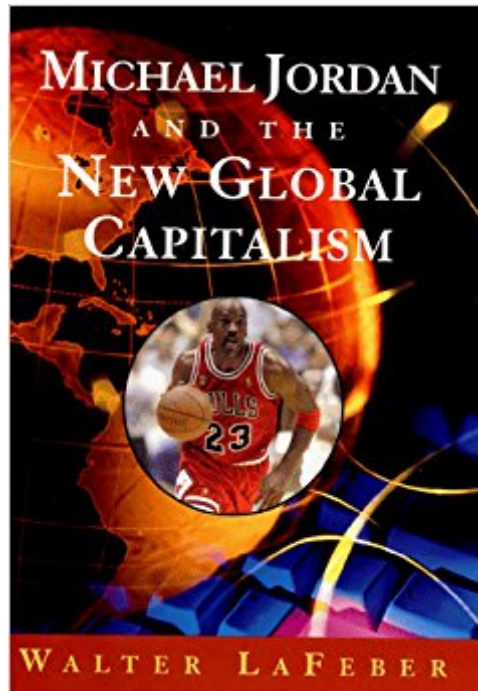


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# Michael Jordan And The New Global Capitalism



## Synopsis

This is the story of Michael Jordan, the American basketball player, and a company that saw a link between Jordan and a world waiting to buy. The convergence of these forces with the new global media, opened the way for the spread of American cultural domination in dozens of less powerful nations. This book is part biography, part social history and part economic analysis. The author's discussion of Nike's dominance over the world marketplace is often scathing, while his biography of Jordan and the long commercial history of basketball reveal much about American society.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Not everyone embraces the "American Way." But as historian Walter LaFeber demonstrates in this highly original look at the effects of global capitalism, not everyone has a choice. Using powerful communications satellites in the 1980s and, later, unbridled capital, transnational corporations such as McDonald's and Nike and their media-mogul counterparts have infiltrated cultures from Paris to Beijing, understanding perfectly that what the world sees the world buys (in this case, Big Macs and anything plastered with a Nike swoosh). Of course, it helps when hoops legend Michael Jordan--the world's most idolized athlete--is pitching your products. His influence is pervasive: "McDonald's, blaring Michael Jordan's endorsement, operated in 103 nations and fed one percent of the world's population each day. 'Within the East Asian urban environment,' one historian of the firm notes, 'McDonald's fills a niche once occupied by the teahouse, the neighborhood shop, the street-side stall, and the park bench.'" LaFeber transitions smoothly from Michael Jordan biography to socioeconomic commentary, first exploring Jordan as the great American hero, then turning a

critical eye on Nike and its shoddy overseas labor practices. Jordan can certainly sell shoes, but at what cost? In the final chapter heading, LaFeber asks whether Michael Jordan is the "Greatest Endorser of the Twentieth Century" or "An Insidious Form of Imperialism." He presents evidence of both, but ultimately The New Global Capitalism becomes less about Jordan's marketing prowess than America's influence over the world's consumer habits, and, subsequently, the havoc that power can wreak. LaFeber's short (164 pages), lucid study gives readers a fresh perspective on the battle between capital and culture. Recommended. --Rob McDonald

What could be more awe inspiring than the image of Michael JordanAshaved head shining, tongue wagging, basketball cockedAhanging in the air as he glides in to dunk? Try global communication technology that allows kids in the Canary Islands to watch NBA games in real time and use the Internet to order Nike shoes so they can be like Mike. In assessing the recently retired star's ascent from basketball phenom to international marketing phenomenon, LaFeber (The Clash, etc.) views Jordan as the harbinger of a new kind of capitalism fueled by information-age media. It's a world in which American transnational companies like Nike have learned to establish brand consciousness with worldwide social and economic impact. Jordan's career corresponded with and was fueled by the emergence of CNN, the Internet and aggressive worldwide marketing. To put Jordan in context, LaFeber links the history of basketball with America's century of economic dominance and writes entertainingly about the development of the sport into a multi-billion-dollar business with licensing spinoffs. He also asks tough questions about Jordan's responsibility as a public figure ("politically neutered," in Arthur Ashe's phrase) and his muted, awkward reaction to Nike's much criticized labor practices in developing countries. Readers who thought that some necessary cultural criticism was missing from David Halberstam's *Playing for Keeps* (Forecasts, Jan. 18) will find that LaFeber, a Cornell historian, has written the chapter Halberstam neglected and has expanded it into a thought-provoking reflection on the relationship between Jordan and globalization. (Aug.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

An eye opening discussion of the modern commercial/cultural world and its implications for all nations. Probably could be presented in half the length but the closing segment nicely outlines the implications of the narrative. Note: the author was my college advisor.

