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## Your Choice - Policy or Opportunity Driven Society

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### Life in a Policy Driven Society

For the past six years, Americans have experienced life in a policy driven, dependency economy where the government exercises ever-tighter constraints while dodging responsibility and discouraging transparency. Labeled "the new normal," the myth of "for the greater good" perpetuates this economic malaise.

America voted twice for this economic model. In 2008, they voted in the Democratic Party, led by President Barack Obama. In 2012, in spite of a poorly performing economy and dishonest governance, they voted to renew his efforts. The Redistribution of America, last month's Focused Fire Newsletter, covered this topic.

The net result of the last six years is a country and world that emulates the president. Trust is a rare commodity, and virtually no one believes what President Obama says. This distrust has brought the normal flow of governing to a halt, and slashed American's influence and strength in the global arena.

America needs to rebuild an opportunity society, where hard work and effort pay off for the individual and society in general. An opportunity society is free market based, but differs from capitalism or laissez faire on two important points. First, the concept does not support exploitation of labor, capital, and resources for pure monetary gain. A clean environment and personal freedoms are prerequisites. Second, it does not reject the regulations required to prevent systemic abuse.

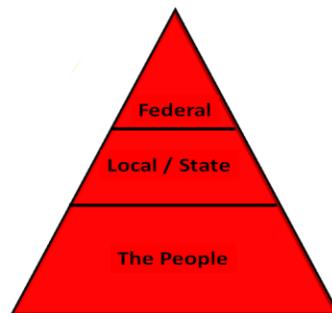
At the same time, in an opportunity society, government cannot exploit business, labor, capital, and resources to achieve unrealistic or artificial economic parity. It is not free to implement transformational programs, by any name, without the consent of the people. Government cannot use its position to justify and/or achieve dystopian objectives. (Merriam-Webster: an imaginary place where people are unhappy and usually afraid because they are not treated fairly). When it attempts to do so, historically, it actually increases the overall waste through the cost of government and the inefficiencies implicit in "big bureaucratic systems," while wreaking lasting damage to our freedoms.

It would be easy to drift into an idealistic discussion, defining unworkable concepts, but from a systems perspective, all ideas and actions must spring from the same thought and effort, with pragmatic application. To achieve these purposes requires a clear and practical description of an "opportunity driven society." First, we must construct some conceptual foundation.

## Basic forms of governance

There are two fundamental organizational structures, hierarchal and self-organizing.

The traditional organizational structure is a hierarchy. The upper tier is independent (casual), and all the other layers are dependent (effect). Power is concentrated at the top and distributed by direction and control through the layers within the organization, with the expectation that all will agree and comply with the directive. Failure is interpreted as insubordination and the penalties are sometimes severe.



Hierarchal forms of government include dictatorships, monarchies, socialism, and dystopia. In these structures, the term equality and hierarchy are an oxymoron. By definition, a hierarchy controls and distributes power and wealth down through a dependent constituency and promotes a greater good, often meaning whatever goals the bureaucracy needs to sustain its power or reach its objectives.

The government determines which freedoms the people can enjoy, with wealth and resources managed directly or through regulatory mechanisms. Bureaucrats choose which laws to enforce, and which legal violations to investigate or tolerate, and the government avoids accountability by manipulating or controlling information. The government has the power over the people, who are accountable to the government. The government rewards those who support its actions, and punish those that do not.

The tiers within a hierarchy take many forms, but equality is not one of them. Pick up the business section of any newspaper and it is apparent the rich are benefiting from the stock market. The poor are increasingly supported by public assistance, and the middle class is shrinking. It seems obvious, but this type of redistribution and downsizing of America is resulting in a poorer, inequitable economy and society by design of our own federal government.

