

# Researcher REVEALS Secrets of US Deep State Politics | Dr. Aaron Good

If you think US politics happens only in the White House and on Capitol Hill, then think again. The US as a political system—the totality of it—is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma. Luckily, some brave researchers dare going into the deep. Dr. Aaron Good, author of *American Exception: Empire and the Deep State*, joins me today to challenge simplistic view of the US system. He argues that agency, blackmail, covert crime, and elite networks shape policy, tying together JFK, RFK, Nixon, Watergate, Epstein, Zionism, and Iran Contra as part of the hidden machinery of the American empire. Links: American Exception Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/americanexception/about> American Exception book: <https://www.skyhorsepublishing.com/9781510769144/american-exception/> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Hyperstructuralism and the black box state 00:10:27 Agency, Kennedy and the regime 00:17:46 Blackmail, lobbying and hidden power 00:22:22 JFK, RFK and the crime network 00:27:33 Epstein, Trump and Watergate 00:33:40 Nixon, CIA and covert crime 00:38:59 Zionism, LBJ and Iran Contra 00:48:59 Christian Zionism and elite networks 00:55:00 Vanderpeel, Epstein and Massie

## #Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies, today for the second time with Dr. Aaron Good, the author of *\*American Exception: Empire and the Deep State.\** Aaron, welcome back. Thank you, Pascal. It's great to be here. Great having you again. Can we discuss a little bit something that you reacted to the other day via email? I had a couple of guests on my show, including Professor Radhika Desai and Professor Kees van der Pijl, who do this kind of structural analysis, or they use the structure of the system in order to explain where we are today in world politics. And you pointed out that this type of hyperstructuralism, as you called it, also leaves us with a couple of problems. Can we go into that?

## #Aaron Good

Sure. And I appreciate, actually, both of these commentators that you had on, these two scholars, Radhika Desai and Kees van der Pijl, if I'm saying his name right. But I would have disagreements with each of them. I think that Radhika's conception of the Marxist idea of the state as just sort of the collective monolithic black box that represents the power of the bourgeois state and bourgeois civil society collectively and is basically animated in a sort of autonomous way by the class interests of the capitalist class, that it has its uses in the abstract when you want to understand the behavior

of empires, I mean, sort of in the same way that the realist abstraction of a monolithic rational actor state has its uses as well when you're thinking about, you know, competitions and politics between states.

But it also has its limitations. And as you pointed out in the interview, people like Mearsheimer — Mearsheimer is a realist, but he departs from that realist convention of conceiving of the state as a unitary actor and as a monolithic black box in order to try to understand why the U.S. is not acting in a realist fashion, in terms of pursuing its interests in a rational way. Why has it pursued policies that have been detrimental to its goal of hegemony? And so, therefore, Mearsheimer realizes that these realist conventions do not help him to explain this.

And so he and Stephen Walt wrote *\*The Israel Lobby\**, which is a good explanation of how these powerful actors can influence the behavior of the state and U.S. grand strategy in ways that have been really detrimental to the project of hegemony. And in the 21st century, it's been an unbroken, pretty much, procession of disastrous wars that were laid out in the mid-90s, pretty much by the logic of the *\*Clean Break\** report, which was commissioned by Bibi Netanyahu and written by people like Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz and David Wurmser — super neocons, the people that would become the neocons. And this is rather than the U.S. state acting, you know, in the same way across administrations, across decades.

This was a 180 from the previous administration. And I know that Bill Clinton doesn't really start all of these things, but he does sign the Iraq Liberation Act. He does pardon Mark Rich, whose lawyer was Scooter Libby, you know, who was one of Cheney's main people. So these neocons are really significant. And the policy under H.W. Bush was announced very early in his presidency. He sent James Baker to AIPAC in May of 1989. So just a few months into his presidency, James Baker says, "It's time to put aside once and for all the unrealistic dream of Greater Israel." And then, following the advice of conservatives like Barry Goldwater and others, they cut off...

They said there will not be loan guarantees made to Israel unless they agree to enter into negotiations over a Palestinian state. And Reagan, when he was out the door — you know, the other president had already been elected — H.W. Bush, one of his last acts in office, if not the last act, was to recognize the PLO, which was done with great objection from the Zionist lobby, who wanted to say, "No, no, no, you can't negotiate with them because they're terrorists." But of course, we know now that they don't want to negotiate with anyone; they'll kill people who are negotiating. So that's very dubious. But we can see why they wouldn't have wanted Reagan to recognize the PLO, because they don't want— right.

## **#Aaron Good**

And so there's a 180 in the way that the state behaves, the policy of the U.S., which really gets consolidated with 9/11 and then launches off two and two and a half decades of wars that follow the Clean Break script. But you have to be able to explore—well, you don't have to, but I would be

interested in explaining how you go from H.W. Bush saying "no Greater Israel" to the Clean Break report becoming orthodoxy in just a few years. And if you're going to try to explain that question, if you think it's a question worth trying to find the answer to, the realist idea or even the Western Marxist radical idea of the state as a monolithic, unitary actor is inadequate. And so there are other traditions that try to look at state behavior.

Some of them are considered liberalism in international relations, which I'm sure you know pretty well, right? But there's also a small group of scholars whose politics are to the left of center, but they're not all the same. People like C. Wright Mills. C. Wright Mills wrote that there are two flawed traditions, ideal types of history philosophy. One of them is history as drift or fate, as history being overdetermined by structural factors to the point that whatever people do, it doesn't really matter very much. And then on the other side, there's history as conspiracy, where everything is really about conspiratorial groups who are either good or bad, but they're very powerful.

It's sort of like the great man theory of history is kind of compatible with this, too. But it's the idea of agency and groups and conspirators perhaps being able to impact history through their own human agency. So, you know, in a way, this is a question of two ideal types of bad history that are related to the general social science argument of structure versus agency. And I think that what you get with the realists or some of these Marxists in the West is what I would call hyperstructuralism, which is that everything is kind of overdetermined by the structure of the system, the class structure. For the Marxists, it's the class structure that is overdetermining in terms of the behavior of the state.

