 Featuring:

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The Virtue of Values
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How to BE Good: Jazz, Soccer, & Virtuous Improvisations

David Wilmington

A truly virtuous person can behave virtuously, do the right thing, simply by acting naturally or by being herself because she simply is a virtuous person.

The Virtue of Values

Gail Miller

Until we take the time to take an inventory of what our values are, they largely go unrecognized. You may live them, but once you know them and recognize them and own them, they get stronger and they get more valuable.

The Critical Role of Honor in Successful Organizations

Robert C. Oaks

For an organization and for an individual, honesty is not just the best policy, it is the only policy.

Middle East Meltdown:
Causes and Consequences for the U.S.

Ryan C. Crocker

We are used to a Middle East where there are revolutions and coups and governments are overthrown, but what we are seeing now is something far starker. We are seeing states fail, countries collapse.
One of the most effective ways of getting at the ideas behind the guns is through a new form of engagement called faith-based diplomacy.
First I want to give you an introductory, unscientific prologue and context-setter. Those among you who are philosophers, or other folks who have studied virtues ethics, will recognize in the definitions and language of virtues ethics that I am using today that I am coming out of a specific school of the revival of virtues ethics coming through Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas and others. Since we have a broad scope of things to cover here with jazz, soccer, and virtues ethics, we will be focusing more on the broad scope than the deep things.

The catalyst for the argument that I am offering came from a strange recognition. My background is in music and I have also had some soccer training. As I studied theology and ethics and philosophy, I started to hear that what philosophers, and particularly theologians who are interested in virtues ethics, were describing was an ideal person that would come out of this, the kind of character that would come out of it. As I started to think about issues of how you
might train that kind of person, I could really only think of one model that I had seen that would come up with something like that. That was the way you train a jazz musician for improvisation. So first, it was realizing what virtues ethicists are often interested in. The end product, although you wouldn’t call it a product, is someone who is able to perform. It is a question of performance. With that and over ten years of harassing various colleagues who care nothing at all about jazz or soccer, this is something that I have come to believe very strongly as a way of doing virtues ethics.

“From Practicing It, It Happened”

The battle for the 2015 Women’s World Cup was won on a playing field in New Jersey in 2003. In 2003, an Australian coach was demanding that US soccer player Carli Lloyd practice taking shots on goal from the center circle of the soccer field. These shots were more than 50 yards long and they had to drop in over human-size training sticks that were placed about nine yards from the goal line. At the time, Carli Lloyd wondered who or perhaps what kind of person is going to shoot from midfield.

As it turned out, the answer to that question—12 years later in a World Cup final—was Carli Lloyd. She was the kind of person who would shoot and score one of the cheekiest, craziest, most beautiful goals in US soccer and in World Cup finals history—men’s or women’s. She didn’t know yet that she was that person because she wasn’t that person yet in 2003. Twelve years later, Carli Lloyd completed the fastest hat trick in World Cup history by scoring from about one step past midfield, her third goal in 16 minutes in the World Cup final against reigning champion Japan.

I still get chills when I watch the video of that shot. Most of the 27 million Americans watching (it was the largest television audience for soccer in US history and it was the third-most-watched event of that year) have wondered, “Who even thinks of that? Did she mean to shoot? Was this pure—and for the Japanese keeper, cruel—luck?” Lloyd’s personal trainer insists that it was no fluke. “It’s something we’ve worked on. She had the courage to do it. . . . That shot was always part of her arsenal. It was just a matter of picking the right moment to unleash it.”

more Aristotelian approach to explaining this legendary goal: “Instincts kicked in. From practicing it, it happened.”

**Soccer Training Methods**

Next I am going to explain to you an example of a popular and influential training method that was started by a Dutch coach called Coerver. The organization and execution of this kind of training maximizes the number of touches the player can have on the ball. It isolates and repeats certain kinds of touch, movement, and fundamental soccer moves. The most basic of these can be thought of in musical analogy as practicing scales. They are fundamental, constitutive elements, isolated from playing the actual music or game.

You might see as a warmup for athletics, “Okay, run a lap.” Top coaches will get the warmup doing soccer movements. For one warmup what they do is practice touching with the inside of the foot, the outside of the foot, the one foot isolated over and over and over. You have to be aware of space a little bit because there are players lined up with you.

These exercises are developed to target specific skills. Notice that even at this stage, it is relational. You are constantly aware that what you are doing is larger than the skills that you are perfecting and that even though you are not shooting at the goal and scoring a goal, what you are doing here is kind of the basic grammar of soccer.

The key insight here is the mode of addressing the immense challenge of determining how best to train for a game, consisting of continuous series of dynamic, variable, fluid movements, requiring mental and physical awareness, decision-making, and bodily performance. Ultimately the game itself is the best teacher, and I submit that this is precisely because the game provides the element that cannot be completely replicated in training, unpredictable variables of motive (either your teammates or the other team), situational judgments, strength of will and body, emotion and effort.

**Virtues Ethics: How Virtue Happens**

Aristotle’s *The Nicomachean Ethics* was written from the political and moral perspective of the Athenian Greeks of 330 BC, but many modern philosophers,
theologians, and educators have returned to this approach in the last several decades. Aristotle focuses on creating a kind of person, rather than trying to figure out how to identify, consider, and choose among every possible choice available in a problematic situation. A truly virtuous person can behave virtuously, do the right thing, simply by acting naturally or by being herself because she simply is a virtuous person. Even your desires are trained to desire the good, so you would gradually stop desiring anything that is not in line with the good.

At the highest level of virtue for Aristotle, and eventually for Thomas Aquinas, the good choices will seem like the obvious choices and a person could trust that what he wants, desires, and wills to do will be the right and good thing. According to Aristotle and most of his modern followers, you can only create

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this kind of person through training and habits. A person becomes courageous, for example, by doing or practicing courageous things until the virtue of courage is ingrained into the character of the person. You practice a virtuous character like you practice scales on a piano or striking the ball in soccer.

For the real performance of the virtue, however, we must recognize that the virtuous person still must, like the musician or soccer player, do more than the ethical equivalent of pressing the right keys or striking the ball with the right part of the foot. In the realm of ethics and politics, there is no pre-written music and no coach guiding us through the narrow parameters of some kind of training drill. We are onstage without music. It is game time. Even within the basic structure of music making or soccer playing, we must perform our skills and judgment in relation to the countless variables of the other musicians in our band or players on the pitch. This is a kind of improvisation and requires a person who embodies the proper harmony between individuality (properly understood) and relationality. In other words, we are talking about the improvised performance of rules, principles, relationships, and even surprise. So with an analogy to training and ethics in mind, we turn to jazz to learn what improvisation is and, perhaps even more important, what improvisation is not.
Freedom in the Groove: How Improvisation Happens

We should recognize that just as soccer drills were actually participating in soccer activities, even at the most fundamental skills level, good musicians will teach their students that they are participating in music making, even while learning scales, and especially when they are learning the patterns that make up phrases in musical sentences and paragraphs.

