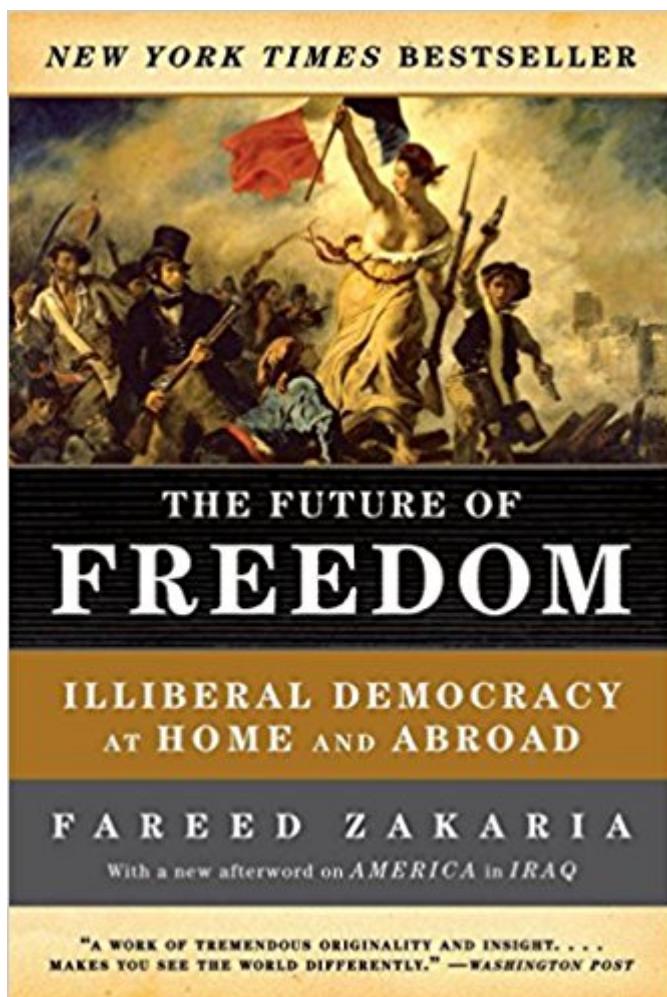


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The Future Of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy At Home And Abroad (Revised Edition)



Synopsis

“A work of tremendous originality and insight. ... Makes you see the world differently.” Washington Post Translated into twenty languages ?The Future of Freedom ?is a modern classic that uses historical analysis to shed light on the present, examining how democracy has changed our politics, economies, and social relations. Prescient in laying out the distinction between democracy and liberty, the book contains a new afterword on the United States’s occupation of Iraq and a wide-ranging update of the book’s themes.

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Customer Reviews

Democracy is not inherently good, Zakaria (From Wealth to Power) tells us in his thought-provoking and timely second book. It works in some situations and not others, and needs strong limits to function properly. The editor of Newsweek International and former managing editor of Foreign Affairs takes us on a tour of democracy’s deficiencies, beginning with the reminder that in 1933 Germans elected the Nazis. While most Western governments are both democratic and liberal-i.e., characterized by the rule of law, a separation of powers, and the protection of basic rights-the two don’t necessarily go hand in hand. Zakaria praises countries like Singapore, Chile and Mexico for liberalizing their economies first and then their political systems, and compares them to other Third World countries "that proclaimed themselves democracies immediately after their independence, while they were poor and unstable, [but] became dictatorships within a decade." But Zakaria

