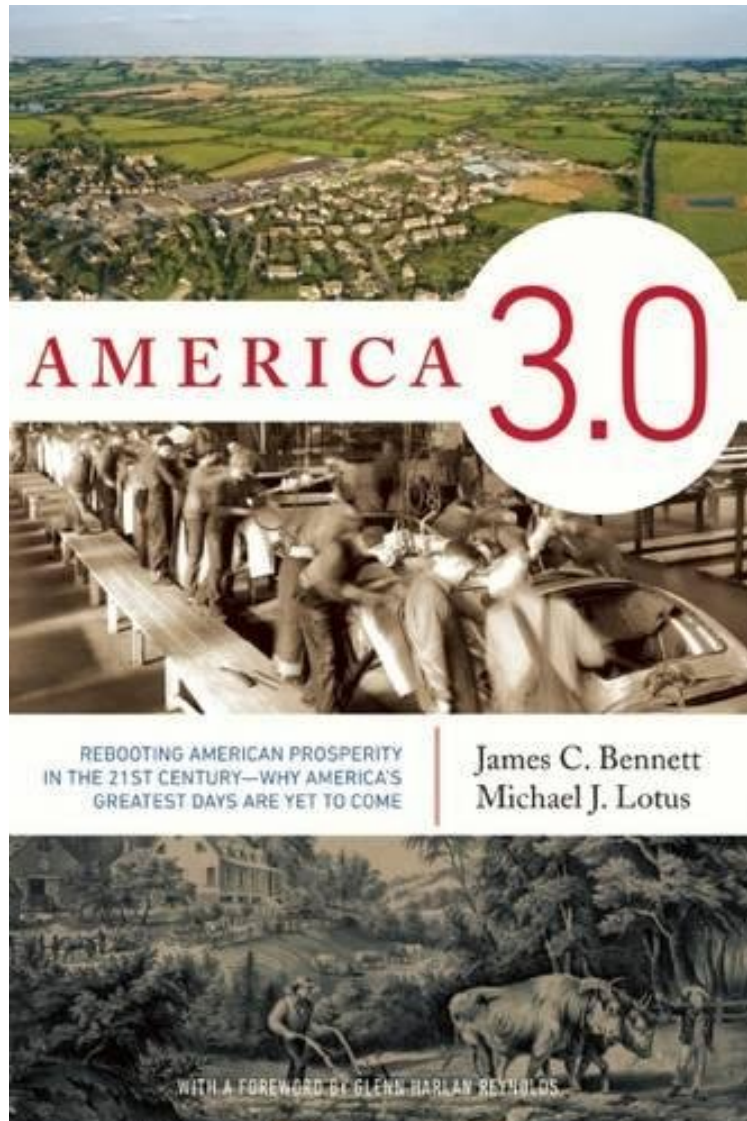


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James C. Bennett, Michael J. Lotus
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James C. Bennett, Michael J. Lotus : America 3.0: Rebooting American Prosperity in the 21st Century Why Americas Greatest Days Are Yet to Come before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised America 3.0: Rebooting American Prosperity in the 21st Century Why Americas Greatest Days Are Yet to Come:

56 of 56 people found the following review helpful. What a Political Tract Should Be By T. Greer It is unusual for me to read a book aimed at popular conservative audiences. I am something of a disaffected conservative. Crony capitalism and government overreach have proved to be bipartisan endeavors, and I have long lost faith that the Republican party can ever be more than an organ of America's governing elite. Outside of the beltway the broader currents of mainstream conservatism are so full of angry sound and righteous fury (and nothing else) that I have long stopped paying close attention them. The movement is in desperate need of a clearer vision and more compelling purpose. America 3.0 is the book to provide it. James Bennet and Michael Lotus get everything right that all of the other popular commentators get wrong. In contrast to pundits incessantly focused on the character flaws of the opposition and controversies of the hour, these authors focus on the broad political principles and broad political context - "centuries into the past and decades into the future" (xxv). Where most popular political creeds are shallow, filled more with hype and platitudes than meaningful evidence, America 3.0 is both respectful in tone and deeply researched (and none the less readable for it!). Few popular political works have any real historical grounding; America 3.0 possesses this in spades. Even more impressively, the authors manage to convey both their sense of history and their firm belief in American exceptionalism without any of the reflexive chest-pounding sometimes mistaken as patriotism in conservative corners. (As they write in the introduction, "We are attempting to avoid setinmentality in this book, and look at the record in a cold light. As we write things are not good in America. Being realistic is a matter of urgency (xxiv).") Most impressive of all is the political platform they lay out. In age where conservatives are too often defined by what they are against, America 3.0 paints a compelling picture of what they should be *for*. All in all, a breath of fresh air. The basic argument of America 3.0 is that the United States is in the midst of a epochal demographic, political, and economic transition. This has happened before. The world of the early American colonists, revolutionaries, and antebellum pioneers was vastly different from our own. Their America (named America 1.0 in the book) was a nation of independent farmers; men did not have "jobs" working for corporations and businesses as we now think of them, but survived off what they could harvest, craft, and sell. Government was mostly a local affair; larger government structures existed, of course, but their impact on daily life was negligible. In comparison to today's society, there was hardly any government at all. This society was not fated to last. A whole host of factors - urbanization, industrialization, changes in communication technology - made old political and economic structures obsolete. The transition to new forms was dirty and painful, but by the early 20th century the United States was reborn into America 2.0, land of big business, big government, big labor, - in short, big everything. In this America economies of scale, a rigid system of hierarchy and meritocracy, and mass production was the path to success. This was the America that defeated totalitarianism during the Second World War, became the center of world wide technological innovation and scientific advancement, and transformed into the largest and strongest economy of humanity's history. But that is changing. The economic and demographic underpinnings of America 2.0 are eroding away. The coming order is what the authors call "America 3.0." The authors chart the course of the future carefully. Their care is seen in the structure of the book itself; though the work is devoted to the future, six of its nine chapters are devoted to the past. They suggest that in order to understand the future (and by