**HS notes 06/25/2017**

**See on medical issues –judy segal.**

**SEE ON Koch bros mystifications on health care and climate change; see “system” of obfuscation about GOP health care bill-how it was kept from the public.**

**Role of news media: example 4 GOP nay votes but not mentioned enough: 3 don’t think it goes far enough to penalize the poor.**

**See Edsall on Dems as Party of the rich (or for the rich. Whom does it help?**

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**Chapter Three**

**Dysfunctional Political Systems**

**In this chapter:**

* Introduction
* America’s Tortuous Path
* Transfixed America, Post 9/11
* Regulations in Service of the Regulated
* “War on Drugs”
* Politics of Mental Illness

Questions for Thought and Discussion

Summary

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**Introduction**

Whenever pejoratives like “crazy” or, more palatably, “dysfunctional,” are used to describe systems of any kind, it’s time to question the judgments of the labeler before buying the claim.  Dysfunctional how? By what criteria? From what perspective?

Yet reading about political problems alongside Rice and Cooper’s *Organizations and Unusual Routines*(2010) convinces me, not only that the term can often be nailed down to the satisfaction of readers of different political persuasions, and that its reach can be extended beyond the organizational confines for which it was originally intended. We may believe, for example, that repeated episodes of unchecked gun violence in America’s school systems are a symptom of political pathology. [1] Others will disagree, but the challenge of defending some of the most controversial of our judgments should prove a useful exercise.

Rice and Cooper credit sociologist Benjamin Singer (1980) with having coined “crazy system.”  But “crazy,” “mad,” “unhinged,” and “out-of-whack,” have long preceded Singer in the vernacular. “Crazy” as applied to organizational routines is a way of seeing political problems systemically (e.g., Cronen, et al, 1982; Grint, 2008; Rittell and Webber,1973). You don’t have to be a liberal or a conservative, for example, to grieve for American soldiers who died for want of the available armored vehicles necessary to keep them alive in Iraq, or of a legislative body unable to deliberate upon, let alone pass much needed legislation, or of the practice whereby low-grade sub-prime mortgages, sold deceptively to people ill-equipped to meet payments on them, are bundled, upgraded and sold to investors by investment banks, propped up by federal government loans, which privately sell them short.

In these as in other examples to be taken up in this book, unwanted repetitive patterns, called “URPs” by Cronen and colleagues (1982) and labeled as “wicked problems” by Grint (2005), and Rittell and Webber(1973) are nested within other, larger crazy systems, as when a nation founded on Puritan beliefs in its own exceptionalism becomes a “State of Exceptions” to its own strictures against torture, renditions, and indefinite detentions of those it declares to be “enemy combatants.” (Danner, 2011)

By whatever labels, problems often become opaque, thus impervious to criticism, or they are tolerated due to habituation of a sort that leads to system blindness: the problems “hiding in plain sight.” Feedback loops and loops within loops are error-amplifying rather than error-correcting, providing further incentive to maintain the routines. Managers of dysfunctional systems often find themselves *trapped*by needing to fulfill incompatible goals. Add too that dysfunctional (i.e., “crazy” political systems) are often gamed or otherwise manipulated for self-serving purposes. For those who profit from them, they may not seem crazy at all. However, a common consequence of self-serving rationality is that it is often harmful to all in the long run. This is the “tragedy of the commons” dilemma, discussed in Chapter 1.

Needless to say, dysfunctional political systems lend themselves to critical, dilemma-centered analysis, whether by self-styled rhetoricians, investigative journalists, or others in the academy, such as Murray Edelman who are attuned to the symbolic functions of politics. But we should be under no illusions that their problems can be readily explained, let alone addressed satisfactorily. What Rittell and Webber say about “wicked problems” (as opposed to “tame” ones) is true as well about dysfunctional political systems: that every such problem is a symptom of another problem; that they are unamenable to engineering fixes or other testable and technical solutions; that they do not develop in distinct phases. These problems are “tricky” in the sense of eluding understanding because their full consequences cannot be apprehended and the problems often become apparent attendant upon each other, but not before signs of progress at addressing them. However, the progress (or lack of it) of every attempted solution has its unanticipated and often unwelcome consequences.

In dealing with wicked problems executives (i.e., managers) try out strategies in an effort to learn from their mistakes, rather than becoming indecisive by the realization that every response to a wicked issue will alter the problem and necessitate another change of strategy. Designing systems “is difficult,” said one management expert, “because there is no consensus on what the problems are, let alone how to solve them.” (Camillus, 2008).

