

## FAREED ZAKARIA

### *From The Post-American World*

*Dr. Fareed Zakaria is a scholar, writer, and TV host whose views on American foreign policy and international affairs are highly regarded by people of varying political ideologies. In this book, Zakaria addresses the changing nature of international politics and the United States' place within it. As the rest of the world—especially Asia—grows dramatically, the United States is no longer in the position of uncontested dominance that it had enjoyed over the past century. Zakaria is careful to distinguish between an “anti-American world” and a “post-American world.” The latter, not the former, is the reality. The author sketches out a role for the United States in the world order that is developing: “global broker.” More like a “chair of the board” than the single superpower, this role is not a familiar one for America, but one that promises great influence and power in the global community. Zakaria concludes his vision for the future with a plea for less fear about the rest of the world and more of the American generosity of spirit that he experienced first hand decades ago, as a young visiting college student.*



THIS IS A BOOK not about the decline of America but rather about the rise of everyone else. It is about the great transformation taking place around the world, a transformation that, though often discussed, remains poorly understood. This is natural. Changes, even sea changes, take place gradually. Though we talk about a new era, the world seems to be one with which we are familiar. But in fact, it is very different.

There have been three tectonic power shifts over the last five hundred years, fundamental changes in the distribution of power that have reshaped international life—its politics, economics, and culture. The first was the rise of the Western world, a process that began in the fifteenth century and accelerated dramatically in the late eighteenth century. It produced modernity as we know it: science and technology, commerce and capitalism, the agricultural and industrial revolutions. It also produced the prolonged political dominance of the nations of the West.

The second shift, which took place in the closing years of the nineteenth century, was the rise of the United States. Soon after it industrialized, the United States became the most powerful nation since imperial Rome, and the only one that was stronger than any likely combination of

other nations. For most of the last century, the United States has dominated global economics, politics, science, and culture. For the last twenty years, that dominance has been unrivaled, a phenomenon unprecedented in modern history.

We are now living through the third great power shift of the modern era. It could be called "the rise of the rest." Over the past few decades, countries all over the world have been experiencing rates of economic growth that were once unthinkable. While they have had booms and busts, the overall trend has been unambiguously upward. This growth has been most visible in Asia but is no longer confined to it. That is why to call this shift "the rise of Asia" does not describe it accurately. In 2006 and 2007, 124 countries grew at a rate of 4 percent or more. That includes more than 30 countries in Africa, two-thirds of the continent. Antoine van Agtmael, the fund manager who coined the term "emerging markets," has identified the 25 companies most likely to be the world's next great multinationals. His list includes four companies each from Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, and Taiwan; three from India; two from China; and one each from Argentina, Chile, Malaysia, and South Africa. . . .

. . . For the first time ever, we are witnessing genuinely global growth. This is creating an international system in which countries in all parts of the world are no longer objects or observers but players in their own right. It is the birth of a truly global order.

A related aspect of this new era is the diffusion of power from states to other actors. The "rest" that is rising includes many nonstate actors. Groups and individuals have been empowered, and hierarchy, centralization, and control are being undermined. Functions that were once controlled by governments are now shared with international bodies like the World Trade Organization and the European Union. Nongovernmental groups are mushrooming every day on every issue in every country. Corporations and capital are moving from place to place, finding the best location in which to do business, rewarding some governments while punishing others. Terrorists like Al Qaeda, drug cartels, insurgents, and militias of all kinds are finding space to operate within the nooks and crannies of the international system. Power is shifting away from nation-states, up, down, and sideways. In such an atmosphere, the traditional applications of national power, both economic and military, have become less effective.

The emerging international system is likely to be quite different from those that have preceded it. One hundred years ago, there was a multipolar order run by a collection of European governments, with constantly shifting alliances, rivalries, miscalculations, and wars. Then came the bipo-

lar duopoly of the Cold War,\* more stable in many ways, but with the superpowers reacting and overreacting to each other's every move. Since 1991, we have lived under an American imperium, a unique, unipolar world in which the open global economy has expanded and accelerated dramatically. This expansion is now driving the next change in the nature of the international order.

