

AMERICA'S ENERGY CRISIS: WHAT'S VIABLE?

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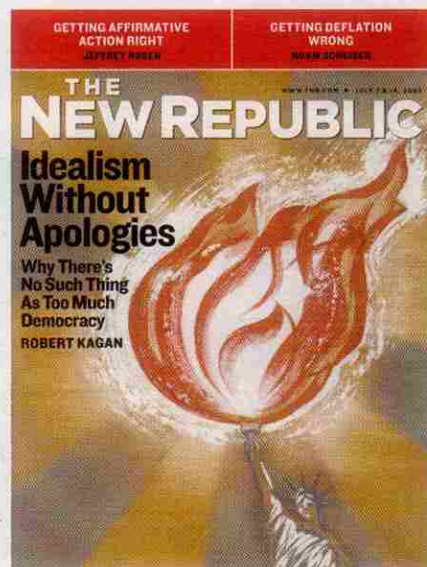
SEVERAL REVIEWERS OF MY BOOK, *The Future of Freedom*, have noted that its thesis, in Niall Ferguson's phrase, "is easily misrepresented." In fact, so far virtually all discussion of it, favorable or not, has been fair. Robert Kagan makes up for all that ("The Un-great Washed," July 7 & 14).

My book explores why liberal democracy came first to the Western world, why it has been so rare elsewhere, and what can be learned from the important exceptions to this rule. As is only natural given such a large topic, many points in it can be debated. What cannot be, however, is the book's clear and oft-stated goal: to help find a path toward genuine liberal democracy for countries everywhere and to reinvigorate it here in the United States. In a generally critical review in the *Financial Times* of London, THE NEW REPUBLIC's Lawrence F. Kaplan writes that the book "is no reactionary tome. It is a plea for attention to be paid first to liberal democracy's 'inner stuffing'—the governing institutions, market systems, civil societies and, yes, restraints on popular will."

Yet, rather than engage the book in front of him, Kagan constructs a straw man and proceeds to beat it vigorously and venomously. He tries to portray the work as a paean to tyranny and aristocracy—a mischaracterization so perverse that it can be sustained only through selective or manipulated quotations, ad hominem innuendo, and outright falsehoods. The signature element of Kagan's review is not intellectual disagreement, which I welcome. It is intellectual dishonesty.

A few examples, chosen almost at random:

1. Kagan writes that I believe, "[i]n the realm of politics, 'the quality of po-



litical 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.')

What the book actually says, however, is this: "The idea that the quality of political leadership has declined... occupies a powerful place in the public imagination. A scholar in his eighties put it to me [that once there were men like Roosevelt and Eisenhower, now there are Gephardt and Bush]. (We were having lunch in the paneled dining room of one of New York City's grand clubs, a perfect setting for misty nostalgia.) But [the scholar's] youth, in the 1930s and 1940s, was dominated by the Great Depression and World War II. Difficult times bring out great leaders. In fact they bring out the best in most of us. Consider how September 11

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transformed George W. Bush and much of the country. ... *From a broader historical perspective, the notion that today's politicians are any worse than the norm is silly. Few people pine for the good old days when Rutherford B. Hayes or Millard Fillmore was president.*" (Emphasis mine.)

2. Commenting on my observation that some autocrats (mostly in East Asia) modernized their economies, a move that over time led to successful democratization, Kagan writes, "This is a bizarre notion. None of these dictators had the slightest intention of preparing their countries for genuine freedom and real democratic rule."

What the book actually says is this: "As in Europe, the autocrats didn't think they were democratizing. But by spurring growth and modernity, they unleashed forces that they couldn't contain." I quote the historian Philip Nord, who noted that "[d]ictatorships believe they want growth but actually make a serious mistake in fostering it." And later, I note that "[a]ll liberalizing autocrats have believed that they can, like Lee [Kuan Yew], achieve modernity but delay democracy. But they can't."

3. Kagan writes that I essentially argue that "dictatorships have been more effective promoters of economic growth than democracies." He then triumphantly points out that the research in this area is inconclusive and concludes, "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."

Here's what the book says on this topic from start to finish: "In general dictators have not done better at [economic] policies than democrats—far from it. Most dictators have ravaged their countries for personal gain. Scholars have asked whether democracy helps or hurts the economic growth of poor countries and despite many surveys, have come to no conclusive answer." (In a footnote here, I cite the same scholar whom Kagan quotes, Adam Przeworski.) I observe—accurately—that almost every recent case of sustained economic growth from Third World poverty to plenty has occurred in East Asia, under an autocratic regime, but then explicitly conclude, "The solution is not to scuttle democracy in the Third World. Democracy has

immense benefits regardless of its effects on economic development and growth. It also has real economic virtues. Although it does not achieve the best results, it usually protects against the worst. You may not get a Lee Kuan Yew through elections, but you will not get a Mobutu Sese Seko either."

4. Kagan repeatedly claims that my call for "delegation" as a solution to some of the problems with democracies constitutes a recommendation for dictatorship.

In fact, I define delegation quite clearly—it takes up the bulk of my conclusion—as involving the creation of central banks, independent judicial and tax agencies, fast-track authority for annual budgets, and some less important procedures designed to make democratic government work better. "It is important to note that all these changes are utterly compatible with democracy," I write.

5. Kagan writes that I "insist" that illiberal democracies are "the greatest threat that the world faces today—greater even than the world's tyrannies." As additional evidence that I am

soft on tyrannies, he adduces a recent column of mine in *Newsweek* magazine.