With these criteria as guideposts I urge readers to try their hands at identifying political systems out of whack. In what follows extended examples of dysfunctional political systems are presented.

**America’s “Torturous” Path**.

In his essay on “The State of Exception,” Mark Danner recalls 9/11/01 as the day Americans began living “in a subtly different country,” one that in the name of security exempted itself from its strictures against torture, renditions and indefinite detentions while circumscribing or setting aside Americans’ accustomed rights and freedoms. In this seemingly endless “strange time,” adds Danner, in which government has operated outside its own laws, “the particular burdens of our exception seem mostly to be borne by someone else—by someone other. It is possible for most people to live their lives without taking note of these practices at all except as phrases in the news—until, every once in a while, like a blind man who lives, all unknowingly, in a very large cage, one or another of us stumbles into the bars.” (p.?)  Says Danner, the very endlessness of this state of exception— a quality emphasized even as it was imposed— and the broad acceptance of that endlessness, the state of exception’s increasing normalization, are among its distinguishing marks.” Among the systemic resources of ambiguity in the wake of 9/11 are the open-ended, ill-defined “War on Terror,” (Roberts-Miller (forthcoming); Simons (2008)) involving rhetorically such euphemistic stand-ins for torture as “enhanced interrogations” and for renditions as “sequesterings.” [CHECK]

Box. 3.1 The “Black Sites”

     Said a New York Times editorial (Feb.17/2013) it has “long been known” that the Central Intelligence Agency ran “black site” prisons outside the United States for purposes of “extraordinary rendition,” involving abductions and transfers of suspected terrorists to countries reputed to torture prisoners under questioning. What had not been known, said the Times, was the extent of the practice, involving at least 136 suspects and 54 participating countries, including some, like Belgium, Finland and Denmark, with stellar human rights reputations. If the immediate aftermath of 9/11 was a “strange time” why is it that an *Open Society* report on the extent of the practices, still “shocked and surprised” the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee? (Or so it was claimed). And why, despite its call for greater transparency, the Senate Committee failed to release useful new information to the public when it held a hearing on the suitability of its top counter-terrorism official, John Brennan, to head up the C.I.A. Moreover, said the New York Times, President Obama refused to question Bush administration officials who authorized human rights violations. Obama did order an end to former President George W. Bush’s torture policies and the closing of C.I.A. detention facilities, but he did not repudiate rendition, and continued to authorize coercive techniques, including drone strikes, using drone attacks far more frequently than under President Bush.[cite needed}    Roberts-Miller, T. (2008) Demagoguery and Democracy, pub city?:Workman

Box 3.1 provides a window into the paradox of “secret” information that still “shocks and surprises,” hiding in plain view of New York Times reportage. If the immediate aftermath of 9/11 was a strange time, how much more so is our own, when a president who voiced strenuous objection to the Bush-era coercive techniques, continued to authorize them, once again invoking the ill-defined “war on terror” as his justification?  Could it be that Barack Obama felt it was necessary as a Democrat to out-hawk the Republicans for political reasons? Was this his way of gaming a crazy political system? More generally, is concealment of some information the price that “open societies” must pay for their very survival? I return to questions of this sort in Chapters 11 and 12.

When, after 9/11, Justice Department attorney John Yoo was ordered by the Bush administration to find legal justification for what until then had been considered illegal under federal and international law, he and his team had the advantages of an American public in panic, a submissive Congress, a compliant judiciary, an “echoing press” (Coe, et al., 2008; Jamieson & Cappella, date?), and an intimidated Democratic Party opposition, fearful that dissent would appear impolitic, if not unpatriotic. This same combination of passive forces leading to what Rossiter (1998) called hyperbolically constitutional dictatorship (sources-see Danner) would remain largely uncritical (and perhaps unaware) of the specious rationales used to invade Iraq in 2003. The political systems of public deliberation and checks-and-balances, watchdog journalism and public debate had gotten out of whack in the face of what I shall describe in Chapter 11 as the Bush administration’s melodramatic crisis rhetoric. These same “passive forces” help to explain the American public’s quiescence attendant upon problems identified by George Packer and others below.

More will be said about America’s “State of Exception,” but I want to emphasize here that its “ambiguous, uncertain, borderline fringe, at the intersection of the legal and the political” (Agamben, 2005) is illustrative of the spaces in which political persuaders have historically exploited what Burke (1969) called the “resources of ambiguity” in language.

