
The Jihad of the title is not specifically Arabic or Muslim but rather the rebellion of embattled peoples and cultures worldwide against the imposition of aggressive Western mercantilism, denoted by Barber as McWorld. But this volume is not just about imperial economics; it is perhaps even more a study of democracy and the damage done to it by both the compulsive protectionism of Jihadis and the rampages of Western free-ranging market economies. Barber's message is, if anything, more relevant in the current reign of the Bush gang than it was in the comparatively temperate days of the first Clinton administration. His language is less sharp and focused than in his more recent work, "Fear's Empire", but his insights are well-worth wading through the flourishes of his poetic prose.

First, Barber presents an overview of McWorld and its interaction with both democratic and non-democratic governance systems:

"The rhetoric that capitalist interests are compatible with and actively advance democratic ideals is difficult to reconcile with market economies' remarkable adaptibility in many tyrannical states."

In fact "capitalism wishes to tame anarchic democracy and has little problem tolerating tyranny [so] long as it secures stability. Capitalism does not need or entail democracy. .. [J]oint stock limited-liability corporations are interested primarily in profits and pursue civic liberty and social justice only where they do not interfere with the bottom line."

Moreover "in the context of common markets, international law has largely ceased to be a vision of justice and has become a workaday framework for getting things done: contracts, deals, trade and currency regulations. .. [N]o ideology (is) less interested in nations than capitalism, no challenge to frontiers more audacious than the market."

Barber notes, "Although full employment is a public good, it is not a corporate good. Business efficiency dictates downsizing; capital-intensive production means labor-minimizing job policies. .. Government has a duty to intervene in the economy in the name of justice, ecology, strategic interests, full employment or other public goods in which the market has, and can have, no interest." .. But "full employment and environmental preservation are social goods, not private goods. From the constrained short-term perspective of capitalist efficiency, citizenship, ethnicity and job status are at best irrelevant, at worst obstacles to be overcome."

In principle, "the modern democratic state legitimizes the priority of
public over private, public goods trump private interests and the common-weal takes precedence individual fortunes." However, under trans-/inter-nationalism, "there is no international state .. (other than) the state of dis-order .. no guarantor of international goods. The virtual corporation (overwhelms) real nations" in the "infotainment telesector" of the international economy.

A principal economic problem with McWorld is that "not only is there less and less to go around but what is left is being more and more unfairly and inefficiently allocated." And politically, "the decline of democratic control over markets endangers both justice and social policy for global democratic control over the economy."

Following "the politics of inadvertence and unintended consequences, .. courts step in, not to preserve a public good, not to impede a developing monopoly but to assure that stockholder profitability will be the only criterion of the deal, .. while governments sit it out, making small clucking noises about free markets as if no public interests were involved."

"Is it unfair", Barber asks, "to hold corporate companies chasing maximum sales, bottomline profits and shareholder satisfaction to some vision of global diversity, international justice and world democracy? .. Can responsible corporate managers afford to be anything but immoral advocates of sybaritism? Or to act as irresponsible citizens in these new mostly developed worlds of opportunity? .. Markets demand freedom from regulation and interference but increasingly impinge directly (and adversely) on civic culture and public goods. .. The market has no interest in civic possibilities of technology, unless profitable. .. Ultimately capitalism is about monopoly."

"Capitalism manufactures an ideology conducive to profits. There are no workers, only consumers; no class interest, only pop culture. .. Private corporations define the public goods of individuals and communities. Choices are superficial, not substantive: which, not whether. .. How", Barber asks, "can the public be represented by markets that privilege individual consumption, taken consumer by consumer, but have no way of representing public goods? .. [W]ho will get the private sector off the back of civil society?"

There follow chapters describing the effects of corporate consumerism's invasion of other cultures, and their reaction to it. Jihad in Barber's use is a rebellion against foreign culture not foreign institutions; it is "characterized by parochialism, antimodernism, exclusiveness and hostility to 'others'." Hear a Russian student complain, "'I just can't study any more, I've become impatient, weak and nervous, crippled .. so vulgar and stimulating are the images of Western TV and MTV from satellites.' .. And Barber asks, "MTV is good for the kind of choice entailed by consumerism, but is it of any use to civic liberty?" In his view, the rise of American neo-cons and the right-wing 'Christian' moralists are fully as Jihadist as the Taliban or al-Qaeda. Anticipating the present, "Jihad is a kind of animal fear propelled by anxiety. .. Islamic fundamentalism is opposed to modernization not democracy."
Now Professor of Civil Society at the University of Maryland, Barber examines the impact of McWorld on the development of nascent democracies and democratic institutions, at home or abroad:

In China "the economy's own logic seems far more likely to bring the vices of the West (ideology of consumption and tolerance for social injustice and inequality) than its virtues (democracy and human rights)." As many modern educators have observed, "Education is unlikely to win an 'open market' competition with entertainment."