Consider a jazz quartet consisting of bass, drums, piano, and a trumpet, performing the Duke Ellington classic “Caravan.” After playing the main melody or tune of the piece, the melody that you might sing along with if it had words, they play continuously, cycling through the basic structure of the song while the players take turns soloing. The trumpet player solos first by inventing his own melody, rhythmic variations, and even a dramatic arc for expert soloists. His improvised melody is very different from the actual pattern and written tune of “Caravan.” However, rather than existing as just an individual, as if an ontological state detached from serious relationships, we see and hear that the intensity and sophistication of relationship, of listening, responding, stating, counter-stating, increases immensely precisely when the trumpeter is soloing. So it is the individual playing, but embedded in multiple layers of relationality.

My point is that we should ask ourselves what those musicians can teach us about performing certain virtues crucial to the dynamics of individuals in relation to community and to tradition. Building on Jeremy Begbie’s examination of relationality of successive notes and of melody even, we can see that the simplest notion of harmony, which is two tones sounding together, suggests something about the necessity of a distinct notion of the individual. Harmony is nothing other than the relation or the interaction at the material level of two individuals or more. Harmony is the sound of properly ordered relationship. If either note in our two-note example were not distinctly and recognizably itself, say if one of the notes starts to drift out of tune to try to become the other note, then the harmony created—the relationship which is this third thing you can hear in addition to the two notes—becomes something other. It is differently ordered or badly ordered and maybe is no longer harmony. Furthermore, we can note the incoherence of a claim that harmony itself can be appreciated or even recognized as a relationship without a profound uncommonality. It can’t be a homogenous blob. Without the disjuncture of distinct individual identities, we have an undifferentiated sameness at best, but more likely we have a clamorous unison of forced and false homogeneity.
When people are making music together, thereby inscribing their human relations within the dynamics of musical identity and relationship, we can see an alternative way of being that transcends the limits of other modes of human relating, all the while remaining rooted in materiality. We aren’t disembodied souls. The trumpet player does perform a solo that is genuinely his individual creation, but it is also genuinely supported and affected by several layers of relationality. The rhythm section continues to play, to interact with him, reacting to his melodic invention through call and response or imitation while also adapting to his variations in harmony and rhythm. Even when the other musicians solo here, the trumpet player is still in relation even though he stops playing, because they are responding sometimes to ideas that he has raised in their heads or they will play back something he had done. So even when the soloist stops, he is still involved.

The kind of inspiration we see in jazz improvisation is rarely the emotive romantic kind. In fact, most jazz musicians appear very controlled, even when everyone can see the effects of great physical exertion on them. If you ask someone, “What were you thinking when you did _____?” you are likely to get fairly vague answers. Some musicians talk about tapping into or tuning into music that is just out there and around them. They know that their countless hours of practice, though, has prepared their minds and bodies—has tuned them—to hear and receive and then perform. Sonny Rollins says, “When you get out on stage . . . forget your books, . . . forget practicing . . . Let the music play you.”iii That has most often been completely mangled to the idea that practicing doesn’t matter and you shouldn’t think about any of those things, Kid, just go out there and play. His real point is that the reason you forget about the practicing is you have imbibed it. It is part of you. You have drunk it in and now it is part of you and then you go out. Instead he says, “Let the music play you.” You get on stage, the

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music is there already, you forget it. You want to get to that place where nobody can describe it. But just like apophatic theology, or other points emphasizing the limits of our language and knowledge about God, the inability to describe precisely what happens and why does not mean that just anything from anywhere will get you to that point.

Like the Coerver soccer drills I explained earlier, the most transcendent and inspired miraculous performances of complicated and relational activities, like soccer and jazz and virtues ethics, usually begin years prior with simple, even mechanical (because we are embodied), practicing in musty practice rooms or cold, lonely soccer fields in New Jersey. It should not be much of a stretch to realize we are right up against Augustine’s emphasis on divine interiority, but now transposed specifically into the key of ethics. So an account of virtues ethics that takes seriously the task of understanding and modeling moral formation on the example of jazz and soccer improvisation has the potential to bring us an anthropologically faithful (we are embodied and we are connected to the transcendent), but also pneumatological approach to understanding how you can be free precisely because you are in the zone. You are free because you are in the groove, a groove you have been training in. Your body and mind, desire, listening and attitude were all formed to be ready to perform this virtue whenever the opportunity and context were right. You do it, you are it, because you practiced it. You do the good, you are the good, or are participating in the good because your practice shaped you to perform your character, body and soul.

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This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture sponsored by the Wheatley Institution and delivered on January 21, 2016. To watch the full lecture, please visit wheatley.byu.edu.
At least once in a lifetime, each of us will have an event that shapes our life and our attitude and starts us on a course that we can either embrace or reject. I can remember the very first one of those I had. It is a little embarrassing, but I am going to tell you about it anyway. Looking back, this was the first thing I can remember that really made me stop and think, “What is it that I am doing? Why am I doing what I am doing and how can I become better?”

This is what I did. My brother who was six years older than I was had just received a .22 rifle. We lived in the city, just west of the capitol building, and in our backyard we had two old sheds that we used to keep coal in. One day he took me out in the backyard with that gun and was shooting target practice and showing me how good he was. I thought, “Wow, that’s really neat.” One day, when no one was at home, I went into his room upstairs, took the gun, got a bullet, put it in it, aimed it out the window, and shot it into one of those old sheds that were out
there, just like he had. I thought, “Wow, I can do that!” When he got home, he
could tell someone had been messing with his gun. I was not going to confess
to anything like that, even though all the circumstantial evidence pointed to me.
I thought I had gotten away with something, but it wasn’t long before I learned
a lesson that has stayed with me for the rest of my life. My conscience kicked
in and I began to feel bad about lying about what I had done. The deed I didn’t
think was so bad, but lying about it got to me. I damaged my relationship with

Everyone runs out of gas at some time in their life, literally or figuratively. That made such an impact on us that it began a way of living and we looked for ways to show people that we cared enough to lend them some gas.

my brother and with my mother, and my mother loved me more than anyone in
the whole world. I had shaken her trust in me, disappointed her, and caused her
a lot of hurt. She had put all of her time and all of her attention and all of her
satisfaction into raising her children, teaching us correct principles, serving the
Lord, and living what she taught.