contends that something has also gone wrong with democracy in America, which has descended into "a simple-minded populism that values popularity and openness." The solution, Zakaria says, is more appointed bodies, like the World Trade Organization and the U.S. Supreme Court, which are effective precisely because they are insulated from political pressures. Zakaria provides a much-needed intellectual framework for many current foreign policy dilemmas, arguing that the United States should support a liberalizing dictator like Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf, be wary of an elected "thug" like Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and take care to remake Afghanistan and Iraq into societies that are not merely democratic but free. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Newsweek International's editor exposes the down side of democracy, i.e., the assumption that what's popular is right. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Here is a critical (but not flawless) book. In it, Fareed Zakaria reminds Americans of an idea that was obvious and fundamental to the founders of our nation, but is now anathema to most: That Democracy and freedom are not one and the same, and that too much Democracy can quickly become the enemy of freedom. That probably sounds strange to most Americans, which is why Zakaria wrote this book. We've been raised to believe that Democracy is unquestionably good and that more of it is always better. In reality, that's a pretty new attitude. At the time of this country's founding, Democracy was viewed very skeptically. The Founders knew that left unchecked, the majority could be an even worse tyrant than an individual because it would have the illusion of morality on its side. For that reason, our nation's government was set up as Republic, not a Democracy (think of the Pledge of Allegiance). A Republic allows the people to choose from pre-screened applicants for leadership roles and then delegates leadership to them. Zakaria argues that the gradual breakdown of the protections against the Tyranny of the Majority as we've moved further and further towards democratization has had a vast negative effect. Politicians most focus increasingly on the short-term approval of voters in order to get re-elected and are kept from using their judgment and long-term outlook. The book is filled with eye-opening insights and makes you aware of problems you may never have considered before. It is one of those books that has the power to change your outlook on major issues. That said, it isn't perfect. Zakaria needs to fully form his ideas just a little more. He obviously is a fan of the free market in most cases, but then says that too much of the free market can act in the same way as too much democratization (he uses the

downfall as the Book of the Month Club as an example of cultural diminution brought about by too much free market.) It's an interesting point, but the reader is left wondering where Zakaria thinks the free market is good, and where he thinks it should be cut back. He needs a clear rule to say, "Use more until "X", then stop." There are a couple cases where Zakaria seems to want to have his cake and eat it too, and that rarely works out. None of that stops this book from being a very important read for modern Americans. I believe Zakaria is striking at the central issue that will determine whether America can retain (or maybe even reclaim) its current and former glory, or whether it will slip off into history. Zakaria doesn't sound an optimistic note, but at least he's done his part to sound the alarm. I applaud his efforts. Read this book and give it to your friends as well.

Explains how we have lost control of our government. When I worked on Capitol Hill in the 1970s, the political discussion argued that staffers on Capitol Hill had usurped and taken control of the political process, making decisions on Members votes, and deciding the path of policy for the nation. This book explains how that power has shifted to K-street lobbyists in the interim so that 10,000 lobbyists now shape the legislation that is passed and signed by the President. The average voter votes for his member of congress only to have K-street lobbyists make his decisions for him once he is a Member of Congress. In turn, lobbyists supply the money that gets the Member re-elected. Unfortunately the book doesn't have a solution for taking back control of our Government. Only a national dialogue can bring that about.

The book gives a wonderful time line explanation of liberal democracy, from where this country started from to where we now find ourselves. While Mr. Zakaria states that the book is not a "historical scholarship" it is as close as I think anybody can come while covering so much ground and providing meaningful and detailed support for views, while still making it highly readable. If there is any complaint it has to do with what felt like a hurried mix of conclusions to finish the work. The implicit conclusion that one can arrive at is that there is no way out, no way for this liberal democracy to survive as we strive to make things more democratic. It may be very well that this is what he believes but simply did not want to say. After a detailed and logical explanation as to how we got where we are he took about two pages to close, with a few quick fixes and platitudes, regarding the difficult future. I believe Mr. Zakaria has some definite views as to how it will all come out. I wish he had included them in his summary.

Mr. Zakaria's key insight is to distinguish between democracy as a process to elect governments,

and constitutional liberalism (i.e. the rule of law where individual rights are protected) as a resulting government which citizens want. He then reviews efforts to introduce democracy before constitutional liberalism and the reverse. This book is very insightful, particularly as we grapple with how to extend the benefits of open societies to other cultures. He also has insights about how to improve our own government, which might be suffering from the ills of democracy sliding into demagoguery. Solution? Like Madison said in the Federalist Papers, get the checks and balances right so tyranny of the majority of the moment doesn't destroy the whole system. Read this one, and I guarantee you will start giving it to your friends.

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