At the politico-military level, we remain in a single-superpower world. But in every other dimension—industrial, financial, educational, social, cultural—the distribution of power is shifting, moving away from American dominance. That does not mean we are entering an anti-American world. But we are moving into a *post-American world*, one defined and directed from many places and by many people.

What kinds of opportunities and challenges do these changes present? What do they portend for the United States and its dominant position? What will this new era look like in terms of war and peace, economics and business, ideas and culture?

In short, what will it mean to live in a post-American world? . . .

Imagine that it is January 2000, and you ask a fortune-teller to predict the course of the global economy over the next several years. Let's say that you give him some clues, to help him gaze into his crystal ball. The United States will be hit by the worst terrorist attack in history, you explain, and will respond by launching two wars, one of which will go badly awry and keep Iraq—the country with the world's third-largest oil reserves—in chaos for years. Iran will gain strength in the Middle East and move to acquire a nuclear capability. North Korea will go further, becoming the world's eighth declared nuclear power. Russia will turn hostile and imperious in its dealings with its neighbors and the West. In Latin America, Hugo Chávez of Venezuela will launch the most spirited anti-Western campaign in a generation, winning many allies and fans. Israel and Hezbollah will fight a war in southern Lebanon, destabilizing Beirut's fragile government, drawing in Iran and Syria, and rattling the Israelis. Gaza will become a failed state ruled by Hamas, and peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians will go nowhere. "Given these events," you say to the sage, "how will the global economy fare over the next six years?"

\*The Cold War refers to the hostility that existed between the United States and the Soviet Union from the end of World War II until the late 1980s. The Cold War involved many forms of hostility: Democracy versus communism; America's NATO allies versus the Soviet Union's Warsaw Pact military partners; the threat of nuclear war; economic competition; the dividing of Third World nations into pro-U.S. and pro-Soviet camps. With the demise of communism in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Cold War era has ended.—Eds.

This is not really a hypothetical. We have the forecasts of experts from those years. They were all wrong. The correct prediction would have been that, between 2000 and 2007, the world economy would grow at its fastest pace in nearly four decades. Income per person across the globe would rise at a faster rate (3.2 percent) than in any other period in history.

In the two decades since the end of the Cold War, we have lived through a paradox, one we experience every morning when reading the newspapers. The world's politics seems deeply troubled, with daily reports of bombings, terror plots, rogue states, and civil strife. And yet the global economy forges ahead, not without significant interruptions and crises, but still vigorously upward on the whole. Markets do panic but over economic not political news. The front page of the newspaper seems unconnected to the business section. . . .

What explains this mismatch between a politics that spirals downward and an economy that stays robust? First, it's worth looking more carefully at the cascade of bad news. It seems that we are living in crazily violent times. But don't believe everything you see on television. Our anecdotal impression turns out to be wrong. War and organized violence have declined dramatically over the last two decades. Ted Robert Gurr and a team of scholars at the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management tracked the data carefully and came to the following conclusion: "the general magnitude of global warfare has decreased by over sixty percent [since the mid-1980s], falling by the end of 2004 to its lowest level since the late 1950s." Violence increased steadily throughout the Cold War—increasing sixfold between the 1950s and early 1990s—but the trend peaked just before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and "the extent of warfare among and within states lessened by nearly half in the first decade after the Cold War." Harvard's polymath professor Steven Pinker argues "that today we are probably living in the most peaceful time in our species' existence."

One reason for the mismatch between reality and our sense of it might be that, over these same decades, we have experienced a revolution in information technology that now brings us news from around the world instantly, vividly, and continuously. The immediacy of the images and the intensity of the twenty-four-hour news cycle combine to produce constant hyperbole. Every weather disturbance is "the storm of the century." Every bomb that explodes is **BREAKING NEWS**. It is difficult to put this all in context because the information revolution is so new. We didn't get daily footage on the roughly two million who died in the killing fields of Cambodia in the 1970s or the million who perished in the sands of the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. We have not even seen much foot-

age from the war in Congo in the 1990s, where millions died. But now, we see almost daily, live broadcasts of the effects of IEDs or car bombs or rockets—tragic events, to be sure, but often with death tolls under ten. The randomness of terrorist violence, the targeting of civilians, and the ease with which modern societies can be penetrated add to our disquiet. “That could have been me,” people say after a terrorist attack.