And for the realists, it's the structure of the international system, the anarchy of the international system, which forces states to act in a predictable, rational, self-maximizing utility sort of way, like, you know, if you teach IR. So I think this is kind of the heart of the problem or the question here. And to my mind, you need to look, you need to open up the black box. You need to look inside the black box of the regime, the state, if you want to understand certain questions, because there are some things that you cannot answer if you just ignore this whole inquiry of the politics at the apex of the regime.

## **#Pascal**

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this can happen anytime again. So please consider subscribing not only here, but to my mailing list on Substack. That's [pascallottaz.substack.com](https://pascallottaz.substack.com). The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video. These are very, very good observations. And, you know, they go also for other branches of academia or scholarly inquiry, of course, right? I like this metaphor, and it's an old metaphor, I think a Chinese one, of the elephant. If you want to see the entire elephant, then you have all of these blind experts, and one touches the trunk, the other one the tail, and the third one the foot. They will all describe the elephant, but in completely different ways, right? And if you try to see the whole thing, even if you completely zoom out, you will never see more than one half of it.

And if you go even further, I literally have colleagues who study elephants. They tell me that within their field, some people study the entire ecosystem, and other people actually study the footprints, because footprints of elephants create many ecosystems for amoebas and whatnot. And you can study all of those, right? And you still study these related phenomena. But the question that we then have with international relations is, of course, which one is most productive in order to help us wrap our minds around what's going on? Now, when we use this structural approach—and I would actually also put Brian Berletic clearly into that tradition—he keeps saying, like, look, it's the way that the U.S. war machine is designed that then outputs on the other end this destruction and warfare.

It doesn't really matter who is president. It doesn't really matter what kind of speech acts the Democrats or the Republicans use. The fact that they're all integrated into the larger structure then means that nothing else can be produced. And that, of course, always diminishes agency. In your research, you looked very much at the agency of these individual actors, which is also why in your explanations you're able to go from one to the other and explain how they interact with each other. What do you find, though? I mean... the structure does determine to some extent who can sit in what place, right? And then there's also the outcome of Chomsky and Herman's critique of how propaganda in liberal societies functions. On the other hand, it's weird to say that individuals have zero agency, actually. How do you square that circle?

## **#Aaron Good**

Well, I think even Marx said something to the effect of, you know, men make history, but history determines the options available to the man in this specific circumstance. Right? That's not exactly how he said it—it was more clever the way that he phrased it—but that's basically the idea. Even Marx wasn't really a hyper-structuralist if you look at that statement. So how do you determine this? I think it involves having a certain understanding of the sociological setting of the elites at the time, and the political spectrum as it exists, and what sort of interests might lie behind it or animate them. I find the Kennedy presidency to be fascinating because he pursued policies that had antecedents with Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy or Wallace's idea for a Century of the Common Man.

He wanted to move the U.S. towards lawful, peaceful internationalism. And yet he's the president and the chief executor of this massive capitalist empire. However, because the empire doesn't call itself an empire, there's some space for leeway, some maneuverability that he had. And so he was able to pursue some policies up to and including, you know, using back-channel communicators to talk to Castro about normalizing relations. And he was working with the Soviets about that. They talked really about ending the Cold War, and he passed a nuclear test ban treaty, despite the fact that Congress was always very much opposed to it when he first started out. But he managed to sort of mobilize public opinion on his side.

So there was a certain amount of space that he had because of the time that he was in. And he had enough. He was threatening enough, as Michael Parenti has pointed out—he was threatening enough to the establishment for them to kill him. I mean, just because we as leftist academics don't

think that he was any threat to the class interests of the American ruling class, it doesn't mean that they see the world the same way as we do. Parenti was very, very good on this. And so something like the Kennedy assassination is really notable when the American institutional left can't really grapple with it, even though on its face it's not very hard to solve at all. It's the regime that killed the Kennedy brothers. And that's why you can't ever have it investigated by any prevailing authority. Right.

That part is straightforward enough. It's just a question of, well, then what kind of regime do we really have? Because the Constitution doesn't allow for that sort of action. So how could this be? But, you know, Kennedy himself—this is in the memoirs of Gromyko—and he said that he had conversations with Kennedy. Gromyko was a Soviet who was sort of a spy in the White House, but not really, because everybody knew he was a way to communicate with the Soviets—a way for the White House to be able to communicate with the Soviets in some way. And he wrote in his memoir that Kennedy spoke to him about the two enemies, the two main enemies, of his policies of détente and peace with the Soviets, and, right, you know, finding a modus vivendi.

And he said there were hardline Cold Warriors, and they're pretty easy to understand because they're, you know, they're right-wing. They want more war, military spending, anti-communist action, wherever. But then the other group was a certain nationality. And it's pretty clear that he's talking about, like, Zionists, or he might've said something to the effect of Jews, but at that time that would have been about, you know, synonymous more or less. And so right there you see part of the society, part of the ruling class, part of the oligarchy that is against the actual policies of the President of the United States. And Kennedy, when he gets killed a week later, he sends an envoy—Robert, Robert Kennedy does this—and Jackie Kennedy.

After the JFK assassination, they sent a friend of theirs, William Walton, to Moscow with a message that: We know that you weren't behind the assassination. It was domestic opponents. And LBJ is not going to be a partner for peace. But, you know, eventually Robert Kennedy will make a run for the White House, and then we can resume the sort of quest for peace. Right. They sent this a week after the Kennedy assassination. So the Kennedys knew what had happened. And, well, then, of course, when Robert is getting close to getting the presidency, he wins the California primary, and they shoot him in the back of the head as well.