One day, not long after this gun incident, I could overhear some of my mother’s
friends talking and one of them said, “I don’t believe that woman has ever told a
lie in her life. She always tells the truth. You can count on her to always be honest
with you.” Those words made something inside of me stand up and listen to what
was being said, and I realized that I was totally different from her. It may have
been because I had just told the biggest lie of my life, but I realized that I was
completely opposite from what she was. I vowed right then that I would never tell
a lie again. That was a turning point for me, the very first one that I can remember
that impacted me that way.

In business, as well as in our personal lives, it is really important to build our
reputation on things that matter. My husband, Larry, was a softball player. One
day he wanted to go to Colorado Springs to see a regional tournament. We had
a four-month-old son, we had a convertible that was our only car, and we had
very little money, so we drove to Colorado Springs with our four-month-old baby in the back in a carrier. We went to a ballpark, stayed overnight in the car, got up the next morning, watched the ball tournament, and then drove back home. On the way home from Colorado Springs, we were approaching Rock Springs, Wyoming, when the car ran out of gas and Larry thought, “I know it is not too far to Rock Springs. I can push the car up and then we can just kind of coast into town and get some gas.” He started pushing and it became quite a feat. He didn’t want to leave us out on the highway, it was the middle of the night, and it was too far to push the car, so he decided the only thing he could do was flag down another motorist. The first car that came along was an El Camino with two gas tanks in the back, one diesel and one gasoline. Larry flagged him down and said, “I have run out of gas. Can you help me?” The guy said, “Well, sure. That is not a problem. I have gas in the back of my truck.” They put a little in the tank and the car started right up. Then Larry said, “Oh, I am so grateful. What can I do to repay you?” The man said, “Oh, nothing. I am grateful to be able to help you. Don’t worry about it.” He started to get back in his car. He got one leg in the car and he got back out and he said, “You know, there is something you can do for me. The next time you see someone who has run out of gas, stop and help them.” That, again, was a turning point in our life. Everyone runs out of gas at some time in their life, literally or figuratively. That made such an impact on us that it began a way of living, and we began looking for ways to show people that we cared enough to lend them some gas.

Early in our marriage, we had many jobs and many opportunities to build a career, but nothing took off right away. After a while we decided that we would move to Colorado since Larry had an offer to play softball over there. While we were there, we worked for a store called Stevinson Toyota. Larry was their first parts manager and he was charged with building up the parts department to be a world-class parts department. He took his talents and said, “I know I don’t have a college education, I know I don’t have any particular training. I know that I have two children and one on the way. I know that in order to support them I have to be the very best at something.” So he became the very best parts man that Toyota had ever had. He became what they called a “million-dollar man.” He sold a
million dollars’ worth of parts in one year before anyone else in the whole Toyota system had done that. Then the next year, he sold two million dollars’ worth. While he was doing that 90 hours a week, I was left to take care of the children, to run the home, and to do everything else that needed to be done. I was willing to do that. One of the things that was so easy for us was to be able to work together for a common goal and do what we needed to do to get things to move forward.

After Larry died, I thought, “What do I do with my life now? How do I figure out who I am by myself? How do I know what I am supposed to do?” During our lifetime together, Larry had shared with me every night things that went on in the business. He had always given me an opportunity to know what he was doing, how much he was doing, what his future plans were, how he handled things, who he dealt with, how things should be done. In fact, a year and a half before he died, he called me and the children together and we sat around the table and he gave us each a notebook and he said, “You are going to want to take notes because I am going to download to you everything you need to know in my absence.” Now at that time, we didn’t know he was as sick as he was, but he was preparing for the future and he knew that what he had built was too precious to leave to happenstance. He had created somewhat of a curriculum and every week we would talk about things he had done and how he had done them and why he had done them.

When he died, I knew that I needed to do whatever it took to continue that legacy. I stepped in as the person who was in charge of making sure the company remained viable. What I realized then, but hadn’t articulated in my own mind, was that we were built on hard work, and we were built on integrity, stewardship and service, and those were the things we needed to preserve in our company and our family and our communities. Then I realized there were so many people in our company that didn’t know Larry and hadn’t had the opportunity to work with him and understand how passionate he was about what he did and how important it was to maintain the values and the base that we had built. I had to do something to preserve that. So I talked with my youngest son who was a writer and loves to create and we talked about how we would preserve what we had. How would we make sure that everyone in our company understands what we stand for? We
created a program called *Who We Are*, which is a curriculum to teach all of our employees the values and foundation of our business and how we expect them to conduct themselves, to carry forward the legacy that we have built. In addition to that, I realized that the other thing I had to do was create an opportunity for this company to last for many, many years. That is what I am about right now, making sure I have a corporate government, a succession and transition plan, and that our family is organized in a way that they all have an opportunity to learn the values and

*We were built on hard work, and we were built on integrity, stewardship and service, and those were the things we needed to preserve in our company and our family and our communities.*

create a life for themselves, should they wish to be in the company.

I have asked myself many, many times, “Why have I been so blessed and why have we been so successful?” The answer to that always comes back to me that we are virtue based. Then I say, “What virtue have I practiced that has led to the success in my life or made a difference for someone else? How did living the virtues or values that we live help us create what we have created?” I think it is important that we recognize that until we take the time to take an inventory of what our values are, they largely go unrecognized. You may live them, but once you know them and recognize them and own them, they get stronger and they get more valuable. Preparation for life has to be deliberate or you just get what is left over. You have to live your life on purpose and you have to live your life according to what you know is true. You need to search your heart and soul to identify your virtues and then name them out loud. Once you take the time to do that, they are yours. You can use them to your advantage to do good things, to have a joyful life, to make other people’s lives joyful, to raise your family, to be successful in business, to have a choice relationship with your spouse, to love your fellow man, to have peace of mind, to create happiness, and to serve the Lord.
We can know if we are becoming virtuous people by the way other people respond to us: our friends, our families, our coworkers, our neighbors. They will trust us and rely on us. They will come to us for guidance and help. They will want to be around us because we inspire them to be better. We will be known as people with exceptional character who make the right choices and strive for excellence in all that we do. Can life be any better than that? The practice of virtues allows us to develop our potential and live a more purposeful, better life—a life not ordinary, but extraordinary. Becoming more virtuous attracts great things to us. That is a certainty. “The best thing you can give to your enemy is forgiveness; to an opponent, tolerance; to a friend, your heart; to your child, a good example; to a father, deference; to your mother, conduct that will make her proud of you; to yourself, respect; to all men, charity.”

