FIFTEEN

11/9 Versus 9/11

Imagination is more important than knowledge.

—Albert Einstein

On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog.

—Two dogs talking to each other, in a *New Yorker* cartoon by Peter Steiner, July 5, 1993

Reflecting on this past decade and a half, during which the world went flat, it strikes me that our lives have been powerfully shaped by two dates: 11/9 and 9/11. These two dates represent the two competing forms of imagination at work in the world today: the creative imagination of 11/9 and the destructive imagination of 9/11. One brought down a wall and opened the windows of the world—both the operating system and the kind we look through. It unlocked half the planet and made the citizens there our collaborators and competitors. Another brought down the World Trade Center, closing its Windows on the World restaurant forever and putting up new invisible and concrete walls among people at a time when we thought 11/9 had erased them for good.

The dismantling of the Berlin Wall on 11/9 was brought about by people who dared to imagine a different, more open world—one where every human being would be free to realize his or her full potential—and who then summoned the courage to act on that imagination. Do

you remember how it happened? It was so simple, really: In July 1989, hundreds of East Germans sought refuge at the West German embassy in Hungary. In September 1989, Hungary decided to remove its border restrictions with Austria. That meant that any East German who got into Hungary could pass through to Austria and the free world. Sure enough, more than thirteen thousand East Germans escaped through Hungary's back door. Pressure built up on the East German government. When in November it announced plans to ease travel restrictions, tens of thousands of East Germans converged on the Berlin Wall, where, on 11/9/89, border guards just opened the gates.

Someone there in Hungary, maybe it was the prime minister, maybe it was just a bureaucrat, must have said to himself or herself, "Imagine—imagine what might happen if we opened the border with Austria." Imagine if the Soviet Union were frozen in place. Imagine if East German citizens, young and old, men and women, were so emboldened by seeing their neighbors flee to the West that one day they just swarmed that Berlin Wall and started to tear it down. Some people must have had a conversation just like that, and because they did, millions of Eastern Europeans were able to walk out from behind the Iron Curtain and engage with a flattening world. It was a great era in which to be an American. We were the only superpower, and the world was our oyster. There were no walls. Young Americans could think about traveling, for a semester or a summer, to more countries than any American generation before them. Indeed, they could travel as far as their imaginations and wallets could take them. They could also look around at their classmates and see people from more different countries and cultures than any other class before them.

Nine-eleven, of course, changed all that. It showed us the power of a very different kind of imagination. It showed us the power of a group of hateful men who spent several years imagining how to kill as many innocent people as they could. At some point bin Laden and his gang literally must have looked at one another and said, "Imagine if we actually could hit both towers of the World Trade Center at the exact right spot, between the ninety-fourth and ninety-eighth floors. And imagine if each tower were to come crashing down like a house of cards." Yes, I am sorry

to say, some people had that conversation, too. And, as a result, the world that was our oyster seemed to close up like a shell.

There has never been a time in history when human imagination wasn't important, but writing this book tells me that it has never been *more* important than now, because in a flat world so many of the tools of collaboration are becoming commodities available to everyone. So many more people now have the power to create their own content. There is one thing, though, that has not and can never be commoditized, and that is imagination—what content they dream of creating.

When we lived in a more centralized, and more vertically organized, world—where states had a near total monopoly of power—individual imagination was a big problem when the leader of a superpower state—a Stalin, a Mao, or a Hitler—became warped. But today, when individuals can easily access all the tools of collaboration and superempower themselves, or their small cells, individuals do not need to control a country to threaten large numbers of other people. The small can act very big today and pose a serious danger to world order—without the instruments of a state.

Therefore, thinking about how we stimulate positive imaginations is of the utmost importance. As Irving Wladawsky-Berger, the IBM computer scientist, put it to me: We need to think more seriously than ever about how we encourage people to focus on productive outcomes that advance and unite civilization—peaceful imaginations that seek to "minimize alienation and celebrate interdependence rather than self-sufficiency, inclusion rather than exclusion," openness, opportunity, and hope rather than limits, suspicion, and grievance.

Let me try to illustrate this by example. In early 1999, two men started airlines from scratch, just a few weeks apart. Both men had a dream involving airplanes and the savvy to do something about it. One was David Neeleman. In February 1999, he started JetBlue. He assembled $130 million in venture capital, bought a fleet of Airbus A-320 passenger jets, recruited pilots and signed them to seven-year contracts, and outsourced his reservation system to stay-at-home moms and retirees living around Salt Lake City, Utah, who booked passengers on their home computers.

The other person who started an airline was, as we now know from the 9/11 Commission Report, Osama bin Laden. At a meeting in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in March or April 1999, he accepted a proposal initially drawn up by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the Pakistan-born mechanical engineer who was the architect of the 9/11 plot. JetBlue's motto was "Same Altitude. Different Attitude." Al-Qaeda's motto was "Allahu Akbar," God is great. Both airlines were designed to fly into New York City—Neeleman's into JFK and bin Laden's into lower Manhattan.