  Arguably, then, the state of exceptions is not exceptional. The U.S. is by no means alone in exempting itself from the moral strictures that it expects of others. In times of war enemies are routinely debased, disfigured, disgraced—pictured in wartime comics as grotesque caricatures of humanity, the better to drop bombs on them without remorse or to exact information from them by “making them talk.” In the language of psychiatry crazy political systems of this kind might be characterized as sociopathic, its perpetrators as being in denial, or as projecting their guilt on to others by way of scapegoating. Clinical language of this kind is in itself a form of distancing, of ironic detachment from warfare.  Popular culture, as in wartime cinema or B-rated cops and robbers movies, provides clues to the ways people can be inured to torture and transfixed by the “rite of the kill.” (Appel. 2011; Burke, 1969).

**America’s Downhill Slide, Post 9/11**

In “A World Apart,” *New Yorker* columnist George Packer picks up where Mark Danner left off, but in a narrative of many themes that builds to the conclusion of an America in decline, its problems “left to rot” (Sept 11, 2012. *The New Yorker* p. 1). Packer’s essay moves freely between Fallujah in Iraq, New Orleans, and places in between but it centers upon Surry County North Carolina’s Mount Airy, a once lively town of working-class Americans idealized on the Andy Griffith Show as a “a society where every man had a job, inequalities of wealth were muted, and people were bound together in a tight community.” (p. 6)

Mount Airy symbolizes for Packer the story of American decline. But for its quaint façade, it is a shadow of its former self. Factories gone bust, streets in decay, jobs so scarce that most adults look elsewhere for work, it remains, however, a staunchly patriotic, religiously conservative enclave, proud to send its children into the military and then into war.

Into Mount Airy five years after 9/11 came Chris Berman, a former Navy SEAL and out-of-work commercial diver who’d signed on with the Blackwater private security firm in 2004. Berman would have died serving on a food escort detail for Blackwater from Kuwait to Fallujah in Iraq except that one of his Blackwater friends volunteered to substitute for him at the last minute and as a result went to his own death in a bullet-riddled car from a fiery ambush near Fallujah.

Berman (said Packer) was determined to solve the problem of insufficient armor, one of the many problems left unattended by the Department of Defense under Donald Rumsfeld. The lightly armored vehicles provided to Blackwater by the DoD were no match for the insurgents powerful roadside bombs. Sensing a business opportunity, he began drawing designs for improved armor, opened a highly successful small factory in Kuwait to produce them, and then began building a far larger factory near Mount Airy in Surry County to outfit not just the armor of privately owned transport vehicles but those of the military. Officials in Surry County were only too happy to make factory space available and Berman set off on his quest.

Tragically, Berman’s efforts to land a government contract were repeatedly stalled, despite the recognized high quality of his armor design and the urgent need for improved armor. In part, suggested Packer, the principal Humvee manufacturer, AM General, had sufficient political clout in Congress to head off competition by delaying the awards process, this despite concerns voiced in Congressional Committee testimony by then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

In the face of these delays Berman's new company was in limbo and hemorrhaging staff and money. He was unable to offer guarantees to Surry County officials that he would land the contract and they mooted the possibility of taking back the lease on the factory space. The seeming injustice of the delay was driving Berman crazy:

 ‘Look at it from a practical point of view—forget the morality. What does it cost to support a guy who loses his limbs for life? What does it cost to care for a guy who’s paralyzed for life? What does it take to pay out a death benefit? Sometimes I want to take these guys in suits by their lapels and tell them, ‘I’m going to take you somewhere you don’t want to go and see how this Humvee does.’ We put more money on T.S.A. people at the airport who are screaming at you like it’s the Third Reich than we do protecting the people who are truly protecting us. (p. ?)

     This in essence is Packer’s main story, but its greater significance emerges from his ability to place it in historical and political perspective. The larger lessons he provides, post-9/11, are of political inertia at the top, missed opportunities to restore America’s once vibrant economic base, callous disregard for the plight of the less than one percent of Americans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, culture clash between what conservatives call the “liberal elite” and ordinary folk, and the seeming indifference by those comfortably well off to the vast army of Americans who have lost jobs or homes or both — all testifying to a general downward slide that may be irreversible in the near term as jobs are exported overseas, as America’s educational system remains  ill-equipped to prepare its graduates for the challenges of a high-tech economy, as one robot does the job of ten former employees, as deficits increase and as the political will to tax even the wealthiest one percent of Americans encounters stiff opposition by fiscal conservatives in Congress.

