

The American deep state
Wall Street, big oil and the attack on U.S. democracy

Peter Dale Scott

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Peter Dale Scott's essays in the 1970s on the Kennedy assassination showed me how to write: keep it clear, simple, and have every assertion documented if possible. Scott's conception then was of parapolitics: '*a system or practice of politics in which accountability is consciously diminished..... generally, covert politics, the conduct of public affairs not by rational debate and responsible decision-making but by indirection, collusion, and deceit.*' But Scott became dissatisfied with this and moved away from 'consciously diminished.... covert politics' – which is perhaps treading too close to conspiracy theories, or theories about conspiracies – to deep politics: '*all those political practices and arrangements, deliberate or not, which are usually repressed rather than acknowledged*'.

As a reader of Scott, the shift to deep politics from parapolitics was seamless: Scott's writing on 'deep politics' is like his writing on parapolitics, only more detailed and more complex – deeper, in fact.

And now we have the deep state (and deep events). The term 'deep state' comes from the politics of Turkey and means centrally the intelligence/security services and the military': sectors of the state which in most countries are barely regulated by the formal democratic process which funds them.¹ We might say deep events are those which become visible when the activities of the deep state surface; or *are surfaced*, as sometimes happens in the bureaucratic struggles within the deep state.²

1 In Turkey organised crime is also a part of the 'deep state'.

2 Think of the activities of Hoover's no. 2, Mark Felt – whether he was 'deep throat' or not – leaking to Woodward and Bernstein at the *Washington Post* as the FBI tried to undermine President Nixon whose aspirations to gain control of parts of the deep state threatened both the FBI and CIA.

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The basic problem facing American politics in Scott's view is this:

'We have seen the emergence to dominance of what used to be called "the military-industrial complex"..... This is a major change. When Eisenhower warned against the military-industrial complex in 1961, the values, institutions and resources that comprised it were still subordinate elements in American society. Today it not only dominates both parties, but it is also financing threats to both these parties from even further to the right.

That change has been achieved partly by money, but partly also with the assistance of deep events: events, such as the Kennedy assassination, Watergate, the 1980 October Surprise, Iran-Contra and 9/11, which repeatedly have involved lawbreaking and/or violence, have been mysterious to begin with, and whose mystery has been compounded by systematic falsification in media and internal government records.' (pp. 102/3)³

Scott looks at the series of linked deep events in American history, beginning in Dallas, through into the post Cold War world which have shaped the visible, formal American politics and shows continuity of methods and some personnel. But this isn't some 'secret team', to use Fletcher Prouty's term. (And a sense that the concept of parapolitics encouraged 'secret team' notions is one of the reasons Scott abandoned it.) There are lots of 'teams', or factions – alliances within the deep state and its links to both the formal political system (elections, president, Congress) and capital, the arms and oil companies in particular.

Between the deep state and formal politics (or surface politics?) are liaison figures. Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney,
Note 2 continued:

On Felt and 'deep throat' as the visible tip of the Watergate iceberg, see Jim Hougan at <http://jimhougan.com/wordpress/?p=96tergate_iceberg>.

3 Robert Parry sees the same thing but puts it in slightly different terms. See his views on the 'stolen narrative' at <<https://consortiumnews.com/2012/10/18/americas-stolen-narrative/>>.

who were there from the mid 1970s through 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq, are prime examples of this. They also figure in the second of Scott's themes here, the deep state control mechanism which is free from formal politics, the continuity of government (COG) emergency network, which was activated on 9/11 and remains in place. Scott even finds elements of this network in the events at Dallas and Watergate.

That much is relatively straightforward but conveys almost nothing of the book. Scott is dealing with big themes – how America has become the military-dominated purveyor of economic chaos and death to large parts of the globe, while clinging to its sense of itself as the 'exceptional nation' – and this is dense stuff; not conceptually difficult, just dense. The text is 182 pages but has 126 pages of notes and index. One of his earlier books on the Kennedy assassination had such detailed notes that someone produced an index to the notes. The index of the volume under review includes the end notes.

Take chapter 2, 'The Deep State, the Wall Street Overworld, and Big Oil'. This is 19 pages long and has the following subheadings within it:

'The Deep State, the Shadow Government and the Wall Street Overworld'

'The Long History of the Wall Street Overworld'

'The Deep State and Funds for CIA Covert Operations'

'Lockheed Payoffs and CIA Clients: the Netherlands, Japan, Italy, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia'

'Iran in 1953: How an Oil Cartel Operation Became a Job for the CIA'

'The CIA, Booz Allen Hamilton, and the Wall Street Overworld'

'The CIA, Miles Copeland, and Adnan Kashoggi'

'Kashoggi, the CIA's Asset Edward K. Moss, and Political Corruption'

'Moss, Kashoggi, the Safari Club, and the International Overworld'

'The Deep State, the Safari Club and BCCI'

'Big Oil, the Saudis, the Safari Club, and the Defeat of President Carter in 1980'

'The Deep State and the BCCI Cover-up'

'Conclusion: a Supranational Deep State'.

Those subheadings convey the kind of thing Scott does here: he starts with the overworld, moves into the covert and then into the deep state and its role in the surface or overworld political event; in this case President Jimmy Carter's defeat in 1980. Some of this might sound familiar; but Edward Moss? Carter and the Safari Club? And all of this is documented in the 131 notes which accompany those 19 pages.