It feels like a very dangerous world. But it isn't. Your chances of dying as a consequence of organized violence of any kind are low and getting lower. The data reveal a broad trend away from wars among major countries, the kind of conflict that produces massive casualties.

I don't believe that war has become obsolete or any such foolishness. Human nature remains what it is and international politics what it is. History has witnessed periods of calm that have been followed by extraordinary bloodshed. And numbers are not the only measure of evil. The nature of the killings in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s—premeditated, religiously motivated, systematic—makes that war, which had 200,000 casualties, a moral obscenity that should register very high on any scale. Al Qaeda's barbarism—cold-blooded beheadings, the deliberate targeting of innocents—is gruesome despite its relatively low number of casualties.

Still, if we are to understand the times we are living in, we must first accurately describe them. And they are, for now, in historical context, unusually calm. . . .

Islamic terror, which makes the headlines daily, is a large and persistent problem, but one involving small numbers of fanatics. It feeds on the dysfunctions of the Muslim world, the sense (real and imagined) of humiliation at the hands of the West, and easy access to technologies of violence. And yet, does it rank as a threat on the order of Germany's drive for world domination in the first half of the twentieth century? Or Soviet expansionism in the second half? Or Mao's efforts to foment war and revolution across the Third World in the 1950s and 1960s? These were all challenges backed by the power and purpose of major countries, often with serious allies, and by an ideology that was seen as a plausible alternative to liberal democracy. By comparison, consider the jihadist threat. Before 9/11, when groups like Al Qaeda operated under the radar, governments treated them as minor annoyances, and they roamed freely, built some strength, and hit symbolic, often military targets, killing Americans and other foreigners. Even so, the damage was fairly limited. Since 2001, governments everywhere have been aggressive in busting terrorists' networks, following their money, and tracking their recruits—with almost immediate results. In Indonesia, the largest Muslim nation in the world,

the government captured both the chief and the military leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, the country's deadliest jihadist group and the one that carried out the Bali bombings in 2002. With American help, the Filipino army battered the Qaeda-style terrorist outfit Abu Sayyaf. The group's leader was killed by Filipino troops in January 2007, and its membership has declined from as many as two thousand guerrillas six years ago to a few hundred today. In Egypt and Saudi Arabia—Al Qaeda's original bases and targets of attack—terrorist cells have been rounded up, and those still at large have been unable to launch any new attacks in three years. Finance ministries—especially the U.S. Department of the Treasury—have made life far more difficult for terrorists. Global organizations cannot thrive without being able to move money around, and so the more terrorists' funds are tracked and targeted, the more they have to resort to small-scale and hastily improvised operations. This struggle, between governments and terrorists, will persist, but it is the former who have the upper hand. . . .

Here is the bottom line. In the six years since 9/11, Al Qaeda Central—the group led by Osama bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri—has been unable to launch a major attack anywhere. It was a terrorist organization; it has become a communications company, producing the occasional videotape rather than actual terrorism. Jihad continues, but the jihadists have had to scatter, make do with smaller targets, and operate on a local level—usually through groups with almost no connection to Al Qaeda Central. And this improvised strategy has a crippling weakness: it kills locals, thus alienating ordinary Muslims—a process that is well underway in countries as diverse as Indonesia, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Over the last six years, support for bin Laden and his goals has fallen steadily throughout the Muslim world. Between 2002 and 2007, approval of suicide bombing as a tactic—a figure that was always low—has dropped by over 50 percent in most Muslim countries that have been tracked. There have been more denunciations of violence and fatwas against bin Laden than ever before, including from prominent clerics in Saudi Arabia. Much more must happen to modernize the Muslim world, but the modernizers are no longer so scared. They have finally realized that, for all the rhetoric of the madrassas and mosques, few people want to live under the writ of Al Qaeda. Those who have, whether in Afghanistan or Iraq, have become its most dedicated opponents. In contrast to Soviet socialism or even fascism in the 1930s, no society looks with admiration and envy on the fundamentalist Islamic model. On an ideological level, it presents no competition to the Western-originated model of modernity that countries across the world are embracing.

