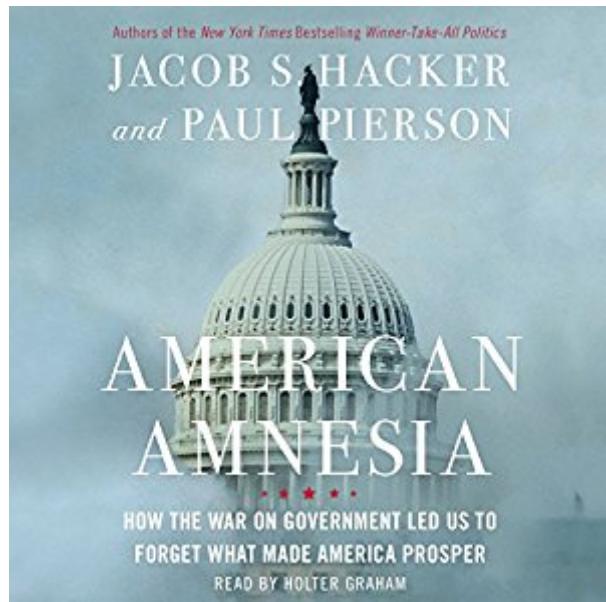


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American Amnesia: How The War On Government Led Us To Forget What Made America Rich



Synopsis

From the groundbreaking author team behind the best-selling Winner-Take-All Politics, a timely and topical work that examines what's good for American business and what's good for Americans - and why those interests are misaligned. In Winner-Take-All Politics, Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson explain how political elites have enabled and propelled plutocracy. They trace the economic and political history of the United States over the last century and show how a viable mixed economy has long been the dominant engine of America's prosperity. Like every other prospering democracy, the United States developed a mixed economy that channeled the spirit of capitalism into strong growth and healthy social development. In this bargain, government and business were as much partners as rivals. Public investments in education, science, transportation, and technology laid the foundation for broadly based prosperity. Programs of economic security and progressive taxation provided a floor of protection, and business focused on the pursuit of profit - and government addressed needs business could not. The mixed economy was the most important social innovation of the 20th century. It spread a previously unimaginable level of broad prosperity. It enabled steep increases in education, health, longevity, and economic security. And yet, extraordinarily, it is anathema to many current economic and political elites. And as the advocates of antigovernment free-market fundamentalism have gained power, they are hell-bent on scrapping the instrument of nearly a century of unprecedented economic and social progress. In American Amnesia, Hacker and Pierson explain how - and why - they must be stopped.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There are too many books being written about the purported evils of 'big government' - ignoring the fact that China has shown how their much more pervasive government has lifted millions out of poverty faster than anyone expected, how every other developed nation has much lower healthcare costs (equal or better patient outcomes) - thanks again to greater involvement by the national government, and similar results with K-12 education. A key element - government limiting the freedom of Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' to make self-interested decisions that undermine society overall. (Even Adam Smith identified many instances where rational actors producing their own self-interest produced bad outcomes such as unchecked monopolies, insufficient infrastructure, etc. Ironically, this limitation of freedom for some also increases freedom of action for others - eg. more information on patient outcomes gives patients more informed and meaningful choices, less free trade allows Main Street to flourish - at the expense of Wall Street, restrictions on today's pollution/Global Warming allows more options for those in the future. Jacob contends that conservatives tell us the U.S. got rich in spite of government, when the truth is closer to the opposite. He also contends that we need a government strong enough to rise above narrow private interests on behalf of broader concerns, and that we suffer from mass historical forgetting, an 'American Amnesia.' What the "geniuses (who) went to Philadelphia" wanted remains the subject of endless debate - fueled by the ambiguities of the compromises they forged. However, no one contends that James Madison, known as the Father of the Constitution, went to Philadelphia seeking gridlock.

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