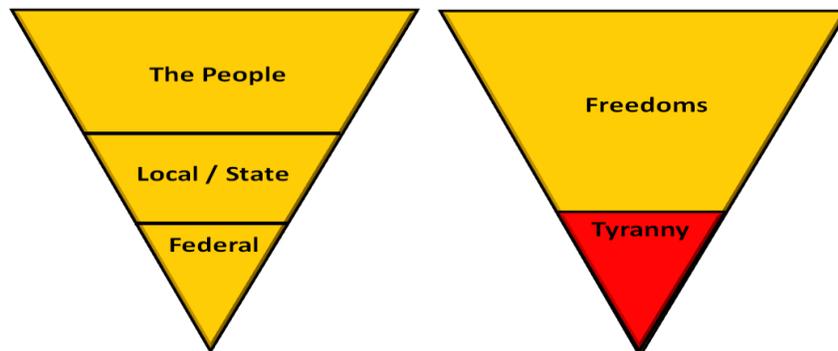
Complexity occurs because many activities within a hierarchy are not dependent. Persons responsible for achieving the delegated tasks have free thought and independent action. Hierarchies incorrectly assume shared values and purpose. Each level filters directives, and people may not choose to execute them, sometimes when the metrics failed to hold them accountable but more because they do not see any reason to do it or believe it harmful. People have different agendas, perspectives, and knowledge. Every person makes decisions daily that affect varying degrees of performance.

Self-organizing—the second concept partially has its origin in complex adaptive theory. In summary, it states that all groups of people develop their own culture, beliefs, and establish sets of values. They select leaders, and perform work to self-determined standards. Natural work groups are rooted in this concept. Actually, self-organizing groups flourish even within hierarchies. The problem is when they take action contrary to the directions given from the top.

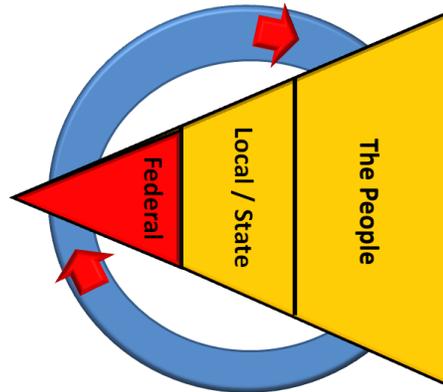
Democracy and Federalism are special examples of self-organizing systems. The people set the policies and elect an abbreviated form of hierarchy to govern. The purpose is the common good, such as protection, administration of laws, and faithful and equal promotion of the best societal interests. In a democracy, the people determine "the greater good," and government helps the people achieve those objectives. Conflicted, Americans are partially operating under both forms of government, and many suffer from political schizophrenia.

It is remarkable, given the opportunity to be king, that George Washington refused, aware that the secret to a successful country was free people. He and the other founders established a miracle of governance that continues until this day. In our form of government, the people have the final say. The people elect the appropriate local and state governments, granting them the primary authority to do the peoples will. That is, pass and enforce laws, build roads and structures, provide education, and in general, provide for the collective needs of the people.

America has a federal government to establish laws over the collection of states, and under the Constitution, it has only the power delegated by the states. The primary mission of centralized government is protecting the citizens and enforcing the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. In this structure, the power remains with the people, per the following illustration. In the parallel illustration, freedoms equate to structure. As long as the people have the power, they retain all the freedoms.



These guiding principles are under attack, as our current leaders attempt to flip the country from, "we the people," to "me the government." We must not deceive ourselves, both parties are complicit in the effort to divide the people and share the spoils. The difference is that President Obama provides leadership to the Democrats, and they have demonstrated their mission - to change America through the mechanisms of redistribution and downsizing, powered by a policy driven, top-down system. (Read the October Focused Fire Newsletter for deeper descriptions of these terms).



These two perspectives dictate different responses and governing styles. Hierarchical systems are directing while self-organizing systems imply enabling. Hierarchical systems are not democratic, and the power always accumulates at the top. History teaches us lessons, among them the sad truth that forfeited freedoms do not come back.

Given this foundation, we can now define an opportunity driven society.

Merriam-Webster

- op-por-tu-ni-ty - an amount of time or a situation in which something can be done
1. a favorable juncture of circumstance
  2. a good chance for advancement or progress



We developed the lead icon to illustrate an opportunity driven society, addressing the principles and tradeoffs of sustainability, human needs, the environment, resources, and equilibrium.

## Sustainability

America must sustain itself as a nation. This requires jobs, an exceptional education system, entrepreneurs, invention, and innovation. This also translates into a strong industrial and service sector. Industry not only increases national power, but it is foundational for economic sustainability. For the last six years, government has blamed business for all social ills, and then reached deeply into industry's pockets for political contributions.