If we can believe Rittell and Webber(1973) these “wicked problems” are themselves symptomatic of still larger underlying problems. But rather than reaching back ad infinitum in search of some original sin or other first cause, I suggest that in accounting for persistent problems we explore possibilities for reciprocal causation such as between declines in communality and parallel increases in economic inequalities. I address this question further in Chapter 7.

**Regulations in the Service of the Regulated**

[Outrageous: Hearing on Tar Sands Pipeline Run by Pipeline Company's Own Contractor](http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/article/672976/outrageous%3A_hearing_on_tar_sands_pipeline_run_by_pipeline_company%27s_own_contractor/" \t "_blank)

In a stunning [conflict of interest](http://creekside1.blogspot.com/2011/07/state-dept-hires-transcanada-consultant.html), public hearings on federal approval of a proposed tar sands pipeline are being run by a contractor for the pipeline company itself. The U.S. Department of State’s [public hearings](http://www.keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov/clientsite/keystonexl.nsf/e327883380befe0b862571f60062011e/4f43762902683eef062575390056f38b?OpenDocument&AutoFramed) along the proposed route of the TransCanada Keystone XL tar sands pipeline this week are under the purview of Cardno Entrix, a “professional environmental consulting company” that specializes in “permitting and compliance.”

Cardno is not only running the State Department hearings, but also manages the [department’s Keystone XL website](http://www.keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov/) and drafted the department’s [environmental impact statement](http://thinkprogress.org/green/2011/08/26/305374/tar-sands-action-day-seven-this-is-our-environmental-impact-statement/). Comments from the public about the pipeline go not to the government, but to a [cardno.com](http://cardno.com/) email:

The Cardno case is noteworthy but not exceptional. The “system” includes not just the obvious swindlers but the lax regulators who move in and out of the “revolving doors” between their regulatory agencies and the companies they’re supposed to regulate. It also includes payoffs by banks and other large corporations to candidates dependent on their largesse. It includes the Supreme Court, which ruled in a case brought to the Court by the Koch brothers’ Americans for Prosperity that corporations are no longer restricted from unlimited campaign donations since they’ve been reclassified as persons who enjoy free speech projections (See Chapter 6). It includes lobbied members of Congress who complain of the costs of regulating and insist, in the face of counter-evidence that companies can be counted upon in a “free market” economy to regulate themselves. And it includes presidents and cabinet officials who arrange bailouts for corporations “too big to fail” when they are needy, and quick settlements of disputes that reward them when they are flush. Consider the following:

* The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has allowed big banks such as Wells Fargo and Goldman Sachs to pay small fines for the fortunes they made in the low-rated mortgage market, in part by betting against the advice they’d given to their own clients.
* Wells Fargo and other big mortgage lenders have signed off on low-rated mortgages to people with bad credit ratings. They’ve done so with such reckless abandon that they’ve repeatedly been unable to provide the necessary evidence of valid mortgage contracts.
* In the early public discourse of the mortgage crisis, homeowners able to keep their homes were credited with “responsible citizenship” while those who could not were branded as “mortgage delinquents,” goaded to “grow up” and exercise “fiscal discipline.” But as the mortgage crisis mounted, the metaphor of the wayward child shifted to mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as “spoiled children” who needed “tough love” rather than “bailout candy.” (Foley, 2012)
* Low-rated mortgages have been converted into bundles of A-rated derivatives, and then sold off at a handsome profit, all this with the blessings of Moody’s and Standard and Poor’s which were remunerated by the banks for their higher mortgage ratings. Note: It’s little known that these are for-profit private agencies, not government agencies. (Krugman, Mar. 20, 2013)
* Against the advice of various state attorneys general (NYT editorial, date?), the Obama administration has asked states to excuse bank conduct, granting them what a New York Times editorial has called “unacceptably broad release from legal liability for the mortgage mess… The proposed settlement reportedly would prevent the states from pursuing claims against banks relating to fraud or abuse in the origination of loans during the bubble. It would also prevent states from pursuing claims for foreclosure abuses, like improper denial of loan modifications… In effect, says the editorial, “Legal waivers being contemplated would let the banks pay up to sweep wrongdoing under the rug.” (Krugman,Aug. 8, 2013).