extension, the policies we must adopt to succeed in it), we must first understand the past. The authors goes back very far in their search for understanding America's unique institutions and attitudes, beginning their search with the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain c. 550 AD. I was delighted to find that much of this analysis rests of the work of the French anthropologist Emmanuel Todd. (I came across Mr. Todd's work (The Explanation of Ideology: Family Structure and Social Systems (Family, Sexuality and Social Relations in Past Times)) a few months ago, and concluded immediately that he is the most under-rated "big idea" thinker in the field of world history. Todd's focus is family structure; the observation that drives his work is that family life is vastly different from one region and culture to another. His big idea is that all of this matters. Family structure is the foundation of cultural attitudes and expectations, and by logical extension the world's different political and economic structures closely mirror the families inside them.) Americans live in "Absolute Nuclear Families." In these families, children are expected to pack up and leave when they become adults. Parents have no legal control of who their children marry, and their children have no legal obligations to care for them. Parents can choose to give what they will to whom they will; while inheritance may be split up among children equally, it is not required by law or social custom. You do not marry your cousins. This all seems very normal to Americans but on the global scale it is actually quite rare. There are only a few other countries - Australia, England, Holland - whose families are structured similarly. (Think: to most of the world, the phrase "empty nester" makes no sense!) Interestingly, the countries with this type of family structure are consistently found to be the most individualistic on the Earth. This is the "deep structure" of American exceptionalism. In comparison to other countries and cultures, Americans are far more mobile, competitive, non-egalitarian, individualistic, selfish, enterprising, and dedicated to religion and volunteer work. Family structure does not explain all of this (the authors devote a chapter to the way England's medieval and enlightenment institutions - such as common law - shape American practices to this day), but it is an undeniable part of the bedrock upon which American culture rests. These roots run deep. They persist from generation to generation. They pose a practical limit to the type of political system America can adopt. This is why European style social democracy could never catch on in America (it is also why

Americans have had such difficulty exporting 'American style' democracy to countries like Afghanistan, whose society is built around the clan). Luckily for us, the authors claim, the economic, demographic, and political trends of our time are leading to a world where the autonomous, enterprising, and individualistic features of American society will be a competitive asset. This transition is inevitable. The 2.0 model is broken. Labor unions are gone. Public programs are supported with a debt the government cannot possibly hope to pay back. Federal regulations and taxation are too complex to understand and rigged by the wealthy and powerful for their own advantage. Big business cannot offer the job security they once did. The executive branch is oversized, the military industrial complex out of control, and the legislative branch is closer to K-street lobbyists than the people who elected them. America has the largest prison population in the world but bails out and excuses criminals on Wall Street. The whole thing is a plutocratic mess of chilling proportions. But the system is not sustainable. What cannot go on, will not. Americans trying to shore up unions, the welfare state, or stable corporate monopolies like the kind we had in the 1940s and 50s are doomed to fail, having no more hope of bringing back America 2.0 than William Jennings Bryant did of restoring America 1.0 in his day. The future is coming. The proposals in this book "are meant to reduce the difficulty of the transition (187)." I will not summarize the predictions the authors make for the new America at great length - they do that themselves in an entertaining chapter devoted to visiting "America in 2040." It is enough to say that in many ways the new America will be closer in image to America 1.0 than 2.0. As with America 1.0, "the entire concept of 'job' is going to away" (187), as more and more Americans work from home in a manner not too different from their Colonial forefathers. 