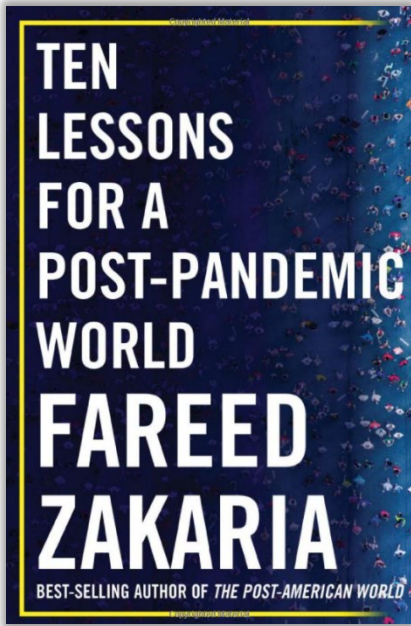
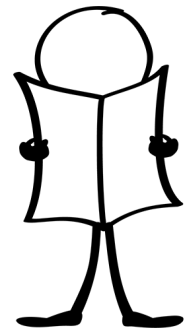


POINT

Get to the *point*, fast!



TEN LESSONS FOR A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

POINT of Reference:

Zakaria, F. (2020). *Ten Lessons for a Post-Pandemic World*. W.W. Norton & Co.: New York, New York.

ISBN: 978-0393542134 | 320 pages



At 320 pages, this is a MEDIUM length read. Contains lessons from history and replete with data and opinion, it's easy to work through but with a lot of gravity. It will make you think.

Genre

World Politics

International Organization

International Trade

Globalization

World Health

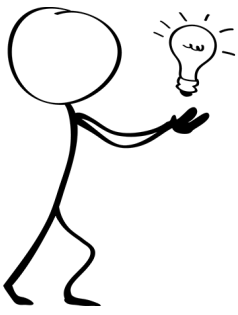
History, Modern

A good walk-through of recent history as it relates to world health and how these issues can and will affect the globe. Oriented toward data, information, and opinions regarding potential societal implications of the pandemic.

Key POINTs

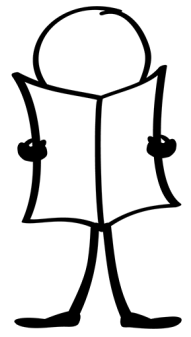
- We've all had a year to absorb and adjust to the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The book challenges us to think longer-term about the implications for our societies around the world and how we interact.
- Takes the form of 10 lessons that cover topics in the areas of globalization, government, health, political science, economics, technology.
- The implications of the pandemic will take time to manifest. The author challenges us to *think forward*.

Note: At Alonos, we tend to stay in the business categories for the books that we read and review; however, in this case we felt it important to challenge our thinking. While this is not directly a business book, the potential implications to business are quite significant. It's worth challenging your paradigms and how you approach business.



POINT

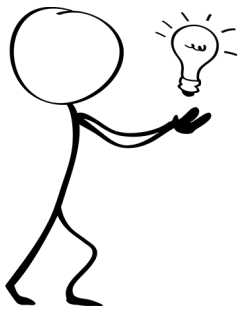
Get to the *point*, fast!



Main POINTs

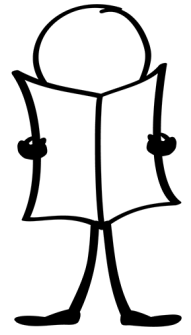
The essence of the book is 10 lessons, so it's easiest to get straight to the POINT and present them. The 10 lessons correspond to the chapter titles. We will give you a sense of each, but we won't spoil the plot so-to-speak. If these summaries interest you, we encourage you to pick up a copy of the book. If your leadership team is going to embark on strategic planning, environmental scanning, and/or workforce planning, this is a good read to stimulate your thinking *before* you perform these activities.

1. "Buckle Up": As the title implies, this lesson is all about *bracing oneself* and *speed*. We have created an interconnected world which moves faster today than any point in human history. Yet, when the 'chips are down' and the world is collectively under strain, each country is on its own to deal with the situation. "Everyone is connected, but no one is in control. In other words, the world we live in is open, fast—and thus, almost by definition, *unstable*" (Zakaria, Page 14). There's also a strong message in this chapter that we should prepare for more pandemics that could come at a faster pace, prompted by our current global interconnectivity. "The pandemic, for its part, can be thought of as nature's revenge. The way we live now is practically an invitation for animal viruses to infect humans" (Page 17). We are living today in a world where societal development is happening at a speed which is unprecedented in human history. Much of the world is in-effect an "open system" with few buffering mechanisms. This means that we directly *and quickly* impact each other globally. The openness with which we can interact has many benefits, but the same openness presents us with unique vulnerabilities.
2. "What Matters is Not the Quantity of Government but the Quality": This particular lesson is one that is simultaneously *obvious* and *profound*. What I thought about when reading this chapter was the "law of triple constraints." You're familiar with this in



