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BOOK REVIEW

The Post-American World

Fareed Zakaria

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The book under review, “*The Post American World*” has been written by an Indian born political journalist and scholar, Fareed Zakaria. The theme of the book is optimistic in its nature that discusses the greatest transformation and drastic changes taking place across the globe as, “the poor are slowly being absorbed into productive and growing economies. The share of people living on a dollar a day or less plummeted from 40 percent in 1981 to 18 percent in 2004, and is estimated to fall to 12 percent by 2015.” Suggesting the Americans, to rethink of their world view, the author shares, “It would not be an anti-American world, we are entering, and it is rather a post American world. They need to throw out the idea of world’s policeman and hyper supremacy and reinstate it with the world’s trusted 3rd party.” It is indeed a gentle caution with submissions as to how America can continue to be a key player as other powers shift globally in the 21st century.

The author answers all questions like how should America recognize and flourish in this fast and ever-changing international climate? What does it mean to live in a truly global age, with his traditional clarity and vision?

The book is divided into seven chapters. It starts with the notion that the great transformation is taking place across the globe. The writer has divided the globe into 3 periods:

- 15th to 18th century, when there was a long period of Western domination;
- Rise of US during last years of 19th century, with no rival power and incomparable dominance;
- Rise of the rest: the period when the poverty of poor nation is being taken up into dynamic growing economies.

The author believes that there have been 3 power shifts in the last 500 years:

1. Shift of power to US during renaissance;
2. Shift of power to US making it a Super Power;

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3. Shift of power to several countries, especially China, India and non-governmental Organizations.

Zakaria offers summary of main problem of the world. He describes the speedy and unparalleled rise of the countries in other regions including Asia, Latin America and Africa. The book explains the rise of dozens of countries that are growing to challenge the political, economic and technological supremacy of the United States. The highest buildings, huge dams, largest business earning movies, and most advanced and expensive cell phones are all being manufactured outside the United States. This economic development and progress is producing political confidence, national pride, and potentially international problems.

It is the time when economic development and growth is taking place across the world, "Look around; the highest building in the world is now in Taipei, and it will soon be overtaken by one being built in Dubai. The world's richest man is Mexican, and its largest publicly traded corporation is Chinese. The world's biggest plane is built in Russia and Ukraine, its leading refinery is under construction in India, and its largest factories are all in China." The author narrates a study held at the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management that "the general magnitude of the global warfare has decreased by over 60% (since mid-1980s), falling by the end of 2004 to its lowest level since the late 1950s. It is for the first time in world history that cultures, economies and politics are changed". This is infact a sign of global growth.

The author has touched the core reality about the development of China which is the world's largest emerging power. Recently, "Chinese exports in one day have surpassed than it exported in the year of 1978. China has grown 9 percent a year for almost 30 years, the fastest rate of a major economy in recorded history". Today China has become the second largest country in the world, adding a wholly new element to the international system." China's awakening is reshaping the economic and political landscape, but it is also being shaped by the world into which it is rising. Beijing is negotiating the same two forces that are defining the post-American world more broadly globalization and nationalism".

India is also a point of focus in the book. The author discusses, "While China's rise is already here and palpable, India is still more a tale of the future. Its per capita GDP is still only \$ 960. But that future is coming into sharp focus. By 2040, India will boast the world's third largest economy". The writer also talks about the democratic system, courts, rule of law, private sector and political institutions of India.

The Bush administration has been criticized for its haughty unilateralism and the democrats for pathetic policies adopted on trade, immigration and terrorism. He compares the British Empire in 1890s and beginning of Boer War with the US in 2005 and initiation of Iraq War, "Washington D.C. has become a bubble, smug and out of touch with the world outside", but on the other hand, Zakaria opined that still US leads the world in nanotechnology, biotechnology, and the future industries. America has gone to a weaker position due to the rise of the other

powers. He writes, "America remains the global superpower today, but it is enfeebled one. Its economy has troubles, its currency is sliding, and it faces long term problems with its soaring entitlements and low savings." Despite that the US is a complete superpower and other major powers are second tier powers depending upon the military and economic aid and support of the United States in one way or other. The writer criticizes the current US presidential administration, citing its dysfunctional political deadlock and foreign and military policies that holds back variation to the current realities. His point is that diplomacy is the strength of America, and it should be used first with the force held as last option, especially in a world where US is not only superpower anymore due to the mounting influence of countries in the developing world. There is only so much America can do about its relative power, as others grow from low starting points, its relative weight will slip. But there is a great deal that Washington can do to redefine America's purpose.

Zakaria argues that an era of sadism has prevailed around the globe since 1990, yet it has lessened in intensity today. The author sees many positive aspects in the rise of the rest, such as decline in poverty and violence. According to Him the war on terror will persist but it is the governments that have the upper hand. The author is confident in a sense that he is of the view that despite all odds, America shall be tough enough to deal with the world, due to its education system and incursion of young immigrations. US is fulfilling this criterion and commanding the world with its capabilities in all areas of strength and is at the top with vast nuclear forces while other major powers have no match. Not only nuclear capabilities but many other sources of power are working at its disposal. Defining the power, the writer has set out six guidelines, i-e; Choose, Build broad rules, not narrow interests, Be Bismarck not Britain, Order a la carte, think asymmetrically and legitimacy is power.

The author is optimistic enough to believe that Americans will surely gain benefit from this overall growth. America is left with the option to have broad mindedness. It should give vent to other countries also in order to become stakeholders because in his view point, in today's, International Order, progress means compromise. He strongly criticizes Democrats for their unilateralism and also the Republicans, as persons like Mitt Romney wanted to double the size of Guantanamo and there was Tom Tancredo, who had suggested the US threat to "take out" Mecca. Zakaria offers solutions for US that it can only protect its nation and policies if it adopts simple domestic policies, opens out in science and technology and upholds energy efficiency. It is the high time that US government must make the right way and decide unambiguous goals and targets for other countries. The best example given by the author is Iran where the US has counterproductively tried both to overthrow the government and push the government to disarm. He writes, "The world we're entering will look like a bollywood. It will be thoroughly modern-and thus powerfully shaped by the West-

but it will also retain important elements of local culture.”He has both outlook of world’s sole super power and a serious rising challenge.

The book offers serious and realistic solutions, a superb non-fiction page-turner for every one. The writer has analyzed the problems very skillfully. The book has been written in such a plain and simple language that makes it understandable to a wide range of readers. The writing covers all areas skillfully and is analytical in its nature and theme. Like many books, it carries drawbacks. The book seems to be an extended essay with journalistic writing style. The orientation and characterization of Bhuddism as Indian religion and India as birthplace of Bhuddha has given rise to criticism. Some groups in Nepal have even burnt the book as a protest against misrepresentation of Bhuddism. The protest was based on the established fact that Lord Bhuddha was born in Lumbini (Nepal, the place of origin for Bhuddism), thus it seems that in order to fulfill the vested interests of India, the writer has deliberately or unconsciously distorted the historical fact.

Still the book is persistently intellectual in its style and turns one back to simple-minded projection from crisis to collapse, as his viewpoint is not the fall of America but “rise of the rest” because America needs to de-emphasize military power and review economic competitions. Presenting a cogent and inspiring review of the world affairs, this book engages readers on both sides of the political spectrum.