Maybe it was because I read the 9/11 report while on a trip to Silicon Valley that I could not help but notice how much Khalid Sheikh Mohammed spoke and presented himself as just another eager engineer-entrepreneur, with his degree from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, pitching his ideas to Osama bin Laden, who comes off as just another wealthy venture capitalist. But Mohammed, alas, was looking for *adventure capital*. As the 9/11 Commission Report put it, "No one exemplifies the model of the terrorist entrepreneur more clearly than Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), the principal architect of the 9/11 attacks . . . Highly educated and equally comfortable in a government office or a terrorist safe house, KSM applied his imagination, technical aptitude and managerial skills to hatching and planning an extraordinary array of terrorist schemes. These ideas included conventional car bombing, political assassination, aircraft bombing, hijacking, reservoir poisoning, and, ultimately, the use of aircraft as missiles guided by suicide operatives . . . KSM presents himself as an entrepreneur seeking venture capital and people . . . Bin Laden summoned KSM to Kandahar in March or April 1999 to tell him that al-Qaeda would support his proposal. The plot was now referred to within al-Qaeda as the 'planes operation.'"

From his corporate headquarters in Afghanistan, bin Laden proved to be a very deft supply chain manager. He assembled a virtual company just for this project—exactly like any global conglomerate would do in the flat world—finding just the right specialist for each task. He outsourced the overall design and blueprint for 9/11 to KSM and overall financial management to KSM's nephew, Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, who coordinated the dispersal of funds to the hijackers through wire transfers,

cash, traveler's checks, and credit and debit cards from overseas bank accounts. Bin Laden recruited from the al-Qaeda roster just the right muscle guys from Asir Province, in Saudi Arabia, just the right pilots from Europe, just the right team leader from Hamburg, and just the right support staff from Pakistan. He outsourced the pilot training to flight schools in America. Bin Laden, who knew he needed only to "lease" the Boeing 757s, 767s, A320s, and possibly 747s for his operation, raised the necessary capital for training pilots on all these different aircraft from a syndicate of pro-al-Qaeda Islamic charities and other Muslim adventure capitalists ready to fund anti-American operations. In the case of 9/11, the total budget was around $400,000. Once the team was assembled, bin Laden focused on his own core competency—overall leadership and ideological inspiration of his suicide supply chain, with assistance from his deputies Mohammed Atef and Ayman al-Zawahiri.

You can get the full flavor of the bin Laden supply chain, and what an aggressive adopter of new technology al-Qaeda was, by reading just one entry from the December 2001 U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia's official indictment of Zacarias Moussaoui, the so-called nineteenth hijacker from 9/11. It reported the following: "In or about June 1999, in an interview with an Arabic-language television station, Osama bin Laden issued a . . . threat indicating that all American males should be killed." It then points out that throughout the year 2000, all of the hijackers, including Moussaoui, began either attending or inquiring about flight school courses in America: "On or about September 29, 2000, Zacarias Moussaoui contacted Airman Flight School in Norman, Oklahoma, using an e-mail account he set up on September 6 with an Internet service provider in Malaysia. In or about October 2000, Zacarias Moussaoui received letters from Infocus Tech, a Malaysian company, stating that Moussaoui was appointed Infocus Tech's marketing consultant in the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe, and that he would receive, among other things, an allowance of $2,500 per month . . . On or about December 11, 2000, Mohammed Atta purchased flight deck videos for the Boeing 767 Model 300ER and the Airbus A320 Model 200 from the Ohio Pilot Store . . . In or about June 2001, in Norman, Oklahoma, Zacarias Moussaoui made inquiries about starting a

cropdusting company . . . On or about August 16, 2001, Zacarias Moussaoui, possessed, among other things: two knives; a pair of binoculars; flight manuals for the Boeing 747 Model 400; a flight simulator computer program; fighting gloves and shin guards; a piece of paper referring to a handheld Global Positioning System receiver and a camcorder; software that could be used to review pilot procedures for the Boeing 747 Model 400; letters indicating that Moussaoui is a marketing consultant in the United States for Infocus Tech; a computer disk containing information related to the aerial application of pesticides; and a hand-held aviation radio."

A devout Mormon, who grew up in Latin America where his father was a UPI correspondent, David Neeleman, by contrast, is one of those classic American entrepreneurs and a man of enormous integrity. He never went to college, but he has started two successful airlines, Morris Air and JetBlue, and played an important role in shaping a third, Southwest. He is the godfather of ticketless air travel, now known as e-ticketing. "I am a total optimist. I think my father is an optimist," he said to me, trying to explain where his innovative genes came from. "I grew up in a very happy home . . . JetBlue was created in my own mind before it was created on paper." Using his optimistic imagination and his ability also to quickly adopt all the latest technology because he had no legacy system to worry about, Neeleman started a highly profitable airline, creating jobs, low-cost travel, a unique onboard, satellite-supported entertainment system, and one of the most people-friendly places to work you can imagine. He also started a catastrophe relief fund in his company to help employee families who are faced with a sudden death or catastrophic illness of a loved one. Neeleman donates $1 of his salary for every $1 any employee puts in the fund. "I think it is important that people give a little," said Neeleman. "I believe that there are irrevocable laws of heaven that when you serve others you get this little buzz." In 2003, Neeleman, already a wealthy man from his JetBlue stock, donated about $120,000 of his $200,000 salary to the JetBlue employee catastrophe fund.

