Fear is terrorism's proximate objective. Enthralled by our fears of what 'might' happen, we become the unwitting subjects of 'fear's empire'. Thus Benjamin R. Barber's Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism and Democracy [W. W. Norton, ISBN 0-393-05836-0] is even more relevant now than it was when it was first published (2003). In clear, concise prose Barber, Professor of Civil Society at the University of Maryland, presents a refutation of the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive war that is utterly, almost completely borne out by events since then. Moreover he explains why pre-emptive war as a means of defeating terrorism was and is doomed to failure; and he offers a counter strategy he terms 'preventive democracy'.

Barber's thesis however is that democracy cannot be exported from established states any more than could communism from the Soviet Union, or indeed the blessings of globalization from the commercial corporatocracies. "Democracy is a process, not an end." It develops and evolves in the context of the culture and society in which it is nurtured. With care and patience, it can be grafted on to pre-existing institutions; but it cannot be effectively transplanted to, or its seeds germinated in, unfavorable soil. And it takes years, decades, sometimes centuries to mature. It is not a quick fix, but rather a long term strategy. With regard to the current Iraqi imbroglio, Barber recalls the ironically prescient cautions and admonitions of two of our current 'leadership':

"If you're going to go in and try to topple Saddam Hussein, you have to go to Baghdad. Once you've got to Baghdad, it's not clear what you do with it. It's not clear what kind of government you would put in place of the one that's currently there now. It is going to be a Shia regime, a Sunni regime or a Kurdish regime? Or one that tilts toward the Baathists, or one that tilts toward the Islamic fundamentalists? How much credibility is that government going to have if it's set up by the United States military when it's there? How long does the United States military have to stay there to protect the people that sign on for that government and what happens to it once we leave?"
- Richard Cheney (1991)

"Our nation stands alone right now in the world in terms of power. And that's why we've got to be humble and project strength in a way that promotes freedom .. if we are an arrogant nation, they'll view us that way but if we're a humble nation, they'll respect us."
- George W. Bush (2000, 2nd presidential debate.)

Barber derives "Thirteen Rules for National Security in the Age of Terror" neglect of which have significantly contributed to the current international fiasco in the Middle East:

1. States are not the enemy; because terrorists are not states.
"2. War is irrational; its outcomes cannot be predicted from rules of rational behavior – inaction and action alike have unintended consequences.

"3. War is a last resort – a 'failure' rather than an 'instrument of policy'.

"4. Going first exacts costs first; the certain costs of starting a war outweigh the uncertain benefits of 'winning' a war because starting costs must be paid. Thus democracies bear a special responsibility to accept the costs of going second.

"5. Terrorism and conventional military power are incommensurable; so conventional weapons cannot defeat terrorism.

"6. Terrorism's only weapon is fear; (an) effective national security strategy should diminish rather than augment it; which means fear cannot defeat fear.

"7. Terrorists are international criminals; when they are captured, they should be treated in conformity with international law.

"8. Weapons of mass destruction mandate 'no first strike'; there can be no 'tactical' or preemptive use of strategic weapons of mass violence.

"9. Legitimate defense strategies can be universalized; they must not be grounded on exceptionalism.

"10. Preemption must be applied only to specific targets; to protect sovereignty, preventive counterterror measures can target only terrorists.

"11. Regime change cannot be a rationale for preventive war against terrorism; changing a government from the outside infringes sovereignty without addressing terrorists.

"12. A coercive inspections regime is always preferable to war; coercive inspections limit warfare and respect essential sovereignty.

"13. Unilateral national security strategies are self-contradictory; unilateralism is a perk of sovereignty but cannot secure safety in an age of interdependence."

In his chapter "You Can't Export McWorld", Barber critiques the deterioration of democracy in the interdependent world of today in the context of globalization:

"[The WTO and IMF are] nominally democratic organizations constituted by sovereign states but (are) in effect servants of global economic interests that undermine national sovereignty and democracy. Privatization does not decentralize power. .. Rather it shifts power deployed from the top down that is public, accountable and transparent to the private sector, where it remains top-down but is now unaccountable and opaque. .. In the name of liberty it destroys democracy by annihilating the good of the public (res publica) in whose name democratic republics are constituted in the first place."

Barber contrasts this behavior with that of citizens:

"It is as citizens that consumers and private choosers deal with the public consequences of what they do as private persons. .. The distinction between private choosing and its social impact is the essence of citizenship. .. the difference between 'me' thinking and 'we' thinking .. the difference between private thinking and public thinking, the difference between consumer logic and civic logic. Democracy's virtue is that it insists on the priority of the 'we' over the 'me', of civic over consumer logic. The globalization of markets and of the consumer
mentality has meant that global reasoning is dominated by private consumerist logic rather than public civic logic."