But nowhere in the book do I claim that illiberal democracies are in any way a threat to America's security or that of any other country. My book is not about international security threats but about economic and political development. The column that Kagan mentions, meanwhile, is on an entirely unrelated topic—the practice some conservatives have gotten into of taking real security threats and irresponsibly exaggerating them. I mention the Team-B report on the Soviet Union in the 1970s, the Cox Commission on China in the 1990s, and claims about Saddam Hussein's weapons in recent months. The column concludes, "What we discovered about the Soviet Union after the cold war was that it was every bit as evil as we had thought—indeed more so—but that it was a whole lot less powerful than we had feared. That is what we will probably discover about Saddam Hussein's Iraq."

And so it goes. Nearly every paragraph of Kagan's review contains some

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such deception, distortion, or error—even in the personal attacks. In an attempt to embarrass, for example, he latches onto a fatuous quote attributed to me in *New York Magazine*, about how friends supposedly assure me that I will become secretary of state. The only problem is that the quote is entirely false, as I pointed out in a letter that *New York Magazine* (May 5) published without contradiction or dispute. The author of the piece corrected the mistake in a subsequent syndicated version of the article. Kagan might have discovered this with a little work had his goal been accuracy.

The review's most offensive aspect, however, is not its deceptive approach to facts, scholarship, or argumentation. It is the opening paragraph, where Kagan suggests that my views on democracy and liberalism are simply the product of my identity and experience as an Indian Muslim. As Kagan knows well, I am an American citizen and have been writing about a broad range of issues here for almost two decades, always with America's interests at heart. The insinuation that my ideas can be reduced to matters of religion or ethnicity is beneath contempt—but a perfect example of the dishonorable tactics that dominate Kagan's review.

FAREED ZAKARIA

Editor

Newsweek International
New York, New York

ROBERT KAGAN REPLIES:

In my review I argued that, despite Fareed Zakaria's professed aim to "reinvigorate" liberal democracy by noting the dangers of "illiberal democracy at home and abroad," at the heart of his thesis is an unmistakable hostility toward democracy itself. His preference at home is for a kind of aristocratic rule by elites; his preference abroad

is for what he calls "liberal" autocracy.

In advancing this interpretation, I offered four broad criticisms of Zakaria's work.

First, that his indictment of democratic governance around the world is unfair and distorts the histories of several countries. For example, he blames the collapse of Indonesia's economy on democratization, although it occurred under Suharto's dictatorship. He blames democratization for the rise of radical Islam, although its initial promoters were dictators in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Indonesia. He erroneously blames democracy for the perpetuation of slavery in the United States and for ethnic conflict in the Balkans.

Second, that his term "illiberal democracy" is misleading and a device to discredit struggling democracies. He describes outright dictatorships in Belarus and elsewhere as "illiberal democracies" and then uses the same term to slander a truly democratic country, such as Argentina.

Third, that he evinces broad mistrust of "the people" as compared with their autocratic rulers. One of his heroes is Pervez Musharraf, who recently declared his Pakistani subjects unfit for democracy. Zakaria insists the Chinese people cannot be trusted with democracy because they are more "illiberal" than the tyrants who rule them.

Finally, I challenged Zakaria's premise that liberalism and democracy are entirely separate and distinct phenomena. This is simply not true in the modern world. Modern autocracies are not "liberal"; true "liberalism" can be found only in democracies.

Zakaria has chosen not to respond to these criticisms. Instead, he tries to recharacterize his argument by quoting himself selectively and out of context.

The chapter in which the "scholar in his eighties" is quoted, for instance, is all about the decline of leadership in the United States as a result of rampant democracy. In the past three decades, Zakaria argues, "something has gone seriously wrong with American democracy"; today's politicians "bow and scrape" before the people. The unnamed scholar's unfavorable assessment of today's political leaders supports his point, which is why Zakaria quotes it. He then distances himself from the scholar's "silly" nostalgia, but one paragraph later he returns to his (and the scholar's) theme: "So what has

made the system decline?"

Similarly, Zakaria writes throughout his book of "liberal" autocrats and "military juntas" who "liberalized" their polities and then, "decades later, held free elections." He even compares them to Moses: The dictator "can lead his country forward, but he rarely makes it to the Promised Land himself." In his letter, however, Zakaria pulls a quotation from elsewhere in the text, suggesting that the dictators weren't like Moses after all. Zakaria thus tries to cover himself by contradicting himself, a device that plagues the book but does not hide his overriding theme.

There isn't space to demonstrate his use of selective quotations in the other instances he cites. I would encourage interested readers to get the book and judge for themselves. Suffice it to say that Zakaria's aim is to prove that "liberal" autocracies are better stewards of government in most developing countries than democracies, especially in matters of economics. He briefly acknowledges that the evidence does not support this claim, but he makes it anyway. As for the dangers to U.S. security posed by "illiberal democracy," Zakaria clearly argues that democratizing countries are more prone to conflict than dictatorships, that they have unleashed radical Islam, and "fomented nationalism, ethnic conflict, and even war." He calls international terrorism the "democratization of violence." Democracy, he insists, is dangerous and "must be made safe for the world."

On two points, I want to express regret. First, I did not search *New York Magazine's* letters section while preparing the review and did not see Zakaria's disavowal of the embarrassing quotation.

I am also sorry that Zakaria found my reference to his experience as an Indian Muslim insulting. In his book, he writes movingly and at length about growing up in a changing India, in order to provide a compelling, firsthand account of the dangers of "illiberal democracy." Clearly this experience played some part in shaping his views, as it would anyone's—we are all immigrants or children of immigrants and are all affected by that history. If I believed Zakaria's experience was the *only* factor shaping his views, however, I would not have written 10,000 words to refute him. ■

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