I would like to share with you a poem that really emphasizes what Larry and I have tried to do in our business world, and that is to be a bridge builder for other people, to be able to give them an opportunity to have the things that we have had, to be able to create opportunities for other people. Like I said in the beginning, if we have something that we can share, we have to share it. This is the *Bridge Builder*: \(^\text{i}\)

*An old man going a lone highway,*
*Came, at the evening cold and gray,*
*To a chasm vast and deep and wide.*
*Through which was flowing a sullen tide*
*The old man crossed in the twilight dim,*
*The sullen stream had no fear for him;*
*But he turned when safe on the other side*
*And built a bridge to span the tide.*

“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near,
“You are wasting your strength with building here;

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\(^{i}\) James Balfour in Proverbial Wisdom: Proverbs, Maxims and Ethical Sentences, ed. A. N. Coleman (New York: Peter Eckler, 1903), 32.

Your journey will end with the ending day,  
You never again will pass this way;  
You’ve crossed the chasm, deep and wide,  
Why build this bridge at evening tide?”

The builder lifted his old gray head;  
“Good friend, in the path I have come,” he said,  
“There followed after me to-day  
A youth whose feet must pass this way.  
This chasm that has been as naught to me  
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be;  
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;  
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him!”

We all have the opportunity to build bridges. We all have the opportunity to be examples. We all have the opportunity to be leaders. We all have the opportunity to do something good. Never, ever turn away from that opportunity.

Karen Gail Miller is the owner of the Larry H. Miller Group of Companies. Gail and her late husband, Larry, grew their businesses into one of the largest privately owned companies in the United States. Gail has a strong legacy of giving back to the communities where the LHM Group conducts business. Gail is the chair of the board of trustees of Salt Lake Community College, serves on the National Advisory Council at the University of Utah, and sits on the board of trustees for Intermountain Healthcare and Zions Bank. She holds an honorary alumna award from Brigham Young University and is the recipient of two honorary degrees, a Doctor of Humanities from Weber State University and a Doctor of Humane Letters from Salt Lake Community College.

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There are several ways to teach or build a sense of honor in an individual or in an organization. You can do it by example, by lectures, by lessons, by honor codes, or by proctors for tests. There are other ways, but here is a major point I want to make: a successful training program for leadership, successful leadership, has to have an element to develop honor and integrity. That may sound obvious to you, but I will tell you, as I looked through material and as I thought back to my Ohio State MBA, I realized
it is not always addressed. There are various elements of an MBA: production management, marketing, finance, and so on, but in the average program there is not an honor-strengthening, or even a character-strengthening, aspect. There should be. If you would leave whatever program you are in and go out and expect to be successful, I want to tell you, character counts.

If you are not satisfied with your attitude toward honorable conduct and honorable behavior, then you need to address that. Whether it is through

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**To be successful in a large, successful, lasting organization, character counts.**

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religion or through readings, you need to address the character part, because to be successful in a large, successful, lasting organization, character counts. To emphasize this point, let me quote an article authored by Donald L. McCabe, who was a professor of management and global business at Rutgers University, and is a founding president of the Center of Academic Integrity. This article was coauthored by Gary Pavela, who is the director of judicial programs at the University of Maryland at College Park, and is past president of the Center of Academic Integrity. These men know whereof they speak. “A survey conducted under the auspices of the Center for Academic Integrity in the 1999/2000 academic year helps explain the benefits of honor codes—even at larger campuses where academic dishonesty is often more common. . . . Modified codes—adopted in recent years at a rapidly growing number of institutions—differ from traditional codes in at least two ways.”

The first major difference they noted was that unproctored exams are used only at an instructor’s option. What does that mean? Usually people come in and take exams and there is a proctor there. Well, for them to have an unproctored exam, it has to be the choice of the

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instructor. The second difference is that students are generally not expected to report cheating that they might observe. Back to the Air Force Academy Cadet Honor Code, “We will not lie, steal, or cheat, *nor tolerate among us anyone who does.*”ii The students, the cadets, at West Point and at the Air Force Academy, have an absolute obligation to report any cheating on the part of anybody that they see. If they do not, that is a violation as dominant and as impactful as if they lied or cheated or stolen themselves. To resume the quote of the article:

> However, modified codes do call for significant student involvement in promoting academic integrity and in adjudicating allegations of academic dishonesty. They also impose strict sanctions for academic dishonesty (like suspensions or transcript notations), but do so in a context where education and prevention take priority over the threat of punishment alone. Neither traditional nor modified honor codes eliminate all cheating, even serious cheating. However, the Center for Academic Integrity survey showed that only 23% of students at colleges with traditional honor codes reported one or more incidents of serious test or exam cheating in the past year, contrasted with 45% of students at colleges with no honor code.iii

Now is that number significant? The difference between 45% and 23%? It is significant. Honor codes work. Do they work perfectly? No, they do not work perfectly. Nothing in this way of addressing behavior works perfectly, but if it works and has an impact on students’ and graduates’ attitude toward honor, then it is important to consider.

My frame of reference, some would say, is out of date. As I mentioned, I served as the executive for honor and ethics at the Air Force Academy. The code is simple but powerful, in the lives of both cadets and graduates. “We will not lie, steal, or cheat, nor tolerate among us anyone who does.”iv At that time, cadet violators of the code were expelled. It has been softened a little bit by

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iii McCabe and Pavela, “New Honor Codes.”

congressional pressure and so they are not automatically expelled now, but often are. Several years after leaving, I returned to the Academy to talk about the Cadet Honor Code. I talked about the absolutes of not lying, cheating, stealing, and not tolerating violations, as well as my observations of honor expectations in the United States Air Force. The cadets informed me I was behind the times, that modern young people were not founded in religion, morality, and ethics, and could not be brought up to the same standards in a two-month summer honor training program. I was disappointed that some could think that concerns for lying, cheating, stealing, and toleration would shift so much over 15 years. The American people still expect military officers and government and business leaders to be honest and honorable.

Let me repeat that. The American people still expect military officers and government and business leaders to be honest and honorable. The penalty flag voters and the media throw the quickest is for cover-ups. President Nixon’s great crime for which he was threatened impeachment was not breaking into the Watergate Apartment, but lying during the investigation. President Clinton admitted infidelity and voters seemed willing to forgive him and overlook it, but his presidency will always be clouded by his lying during the investigation. You say, “This is business ethics, not government ethics.” There is really no difference. The customer expects what the voter expects, what the investor expects: honesty, fair treatment, and their money’s worth, however you want to put it. When I worked at US Airways, they regularly reviewed customer complaints and comments. This message came through constantly, “Treat us fairly and honestly or we will not come back.” And they did not. With all the talk today on customer identification and service, it should make ethical treatment easier to justify and sell. This is not brain surgery. There are some time-tested rules that are useful to consider.
in leadership. The Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have others do unto you. That is an ethical statement. Honesty is the best policy: an ethical, practical, pragmatic statement. The worker’s contract: an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay. Or the employer’s contract: an honest day’s pay for an honest day’s work. Honorable, good treatment of customers and employees is just good business. Now yes, there are people or businesses who make money dishonestly, but this is a bad long-term approach and generally does not go on indefinitely.

