



# **The Battle: How the Fight between Free Enterprise and Big Government Will Shape America's Future**

*Arthur C. Brooks*

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America faces a new culture war. It is not a war about guns, abortions, or gays--rather it is a war against the creeping changes to our entrepreneurial culture, the true bedrock of who we are as a people. The new culture war is a battle between free enterprise and social democracy. Many Americans have forgotten the evils of socialism and the predations of the American Great Society's welfare state programs. But, as American Enterprise Institute's president Arthur C. Brooks reveals in *The Battle*, the forces for social democracy have returned with a vengeance, expanding the power of the state to a breathtaking degree.

*The Battle* offers a plan of action for the defense of free enterprise; it is at once a call to arms and a crucial redefinition of the political and moral gulf that divides Right and Left in America today. The battle is on, and nothing less than the soul of America is at stake.

## **The Battle: How the Fight between Free Enterprise and Big Government Will Shape America's Future Details**

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Author : Arthur C. Brooks

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# From Reader Review **The Battle: How the Fight between Free Enterprise and Big Government Will Shape America's Future** for online ebook

## Angie says

I didn't enjoy the first chapter at all...mainly because it reminded me of everything that's going wrong in the government right now, specifically in how it relates to the economy. But after that, it got better. For me, the author related what it means to be an American, the idealist American...you know, that hard-working, build-your-own-success-story kind of American. And I found that I was feeling patriotism for my country again...(too bad it's not lasting...).

And it gave some practical advice on how to get that America back. I have to say I really agreed with the author's statements, especially about free enterprise.

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## Nate says

Brooks provides historical, economic, and political arguments for the application of policies that promote a free-market system and lauds America for its success because of its application of free markets in every-day life. Parts of the book become a little too politicized in a right vs. left mindset, but the overall message of his book is the strength of America is built upon free market values where everybody has the opportunity to work and make something of themselves; America is equal opportunity, but not equal outcome system. The results of a free market system will make some more successful than others and Brooks argues this is for the benefit of all because it is what enables America as a nation to exist and to succeed. The move toward an equal outcome for all with heavy welfare and high taxes will only stifle economic growth and lead to social and economic problems in line with many European countries.

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## Vince Westin says

This book does a great job of describing the choice we are facing as a country: free enterprise or big government. It also points out where many of the supposed benefits of big government have been shown to be cataclysmic failures. Mr. Brooks works from facts, analyzing trends and results. His conclusions are very interesting.

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## Jon says

I liked Brooks' book *Who Really Cares?*, largely because he had a lot of primary data behind his claims, and because he seemed uninterested in political cliches. I also liked Brooks when I heard him speak in person. However, in *The Battle* he's predictably partisan (as the subtitle indicates). The financial crisis was all because of government. And so is sadness.

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## **John says**

Highly partisan but full of interesting data. Makes the case that there is a 70% majority in the United States in favour of free markets and small government against a 30% minority in favour of more government intervention in the economy. Argues in favour of the former and claims that advocates for free markets must reclaim the vocabulary of 'morals' from the left.

If you agree with Brooks' arguments you will find much ammunition here. If you don't, you are unlikely to be convinced.

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## **Schuyler says**

It's nice to read something short after months of Atlas Shrugged.

I guess it's silly to be surprised by the tone of a book titled The Battle, but sometimes (most of the time) the tone was too much for me to bear. If you can get past that, and don't mind reading the phrase "30 percent coalition" five times per page, there's a lot of good stuff on free enterprise and happiness here. Instead of the book, I'd probably recommend just reading the Washington Post article version of the book:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/...>

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## **Christopher Obert says**

I agree with author Arthur C. Brooks that "America faces a new culture war!" His book states this battle will define the values of this nation for years to come and it up to us to choose a side in this battle. I am part of what Mr. Brooks calls the "70 percent majority" not the "30 percent coalition." The 70% is a group of people that believes in Free Enterprise and the Freedom of Opportunity not big government and socialist type entitlements. Regardless of which side you are on, the book does ask some interesting questions and points out some of the problems that have plagued presidential administrations for the last 20 years. The book is an easy read and should be read by everyone, because sooner or later it will be time to choose sides!

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## **David Holtkamp says**

I feel like I should add a caveat to this. Arthur Brooks is the President of the American Enterprise Institute, and I am working directly for him. Part of my responsibilities is to read all his books. So, this isn't one that I'd normally read, but I'll be neck-deep in conservative ideology for the next 4 months...not that that's necessarily a bad thing, but it's not something (nor is reading this type of book) that I would willfully do of my own accord.

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## Arvin says

Short review: I do not recommend this book (go ahead and read if you want, as I believe in freedom of choice, but don't say I didn't warn you). This book takes some interesting data from recent scientific studies, and then wraps/twists it in ideological name-calling nonsense. I would go as far to describe it similar as a modern-day social Darwinism argument.