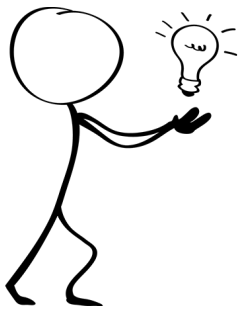
POINT

Get to the *point*, fast!



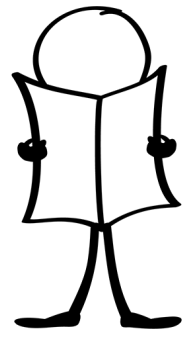
business right? Three competing criteria of Cost, Quality, and Time. The constraint being that we are only able to drive one or two of the dimensions at the same time...rarely, being able to drive all three. For example, if you want something at a lower cost and a higher quality, then it will take time to produce it. Another example, let's say you want something quickly, it will come at a higher cost and lesser quality. When it comes to government, the wheels have come off the "law of triple constraints": Government is expensive, poor quality, and takes forever to get anything done. The prevailing response of governments around the world is to spend more money and resources, with insufficient attention given to quality and time. "For the twentieth century, the great political debate was about the size and role of government in the economy—the quantity of government. But what seems to have mattered the most in this crisis [pandemic] was the *quality* of government" (Page 36). There is a brief history lesson in this chapter, going back to governing examples from around the world including Japan, China, Korea, Rome, and more. Much is oriented around the U.S. including a summary of modern U.S. governmental history through the last century. This chapter concludes with a section about how we might build a better governing structure, which are good thoughts to muse, but there are much better and deeper reads on political science if you're interest lies here.

3. "Markets are Not Enough": It's pretty easy to read this "lesson" and think that the author is against markets, but read on, that doesn't appear to be the case. Based on reading the chapter and what the author says, another title for the lesson might be, "Markets are a Great Basis, but More is Needed." Pages 68-69 give a good synopsis of where the author stands on markets. Markets have great power to transform societies because they motivate productivity and innovation, which are driven off the desire to accumulate resources. Of course, the counter-punch is that the ability to accumulate



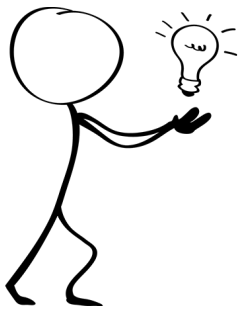
POINT

Get to the *point*, fast!



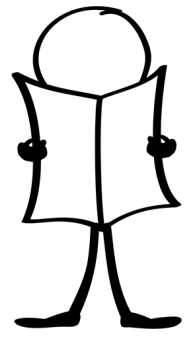
resources can be a phenomena that runs unchecked and seems to inevitability result in some small percentage of the population with large accumulations. The societal implications are monopolization of industries and an imbalance of power. The author presents the dilemma that we face, we need both, “that combination—real open markets and a strong state—is a tough balancing act” (Page 68). Fundamentally, this is a lesson that should cause us all to stop and think. There are no full solutions out there. No country on the planet today, or ever, has found a good solution that balances markets, state, equality, fairness, and respect. It may be lesson #3 in the author’s book, but it is the #1 thing that we (humanity) need to solve in order for humanity to have a prosperous future.

4. “People Should Listen to the Experts—and Experts Should Listen to the People”: I think you can gather where this lesson is heading. This lesson is filled with commentary on party-politics and how they impact the views of the citizenry on experts. The undercurrent of this chapter is *trust*...or, better said, the *lack of trust* in our societies today. It seems that everyone who wants to be and expert (who has a modicum of motivation,) can be an “expert.” When everyone can be an expert, well, is anyone really an expert anymore? There are many (much larger) issues at play in this chapter, and that’s the whole point of the lesson – again – to get us to think. Couple this *crisis of expertise* with the fundamental human burden of biases, and we have a bit of an issue. We all have biases in our thinking and how we see the world. We tend to listen to what we *want to listen to*, and no matter how “educated” we are, “smart people who read the facts and follow the debates, but use their knowledge to justify and support their preexisting biases” (Page 87). It’s a global issue in all societies; how do we overcome it?

