



AUTONOMOUS AGENCY

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Autonomy, Groupthink, and the Power of the Deep State

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Cover and logo image: Virginia Leith in *The Brain That Wouldn't Die* movie directed by Joseph Green (1962 - public domain).

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Autonomy, Groupthink, and the Power of the Deep State

Series Introduction¹ by Alysse Stepanian

The Deep State in politics is a state within a state of unelected officials and special interest lobbyists working alongside various intelligence, security, financial and law enforcement agencies to influence policies in the government. In a 2014 conversation with Bill Moyers and an accompanying essay, a former U.S. GOP congressional staff member specializing in national security, Mike Lofgren talked about the American Deep State, “the red thread that runs through the history of the last three decades. It is how we had deregulation, financialization of the economy, the Wall Street bust, the erosion of our civil liberties and perpetual war”.² Referencing what psychologist Irving L. Janis has termed “groupthink”, Lofgren argued that this sort of cultural assimilation combined with a need for survival drives the Deep State.

The term “Deep State” is often misrepresented as a recent invention of the American alt-right movement. There are abundant reports spanning decades about politics that are controlled by vested interests such as Wall Street, Silicon Valley, the military industrial complex and the fossil fuel industry. UC Berkeley Professor Emeritus, Peter Dale Scott who formerly used the term “Deep Politics”, has recently written the book, *The American Deep State: Wall Street, Big Oil, and the Attack on U.S. Democracy* (2015). Journalists Ambinder and Grady have described the Deep State as a “hidden country within the United States”, in their co-authored book, *Deep State: Inside the Government Secrecy Industry* (2013). In 2010 *Washington Post* published a two-year project with extensive reporting in a four-part series that revealed the post-911 top-secret world of America’s military-intelligence sector as a costly massive “alternative geography” with redundancy, waste, and without proper oversight.³ Additionally, a 2010 *Aljazeera* report titled “Timeline: Turkey’s ‘deep state’” outlines a November 1996 car accident that revealed “the existence of a ‘deep state’ link between the state, the police and the criminal underworld”.⁴

As a result of a May 2017 call for work related to this theme, work by select artists were chosen by our team, to be presented on Autonomous Agency’s website and online publication.⁵ Essays

¹ This introduction to the *Autonomy, Groupthink, and the Power of the Deep State* series and the resulting compilation was first published on July 2, 2018 on www.autonomousagency.us. For inquiries regarding the use of this introduction or the series/compilation, please contact [info\[at\]autonomousagency.us](mailto:info[at]autonomousagency.us).

² “The Deep State Hiding in Plain Sight | Moyers & Company,” *BillMoyers.com*, February 21, 2014, billmoyers.com/episode/the-deep-state-hiding-in-plain-sight.

³ Dana Priest and William M. Arkin, “Top Secret America,” *The Washington Post* online, WP Company, July 19, 2010, projects.washingtonpost.com/top-secret-america/.

⁴ “Timeline: “Turkey’s ‘deep state’ - Al Jazeera looks at the country's history of coup plots and the mysterious ‘deep state’,” *Aljazeera.com*, March 19, 2010, <https://www.aljazeera.com/focus/2010/02/2010225132347919497.html>.

⁵ See the call for work at <http://autonomousagency.us/deep-state-call-for-work>. For information about the selection team see <http://autonomousagency.us/about>. This series/compilation is a work-in-progress. Email

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accompanying some of the works will also be published for the first time on this website. These works highlight the necessity of creative action against various expressions of bigotry, oppression, and Machiavellian politics of fear.

This series will begin with Virginia-based, Malawian writer and artist, **Massa Lemu**'s essay about his performative photographs that satirize the corrupt petty bourgeoisie in the African postcolony.

About the Author

Alysse Stepanian is a transdisciplinary artist, writer and independent curator. She is the Founder and Editor of Autonomous Agency. Visit her website at <http://alyssestepanian.com>.

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