Long review: So before Christmas, I was driving home from work one Friday night, turned on the radio (happened to be on NPR since I listen to Prairie Home Companion and Car Talk) and caught part of what sounded like a very interesting talk on how "Money does not buy Happiness". In that talk he argues that in general, government redistribution of wealth is an ineffective means of increasing the happiness of its citizen and that the government should only provide limited monetary assistance (i.e. don't let anyone starve from lack of food, don't let anyone freeze due to lack of shelter, and don't let anyone die due to lack of medical care - but not much more than that).

First, he points to a study that shows Americans today are no happier than Americans in 1970... even though economically we are much "richer" than we were four decades ago (we can buy significantly more food, clothing, cars, and electronics and in general have a much larger percentage of our income free to spend on non-essential/luxury goods). However, we don't see this as us being "rich", just as the products being "cheap."

He also shows that while in general, citizen of richer countries are happier, after a certain level of wealth, the relationship disappears... so you can have people from poorer countries actually being happier than people from richer countries.

Then he shows that people who are explicitly given money do not on average turn out to be much happier. Here he cites data from lottery winners, people with unexpected inheritances, and of course people who have been giving explicit money by the government (welfare, food stamps, etc).

At the end, he proposes a few things that data has shown to improve happiness. The first is a sense of community (noting that all the countries that were poor, but happy... general had a strong cultural identity and community). The second is a sense of relative wealth (i.e. people are happier to be earning 50k when everyone else is earning 25k than earning 100k and having everyone else earn 125k). And the final thing is this thing called "earned worth" meaning that people really like seeing that their jobs actually have a tangible effect on the world. It could be the teacher who sees his students learn and thrive in the future. It could be a skilled craftsman that "sees" his finished products go out the door (this is different from assembly line factory worker are given a half-finished product, add something small to it, and then see a still-incomplete product move along out of their site unfinished). I found his point well argued and seemly well-supported and so just before I boarded my plane to visit my parents I bought the book on my new Kindle using some free credits I got (was the first book I bought on the Kindle).

So about a week later, while sick at my parents house due to a bout of stomach flu, I began reading it in earnest... only to discover the foreword was written by Newt Gingrich who said that this would be "one of the pivotal books around which American history turned."

After double-checking that I had gotten the right book, I shrugged my shoulders and kept reading... to discover that America is divided into two groups... there is the "free enterprise, work ethic, opportunity oriented majority (the 70% majority)" and the... "socialist, redistributionist minority (the 30% coalition)"...

and it kind of went downhill from there... although there were a "few" middle chapters that rehashed the details from NPR talk I heard, it concludes by encouraging people to "take back America" from the "kulturekampf" (in italics) whose "socialist, redistributionist, social experiment ways" (throw in some more negative sounding buzzwords) is destroying the soul of America...

Well... the experience was educational. In hindsight, I should have looked up the book description on Amazon... but in my defense, it was my first book on the Kindle - I bought it quickly without reading the book description (also this would prove to be a very useful lesson as I read the book cover description of "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mom" before commenting about that book sight unread). I did give about \$6 to Arthur C. Brooks... but that amount of money doesn't help him that much and on the flip side I had the opportunity to learn and do some critical thinking against viewpoints that were not my own. I see it as the equivalent of watching a movie at the theatres (oh no... I just exposed my elitist true colors by my spelling of "theater") where you don't know if you are going to like it or not.

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### **Ben says**

This book is an exploration of political philosophy using empirical methods. Brooks gives an excellent, succinct and accessible summary and analysis of the american political situation since the 2008 financial crisis. It is based heavily on poll data, history, and lucid financial analysis and it defines beautifully the practical and moral case for the American free enterprise system and culture.

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### **Tara Brabazon says**

Oh dear. The big print is a dead giveaway. But once more academics are part of a left-wing conspiracy to make citizens ... ummmm ... think a bit more.

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### **Sheila says**

It was interesting about the middle of the book but than got repetitive and boring. More reflection of Atlas Shrugged in modern times but not well researched. More reference to third party research and studies. Would not read such titles unless it is better researched, and edited. Most of what read is what I already know and have had discussion with family and friends. America has dysfunctional government. Lives of normal people are at stake while Government is preoccupied in self preservation only. Very sad. America needs to clean its house before preaching to the world

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### **Jeff Raymond says**

4 stars for ideas, 2.5 for execution. A very short, but concise, book on what's really fueling the current political climate and how free market advocates can fight the battle. I get a feeling that a lot of these books hitting the market these days are geared more toward Tea Party types with no political experience. That might be why this felt so unnecessary to me.

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## **Nickie says**

70/30 concept. 70% believe in free enterprise, if that is the right wording to use. Though I do believe I want my kids to be free to pursue any vocation they can create for themselves, so I must fall into this 70%. The 30% are those who want more government control. Statism.

This little book was certainly enough to motivate me to be more encouraging with our children's bread business.

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## **Tyler says**

"The Battle" by Arthur Brooks explores the on going disagreement between free enterprise and big government. Brooks explains the issue with great clarity. He clarifies that free markets(enterprise) allows individuals to lift themselves up out of poverty. On the other hand, monetary redistribution might help the poor for a moment, but in the long run will cause them not to work hard. Overall, a great insight into an important problem facing the nation.

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