And even though the person's in front of him by six feet, he's shot in the back of the head at point-blank range. And that's just one of these mysteries of U.S. history. But, you know, these were powerful people, and the system, the structure itself, was not sufficient to allow them to take the reins of power using these democratic institutions and then redirect the state. So that's something we should understand and think, OK, we should understand how the regime actually functions. And this is part of the way that it functions. It eliminates the people that are not in favor with the people who have the real power.

**#Pascal**

And I find that really, really important because in our last discussion, you pointed out very correctly that a lot of political scientists study how the United States and all the states function according to the constitutional order. And then you look at the executive, judiciary, blah, blah, blah. And then you leave out the entire other part of the black box, which is the unofficial power structure. Some people still venture into the topic of lobbying, of course, but lobbying is also... there's a legal framework for it.

And then there's the entire part that shouldn't exist, but obviously does, including the mafia, including the different interest groups that then also bribe each other and whatnot, including targeted assassinations. And, you know, we know about Epstein by now. And every once in a while we get glimpses of this, but as soon as you get near to it, also on a journalistic basis, you are immediately called a conspiracy theorist because you're pointing out that the obvious is there that shouldn't be there, but is, and impacts the other one, but vice versa as well, because they obviously also intersect.

I mean, the connections of the Kennedys with the mafia are also just a well-documented fact. So how should we then properly try to understand what you pointed out as a regime? And just to make the point, in political science, we use the term regime, regime type, in order to compare different ways in which states function and structure themselves. So it's not a derogatory term, in fact, in political science, even if we used it on Iran—although for Iran, it is being used constantly as a derogatory term, just to point that out. So the US regime—what's the best way to understand it, how it in its totality actually works?

## **#Aaron Good**

Well, that is the question. And in political science terms, regime doesn't just mean the state. It means all of those institutions that determine who has access to the state and state power. And so the U.S. is supposedly a democratic regime type, but in reality, democracy gets overridden in different ways. Of course, the one person, one vote rule gets negated by massive campaign contributions—legalized bribery. And that's straightforward enough. But in the more extreme cases, they can just assassinate people. You also have bribery—or, excuse me, blackmail. You know, blackmail at the same time, which I think is a huge institution in D.C. We probably don't know the half of it. I mean, Dennis Hastert was later found out to be a huge pedophile going back to his days as a wrestling coach.

And that's not a coincidence that he became Speaker of the House. You know, it was known by FBI sources that he was being bribed by foreign networks, you know, for having sex with young boys, and they would provide him with young boys and so on. So, this must be—this—it wasn't that he succeeded in spite of this. This probably is a big part of the reason why this unimpressive person was able to be the Speaker of the House, the longest-serving Republican Speaker of the House. And that is a kind of regime or system of government that our social scientists have no—they have no

interest in actually grappling with that. But the funny thing is, for other systems, we actually know about that.

## **#Pascal**

I mean, the Russian term kompromat, right? Having something compromising—facts about you and proof that then make sure that whoever is in office actually behaves the way they're supposed to. Which is not to say that everything is just guided, as you said earlier, by the few four or five Rockefeller people in the back room, but the fact that that is one of the ways in which political groups and classes then structure also who they agree upon, who should take the hot seat, also behind closed doors. Why is it that for the United States, up until Epstein, this has been very much on the back burner?

## **#Aaron Good**

It's been on the back burner, but it's been in the subconscious of the US in many ways. I mean, look at the public opinion over the JFK assassination. It fell down in the 70s after they showed the Zapruder film on the air, to the single digits in terms of people who actually believed the story about one lone nut who kills the president with these lucky shots from a sixth-floor window. And then he gets killed by another lone nut, you know, who was very clever and sneaky and killed him in a room full of cops. Like, Americans didn't buy that story.

And then when they saw the video, which showed that Kennedy got shot from the front very clearly, then, you know, almost no one believed it. And yet it can't be addressed because the regime just says no further, you know, over and over again. And they did an investigation of it, a second one. But then the more you look at these investigations, they're very weird too. It seems that some other deep political actors used this. I mean, my understanding now of the JFK assassination has evolved to be that it must have been endorsed on some level by powerful actors in the U.S. regime, probably the Pentagon, the Joint Chiefs.

And yet they had networks tied to the CIA, but not, you know, in obscure ways, like people cannot connect it to that James Angleton, Israel side of the account, and the Lansky, the National Crime Syndicate. And so this is an area of the assassination that's kind of a black hole. People know Angleton was involved because that's pretty obvious. But then there are these ties to Israel and the National Crime Syndicate that people can't address. So even when they reinvestigated in the 70s, the person behind that really obscures it—he blames it on the mafia. So the second investigation in the 70s said it was a probable conspiracy.

And this, the most recent investigation by an official body, said it was a probable conspiracy, and it puts the blame on mafia—Italian mafia figures. But Robert Kennedy knew that that idea of the National Crime Syndicate was bogus, and that he really went after the Teamsters, and he wanted to go after Vegas and Lansky. And he was stopped in different ways for political reasons. James

Angleton himself intervened to stop him from being able to investigate Lansky, Las Vegas money that was going to Panama banks and elsewhere. But Kennedy had the idea of a National Crime Syndicate that was, you know, multi-ethnic but centered around Vegas and the Teamsters. If you look at the Teamsters, their massive loans to Vegas built up these casinos, and Vegas was established by Lansky in order to launder drug money.

Yeah. And the Teamsters also, they were the biggest union purchaser of Israeli bonds. So they were, and Hoffa was involved in shipping the weapons to Israel in 1948, along with Meyer Lansky—like key, really key figures. He visited Israel many times. Jimmy Hoffa did. There's like a Jimmy Hoffa–Yitzhak Rabin Center there. It's very weird. There are still these strange connections. And these are things that the left, or I mean, American historians, can't grapple with. But even the left, when you start to think about the role of labor unions, you realize, you know, in the crime syndicate and also tied to Zionism, neoconservatism, and this lunatic Zionist project, then the idea of labor and organized labor as a progressive force—even that gets called into question.

