

not of the imitation of life but of the creation of life. If Nadelman's imaginative freedom produces an art that has its share of ambiguities, it may be because his experimental spirit reflects both a classicist's search for timeless truths and a romantic's struggle to be absolutely himself. The fact is that in order to achieve the homogeneity of a true classicism, which he surely desired, Nadelman had to be something of a romantic individualist. In theory, the romantic says that it is the individual's perceptions that matter, while the classicist says that it is the timeless ideals that

matter; but in practice something rather odd can occur. The romantic, who hangs everything on the individual, can create a sense of wholeness more easily than the classicist, who in seeking to set the self to the side provokes an increasingly complex relationship between the self and the world.

Nadelman, the classicist who aims to "create a new life that has nothing to do with life in nature," is a man of romantic longings. And it is the mingling of romantic individualism and classical equilibrium that accounts for the haunted, muffled, there-but-not-quite-

there beauty of so many of his unforgettable figures. In Nadelman's sculpture, the particular and the general, and the power of the general to become particular, are held in a bewitching high-wire balance. Through the very act of refusing to wear his heart on his sleeve, this great sculptor pushes us to go in search of his heart. Perhaps that is what Henry McBride had in mind when he observed that Nadelman's art "is cultured to the breaking point." Nadelman's triumphant classicism is tinged with disquietude, a disquietude that we experience as melancholy's afterglow. ■

Robert Kagan

The Ungreat Washed

Why democracy must remain America's goal abroad.

THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM:
ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACY AT HOME
AND ABROAD

By Fareed Zakaria
(W. W. Norton, 286 pp., \$24.95)

MI. MIDWAY THROUGH FAREED Zakaria's attack on democracy, one realizes that his animus toward popular government is not only theoretical but also personal, and in some ways it is even quite understandable. The unique perils of democracy upon which Tocqueville long ago speculated—the "tyranny of the majority," the debasement of the culture, the tearing down of elites—are not abstractions for Zakaria, but phenomena that he experienced first-hand as an Indian Muslim growing up in Bombay in the 1960s and 1970s. The child of elites—his father was a leading Indian politician, his mother an editor of the *Sunday Times* of India—Zakaria remembers (in a recent profile in *New York* magazine) that his family "knew everybody," and "saw the best architects, government officials, and poets all the time. Nothing seemed out of your reach."

But even during those happy, privileged years, what Zakaria remembers as the ordered, liberal secularism of Nehru's India was beginning to fray. In his book,

Zakaria recalls that the dominant Congress Party "morphed from a vibrant grass roots organization into a fawning, imperial court" under the thumb of Indira Gandhi, whose "populist policies ... were often unconstitutional and certainly illiberal." Then the Congress Party itself declined as India's dominant political institution. While many outsiders viewed the passing of one-party rule and the emergence of genuine political competition in India as a promising democratic development, for Zakaria this democratic progress was no progress at all. Democratization and the opening of the Indian political system gave rise to new parties that vied for the allegiance of new voters—"almost all," Zakaria observes, "from poor, rural, and lower-caste backgrounds." The growth of political participation by these once-excluded groups "made India more democratic." And the consequence, Zakaria argues, was that it "also made it less liberal."

Democratization in India, in Zakaria's view, proved disastrous for the nation, and especially for its large Muslim minority. The most potent new challenger to the Congress Party was the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In its years in opposition, Zakaria recounts, the BJP employed an anti-Muslim and anti-Christian "rhetoric of hatred" to fire up its voters. Since coming to power, the BJP—although mellowed

somewhat by the need for political compromise—has still been leading a Hindu nationalist revival. The consequences, Zakaria insists, have ranged from the horrific to the absurd. In Gujarat in 2002, the local BJP government was complicit in "India's first state-assisted pogrom," in which thousands of innocent Muslim men, women, and children were massacred. (For some reason, Zakaria does not mention the massacre of fifty-eight Hindus that preceded the anti-Muslim violence.) India's largest state, Uttar Pradesh, dominated by the BJP and "two lower-caste parties," has become a sea of corruption, a "bandit democracy." The Indian justice system has become, according to Zakaria, "a corrupt handmaiden of political power." Zakaria's hometown of Bombay, "a city built by its great minority communities," once "vibrant, meritocratic, and tolerant," has been destroyed by this officially sponsored Hindu revival in service to what Zakaria considers a ludicrous Hindu nationalist mythology. "The renaming of Bombay as Mumbai in 1996," he remarks, "illustrates the invented quality of much of Hindu nationalism."

"This is the reality of democracy in India," Zakaria declares in the most intensely personal passage of his new book. And yet, he complains, "no one in the West wishes to look at it too closely. We prefer to speak romantically about

the beauty of Indians voting and the joys of the world's largest democracy." "Thoughtful Indians," Zakaria explains, "do not quite see it this way."

ZAKARIA HIMSELF IS NOT ROMANTIC about democracy and democratization. He holds democracy responsible for many of the modern world's evils, from ethnic violence to poverty, repression, and war, and even for international terrorism, which he calls the "democratization of violence." About one-third of his book derives from an essay that he published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1997, called "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," in which he argued that democracy was not the necessary, appropriate, or even desirable form of government for many if not most countries around the world. In describing what he thinks is the new phenomenon of "illiberal democracy," Zakaria argued—and he repeats the argument in his book—that "democratically elected regimes" are now "routinely ignoring constitutional limits on their power and depriving their citizens of basic rights and freedoms." Citing examples from Russia and Belarus to the Philippines, Kazakhstan, Venezuela, and Argentina, Zakaria claims that "in many developing countries, the experience of democracy over the past few decades has been one in which majorities have—often quietly, sometimes noisily—eroded separations of power, undermined human rights, and corrupted long-standing traditions of tolerance and fairness." Curiously, Zakaria does not mention India, although it seems by his own description to be the quintessential example of a democracy gone "illiberal"—"less tolerant, less secular, less law-abiding, less liberal."

The sins of democracy go beyond the trampling of rights to include economic malfeasance and the impoverishment of peoples (in Russia, for instance, and post-Suharto Indonesia), the unleashing of religious fanaticism (notably in the Muslim world), the stoking of ethnic hatreds (in the Balkans, Africa, Central Asia, and the subcontinent). Drawing on the work of the political scientists Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, Zakaria even asserts that, contrary to conventional wisdom about the "democratic peace," democracies are more prone to militarism and war. When political systems are "opened up," he claims, new groups of enfranchised voters make incompatible demands on leaders, who in

turn try to "rally the masses" behind aggressive nationalist crusades.