3-D printing and additive manufacturing will make any home a factory; production of goods will be as decentralized as production of software is today. American political structures will follow suit, and the authors go so far as to suggest that states like California, Texas, and New York may split into more manageable units. I found this section of immense interest; the urgent need for political decentralization is a common theme of my writings. The authors agree with this sentiment, but go much further than I have, suggesting a series of reforms that move talk of decentralization from the realm of abstract political principle to concrete action. The book is worth reading for these twenty pages on decentralization alone. Key to the program is the goal to "push as many contentious issues as possible to the most basic local level as possible, and then reducing the transaction costs as low as possible (229)." In other words, let each community decide its own policy on social issues but make it as easy as possible for people to switch from one community to another. If state senators in Connecticut want to ban the ownership of assault rifles - let them! If a small town in Utah wants to require every teacher to carry a gun with them to school - let them! If you do not like the policies in your community, move to somewhere new. The end result will be drastic ideological sorting, as people move to the communities who have the laws and services they want their government to have. Mr. Lotus and Bennett expect the shift from America 2.0 to 3.0 to be long and difficult. Indeed, implementing the reforms needed to make America 3.0 succeed will be "hellishly difficult (234)." Nevertheless, the authors are "betting on the positive scenario (22)" that the reform will happen without any systematic collapse. I am less sanguine. My pessimism reflects something the book seems to pass over: the drastic decline in American "social capital," or the social networks and friendships that allow people to work together. Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* is the classic account of American social capital and its precipitous decline in the latter half of the 20th century. Since "the greatest generation" that fought in WWII, each generation of Americans that has followed has been less likely to vote, to participate in community groups like the PTA, Boy Scouts, or even neighborhood bowling leagues, to give charitable service, attend Church, have dinner parties, or trust strangers than the generation before it. Socially isolated Americans of this type will have trouble doing anything "hellishly difficult" for social capital is what effective political movements are built upon. Putnam includes a wonderful chapter in his book on the progressive movement, which was the movement that engineered America's transition to the 2.0 model. Putnam points out that the progressive movement was one of the few true "grass roots" political movements in American history. Central to their success in the 1900s and 1910s was the dense network of reading groups, charity clubs, churches, and political committees they created or joined during the 1880s and 1890s. (Most of America's famous civic groups today - Big Brothers, Sierra Club, NAACP, the Red Cross, the PTA, Rotary, and many more - were founded in the thirty years between 1898 and 1910). Putnam argues convincingly that the progressive movement could not have happened without this explosion in civic activism. The progressives did not just found the political order of America 2.0 - they founded the civic associations and institutions of American 2.0 as well. Lotus and Bennett place the high point of America 2.0 at 1960 - this is too was the high water mark for American civic engagement. The civic organizations (and the lifestyle they promoted) lasted the duration of America 2.0, and have fallen into decline with it. Given the excellent treatment of the of America's economic and political insitutions, the precious little the authors had to say about America's religious and civic institutions was disappointing. More importantly, they have little to say about how to rekindle America's civic spirit or what forms America 3.0's civic associations might take. This is a critical omission. If past American political experience is anything to go by, then bottom-up reforms cannot and will not happen without the kind of social capital that conquers hellish tasks. My hope is that those who read this book will have their own ideas on how to bring a civic renewal to America 3.0. The ideas in the book - particularly the parts about decentralization - are worth organizing for. But enough on that theme. America 3.0 is an excellent book. It is an

