

The Deep State

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The “Deep State” is a term that has come into popular use over the past four years and is a subject of serious or even grave concern for many Americans.

Does a Deep State exist in America? Of course it does. The Deep State has been around for a long while, changing with the times. Speculation among the public about the Deep State’s nature, goals, and the extent of its surreptitious power is longstanding, but such questions are increasingly a topic of popular opinion and discussion.

In most other nations, especially those that are less democratic, more collectivist, or outright totalitarian, the authority of the state is a given. Government power is overt, right out front, and accepted without question. The individual is subservient to the state. America, however, was founded on ideals of personal liberty and equality. Here, the individual is supposed to have primacy over the state. In addition, American ideals include the unique presumption that government derives its legitimacy from the consent of the citizens. The founders deliberately chose to build in checks and balances to keep government from usurping the will of the people.

Thus, the coercive authority of the state has always been suspect for Americans. Mistrust of centralized power is deeply ingrained in our national character. As a result, state power has to be kept secret, clandestine, and shrouded from public view — effectively shielded from the light of day. This is necessary because the power of the state conflicts so dramatically with American ideals.

Throughout our first century, government power remained limited. As America flexed its economic muscles and grew into an industrial giant, then chose to become a global empire at the end of the 19th century, the power of the state steadily increased. Still, it wasn’t until World War II that the most dramatic expansion of state power occurred in America. The war effort required — and America provided — an unprecedented ramp-up of industrial output in military materiel. The logistics alone were staggering: millions of guns, planes, ships, tanks, and trucks, with a massive manufacturing and logistics bureaucracy created to oversee production and supply chain infrastructure. In a very real sense, the primary American contribution to the Allied cause of defeating the Germans and Japanese was as much economic as military, with the two

operating in tandem. That astounding demonstration of America's industrial might also put an end to the Great Depression in this country. By the close of the war in 1945, America stood alone as the world's preeminent (and only intact) superpower.

That's when what we think of today as the Deep State initially took shape. Sure, wealthy individuals and interest groups had always influenced politics and governmental policy in America — the classic image of rich, privileged white guys sitting around hobnobbing in luxurious if smoke-filled rooms, making decisions in secret that would affect us all, is certainly true — but the shattered post-war world of 1945 required something far more powerful than just the good old boy's club. Rebuilding a devastated Europe from the carnage and the onset of the Cold War with the Soviet Union demanded the exercise of immense state power. America had The Bomb at that point, and we weren't about to give it up. Nor did we shirk the responsibility that fell to us to lead the way in rebuilding Europe and constructing a New World Order that would prevent another such calamity. In real terms, the pinnacle of American power was in those years of the late-1940s.

So, the OSS morphed into the CIA, Operation PaperClip (to rescue Nazi scientists and bring them to America) became the first major black ops project, the military-industrial complex settled in for the long haul to insure America's "national security" — but even more than that, our preeminence — and the Deep State was born.

Let me re-emphasize the inherent contradictions here. In the modern world, "American Exceptionalism" and the American Empire require massive centralized power, but that directly contradicts the ideals of American democracy (liberty, equality, with government "of, by, and for the People.") Such a far-reaching apparatus of power in this country demands the cloak of secrecy. In addition, the mistrust of government power embedded in the American character is uneasy with the raw power of Empire (even if most Americans tacitly approve of the Empire).

Throughout American history, our deep suspicion about state power has spawned an ongoing spate of conspiracy theories aimed at many nefarious and covert forces: the Illuminati, Free Masonry, Skull and Bones, the Bilderberg Group, or even Shape-Shifting Lizards, to name just a few. Now we can add the Deep State. This is especially prevalent along the extreme wings of the political spectrum, both left and right, which for the past 70 years have espoused numerous conspiracies by sinister and powerful "internationalist cabals" in one form or another, all supposedly bent on world domination.