AND WHAT OF THE BIGGEST and oldest democracy of them all? In his essay, Zakaria made a distinction between the "illiberal" democracies proliferating around the developing world and the liberal democracy enjoyed by the United States. But the subtitle of his new book is "Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad," and Zakaria devotes almost half the book to cataloguing the catastrophic effects of "illiberal" democracy in the United States. "The troubles of American democracy," he argues, "are similar to those being experienced by countries across the globe." Most Americans are disgusted with their democratic system; "they are repulsed by it." They "have lost faith in their democracy." They are experiencing a "crisis of faith" in democratic governance. And with good reason, Zakaria insists, because "something has gone seriously wrong with American democracy."

The problem with democracy in America, Zakaria maintains, is that there is simply too much of it. The old powerful elites that used to dominate every segment of American society have been pulled down and replaced by "a simple-minded populism," with disastrous consequences. In the realm of politics, "the quality of political leadership has declined." Fifty years ago the nation had Dwight D. Eisenhower; today it has George W. Bush—thus Zakaria quotes an unnamed "scholar in his eighties." ("We were having lunch in the paneled dining room of one of New York City's grand clubs.") Meanwhile, direct democracy in the form of initiatives and referenda has taken governance out of the hands of political elites and placed it in the hands of an irresponsible and shortsighted citizenry. Proposition 13, the famous California tax-cutting measure of 1978 so celebrated by Reagan-era conservatives, was a terrible precedent, in Zakaria's view, because it led to an explosion of such citizen movements. As a result of this democratization, especially within the American party system, for three decades Americans have had "their leaders bow and scrape before them."

And the unfortunate impact of democracy extends well beyond politics. It has also had pernicious effects on business, law, medicine, religion, journalism,

and culture. There, too, the nation has suffered from "the eclipse of the class of elites who ran these institutions" and has been harmed by "the opening up of many American industries and professions to outsiders." Zakaria traces the undoing of the American financial system, for instance, in part to Chase Manhattan Bank's shift in the 1990s toward a strategy of "catering to the great unwashed." There was a time, Zakaria argues, when American bankers such as J.P. Morgan awarded credit to men with good "character"; but his successors failed in "a financial world dominated by mass rather than class." Today's stock market is "geared toward everyday investors ... everyone, king and commoner alike, has become a capitalist"—a partial fulfillment, Zakaria complains, of the Southern populist Huey Long's rallying cry, "Every man a king!" If the "symbol of the old order was a Wall Street club where a handful of power brokers lunched, the symbol of the new was CNBC, where CEOs vied for airtime to speak to a mass audience." The once elite legal profession has destroyed itself by permitting lawyers to advertise to the common man. And doctors, too, have "lost their privileged perch" in society and become like everybody else.

Catering to the "great unwashed" has also destroyed the media. In television, Zakaria complains, the days are gone when Don Hewitt, producer of the "now-legendary" *60 Minutes*, could be told by his network bosses simply to "make us proud." Yes, Zakaria concedes, there may still be some "serious news programs ... [that] were started decades ago and built their audience gradually over those years" (he may be referring to ABC's *This Week*, on which he appears), but ever since ABC and the two other "traditional networks" lost their monopoly, television news has been engaged in a "race to the bottom." And the same goes for print journalism. While there still remain, for Zakaria, a few serious publications whose owners "are willing to subsidize excellence," such as *The New Yorker* (where he also appears), and while there is at least one mass-circulation magazine that "still covers the news seriously and in depth," such as *Newsweek*, where I work, these quality publications are becoming fewer and fewer.

The problem extends even to think tanks. Venerable institutions such as the Council on Foreign Relations, where Zakaria also worked, are "worthy and duti-

ful" for having created a "foreign-policy discussion for the country that was civil and not permeated with partisanship." But Zakaria's own think tank and the equally venerable Brookings Institution (also "designed to serve the country beyond partisanship and party politics") are exceptional in this respect, for "almost every institute and think tank created in the past thirty years is deeply ideological." In Zakaria's view, this is principally because the new think tanks were founded by conservatives seeking to erect a "counter-establishment" to challenge the old elites. But instead of creating "independent institutions" for "free-thinking intellectuals," the conservative think tanks have blindly "pushed their own partisan line." The scholars at these conservative institutions, Zakaria writes, are "chosen for their views, not their expertise." As a result, they produce "lots of predictable polemics and little serious analysis."

Finally, there is the debasement of the culture by its democratization. There was a time, Zakaria recalls, when the nation's tastes were set by men who "had a feel" for what Zakaria calls "cultural

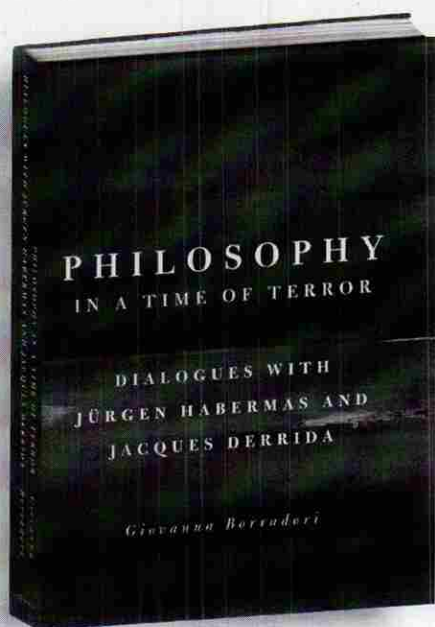
content"—men such as Harold Ross, the "legendary" editor of *The New Yorker*. But no longer. There was a time when Americans looked for guidance to Philippe de Montebello, the "legendary" director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but now museum directors pander to the masses.

Zakaria's answer to this rampant excess of democracy in America is to "resurrect, in some form, the institutions and elites" that dominated America in the past, and to return to them the authority that they have lost. Specifically, he has in mind the sweeping delegation of economic, political, social, and cultural power away from average Americans to an elite corps of experts. Zakaria's model for American government is the American corporation. "Delegation is, after all, how modern business is run. Shareholders own companies but hand over their management to people who can devote time and energy to it and who have expertise in the field. Shareholders retain ultimate control but recognize that they cannot run the companies themselves." Zakaria argues that it is ridiculous to believe that "any amateur" should deter-

mine the policies of the nation. Americans somehow think that "although we cannot file our tax forms, write our wills, or configure our computers, we can pass laws ourselves." He insists that it is time for Americans to "admit that, without guidance or reference to authority, people can make bad choices." What the United States needs, in short, "is not more democracy but less."

IN MAKING HIS CASE AGAINST American-style democracy, Zakaria points admiringly to the European Union as an example of how "undemocratic policy-making" can be preferable to democratic policy-making. While many in the United States and Great Britain complain about the EU's so-called "democracy deficit" and the bloated, imperious bureaucracy of Brussels, Zakaria finds much to admire in the EU bureaucracy. It is effective, he argues, "precisely because it is insulated from political pressures." Zakaria asserts that economic reforms made in Europe over the last decade were possible only because of the "pressure" and "power" of Brussels.