example of a historically grounded and thoroughly researched book designed to reach popular audiences - in other words, what all political tracts should be like. Even those who disagree with the authors will find the style and substance of this work admirable. 5 stars. NOTE: America 3.0 has a 28 page bibliographic essay and a 29 page index. It does not include charts, maps or a chronology. [This essay is a slightly condensed version of the review the author wrote for the blog The Scholar's Stage.] 12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. An excellent analysis of American history. By Michael T Kennedy The book seems to be a followup to Bennett's *The Anglosphere Challenge: Why the English-Speaking Nations Will Lead the Way in the Twenty-First Century*, another excellent analysis of history. It opens with a chapter predicting what America will look like in 2040. The emphasis of the entire book is the American adoption of English traditional society and, before that, the Germanic tribes from which that society evolved. Among the predictions is the breakup of some states into smaller, more culturally uniform entities. Technology is discussed including new developments like 3D printers and additive manufacturing. This may lead to a new manufacturing base although one needing few manual workers. New forms of governance are predicted including state alliances that share some social trends and even some former state assets like universities. There is a chapter on characteristics of Americans that suggest these changes, including what they call "The American Nuclear Family," which is derived from the similar family structure of England going back to the Germanic tribes that settled Britain after the Romans left. This section is, to me, the most interesting part of the book. It melds nicely with Michael Barone's *Our First Revolution: The Remarkable British Upheaval That Inspired America's Founding Fathers*, which the authors agree was critical in establishing the Anglo-American form of government. The next section, beginning with chapter 5, is called "America 1.0" and summarizes our history from the colonies to the first stages of the Civil War and its antecedents. It is a very nice summary of trends in our history. With the rise of the railroads and the Industrial Revolution, we enter "America 2.0." The authors make the point that the organization of this phase of our history was based on the experience of the Union Army in the Civil War. There was no other way to manage a large enterprise like a steel company or a railroad. America 2.0 was organized around large bureaucracies including the US military in World War II. The authors don't mention it but Peter Drucker's book, *Concept of the Corporation*, which appeared in 1944, was the first analysis of these large bureaucracies and how they should be managed. His study was based on analysis of General Motors, the epitome of war time production. After the war, the US faced no international competition for decades and so, what the authors call "gross policy errors" by the war time generation, were not noticed in the postwar euphoria. The "Greatest Generation" was inclined to trade individualism for security, although a few books like *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, were critical of this trend. By the 1960s, the children of the war generation, the Baby Boomers, were rebelling and disillusioned by the Vietnam War among other things. Here, I part company a bit with the authors as I see less individualism than fecklessness in this generation. I went to medical school with some of them and watched drug use ruin a few lives. Jimmy Carter is described as misunderstanding his election as permission to move farther toward European social democracy. Carter, in my estimation, was less misguided than his far left party members after Richard Nixon was deposed but he was ineffective in trying to stop the pendulum as it swung toward anarchy. At least he hired Paul Volker. The coming financial crisis is described as "The Big Haircut" as the US is forced to renege on the