

Excerpts from **The Post-American World**, by Fareed Zakaria, W.W. Norton & Company, 2008, 2009

Preface to the Paperback Edition

p. xv The world economy had become the equivalent of a race car – expensive, with incredible range, and capable of performing at breathtaking speed. For the last decade everyone rode it and experienced the adrenaline rush and the highs. There was only one problem: it turned out that nobody really knew how to drive a car like this one. p. xxi The current economic upheaval will only hasten the move to a post-American world. If the Iraq War and George W. Bush's foreign policy had the effect of delegitimizing America's military-political power in the eyes of the world, the financial crisis has had the effect of delegitimizing America's economic power.

p. xxix The management of U.S. political and military power remains the single most important task for global stability. The United States must provide rules, institutions, and services that help solve the world's major problems, while giving other countries – crucially the emerging powers – a stake in the system.

Chapter 1 – The Rise of the Rest

p. 4 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 bipolar 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.

Chapter 2 – The Cup Runneth Over

p. 36 We still think of a world in which a rising power must choose between two stark options: integrate into the Western order, or reject it, becoming a rogue nation and facing the penalties of excommunication. In fact, rising powers appear to be following a third way: entering the Western order but doing so on their own terms – thus reshaping the system itself. . . . [I]n a world where everyone feels empowered, countries can choose to bypass this Western “center” entirely and forge their own ties with one another.

p. 48 The irony is that the rise of the rest is a consequence of American ideas and actions. For sixty years, American politicians and diplomats have traveled around the world pushing countries to open their markets, free up their politics, and embrace trade and technology. We have urged peoples in distant lands to take up the challenge of competing in the global economy, freeing up their currencies, and developing new industries. We counseled them to be unafraid of change and learn the secrets of our success. And it worked: the natives have gotten good at capitalism. But now we are becoming suspicious of the very things we have long celebrated – free markets, trade, immigration, and technological change. And all this is happening when the tide is going our way. Just as the world is opening up, America is closing down.

Chapter 3 – A Non-Western World?

p. 73 The issue that non-Western reformers were struggling with in the twentieth century has returned as a central question for the future: Can you be modern without being Western? How different are the two? Will international life be substantially different in a world in which the non-Western powers have enormous weight? Will these new powers have different values? Or does the process of becoming rich make us all the same? These are not idle thoughts. In the next few decades, three of the world's four biggest economies will be non-Western (Japan, China, and India). And the fourth, the United States, will be increasingly shaped by its growing non-European population.

p. 80 [I]n general, and over time, growing wealth and individual opportunity does produce a social transformation. Modernization brings about some form of women's liberation. It overturns the hierarchy of

age, religion, tradition, and feudal order. And all of this makes societies look more and more like those in Europe and North America.

Chapter 4 – The Challenger

p. 89 The magnitude of change in China is almost unimaginable. The size of the economy has doubled every eight years for three decades. p. 92 China is also the world's largest holder of money. Its foreign-exchange reserves are \$1.5 trillion, 50 percent more than those of the next country (Japan) and three times the holdings of the entire European Union.

p. 127 Were China to push its weight around, anger its neighbors, and frighten the world, Washington would be able to respond with a set of effective policies that would take advantage of the natural balancing process by which Japan, India, Australia, and Vietnam – and perhaps others – would come together to limit China's emerging power. But what if China adheres to its asymmetrical strategy? What if it gradually expands its economic ties, acts calmly and moderately, and slowly enlarges its sphere of influence, seeking only greater weight, friendship, and influence in the world? What if it slowly pushes Washington onto the sidelines in Asia, in an effort to wear out America's patience and endurance? What if it quietly positions itself as the alternative to a hectoring and arrogant America?... This is a new challenge for the United States, one it has not tackled before, and for which it is largely unprepared.