PHILOSOPHY IN A TIME OF TERROR



Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida

Giovanna Borradori

"This is in many ways the first real engagement between Derrida and Habermas, two eminent thinkers who disagree on a great many issues and who have until now been perceived as speaking very much at philosophical cross-purposes. Each has some searchingly original and important things to say about the terrorist attacks and their political aftermath, not least in light of the threat posed by the Bush administration and its drive for global economic and military-strategic dominance. Borradori has done an excellent job in editing the interviews and drawing her collocutors out on a range of issues that neither has previously discussed with so powerful a sense of moral and political urgency."—Christopher Norris, Cardiff University

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The United States can learn from the example of the European Union, Zakaria believes. Above all, American policymakers must learn to ignore public opinion. Zakaria begins his book by recounting the story of Odysseus ordering his men to tie him to the ship's mast so that he would not follow the Sirens' call and wreck his vessel on the rocks toward which their sweet singing beckoned. In Zakaria's analogy, the Sirens are the American people—the "great unwashed"—who are destroying their nation because their political leaders cannot resist their alluring call. The power now held by the American masses must be transferred to the elites; and America's elites need to grasp that power. They must recover their nerve and recapture their old ethos of responsibility. Noblesse oblige: for Zakaria, this must be the American ideal. He sees it perfectly epitomized in the slogans of Groton Academy, whose motto, "to serve is to reign," aimed to produce "men who played hard but fair, followed a moral code, and believed in public service as a responsibility that came with power."

II.

THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM offers, in the words of Niall Ferguson, a "classical defense of aristocratic rule" as a superior alternative to American democracy. And perhaps, as Ferguson suggests, it is a brave thing for Zakaria to make such a case for conservative counter-revolution. For Americans have traditionally looked askance at aristocracy and taken a dim view of the idea that non-elected elites, insulated from politics, should assume much greater authority to run the nation's affairs. To be sure, American elites have always been more enthusiastic about such ideas, and it is notable, if not surprising, to find *The New Yorker's* Nicholas Lemann, ABC's Peter Jennings, and would-be Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke among those adorning the dust jacket of Zakaria's book with praise of its anti-democratic thesis. But Zakaria, who remarked in that *New York* magazine piece that "my friends all say I am going to be secretary of state," has nonetheless taken the risk, as he puts it, of speaking out about the "dark sides" of democracy. Meanwhile others hide in the shadows, "silenced by fears of being branded 'anti-democratic'" and "out of sync with the times."

Although Zakaria is courageous enough to cast his harsh spotlight on the evils of democracy, he claims oddly that he is not anti-democratic, that he wants only to protect democracy from its worst tendencies and thereby to strengthen it. But it is difficult to read his book, or the essay from which it derives, and conclude that Zakaria has much fondness for governance by the "great unwashed." The whole thrust of Zakaria's argument and analysis is, by any reasonable understanding of the word, anti-democratic. His critique of democracy "at home and abroad" is a sweeping, no-holds-barred indictment, clearly intended to be damning. That he very occasionally utters some praise of democracy—"overwhelmingly it has had wonderful consequences"—is not at all convincing, especially when each tidbit of praise is followed by the inevitable "but..." Nor is it clear why Zakaria should shy away from the "anti-democratic" label. Zakaria's prescriptions for government both "at home and abroad" are so overtly and objectively "anti-democratic" in intent that it belittles his argument for him to pretend otherwise.

For Zakaria's "classical defense of aristocratic rule" for the United States is matched by an equally classical defense of authoritarian rule for most of the rest of the world. "The need for delegation" in the developing world, Zakaria argues delicately, "is even higher." Most countries, he believes, are unready for democratic government. They would be better off under some form of dictatorship, or what he calls "liberal autocracy." According to Zakaria, "almost every success story in the developing world has taken place under a liberal authoritarian regime." By "liberal," Zakaria means chiefly economic liberalization; and by "success" he means chiefly economic success. Citing Singapore, Indonesia, Taiwan, Thailand, and China, Zakaria argues that only autocratic governments "were able to make shrewd choices for the long term" that allowed the country to prosper and to modernize economically. Meanwhile, "it is difficult to think of a Third World democracy that has achieved sustained growth rates."

ALTHOUGH MANY READERS may be encountering this argument for the first time, the bulk of Zakaria's analysis of the developing world is a simplified recycling of what three decades ago used to

be called "modernization theory." The central hypotheses of modernization theory were, first, that authoritarian governments are better than democracies at promoting economic growth and, second, that economic growth and industrialization are prerequisites for the emergence and success of democracy. In the late 1950s and 1960s, many leading political scientists concluded that democracies were an obstacle to economic growth because popular pressures forced governments away from the most efficient economic decisions. Popular government led to inflation, budget deficits, and chronic low growth. The obvious answer was less democracy and more dictatorship. As Samuel Huntington and Joan Nelson put it back then, "Political participation must be held down, at least temporarily, to promote economic development." Once a period of stable authoritarianism created sufficient national wealth, then a transition to democracy became possible, and perhaps even inevitable.

As the political scientist Adam Przeworski describes the presumption of modernization theory, there was a "benign line" running from "economically successful dictatorships to democracy.... Dictatorships would generate development, and development would create democracy as a by-product." Of course, as Przeworski also points out, this assumption "justified supporting dictatorships and letting modernization do the rest." The effect of the Cold War on the thinking of that era is evident in retrospect, as it was to many at the time: the "modernization thesis" fit nicely with the occasional American propensity during the Cold War to support "friendly" dictators as a bulwark against possible Communist revolution.

FOR ZAKARIA, NOT MUCH HAS changed. The alleged correlation between economic success and democracy is a central pillar in his argument for dictatorship as the preferred mode of government for most of the developing world. More even than many of the modernization theorists upon whom his work relies, Zakaria's argument approaches economic determinism. As he puts it, "Karl Marx understood that when a country modernizes its economy, embraces capitalism, and creates a bourgeoisie, the political system will change to reflect that transformation. Changes in the 'base,' in Marxist lingo, always produce changes in the

'superstructure.'" National wealth, as measured by per capita gross domestic product, is the surest indicator of a nation's readiness to sustain democratic government.

