



The Synthesis Revolution:

New Thinking for a
New Era of Prosperity

By **Thomas A. Rossman**

The human race has created more progress and advancement in science, technology, medicine, wealth and overall well-being in the last 200 years than in all previous historical periods combined. This unparalleled achievement of the modern age was the direct result of our ability to overcome the narrow, one-dimensional thinking of previous eras and embrace new, more effective ways to think about the world and new methods of interaction and analysis. By shifting our focus to improving the world around us, progress and prosperity began a steep upward trajectory.

The Synthesis Revolution applies the innovative and results-based perspective of perpetual improvement and ascent to America's current challenges and systematically lays out the process of substantially improving the quality and effectiveness of our political and economic decision-making. Since the founding of our great nation, one of the defining qualities of the United States has been our ability and willingness to "repair our faults."

Over the past few decades, however, our political dynamic, the way in which we make crucial decisions about the form and function of our government, has become increasingly held captive to the flawed ideas and failed policies of the past. Political parties, ideologies and special interests have all combined to form substantial barriers to solving problems and realizing our potential, both as individuals and as a nation.

In an era of increasing polarization, our current discourse is often said to produce a great deal of heat but very little light. The Synthesis Revolution is a transformational movement that provides a mechanism to convert the energy

naturally created by that heat into the illumination needed to guide our dialogue toward the new thinking and new methods of perpetual improvement and ascent.

Over the past several centuries, innovation, productivity and inclusiveness have been the defining qualities of societies that embraced modernity and all of the corresponding benefits. And even though in many areas America continues to lead the world and is positioned far better than any other nation for the future, in several key areas such as primary and secondary education, inefficient tax and financial systems, and exploding debt and unfunded liabilities of government, we are losing ground in an increasingly competitive world.

The Synthesis Revolution provides both the understanding and the toolkit to significantly shift our political and economic dynamic back to solving difficult problems, implementing durable reforms, and creating new pathways upward to perpetual improvement and ascent. America currently possesses all of the knowledge and the necessary will to create a new era of prosperity, what we currently lack is a “new vision of a better America” that can turn those qualities into reality. For us to do that, we need to, once again, engage in a Revolution.



ABOUT TOM ROSSMAN

Tom Rossman is an emerging global thought leader in improving political and economic decision making and has spoken at conferences around the world on politics and economics. His forthcoming book, *Forming A More Perfect Union*, is an updated social contract for America in the 21st century.

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The Synthesis Revolution

An Overview

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One of the driving forces behind America's enormous success over the past two and a half centuries has been the unshakable confidence and belief that we can improve the world around us and create a better life for ourselves and our children. Each time difficulties have emerged to impede this process, Americans have risen to the challenge and found a way to solve the problem and continue our ascent as a nation. The key to overcoming all of the diverse roadblocks to rising progress and prosperity is our ability to productively reconcile various interests and conceive new pathways to success.

Today, yet again, we find ourselves at a major inflection point that is threatening our ability to improve society, both on an individual level and as a nation. The evidence is unmistakably clear that our current political and economic dynamic, the way that we make critical decisions about the form and functioning of our governing institutions, is not working nearly as productively or as effectively as it should. The result of this ongoing dysfunction is the lowering of our potential both as individuals and as a nation. The bottom-line is that unless we significantly reform this clearly flawed process of decision making and failed leadership, we cannot alter and will not change the consistently poor results emanating from our governing institutions and those presently holding positions of power.

This challenge is quite substantial, but not as daunting as it may seem. The reason for such optimism is that one of the defining characteristics of America has always been our ability to 'repair our faults', as Alexis de Tocqueville observed nearly two centuries ago. Each time America has been confronted with a difficult inflection point, we have met the challenge and the productive reconciliation that emerged then provided the foundation for the next era of ascending prosperity.

Today, our political and economic discourse has lost much of that productive focus on solving difficult problems and generating insightful leadership that was the centerpiece of earlier debates. In fact, there are significant barriers that we have allowed to become embedded in our political dynamic that prevent us from focusing on solutions and embracing a 'new vision of a better America,' for both ourselves and for future generations.

As Albert Einstein observed, “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” To repair the faults of our current political and economic decision making, we need a new way to think about these challenges and a new method of interaction that would enable us to resolve these impasses and create new forms of perpetual improvement, as the Founders envisioned.

The Synthesis Revolution is the mechanism by which we can accomplish such a monumental shift in thinking and interaction to focus our political and economic debate on solving complex problems and the overall reform and improvement our society. The Synthesis Revolution will unite the vast majority of Americans who are tired of the failed ideas and failed leadership that have become so commonplace over the past several decades and that continue to weigh on our prosperity and make us far less competitive in an increasingly globalized and connected world.

The first step of the Synthesis Revolution is to thoroughly understand the origins of modern progress and prosperity. In other words, identify what has worked in the past and what has not. In the past 200 years alone, humanity has created more advances in health, science, technology, wealth, longevity and well being, than in the entire rest of human history combined. This enormous leap in human achievement began with the new thinking and new methods of objective observation and analysis which brought to an end more than a millennia of narrow, one-dimensional reliance on flawed thinking and entrenched superstition. The new thinking and new method of the early modern period established true knowledge of the real world, which could then be built upon cooperatively and cumulatively to exponentially accelerate progress in science, medicine, and technology, as well as political, social and economic conditions. The Founding Fathers drew heavily from this new thinking and new method to construct the enduring foundations of our great nation and the world has continued to benefit ever since.