Let us discuss for a few moments the notion that character counts. From my experience in a wide variety of organizations, I am confident in saying that character counts, and honesty and integrity are occupational plusses. They do not fit on a resume, but anything negative in that respect will certainly be destructive on a resume. Nonetheless, the occupational plus is they contribute to success in most organizations. It is quite logical. Who would not want a factory or an office full of employees who believed in an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay? Who would not want employees who respect the company’s property, including pencils and paperclips; employees who are really sick when they call in sick, employees who are willing to take responsibility for their failures, along with their successes; in short, a factory or an office full of employees who could be labeled “honest”? This may not strike you as profound, but it is very important from the point of view of a junior employee as well as that of a senior corporate leader. As a junior employee, one should expect to be expected to be honest and of high character. Despite all the talk about declining morals or values, most people have high integrity expectations for those people with whom they associate, especially for people on their payroll. From a senior manager level, character consciousness is even more important.

First, and most obvious, the importance of setting high integrity standards by personal example cannot be overemphasized. People watch carefully and follow the character example of the boss, the person they feel to be responsible for establishing the integrity tone of the organization. That same tone cuts across all the company interfaces. The CEO of US Airways when I was there, early on established a reputation within the company and beyond for keeping his word absolutely. When you are negotiating new labor contracts, new airplane
acquisitions, or new financing arrangements, set your reputation, for integrity can prove to be of remarkable worth. Besides that, it feels good.

Not so obvious, but equally important, is the necessity of demanding honesty from all employee groups. Sounds simple. Sounds trivial even. Let me give a couple of examples. For sick leave, many labor contracts will include annual days allocated for sick leave. For example, the airline pilots used to get about 12 days a year for sick leave. If you do not institute effective controls and attitudes, people will soon develop the philosophy that sick leave is just more vacation, a general entitlement. If that happens, your labor costs have jumped 6% with no increase in productivity. Corrupted morality will feed over into other areas like late arrivals to work, early departures from work, and even more insidious things such as certifying work that has not actually been completed, and so on. For an organization and for an individual, honesty is not just the best policy, it is the only policy. Character does count.

But ethics is really bigger than just honesty. Ethics is the key determinant in how we treat people, how we treat them fairly, honestly, justly, and with trust. All groups of people—customers, contractors, employees, bosses—demand honest treatment. When I was a U.S. Air Force commander in Europe, we experienced the very tragic Army helicopter shoot down by an Air Force airplane. It was in Iraq with a significant loss of life. My investigation instructions were, “Get all of the facts and do the report.” I assigned an Army colonel as deputy team chief for the investigation. We disclosed all, the bad and the ugly. There was no good to disclose. Still, cries of cover-up appeared in the media and in U.S. Congress. There was no cover-up. People expect, and even demand the truth. As I have said before, untruthful cover-up will get you every time. Years ago—some may remember this—in Las Vegas, there was an incident of sexual abuse at the
Annual Tailhook Association Symposium. Heads rolled over the seeming cover-up, or at best, a lack of vigor in pursuing the culprits. Several years ago, a New York Times article alluded to maintenance shortcuts, insinuating that a financially troubled airline would shortcut maintenance. I was the senior vice president for safety and attention to compliance. Would you expect me to tolerate the director of maintenance buying uncertified spare parts or eliminating some inspection to enhance company profits? Of course you would not. That would be dumb and dishonorable. My family and friends fly on those airplanes.

There are examples from all levels of organizations of the destructive, disastrous results of dishonest behavior, and we do not have to reach back very far in history to find them. I do not know if anyone ever calculated the total cost of the Enron financial fiasco based on leadership lies. Today, I am sure we could find an article in today’s newspapers about the Volkswagen computers. They are still running to count the cost of a decision to cheat on the pollution reporting software of its diesel engines. All I know is that the Volkswagen CEO lost his job immediately over that problem. Honorable people have to be concerned about the integrity of the entire organization, not just their own behavior.

In summation, good grades in finance, production, personal management, marketing, accounting, and so on, are all valuable and important, but none are as critical as core dedication to honorable, honest behavior, always. I would like to close with two quotes. The first is from Donald T. Phillips’ book, *Lincoln on Leadership*. He said in that book, “The architecture of leadership, all the theories and guidelines, falls apart without honesty and integrity. It’s the keystone that holds an organization together.” He went on to say:

[The well-known writer on leadership,] Tom Peters reported in his research that the best, most aggressive, and successful organizations were the ones that stressed integrity and trust. ‘Without doubt,’ Peters stated, ‘honesty has always been the best policy.’ ‘Managers do things right, leaders do the right thing,’ wrote Bennis and Nanus. James

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MacGregor Burns warned: ‘Divorced from ethics, leadership is reduced to management and politics to mere technique.’

If you would succeed in leadership and management endeavors, build on a foundation of honor and honesty.

The second quote I would like to leave with you comes from comments Warren Buffett made some time ago. Buffett said, “We look for three things when we’re hiring people. We look for integrity, intelligence, and energy.” He went on, “If the person didn’t have the first one, the latter two would kill them, because if they don’t have integrity, you want them dumb and lazy. You don’t want them smart and energetic.” I love that. You think it through and it has meaning. If somebody does not have integrity, I want them to just sit in their office and just sleep and not be out making trouble for the rest of the organization. That is a great summary on a key topic from a most credible commentator. Character counts.

vi Ibid.
viii Ibid.

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This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture sponsored by the Wheatley Institution and delivered on February 11, 2016. To watch the full lecture, please visit wheatley.byu.edu.
I am going to lay out some organizing concepts that I have found helpful in trying to understand the unprecedented tumult of the broader Middle East. First let me define my terms. “Broader Middle East” is that swath of land from Morocco on the Atlantic coast of North Africa, all the way through North Africa, into the countries of the Levant, that is, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian territories, Syria, and Lebanon, the Arabian Peninsula anchored by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and then the non-Arab countries to the east: Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. They have different languages, different cultures, different religions, but they all share a roughly similar worldview that is formed in no small part by the fact that every one of those countries, with the exception of the interior of
Yemen and Saudi Arabia, has been occupied by one or more Western powers since Napoleon Bonaparte went into Egypt in 1798. We do not think of the Middle East as occupied countries; we do not see ourselves as occupiers.