In the waiting room outside his New York City office, there is a color photo of a JetBlue Airbus flying over the World Trade Center. Neeleman

was in his office on 9/11 and watched the Twin Towers burn, while his own JetBlue airliners were circling JFK in a holding pattern. When I explained to him the comparison/contrast I was going to make between him and bin Laden, he was both uncomfortable and curious. As I closed up my computer and prepared to leave following our interview, he said he had one question for me: "Do you think Osama actually believes there is a God up there who is happy with what he is doing?"

I told him I just didn't know. What I do know is this: There are two ways to flatten the world. One is to use your imagination to bring everyone up to the same level, and the other is to use your imagination to bring everyone down to the same level. David Neeleman used his optimistic imagination and the easily available technologies of the flat world to lift people up. He launched a surprising and successful new airline, some profits of which he turns over to a catastrophe relief fund for his employees. Osama bin Laden and his disciples used their twisted imagination, and many of the same tools, to launch a surprise attack, which brought two enormous symbols of American power down to their level. Worse, they raised their money and created this massive human catastrophe under the guise of religion.

"From the primordial swamps of globalization have emerged two genetic variants," observed Infosys CEO Nandan Nilekani—one is al-Qaeda and the other are companies like Infosys or JetBlue. "Our focus therefore has to be how we can encourage more of the good mutations and keep out the bad."

I could not agree more. Indeed, that effort may be the most important thing we learn to do in order to keep this planet in one piece.

I have no doubt that advances in technology—from iris scans to X-ray machines—will help us to identify, expose, and capture those who are trying to use the easily available tools of the flat world to destroy it. But in the end, technology alone cannot keep us safe. We really do have to find ways to affect the imagination of those who would use the tools of collaboration to destroy the world that has invented those tools. But how does one go about nurturing a more hopeful, life-affirming, and tolerant

imagination in others? Everyone has to ask himself or herself this question. I ask it as an American. I stress this last point because I think it starts first and foremost by America setting an example. Those of us who are fortunate to live in free and progressive societies have to set an example. We have to be the best global citizens we can be. We cannot retreat from the world. We have to make sure that we get the best of our own imaginations—and never let our imaginations get the best of us.

It is always hard to know when we have crossed the line between justified safety measures and letting our imaginations get the best of us and thereby paralyzing ourselves with precautions. I argued right after 9/11 that the reason our intelligence did not pick up the 9/11 plotters was "a failure of imagination." We just did not have enough people within our intelligence community with a sick enough imagination to match that of bin Laden and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. We do need some people like that within our intelligence services. But we *all* don't need to go down that route. We all don't need to become so gripped by imagining the worst in everyone around us that we shrink into ourselves.

In 2003, my older daughter, Orly, was in her high school's symphonic orchestra. They spent all year practicing to take part in the national high school orchestra competition in New Orleans that March. When March rolled around, it appeared that we were heading for war in Iraq, so the Montgomery County School Board canceled all out-of-town trips by school groups—including the orchestra's attendance at New Orleans—fearing an outbreak of terrorism. I thought this was absolutely nuts. Even the evil imagination of 9/11 has its limits. At some point you do have to ask yourself whether Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri were really sitting around a cave in Afghanistan, with Ayman saying to Osama, "Say, Osama, d'you remember that annual high school orchestra competition in New Orleans? Well, it's coming up again next week. Let's really make a splash and go after it."

No, I don't think so. Let's leave the cave dwelling to bin Laden. We have to be the masters of our imaginations, not the prisoners. I had a friend in Beirut who used to joke that every time she flew on an airplane she packed a bomb in her suitcase, because the odds of two people carrying a bomb on the same plane were so much higher. Do whatever it takes, but get out the door.

Apropos of that, let me share the 9/11 story that touched me most from *The New York Times* series "Portraits of Grief," the little biographies of those who were killed. It was the story of Candace Lee Williams, the twenty-year-old business student at Northeastern University, who had worked from January to June of 2001 as a work-study intern at the Merrill Lynch office on the fourteenth floor of 1 World Trade Center. Both Candace's mother and colleagues described her to *The New York Times* as a young woman full of energy and ambition, who loved her internship. Indeed, Candace's colleagues at Merrill Lynch liked her so much they took her to dinner on her last day of work, sent her home in a limousine, and later wrote Northeastern to say, "Send us five more like Candace." A few weeks after finishing midterm exams—she was on a June–December academic schedule—Candace Lee Williams decided to meet her roommate at her home in California. Candace had recently made the dean's list. "They'd rented a convertible preparing for the occasion, and Candace wanted her picture taken with that Hollywood sign," her mother, Sherri, told the *Times*.

Unfortunately, Candace took the American Airlines Flight 11 that departed from Boston's Logan Airport on the morning of September 11, 2001, at 8:02 a.m. The plane was hijacked at 8:14 a.m. by five men, including Mohammed Atta, who was in seat 8D. With Atta at the controls, the Boeing 767-223ER was diverted to Manhattan and slammed Candace Lee Williams right back into the very same World Trade Center tower—between floors 94 and 98—where she had worked as an intern.

Airline records show that she was seated next to an eighty-year-old grandmother—two people at opposites ends of life: one full of memories, one full of dreams.

