



Psychology of Societal Stupidity: Examining Two Key Indicators

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Abstract

Human cognitive abilities differ at the individual and societal scales. The best evidence comes from instances where actions considered stupid at an individual level are embraced and perpetuated societally without any recognition of their inherent stupidity. This article explores two prominent examples of such phenomena, shedding light on the complexities of human cognition and societal behavior.

Introduction

Stupidity, with its myriad definitions and wide-ranging implications, is an inherent aspect of human behavior, shaping our existence in countless ways [1]. It permeates both individual actions and organizational structures, hindering the acquisition and processing of knowledge [2]. No individual or entity is immune to its influence, as even esteemed institutions of higher education can inadvertently reinforce patterns of stupidity [2]. Some argue that stupidity is uniquely human, distinguishing us from other species [3]. At its core, stupidity manifests as an inability to effectively acquire and process knowledge to meet human needs. While it may be evident in individual actions, its impact is most pronounced within societal frameworks. This article aims to underscore the pervasive nature of societal stupidity by examining two prominent examples of immense societal stupidity:

1. Mismanagement of societal forces, particularly the armed forces, leading to destructive outcomes.
2. Flawed selection processes for societal leaders, including presidents, senators, and representatives.

By exploring these instances, we shed light on the broader implications of societal stupidity and its profound influence on human affairs.

Stupidity as in Armed Forces

At first glance, the roles assigned to armed forces encompass a range of duties such as territorial defense, counterterrorism operations, combating drug smuggling, and addressing illegal migration. However, at its most extreme, armed forces are also tasked with the mass-killing of human beings and the destruction of cities through the application of concentrated brute force. One must question the foundational necessity driving humans to engage in such inherently self-destructive behaviors, particularly when considering the widespread devastation that arises from global conflicts involving armed forces. At its core, the existence of individuals relies on taking resources from the Earth and from other individuals. This resource taking occurs both at the individual and organizational levels. Every human depends on goods and services produced by others-whether it be a car, food, or shelter-all crafted from Earth's materials. Human societies, through millennia of experience, have arrived at the conclusion that to manage these resource-taking processes, "voluntary exchange-based resource-taking" is the most effective approach. Through voluntary exchanges, producers gain additional resources in the form of profits, while consumers obtain the goods and services they require. While resorting to brute force-such as wielding a gun-seemingly the easiest method of resource taking, the reality is that resource taking through voluntary exchanges of goods and services remains the most challenging yet beneficial approach. Individuals are more inclined to share their capabilities in the form of goods and

services when there is minimal or no threat of coercion. Ideally, the foundation for societal existence should revolve around voluntary exchanges within a framework of force-backed laws that encourage and stabilize such behavior [4].

When human life is perceived through the lens of a “society of resource takers” engaged in “voluntary exchanges,” every individual becomes invested in safeguarding their sphere of voluntary transactions. This parallels the instinct of an individual protecting their home, as each home and its contents are the result of voluntary exchanges. Consider a thought experiment. Imagine hearing about someone who, to safeguard their home, has surrounded it with sticks of dynamite rigged to explode if anyone attempts to take its contents by brute force rather than through voluntary exchange. This excessive measure seems disproportionate to the threat and impractical compared to simply installing a sturdy door with a reliable lock. Consequently, such a scenario remains purely theoretical; no sane individual would consider lining their home with explosives as a rational means of protection if voluntary exchanges were to falter. However, the dynamic shifts when we extend this analogy from the individual level to that of society and the nation. Many societies have essentially created the equivalent of a dynamite-lined house through their armed forces, particularly those armed with nuclear weapons. The mere presence of nuclear arsenals stands as a stark testament to human stupidity in managing exchange-based resource taking systems at a societal level.

The segmentation of humanity into domains protected by brute force, each structured to annihilate vast numbers of individuals if a threat is perceived to their exchange-based resource taking system, epitomizes the pinnacle of stupidity in managing daily human affairs.