There is, Zakaria insists, a measurable "zone of transition" within which democratic governance can be expected to succeed. A country "that attempts a transition to democracy when it has a per capita GDP of between \$3,000 and \$6,000 will be successful." But a country that attempts the transition at a lower income level will probably fail. Nor is this "zone of transition" a reliable indicator only in the modern world. Zakaria claims that the correlation held for nineteenth-century Europe as well. "The per capita GDPs of European countries in 1820, when most of them had taken the first steps toward widening the franchise, hovered around \$1,700 ... growing to about \$2,700 in 1870." These figures, which Zakaria admits are based on "heroic assumption and guesswork," would seem to place nineteenth-century Europe below Zakaria's "zone of transition," but he insists that they fall "somewhere within the zone of transition, albeit at the low end." To those who would ask about Saudi Arabia and other dictatorships with a per capita GDP at the high end or even above the "zone of transition," Zakaria's answer, borrowed from a study by two Harvard economists, is that countries whose wealth derives from oil or other natural resources are likely to fail both politically and economically: "Wealth in natural resources hinders both political modernization and economic growth."

THE OTHER PILLAR OF ZAKARIA'S anti-democratic thesis draws on the argument, offered by Huntington in the 1960s, that in all developing countries "order" must precede "liberty." In "modernizing countries," Huntington wrote in 1968 in his influential treatise *Political Order in Changing Societies*, "the primary problem is not liberty but the creation of a legitimate public order." In this respect, in Huntington's view, the world was not divided between dictatorships and democracies, but between governments that could govern and governments that could not govern. In this sense, he asserted, the United States and the Soviet Union had much in common. In phrases that do not read as well today as they may have when he wrote them more than three decades ago, Hunting-

ton argued that both the United States and the Soviet Union were "political communities" with "an overwhelming consensus among the people on the legitimacy of the political system." In each country, "the citizens and their leaders share a vision of the public interest of the society and of the traditions and principles upon which the political community is based." Both the United States and the Soviet Union had "strong, adaptable, coherent political institutions: effective bureaucracies, well-organized political parties, [and] a high degree of popular participation in public affairs." Both the American and Soviet governments, Huntington argued, commanded "the loyalties of their citizens." This ability to govern was what developing countries needed most—the question of democracy or dictatorship was secondary. "The problem is not to hold elections," Huntington instructed, "but to create organizations." More than three decades later, Huntington's judgments about the coherence of the Soviet system do not hold up terribly well. But Zakaria applies Huntington's central idea to the present circumstances: "First, a government must be

able to control the governed," he writes, "then it must be able to control itself. Order plus liberty." And then, perhaps, after many decades, order plus liberty plus democracy.

Zakaria's "benign line" is more elongated than the one proposed by the modernization theorists of the 1960s. Nations must not only wait to enter the economic "zone of transition" before the people can be allowed to elect their leaders. According to Zakaria, before moving to democracy, they must first put in place all the attributes of an ordered, liberal society. As Zakaria put it in a recent interview, the aim of American policymakers should be not to build democracy but, echoing Huntington, to build the "institutions" that can make democracy possible: "the rule of law, all that stuff."

WHEN DEMOCRACY IS adopted in countries that are not ready for it, then democracy itself becomes pernicious, and not only for the people of the nation in which it is unwisely planted. The product of premature de-

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mocratization is Zakaria's "illiberal democracy," repressive, intolerant, violent, prone to war. Indeed, the proliferation of these "illiberal democracies," Zakaria insists, is the greatest threat that the world faces today—greater even than the world's tyrannies. In a recent *Newsweek* column, Zakaria excoriated those who for many years "had a tendency to vastly exaggerate the threat posed by tyrannical regimes," specifically the Soviet Union during the Cold War and more recently Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Woodrow Wilson had once sought to make the world safe for democracy, but Zakaria insists that it is necessary to "make democracy safe for the world." This is to be accomplished by sharply limiting its spread to those very few places where its pernicious excesses can be contained.

This neologism "illiberal democracy" gained Zakaria's *Foreign Affairs* article a great deal of attention. It is his principal contribution to the present discussion of political development. (The phenomenon was in fact first and most fully elaborated by the political scientist Larry Diamond, in 1996 and 1997, prior to the appearance of Zakaria's article. He distinguished between "liberal" democracies and "electoral" democracies whose governance was nevertheless "illiberal.") It is also central to Zakaria's purpose, for only by demonstrating the reality and significance of "illiberal democracy" as a phenomenon in the modern world can Zakaria make his case that the world suffers not from too little democracy but from too much.

For there have indeed been setbacks in democracies, and perhaps permanent failures to promote democracy in many parts of the world. Political scientists such as Diamond and democracy experts such as Thomas Carothers have long catalogued and ruminated over these failures. But they, like almost everyone else, have asked why democracy has failed. Zakaria's perspective is different. In his view, the problem in many countries is not that democracy fails, but that it succeeds. The evils that we see in the world, he insists, represent the product of democratization, not the failure of democratization. This is not just a question of semantics. Declaring a democracy failed and declaring it an illiberal democracy lead to entirely different prescriptions. If a democracy fails, then democracy itself is not implicated in the disasters that follow, and the remedy might be more democracy. But if the disasters are the

product of the success of democracy, then the remedy is, as Zakaria insists, more dictatorship.

III.

SO HOW REAL AND SIGNIFICANT is the phenomenon of "illiberal democracy"? Zakaria claims that it is rampant. But perusing the list of countries he describes as suffering from "illiberal democracy," one discovers that the term, as he deploys it, is rather elastic and inclusive. Indeed, at the heart of Zakaria's analysis is what political scientists like to call a methodological problem.

Consider the example of Belarus. Zakaria labels Belarus an "illiberal democracy," presumably because its ruler, Alexander Lukashenko, won the presidency in a free election in 1994. Immediately after winning, however, Lukashenko began ruling as an authoritarian dictator. In 1996 he extended his term of office by means of a rigged "referendum," and he was "re-elected" in 2001 in another rigged election marked, according to the State Department, by "sweeping human rights violations and non-democratic practices throughout the election period, including massive vote-counting fraud." The survey of world nations conducted annually by Freedom House, which Zakaria himself cites, correctly places Belarus in the non-democratic camp. In short, Belarus is not an "illiberal democracy," or a democracy of any kind. It is a dictatorship.

Nor is Lukashenko's method of hijacking a democracy and turning it into a tyranny exactly a new phenomenon. The history books are filled with democratically elected leaders entrenching themselves in power by undemocratic means. If Belarus is an "illiberal democracy," then so was Nicaragua under three generations of the Somoza dynasty. The Somozas held repeated elections and referenda, too, and they won them all.

One would have thought that to qualify as an "illiberal democracy," a country would first have to meet the minimal standards necessary to qualify as a democracy. Zakaria himself defines the requirements of democracy as "competitive, multiparty elections"; the elections themselves "must be open and fair," which in turn "requires some protections for the freedom of speech and assembly." This is a fairly narrow definition. Huntington more appropriately de-

fines modern democracy as a system in which "the most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote [emphasis added]." Most political scientists would agree that a nation cannot be called a democracy after only one election. Huntington adds that democracy "also implies the existence of those civil and political freedoms to speak, publish, assemble, and organize that are necessary to political debate and the conduct of electoral campaigns."