What does this story say to me? It says this: When Candace Lee Williams boarded Flight 11 she could not have imagined how it would end. But in the wake of 9/11, none of us can now board an airplane *without* imagining how it could end—that what happened to Candace Lee Williams could also happen to us. We all are now so much more conscious

that a person's life can be wiped out by the arbitrary will of a madman in a cave in Afghanistan. But the fact is, the chances of our plane being hijacked by terrorists today are still infinitesimal. We are more likely to be killed hitting a deer with our car or being struck by lightning. So even though we *can* now imagine what could happen when we get on an airplane, we have to get on the plane anyway. Because the alternative to not getting on that plane is putting ourselves in our own cave. Imagination can't just be about reruns. It also has to be about writing our own new script. From what I read about Candace Lee Williams, she was an optimist. I'd bet anything she'd still be getting on planes today if she had the chance. And so must we all.

America's role in the world, from its inception, has been to be the country that looks forward, not back. One of the most dangerous things that has happened to America since 9/11, under the Bush administration, is that we have gone from exporting hope to exporting fear. We have gone from trying to coax the best out of the world to snarling at it way too often. And when you export fear, you end up importing everyone else's fears. Yes, we need people who can imagine the worst, because the worst did happen on 9/11 and it could happen again. But, as I said, there is a fine line between precaution and paranoia, and at times we have crossed it. Europeans and others often love to make fun of American optimism and naïveté—our crazy notion that every problem has a solution, that tomorrow can be better than yesterday, that the future can always bury the past. But I have always believed that deep down the rest of the world envies that American optimism and naïveté. It needs American optimism. It is one of the things that help keep the world spinning on its axis. If we go dark as a society, if we stop being the world's "dream factory," we will make the world not only a darker place but also a poorer place.

Analysts have always tended to measure a society by classical economic and social statistics: its deficit-to-GDP ratio, or its unemployment rate, or the rate of literacy among its adult women. Such statistics are important and revealing. But there is another statistic, much harder to

measure, that I think is even more important and revealing: Does your society have more memories than dreams or more dreams than memories?

By dreams I mean the positive, life-affirming variety. The business organization consultant Michael Hammer once remarked, "One thing that tells me a company is in trouble is when they tell me how good they were in the past. Same with countries. You don't want to forget your identity. I am glad you were great in the fourteenth century, but that was then and this is now. When memories exceed dreams, the end is near. The hallmark of a truly successful organization is the willingness to abandon what made it successful and start fresh."

In societies that have more memories than dreams, too many people are spending too many days looking backward. They see dignity, affirmation, and self-worth not by mining the present but by chewing on the past. And even that is usually not a real past but an imagined and adorned past. Indeed, such societies focus all their imagination on making that imagined past even more beautiful than it ever was, and then they cling to it like a rosary or a strand of worry beads, rather than imagining a better future and acting on that. It is dangerous enough when other countries go down that route; it would be disastrous for America to lose its bearings and move in that direction. I think my friend David Rothkopf, the former Commerce Department official and now a fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said it best: "The answer for us lies not in what has changed, but in recognizing what has not changed. Because only through this recognition will we begin to focus on the truly critical issues—an effective multilateral response to weapons of mass destruction proliferation, the creation of real stakeholders in globalization among the world's poor, the need for reform in the Arab world, and a style of U.S. leadership that seeks to build our base of support worldwide by getting more people to voluntarily sign onto our values. We need to remember that those values are the real foundation for our security and the real source of our strength. And we need to recognize that our enemies can never defeat us. Only we can defeat ourselves, by throwing out the rule book that has worked for us for a long, long time."

I believe that history will make very clear that President Bush shamelessly exploited the emotions around 9/11 for political purposes. He used those 9/11 emotions to take a far-right Republican domestic agenda on taxes, the environment, and social issues from 9/10—an agenda for which he had no popular mandate—and drive it into a 9/12 world. In doing so, Mr. Bush not only drove a wedge between Americans, and between Americans and the world, he drove a wedge between America and its own history and identity. His administration transformed the United States into "the United States of Fighting Terrorism." This is the real reason, in my view, that so many people in the world dislike President Bush so intensely. They feel that he has taken away something very dear to them—an America that exports hope, not fear.

We need our president to restore September 11 to its rightful place on the calendar—as the day after September 10 and before September 12. We must never let it become a day that defines us. Because ultimately September 11 is about *them*—the bad guys—not about us.

We're about the Fourth of July. We're about 11/9.

Beyond trying to retain the best of our own imaginations, what else can we do as Americans and as a global society to try to nurture the same in others? One has to approach this question with great humility. What leads one person to the joy of destruction and what leads another to the joy of creation, what leads one to imagine 11/9 and another to imagine 9/11, is surely one of the great mysteries of contemporary life. Moreover, while most of us might have some clue about how to nurture a more positive imagination for our own kids, and maybe—maybe—for our fellow citizens, it is presumptuous to think that we can do it for others, particularly those of a different culture, speaking different languages, and living half a world away. Yet 9/11, the flattening of the world, and the continuing threat of world-disrupting terrorism suggest that not thinking about this is its own kind of dangerous naïveté. So I insist on trying to do so, but I approach this issue with a keen awareness of the limits of what any outsider can know or do.

Generally speaking, imagination is the product of two shaping forces.

One is the narratives that people are nurtured on—the stories and myths they and their religious and national leaders tell themselves—and how those narratives feed their imaginations one way or another. The other is the context in which people grow up, which has a huge impact on shaping how they see the world and others. Outsiders cannot get inside and adjust the Mexican or Arab or Chinese narrative any more than they can get inside the American one. Only they can reinterpret their narrative, make it more tolerant or forward looking, and adapt it to modernity. No one can do that for them or even with them. But one can think about how to collaborate with others to change their context—the context within which people grow up and live their daily lives—to help nurture more people with the imagination of 11/9 than 9/11.

