

From the Planners' Bookshelf...

The Post-American World

Fareed Zakaria, W.W. Norton & Company, 2008.

Fareed Zakaria has written thoughtfully and widely on geopolitics and global society. He also discusses issues in a refreshingly interactive way with world leaders on CNN. His recent book, *The Post-American World*, despite its gloomy title, forecasts a happy ending to the next leg of the American journey.

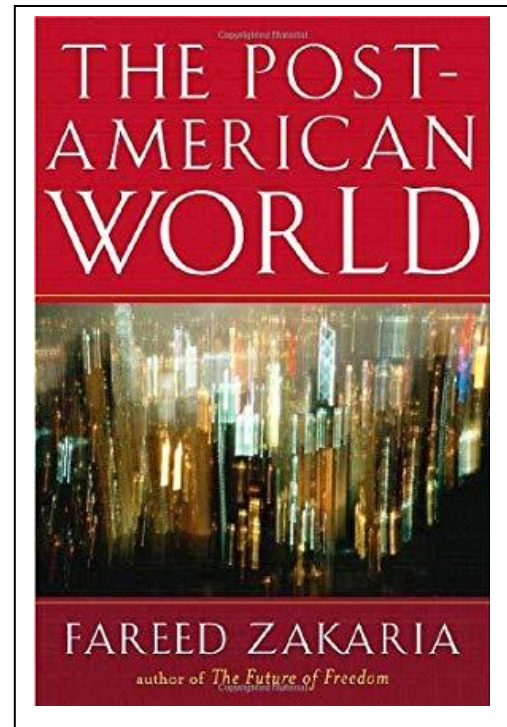
One of Mr. Zakaria's catchy catch phrases is "the rise of the rest". This sums up his view of America's position and attributes the current situation to "three tectonic power shifts" of historic proportion: the rise of the western world, the rise of the United States and the rise of the rest. The rise of the rest is now upon us and has given "birth of a truly global order".

Almost as an aside, he addresses the form of governance that responds best to the new global order. "In an open world economy, these groups know that they need the central government less and less." This follows an earlier statement that "power is shifting away from nation-states." With direct communication and transportation between people, customers and businesses, the linkages will tend to be more and more personal; less dependent of national governments and institutions. Returning to Professor Fukuyama's point, it seems that even though Mr. Zakaria's observation about increasingly personal forms of global interaction are indeed happening; institutions, whether national governments, international regulators or other systemic organizers in the multi-party world will always be in demand.

"For almost three centuries, the world has had a superpower." Today, "solving common problems in an era of diffusion and decentralization could turn out to be more difficult without a superpower."

"Becoming a modern society is about industrialization, urbanization, and rising levels of literacy, education, and wealth [the Editor would add health and safety to the list]. The qualities that make a society Western, in contrast, are special: the classical legacy, [Judeo-]Christianity, the separation of church and state, the rule of law and civil society." Western civilization, as Samuel P. Huntington writes in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, "is precious not because it is universal but because it is unique."

"America has been able to tap this energy [the energy and vitality provided by immigrants], manage diversity, assimilate newcomers, and move ahead economically. Ultimately, this is what sets the country [America] apart from the experience of Britain and all other historical examples of great economic powers that grew fat and lazy and slipped behind as they faced the rise of leaner, hungrier nations." America internalizes the competition with energizing immigrants and an entrepreneurial spirit.



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"Growing inequality is the signature feature of the new era fueled by a triple force – the knowledge economy, information technology, and globalization." Mr. Zakaria quotes Martin Wolf in noting "...the change in economic fundamentals is from capital and labor to energy and ideas."

"The world is going America's way. Countries are becoming more open, market friendly, and democratic." [Editor's Note: this may not be as true in 2019 as it was in 2008.]

