Critical Analysis
The Dysfunctional States of America
By John Cooper
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What do you call a government that, hearing the advice of knowledgeable experts warning of impending disasters, still proceeds for years, for decades, without any meaningfully effective attempt to solve or avoid the problems?

I call it a dysfunctional government.

What do you call a people who, knowing that their government is failing them irresponsibly, ignoring their welfare and inviting disaster, kicks back and coasts on, trusting in the competence, benevolent concern and leadership of their elected officials?

I call it a dysfunctional populace.

What do you call a country that combines both the elements above? Think now: In the real world, causes have effects; actions, even inactions, have consequences. The denial of the evidence of our senses, the evidence of our experts, the evidence of history lubricates our descent into a morass of unintended consequences.

I call such a country the Dysfunctional States of America.

For years experts have been predicting disaster along the Gulf Coast as development has been allowed and encouraged in the flood plains and lowlands of the southern US. We were told but we ignored the cautions. Our government, not just Bush's, all our governments have, for decades, been warned but have failed adequately to prepare. Who has been minding this country's shop? And who has been minding the shopminders? Who?

Natural disasters happen: again and again. As we ignore the consequences of previous disasters and situate ourselves in the line of action for the next, we fulfill one criterion of insanity: performing the same operation under the same circumstances repeatedly while expecting a different result.

If, perceiving the consequences of prior disasters, little or no attempt is made to mitigate the utterly predictable consequences of each succeeding one, are we not fulfilling that same criterion? Where is our learning curve? Do we have a collective learning disorder, or maybe it's just cultural stupidity.

It is as though together we, governments and people, have amnesia, diminished ability to learn from experience, or both. Earthquakes, forest fires, tsunamis, tropical cyclones, tornado outbreaks occur cyclically and predictably, both temporally and spatially. Yet over and over again, we continue to return to, and position itself in, harm's way with at best
only minimal attempts if any to avoid further repetitions of previously experienced disasters.

As a people, we have mastered the principles not only of quantum physics, electrodynamics and mechanical motion but also subatomic- and atomic-structure and molecular behavior. Yet an understanding and acceptance of cause-and-effect seems an utterly alien in the everyday lives of most of us at least with respect to the major issues that face this country: war; poverty; racial and social inequality; an economy that funnels wealth from the poor to the rich; an injustice system; broken healthcare. Einstein imagined that there were two things in the universe: the universe itself and human stupidity. And he wasn't sure about the universe. America, both governments and populace, are those very humans.

America's love-affair with delusional politics and policies stems from something termed 'hope', which appears to be a glorified form of wish-fulfilling fantasy that excludes all trace of reason; that functions as a substitute for the acquisition of, and reliance on, experience or the use of logic. 'Hoping' that global warming is an error, we continue to pollute our atmosphere with heat-trapping products of combustion. 'Hoping' that earthquakes or eruptions will not occur, we build around faults and on volcanic flanks. 'Hope' seems to be the underlying motivator of some of the most irrational of this country's policies: the neglect of the consequences of actions or inactions, repeating the same unsuccessful operation over and over again, 'hoping' that the outcome will somehow differ.

It's not just natural disasters. There are plenty of our own making. 'Hoping' that the economy will improve, we continue with policies, strategies and economic initiatives that keep the poor increasingly poor, the rich increasingly wealthy. 'Hoping', seemingly without end, to control the behaviors of other countries and peoples, we employ direct force to further our ends: violence, injury, death and destruction, instead of reason, logic and compassion. The fact that this never fails to fail is apparently irrelevant. America seems to need war as a distraction from our difficulties at home; if we cannot find an enemy, we'll make one, or several. 'Hoping' that war will somehow end war, we war at every opportunity. More hate, more wars of defense against hate, are reproducible effects of attempting unjustly to impose our will on others: a failed procedure repeatedly tried, unsuccessfully. As a mechanism for effective problem solution, 'hope' just doesn't cut it. 'Hope' is no substitute for innovative, effective action.

If legitimate government derives from the consent of the governed, it is long past time to remove our consent from ineffective, self-serving, dysfunctional government. It is long past time to demand that government function for the welfare and well-being of ALL the people, not just the richest few, not just the corporations. It is long past time to demand that government envision and plan for the long term, not just the next election cycle - based on reason, plausibly effective strategies and rational attempts to avoid undesirable consequences, not illusions, delusions and wish-fulfilling fantasies.
It is long past time to insist that we, the public, wake up and pay attention to what is being said, done and not done in our names. We must begin to govern ourselves. Long past time. Can we do that? Will we? We must!

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