The question that begs to be addressed in all of these examples is why are elites able to repeatedly game the regulatory process for enormous profits at the general public’s expense? Why, asked, J. Murray Edelman (1967:25), are initial displays of public wrath at forces seen as threatening to the general public “about as predictable as the subsequent lapse of that fervor?” Why is the professional politician’s advocacy of regulatory legislation widely popular “while actual resource allocations inconsistent with the promise of the statutes are met with quiescence?” (p. 25) Why are the provisions of regulatory legislation least significant for resource allocation…most widely publicized and the most significant provisions least widely publicized?” (p. 26) Why do the preambles to such legislation contain strong assurances that the public interest will be served while the fine print of that legislation routinely undercuts those promises? (p. 26)

Says Edelman (1967) the most common explanation for the general public’s general inability to realize its interests through public policy is “invisibility.” But this, says Edelman, is at best a partial explanation, begging the question of why public ignorance is so persistent. Edelman adds that statutes have meaning to most citizens mostly as symbols—that “passing parade of symbols” he refers to early in his book. Where public understanding “is vague and information rare, interests in reassurance will be all the more potent and all the more susceptible to manipulation by political symbols” (p. 38). One form that this takes “is noisy attacks against trivia” (p. 39). Another “is persistent, well-publicized attention to a problem that is never solved” (p. 39).

Edelman adds: The most obvious kinds of dissemination of symbolic satisfactions are to be found in administrative dicta accompanying decisions and orders, in press releases and in annual reports. It is not uncommon to give the rhetoric to one side and the decision to the other. Nowhere does the FCC wax so emphatic in emphasizing public service responsibility, for example, as in decisions permitting greater concentrations of control in an area. (p.39)

**“Wars” on Drugs**

A relatively simple illustration of a crazy political system is the quadrennially declared “war on drugs,” a war in much the same metaphorical sense as Lyndon Johnson’s “war on poverty,” Gerald Ford’s “all-out war on inflation,” Jimmy Carter’s energy program as “the moral equivalent of war,” and George W. Bush’s “war on terror.”

     As Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 156-7) observed, the war metaphor arouses emotions, structures thought, and directs actions.  Carter’s “energy war” generated a network of entailments: There was an “enemy” (pictured by cartoonists in Arab headdress), a “threat to national security,” which required “setting targets,” “reorganizing priorities,” “establishing a new chain of command,” “plotting a new strategy,” “gathering intelligence,” “marshaling forces,” and “imposing sanctions.” Acceptance of the energy war metaphor provided grounds for certain inferences: Energy needed to be given top budgetary priority; the populace would have to make sacrifices; if we didn’t meet the threat, we would not survive.

     Successive presidents’ wars on drugs have been politically popular; never mind that they haven’t worked as envisioned. The criminalization of possession or sale of street drugs has succeeded beyond expectations at creating lucrative illicit markets for drug lords and growers and wholesalers, and shippers, down to the kids on the corner who sell the drugs and others, including in some countries law-enforcement officers and politicians, who are paid to protect them. Real wars have been fought over drugs and the sale of drugs. Protection of farmers who grow poppies or cocoa beans has enabled insurgents like the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Shining Path in Peru to fight other wars.

     After his election in 2008 President Obama authorized his administration’s “drug czar” to *reject* the war metaphor as applied to drugs, recommending instead that America’s illegal drug problems be viewed from a health perspective primarily(Tierney, March 12, 2009). But the authorization has come with political risk attached. Hence the President has wavered, as he has often done, between hewing to principle and doing what’s politically smart.

     Scratch at the drug conflict and you will find another, between a subculture of traditionally minded strict disciplinarians who typically exempt alcohol consumption from their objections to recreational drug use and a more permissive and more self-indulgent subculture which finds this distinction to be absurd. This is the cultural distinction that Lakoff (2002), describes in *Moral Politics.* How the conflict will play out is anybody’s guess.

**The Politics of Mental Illness**

The FDA is supposed to protect the American public by seeing to it that the marketing of a drug is confined to the patient populations and purposes for which the drug has been appropriately tested and approved. That seems reasonable enough except for the following:

* It is not illegal for physicians to prescribe these same “off-label” drugs and many do, especially for what they diagnose as psychiatric disorders (Angell, 2004).
* For obvious reasons, drug companies make very sure that their positive studies are published in medical journals and doctors know about them, while the negative ones often languish unseen within the FDA, which regards them as proprietary and therefore confidential. This practice greatly biases the medical literature, medical education, and treatment decisions. Compounding the problem of bias, reviews of drug tests published in medical journals are often contributed by persons from the pharmaceutical industry. (“Our Conflicted Medical Journals”, 2006)
* Criteria for “successful” clinical trials ignore chance positives and placebo effects by allowing as the standard of success two clinical trials (on a drug or procedure) out of an unlimited number of trials (Angell, 2004) (See Angell, M., 2004, the truth about drug companies: how they deceive us and what to do about it. New York: Random House).
* Research reports in medical journals often highlight drug benefits while downplaying their probable side effects. Not uncommonly research findings are generalized beyond the patient populations that were studied: to women, in studies of men, for example. (Simons, 1993, pp. ?).
* Marcia Angell, former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, has complained about the over-prescription of anti-depressants and other anti-psychotic drugs. Now, more than ever, Americans are being diagnosed as mentally ill (Angell, 2004). After 1987, when Prozac was introduced into the market, the number of people treated for depression tripled in the next ten years, and roughly 10 percent of all Americans over six years of age took anti-depressants, as of 2004. Mental illness is now the leading cause of disability among children, the result of a 35-fold increase in diagnoses over a twenty-year period, well ahead of physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy. Among adults during that same period, those allegedly disabled and unable to work from mental illness more than doubled during that same period.

Angell cites one of the books she reviews:

‘At the very least, we need to stop thinking of psychoactive drugs as the best, and often the only, treatment for mental illness or emotional distress. Both psychotherapy and exercise have been shown to be as effective as drugs for depression, and their effects are longer-lasting, but unfortunately, there is no industry to push these alternatives and Americans have come to believe that pills must be more potent. More research is needed to study alternatives to psychoactive drugs, and the results should be included in medical education.’ (Angell, 2011)

**Questions for Thought and Discussion**

1. Describe and illustrate the differences between functional and dysfunctional systems. Identify a system dysfunction not named or explained in this chapter.
2. Define and illustrate runaway feedback loops.
3. When if at all is torture defensible? Make the case for it.
4. How would you handle the NIMBY problem if you faced it?
5. What can be a possible strategy to handle a wicked problem? Illustrate with an example.
6. What are the reasons that allow the continued existence of regulatory services that favor for profit organization instead of public interest? Is this a wicked problem?

**Summary**

Of the many dysfunctional political systems taken up in the book, this chapter has focused upon five for critical scrutiny but given dishonorable mention to a host of others, this in keeping with Rice and Cooper on “unusual” organizational routines (2010), Cronen et al. (1982) on “unwanted repetitive patterns” (“URPs”) . Rittell and Webber (1973) on “wicked problems.” Every such problem is a symptom of another problem, as when belief in American exceptionalism licenses exceptions to moral strictures against torture, to the point where the practice of torture is normalized and naturalized and may even become a source of “sinful” pleasure as in B-rated “gangster” films that play on culturally reinforced sadistic impulses.  Crazy political systems are not crazy to those who learn how to “game” the system but even they may suffer ultimately from system breakdowns and the resulting “tragedy of the commons.” System failure may be difficult to anticipate and harder yet to rectify as problems become ingrained and magnified. Rather than searching for first causes or ultimate causes, I have suggested looking for instances of reciprocal causation leading to vicious cycles.

Highlighted in the chapter have been failures to regulate and, worse yet, the illusory appearance of regulation in the interests of the ostensibly regulated, as in recent banking scandals.

For readers interested in bringing the concept of dysfunctional political system to bear on cases of their own choosing, I would recommend as worth pursuing:

1. *Electoral systems*, as in the U.S., where at great cost, seemingly endless campaigning for office or for the right to run for office creates dependence on fat-cat contributors and further polarizes an already divided electorate. (See Chapter 6)
2. *Failed States,*such asthose run by mono-maniacal dictators, or administered in the interests of those on the take, or engaged in seemingly perpetual deadly conflict, or either unwilling or unable to attend to their peoples’ basic needs. (e.g., Nienaber on Congo 7-23-12)
3. *Failing relationships between nation-*states, as in *double games*wherepolitical leaders alternate endlessly between publicly reprimanding opponents on whom they depend and cozying up to them. (See Chapter 11)
4. *Indefinite incarcerations without judicial hearings*, as in China where the Stalinist-inspired re-education through labor system, known as “laojiao” resulted in forced labor for up to four years of as many as 190,000 inmates at a time, all without trial.” But it is a measure of sanity returning to China that “laojiao” is now being widely denounced with tacit support from the Chinese Communist Party. (See Jacobs, Dec. 14, 2012; also, Jacobs, June 13, 2013)

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Endnote

[1] See for example op-ed columnist Gail Collins (Dec. 14, 2012) on the gun violence controversy. “Every country has a sizeable contingent of mentally ill citizens. We’re the one that gives them the technological power to play god.” <http://w.w.w..nytimes/2012/12/15/opinion/collins-looking-for-America/html>