SO LET US RETURN TO BELARUS. Lukashenko's government does not meet even Zakaria's narrower requirements for a democracy, much less the more generally accepted requirements spelled out by Huntington and others. Why, then, does Zakaria list it as an "illiberal democracy"? He also lists Kazakhstan as an "illiberal democracy"—a nation whose president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, has been in office for a dozen years. Freedom House categorizes Kazakhstan as non-democratic, and Zakaria himself describes it as a "near-tyranny." Zakaria states that "many illiberal democracies," especially in Central Asia, "have quickly and firmly turned into dictatorships." Indeed many have, and so quickly and firmly that no reasonable observer would designate them as having ever been democracies at all.

But Zakaria is playing a somewhat slippery game. In his discussion of "illiberal democracies" in Central Asia, he cites Azerbaijan's president, Heydar Aliyev. Zakaria acknowledges that Aliyev is really an "autocrat" (although he seems unaware that Aliyev "won" two phony elections). Still, Zakaria writes, "most serious observers of the region suspect that if a free and fair election were held today, Aliyev would win." So in this respect, one supposes, dictatorial Azerbaijan must be counted as an "illiberal democracy." Zakaria also seems to include Iran as an "illiberal democracy," despite the fact that all candidates for election are selected by the dictatorship of the mullahs, and there is no free press, no free assembly, and no legal opposition. (Zakaria describes Iranian "democracy" as "highly restricted.") And what is one to make of Zakaria's extravagant decision, in arguing that democratizing

nations are more likely to go to war than dictatorships, to cite as an example of a “democratizing” nation the absolutist dictatorial regime of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany?

There are equally peculiar inclusions at the other end of the spectrum. It would seem strange to list Argentina in the same category as Belarus. Yet Zakaria labels Argentina another “illiberal democracy,” because its onetime president Carlos Menem issued many presidential decrees, “about three times as many” as all previous governments put together. Freedom House more correctly categorized Argentina as both democratic and liberal throughout the Menem years. (This says nothing about the wisdom of Menem’s policies.) Nor is it clear exactly why presidential decrees are necessarily “illiberal.” A president may exercise his executive power to preserve individual liberties, just as a parliament may exercise its legislative power to constrain those liberties. (The military dictatorships that preceded Menem in Argentina did not have to issue decrees; they issued disappearances.)

A category that includes Argentina and Belarus, the Philippines and Kazakhstan, and many other equally dissimilar polities is an imprecise category indeed. And although one is tempted to believe that the imprecision stems only from a certain lack of analytical rigor, one also senses that Zakaria’s intent is to do as much damage as possible to the reputations of all democracies in the developing world. Calling Belarus a democracy smears all democracies. Throwing Argentina into the same cell with Belarus makes Argentina look guiltier than it is.

ZAKARIA ALSO EMPLOYS OTHER means of smearing democracy. Often he blames democracies for problems for which they bear no responsibility. In order to demonstrate that democracies are incompetent at stimulating economic growth, he cites the case of Indonesia. “Since it embraced democracy,” Zakaria observes, “Indonesia’s gross domestic product has contracted by almost 50 percent, wiping out a generation of economic progress and pushing more than 20 million people below the poverty line.” This is a rather appalling distortion. Indonesia’s economy collapsed not after Indonesia “embraced” democracy but before, during the last two years of the Suharto dicta-

torship and as a result of the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998. Per capita GDP dropped from \$1,100 in 1997 to \$487 in 1998, the year Suharto fell. Indonesia’s first parliamentary elections were held a year later, in June 1999, by which time the economy had already collapsed and the 50 percent contraction to which Zakaria refers had already taken place.

This tendency to blame democracy for problems for which it cannot justly be blamed permeates Zakaria’s book. He blames democratization for the ethnic warfare in Yugoslavia as it broke up in the early 1990s, arguing that “the introduction of democracy” there “actually fomented nationalism, ethnic conflict and even war,” and that this proves his general point, which is that “democratizing societies display a disturbingly common tendency toward” violent behavior. But does Zakaria believe that ethnic conflict would have been avoided after the breakup of Yugoslavia had Serbia been in the hands of an unelected dictator? No, he shies away from making such an absurd claim. He admits that dictatorships are “hardly innocent” of fomenting ethnic conflict. Indeed they are not. Nor does the history of the Balkans, filled as it is with ethnic violence over the centuries, lend support to Zakaria’s assertion that somehow it was “the introduction of democracy” that was responsible for sparking ethnic warfare in the 1990s. Nor would any sensible person hold democratization responsible for ethnic conflict in parts of Africa, where tribal warfare has thrived in all political climates.

ZAKARIA ALSO BLAMES DEMOCRACY for unleashing Islamic radicalism and religious conflicts that, he claims, had been kept under control by “liberal autocrats.” He cites Indonesia as one such case. Suharto’s “strongman” rule was “far more tolerant and secular” than the democracy that followed his overthrow in 1998, and whose “newly open political system has ... thrown up Islamic fundamentalists.” This is another historical distortion. It is true that in the first decades after independence, secularism was part of the Indonesian social compact. But as Jacques Bertrand, the prominent expert on Indonesia, explained in a recent article in *Pacific Affairs*, the roots of religious conflict in Indonesia can be traced back to the 1980s and 1990s, when Suharto, worried about his increasingly precarious control of the country, delib-

erately “shifted to Islamic groups for political support.” Zakaria himself notes that in Pakistan it was the military dictator Zia ul-Haq who embarked on an “Islamization” program that fostered the militant fundamentalism we know today, and with the funding provided by another dictatorship, the Saudi Arabian monarchy.

In an offhanded remark Zakaria even claims that democracy was responsible for the perpetuation of slavery in the United States. “Slavery and segregation were entrenched in the American South through the democratic system,” he argues, because “the majority of southern voters defended it passionately.” This is a marvelous inversion of history. Slavery, in fact, was perpetuated not by democracy—slaveholders and their supporters in the South represented a minority of voters in the nation—but precisely by all the undemocratic elements of the

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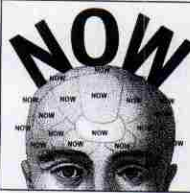
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American system of government that Zakaria now celebrates and wishes to recover: by one undemocratic clause in the Constitution that counted a non-voting slave as three-fifths of a voter so as to give Southern states a disproportionate influence in Congress, and by another clause in the Constitution that gave each state two senators regardless of their population, which was also partly designed to give disproportionate weight to the slaveholding South; by an undemocratic Supreme Court that consistently upheld the "liberal" principle that the slaveholders' human "property" could not be taken away by the government, even in non-slave states; and by a Senate, already weighted undemocratically in the South's favor, in which the slave states were capable of thwarting the will of the non-slave-state majority by means of the filibuster and other undemocratic practices. Southern Senators employed those same practices to block civil rights legislation during the century that followed the Civil War.