So this was assigned as one of the textbooks for my Sociology courses, and it turns out the Kindle version does not include the 2002 addition of Chapter 7 which discusses a post 9/11 world. So I'm

kinda screwed. This problem needs to be fixed.

This is one of my favorite books out there that discusses global capitalism, globalization, and the changing scope of the US' economy. The parts about Michael Jordan's life are tedious to read, but the analogy and comparison made are amazing.

This book was well thought out and very well written. It allowed even those of us not well-versed in economics or sociology to understand the big ideas and small nuances portrayed within the book.

Great book to read!

Those who want to know what the WTO and IMF protest are about can start with this book. LaFeber's book simplifies the key issues of global corporatism (not free trade; not merely capitalism but corporatism) while relating the rise of the US with the rise of basketball. A great intro book for basketball fans who claim to not understand or care about what is Globalization. They should, but LaFeber stops short of taking a stand on the issue himself. As a historian he merely reports what happened without predicting the future. Contrary to the anonymous reviewer who panned the book as "Liberal Junk," I felt LaFeber stayed extremely neutral- which is my major problem with the book. Remove the Michael Jordan biography, and this book says what Ben Barber's 'Jihad vs. McWorld' does in 1 chapter. Except Barber explains the WHY we should care; not just what's going on in this Corporate world as LeFeber.

Walter Lafeber, a noted historian, writes about a parallel between the rise of basketball and the rise of what he calls the "New Global Capitalism." The culmination of this new capitalism is personified in the book with Michael Jordan. In his discussion of capitalism, the author brings up some examples that point out some of the disadvantages related to capitalism. While we could argue about whether capitalism is good or bad, the author is careful in not really getting into that argument so much as he acts as a cultural critic in how America is not only spreading capitalism around the world (seen by most Americans as good), but also spreading American culture around the world (seen by me at least as not so great). In one sense, most of the world is by now seeing the effects of American-style imperialism. The book does talk about how some have welcomed this and others have reacted harshly. I think the way that the author sees imperialism here is that America is imposing its culture on other nations. It may be at least somewhat fair to say that the people choose this fate, but

economic theory would show otherwise: in a world of large companies and small companies, if a large company decides to compete directly with a small company, the large company will be the most likely winner because it is able to charge lower prices, etc. The same goes for large American companies imposing their business into other nations. Can French cafes compete with McDonalds? The author also talks about some of Michael Jordan's pitfalls, such as not speaking out against unfair labor practices in Nike factories, or gambling with known criminals. Why did Michael Jordan have such a strong following? Phil Knight himself even observed people bowing down to a life-size statue of Jordan (can we say idolatry?). While Jordan established himself early in his career as someone who "transcends race," his international fame came through an enormous worldwide marketing blitz. While he became known worldwide as an incredible basketball player, the marketing campaign surrounding him made him out to be much more than that. Through it all, Michael Jordan is still human, and so it is, too, that the economic system that brought him fame is built by humans. They both have incredibly strong points, but neither are infallible. This is not liberal junk. It is merely a book that keeps things in perspective.

Noted foreign policy (global?) historian Walter LaFeber has written an extremely readable short book. The narrative flows without getting stuck in academic jargon. However, his premise that the twenty-first century will be dominated by multi-national corporations is not new. The twist is that Michael Jordan is our new Santa Claus; instead of delivering presents to "good children" throughout the world, he leaves them with symbols of products (not the presents themselves) and spreads name-brand recognition in the far corners of the earth. (In one remote region of China, the Chicago Bulls are referred to as "Red Oxen.") But haven't we heard this argument before with Ronald McDonald? He is better known in the world than the Pope. And as for Santa Claus, he can thank Coca-Cola for making him cherry red and white (the same as their soft drink label) for who he is today. I would recommend this book to people that don't yet know that basketball commissioner David Stern packaged the NBA like Disney: "they have theme parks, and we have theme parks. Only we call them arenas. They have characters: Mickey and Goofy. Our characters are named Magic and Michael." But Walter LaFeber, who is known for his exhaustive research skills, relies too heavily on pop culture to discuss the impact of a pop figure. His endnotes are dominated by magazine and newspaper articles (Newsweek, Sports Illustrated) without delving more deeply into how a black man in America became "a god" that transcends cultural boundaries. "Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism" is a good beginners book on the long arm of U.S. corporations but do not stop there. James Twitchell's superb "Adcult USA: The Triumph of Advertising in American

Culture" provides the reader with much more indepth analysis on how Nike and others came to dominate our world.

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