Chapter 5 – The Ally

p. 132 While China's rise is already here and palpable, India's is still more a tale of the future. Its per capita GDP is still only \$960. But that future is coming into sharp focus.... [C]rucially, the country has a promising demographic profile. As the industrial world ages, India will continue to have *lots* of young people – in other words, workers. China faces a youth gap because of its successful "one-child" policies; India faces a youth bulge because, ironically, its own family-planning policies of the past failed.... If demography is destiny, India's future is secure. Even the here and now is impressive. India's poverty rate is half what it was twenty years ago.

p. 135 The most striking characteristic of India today is its human capital – a vast and growing population of entrepreneurs, managers, and business-savvy individuals.... The result is a country that looks like no other developing nation. India's GDP is 50 percent services, 25 percent industry, and 25 percent agriculture.

p. 165 The more likely scenario is that China will stay well ahead of India. But India can still capitalize on its advantages – a vast, growing economy, an attractive political democracy, a vibrant model of secularism and tolerance, a keen knowledge of both East and West, and a special relationship with America. If it can mobilize these forces and use them to its advantage, India will still make for a powerful package, whether it is technically number two, or three, or four in the world.... p. 166 But India's political system is weak and porous and thus not well equipped to play its rightful role in this new world. A series of crises might change all this, but absent a shock to the system, India's society will stay ahead of the Indian state in the new global game.

Chapter 6 – American Power

p. 209 What is America's competitive advantage?... The answer lies in something the economist Martin Wolf noted. Describing the changing world, he wrote that economists used to discuss two basic concepts, *capital* and *labor*. But these are now commodities, widely available to everyone. What distinguishes economies today are *ideas* and *energy*. A country must be a source of either ideas or energy (meaning oil, natural gas, coal, etc.). The United States has been and can be the world's most important, continuing source of new ideas, big and small, technical and creative, economic and political. But to do that, it has to make some significant changes.

p. 211 The economic dysfunctions in America today are real, but, by and large, they are not the product of deep inefficiencies within the American economy, nor are they reflections of cultural decay. They are the consequences of specific government policies. Different policies could quickly and relatively easily move the United States onto a far more stable footing. A set of sensible reforms could be enacted tomorrow to trim wasteful spending and subsidies, increase savings, expand training in science and

technology, secure pensions, create a workable immigration process, and achieve significant efficiencies in the use of energy. Policy experts do not have wide disagreements on most of these issues, and none of the proposed measures would require sacrifices reminiscent of wartime hardship, only modest adjustments of existing arrangements. And yet, because of politics, they appear impossible. The American political system has lost the ability for large-scale compromise, and it has lost the ability to accept some pain now for much gain later on.

p. 213 The real test for the United States is, in some ways, the opposite of that faced by Britain in 1900. Britain's economic power waned while it managed to maintain immense political influence around the world. The American economy and American society, in contrast, are capable of responding to the economic pressures and competition they face.... The real test for the United States is political – and it rests not just with America at large but with Washington in particular. Can Washington adjust and adapt to a world in which others have moved up?

Chapter 7 – American Purpose

p. 229 For most of the twentieth century... America embraced international cooperation not out of fear and vulnerability but out of confidence and strength. p. 230 FDR understood that American power had to be coupled with a generosity of spirit.

p. 233 [The United States] 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 each other... 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.

p. 235 – 250 [Six simple guidelines for the US: **1) Choose.** Be more disciplined about priorities in order to be successful. Sometimes we work at cross-purposes with ourselves. **2) Build broad rules, not narrow interests.** Better to create a structure of rules, practices and values than push our own particular interests. Don't be hypocritical. **3) Be Bismarck not Britain.** Bismarck engaged with the great powers, Britain balanced against them but otherwise kept a low profile. **4) Order a la carte.** Work with a variety of institutions, organizations, frameworks to keep stability. **5) Think asymmetrically.** Powerful military forces are finding it difficult to prevail. The US has a broader and deeper range of instruments than just its military. An American policy toward Africa, e.g. should focus on building up our diplomatic corps, nation-building capacities, and technical assistance teams rather than what we did, which was to create a new military command for the continent, AFRICOM. **6) Legitimacy is power.** Legitimacy allows one to set the agenda, define a crisis, and mobilize support for policies among both countries and nongovernmental forces like private business and grass-roots organizations. The US is lacking legitimacy these days.]

p. 250 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. p. 251 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. p. 255 We will never be able to prevent a small group of misfits from planning some terrible act of terror.... [O]ur goal must be resilience – how quickly can we bounce back from a disruption?... If we are not terrorized, then in a crucial sense we have defeated terrorism.

p. 257 Some of foreign policy is what we do, but some of it is also who we are. America *the place* has often been the great antidote to U.S. foreign policy.... At the end of the day, openness is America's greatest strength.