Life

Trump vs. Clinton

CNN host Fareed Zakaria compares presidential candidates, will speak at The Granada

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Die-hard supporters will back Donald Trump no matter what, and Hillary Clinton could lose votes to a mannequin.

That’s how CNN host Fareed Zakaria sees this year’s unusual presidential race.

"The message is we are a very polarized country," Mr. Zakaria, 52, told the News-Press by phone from his New York City home. "There are certain groups of people who are not going to vote for Hillary Clinton, no matter who runs against her. You could put a mannequin against Hillary Clinton, and maybe that mannequin would get 38 percent of the vote.

"That is what has surprised me," said Mr. Zakaria, a Mumbai, India, native and former editor of Newsweek International, who hosts CNN’s Emmy-winning "Fareed Zakaria GPS." He also is the author of "The Post-American World" (2008) and "The Future of Freedom" (2007), both published by W.W. Norton & Co.

Mr. Zakaria, a Mumbai, India, native and former editor of Newsweek International, will discuss "Election 2016: A View from Home and Abroad" at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at The Granada, 1214 State St.

The UCSB Arts & Lectures talk will come after the first debate between Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Trump, which will air live at 6 p.m. Monday on many broadcast and cable networks. Moderating this first of three debates will be "NBC Nightly News" anchor Lester Holt.

Many people see this year’s presidential race as a choice between the lesser of two evils. They're voting against Mr. Trump, the Republican candidate, or Mrs. Clinton, the Democratic candidate, more than they are rallying behind them, and Mr. Zakaria said...
that's a fair assessment of the race - except for Mr. Trump's most dedicated supporters.

"He once said, 'If I were to stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot someone, I would not lose any of my supporters,'" Mr. Zakaria said. "That's one of the rare things he said that I would say is 100 percent true."

He said Mr. Trump has succeeded despite a chaotic, bizarre and offensive campaign that has threatened to fracture the Republican Party into establishment and anti-establishment components.

"Trump has run, by any objective standards, a terrible campaign after the primaries. He hasn't defined Hillary Clinton effectively," Mr. Zakaria said. "It doesn't seem to matter."

The trust problem for Mrs. Clinton is more about how she presents herself than the debate over her use of a private server for emails when she was secretary of state, Mr. Zakaria said.

He said Mrs. Clinton is intelligent but lacks the political skills of charismatic politicians such as her husband, former President Bill Clinton. That leaves her with the challenge of making herself seem more authentic to the 20 percent of voters who haven't made up their minds in a race that polls say is a statistical tie.

"I don't know if she is more or less authentic than anybody else," Mr. Zakaria said. "All politicians, at some level, are putting on an act. She's just not very good at that."

He added Mrs. Clinton didn't help her campaign with her long delay in news conferences to answer questions over matters such as her husband's Clinton Foundation. (She had her first conference in 275 days shortly after the News-Press interview with Mr. Zakaria.)

"I think people forget this is a tough election for the Democrats before you spell the first letter of the name Hillary Clinton," Mr. Zakaria said. "The last time a party won a third term in the White House was in 1988 with George Bush after Ronald Reagan. The time before that was Franklin Roosevelt after himself."

Mr. Zakaria said Mr. Trump has gained support despite questions about his competency and opponents who consider him reckless and irresponsible.

"Trump has been astonishingly unprepared and ignorant of basic public policy issues," Mr. Zakaria said. "So far it hasn't hurt him."

The Republican candidate faces the challenge of keeping his base while moderating his opinions for the larger population. He said the result has been Mr. Trump moderating his views, then un-moderating them during the excitement of his rallies.

"Trump is a great salesman. He feeds off the energy of these crowds," Mr. Zakaria said. "He walks into the room, and he knows what people want to hear."

"There's been this long revolt of people who felt that the (Republican) party has promised them radical change but never delivered it," he said. "People have talked about reversing the great changes liberals have been making to America for the last 30 or 40 years. Nothing ever happens. We have Obamacare. We have (George W.) Bush-expanded Medicare. We have the big state that they seem to detest. We have more immigration."

"That's one part of it, this kind of Republican revolt against the compromising Republican elite," Mr. Zakaria said. "The second is the completely new Trump revolt, which is basically about the working-class whites who feel they are being overwhelmed by the world and modern society."

"Trump's basic message is very simple. He says, mostly to the white working class in America and to others as well, "Your life has not been what you thought it would be, and it's other people's fault," Mr. Zakaria said. "Blame the Mexicans, blame the Muslims, blame the Chinese for stealing your goods, your security, your dignity."

"I think for Trump, his basic strategy seems to mobilize and rally the base. America is still 75 percent white," Mr. Zakaria said. "He's still hoping to do it (win the election) that way."
But he added Mr. Trump has less support than any previous Republican nominee among the college-educated population he needs to win the most populous states and get an electoral college majority.

"I think win or lose, you're going to see something very profound happen in the Republican Party," Mr. Zakaria said. "A party that was characterized under Reagan by free trade, free markets and a welcoming stance on immigration has become a nationalist, protectionist, populist party."

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**FYI**

- CNN host, author and Washington Post columnist Fareed Zakaria will discuss the presidential race during "Election 2016: A View from Home and Abroad" at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at The Granada, 1214 State St. Tickets cost $25 to $40 for general admission and $15 for students with ID. To purchase, call UCSB Arts & Lectures at 893-3535 or go to www.artsandlectures.ucsb.edu. Mr. Zakaria's books will be available for purchase and signing.

- The first of three debates between presidential candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton will take place Monday at Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y. It will air live at 6 p.m. Monday on ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, C-SPAN and other networks. "NBC Nightly News" anchor Lester Holt is the moderator.