, the official 9/11 narrative and the theory the Bush administration (or whoever) planned the attacks (or let them happen) are both theories about global conspiracies of dozens, if not hundreds, of actors to attack the United States, but only one is a “conspiracy theory.”<sup>68</sup> It was easy to brush off the notion of CIA involvement in the attacks as conspiracy theories from radicals; however, it is harder to condemn a DEA agent and official military investigator as a radical.

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<sup>64</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 167.

<sup>65</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 168.

<sup>66</sup> Branko, Marcetic, “Mainstream Media Doesn’t Care That the CIA May Have Helped Cause 9/11,” *Jacobin*, May 5, 2023, <https://jacobin.com/2023/05/cia-fbi-911-hijackers-cover-up-bush-media>

<sup>67</sup> Marcetic, “Mainstream Media Doesn’t Care That the CIA May Have Helped Cause 9/11.”

<sup>68</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 271.

Good and some of the conclusions reached may also seem radical, but the water Good came up in was decisively establishment. Previously a member of Barack Obama's (b.1961) 2008 presidential campaign staff, Good calls this part of his "traumatic" political development from "an Obama campaign staffer—even attending the Inauguration and Staff Ball in 2009—to becoming a staunch critic of the fundamental lawlessness and avarice that animates the American state."<sup>69</sup> Throughout *American Exception*, Good holds no partisan punches, condemning the Obama Administration that armed jihadi paramilitary forces to destroy Libya, attempted to destabilize Syria, did not reverse unconstitutional NSA spying practices, and was guilty under the stipulations United Nations Convention Against Torture (CAT) for the failure to indict W. Bush Administration (2001-2009) officials for war crimes.<sup>70</sup>

Ultimately, the tripartite state model and formulation of the deep state laid out in *American Exception* offers, through materialist analysis, a coherent model of government that takes seriously the unsavory implications that a near century of foreign intervention, hindsight, and de/classified documents provide. The formulation of the deep state provided is also useful for those who wish to scratch below the surface of Trumpian and other partisan or thoughtless uses of the term. Unless one can take the ahistorical narcissistic assumption things *really* are different *now* in the year of our Lord, and the government would not lie to us about its actions as it consistently has, then the sordid history covered should be of concern to anyone interested in the American political system.

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<sup>69</sup> Good, *American Exception*, IX.

<sup>70</sup> Good, *American Exception*, 36, 60, 69.

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### **Author Bio**

Devin Gillen is currently finishing his first year in California State University, San Bernardino's history department Master of Arts program. He hopes to graduate by this time next year in 2024. After this, Devin plans to make a living through some mixture of education at a community college level, substitute teaching, publishing as an editor and author or journalist, and artistic endeavors. He is primarily interested in United States foreign policy, particularly from the Cold War to the present, with a focus on "Third World" nations. Through his writing and future education, he hopes to spread awareness to Americans of the extreme suffering their taxpayer dollars finance across the globe. Prior to COVID restrictions, Devin planned to create a zine of independent art and essays on United States-backed historical atrocities and other geopolitical realities often ignored in history classes to hand out at local DIY backyard shows. After graduating, Devin hopes to pick this idea back up with dreams of turning it into a semi-official publication.