In this societal framework, inhabitants of each domain perpetually identify “enemies” within other domains. It mirrors a neighborhood where every residence is surrounded by dynamite due to the labeling of neighboring houses as potential threats that may not engage in voluntary exchange-based resource taking transactions. The extent of societal stupidity becomes staggering when armed forces are justified as destroyers of enemies rather than recognizably as potential destroyers of humanity. The inherent irrationality-essentially, the presence of societal stupidity-lies in the paradoxical structure ingrained within every society, where self-destructive mechanisms coexist with structured designed to fulfil the very basic human needs for goods and services through voluntary exchange-based resource taking transactions. The absurdity of this arrangement is most pronounced in societies armed with nuclear weapons, particularly when one considers the catastrophic consequences of using nuclear weapons against other societies even without retaliation. The detonation of nuclear weapons over cities would unleash dust and soot into the upper atmosphere, forming a dense layer that obstructs sunlight. These particulates, lingering in the upper atmosphere, remain unaffected by precipitation and persist in blocking sunlight for months and even years, devastating agriculture and triggering worldwide

famine among survivors. The grim reality of a nuclear winter holds true even if only one side successfully launches a first strike and faces no retaliation; it spells doom not just for the aggressor but for all societies.

Despite the foreseeable and catastrophic consequences, societies persist in pursuing nuclear weapons to enhance their destructive capabilities. The question arises: why would humans prepare to obliterate each other’s societies in the guise of protecting exchange-based resource taking transactions, which otherwise sustain the daily needs of everyone? How is it that individuals who would never entertain the idea of living in dynamite-lined houses to safeguard against potential disruptions in voluntary exchanges collectively embrace the notion of inhabiting nuclear-weapon-lined societies?

Stupidity as in Leader Selection

Throughout history, societies have relied on the manager-managed duality (MMD) to structure the organization and utilization of human capabilities for the production and distribution of goods and services. In this system, a select few are designated as managers, entrusted with the authority to control and direct the capabilities of the larger group known as the managed, drawn from the masses. However, within this framework, both managers and the managed are susceptible to mismanagement, potentially jeopardizing the equitable provision of goods and services to meet the needs of all [5]. Clearly, in such a setup, the individuals chosen to serve as “managers” play a crucial role in ensuring the well-being of all capability sharers. Consider the following hypothetical scenario: Imagine residing in a society where, to enlist the services of a plumber for a water leak or a physician to address an illness, one simply ventures out onto the street and arbitrarily selects the first person encountered, basing the decision solely on their age. If the individual happens to be over thirty years old, they are tasked with fixing the plumbing or diagnosing and prescribing treatment for the ailment. Initially, this notion might strike one as utterly absurd. After all, nobody in their right mind would choose a plumber or a doctor by randomly selecting a passerby and only inquiring about their age. Even the most misguided individual would not resort to such a method, especially when it comes to selecting a healthcare provider.

Ironically, however, this level of discernment seems to vanish when it comes to societal-level decision-making. In the case of selecting the President of the United States, for instance, the sole requirement is to be at least 35 years old. Similarly, the same level of simplicity applies to becoming a senator (requiring one to be over 30 years old) or a representative (requiring one to be over 25 years old). In essence, what individuals would never contemplate at the individual level—such as randomly selecting a plumber, or a doctor based solely on age- they readily accept at the societal level when it comes to electing the president, senators, and representatives. When it comes to selecting societal leaders such as the president, senators, and representatives, there appears to be a glaring absence

of consideration regarding whether the individual possesses the necessary training and education to manage crucial aspects of societal functioning. Unlike professions such as medicine, where rigorous training and education are prerequisites for acceptance, there is no equivalent "schooling requirement" for those entrusted with overseeing the manager-managed duality within society. There is no assessment of whether they have received training in managing force, whether in the form of armed forces or laws, or if they have been equipped to handle the complexities of managing voluntary exchange-based resource taking systems (the economy), or even if they have a deep understanding of societal psychology and social dynamics. While a doctor undergoes years of rigorous education and practical training to attain competence and acceptance within their field, individuals tasked with leading society are not held to the same standard. This discrepancy serves as a poignant indicator of the profound level of stupidity ingrained in human behavior when it comes to societal governance and leadership selection processes.

Concluding View

The presence of nuclear-weapon-lined societies and the lax criteria for societal leadership selection-such as the mere age requirement of over 35 years-underscore human limitations in processing societal knowledge, a cognitive shortfall readily referred to as "stupidity." These are just two of several indicators that highlight this phenomenon, with countless others remaining

unaddressed. Consider the distressing fact that over one billion individuals worldwide endure deplorable living conditions, a reality tacitly accepted by societies as "normal." In light of such evidence, one is compelled to question whether humans possess an inherent cognitive deficit in navigating the complexities of armed forces and the selection of societal leaders. Could it be that humans are intrinsically ill-equipped to address the societal dimensions of survival and well-being? Such inquiries prompt a deeper exploration into the psychological underpinnings of stupidity inherent in our collective decision-making processes and societal norms.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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