

Fareed Zakaria (2011)

Host of CNN's weekly foreign affairs program, Fareed Zakaria GPS



Fareed Zakaria is the host of CNN's weekly foreign affairs program, Fareed Zakaria GPS, airing on CNN worldwide. On the program Zakaria conducts in-depth interviews with world leaders such as Tony Blair, Wen Jiabao, Henry Kissinger, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and Barack Obama. In August 2010 Fareed Zakaria joined TIME as Editor-at-Large, writing a biweekly column and contributing cover stories and features in the magazine and on TIME.com. He also is serving as a consultant for HBO's documentary unit. He continues to write a regular column for The Washington Post.

Over 850 students, faculty and members of the Cornell community filled Statler Auditorium and an overflow room to capacity to hear Fareed Zakaria's talk "The Rise of the Rest: The Post-American World." on April 25, 2011. Einaudi Center Director, Fred Logevall, opened the event and Hunter Rawlings, President Emeritus of Cornell University, introduced Dr. Zakaria as the 2011 Henry E. and Nancy Horton Bartels World Affairs Fellow.

Zakaria opened his remarks with an amusing anecdote, describing a midnight interview of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi at the Libyan mission to the United Nations 10 years ago. Shifting back to the present, Zakaria highlighted the significance of the recent populist uprisings in North Africa. "It isn't really just Libya where we're seeing this," Zakaria said. Recent events there, in Egypt, Tunisia, and other countries are part of a larger global trend and further evidence that the Middle East is catching up to the rest of the world.

Zakaria then went on to develop the theme of his talk, "The Rise of the Rest." In the now defunct Cold War world order, there were two superpowers with instability in between, with the Soviets funding

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guerilla groups to engage in violence and the United States supporting their opponents. With the collapse of this political divide came one global system and a scramble to make it work for the best.

Despite the increasing attention brought to political conflicts and civil wars by 24-hour cable news channels, said Zakaria, there has actually been a worldwide decline in political violence in recent years. As an example he reminded the audience that more than three million people died in various conflicts in Indochina throughout the 1960s, and that even with the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and growing instability in Africa, there is nothing on that scale going on today. On the contrary, he said, with the end of the Cold War came the end of decades of economic uncertainty and instability for much of the world.

Zakaria said that in the last 10 years the "frozen" system in the Middle East has thawed and the region is no longer the playground of the great powers, as it had been for centuries. The United States has lost its appetite for backing dictators in the Middle East because, "We're broke and are tired of supporting nation building," and has realized that the cost of subsidizing these regimes was the violent Islamic opposition that they spawned.

The additional confluence of a demographically young population and the spread of technology have acted as a catalyst to the formation of a counter narrative to the official government line in these countries. Zakaria went on to explain that there are lots of young men in Middle Eastern society, and that "One of the principal occupations of society is to figure out what to do with young men. That's why you have boarding schools and military academies." He elaborated that what was occurring in Egypt was significant and important to watch, concluding that, "If Egypt makes it, it is the single most important role model for the rest of the Middle East."

After discussing the recent upsurge of democratic movements in the Middle East, Zakaria went on to address his second major topic, changes in the global economy. The effect of the financial crisis has been a lower growth rate in the Western world and a higher growth rate in China, while the growth rate in Brazil and India is unchanged. "It is obvious we are already in a post-American world. China is already behaving as if it is in a post-American world. The new China is emboldened by its success during the financial crisis," Zakaria said.

Zakaria went on to say that the United States faces an unusual challenge in the near term. He said that the United States is by far still the most dominant power in the world, but there is no question that others are rising to fill that space, and that when we think about the foreign policies of Brazil and Turkey over the last two years we begin to see this new post American world. "In foreign policy terms, this will be hard for the US to deal with, we have gotten used to how the world works," Zakaria said, and explained that the coming years will bring a new, multilateral world order. "It's not necessary for the United States to scratch the imperial itch every time the fancy strikes us," he continued.

What remains to be seen is whether or not this evolving multilateralist mentality will permeate domestic politics. Zakaria brought up the example of the United States defense budget, pointing out that though we were fighting in two wars and were now involved in Libya, that the F-22 fighter had not been used in any of these conflicts. This begs the question whether we need this single most expensive component of the defense budget.

Zakaria thought the biggest challenge currently facing the United States is the economic one. The United States has been the banker of last resort, the United States dollar has been the currency of last resort and the United States economy has been the engine to job creation at every level. This has broken down over the last 10 years, and it's unclear what will rise to replace it, and what will happen to the American

worker. "We are back to our pre recession GDP, but with 7.5 million fewer workers," he said. Zakaria continued that although technical innovation sounds great, the connections between innovation and job growth are hard to find. For example, in 2010 Apple Computer had one of its most profitable years ever, with \$63 billion USD in revenue, 80% growth and 80,000 employees. The Taiwanese company Foxconn, which manufactures Apple's products in China, also had \$63 billion USD in revenue, but employed 850,000 workers. "The products we buy are being made there, and the jobs are being created there too," he said.

Zakaria concluded that the solution to these problems is not for the United States to be more like China because our strengths are openness to ideas, people and culture and the ability to make things dynamic. "The challenge is not to be more like them, but to be more like us," said Zakaria. He imagined a historian writing 100 years in the future looking back at this period of time saying, "The United States followed its great ambition and globalized the world, it just forgot to globalize itself."

After these prepared remarks, the lecture was opened to questions from the floor. The first audience member asked, "As economies around the globe continue to grow, will inequality rise?" Zakaria answered, "Global inequality is declining, but inequality within countries will rise." This is more structural than people like to believe, he continued, and would result from a devaluation of commoditized work.

Another member of the audience pointed out that America was an empire, but one that promoted great concepts such as self-determination, and asked who would fill this vacuum in the post United States era. Zakaria responded that "If you lived in Latin America more than 20 years ago, it would be difficult to see the benign effects of United States imperialism," and that so far there were not encouraging signs that China would try to uphold freedom of information or religion or try to protect intellectual capital.

Another audience member pointed out that Chile had an authoritarian regime backed by the United States but was able to evolve into a democracy, and asked Zakaria if he thought this was likely in the Middle East. Zakaria answered that all of the dictatorial regimes the United States supported in Latin America had liberal or "liberalizing" economies, which was not the case in the Arab world. He reiterated his earlier point that what the United States does in Egypt would be crucial to how this process of democratization unfolds.

Another audience member asked, given the emphasis placed on energy independence in campaign rhetoric from the last two presidential elections, would energy security continue to be an issue? Zakaria answered that it makes sense to look for alternative energy, but that none of these alternatives are currently available in the scale needed and that we need to invest heavily in research. "For a real technological revolution, we need a massive increase in supply and a massive decrease in price. Otherwise you have to pay people to be virtuous, and that's never a good bet, especially in the United States."

Another audience member asked, "What role will globalization play in health care reform?" Zakaria answered that globalization will impact healthcare in several ways, such as an increase in "medical tourism," but the larger question is how a system as ineffective as the current one in the United States can keep running.

An audience member then asked the final question, "Was the economic crisis caused by greed?" Zakaria answered that a shift in power has taken place between capital and labor, which has allowed management to profit while labor loses. "They are no longer in it together," he said. A solution will be

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tough to find, but rather than beating up on businesses, he concluded, we need to invest in people and invest in education.

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The Henry E. and Nancy Horton Bartels World Affairs Fellowship was established in 1984, to bring prominent international leaders to Cornell. The mission of the fellowship program is explicitly educational-to foster a broadened worldview among Cornell students by bringing to campus persons who have distinguished themselves as international public figures.

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