Let me offer a few examples.

eBay

Meg Whitman, the CEO of eBay, once told me a wonderful story that went like this: "We took eBay public in September 1998, in the middle of the dot-com boom. And in September and October our stock would go up eighty points and down fifty in a single day. I thought, 'This is insane.' Anyway, one day I am minding my own business, sitting in my own cubicle, and my secretary runs over and says to me, 'Meg, it's Arthur Levitt [chairman] of the SEC on the phone.'" The Securities and Exchange Commission oversees the stock market and is always concerned about issues of volatility in a stock and whether there is manipulation behind it. In those days, for a CEO to hear that "Arthur Levitt is on the line" was not a good way to start the day.

"So I called my general counsel," said Whitman, "who came over from his cubicle, and he was white like a sheet. We called Levitt back together and we put him on the speakerphone, and I said, 'Hi, it's Meg Whitman of eBay.' And he said, 'Hi, it's Arthur Levitt of the SEC. I don't know you and have never met you but I know that you just went public and I want to know: How did it go? Were we [the SEC] customer-friendly?' And so we

breathed a sigh of relief, and we talked about that a little bit. And then [Levitt] said, 'Well, actually, another reason that I am calling is that I just got my tenth positive feedback on eBay and have earned my yellow star. And I am so proud.' And then he said, 'I am actually a collector of Depression-era glass, post-1929, and so I have bought and sold on eBay and you get feedback as a buyer and seller. And I thought you would just like to know.'"

Every eBay user has a feedback profile made up of comments from other eBay users who have done transactions with him or her, relating to whether the goods bought or sold were as expected and the transaction went off smoothly. This constitutes your official "eBay reputation." You get +1 point for each positive comment, 0 points for each neutral comment, and -1 for each negative comment. A colored star icon is attached to your user ID on eBay for ten or more feedback points. My user ID on eBay might be TOMF (50) and a blue star, which means that I have received positive feedback comments from fifty other eBay users. Next to that is a box that will tell you whether the seller has had 100 percent positive feedback comments or less, and also give you the chance to click and read all the buyers' comments about that seller.

The point, said Whitman, is that "I think every human being, Arthur Levitt or the janitor or the waitress or the doctor or the professor, needs and craves validation and positive feedback." And the big misconception is to think that it has to be money. "It can be really small things," said Whitman, "telling someone, 'You did a really great job, you were recognized as doing a great history paper.' Our users say to us [about eBay's star system], 'Where else can you wake up in the morning and see how much people like you?'"

But what is so striking, said Whitman, is that the overwhelming majority of feedback on eBay is positive. That's interesting. People don't usually write Wal-Mart managers to compliment them on a fabulous purchase. But when you are part of a community that you feel ownership in, it is different. You have a stake. "The highest number of feedback we have is well over 250,000 positive comments, and you can see each one," said Whitman. "You can see the entire history of each buyer and seller, and we have introduced the ability to rebut . . . You cannot be anonymous on eBay. If you are not willing to say who you are, you should not be saying it. And it became the norm of the community really fast . . . We are not running an exchange—we are running a community." Indeed, with 105 million registered users from 190 countries trading more than $35 billion in products annually, eBay is actually a self-governing nation-state—the V.R.e., the Virtual Republic of eBay.

And how is it governed? The philosophy of eBay, said Whitman, is "Let's make a small number of rules, really enforce them, and then create an environment in which people can fulfill their own potential. There is something going on here besides buying and selling goods." Even allowing for corporate boosterism, Whitman's essential message is really worth contemplating: "People will say that 'eBay restored my faith in humanity'—contrary to the world where people are cheating and don't give people the benefit of the doubt. I hear that twice a week . . . eBay offers the little guy, who's disenfranchised, an opportunity to compete on a totally level playing field. We have a disproportionate share of wheelchairs and disabled and minorities, [because] on eBay people don't know who you are. You are only as good as your product and feedback."

Whitman recalled that one day she got an e-mail from a couple in Orlando who were coming to an "eBay Live" event at which she was speaking. These are big revival meeting–conventions of eBay sellers. They asked if they could come backstage to meet Whitman after her speech. "So after the keynote," she recalled, "they come back to my green room, and in comes mom and dad and a seventeen-year-old boy in a wheelchair—very disabled with cerebral palsy. They tell me, 'Kyle is very disabled and can't go to school, [but] he built an eBay business and last year my husband and I quit our jobs, and now we help him—we have made more money on eBay than we ever made on our jobs.' And then they added the most incredible thing. They said, 'On eBay, Kyle is not disabled.'"

Whitman told me that at another "eBay Live" event a young man came up to her, a big power seller on eBay, and said that thanks to his eBay business he had been able to buy a house and a car, hire people, and be his own boss. But the best part, said Whitman, was that the young man added, "I am so excited about eBay, because I did not graduate from

college and was sort of disowned by my family, and I am now the hit of my family. I am a successful entrepreneur."

"It's this blend of economic opportunity and validation" that makes eBay tick, concluded Whitman. Those validated become transparent as good partners, because bad validation is an option for the whole community.