In 1961, at the end of his eight years in office, departing President Dwight Eisenhower warned Americans in his televised farewell address about the dangers of the "military-industrial complex." Others had written about it earlier, but Ike's speech coined the now-common phrase. At the time, during the

frenzied nuclear weapons escalation in the Cold War, few among the public reacted to Ike's warning with concern. Now, nearly 60 years later, that has changed. 9-11 and the information technology revolution amplified the NSA and other similar sectors, such as Homeland Security, to massive size and nearly unlimited scope. Deference to the military and fears for our safety have undercut Congressional oversight. The national security state is now a permanent shadow government that underlies both the "regular" bureaucracy and our elected governmental institutions (the legislative and executive branches).

According to a recent Washington Post-ABC poll, nearly 50% of Americans believe in the existence of a Deep State when it's defined as *"military, intelligence, and government officials who try to secretly manipulate government policy."*

The key word in that definition is "secretly." It's important to note that the Deep State does not include lobbying by industries and special interest groups. Although the influence of lobbyists is considered monstrous by many people — industry lobbying groups are often so powerful now that the lobbyists actually write the legislative bills that Congress considers — lobbying *per se* is part of the *regular* state, not the *Deep* State. The activities of lobbyists are not always transparent or well publicized, but, for the most part, they aren't inherently clandestine or covert.

The standard, vanilla version of the Deep State is centered around electronic cyber-surveillance used to monitor and collect information about everyone and everything. The revelations from NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden tend to confirm that. But, for many Americans, the odious activities of the Deep State are more insidious, powerful, and far-reaching than mere data collection.

An example of this more draconian view is a report from 2017 by Catherine Austin Fitts, a former banker who worked during the Clinton administration as an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Mark Skidmore, an economist at Michigan State University. Their team analyzed official accounting reports from numerous government web sites for the years 1998-2015 (reports that have since been redacted). They found a massive amount of money in "undocumented adjustments" (meaning unauthorized spending) at HUD and the Department of Defense. The total of "missing money" was frankly staggering: **21 trillion dollars**.

Is this true? Can it possibly be correct that a pile of money greater than the national debt has actually gone down the rabbit hole, apparently vanishing without a trace, and with no one noticing? I'm in no position to judge one way or the other. For all I know, Austin Fitts and Skidmore may be chasing phantoms.

Another extreme view of the Deep State is held by a segment of the UFO community, which believes that extraterrestrials have been visiting earth, are

here now, and are working with the government (through the secrecy of the Deep State) to develop alien technologies — including weapons, spacecraft, anti-gravity machines, and zero-point energy generators — all so powerful as to make science fiction fantasies pale.

Ah! So *that's* where the missing \$21 trillion went.

Further, there is the assumption that the Deep State is building massive underground facilities all over the country to allow their privileged members to survive after the proverbial shit hits the fan and wipes out the bulk of humanity. I think of that as the "Dr. Strangelove" scenario.

Finally, there is the belief that the Deep State is working like beavers to develop techniques of mass mind control to render the population passive and docile for their grand scheme of enslavement and world domination. It's "The Matrix" redux! Sorry, I don't mean to sound dismissive, but hasn't marketing and advertising already achieved mass mind control?

How concerned am I about the Deep State? A little, but not nearly as much as some people. Part of the reason for my relative lack of concern is that I believe in human fallibility. Many conspiracy theories seem to me to require super-human perfection to successfully carry out their schemes. If the Deep State is as immense and powerful as some people believe, then the minions who populate the Deep State probably include a fair percentage of idiots and screw-ups.

The other reason is that my capacity for concern is already filled to the brim with boogeymen who aren't secret at all, but are instead overt, obvious, and right out front. For instance, the Republican Party and the mob of extreme right-wingers who have taken it over scare me to death. (The Democratic Party is almost as bad, but my reaction to the Dems is more disappointment than fear.) Also, I worry a lot more about the Corporate State than the Deep State. Predatory capitalism and its reduction of all life on earth to nothing more than selling stuff to make piles of money isn't hidden. It's everywhere.

I need not mention the many other issues that worry me. I've already written about most of them and feel no compunction to restate them all here.

I hope the Deep State remains invisible. Out of sight, out of mind. I have more than enough on my plate already.