The international order established by the United States after World War II is in urgent need of expansion and repair, but not reconception." Mr. Zakaria suggests that America become an 'honest broker' in the vein of Chancellor Bismarck during the late 19th century in Germany. "This new role is quite different from the traditional superpower role. It involves consultation, cooperation, and even compromise. It derives its power by setting the agenda, defining the issues, and mobilizing coalitions...being Chairman of the Board." [Editor: The 2016 diversion from this mission may change the global dynamics if it persists.]

Mr. Zakaria concludes by describing six specific guidelines to enable America a successful leadership role in the new world:

1. Choose a foreign policy path; don't play the field.
2. Build broad rules, not narrow interests.
3. Be Bismarck, not Britain...be the honest broker, not a diminishing power broker.
4. Order ala carte.
5. Think asymmetrically.
6. Be, and be viewed as, legitimate; legitimacy is power.

At the end of the day, the message to take from Mr. Zakaria's work is that America remains a superpower, even as other nations ascend the power structure. The use of our power, and its perpetuation, is best applied by welcoming the rising nations of the world to the table and then serving as the host, the facilitator, the source of intellectual inspiration, the leader. While still a useful and existential approach, the ramifications of abandoning this path are becoming apparent in 2019.

Conclusion.

The world seems to be turning away from the post WW II philosophy of building institutions and systems to manage global peace, economic development and human rights. More insular policies and programs are growing in Europe, China, Japan and America. The economic stagnation of the global economy and the living standards of first, second and third world families is a disruption not previously felt by global systems. Despite the inward tendencies of modern society, the lessons and approaches of Messrs. Zakaria, Friedman and Fukuyama are still valid aspirations.

Published Reviews.

The Post-American World; Fareed Zakaria; W.W. Norton & Company; 2008.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/11/books/review/Joffe-t.html?_r=0

<http://www.npr.org/2011/06/30/137522219/what-does-a-post-american-world-look-like>

http://mises.org/misesreview_detail.aspx?control=352

http://books.google.com/books/about/The_Post_American_World.html?id=DAFHjoFyfTgC

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Related Readings.

1. ***Citistates, How Urban America Can Prosper in a Competitive World***, Neal R. Peirce with Curtis W. Johnson and John Stuart Hall, Seven Locks Press, Washington D.C., 359 pages, 1993.
2. ***Customer Service.Gov: Technology Tools and Customer Service Principles for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Government***, [Bruce McClendon](#) (Author), [Mac Birch](#) (Contributor), [Ray Quay](#) (Contributor), CityGate Press, Folsom CA, 490 pages, 2013.
3. ***Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth***, Fuller, R. Buckminster [1885-1983], Southern Illinois University Press, 1969. Pocket Book edition published November, 1970; 7th printing, October, 1974.
4. ***State-Building, Governance and the New World Order in the 21st Century***, Francis Fukuyama, Cornell University Press, 2004.
5. ***The Art of the Long View, Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World***, Peter Schwartz, Currency Doubleday; 2001.
6. ***The Big Nine, How the Tech Titans & Their Thinking Machines Could Warp Humanity***; Amy Webb, Public Affairs, The Hatchett Book Group, NY, 2019.
7. ***The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time***, Jeffrey D. Sachs, Penguin Books; 2005.
8. ***The Future of Freedom, Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad***, Fareed Zakaria, W.W. Norton & Company; 2003.
9. ***The Great Reset, How New Ways of Living and Working Drive Post-Crash Prosperity***; Richard Florida, HarperCollins Publishers, ISBN 978-0-06-193719-4; 2010.
10. ***The Soros Lectures at the Central European University***, George Soros, Perseus Book Group; 2010.
11. ***The Upcycle: Beyond Sustainability--Designing for Abundance***, William McDonough, Michael Braungart, North Point Press, a Division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2013.
12. ***The World is Flat, A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century***; Thomas L. Friedman, Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 2005.
13. ***Thinking in Systems, A Primer***, Donella H. Meadows, Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction VT, 2008.
14. ***Triumph of the City, How our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier and Happier***, Edward Glaeser, The Penguin Press [USA], London, 2011.