In a way, I think Marx wasn't sufficiently cynical about capitalism, if you can believe that, because there are just things that have happened in the U.S. where you're just like, this goes beyond what he would have... He said he understood that labor could be co-opted and this and that, but when you look at the Teamsters and the National Crime Syndicate working hand in glove with intelligence agencies, and, you know, the AFL-CIO working with the CIA in other countries to overthrow them, this is a darker type of entity, this U.S. regime. And so trying to understand it is something we should be very interested in if we are on the left, in my opinion, and if we're against imperial capitalism, because this is how it functions, and it's indefensible if you look at it.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, it's a little bit like a discussion about time and then saying, look, we need to understand how the actual clock on the inside works in order to understand the movement of the hands. And then the structuralists go like, no, we need to understand the nature of time in order to figure out how the hands have to move, how they do. But because it gets so intricate and it gets so extremely detailed and also person- and action- and whatever-drinking-events-oriented, where some things are just being decided. And again, like even at the end of the Second World War, you have the famous little napkin, right, where Churchill and Stalin basically divide Europe. And that just happened, that just happened. But at the same time, you, of course, have then the forces of the way that the Second World War developed that would allow that moment to then, in the end, happen and give them the structural possibilities to do that.

So how do you think that for this regime type in the United States, we should conceive of where power actually lies? Because in the end, the Kennedy assassination is just proof that the U.S. regime is able to get rid of elements that are dangerous to the way it works. And we've seen glimpses of that again with Donald Trump during his presidential run. I mean, he nearly had his head shot off. And then two years down the road, it seems to me that the system managed to get to him in

another way, to just make him conform with the expectations of the regime, because by now he's basically done a 180 on the entire peace agenda. And he was the man who said this administration will not only be remembered for the wars we ended, but also the wars we never got in, in his commencement speech, which is a commendable thing to say. And then, of course, he's the architect of the now Iran war and the Ukraine war, also still very much ongoing and transforming and maybe getting bigger. But I'll let you talk again.

## **#Aaron Good**

Yeah. I mean, Trump is a key case because he ran. I mean, it shows that these ideas were popular in a democratic sense — the idea of not having forever wars, you know, not going to war with Iran. He keeps wanting the Nobel Peace Prize, so in a way he's affirming the idea that peace is better than war. Yeah, which I guess needs to be affirmed in some way. But there seems to be this Epstein episode, and they spent a lot of time together. People have seen that insane birthday card. Epstein was known to be a person who looked to compromise powerful actors, and his mansion and other properties were wired for sound and video. There's all this trafficking of young girls. It's not very difficult to figure out what the game was there.

And when you know about episodes like the Dennis Hastert case, that should make you even more aware of it. And even with Watergate, there's a lot of sexual blackmail in the background of the Watergate offices that were burglarized that made that very sensitive. So there's a good history of sexual blackmail there going on in the U.S. And the Epstein thing just seems obvious. I mean, if you know what Epstein was up to and you know who Trump is and you've seen some of the exchanges between them, what are the chances that he didn't do anything that would have compromised himself in this way, and all the time that he spent with Epstein and on the jet and at the island and et cetera, et cetera? It's pretty clear, and yet it's too much in some ways for people to grasp, apparently, if it conflicts with their priors.

And so, like, you see Finkelstein, who I generally have respect for as a very diligent, you know, academic and very smart researcher and so on. But he just scoffed at the idea that Epstein is blackmailing Trump and the Epstein network and so on. But this policy is not positive for the U.S. It seems to be destroying U.S. hegemony. And so to really understand how these forces interact with these bigger projects... You know, I wrote a whole dissertation on the way the U.S. regime after World War II established a lawless national security state that was partnered with organized crime and was essentially able to operate without any legal constraints, doing everything with covert operations.

It was basically covertly fascist. It was capitalism über alles and imperialism über alles, but it pretended not to be. And it used a lot of covert operations to hide it. And it was a pretty sinister operation, you know, an enterprise with many crimes committed overall. I mean, one to three million

people in Indonesia, all the other people we killed in Southeast Asia, Congo—millions and millions have died in the decades after U.S. interventions there, Latin America. I mean, you can't even begin to summarize the crime. And these are just documented facts.

## **#Pascal**

These are documented conspiracies that were perpetrated by the United States in cooperation— I mean, in cooperation orchestrated by several agencies, first among them, of course, the CIA that just did that. And we know that. The whole Indonesia thing, the millions of people who died in Indonesia just because the United States wanted to purge the leftists there. And that's just documented. But then at the same time, we are also supposed to believe that the deep state that does stuff, documented stuff like this on the outside, would never ever touch the inside because there's the Constitution, right? I mean, that's the thing we must accept. Otherwise, we're not part of polite society anymore, right?

## **#Aaron Good**

Right. I mean, the things that Richard Nixon does, you know, that's the fascinating case, is that he said, "When the president does it, it's not illegal." Well, that's so terrible. But that's really been the policy. And the things he did were things that the national security state had been doing. I mean, the COINTELPRO stuff, all these things that came out. Nixon was not—there was nothing unique, except for Nixon's perhaps personal White House role in it. But it's even scarier if it's faceless, unelected bureaucrats doing it, in my opinion, although Nixon was a criminal too. So I'm not trying to make a hero out of him.

## **#Pascal**

Nixon did a fascinating thing. He wiretapped himself. Do you think—I mean, if we think of all the ways in which power actually works, it makes much more sense that he would actually want to keep a clean record of what happened in his goddamn Oval Office for the histories of the future, knowing that the other parts of the state would try to distort anything. Do you read his self-wiretapping in that way too?