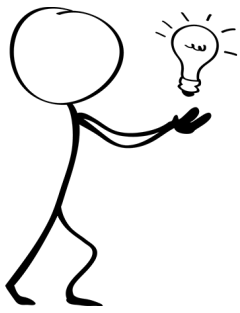


POINT

Get to the *point*, fast!

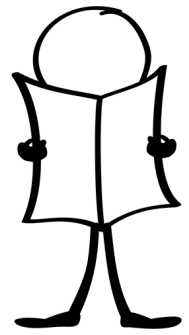


5. “Life is Digital”: This lesson is a bit of a promotion of the digital life, indicating that what we’ve experienced as part of the pandemic will propel us further and faster into a more-digital-future. “Covid-19 came onto this stage and obliterated the one remaining obstacle to a digital future—human attitudes” (Page 103). The author does concede that the workplace of the future might (*could*) be a more blended model. We could see working environments that allow us to conduct our individual contributions remotely, while leveraging in-person workspaces to truly do collaborative and dynamic engagements. “The new work model might be one in which people do much of their day-to-day work remotely...but conferences that are about networking, deepening connections, providing intellectual stimulation, or simply offering entertainment might continue to be in person” (Page 104). This is an excellent lesson to read for any human resources professional who’s thinking through workforce planning and reopening their business. Nowadays you can’t write a lesson about life being digital without mentioning artificial intelligence (A.I.) in some way; the author provides a heavy dose of writing about the potential benefits and warnings related to A.I.
6. “Aristotle was Right—We are Social Animals”: Yep, we human beings are definitely social...most of us anyway. According to the world economic forum, over 56% of the world population lives in cities (Buchholz, 2020). The density of populations around the world and the mobility of the human population upon the globe makes us uniquely susceptible to pandemics at this point in our history. Cities around the world were hit first and hit hard. “By April 2020, many of the world’s most glamorous cities had become shells of their former selves. Paris, with its pretty cafes lining the empty sidewalks, looked like a move set” (Zakaria, Page 125). The author combines the thoughts of lesson #5 with this lesson and causes us to wonder if the trend to urbanization might just reverse itself now. If we are able to do more work remotely,



POINT

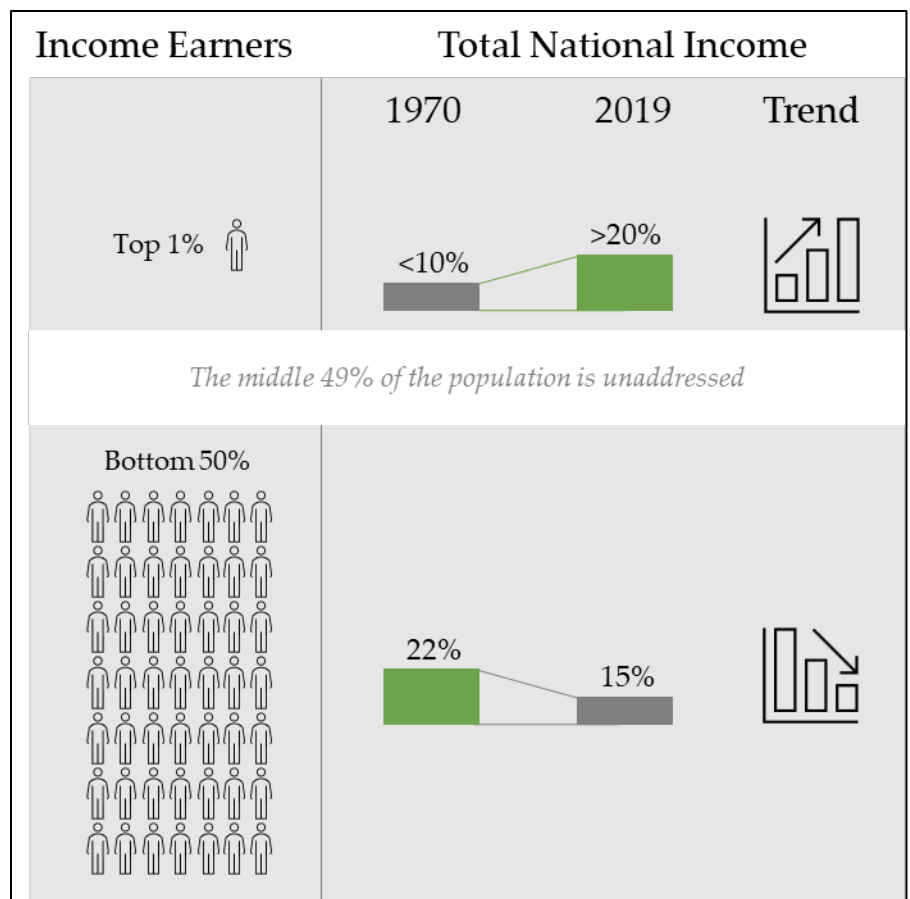
Get to the **point**, fast!