That is not how Middle Easterners view it. They very much see us in that light, and it affects what we are dealing with today. The modern Middle East is roughly 100 years old. It dates back to the Treaties of Versailles and Sèvres after World War I. That literally drew the lines on the map that still exist today. In that hundred years, we have never seen a more chaotic and turbulent time than we see today. We are used to a Middle East where there are revolutions and coups and governments are overthrown, but what we are seeing now is something far starker. We are seeing states fail, countries collapse. Syria—a completely failed state. Libya, Yemen—all completely failed states. Iraq is right on the edge, maybe going over it. Afghanistan will be there, too, if we decide we are tired of it all and we pull out the last of our troops. With the failure of states, we are seeing something else that is quite disturbing. It is the rise of non-state actors. They come in several categories. There are those that are state-sponsored. That would be, for example, Hezbollah, the Lebanese militia that has done so much harm to that country, to Israel, and now to Syria. Then there are the actors who do not have state sponsorship, most prominently Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. It is a new phenomenon in the Middle East and is no longer just restricted to the Middle East. You also have Al-Shabaab in Somalia, Boko Haram in Northwest Africa. When states fail, non-state actors rise. It is a new regional disorder, very grave in its implications for security there and throughout the world, including in our own country.

With the various conflicts we see in Syria, in Yemen, in Iraq, there is an overarching construct that I call the Middle East Cold War, and it has two principle
protagonists (not the US and Russia): Saudi Arabia and Iran—the citadel of Sunni Islam versus the citadel of Shia Islam—which means that these conflicts around the region are increasingly denominated in sectarian terms. There has been a tendency in this country to leap past that to say, “Well, it has always been a religious war. It has gone on for 1500 years and will go on for another 1500 years and there is nothing we can do about it.” Not exactly.

At the time of my first tour in the Foreign Service, which was in the Iran of the Shah, we were relying post-Vietnam on a twin pillar of gulf security and those two pillars were Saudi Arabia and Iran, working very closely with us, working very closely with each other. Just worth bearing in mind, this is not a millennial struggle between Shia and Sunni. Sectarian differences have always been there, virtually since the dawn of Islam, but very rarely have they been expressed in violent terms. I am old enough to remember another era of Middle Eastern terror. This was in the late sixties and through the decade of the seventies. Palestinian groups did a whole lot of damage in Israel and elsewhere. They assassinated one of my predecessors as ambassador to Lebanon and two other senior diplomats in Sudan. Were they Islamic fanatics? Well, the most lethal group was the popular front for the Liberation of Palestine and it was headed by George Habash. He was a Christian. The ideology was not only not Islamic, it was atheistic, as was the ideology of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, also headed by a Christian. It is way more complicated than the broad brush strokes that paint this as an irresolvable religious struggle or an unending wave of Islamic terrorism. We do ourselves a disservice and a danger by thinking in those overly simplistic terms.

What is going on that has caused states to fail and has caused non-state actors to rise? The organizing principle that I have found to be most useful is governance, or the failure of governance. The Middle East has seen a chronic failure of governance, a failure to establish a consistent rule of law that applies to all, a failure to establish stable institutions that look to the interests of all of the governed. I describe it as a succession of failed -isms. You can start in this hundred-year period, you can start with the failure of colonialism and imperialism. After World War I, the French and the British ran most of the Middle East. What
they did not do was spend a lot of time helping to develop indigenous institutions that had legitimacy in the eyes of their own people. Monarchism in the central Middle Eastern countries of Egypt and Iraq also failed and it gave way to yet another -ism: Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism made no particular effort to establish real legitimacy by developing institutions and enforcing a consistent rule of law. Other -isms also failed. Arab socialism, Baathism, communism, undiluted authoritarianism, all failed and gave way to another -ism. Now we have, if you will, Islamism.

You do not end a war by withdrawing your forces. You simply leave the battlespace to your adversaries.

When I ask myself, “How enduring is the Islamic State?”, I do not think that much in terms of their military capabilities. I think in terms of their governance. They benefitted from having an incredibly low bar when they moved into parts of Syria and Iraq with good governance as practiced by Bashar al-Assad or the Iraqi regime. You know, not the kind of thing you want to hold up as a great example of state building. And indeed, they knew this. So they made an effort to establish very brutal, but consistent and predictable justice. For people with memories of totally arbitrary and capricious justice, if you can call it that, that was a step forward. But what we have seen lately in the Islamic State, which is hurting for revenues, is the establishment of really extortionate taxes. All taxes are extortionate, but we pay our taxes and we actually get services. People under the Islamic State pay taxes and they get nothing. I would predict that the Islamic State will fall apart at some point. Not because of the youth of the American military force, but because they will fail as all their predecessors have failed to provide good governance. Do not feel good about that. There is no such thing as a vacuum, not in nature and certainly not in the Middle East. Something else we cannot even imagine will rise in its place and it is not going to be the Syrian and Iraqi Boy Scouts. It is going to be something pretty awful.
That takes me to us, the United States. The United States has had about a 70-year history in the Middle East that basically goes back to the end of World War II. Before then we were not politically there; that was a European thing. The year 1945 changed that. The British and the French were bled white. They could not play their traditional role and you had an ascendant Soviet Union. Basically, Churchill said to us, “You’d better step up or the Soviets are going to step in.” So we came to the Middle East basically as a Cold War theater and have been prominently engaged ever since. Sometimes that engagement has been positive and constructive. I am reminded that this month is the 25th anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait by the broadest international coalition since World War II. That not only brought in our traditional European allies, we actually persuaded Egypt and even Syria to send each an armored division to Saudi Arabia as part of that effort. It was a magnificent achievement.

Some of our other achievements have not been so magnificent. I was in Beirut when we kind of thought it would be a good idea if the Israelis invaded Lebanon and got rid of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1982. Who could argue that? Palestinian terrorism had killed a lot of Israelis and a lot of Americans, destabilized Jordan, the list goes on. So sure! It was a good idea. Except it wasn’t, and I was there. Israelis pretty much got rid of PLO, but they created the conditions that led to the rise of something far worse, and that was Hezbollah. And it really was worse. I met recently with an old friend who was a marine sergeant in Beirut with me in the eighties and we went through the bombing of the embassy in April of 1983 together and obviously both survived it. A lot of us did not. It was the worst single attack on a U.S. diplomatic facility, and it was done by Hezbollah, with Syrian and Iranian support. Six months later, it got even worse—October 1983, the bombing of the marine barracks, 244 dead. We traded the PLO who could kill us in ones or twos and got in exchange a mass murder machine that could kill us by the hundreds.