## **#Aaron Good**

I believe he did so in order to keep track. I think he said this in his memoirs or elsewhere, that he did this in order to keep track. And it was really building on the Kennedy system that he had put up. And I think JFK did it, I believe, after maybe the Bay of Pigs, because he wanted to have these conversations recorded so people couldn't distort what they had said earlier—something to that effect. So he created this system. But then I think Nixon maybe even had a more elaborate one. But, you know, the fact that the regime removed Nixon in the same way—he believed that himself. He said he would have a few drinks with his biographer, Frank Gannon, and Gannon would ask him who

he thought was really behind Watergate, and he would say the same people that killed JFK. And I think that he was basically correct about that.

It was, well, look at Woodward and Bernstein. Who did JFK say his two enemies were? Hardline Cold Warriors and Zionists. Well, Woodward and Bernstein—Woodward was connected to military intelligence. He went basically from military intelligence, you know, briefing very powerful figures in the Pentagon, to being this reporter. And then Carl Bernstein was like a B'nai B'rith, you know, Zionist kid. Like, they just teamed up and took him down. So, you know, I think it's in some ways kind of as simple as that. Well, Nixon gets caricatured. You know, we talk about how Nixon was going on and on about his enemies, and he was an anti-Semite because he was always complaining about the Jews. But, like, he had, you know, organized Zionism as some of his enemies, like Hank Greenspun out in Las Vegas.

All of these strange actors that were Mormons, like Jack Anderson and—Edward, not Edward Bennett Williams, although he was on his enemies list as well—Robert Bennett, the guy who owned the Mullen Company that employed Howard Hunt. Like, very strange actors. So, you know, this is a case where he doesn't even totally understand the forces that he's dealing with, but he believes the CIA is involved in it. So he fires Richard Helms and replaces him with Schlesinger. And Schlesinger digs up the Family Jewels report to try to get dirt on the CIA. And it just plays out as, like, we're going to spill your crimes to the public. And then the CIA spills more crimes, or the burglars and other forces spill more of Nixon's crimes out there.

And it was a way to get rid of Nixon without killing him. But the issue is the continuity of the crime, right, the criminality of the regime. And Nixon dabbled in it for his own devices. But it was really because he pursued policies that upset powerful actors, like détente and maybe dialing back Israel's role. And also he went after Meyer Lansky and, you know, his war on drugs. And Lansky was indicted. Lansky flees to Israel, and he doesn't come back until after the Watergate burglars are already in jail. And then he never gets out, never gets convicted of anything.

So he upset this relationship that I wrote about, how the mob was involved from Operation Underworld in World War II. They basically were integrated into the covert operations of the U.S.—the Lansky syndicate, the National Crime Syndicate. And so this not only gave... it was an element of criminality that made the U.S. very susceptible to blackmail if the key figures wanted to use it for that reason, which is, I think, part of what happens with Jack Ruby. He kind of guarantees the cover-up because he's connected to the National Crime Syndicate.

And it gives Israel in particular—you could argue the National Crime Syndicate headed by Lansky was essentially a functional asset of Zionism because they had corrupted the entire country to be able to operate and sell drugs wherever, and do it with impunity, and launder the money, and put the proceeds where they wanted to. And this had compromised the U.S. in a way. And I think that plays a factor in Jack Ruby and the cover-up—the Warren Commission cover-up of his mob ties and everything else. And even with Watergate, you can't really investigate those burglars because they

tie into the same mind-blowing criminality. And so this exists before the '90s and the neocon takeover, but it shows you how the system works.

So this global dominance project always relied on criminality to pursue a U.S. policy of hegemony over global capitalism. But it changes to intertwine Greater Israel Zionism with the global dominance project in the '90s. And that's what's happened up to the present day. So, yes, they do want to control the oil and manage the petrodollar. But why? And rule capitalism, rule the world, basically. But why did they do it in a way that puts Israel so much at the center of it, really to the point that it's actually been unrealistic and it's destroying the whole project? That's the question I would like to answer. And they really cannot, I don't believe.

## **#Pascal**

No, but this is, again, where some other scholars then try to zoom out. And the biggest zoom out that you can get is probably by people like Hussein Annan and Manuel Ramos, who actually put the entire Zionist project into the *longue durée* of the Crusades. And just say, look, we have basically a nearly 1,000-year history of the West trying to reoccupy and rule over the Holy Lands. And Zionism is really just the latest manifestation of that. And it's a straight line of ideology that goes back also, not just to, but straight through also the Knights Templar. This is where some of these histories then actually also start interlinking again when you see the two of the current Secretary of War with the Knights Templar and so on. And this is not to say that he's part of that conspiracy.

It's just to say that the ideological basis, the fundamentals, is rooted in some form of imagined history of what you are doing. And that ideology does play a role because it helps coordinate actors that otherwise wouldn't be—from the Secretary of War to the Las Vegas mobster—as long as they share the same overarching type of ideology. Even if they're connected to different things, they will work toward the same end goal. So that's where then the structuralists again go and say, look, it's certain aspects of the way the system develops that actually then determine the actions of the actors. And I think we cannot discard that, while on the other hand, also, we cannot get rid of the individuals that then take the decisions to put bullets in people's heads.

## **#Aaron Good**

Yeah, I mean, in a generic sense, we can say Israel represents, you know, Western imperialism and its attempt to take over the whole world and all the places that are worth controlling strategically. But in the U.S. case regarding Zionism, there were powerful opponents of it at the very beginning, like people like James Forrestal, who was the Secretary of Defense, and George Marshall, who was the Secretary of State. But the Democratic Party was at this point the more corrupt one because it was more tied to, like, labor unions and the mob, basically, especially in the South. And the Republicans were more the party of Standard Oil and, you know, corporate America. So this is why in 1956, when they staged the Suez Crisis, Eisenhower leaves them hanging and says, no, you're not going to do this.