Bottom line: eBay didn't just create an online market. It created a self-governing community—*a context*—where anyone, from the severely handicapped to the head of the SEC, could come and achieve his or her potential and be validated as a good and trustworthy person by the whole community. That kind of self-esteem and validation is the best, most effective way of producing dehumiliation and redignification. To the extent that America can collaborate with regions like the Arab-Muslim world to produce contexts where young people can succeed, can achieve their full potential on a level playing field, can get validation and respect from achievements in this world—and not from martyrdom to get into the next world—we can help foster more young people with more dreams than memories.

India

If you want to see this same process at work in a less virtual community, study the second largest Muslim country in the world. The largest Muslim country in the world is Indonesia and the second largest is not Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, or Pakistan. It is India. With some 150 million Muslims, India has more Muslims than Pakistan. But here is an interesting statistic from 9/11: There are no Indian Muslims that we know of in al-Qaeda and there are no Indian Muslims in America's Guantánamo Bay post-9/11 prison camp. And no Indian Muslims have been found fighting alongside the jihadists in Iraq. Why is that? Why do we not read about Indian Muslims, who are a minority in a vast Hindu-dominated land, blaming America for all their problems and wanting to fly airplanes into the Taj Mahal or the British embassy? Lord knows, Indian Muslims

have their grievances about access to capital and political representation. And interreligious violence has occasionally flared up in India, with disastrous consequences. I am certain that out of 150 million Muslims in India, a few will one day find their way to al-Qaeda—if it can happen with some American Muslims, it can happen with Indian Muslims. But this is not the norm. Why?

The answer is context—and in particular the secular, free-market, democratic context of India, heavily influenced by a tradition of nonviolence and Hindu tolerance. M. J. Akbar, the Muslim editor of the *Asian Age*, a national Indian English-language daily primarily funded by non-Muslim Indians, put it to me this way: "I'll give you a quiz question: Which is the only large Muslim community to enjoy sustained democracy for the last fifty years? The Muslims of India. I am not going to exaggerate Muslim good fortune in India. There are tensions, economic discrimination, and provocations, like the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya [by Hindu nationalists in 1992]. But the fact is, the Indian Constitution is secular and provides a real opportunity for economic advancement of any community that can offer talent. That's why a growing Muslim middle class here is moving up and generally doesn't manifest the strands of deep anger you find in many nondemocratic Muslim states."

Where Islam is embedded in authoritarian societies, it tends to become the vehicle of angry protest—Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan. But where Islam is embedded in a pluralistic democratic society—Turkey or India, for instance—those with a more progressive outlook have a chance to get a better hearing for their interpretation and a democratic forum where they can fight for their ideas on a more equal footing. On November 15, 2003, the two main synagogues of Istanbul were hit by some fringe suicide bombers. I happened to be in Istanbul a few months later, when they were reopened. Several things struck me. To begin with, the chief rabbi appeared at the ceremony, hand in hand with the top Muslim cleric of Istanbul and the local mayor, while crowds in the street threw red carnations on them both. Second, the prime minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who comes from an Islamic party, paid a visit to the chief rabbi in his office—the first time a Turkish prime minister had ever called on the chief rabbi. Lastly, the father of one of the

suicide bombers told the Turkish newspaper *Zaman*, "We cannot understand why this child had done the thing he had done . . . First let us meet with the chief rabbi of our Jewish brothers. Let me hug him. Let me kiss his hands and flowing robe. Let me apologize in the name of my son and offer my condolences for the deaths . . . We will be damned if we do not reconcile with them."

Different context, different narrative, different imagination.

I am keenly aware of the imperfections of Indian democracy, starting with the oppressive caste system. Nevertheless, to have sustained a functioning democracy with all its flaws for more than fifty years in a country of over one billion people, who speak scores of different languages, is something of a miracle and a great source of stability for the world. Two of India's presidents have been Muslims, and its current president, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, is both a Muslim and the father of the Indian nuclear missile program. While a Muslim woman sits on India's Supreme Court, no Muslim woman is allowed even to drive a car in Saudi Arabia. Indian Muslims, including women, have been governors of many Indian states, and the wealthiest man in India today, high on the *Forbes* list of global billionaires, is an Indian Muslim: Azim Premji, the chairman of Wipro, one of India's most important technology companies. I was in India shortly after the United States invaded Afghanistan in late 2001, when Indian television carried a debate between the country's leading female movie star and parliamentarian—Shabana Azmi, a Muslim woman—and the imam of New Delhi's biggest mosque. The imam had called on Indian Muslims to go to Afghanistan and join the jihad against America, and Azmi ripped into him, live on Indian TV, basically telling the cleric to go take a hike. She told *him* to go to Kandahar and join the Taliban and leave the rest of India's Muslims alone. How did she get away with that? Easy. As a Muslim woman she lived in a context that empowered and protected her to speak her mind—even to a leading cleric.

Different context, different narrative, different imagination.

This is not all that complicated: Give young people a context where they can translate a positive imagination into reality, give them a context in which someone with a grievance can have it adjudicated in a court of law without having to bribe the judge with a goat, give them a context in

which they can pursue an entrepreneurial idea and become the richest or the most creative or most respected people in their own country, no matter what their background, give them a context in which any complaint or idea can be published in the newspaper, give them a context in which anyone can run for office—and guess what? They usually don't want to blow up the world. They usually want to be part of it.