Why do I tell you this? Because it illustrates one of the very few things I learned in the Middle East over the years, and I am going to tell you two things I learned. The first is be careful what you get into. Interventions, particularly military interventions in the volatile Middle East, can have extraordinary
unintended consequences. Not of the third and fourth order, but the thirtieth and fortieth order that you cannot begin to predict, let alone plan for. Beirut taught me that lesson 35 years ago. But we are not good at absorbing lessons. So in 2002, the American people basically voted to have a big ol’ war in Iraq through the congressional elections that year, and we did. Who could quibble with getting rid of the dictator who had invaded two of his neighbors and would invade a third if he got his hands on the wherewithal to do it? Yeah, well again, be careful what you get into. The thirtieth and fortieth order consequences are unimaginable. The rise of sectarian strife as larger identities melted away, the loss of almost 4,500 American servicemen and servicewomen, of billions and billions of dollars. We got it stabilized on my watch: 2007, 2008, 2009. The violence subsided. Political agreements were reached among Sunni, Shia, and Kurds. Iraq actually looked like it had a chance, but then we got tired of it. We decided we did not want to be there anymore. A president was elected to end wars, not perpetuate them. Time to bring the troops home. But here is what happens. You do not end a war by withdrawing your forces. You simply leave the battlespace to your adversaries. From an Iraq in which we saw reasonable stability and the prospect for more, we pulled out in 2011, and how is Iraq occupied today? By Iranians, by extremist Shia militias whose leaders have murdered American service members, and by Islamic State. You know, it exceeds my worst nightmares from the time I left in 2009. That is the second thing I learned: be careful getting in; be just as careful about what you propose to get out of. Disengagement can have consequences as great, or greater, than your original intervention and I would suggest to you in Iraq, we kind of blew it on both. We were not careful getting into it, even though we had the lesson of Lebanon, and we were not careful getting out of it.

If this is the most chaotic and turbulent the Middle East has ever been, this is a moment in which the United States is more disengaged from the area than it has been in the 70 years of our involvement there. I was out in Lebanon just before Christmas. The universal perception is the United States, at best, is not involved anymore, and at worst, is actually in collusion with the Iranians, with Hezbollah, with Assad, and with the Russians. The pendulum swung one way to an intervention in 2003 that led to a chain of unintended consequences, and then
it swung the other way: “We are done here. We are out. It is not our problem.” Except it is. The Islamic State is most definitely our problem. A flood of refugees greater than at any time since World War II, although we may shut our doors to it, is our problem because it is a global problem.

In an election year, my plea for whoever is going to be our next President is pretty simple. Engage. Be involved in the Middle East. I do not mean sending in the Eighty-second Airborne again. I mean not putting boots on the ground, but wingtips and pumps on the ground, on the feet of Foreign Service Officers who know the languages, know the region, know the history, know the culture. Have the Secretary of State camp out in the Middle East, shore up our alliances which have deteriorated badly; have a President who will work the phones with regional leaders. Something again that George Herbert Walker Bush did so brilliantly. This President does not do that and he does not like his Secretary of State to actually take on major diplomatic initiatives in the region. If we did too much in the last decade, I would argue that we are doing way too little now. We need to get back in the game. It is going to be a long year until we have a new administration. I do not expect this administration to do anything of consequence. They are just going to let it ride. That is what happens in the last year of an administration. I hope we can ride it out.

I will conclude on a note of what passes for me as optimism. As bad as things are today, savor the moment. Enjoy it, because three months from now, you are going to look back on today with longing and nostalgia for the good ol’ days because three months from now it is going to be way worse.
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To the topic at hand, religious extremism. First a couple of definitions for you. Salafism is the earliest, most puritanical form of Islam. In its purest sense, it was apolitical. That is to say, it had no desire to be involved in politics, but over time a segment of that community did start to care about political ends and they did not care whether or not they used violence to achieve them. So this group became known as Jihadi Salafism and it is very much like the Wahhabism that you see currently practiced in Saudi Arabia today. Another term which is widely bandied about in Washington is CVE: Countering Violent Extremism. In many respects, it is sort of a politically correct way of saying religious extremism. Now when we as a country have been
confronted with religious extremism, our reaction has typically been militaristic in nature. While bombs and bullets have their place, we think that what is needed is a much more far sighted response—one that gets at the ideas behind the guns. We have found that one of the most effective ways of getting at those ideas behind the guns is through a new form of engagement called faith-based diplomacy. Now what that is at the macro level is incorporating religious considerations into the practice of international politics. At the micro level it means actually making

**While bombs and bullets have their place, what is needed is a much more far sighted response.**

religion part of the solution in some of these intractable identity based conflicts like ethnic disputes, tribal warfare, and the like that typically exceed the grasp of traditional diplomacy.

Now what does it take to practice this faith-based diplomacy? Well, I could list any number of things for you, but there are two that kind of stand out, I think. One is to have a visceral understanding of how faith drives action and oftentimes that means for you to really have that kind of understanding you need to have a pretty strong faith yourself. It does not particularly matter which religion, but to have that faith is helpful because it gives you credibility in a sense, but it also gives you a deeper understanding. The other thing I think is so important is there is a need to empathize. Now empathy, in its most basic form, means identifying with the other person. Not only understanding their point of view, but understanding where they are coming from. What are the things that weigh in their calculus as they make decisions? This may go back to unaddressed wounds of history, for example, that still prevail. So you really need to try to get inside their skin. When former Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara was asked what the most important lesson he learned from Vietnam, his response was, “The need to empathize with the enemy.” As he further lamented in his book titled *In Retrospect,*
“Our misjudgment of friend or foe alike reflected our profound ignorance of the history, culture, and politics of the people in the area.”

Well, in our own center’s project work, empathy plays quite a role. A good illustration of this is the initiative in Pakistan with the religious schools, or the madrasas, where we have essentially worked with the madrasa leaders to expand their curriculums, in order to enable the students to deal with contemporary issues, but also to promote greater adherence to human rights and religious tolerance, and also to transform the pedagogy to create critical thinking skills among the students. Over the eight years in which we were doing that before we passed the baton to an indigenous NGO that is now overseeing the effort, we had reached some 2,700 madrasa leaders from 1,600 madrasas at that point in time. Today it is about 5,000 madrasa leaders over 2,500 madrasas. The success that we enjoyed in that stands in marked contrast to the attempts of others to do something similar, most particularly the government of Pakistan.

A large part of that success had to do with empathy. For example, we conducted the effort in such a way that the madrasa leaders felt it was their reform effort and not something imposed from the outside, which means that they had a lot of ownership in the change process. Secondly, we inspired them with their own heritage. Their schools were once without peer as institutions of higher learning at the time. Then sadly, over a period of time, particularly under British colonial rule where they tried to secularize them, fearful of losing their Muslim identity, most of these schools purged themselves of all disciplines that were either Western or secular in nature. The vast majority today are about rote memorization of the Quran and the study of Islamic principles. We go even further back in their heritage to the early days of the religion when many of the pioneering breakthroughs in the arts and sciences took place under Islam, including religious tolerance at a time when Christianity was woefully intolerant. The more that these madrasa leaders hear this—we do not dwell on it—but when they hear it, they walk a little taller and start thinking, “Maybe we can do better as well.” Finally (I think perhaps most importantly as this gets to empathy as

well) we grounded all suggested change in Islamic principles so that they could genuinely feel that they were becoming better Muslims in the process. For the last five years that we were involved with this effort the embassy in Islamabad was not supportive until finally one day they came to their senses and a contingent from the State Department came over to our offices and said, “We want to build our strategy around your work.” They finally saw that what we were doing there, dealing with the ideas behind the guns, was every bit as strategic as anything else

You never quite know where the seeds you plant are going to bear fruit.

that was taking place on or off the battle field. So with that, we were able to start getting some support, which was very helpful and that continues to this day.