And the reasoning was it would have destroyed the U.S. image in the developing world. And this gets reversed in 1967 because LBJ is similar to Harry Truman in that he's even more tied to Zionism. He's kind of the original Donald Trump. He grew up in a weird Texan cult that's like less Christian, almost weird, like a Zionist, you know, franchise or something. And he had all these Zionists around him that helped to finance him and help his career and so on. So he does a 180 in 1967. And he even—there's a story that breaks right on the eve of the Six-Day War about the mafia plots to kill Castro with the CIA. And this LBJ has the CIA write an inspector general report confessing to their criminal behavior here and how they went against what President Kennedy wanted, right?

Because President Kennedy didn't want them to use the mob to assassinate Castro. And LBJ forces the CIA to admit this. And he really—it's a way of getting this, like the same way that Nixon tried to get the family jewels in order to control the CIA, right? In this case, what I believe happens is that this story is leaked at a particular time in order to give these actors more control over the CIA, because it was more conventional, even though you have James Angleton and the people tied to the crime syndicate. The CIA as an institution was more closely aligned to, like, Rockefeller types, and they would go and retire. After they left the CIA, they could go work for Aramco, make a lot of money. They just had a different idea.

This is like the same group, the same forces behind Eisenhower not backing the Suez crisis. You know, villains of Israel and Britain and France, right? It's these sort of same forces. And so, you know, how does this happen? What's different? What's really changed fundamentally in the U.S. national interest between Eisenhower and LBJ? You know, and it's nothing really had. JFK had a totally—JFK was even more anti—you know, anti-Zionist, even though he wouldn't have said, "I'm against Zionism," but he tried to stop their nuclear program. He tried to force the American Zionist Council to register as a foreign agent, and he wanted to solve the refugee crisis, and he was friendly with Nasser. These were all things that LBJ completely reverses. So, you know, what happens there?

If the policy—if it doesn't matter who's president—then why the 180 from LBJ? Why the 180 in the 90s, when you go from no Greater Israel to Greater Israel über alles in a very short period of time? Something happens. And I don't think you can explain it without reference to deep politics, to things like the Kennedy assassination, things like Iran-Contra. And why that even became a scandal, because Iran-Contra really only ends just days before the 1992 election, with an indictment of Caspar Weinberger, I believe. And it emerges for the first time that H.W. Bush knew more and was more involved than anyone had previously thought. And this really hurt him in the election. Some people said it's why he lost. But, you know, how does something like that happen days before the election?

What powerful interests in the U.S. would have wanted that to happen to H.W. Bush? Like, what issue was there, a difference between the two of them, that you could see something like this—something, a deep political act of power where a U.S. official comes out and indicts, like indirectly indicts, a sitting president? And I think this is why. And there's more that happens under H.W. Bush,

but there's a whole lot of scandals and even assassinations. Like, Robert Maxwell dies in that time, in like '91. Two senators die within a couple of days of each other in plane crashes in 1991. Very strange things are happening. So these are things—these shifts in policy. It's not just, oh, going back from the Crusades, the West has just been single-minded.

Like, no, there have been 180s and much disagreement over this issue. And I think you have to understand the deep politics of the U.S. really to understand it. And in particular, my friend and mentor, Peter Dale Scott. I mean, he worked on these issues in different ways, and he didn't really necessarily realize it at the time, but it made more sense to him later. He, in the '70s, was being paid by a super-Zionist family to work with people who were trying to reopen the Kennedy assassination case. So why would they be doing this? I think it's because they were a part of it, and they wanted to blackmail the U.S. over these issues. Likewise, Peter worked for John Kerry to investigate Iran-Contra cocaine connections.

And the person he was working under was a guy named Jack Blum, who was listed in a book about lobbyists as the guy to see if you wanted to understand the Israel relations—basically, the U.S.-Israel lobby. Like, this was the guy. So why is he investigating this, the Iran-Contra cocaine connections? Why is he trying to, like, damage the CIA? And what I think happens, more or less, is that after the '90s and after they get rid of H.W. Bush, they eventually reconstruct the old role of the Lansky syndicate, only with people like Epstein and people like the Sands Casino, which was still powerful in between Watergate and Iran-Contra and all that. But these, I think, are really key issues, and they're so understudied as to be not even things people think about.

## **#Pascal**

True, true. And I do want to ask you about your interpretation of what Massey is doing at the moment. But before we do that, I mean, one of the reasons why this is understudied, in my view, especially if you're correct, if that's actually how the regime works, is, of course, that what you're doing is highly dangerous. I mean, you're basically pinning a little bullseye on your forehead, because if you're correct and you get too far, you get too deep, I mean, something has to be done about that. And we know these things—if they can get rid of U.S. presidents, I mean, what can they do to little researchers on the ground, right?

And we've seen how viscerally the system reacts when too much is exposed. We saw it—I mean, Mr. Epstein conveniently disappeared, and he was a very powerful figure. I mean, conveniently died, right? Under custody in prison, when suddenly the cameras didn't work all of a sudden—oh, too bad. But he was a powerful man within that system, and, well, he got taken out. We've seen how the system treated Julian Assange, who got closer and unearthed part of the important files that show how the system is working, and then the entire machine, including the official part, cracked down on him, right, and tried to kill him.

## **#Aaron Good**

They tried to kill him. You know who they used to kill him? Who? The Adelson Sands Casino, which was a Lansky joint. That's who they hired to do it.

## **#Pascal**

So, I mean, if you're correct, then you're setting yourself up for trouble. If you're not correct and you continue doing this, then you're not a threat because you're basically distracting in the wrong way, right? So it's a very difficult position to be in.

