

Jihad vs. McWorld: Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy

By Benjamin Barber

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Jihad vs. McWorld is a groundbreaking work, an elegant and illuminating analysis of the central conflict of our times: consumerist capitalism versus religious and tribal fundamentalism. These diametrically opposed but strangely intertwined forces are tearing apart--and bringing together--the world as we know it, undermining democracy and the nation-state on which it depends.

On the one hand, consumer capitalism on the global level is rapidly dissolving the social and economic barriers between nations, transforming the world's diverse populations into a blandly uniform market. On the other hand, ethnic, religious, and racial hatreds are fragmenting the political landscape into smaller and smaller tribal units. **Jihad vs. McWorld** is the term that distinguished writer and political scientist Benjamin R. Barber has coined to describe the powerful and paradoxical interdependence of these forces. In this important new book, he explores the alarming repercussions of this potent dialectic for democracy.

A work of persuasive originality and penetrating insight, **Jihad vs. McWorld** holds up a sharp, clear lens to the dangerous chaos of the post-Cold War world. Critics and political leaders have already heralded Benjamin R. Barber's work for its bold vision and moral courage. **Jihad vs. McWorld** is an essential text for anyone who wants to understand our troubled present and the crisis threatening our future.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
As soon as you hear the conceit of this book--that there are two great opposing forces at work in the world today, border-crossing capitalism and splintering factionalism, and that they are the two biggest threats to democracy--you know it rings true enough to be worth reading. Although capitalism could have only grown to current levels in the soil of democracies, Benjamin Barber argues that global capitalism now tends to work against the very concept of citizenship, of people thinking for themselves and with their neighbors. Too often now, how we think is the product of a transnational corporation (increasingly, a media corporation) with headquarters elsewhere. And although self-determination is one of the most fundamental of democratic principles, unchecked it has lead to a tribalism (think Bosnia, think Rwanda) in which virtually no one besides the local power elite gets a fair shake. The antidote, Barber concludes, is to work everywhere to resuscitate the non-governmental, non-business spaces in life--he calls them "civic spaces" (such as the village green, voluntary associations of every sort, churches, community schools)--where true citizenship thrives.

From Publishers Weekly
Political scientist Barber examines the rise of both intolerant tribal identities and international consumerism.
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From Library Journal
In a highly serious book with a catchy title, Barber, director of the Walt Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy at Rutgers University and an exponent of direct democracy, offers an extensive analysis of the state of the world, written for a general lay audience. Combining over 50 pages of reference notes with a barrage of examples from popular culture, this analysis explores the contemporary paradox between widespread political disintegration (Jihad) and global economic homogenization (McWorld). In colorful prose, he concludes that both trends pose major threats to democracy and personal liberty. More than anything else, what has been lost in the clash between Jihad and McWorld has been the idea of the public as something more than a random collection of people. Thus, Barber calls for a "reconstruction of civil society," a middle ground between government and the private sector. "It is not where we vote and not where we buy and sell; it is where we talk with neighbors about the commonweal." This book starts that conversation effectively and in an entertaining fashion. For all academic and public libraries.?James Rhodes, Luther Coll., Decorah, Ia.
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Nancy Nault:

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