We need a strong and committed military to protect our lives, physical world, and our freedoms. When the United States leads, the world does better, but we must not police the world. At the same time, we need to provide leadership or others will do so, specifically China, Russia, and groups like ISIS. The failure

to make a decision and take positive action always means living with the default, a direction determined by others, and suffer the consequences of their decisions.

We need to hold the press accountable for keeping us accurately informed. Without a free and honest press, democracy will fall. Our manipulated press now serves no purpose beyond propaganda.

Technology has been the perennial scapegoat for destroying the environment. Like money and other fungible (interchangeable) concepts, technology has application for positive or negative purposes. In this case, it will ensure the survival or destruction of the human species. There are a number of presentations on CompetitiveAmerica.us showing high-technology applications in manufacturing and food production. Manufacturing technologies, specifically miniaturization and lean programs, will reduce resource requirements. Food technology, the Green Revolution, saved millions from starving. Without advanced agriculture, many millions are destined to die. Who wants to be the person that tells them, "We want to preserve our environment for the future. I'm sorry, but that means you and your children must starve, for the greater good."

America is the most innovative country in the world and must sustain that comparative advantage. Technology, across all disciplines and fields of study, brings great opportunities for knowledge and convergence, and applied knowledge power's innovation. Enterprises need to think in terms of structures and systems that promote innovation. While partially addressed by the Lean philosophy, the thought process needs to expand and encompass emergent technologies, and breakthrough products. These will generate situations and risks, convertible into opportunities. American industry, powered by a free society of workers and a national curiosity, will continue to be the world leader in innovation.

American manufacturers are rethinking the factory system in terms of new energy sources, automation, and the environment. The investment in advanced technologies will result in a factory system premised on energy conservation and the environmental integrity.

## Human

Promote the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. We are a nation subject to the equal application of the Rule of Law. Elected officials take an oath to uphold and enforce the laws and are responsible and accountable to the constituents, not the people to government. When they fail at this primary task, throw them out.

Free the people to create and build on entrepreneurial opportunities without excessive intervention or regulation by government, as long as they comply with a fair set of regulations. This passion fuels free enterprise, innovation, and creates businesses, services, and jobs. Slant the reward system to the producers and entrepreneurs instead of non-productive members of society. This is an opportunity driven system with incentives and rewards worth the passion and effort required to make good things happen.

Build systems that provide food, shelter, and clothing for those in need.

Admit the numerous shortcomings in the Affordable Care Act. Restructure the health care system to provide comprehensive services at affordable prices for all Americans. Start by revamping the Tort system.

Encourage entrepreneurship and innovation in education. There has been an accumulative shortage of advanced applied technology workers for ten years, yet the education system is still behind the curve. We know that bureaucracies take time to react; did that contribute to the failure to fill the education gap?

Create a student centric education system that prepares graduates for a realistic future job market. Start by returning the responsibility to the educators at the state level, who are far better prepared to educate the people than government bureaucrats. Use education to create equal opportunities regardless of gender, color, or religion.

Take the money spent at the federal level and return it to the states, but use it for education. Increase teachers' salaries to professional levels and make sure every student has the needed materials. Educators should not have to form a union to make an equitable salary, buy teaching materials from personal income, or ask family members to contribute supplies. Use some of the money saved by eliminating the federal bureaucracy to make quantum improvements in the schools located in troubled/poor areas. Until society can find a way to integrate low-opportunity students, equality is a buzzword.

## Environment

Reducing the environmental impact of human activity is a social cause. Every enterprise needs to address the environment in the governance process. The most significant issues are finding ways to cost effectively incorporate solutions into products, processes, buildings, and everyday practice.

The Second industrial revolution raped the environment, and companies all over the world continue the practice. America industry must be ecologically responsible. It is a given that environmental controls increase the cost of production, and global competitors save money by dumping industrial waste into the air and water. Consumers must learn to reward ecological stewardship, for example, and buy from responsible American manufacturers instead of purchasing products made in polluting factories.

## Resources

The world is a finite sphere of eco-dependencies, filled with limited resources, multiple life forms, and endless possibilities. All systems create resource damage or waste in some form. There are earthquakes, forest fires, and a long list of other natural disasters. Humans dig holes, spread fertilizer, cut forests, use chemicals, and create pollution. These activities create waste and environmental destruction.