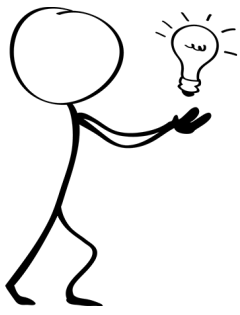


might a significant percent of our population now desire to move to less populated locations? Worth thinking about. If this ends up being the case, information network infrastructure will have much to do with any trends in population migrations.

7. "Inequality Will Get Worse": This lesson is a "hard pill to swallow." As a consulting firm we spent our time helping other people and companies succeed. The majority of our clientele are small to mid-size companies. The author's points about how technology is leaving the smaller companies behind is felt, and it especially hurts during this pandemic. Sadly, many small and mid-size companies will not be in business post-pandemic. The author makes another point about how large companies are better able to weather the storm because of their access to capital; they can get

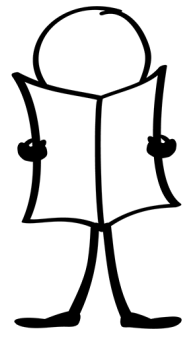
loans. This is also true, but it is a sad truth. So many large companies are not profitable, yet they keep operating off other people's money. It is an inequality, and that inequality is even more evident during this pandemic. Small businesses were not able to access PPP loans because large banks gave preference to big-business. The inequality is painfully evident in the income numbers that are presented on page 160 of the





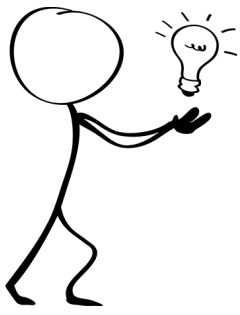
POINT

Get to the *point*, fast!



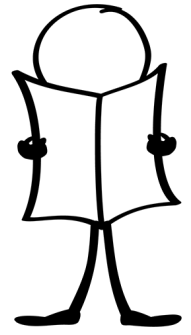
book. The graphic here depicts the data presented in the book. The bottom 50% of income earners have lost 7% of total national income since 1970. The top 1% of income earners have gained over 10% of total national income since 1970. The author doesn't say anything about the middle 49%, but we can deduce that the middle has lost a few percentage points too. "Inequality in America looms worse than ever, the worst in the Western world, even after accounting for taxes and government transfers. By its Gini coefficient, America is closer to Brazil than to a European country like Denmark" (Page 161).

8. "Globalization is not Dead": Yes, this pandemic, like others before it, causes us to rebuff globalization. The author's point is that globalization will return; it's likely to return slowly and with caution, but it will return. If lesson #2 were to prevail the global governments would rethink supply chains, especially for critical supplies. Full globalization would have us all completely interconnected and dependent. Isolationists would have us all completely disconnected and independent. The "truth" is in the middle, as it often is, and a thoughtful design would yield planned interdependence. Again, that requires *quality government* from lesson #2.
9. "The World is Becoming Bipolar": In this lesson the author juxtapositions the roles and influence of two world powers: United States vs. China. Information is provided on economic scale, production/GDP, social influence, and military prowess. The ideologies are indeed different. Each country continues to evolve and adapt. Are these two powers destined to collide? This lesson is worth a read for sure.
10. "Sometimes the Greatest Realists are the Idealists": In this lesson the author devotes some time to discussing the modern dilemma of nationalism and globalism. Conceptually, it's a repeat from earlier lessons, but in this case it approaches the topic from a "vision" standpoint. He challenges where we're all going compared to where



POINT

Get to the *point*, fast!



we are and the overwhelming (current) response to the pandemic: nationalism on the global scene. Every country has focused inward to handle their own. But, what comes next and where do we want to go?

There is an 11th point, which is the conclusion. It could arguably be the most important one of the book: “**Nothing is Written.**”

It’s up to us to determine our fate and our future.

Other Sources:

Buchholz, K. (2020). *How has the world’s urban population changed from 1950 to today?*

(November). World Economic Forum. Retrieved on March 3, 2021 from:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/11/global-continent-urban-population-urbanisation-percent/#:~:text=56.2%25%20of%20the%20global%20population,up%20from%2041.3%25%20in%201950>