A cottage industry of scaremongering has flourished in the West—especially in the United States—since 9/11. Experts extrapolate every trend they don't like, forgoing any serious study of the data. Many conservative commentators have written about the impending Islamization of Europe (Eurabia, they call it, to make you even more uncomfortable). Except that the best estimates, from U.S. intelligence agencies, indicate that Muslims constitute around 3 percent of Europe's population now and will rise to between 5 and 8 percent by 2025, after which they will probably plateau. The watchdogs note the musings of every crackpot Imam, search the archives for each reference to the end of days, and record and distribute the late-night TV musings of every nutcase who glorifies martyrdom. They erupt in fury when a Somali taxi driver somewhere refuses to load a case of liquor into his car, seeing it as the beginning of sharia in the West. But these episodes do not reflect the basic direction of the Muslim world. That world is also modernizing, though more slowly than the rest, and there are those who try to become leaders in rebellion against it. The reactionaries in the world of Islam are more numerous and extreme than those in other cultures—that world does have its dysfunctions. But they remain a tiny minority of the world's billion-plus Muslims. And neglecting the complicated context in which some of these pseudoreligious statements are made—such as an internal Iranian power struggle among clerics and nonclerics—leads to hair-raising but absurd predictions, like Bernard Lewis's confident claim that Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad planned to mark an auspicious date on the Islamic calendar (August 22, 2006) by *ending the world*. (Yes, he actually wrote that.)

The ideological watchdogs have spent so much time with the documents of jihad that they have lost sight of actual Muslim societies. Were they to step back, they would see a frustration with the fundamentalists, a desire for modernity (with some dignity and cultural pride for sure), and a search for practical solutions—not a mass quest for immortality through death. When Muslims travel, they flock by the millions to see the razzle-dazzle of Dubai, not the seminaries of Iran. The minority that wants jihad is real, but it operates within societies where such activities are increasingly unpopular and irrelevant. . . .

In some unspoken way, people have recognized that the best counter-terrorism policy is resilience. Terrorism is unusual in that it is a military tactic defined by the response of the onlooker. If we are not terrorized, then it doesn't work. And, from New York and London to Mumbai and Jakarta, people are learning this fact through experience and getting on with life even amid the uncertainty. The most likely scenario—a series of

backpack or truck bombings in the United States—would be a shock, but in a couple of weeks its effects would fade and the long-term consequences would likely be minimal. In vast, vigorous, and complex societies—the American economy is now \$13 trillion—problems in a few places do not easily spill over. Modern civilization may be stronger than we suspect. . . .

The rise of the rest, while real, is a long, slow process. And it is one that ensures America a vital, though different, role. As China, India, Brazil, Russia, South Africa, and a host of smaller countries all do well in the years ahead, new points of tension will emerge among them. Many of these rising countries have historical animosities, border disputes, and contemporary quarrels with one another; in most cases, nationalism will grow along with economic and geopolitical stature. Being a distant power, America is often a convenient partner for many regional nations worried about the rise of a hegemon in their midst. In fact, as the scholar William Wohlforth notes, American influence is strengthened by the growth of a dominant regional power. These factors are often noted in discussions of Asia, but it is true of many other spots on the globe as well. The process will not be mechanical. As one of these countries rises (China), it will not produce a clockwork-like balancing dynamic where its neighbor (India) will seek a formal alliance with the United States. Today's world is more complicated than that. But these rivalries do give the United States an opportunity to play a large and constructive role at the center of the global order. It has the potential to be what Bismarck helped Germany become (briefly) in the late nineteenth-century—Europe's "honest broker," forging close relationships with each of the major countries, ties that were closer than the ones those countries had with one another. It was the hub of the European system. Being the global broker today would be a job involving not just the American government but its society, with all the strengths and perspectives that it will bring to the challenge. It is a role that the United States—with its global interests and presence, complete portfolio of power, and diverse immigrant communities—could learn to play with great skill.