We later came up with a confidence building measure, which called for establishing a secure zone in the western third of Nuristan. The idea was to try to respond to the fact that all of these Taliban commanders seemed to genuinely care about their people and were really very frustrated and felt a lot of angst about the fact that of the billions of dollars flowing to Afghanistan at that point in time, none of it ever seemed to reach the villages. The idea was that, in the secure zone, we would try to get private development that would go directly to the villages. Well, that never got off the ground—it could not get the traction with NATO to establish the secure zone—but one thing came out of it. Several months later I received a call from the Korean Ambassador of the United States to see if there was anything that our center could do to help free the 21 Korean missionaries who were being held hostage by the Taliban. As a result of the extensive networking that went into that earlier meeting with the Taliban, we were ultimately able to play a very instrumental role in getting them released. So you never quite know where the seeds you plant are going to bear fruit.

We undertook some systemic efforts to make a difference, one of which was to try to develop some model curriculums for the madrasas that were based on
best educational practices to be found in the entire Muslim world. Part of that involved taking the National Madrasa Oversight Board (these are the five religious leaders that sit on top of the five sects that sponsor these religious schools) to Egypt and Turkey to view how Islamic education was handled there. They went, frankly, with a bit of an attitude. “What can these secularists teach us religious pluralists?” Both Egypt and Turkey enjoyed a somewhat secular reputation. Well, they came back very humbled because they found that not only did Egyptian and Turkish students handle religious questions every bit as capably as any Pakistani madrasa student, but they could also handle contemporary problems because they had had the right subjects. The science, the math, the rest of it. Because of this finding, they came back, made an agreement with the government to register their madrasas in exchange for the government supporting them, changing their curriculums and the like, and they also laid down a requirement that henceforth all madrasa faculty would be certified. Up until then, there were no standards. You wanted to open a madrasa, you opened a madrasa. One of the reasons the madrasas had grown like Topsy is because the public schools are an unmitigated disaster in Pakistan, part of which was the fact that despite the democratic trappings, Pakistan is fundamentally a feudal country. Those at the top are not only not interested in empowering those at the bottom, but they want them to stay on the bottom. I think it is one of the reasons when you look at the world index of percent of GDP devoted to education, Pakistan is always very near the bottom. It is almost like there is a purposeful intent to keep people as illiterate as possible so they cannot vote to upset the status quo. So all that has to change and we are very mindful of the fact that no matter how many hearts and minds you win, at the end of the day, people need jobs. Otherwise, by default so many of them turn to the insurgency because they can put bread on the table. Another thing that came out of that was the head of the Deobandi sect (which is far more powerful than the other sects put together—this is where the Taliban came out of) came up with the idea which we sort of planted, and that was to develop a peace textbook that could be put in all of the madrasas. So using madrasa scholars—again it is that ownership piece—such a textbook was put together, and furthermore, a teacher training institute was established in the headquarters
madrasa for each of those five sects that I was making reference to. They have been teaching madrasa faculty how to teach the peace textbook to their students, and quite frankly, it is a very impressive work. I really think I would love to see every high school kid in America get exposed to it because it is really thoughtful and it gets to the nuances as well. It is not just about peacemaking with respect to other countries and other religions, but it is also sectarian and we are just starting a project in Pakistan right now to counter sectarian violence. This is going to be a piece of that.

In 2011, the State Department asked us to take a hard look at the discriminatory content in the public school textbooks of Saudi Arabia and then to assess the

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global impact of that content. We did that, but we took a very different approach. Instead of cursing the darkness, which was the approach that others who had tried more abbreviated looks had taken, we decided to take a positive approach and we gave them credit for all of the reforms that they had already enacted. They did have some reforms underway, also the progress they were making with their de-radicalization program, so we gave them all the credit we could for that, but then were very unsparing in our detail of what yet remained to be done. I will tell you, this whole exercise was very enlightening to see the degree to which Wahhabis theology influenced the content of those textbooks, but also the behavior of students. You could find direct license in there for violent behavior toward others who did not believe in your particular brand of Islam. You could see direct license given to desecrating the tombs of the Sufi Saints in Timbuktu, which is exactly what the extremists did when they moved into Mali until the French finally kicked them out. But this is the kind of content that you could see there. Fortunately, consistent with the positive approach, we decided that we wanted to do what we could to try to help facilitate the continuation and
completion of these reforms through quiet diplomacy. So we asked the State Department at the end—the original intent was to beat Saudis over the head with this—but we asked them, “Please do not make this public because if you do, then the critics will seize upon the offensive passages that still remain, hit the Saudis over the head, and the hardliners will then step in and nip all further progress in the bud.” Fortunately, State went along with it and we have had occasion to have to defend that because when President Obama was going over to Saudi Arabia, some scholars from a think tank became aware of the study and put on enormous public pressure to try to get the study released. We were able to deflect that and as recently as this past November, we had a team of Saudi education scholars and experts and officials come over to the United States to meet with American counterparts to discuss problems of bias and intolerance in national education systems. What you have to do when you are dealing on this basis to avoid any aura of paternalism is you have to have equals coming together to meet about a problem that they share in common. We have enough problems in our own very decentralized academic system to qualify to sit at the table, but it went exceedingly well and I might say too that almost coincidental with when I went over to brief the Saudis on the report—and this is about a year after it had made its way over through diplomatic channels—the country came up with a national plan for educational reform that calls for doing all the right things. It calls for additional purging of the textbooks, dealing with educational standards, and teaching 21st century skills, if you will, but also integrating religious freedom and tolerance into the message, which is quite a leap for the Saudis to do. I strongly suspect that in addition to whatever impact Western criticism might have had, including our study, I think that they probably see it in their own self-interest, as the declining influence of their oil wealth takes place, that they need to equip their youngsters to be able to deal in this globalized marketplace. Not just for economic reasons, but to provide an alternative to the appeals of extremism, because a lot of Saudi youth have been caught up in that in the past. It is going to take a while for this impact to start manifesting itself. I think the strategic implications are enormous. This is the content that has provided the inspiration for groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS and taking that away, I think, is going to have a huge impact.
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