A South Asian Muslim friend of mine once told me this story: His Indian Muslim family split in 1948, with half going to Pakistan and half staying in Mumbai. When he got older, he asked his father one day why the Indian half of the family seemed to be doing better than the Pakistani half. His father said to him, "Son, when a Muslim grows up in India and he sees a man living in a big mansion high on a hill, he says, 'Father, one day, I will be that man.' And when a Muslim grows up in Pakistan and sees a man living in a big mansion high on a hill, he says, 'Father, one day I will kill that man.'" When you have a pathway to be the Man or the Woman, you tend to focus on the path and on achieving your dreams. When you have no pathway, you tend to focus on your wrath and on nursing your memories.

India only twenty years ago, before the triple convergence, was known as a country of snake charmers, poor people, and Mother Teresa. Today its image has been recalibrated. Now it is also seen as a country of brainy people and computer wizards. Atul Vashistha, CEO of the outsourcing consulting firm NeoIT, often appears in the American media to defend outsourcing. He told me this story: "One day I had a problem with my HP printer—the printing was very slow. I was trying to figure out the problem. So I call HP tech support. This guy answers and takes all my personal information down. From his voice it is clear he is somewhere in India. So I start asking where he is and how the weather is. We're having a nice chat. So after he is helping me for about ten or fifteen minutes he says, 'Sir, do you mind if I say something to you?' I said, 'Sure.' I figured he was going to tell me something else I was doing wrong with my computer and was trying to be polite about it. And instead he says, 'Sir, I was very proud to hear you on Voice of America. You did a good job . . .' I had just been on a VOA show about the backlash against globalization and outsourcing. I was one of three invited guests. There was a union of-

ficial, an economist, and myself. I defended outsourcing and this guy heard it."

Remember: In the flat world you don't get just your humiliation dished out to you fiber-optically. *You also get your pride dished out to you fiber-optically.* An Indian help-line operator suddenly knows, in real time, all about how one of his compatriots is representing India half a world away, and it makes him feel better about himself.

The French Revolution, the American Revolution, the Indian democracy, and even eBay are all based on social contracts whose dominant feature is that authority comes from the bottom up, and people can and do feel self-empowered to improve their lot. People living in such contexts tend to spend their time focusing on what to do next, not on whom to blame next.

The Curse of Oil

Nothing has contributed more to retarding the emergence of a democratic context in places like Venezuela, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Iran than the curse of oil. As long as the monarchs and dictators who run these oil states can get rich by drilling their natural resources—as opposed to drilling the natural talents and energy of their people—they can stay in office forever. They can use oil money to monopolize all the instruments of power—army, police, and intelligence—and never have to introduce real transparency or power sharing. All they have to do is capture and hold the oil tap. They never have to tax their people, so the relationship between ruler and ruled is highly distorted. *Without taxation, there is no representation.* The rulers don't really have to pay attention to the people or explain how they are spending their money—because they have not raised that money through taxes. That is why countries focused on tapping their oil wells always have weak or nonexistent institutions. Countries focused on tapping their people have to focus on developing real institutions, property rights, rule of law, independent courts, modern education, foreign trade, foreign investment, freedom of thought, and scientific enquiry to

get the most out of their men and women. In an essay in *Foreign Affairs* called "Saving Iraq from Its Oil" (July–August 2004), development economists Nancy Birdsall and Arvind Subramanian point out that "34 less-developed countries now boast significant oil and natural gas resources that constitute at least 30 percent of their total export revenue. Despite their riches, however, 12 of these countries' annual per capita income remains below $1,500 . . . Moreover, two-thirds of the 34 countries are not democratic, and of those that are, only three score in the top half of Freedom House's world rankings of political freedom."

In other words, imagination is also a product of necessity—when the context you are living in simply does not allow you to indulge in certain escapist or radical fantasies, you don't. Look where the most creative innovation is happening in the Arab-Muslim world today. It is in the places with little or no oil. As I noted earlier, Bahrain was one of the first Arab Gulf states to discover oil and was *the* first Arab Gulf state to run out of oil. And today it is the first Arab Gulf state to develop comprehensive labor reform for developing the skills of its own workers, the first to sign a free-trade agreement with the United States, and the first to hold a free and fair election, in which women could both run and vote. And which countries in that same region are paralyzed or actually rolling back reforms? Saudi Arabia and Iran, which are awash in oil money. On December 9, 2004, at a time when crude oil prices had soared to near $50 a barrel, *The Economist* did a special report from Iran, in which it noted, "Without oil at its present sky-high price, Iran's economy would be in wretched straits. Oil provides about half the government's revenue and at least 80% of export earnings. But, once again under the influence of zealots in parliament, the oil cash is being spent on boosting wasteful subsidies rather than on much-needed development and new technology."

