

Jihad vs. McWorld: Benjamin Barber. The Atlantic Monthly March 1992

The planet is falling precipitantly apart and coming reluctantly together at the very same moment. Jihad is a centrifugal whirlpool; McWorld is centripetal black hole.

Globalisation:

Enlightenment dream has been realised, through commercialisation and bureaucracy.

Market imperative:

capitalism needs expanding markets so national boundaries are broken in search for international economic imperialism. New entities: international banks, trade associations, transnational lobbies like Greenpeace; world news services. Market psychology assumes no cleavage between producer and consumer. Common markets, currencies, cosmopolitan city life. The right to shop.

Resource imperative:

Not even Athenians could sustain autarkic independence. We are all mutually insufficient. USA thought it was big and resourced enough, but no.

Information-technology imperative:

Scientific progress demands open discourse. Banking needs information flow. The car is “an ideology on four wheels”. Electronic communication is ideology at 186K miles per second - a very small planet in a big hurry. Modems!

Cultural imperialism of American film and leisure industries. Culture is more potent than armaments. Brand names and life-style images.

Communication and surveillance. Free-market flourished in Chile and Taiwan and Korea.

Ecological imperative:

German forests are devastated by Swiss and Italian fumes. Brazilian forest is slashed. Wealthy countries try to stop two-thirds world polluting.

Localisation:

Nation states and sub-national factions in permanent rebellion against uniformity and integration. They are cultures, not countries; at war not just with globalism but with the traditional nation state. “In periods of consolidation, nationalism has a positive value, and is a lofty standard.. But in Europe everything is more than consolidated, and nationalism is nothing but mania.” Wars to explode boundaries and as an emblem of identity. Yugoslavia, Kurdistan, Quebec.

Passing of Communism has torn thin veil of internationalism - “workers of the world unite”
Religion as the Crusaders knew it.

Darkening Future for Democracy

Both have their attractions but unrelated to democracy. In market trading, predictability is more important than justice. So trade away democratic prospects. It is held together by a technology and administration of things for efficiency.

Localisation can be narrow and exclusive parochialism. Deference to leaders and intolerance to outsiders.

The Confederal Option.

Globalisation will eventually vanquish retribalisation. “Jihad is the last deep sigh before eternal yawn of McWorld.”

Answer for Tribalisation is decentralised participatory democracy.

Answer for Globalisation is representative government.

So a confederated representative system may be possible.

Only possible by act of will. Democracy always grows from the bottom up and cannot be imposed. Discover indigenous democratic impulses and enhance that.

Think globally, act locally.