James Madison wrote that "liberty may be endangered by the abuses of liberty, as well as by the abuses of power." .. Barber observes,

"Nowhere today are .. abuses of liberty more evident than in the made-in-America global market sector where in the good name of liberty, monopoly, greed, narcissism and anarchy have been set loose; and where global private capital, consumer narcissism and rampant commercialism pass as harbingers of global democracy."

Barber argues that only by the fostering of "preventive democracy" can the community of nations successfully triumph in the war on terror because only in sovereign, national democracies are terrorists deprived of the anger and resentment that is the nutrient soil of terrorism. Thus

"war and the annihilation of sovereignty are less than ideal instruments for converting tyrannical regimes into democratic ones. Nor are soldiers ideal guides for mapping the topography of democratization. .. Representatives of the conquerors will be inappropriate advisers to the conquered on the .. issues how to reestablish autonomy, restore domestic credibility and achieve global legitimacy."

Further,

"Democracies grow from the inside out and from the bottom up rather than from the outside in and top-down. ..(T)hose seeking a democratic world ought not to be (seeking) 'democracy' in the singular, on the American model or any other, but 'democracies' in the plural."

Each heritage and culture will evolve a form of democracy uniquely specific to it.

But it takes time, and patience.

"If the United States wants to democratization as part of a preventive democracy strategy aimed at crippling terrorism .. then it will have to proceed with greater patience than it has shown heretofore and with an understanding that democracy's special virtues of tolerance and pluralism are intended not just to protect the state from [its citizens] but to protect [its citizens] from the state.

Thus democratization requires a receptive citizenry:

"The lesson for national security policy is clear: an America wishing to secure itself from terror by forging a world of free nations needs to be at least as interested in smart citizens as it is in smart bombs. America's first instinct in spending dollars abroad has been to train soldiers rather than to train citizens. (But) it costs far more to do the former, even though doing the latter pays off far better for democracy. .. The Western neglect of education [in other countries] leaves a vacuum fundamentalists are ready to fill."
In his penultimate chapter, Barber returns to the concept of world interconnectedness, proposing a Declaration of Interdependence to guide our relationships with other peoples and other nations in what he calls CivWorld, a global civil society in which free nations think and act as 'we's rather than as 'me's:

"We the people of the world do herewith declare our interdependence both as individuals and legal persons and as peoples — members of distinct communities and nations. We do pledge ourselves citizens of one CivWorld, civic, civil and civilized. Without prejudice to the goods and interests of our national and regional identities, we recognize our responsibilities to the common goods and liberties of humankind as a whole.

"We do therefore pledge to work both directly and through the nations and communities of which we are also citizens:
* To guarantee justice and equality for all by establishing on a firm basis the human rights of every person on the planet, ensure that the least among us may enjoy the same liberties as the prominent and the powerful;
* To forge a safe and sustainable global environment for all -- which is the condition of human survival -- at a cost to peoples based on their current share in the world's wealth;
* To offer children, our common human future, special attention and protection in distributing our common goods, above all those upon which health and education depend;
* To establish democratic forms of global civil and legal governance through which our common rights can be secured and common ends realized; and
* To foster democratic policies and institutions expressing and protecting our human commonality; and still at the same time
* To nurture free spaces in which our distinctive religions, ethnic and cultural identities may flourish and our equally worthy lives may be lived in dignity, protected from political, economic cultural hegemony of every kind."

But if America is to play a leading role in the development of such a world it must first learn that it "need not conquer it in order to join it." Indeed it is precisely that mentality of conquest that has kept and continues to keep this world in so fragmented and contentious a condition.

Finally, Barber returns to the empire of fear:

"Before it establishes its dominion, fear's empire colonizes the imagination. .. The empire of fear is a realm of spectators .. whose passivity .. and helplessness define and sharpen fear."

Dynamic, constructive and creative,

"citizenship builds walls of activity around fear .. (that) diminish the psychic toll terrorism takes. .. Moderns caught up in the imperatives of interdependence have but two options: (to try) somehow to overpower the malevolent interdependence that is terrorism by imposing a global pax rooted in force; or to forge a benevolent interdependence by democratizing the world."
But democratizing the world cannot be done without America's cooperation and America has much that needs to be done to change its attitude toward the rest of the world. Barber quotes a little heard verse from 'America the Beautiful':

America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law.

In 1958, Dwight Eisenhower said,

"there can be no peace without law. And there can be no law if we were to invoke one code of international conduct for those who oppose us and another for our friends."

Barber concludes:

"Real power today lies in being able to will common global laws rather than asserting individual national sovereignty. ... [O]ver the women and men whose engaged citizenship constitutes true democracy, fear's empire holds no sway."

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