The second step in the Synthesis Revolution is recognizing and overcoming the existing barriers to our perpetual improvement as a nation. The three major impediments of the political dynamic currently lowering our potential are ideology, partisan tribalism and special interests. Ideology was originally conceived in the late eighteenth century as a useful tool for applying the new Enlightenment thinking to benefit society. However, overtime ideologies of all types were converted from useful mechanisms of pursuing progress into the supposed realization of progress itself. This idealization process enshrined a

rigidly inflexible worldview that promoted polarization and division, rather than productive reconciliation, or ‘synthesis’, of different perspectives.

Since the beginning of Western thought in ancient Greece, there have always been different perspectives on how to approach the process of discovery and analysis of knowledge. Over time, societies that have been most successful were the ones that remained open to new ideas from all sources and were able to flexibly adapt to new and changing circumstances. In these successful societies, when one perspective or system of thought became unquestioningly dominant, stagnation and decline were never far behind. In our current dynamic, we have two idealized systems of thought, one on the Left and the other on the Right, that are locked in a destructive clash that is neither producing solutions, nor creating new pathways to improvement.

The second major barrier is partisan tribalism, or as George Washington called it in his famous farewell address of 1796, the ‘Spirit of Party.’ Our first President presciently warned of fierce divisions and of the destructive nature of two groups endlessly competing for power within a zero-sum framework. Today, we have realized the degradation of our debate that this power struggle produces and we must overcome it, if we are to return to the productive reconciliation and focus on solutions that Presidents Washington, Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt and other great America leaders exemplified.

The third major barrier distorting our political discourse is special interests. From the eighteenth century on, the concept of individualism has shifted and changed as society evolved, but one thing that has not changed is the tendency for certain individuals or small groups to pursue their interests despite the wider damage they inflict on other individuals within society and the nation as a whole. In addition to Washington, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton warned of this in the Federalist Papers. Their vision was that prudently constructed institutions, run by insightful leaders, could check and balance these potentially negative forces. Another visionary thinker of that time, Adam Smith, also pointed out the danger of unrestrained individuals using both market structures and government power to benefit themselves to the detriment of others, thereby reducing the capacity for ‘universal opulence’, as he called it. Nearly a half century later, de Tocqueville observed that one of the core strengths of the young American republic was the value-creating byproduct of what he called, ‘self-interest, rightly understood.’ He believed that one of America’s strengths was that individual interests and that of the community, ‘meet and amalgamate,’ and combine to benefit everyone. In our

current political dynamic, many interest groups on both sides are fighting a battle of one-against-all and have completely abandoned this idea. The 2008 financial crisis is a direct result of our present misconception of this fundamental building block of innovative, productive and inclusive political and economic institutions.

The third step in our Synthesis Revolution is embracing and implementing the new thinking and new method of interaction that will bring about a new era of progress and prosperity. The new thinking is a return to the focus on perpetual improvement and ascent, away from the distorting influences of ideology, partisan tribalism and special interests. As there have always been different, naturally occurring perspectives, the key challenge has been to systematically identify what is good and useful from all perspectives and discard what is not. This is where the new method of interaction is essential. By discarding the initial assumptions and predetermined conclusions of ideology and partisan division, we can then focus on the method that has propelled all of modern advancement: objective observation and analysis, the systematic consideration of all perspectives to identify what is good and useful from all sides, purified through the crucible of free, fair and productive debate, and the careful implementation of potential solutions with the validation of experiment and testing. This method provided the framework and toolkit for the scientific, political and economic revolutions that took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that we continue to build-upon today.

At the present time, America is becoming increasingly polarized socially, politically, economically and on many other levels. Therefore, these trends pulling us apart are only poised to get worse. However, with the new thinking and new method of the Synthesis Revolution, we can restore a vision of a better America and return our nation's trajectory to one of perpetual improvement and ascending progress and prosperity. The result of this transformation of our political and economic dynamic will be the restoration of our confidence that we will be better off than preceding generations and we can provide an increasingly better life for our children and grandchildren.

No nation on earth is better positioned than the United States to make the necessary changes needed to reform our political dynamic and take advantage of the growth and innovation presently occurring all around the world. And the key to realizing this transformation is that we, yet again, engage in a Revolution.

Author Profile – Thomas A. Rossman

Thomas ‘Tom’ Rossman is an emerging global thought leader in improving political and economic decision making and has spent his career studying and investigating how people around the world can think and interact more effectively. As a young executive in finance during the 1990’s, Rossman was an early champion of developing markets, investing in the newly emerging countries of Latin American and Asia far ahead of the crowd. Following Communism's collapse, Rossman took a key role at the leading Turkish Investment Bank, Global Securities, in bringing American capital and investment to the developing markets of the Former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Turkey and North Africa. By assisting in the privatization process within Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, Rossman became an important link between Western capital and know-how in the early stages of modernizing these formerly closed economic systems. First as an institutional advisor, and then as an independent consultant, he continued to advocate the sustainable development of democratic and stable free market institutions and expanding economic opportunity throughout the region. More recently, Rossman has provided a similar advisory role to major holding companies and financial institutions in the Middle East seeking to most effectively navigate through the volatility of the current financial crisis.

Mr. Rossman has spoken on these topics at conferences around the world in such diverse places as London, New York, Istanbul, Baku, Almaty, Bishkek, Tashkent, Stockholm, Washington DC and Houston and he has lived in both Turkey and Kuwait. He studied religion and history at Nyack College in Nyack, New York and did his Master’s work in international relations at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Medford, Massachusetts.

His current book *The Synthesis Revolution: New Thinking for a New Era of Prosperity* was released in November 2012 by Eudaimonia Publishing and is available in paperback and eBook formats. His forthcoming book, *Forming A More Perfect Union*, is an updated social contract for America in the 21st century.

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