The Saudi link, which surfaces in the 1970s, is the key thread here. After the revelations of FBI and CIA criminality in the mid 1970s, Jimmy Carter appointed a new DCIA, James Schlesinger, who tried to get a grip on the CIA and fired a lot of people in the covert operations branch. The result was the creation of an inner faction in the CIA, within that covert operations wing. They formed 'the Safari club' and resumed their activities entirely off the books with their equivalents from the intelligence services of France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Iran. This was funded by the Saudis; and, Scott thinks, largely by the mechanism of skimming off the enormous American arms sales to the Saudi government. Scott suspects all the major deep events have been funded by this mechanism. The evidence on this is suggestive not conclusive.

This group helped remove Jimmy Carter as president in 1980 by arranging that the Iranian state not release the hostages taken from the American embassy until after the presidential election of 1980, which Reagan won.

The relationship between America and Saudi Arabia – the real 'special relationship' – was cemented with the 1973 Saudi-American deal that the Saudis would only accept dollars as payment for oil, thus creating an oil-backed dollar to replace the gold-backed dollar abandoned in 1971. With all oil trading done in dollars, a world demand for dollars is created and the US can run trade deficits without it much affecting the dollar's international value. So the Saudis have been, on one hand, the ally of America as its biggest customer for weapons and backer of the dollar, and on the other its enemy as

America sustains Israel. Add to which the Saudi state's use of its oil wealth to export its version of Islam world-wide, the CIA's use of Islamist fighters in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Libya and Syria, and you have the bizarre geopolitical mess detailed by Scott in which the American deep state has funded and run groups regarded by the overworld state – e.g. the State Department and the FBI – as terrorists.⁴

At the centre of this is Osama Bin Laden, sent into exile but with the covert support of the Saudi regime. Bin Laden's operations climax in the 9/11 plot in which all these elements come together: Saudi funding for the Saudi hijackers; CIA protection of (at least) two of them and CIA withholding information from the FBI to let-it-happen-on-purpose (LIHOP). Scott suspects, as other have before, that the Bin Laden group conned the Americans into thinking they were going to do something relatively minor – plane hijackings, probably – which the American deep state wanted to use for its own ends: as a *casus belli*, perhaps. Scott sees 9/11 hijacker al-Mihdhar and Lee Harvey Oswald as serving similar functions – the designated patsy/culprit – in fake operations whose purpose we cannot yet identify.

Scott thinks the 28 pages suppressed from the official 9/11 report, which we know are about the Saudi link,

'...indicate a US-sanctioned Saudi joint operation on 9/11 that is clearly different from the piggy-backed plot to bring down the WTC towers and cause thousands of deaths' (p. 132)

And maybe the Bin Laden group had worked out that the way to get protection (and visas) was to become CIA assets, in the same way that the Mob did by joining the anti-Castro plotting in the sixties. If so, having been made fools of, no wonder the CIA's post 9/11 response has been so savage.

⁴ It is striking that the two states which tried to organise a system of petroleum payments not based on the dollar, Iraq and Libya, have been attacked by the US.

See, for example, on Iraq <<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/RRIraqWar.html>> and Scott himself at <<http://www.peterdalescott.net/iraq.html>>.

On Libya see <<http://rt.com/news/libya-all-about-oil-818/>>.

Parallel to the growth of the deep state's overseas activities, has been the creation, continuous expansion and refinement of the deep state's defensive shield: the continuity of government (COG) procedures. Scott follows this through from the fifties to the post 9/11 environment, 'the product of an almost continuous level of secret emergency planning, going back to J. Edgar Hoover', in which the deep state got presidential approval for open-ended commitments, such as the 1988 Executive Order 12656 which covers 'any occurrence, including national disaster, military attack, technological emergency, or other emergency, that seriously degrades or seriously threatens the national security of the United States.' Thus, comments Scott:

'a totally legitimate program dating back to Eisenhower, of planning extraordinary emergency measures for an America devastated in a nuclear attack, was now converted to confer equivalent secret powers on the White House for anything it considered an emergency.'
(p. 33)

In effect,

'under the guise of Continuity of Government planning the American war machine has been preparing for forty years to neutralize street antiwar protest.' (p. 180)

The deep state watched the anti-war protests of the 1960s and resolved 'never again'.

9/11 was the green light for the deep state to move into action: warrantless arrests, no fly lists, mass surveillance, data mining, and anti-terrorist 'fusion centres' of military and civil organisations.

If deep politics is 'all those political practices and arrangements, deliberate or not, which are usually repressed rather than acknowledged', as the deep state grows so does the repressed, the unsayable. Almost nothing of substance is now said by American politicians afraid of the right's attack media, the security lobby, the arms lobby, the Wall Street lobby and the Israeli lobby. Nobody's political career has prospered by understanding (let alone opposing) the deep

state which ended the careers of Nixon and Jimmy Carter. As a result, American politicians barely figure in this story.

How is this political and intellectual paralysis to be overcome? I don't know. Scott makes some cautiously positive noises at the end of this terrific book about the possibilities of mass action to affect the changes. I wish I shared his optimism. Empires come and go but none has been as powerful and as well prepared to resist change from within as this one.

Robin Ramsay