unrealistic promises of Lyndon Johnson and the "GI Generation." We now come to the authors' plan to save the Union and restore American greatness. I wish I were more optimistic about this section of the book. They do outline some steps to take if anyone will take them. They are critical of both the Left and Right, although the prescriptions lean well toward the libertarian right, as I do. The analysis of American history is worth the price of the book and the time to read it. I wish the recommendations for recovery were more likely to be adopted. There are some excellent points about future trends, as in medicine for example. I like some of the suggestions for defense policy. The whole thing is a nice exercise in predicting the future. I just wish it would happen that way. I previously reviewed George Friedman's *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century*. I think I like this one better and highly recommend it. 13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. No doom and gloom here, our best days are ahead! By J. Scott Shipman Amidst the doom and gloom of many in the United States, Lotus and Bennett provide a bright view based on our history. The power of American exceptionalism, they assert, is the nuclear family and I believe they are right. They provide ample evidence from our history to explain our uniqueness among peoples, and do so in an engaging style. The introductory chapter, *America 2040* is a clever guided tour of possibilities. I didn't agree with all their conclusions, but gazing into a crystal ball is just that. The point is they offer alternative solutions to some of the toughest issues of our time (add abortion to that list). For a bibliography, they provide an excellent and ample Bibliographic Essay that is impressive and comprehensive. Chapter by chapter, Lotus and Bennett explain their work's sources in entertaining detail. Ten years in the making, *America 3.0* has my strongest recommendation---it will make you think of alternatives to the status quo that are on the side of Liberty. Well done!

America's greatest days are yet to come. We are in a painful transition period. Our government is crushingly expensive, failing at its basic functions, and unable to keep its promises. It does not work and it cannot continue as it is. But the inevitable end of big government does not mean the end of America. It only means the end of one phase of American life. America is poised to enter a new era of freedom and prosperity. The cultural roots of the American people go

back at least fifteen centuries, and make us individualistic, enterprising, and liberty-loving. The Founding generation of the United States lived in a world of family farms and small businesses, America 1.0. This world faded away and was replaced by an industrialized world of big cities, big business, big labor unions and big government, America 2.0. Now America 2.0 is outdated and crumbling, while America 3.0 is struggling to be born. This new world will bring immense productivity, rapid technological progress, greater scope for individual and family-scale autonomy, and a leaner and strictly limited government. America has made one major transition already, and industrial America became an economic colossus. We are now making a new transition, which will surprise many Americans, and astonish the world.

About the Author James C. Bennett is a writer and entrepreneur. He was co-founder of two private space transportation companies and other technology ventures. He has written extensively on technology, culture, and society. He is best known for his writing on the concept of the Anglosphere, the emerging global community of English-speaking peoples. He is the author of *The Anglosphere Challenge* (Rowman Littlefield, 2004), *The Third Anglosphere Century* (Heritage Foundation, 2007), a former columnist for United Press International, and has contributed to *The New Criterion*, *National*, *The National Interest*, *The New Atlantis*, *National Post* (Canada), and *The Daily Telegraph* (London). Michael J. Lotus writes as Lexington Green for the Chicago Boyz blog, on history, politics and books. He is the editor and lead contributor to *The Clausewitz Roundtable* (Ever Victorious Press, 2013). He is the 2012 winner of the Explorers Foundation Cobden-Bright award for his contribution to the Anglosphere. He has a BA in economics from the University of Chicago, and a JD from Indiana University, Bloomington. He practices law in Chicago.