## **#Aaron Good**

Well, let me say this for people who would think like, well, I don't even want to believe that... I don't believe that Zionism, as an independent or powerful force in and of itself, can influence the grand strategy of the U.S. empire, right? That these oligarchs would have that power. It's really just the U. S., it's capitalism, and so on. Well, in a sense, that's fine. If everybody just understood that, like, okay... this imperial, lawless, imperial capitalist system must be changed, and it must be made into a lawful, you know, democratic, you know, place where everybody can be prosperous—basically a more socialist, you know, enterprise.

And that Zionism should be dismantled because it's illegitimate from the start. It really doesn't matter how you think we got to this point, right? So I think, in a sense, if you don't really want to understand how the sausage got made or whatever, or you just don't find this sort of line of argument persuasive, it's fine as long as people understand that basically the U.S. regime and Zionism—neither one of them are defensible in any way, shape, or form in 2026. And so that should be the starting point for any person with any amount of morality or intellectual wherewithal.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, and the most important thing to know is that Zionism is not Judaism, right? I mean, that's what Yakov Rabkin keeps pointing out. And we have currently, according to the estimates also of Yakov Rabkin, roughly 50 million people in the United States who are Christian Zionists, who subscribe from the Christian side. I mean, it's much larger than Jewish Zionism. Christian Zionism as such, as an ideology that then, with all of its weird quirks and so on, to suppose that this has structural effect and also then spawns people who work toward those end goals, is not a far stretch at all. I mean, we can even show it for the past. Yakov Rabkin did a wonderful job of showing how Zionism in the early days worked all the way, basically, until the Second World War, and how they even were in bed, some of them, with the Nazis. Because, again, getting oligarchs out of Europe was a common interest. That's not a conspiracy theory, that's just a proven fact. Yes.

## **#Aaron Good**

I mean, that's key. I mean, the American Zionists, in terms of the people who aren't really oligarchs, I think they seem to be the product of a lot of social engineering. I mean, a lot of money went into Jerry Falwell, the Moral Majority, you know, the massive increase in evangelical Christianity tied to things like the Scofield Bible and other, you know, crackpot aspects of U.S. culture. But I think in a way they're sort of socially engineered as far as their numbers. But they're not really relevant. I mean, the more relevant people are like Bill Ackman, the Crown family. I mean, the biggest military-industrial complex firm, or at least one of them, if not the biggest one, is General Dynamics.

And they have been controlled by the Crown family, which is really the Krinsky family. And their fortune came from ties to the Chicago mob and the Lansky syndicate and so on. They're huge Zionists. So if you look at, like, well, what's the product of, you know, military-industrial complex firms lobbying, and then what's the product of Zionism here, how would you even assess that? I mean, that's a family that was tied to the murder of the wire, the person that ran the national racing wire. And then it got taken over by more syndicate-friendly people. And the Crown family was involved in this. They endorsed Barack Obama back in 2008, which I think said, like, he's a guy that we can trust. He's not John McCain, but he gets the kosher seal, you know, no pun intended here.

And they also were involved in financing the "Which Path to Persia" report, which came out in 2009. And there were two other—the other entity behind that was the Saban family, who are also Zionist billionaires. And I don't understand this, but Berletic always makes the argument that because Brookings, a think tank in the U.S., issued this report, it shows that it's the Americans who are behind the sort of Greater Israel PNAC "Clean Break" thing. And I'm just like, how would you make that argument? These are super Zionist oligarchs. The Crown family is notoriously mobbed up, and they paid for this report. And you're saying that somehow this report shows that it's not Zionists who are in charge.

## **#Pascal**

I don't understand it. I believe at this point either argument, like the argument, "Oh, it's Israel that controls US politics," or "US politics that controls Israel," is missing the point. They are an integrated system. They are one body. They are like different organs of the same body. Yes.

## **#Aaron Good**

How did they get the upper hand in the oligarchy is the question, because it's an oligarchic regime. And how did this particular faction win and tie itself to a project? Because now if you break up the Greater Israel project, you're breaking off the global dominance project. And I think that's by design. I think that they did this on purpose because they're obsessed with this. They're insane about Zionism. And so they did everything possible. Everything in their mind was justified to get to this end. And I don't think that they're going to make it across the finish line. It's very scary.

## **#Pascal**

In this sense, you know, Zionism is an end and a tool at the same time in order to interpret what is happening. But yes, I think it's hitting a wall, and that's where people come in and say, like, look, this is just how the empire cannot further sustain itself because it's reaching its natural limit. And...

## **#Aaron Good**

But people knew that. I mean, why, like H.W. Bush? He's an imperialist par excellence. And Reagan. I mean, they actually—but Reagan calls on, was it Begin at the time, and says, you can't keep bombing these people in Lebanon. It's like a Holocaust. I don't want to look at all these people. And Begin said something like, well, I know a lot about Holocausts. And Reagan just said, I'm like, I don't want to hear this, you know. So these were powerful imperialists. They were the most corporate, conservative, pro-American, pro-capitalist people. And yet they were overcome by other constituencies in the U.S. power structure. So how and why? That's important to answer. Yeah.

## **#Pascal**

No, I agree. This is important to answer. This is absolutely a discussion that must be had. It's just very difficult to integrate them all because they rely on a lot of different factors and knowledge about it. But you're absolutely right. This should be discussed and talked about.

## **#Aaron Good**

Can I talk about Van der Pijl for a moment? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because I'm getting excited here, because I wanted to mention him, and I actually really appreciate his work. And if I understand it correctly, because he's got a book, I think, coming out on 9/11 and Israel or something, right? Yeah, yeah. And I think that the area where I would disagree with him about—he's very sophisticated, and I think on point in his analysis, as I understand it—is that he argues that Israel has had this role as the sort of cloak-and-dagger part of the deep state, that they outsourced a whole lot of things to, to make this system run. And I do agree with that. I think that that's key.

