

UNCOVERED

Fareed Zakaria

The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad
Norton

You may not recognize the name of political columnist Fareed Zakaria, and there is a reason for this: His thoughtful, well-reasoned, fact-supported opinions don't make for good television or radio. The commentator spotlight is reserved for blowhards and extremists, and sadly, the voice of bipartisan intellectuals like Zakaria takes a backseat to the political pissing contest that is the modern media.

But for dutiful readers, Zakaria, a regular columnist for Newsweek and editor of Newsweek International, is a rising voice in journalism who's eloquent and insightful manner of putting our modern world in perspective brings a sense of order to the partisan-biased political climate. This is precisely what Zakaria does in his comprehensive work *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, an exhaustive exploration of the history of democracy.

The book, Zakaria's first, was conceived in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks and the civil rights fallout that ensued. Zakaria first delineates the difference between liberty and democracy, two terms that have been misconstrued to be synonymous. Liberty, Zakaria explains, is the protection of the rights of everybody, while democracy is the will of the majority. Zakaria carefully dissects the history of human liberty, in particular the rise of democracy in the 20th century, and discovers that the most successful governments have been those that effectively balance liberty and democracy.

But *The Future of Freedom* is by no means just a history book. Zakaria's treatise on freedom is dangerously relevant as the success of American foreign policy is at perhaps its most pivotal point in history. Zakaria focuses his work on the Middle East in general, having written *The Future of Freedom* prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, but his words are strikingly poignant to the current situation in the Persian Gulf. As Zakaria argues, democracy does not necessarily mean more freedom. For example, Chilean General Augusto Pinochet "did eventually lead his country to liberal democracy." A true democratic election in Iraq could easily vote in another dictator who wouldn't further the freedom of every citizen, or perhaps an Islamic extremist who would turn Iraq into the terrorist hotbed that the Bush administration claimed it to be.

Born in India, Zakaria is the perfect voice to speak on the unique challenges faced by the West when dealing with the Middle East, due to his intimate knowledge of both societies. Zakaria made a name for himself with his compassionate, cool-headed response to 9/11, taking the terrorists to task, urging Arab countries to get tougher on terrorism and trying to quell U.S. fears of Arabs in this country. The longest chapter in the *The Future of Freedom* is titled "The Islamic Exception," and in this section, Zakaria explores the difficulties with building an Arab democracy:

"The Arab rulers of the Middle East are autocratic, corrupt, and heavy-handed. But they are still more liberal, tolerant, and pluralistic than what would likely replace them. Elections in many Arab countries would produce politicians who espouse views that are closer to Osama bin Laden's than those of Jordan's liberal monarch, King Abdullah."

But Zakaria doesn't focus only on the negatives. In the closing chapter Zakaria offers a blueprint to "make democracy safe for the world." In addition to the work set before the Middle East, he implores powerful democracies, such as the United States, to accept their responsibility to the world and lead by example.

"Without this inner stuffing, democracy will become an empty shell, not simply inadequate but potentially dangerous, bringing with it the erosion of liberty, the manipulation of freedom, and the decay of a common life."

Hopefully our leaders take note and give Zakaria's thoughtful tome a glance between signing oil contracts and sending "Fly Boy" Bush on ill-conceived photo-ops. Perhaps after reading *The Future of Freedom*, our government will have a better approach to Middle-Eastern diplomacy than "bring 'em on." ②

—Vince Darcangelo



THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM

ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACY at HOME and ABROAD

FAREED ZAKARIA

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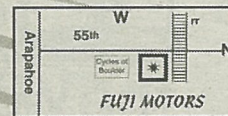
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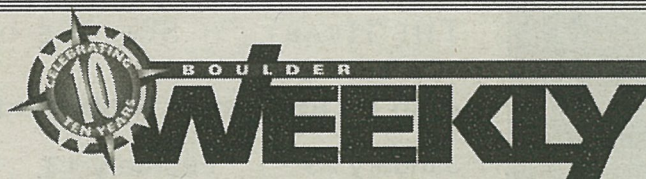
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