"Where democracy thrives on words, commerce prefers pictures - drivers, even conjurers, of need. As need trumps reason, pictures trump words. .. The victory of the dollar over every other conceivable interest, public or private, entails a monopoly antithetical to democratic society and free civilization. .. [O]utangered men and women .. clearly prefer their rights as clients and consumers to their responsibilities and freedoms as citizens."

"[H]ow can communities defend their common good against the empire of profits and cultural monopoly .. and free ourselves from the consequences of the private market choices that masquerade as the whole of freedom?" .. We approach "[a] default totalitarianism: Women and men governed by their appetites .. welters of me's operating impulsively in an anonymous market provide not a clue to the common identity or place of community in the market."

"Neither Jihad nor McWorld promises a remotely democratic future. .. The market's invisible hand is attached to a manipulative arm left to the contingencies of spontaneous greed. .. McWorld's denizens are consumers and clients whose freedom consists of the right to buy in markets they cannot control and whose identity is imposed on them by a consumerism they scarcely notice."

Strikingly relevant to the current quest to impose democracy on other, selected countries, "Jihad neither generates its own democracy, nor permits others to democratize it by importing constitutional mechanisms devised by others. .. Democracy is a slow developmental process that comes into being through a long evolution; [it] requires patience, stubbornness, bold political imagination and self-conscious political willing."

Whereas "[l]aw is at best utilitarian - handmaiden to the interests of nations or markets -, and at worst a rationale for covert force. .. What is required by justice and the global public good is, among other things, peace and protection from genocide and human rights violations, full employment with a fair wage structure, globally sustainable development policies within specified ecological limits and an even playing field among nations with different natural resources in different stages of economic development."

A recurrent theme of Barber's is the difference between consumers and citizens: citizens are not just consumers but members of a civil society, a caring and concerned, politically active community. "Consumers speak the
language of 'me'; citizens, the language of 'us'." In assessing the impact of market economics on national and international communities, Barber surmises, "Without civil society and there can be no citizens and thus no meaningful democracy... Truly free economies have always been mixed economies in which democratic governments balanced economic utility and social justice."

"In a democratic society, I can act in common with others to modify the untoward consequences of private choice. Democracy makes markets work by allowing us the freedom of our consumer choices. To counteract their accompanying vices, we must have alternative nonmarket institutions, (which) in the international arena are entirely absent."

On the failure of international control of multinationals, "[i]t is the job of civil society and democratic government, not of the market, to look after common interests, and make sure those who profit from the common planet pay its common proprietors their fair share... Markets are not designed to do things democratic politics do... [M]arkets produce collective consequences [un]foreseen by individual choices... They advance individualistic rather than social goals."

"In the absence of any global civic 'we' (apart from) anarchic congeries of greedy 'me's, we get the goods but not the lives we want; prosperity for some but despair for many and dignity for none... Defects of markets (arise) when macroeconomics usurp the role of politics."

Merantistilism even affects how we bring our children up: "Attitudes about competition, violence, consumption and winning are indispensible to the marketing of McWorld." But "[m]arkets have proved incapable of producing social adjustments to compensate for public consequences of market choices... Civil societies are a necessary constraint on despotic, totalitarian tendencies of state power... Left to markets, (technology) is likely to augment McWorld's least worthy imperatives, including surveillance over and manipulation of opinion and the cultivation of artificial needs."

"Democracy rests on civil society and citizenship... [L]aissez-faire undermines action in the name of public good... [G]overnment remains identified with bureaucracy, inefficiency and a professional political class in whom peoples everywhere have lost confidence... [I]n "civil society, responsibilities (are) joined in a seamless web of community self-government... doing for the public good what markets do (for) aggregated private interests."

Globally, the development of democracy, requires "a world of citizens without frontiers; the creation of a public is the task of civil society. .. Old democrats forget how violent and disruptive democratization can be, how long it takes to construct a free society before a democratic constitution can be raised up in it... The modern democrat represses the memory of revolution and revolt, (his) long and painful childhood." Again, "Democracies are built slowly, culture by culture, each with its own strengths and needs over centuries."
"Democracy can(not) be a gift to the powerless. It must be seized by them because they refuse to live without liberty and insist on justice for all. .. Democracy is to live responsibly, autonomously on common ground in self-determining communities with tolerance and respect. Citizenship comes first."

"Neither the market nor state bureaucracy speaks to or serves (democracy)." Barber sees "government as a foreign body, a threatening sphere of quasi-legitimate coercion", but "civil society as a non-coercive association of equals."

"The voice of civil society (is its) citizens in deliberative conversation. .. Global strong democracy needs and depends on methodical internationalization of civil society .. the kind of democratic community that can provide citizens identity and inclusion." .. Only "if markets are not left to determine how technologies (are) developed and deployed and if global communication is disciplined by prudent deliberations and civility (can) some form of global communication that permits cooperation without destroying autonomy" emerge.

Barber concludes that the successful evolution of democracy from pre-democratic states can only be accomplished if the nascent nations are protected from the corrosive affects and effects of both Jihad and McWorld. The question is how to accomplish this.

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