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. It is not a top-down hierarchy in which the United States makes its decisions and then informs a grateful (or silent) world. But it is a crucial role because, in a world with many players, setting the agenda and organizing coalitions become primary forms of power. The chair of the board



who can gently guide a group of independent directors is still a very powerful person. . . .

Before it can implement any of these specific strategies, however, the United States must make a much broader adjustment. It needs to stop cowering in fear. It is fear that has created a climate of paranoia and panic in the United States and fear that has enabled our strategic missteps. Having spooked ourselves into believing that we have no option but to act fast and alone, preemptively and unilaterally, we have managed to destroy decades of international goodwill, alienate allies, and embolden enemies, while solving few of the major international problems we face. To recover its place in the world, America first has to recover its confidence.

By almost all objective measures, the United States is in a blessed position today. It faces problems, crises, and resistance, but compared with any of the massive threats of the past—Nazi Germany, Stalin's aggression, nuclear war—the circumstances are favorable, and the world is moving our way. In 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt diagnosed the real danger for the United States. "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," he said. "Nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror." And he was arguing against fear when America's economic and political system was near collapse, when a quarter of the workforce was unemployed, and when fascism was on the march around the world. Somehow we have managed to spook ourselves in a time of worldwide peace and prosperity. Keeping that front and center in our minds is crucial to ensure that we do not miscalculate, misjudge, and misunderstand.

America has become a nation consumed by anxiety, worried about terrorists and rogue nations, Muslims and Mexicans, foreign companies and free trade, immigrants and international organizations. The strongest nation in the history of the world now sees itself as besieged by forces beyond its control. While the Bush administration has contributed mightily to this state of affairs, it is a phenomenon that goes beyond one president. Too many Americans have been taken in by a rhetoric of fear. . . .

We will never be able to prevent a small group of misfits from planning some terrible act of terror. No matter how far-seeing and competent our intelligence and law-enforcement officials, people will always be able to slip through the cracks in a large, open, and diverse country. The real test of American leadership is not whether we can make 100 percent sure we prevent the attack, but rather how we respond to it. Stephen Flynn, a homeland-security expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, argues that our goal must be resilience—how quickly can we bounce back from a disruption? In the material sciences, resilience is the ability of a material

to recover its original shape after a deformation. If one day bombs do go off, we must ensure that they cause as little disruption—economic, social, political—as possible. This would prevent the terrorist from achieving his main objective. If we are not terrorized, then in a crucial sense we have defeated terrorism. . . .

At the end of the day, openness is America's greatest strength. Many smart policy wonks have clever ideas that they believe will better American productivity, savings, and health care. More power to them all. But historically, America has succeeded not because of the ingenuity of its government programs but because of the vigor of its society. It has thrived because it has kept itself open to the world—to goods and services, to ideas and inventions, and, above all, to people and cultures. This openness has allowed us to respond quickly and flexibly to new economic times, to manage change and diversity with remarkable ease, and to push forward the boundaries of individual freedom and autonomy. It has allowed America to create the first universal nation, a place where people from all over the world can work, mingle, mix, and share in a common dream and a common destiny.

In the fall of 1982, I arrived here as an eighteen-year-old student from India, eight thousand miles away. . . .

. . . Everywhere I went, the atmosphere was warm and welcoming. It was a feeling I had never had before, a country wide open to the world, to the future, and to anyone who loved it. To a young visitor, it seemed to offer unlimited generosity and promise.

For America to thrive in this new and challenging era, for it to succeed amid the rise of the rest, it need fulfill only one test. It should be a place that is as inviting and exciting to the young student who enters the country today as it was for this awkward eighteen-year-old a generation ago.