IV.

ZAKARIA'S PROCLIVITY TO EXPOSE the "dark sides" of democracy, including many that do not exist, is matched by his propensity to mythologize the virtues of what he calls "liberal autocracies" and to turn a blind eye to their vices. Although he spends comparatively little of his time describing the nature of the dictatorship that he would like to impose on most of the developing world in place of democracy, and although he cannot name more than one "liberal autocracy" in today's world—it is, of course, the tiny city-state of Singapore, which he admires—Zakaria does find much to praise in the dictatorships of the past: the governments that ruled South Korea and Taiwan from the 1950s through the late 1980s, Augusto Pinochet's Chile, Suharto's Indonesia, the onetime dictatorships of Malaysia and Thailand, the late one-party dictatorship of Mexico.

All of these dictatorships Zakaria lumps together under the benign narrative of the "modernization" paradigm. In his version of history, these dictatorships "liberalized, people's lives improved, [and] economic reforms took place, followed by democratic openings." The dictators made "shrewd choices" that created "economic growth." They "liberalized the economy, the legal system, and rights

of worship and travel, and then, decades later, held free elections." The "liberalizing autocracies" thus "laid the groundwork for stable liberal democracies"; democracies would not have been possible without the work done by the dictatorships that preceded them. In the end, of course, the autocrats were overthrown by an angry populace, despite their benevolent rule. But this was in the nature of things, the inevitable course of modernization theory's "benign line."

Zakaria likens these dictators to Moses: "The role of the modernizing autocrat is biblical; like Moses, he can lead his country forward, but he rarely makes it to the promised land himself." This analogy may be the most revealing clue about Zakaria's whole way of thinking about dictatorship and democracy. For it implies not only that dictatorships objectively create the conditions for democracy, but also that such is their intent. But the reader may be left with a question: if democracies followed dictatorships in these countries, was it because of the dictators or in spite of them?

TAKE THE CASE OF SUHARTO'S Indonesia. Zakaria praises Suharto for having "achieved order, secularism, economic liberalization," and tolerance in that difficult country. In Zakaria's telling, Indonesia under the Suharto dictatorship followed the classic modernization narrative. Suharto was one of those "liberal autocrats" who made "shrewd choices" about the nation's economy. Suharto's Indonesia "liberalized its economy," which grew at 7 percent per year for almost three decades. And then, Zakaria notes, Indonesia "embraced democracy."

The remarkable thing about this story is that Zakaria himself contradicts it elsewhere in his book, albeit when he is trying to make a different point about Indonesia. In addition to wanting to praise the dictator Suharto, Zakaria also wants to argue that Indonesian democracy is a failure because democracy came to Indonesia prematurely. When making this particular argument, Zakaria points out that Suharto had not prepared Indonesia for a democratic transition after all. It was "bereft of political institutions, since Suharto ran the country through a small group of courtiers, paying little attention to the task of institution-building." Nor had Suharto alleviated Indonesia's dependence on natural resources as its main source of wealth. Nor, according to Za-

karia, had Suharto managed to lift Indonesia's per capita GDP to the magical "zone of transition." "Strike three," Zakaria declares in condemning the struggling democracy of Indonesia to likely failure. But if anyone struck out, it was Suharto, not Indonesian democracy. And one might add a fourth strike, since Suharto's "shrewd" economic decisions—including the shrewd decision to plunder the Indonesian economy for his own and his courtiers' personal enrichment—helped to plunge the nation into the abyss in 1997 and 1998.

SOUTH KOREA IS ANOTHER OF Zakaria's favorite success stories, "governed for decades by military juntas" that "liberalized the economy, the legal system, and rights of worship and travel, and then, decades later, held free elections." But the story of South Korea's political and economic development is rather more complicated. For one thing, South Korea was not simply an autocracy in the decades after World War II. It was also partly democratic: Korea's first president, Syngman Rhee, faced a genuine political opposition in the Korean Democratic Party, and the Korean National Assembly provided a forum for the opposition to voice dissent. Korea's short-lived Second Republic, formed after the United States forced Rhee's departure in 1960, was a full-fledged democracy with a bicameral legislature, a stronger National Assembly, and a free press. Even when the military strongman Park Chung Hee seized power in a coup in 1961, no doubt realizing that the nation's per capita GDP of \$1,460 was below the democratic "zone of transition," he nevertheless continued to hold relatively free elections, a couple of which he almost lost to his KDP opponents.

Once again we enter the murkiness of Zakaria's categories: was South Korea from 1945 through 1972 one of his good "liberal autocracies" or one of his bad "illiberal democracies"? Once again, Zakaria's decision to place a country in one category or the other depends on the point that he is trying to make. In fact, South Korea became a full-blown autocracy only in 1972, when Park almost lost the election to his political rival, the opposition leader Kim Dae Jung. That year Park seized full dictatorial power, and he preserved this autocracy until his assassination in 1979. But was Park's autocracy "liberal"? Park

certainly produced economic growth through *dirigiste* economic policies that worked miracles for a while before they ultimately came a cropper in the late 1990s; but unless one happened to be a favorite of the regime, one of Park's "crony capitalists," one could not expect the full panoply of individual rights to be protected.

During Park's autocratic reign, the Korean CIA ran amok, torturing and murdering opposition leaders and suspected subversives. Regime opponents were tied spread-eagle over a flame in what became known as the "Korean barbecue." In 1979, when Park was assassinated, the government responded to mass protests in Kwangju with murderous force—Korea's equivalent of the Tiananmen Square massacre. The next year the regime prepared to execute opposition leader Kim Dae Jung. Is this what Zakaria means by "tolerance" and respect for the "rule of law"? Was the Park military dictatorship creating constitutional liberalism as the prerequisite to liberal democracy?

DURING ALL THOSE YEARS OF Park's brutal rule, Korea's per capita GDP was passing squarely into Zakaria's "zone of transition," but the transition to democracy did not come. In 1979, when the Korean military was massacring protesters in the streets of Kwangju, Korea's per capita GDP stood at \$4,530. General John Wickham, the commander of American forces in Korea, must not have been aware of this decisive statistic, for after the Carter administration had virtually endorsed the use of force to put down the Kwangju protests, he declared, "I'm not sure democracy the way we understand it is ready for Korea, or the Koreans ready for it."