However, what I think he misses is the deep political games and conflicts whereby they leverage their role as the custodian and keeper of all of these dark practices and arts, you know, like the control of the drug syndicate up until at least Watergate, and then the assassination apparatus and so on, that they acquired so much blackmail over the U.S. that that enabled them to get the strategy that they wanted for the empire. So the empire was always vicious and lawless and imperialist, neocolonialist, and they used the Israelis in certain ways, but it's a Faustian sort of thing because the more you rely on Zionist networks to be the hidden knife in the dark for capitalism and to do the things that need to be done, but that you can't talk about or admit openly, the more blackmail they have on you.

And I think that that's a part of what happened in the Epstein thing—it's like the perfect case of this—because he had a pass from the intelligence community and law enforcement to operate. And yet he was also undermining all of our institutions and really our national security, by any rational conception of it, by getting the worst kind of blackmail dirt on our leaders. So, you know, I think that that's where Van der Pijl is wrong. But, you know, I also, you know, I definitely don't want to get to the point of saying the problem is Jewish people, or if it weren't for the Zionists, this would be a great system. It's not. I think that that's why the right-wingers love to fixate on this, because it gives them a boogeyman. But they miss the criminality of the system as well. It's not just the criminality of Zionists. They were able to do this because of the criminality of the system.

## **#Pascal**

And this is where Van der Pijl actually studies, or his main, his core subject is, you know, elite formation—so how these groups and these networks first form in the first place, and then how they change over time. Because they also, they run with opportunities, right? You work with what you've got. And sometimes something happens that is very unfortunate for certain parts of it. I mean, the exposure of Epstein and what was going on is very unfortunate, and this definitely led to the demise of a certain part of the group, right? Epstein first and foremost, but the entire Maxwell kind of operation as well. And so you then have a reconfiguration of the system. I think he goes after that, and that also makes a lot of sense in order to connect the structural to the individual.

## **#Aaron Good**

I do not know quite what to make of the exposure of Epstein. To my mind, it echoes previous patterns in the past, in that, as people like Ari Ben-Menashe have noted, these leaks—some of the more spectacular and timely ones—have come from sources like the Murdoch press, who are known to be sympathetic to Zionism. And they seem to be brought to bear when it comes to decisions, especially around attacking Iran. And so, for me, I mean, what he suggests is that these stories are being rolled out in a way to manipulate and control Trump. That's what Ari Ben-Menashe says. And he was Mossad.

He did know Epstein and worked with him, and he worked with Ehud Barak and so on. So he's not someone you can really write off. But to my mind, this reminds me of the Jack Ruby story—Jack Ruby being in jail and him being somebody who guaranteed that the assassination couldn't be investigated, because if it did, it would tie into all these networks of criminality in the national security state and also just in law enforcement, and basically the overlooking of massive amounts of drug money coming into the system, you know, and enriching CIA people and other elites in the U.S. And it would just have been a catastrophe.

So even though Zionists and other actors were involved in all of this and were involved in the assassination, their criminality was so spectacular that it actually helped them get away with these things. Similarly, with Watergate and those burglars in jail, you can't investigate those things. And

with Iran-Contra, you know, the Israelis were involved in all of those operations—the arms sales to Iran, the Contras—you know, the Israelis were close to Somoza, you know, key Zionists were like Irving Davidson and other people. And yet, it looks like, I mean, Peter believes some aspects of this.

And he was very important in terms of researchers back then, Peter Dale Scott, that they were involved in exposing it and using it to damage Reagan and Bush. I believe right at the time that Reagan and Bush were moving towards understanding that there should be a Palestinian state. So is the Epstein case a sort of similar thing, where the criminality is so huge it gives the criminals moral leeway, because the whole society or the whole regime is so corrupt that you can't really ever... They won't allow it to be exposed. And the people have a ton of power because they've been maintaining these networks that are so sensitive.

## **#Pascal**

Last point, and then we have to wrap it up. But what Matt Gaetz is doing right now, he was just, again, also thrown out of the system. He lost the primary. He will at least lose his seat in Congress, right? At the same time, he's the force behind, like, we will publish the Epstein files. And then he doesn't. So what do you make of Matt Gaetz?

## **#Aaron Good**

I really have no idea.

## **#Aaron Good**

And so I really don't know. He seems sincere. He seems like a sincere, super right-wing American nationalist guy, you know, who is really against Israel on the surface. So that's kind of how I take it. And he was destroyed by a massive amount of money that went into his campaign, which is very weird for one congressional race. I think it makes them look bad in a bigger sense—the Zionists—because it just shows that American democracy is just, you can just throw enough money at it, and whoever has the most money wins. And if you're going to sum up the problems of our whole society, you could do worse than just saying, well, yeah, that's it. Whoever has the most money wins over and over and over and over again and just gets worse and worse. That seems to be a pretty good description of it. And Matt Gaetz, his defeat seems to prove that rule again.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, I still wonder what happened to make Marjorie Taylor Greene give up her seat, but that's maybe a discussion for another day. I don't know. Aaron, thank you so much for that very deep talk. Very much appreciate that we can also discuss how we discuss things. People who want to find your book, they should Google *\*American Exception: Empire and the Deep State.\** Where else should they go to find your work?

## **#Aaron Good**

The American Exception podcast on Patreon is the way that I'm able to support myself. And we have about 300 or so episodes now on a lot of different subjects. We do pretty deep dives into some of these episodes, so I would encourage people to check that out if they're into podcasts at all and into this material, which is really under-discussed among leftist academics, let's say. So, you know, I really appreciate you giving me the time to talk about these things because I ponder them all the time, and it's good to be able to reach your audience.

## **#Pascal**

And the good thing is we actually do, like anyone listening to this also ponders about it, and it helps pondering together because at some point maybe we will get somewhere. So everybody, the American Exception podcast—go there, listen to it, and also subscribe to it. Support Aaron Good and independent scholarship and journalism. Aaron Good, thank you so much for your time today.

## **#Aaron Good**

Thank you.