All manmade systems generate some form of pollution, such as carbon dioxide. Academics argue about the causes for global warming. The realist understands that dumping pollutants into a fixed space will eventually render it unusable, and finite resources of some types will run out.

Limited resources with increased demand create a paradox. How can humans produce and consume without destroying the environment? It appears that we have reached a lose-lose position without resolution. In spite of rhetoric, customers will continue to consume, and industry will provide goods and services. All will contribute to resource waste.

The answers are obvious and pragmatic.

- Take responsibility for resource conservation and replenishment.
- Take actions to increase productivity throughout the eco-dependencies, in the plant, office and at home.
- Recognize the importance of convergence, integrating the business enterprise to increase speed but function in sync.
- Reduce waste by buying from responsible suppliers while practicing cradle to grave recycling.
- Spend money on developing technology to create new, more sustainable materials.
- Build products designed/engineered/manufactured for recycling.

We must lead the world in scientific investigation and rapidly deploy technologies to insure clean food and water supplies, worldwide. We can contribute far more to the world with entrepreneurship and technology than by redistributing resources and energy to the point of diminishing return.

"Give a person food and teach a person how to build a fire, and they can be warm and filled until the food and fuel run out.

Teach a person how to make tools, and they will make an ax and cut the wood needed for the fire, a hoe to till the soil, and a hammer to build shelter.

Teach a person how to think, innovate, make decisions, and they can build a fire, make tools, grow food, get energy, and exploit opportunities.

Teach people how to collaborate, and they will combine knowledge, innovate, heal the sick, and break technological barriers."

America has once again become the energy center of the world. Energy cost and availability will affect products, processes, and performance. Customers and suppliers face a new set of opportunities. While there are risks in taking action, the risk of doing nothing is inconceivable. It is a simple task to look at the new energy-related technologies and find that change, and obsolescence will be pervasive as this paradigm shift gains power.

## Equilibrium

Equilibrium is balance, implying responsible choices. In a civilized democracy, the people must have trust in what their government does, and confidence is a shared "for the greater good."

Develop a clear, concise direction and focused objectives, followed by a path to achieve them. The process is interactive, using the planning tools found in Lean.

Find a balance between the governed and the government. This is not Democrats vs. Republicans; it is we the people against the abuse of power by both parties.

Government must live within its means, with a national debt of zero.

Finding a way towards balance between population, resources, and the environment will continue to be difficult. Since 1973, the native population of America reached equilibrium, with the reduction in birth rates, and nearly 50 million abortions. Immigration from other countries filled the void. The argument about environmental equilibrium is useless unless the rest of the world joins the issue. It makes little

sense to continue to cut the opportunities for the future of American children when we have decided, informally, to reduce our own population, redistribute our wealth, and downsize our global economic and military power. Diluted by unskilled workers, our old pay scale was undercut, a condition at least partially responsible for the reduction in take-home pay.

## **Opportunity**

We need leadership, a plan, and resolve to rebuild an opportunity driven economy to replace the net sum, policy-driven one we are in the process of creating. To get there we must reject two phony premises. First, government created the "new normal," a condition where everyone must expect fewer opportunities, pay, and personal growth. It is the result of a policy-driven society, and it is not predestined or normal. Second, our greatest days are behind us, an untruth, but potential self-fulfilling prophecy.

Government is now impotent and intrusive. That means business, education, entrepreneurs, and concerned citizens must work together to change America to an opportunity society. We owe it to our children and grandchildren.

American citizens will go to the polls this November. If the Democrats retain a majority, the situation, as experienced for the last six years, will continue. If the Democrats lose the Senate, the country may reach a constitutional crisis if the President takes unilateral actions. President Obama may use pen and telephone to take over America, eliminating your rights to freedoms of religion, speech, and to bear arms, and will still the voice of opposition. If my Democratic friends think this is hyperbole, please tell me, "What evidence do you have that he will respect your freedoms?"

Failure to cast a ballot is the equivalent to a yes for the Obama agenda. We have a personal choice. I will vote just as much against the Obama agenda as for a Republican, then start on the newly elected officials to build an opportunity driven society.

**Americans are at a cross roads and your vote will determine the future of America.**

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