Zakaria's contention, of course, is that Korea was in fact not "ready" for democracy in 1980, even though its per capita GDP was around \$4,500, but that it was "ready" by the end of that decade, when the per capita GDP was around \$8,000. "What made [Kim Dae Jung] fail in the 1970s but succeed in the 1990s?" Zakaria asks. Some might argue, without any reference to economics, that it was the fact that in 1987, unlike in 1980, the U.S. government demanded that the military junta hold free elections or risk the loss of American support. Or that Korea's military leaders, recalling what happened to Park, decided they would prefer to die

of old age rather than in a hail of bullets. Or that both the Korean people and their leaders, all of whom had some experience with and recollection of democracy in the 1950s and 1960s, had grown weary of Park's brutal military authoritarianism.

Perhaps the Korean people did not need to be made "ready" for democracy. Maybe what they needed was not more GDP growth, but someone to help rid them of the military junta that had hijacked the democracy the Koreans had started to build after World War II. Fortunately, after many years of dithering, the United States finally helped them to do just that. But Zakaria dismisses these emotional and moral factors, these human factors, as well as the notion that the United States played a role in aiding Korea's transition to democracy. "As a matter of scholarship," he insists, the answer is per capita GDP.

THE CLASH BETWEEN ZAKARIA's deterministic "scholarship" and the true history of his "liberal autocracies" appears again in the case of Chile. Pinochet is another poster child for Zakaria's modernization thesis, the man who brought order and economic growth to Chile in the 1970s and 1980s, and thus allegedly laid the groundwork for the Chilean democracy that blossomed in the 1990s. Zakaria seems to forget, again, that Chileans, like Koreans, knew democracy before Pinochet. As Thomas Carothers has pointed out, "Chile's post-Pinochet democratic success has as much to do with Chile's long pre-Pinochet history of democracy as it does with the economic groundwork Pinochet laid." In fact, Pinochet did not need to make Chile "ready" for democracy. Chilean democracy needed to be rescued from Pinochet. And it was rescued from him, again with American assistance.

Certainly the most striking thought offered by Zakaria is his assertion that autocrats such as Suharto, Park, and Pinochet were like Moses, leading their people to the promised land of democracy but not quite entering it themselves. This is a bizarre notion. None of these dictators had the slightest intention of preparing their countries for genuine freedom and real democratic rule. To the contrary, their aim was to perpetuate their power for as long as possible. In that effort, they did their best to destroy institutions and opposition forces that might someday pose a challenge to their

dictatorial rule. And if they failed at times to wipe out their opposition entirely, it was due to pressures from outside, especially from the United States. If there is an analogy to be drawn from Exodus, these dictators were more like Pharaoh than like Moses. They never had any plans to let their people go. And that is why they did not make it to the "promised land."

ZAKARIA'S SYMPATHY FOR THE dictator, his tendency to attribute to tyrants a decisive role in preparing the ground for democracy, is related to his rather contemptuous view of the "great unwashed" over whom they ruled. Not only does Zakaria presume that the people, left to themselves, could never have reached the promised land without their tyrannical Moses. In Zakaria's view, the dictators saved their countries, and the world, from the inherent, dangerous illiberalism of the masses.

Today Zakaria hopes that other dictators will do the same. He praises many dictators in this book, but he singles one out for special acclaim. Some readers may be surprised to learn that Zakaria's paragon is Pervez Musharraf, the current dictator of Pakistan. According to Zakaria, this "liberal autocrat" has "boldly, decisively, and effectively" pursued a "path of radical political, social, educational, and economic reform." And Zakaria insists that "if genuine liberalization and even democracy come to Pakistan it will come not because of its history of illiberal democracy but because it stumbled on a liberal autocrat."

Again one puzzles over Zakaria's categories, since Musharraf, like Lukashenko, not so long ago held a "referendum" extending his term as president by another five years (he claimed to have won 97.5 percent of the vote), and there have been elections for Pakistan's parliament. But whatever designation one gives to Pakistan's form of government under Musharraf, it would not include the word "liberal." The State Department, with no incentive to criticize this essential "partner" in the war on terror-



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ism, describes Musharraf's human rights record as "poor." Freedom House places Pakistan squarely in the "Not Free" category, neither democratic nor liberal. And as Zakaria's own book went to press, he found it necessary to admit that "as of this writing, Musharraf seems somewhat more autocratic and somewhat less liberal than he seemed at first flush [*sic*]." Yes, that happens. But this late realization has not affected Zakaria's unbounded admiration for Musharraf. Perhaps one may be forgiven for concluding, therefore, that Zakaria likes Musharraf not because he is a "liberal autocrat," but simply because he is an autocrat and "because he did not have to run for office."

NOWHERE IS THIS. PRO-dictatorial, anti-popular prejudice more evident than in Zakaria's characterization of present-day China. For in China, Zakaria claims, the government is "on many issues more liberal than its people." One might wonder how Zakaria knows this, since the actual opinions of the Chinese people are rather difficult to measure, given that free expression on political matters is forbidden and punishable by imprisonment, torture, and death. Still, Zakaria insists that the Chinese people are more "intolerant and aggressive" than the rulers in Beijing. Indeed, he compares today's China to Germany in the late nineteenth century. Both nations, he claims, could be described as "trapped between regimes that wouldn't liberalize enough," on the one hand, and, on the other, "mass movements" that Zakaria describes as "hyper-nationalist, fascist, communist—and ultimately illiberal." (This, by the way, is as much a slander of the German people under Kaiser Wilhelm as it is of the Chinese people under the Communists.) The Chinese people, in Zakaria's view, are dangerous, and best kept on a short leash by their government.

Zakaria feels compelled by political fashion to write that "the current regime in Beijing should not suppress dissent or slow down political reform." But Zakaria's real point is the opposite. He warns Chinese leaders that "they would do well to liberalize with care and incrementally." Not too fast, gentlemen. And one can be sure that the Chinese dictators will take this worldly warning to heart, that

The First Star

There are no paperwhites on the meadow edge this time of year; only snow that shimmers like paperwhite petals in the farewell window of March's postponed clemency, dune-blown with skirt-pretty ripples like someone cared. Why come out here and think of paperwhites bent toward a window with their clusters of cups of six-tricks listening when the deer are standing on the valley's facing hill? The sound of my own voice substitutes for the voice of God. *Here I am.* And, of course, the sudden windscatter on snow like sand and a few maples clacking. The day dies and an invisible coydog pack descends on the fawn of my optimism. The first star hovers out of nowhere. For courage's sake, I think it is as real as a blown flag shadow. But it could be the spark in air at the end of a whip on the back of a nightmare.

JOHN POCH

they share this concern about the premature democratization of what they must agree is their dangerously illiberal people. "It is easy to believe that more democracy" in China "would mean more liberty," Zakaria writes. But "in the short term, the opposite is true." One day, of course, China will democratize, following the iron law of GDP growth; but "in the short term," Zakaria insists, however long that may be, China, like the rest of the world, including America, needs less democracy, not more.