It is worthy of note that Jordan began upgrading its education system and privatizing, modernizing, and deregulating its economy starting in 1989—precisely when oil prices were way down and it could no longer rely on handouts from the Gulf oil states. In 1999, when Jordan signed its free-trade agreement with the United States, its exports to America totaled $13 million. In 2004, Jordan exported over $1 billion of goods to America—things Jordanians made with their hands. The Jordanian gov-

ernment has also installed computers and broadband Internet in every school. Most important, in 2004, Jordan announced a reform of its education requirements for mosque prayer leaders. Traditionally, high school students in Jordan took an exam for college entrance, and those who did the best became doctors and engineers. Those who did the worst became mosque preachers. In 2004, Jordan decided to gradually phase in a new system. Henceforth, to become a mosque prayer leader, a young man will first have to get a B.A. in some other subject, and can study Islamic law only as a graduate degree—in order to encourage more young men of talent to go into the clergy and weed out those who were just "failing" into it. That is an important change in context that should pay dividends over time in the narratives that young Jordanians are nurtured upon in their mosques. "We had to go through a crisis to accept the need for reform," said Jordan's minister of planning, Bassem Awadallah.

There is no mother of invention like necessity, and only when falling oil prices force the leaders in the Middle East to change their contexts will they reform. People don't change when you tell them they should. They change when they tell themselves they must. Or as Johns Hopkins foreign affairs professor Michael Mandelbaum puts it, "People don't change when you tell them there is a better option. They change when they conclude that they have no other option." Give me $10-a-barrel oil, and I will give you political and economic reform from Moscow to Riyadh to Iran. If America and its allies will not collaborate in bringing down the price of crude oil, their aspirations for reform in all these areas will be stillborn.

There is another factor to consider here. When you have to make things with your hands and then trade with others in order to flourish, not just dig an oil well in your own backyard, it inevitably broadens imagination and increases tolerance and trust. It is no accident that Muslim countries make up 20 percent of the world's population but account for only 4 percent of world trade. When countries don't make things anyone else wants, they trade less, and less trade means less exchange of ideas and openness to the world. The most open, tolerant cities in the Muslim world today are its trading centers—Beirut, Istanbul, Jakarta, Dubai, Bahrain. The most open, tolerant cities in China are Hong Kong and

Shanghai. The most closed cities in the world are in central Saudi Arabia, where no Christians, Hindus, Jews, or other non-Muslims are allowed to express their religions in public or build a house of worship, and, in the case of Mecca, even enter. Religions are the smelters and founders of imagination. The more any religion's imagination—Hindu, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist—is shaped in an isolated bubble, or in a dark cave, the more its imagination is likely to sail off in dangerous directions. People who are connected to the world and exposed to different cultures and perspectives are far more likely to develop the imagination of 11/9. People who are feeling disconnected, for whom personal freedom and fulfillment are a utopian fantasy, are more likely to develop the imagination of 9/11.

Just One Good Example

Stanley Fischer, the former deputy managing director of the IMF, once remarked to me, "One good example is worth a thousand theories." I believe that is true. Indeed, people do not change only when they must: They also change when they see that others—*like themselves*—have changed and flourished. Or as Michael Mandelbaum also points out, "People change as a result of what they notice, not just what they are told"—especially when what they notice is someone just like them doing well. As I pointed out earlier, there is only one Arab company that developed a world-class business strong enough to get itself listed on the Nasdaq, and that was Aramex. Every Jordanian, every Arab, should know and take pride in the Aramex story, the way every American knows the Apple and Microsoft and Dell stories. It is the example that is worth a thousand theories. It should be the role model of a self-empowered Arab company, run by Arab brainpower and entrepreneurship, succeeding on the world stage and enriching its own workers at the same time.

When Fadi Ghandour took Aramex public again in 2005, this time in Dubai, some four hundred Aramex employees from all over the Arab world who had stock options divided $14 million. I will never forget Fadi

telling me how proud these employees were—some of them managers, some of them just delivery drivers. This windfall was going to enable them to buy homes or send their kids to better schools. Imagine the dignity that these people feel when they come back to their families and neighborhoods and tell everyone that they are going to build a new house because the world-class *Arab* company they work for has gone public. Imagine how much dignity they feel when they see themselves getting ahead by succeeding in the flat world—not in the traditional Middle Eastern way by inheritance, by selling land, or by getting a government contract, but by working for a real company, an Arab company. Just as it is no accident that there are no Indian Muslims in al-Qaeda, it is no accident that the three thousand Arab employees of Aramex want to deliver only packages that help economies grow and Arab people flourish—not suicide bombs.

Speaking of the Aramex employees with stock options, Ghandour said, "They all feel like owners. A lot of them came up to me and said, 'Thank you, but I want to invest my options back in the company and be an investor in the new IPO.'"

Give me just one hundred more examples like Aramex, and I will start to give you a different context—and narrative.

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In 1999 I published a book on globalization called *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. The phenomenon we call globalization was just taking off then, and *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* was one of the early attempts to put a frame around it. This book is not meant to replace *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* but rather to build on it and push the arguments forward as the world has evolved. I am deeply grateful to the publisher of *The New York Times* and chairman of the New York Times Company, Arthur Sulzberger Jr., for granting me a leave of absence to be able to undertake this book, and to Gail Collins, editorial page editor of *The New York Times*, for supporting that leave and this whole project. It is a privilege to work for such a great newspaper. It was Arthur and Gail who pushed me to try my hand at documentaries for the Discovery Times Channel, which took me to India and stimulated this whole book. Thanks in that regard also go to Billy Campbell of the Discovery Channel for his enthusiastic backing of that Indian documentary, and to Ken Levis, Ann Derry, and Stephen Reverand for helping to bring it off. Without Discovery the show would not have happened.

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