Fear of the people and trust in dictators may be the two constants in Zakaria's confused and often murky analysis. For he is equally confident that Arab dictatorships, while admittedly "autocratic, corrupt, and heavy-handed," are still "more liberal, tolerant, and pluralistic" than the people they rule. And that is why "the West must recognize that it does not seek democracy in the Middle East." At least not until the Arab societies have first achieved "constitutional liberalism."

V.
IT IS POSSIBLE THAT MANY OF THOSE who find Zakaria's analysis troubling will agree that in some measure it is at least realistic. Surely it is true, after all, that political development

and economic wealth are closely related. Surely dictatorships have been more effective promoters of economic growth than democracies. Surely economic growth has in turn been essential to the democratic progress.

And so it may be worth pointing out that, according to the most thorough and recent studies of this issue—studies upon which Zakaria himself relies—the answer on both points seems to be no. As Adam Przeworski noted in a recent article in the *Harvard International Review* summing up the current state of political science wisdom, the once common views "that dictatorships promote development and that development breeds democracy are both false." There is now a broad consensus that "dictatorships and democracies ... do not differ on the average in their annual rates of growth in

total income." The fact is, most countries that begin poor stay poor, regardless of type of regime. Those countries that manage to escape poverty are just as likely to be democratic throughout their period of economic growth (Japan, Ireland) as they are to be dictatorial (Singapore, Malaysia) or to undergo transition from dictatorship to democracy (Portugal, Spain, South Korea).

Nor is there a direct correlation between economic wealth and the transition to democracy. And even though there appears to be a correlation, as Zakaria points out, between economic wealth and the sustainability of democracy, Przeworski, on whose research Zakaria depends, notes that "these thresholds vary enormously": "India had a per capita income of about \$556 in 1947, the United States had an income of roughly \$1,100 in 1830—years when both countries established lasting democracies."

So is there any relationship between economic development and political development? In truth, no one quite knows. There is always a certain arrogance in telling other peoples what form of government best suits them. But it is worse than arrogant to tell people that they are better off under tyranny, when in truth we do not have the faintest scholarly idea whether this is the case or not. Przeworski sensibly suggests that the experience

of political scientists over the decades should be reason for caution “against pretending that we know more than we know.” One would think that such caution might be applied particularly by those fortunate Americans who would recommend a form of government for others that is sharply at variance with the political principles—some have even called them “universal” principles—upon which the United States itself rests.

IT REMAINS ONLY TO ADDRESS Zakaria’s central claim, that liberalism and democracy are distinct and unrelated, and that democratization may impinge on liberalism more than autocracy does. At first blush, the idea that democracy can be “illiberal” seems reasonable enough. Few people have ever claimed that elections alone are sufficient to protect individual liberties. And in theory at least, “democracy,” which is a process of choosing leaders, is not necessarily related to “liberal” governance, which is more about protecting individual liberties against the state.

But as Marc F. Plattner, the editor of the extraordinary *Journal of Democracy*, argued when Zakaria’s original essay appeared, Zakaria’s claim that constitutional “liberalism” is “theoretically different and historically distinct from democracy” ignores the “deeply egalitarian and majoritarian dimension” of modern liberalism. “The political doctrine at the source of liberalism,” Plattner explains, holds that “all legitimate political power is derived from the consent of individuals, who are by nature not only free but equal.” As Locke put it, men are naturally in “a state of perfect freedom,” which is “a state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another: there being nothing more evident, than that Creatures of the same species and rank ... should be equal one amongst another without Subordination or Subjection.”

And while it is true that in Locke’s time, and for another two centuries afterward, it was possible for people, especially in England, to find liberalism compatible with non-democratic forms of government such as hereditary monarchy and even slavery, the fundamental conviction of liberalism—that all people are by nature both free and equal—was inevitably going to force a change in this perception. “As the principle that all men are created equal gained currency,” Plattner explains, the common people

would come to demand the right to vote. “And once they began to do so, how could it any longer be claimed that they consented to a political order in which they had no say?” The working out of the principles of modern liberalism would inevitably mean—as indeed it has meant—that the only liberalism considered legitimate and genuine is that which is found in liberal democracy.

Which is why the fact remains that, as Plattner and other critics have pointed out, “countries that hold free elections are overwhelmingly more liberal than those that do not, and countries that protect civil liberties are overwhelmingly more likely to hold free elections than those that do not.” “This is not simply an accident,” Plattner argues. Contrary to Zakaria’s claims, “it is the result of powerful intrinsic links between electoral democracy and a liberal order.”

In his book Zakaria never bothers to address Plattner’s sharp refutation of his central thesis, although he has had years to mull it over. But his failure to do so probably stems from the fact that at its core Zakaria’s argument is not really about “illiberal democracy” versus “liberal autocracy.” All his disclaimers to the contrary notwithstanding, it becomes painfully clear reading his book that Zakaria simply has a preference for aristocratic government over democratic government at home, and for autocratic government over democratic government abroad.

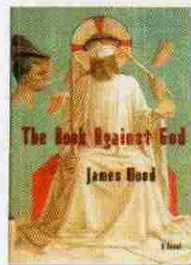
This is a respectable point of view, although it was perhaps a bit more respectable a quarter of a millennium ago than it is today. Zakaria is in this respect the most literal kind of conservative, which is rare in the United States. He is nostalgic for a time when there was indeed “less democracy” in the world. He yearns for the restoration of an earlier age when in places such as England (though perhaps only in England) monarchy and autocracy, as well as aristocracy, were compatible with a developing liberalism.

That combination never really existed in the United States, where democracy and liberalism co-existed from the beginning. And it is almost impossible to imagine re-creating it in the modern world. Which people today are ready to accept the return of divine-right monarchy? Which tyrants today can be counted on to protect the liberties of the individuals over whom they wield absolute power? How would Zakaria or anyone

else presume to know which dictator could be entrusted with the well-being of his or her people? And most important of all, does Zakaria or anyone else really believe that we know how to create a liberal society without democracy? The truth is that, as many experts are now beginning to admit, we have not had so much success in promoting “the rule of law” and “all that stuff.”

Indeed, for the United States and other democratic nations to support the promotion of democracy abroad is not a sign of arrogance. It is a sign of humility. We do not really know how to build a liberal society, any more than we know how to build a human body. But we do know a free and fair election when we see one. And we know what we believe: that the rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence belong to all humankind, and therefore that liberalism in the modern world can only be genuine when the people have the right to choose—and to dismiss—their rulers. When democracies fail, we should try again to help them succeed. And when democracies falter, the answer is, yes, more democracy. ■

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