

Media and Madrasa: Between Rhetoric and Reality

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Literally meaning “place of study,” the word *madrasa* simply refers to an ordinary school in Arabic speaking countries. In non-Arab Muslim countries, it tends to refer to institutions of religious learning, tradition transmission, and scholarly formation. In South Asia, the madrasa is akin to a seminary that trains religious scholars who can issue authoritative religious opinions and lead the community in the performance of rites and rituals. But the word madrasa has become a bad word in popular culture. There are at least three reasons for that: 1) Islamophobia: the mere association of the word madrasa with Islam causes angst; 2) Jihad: the instrumentalization of the madrasa for military objectives surrounds it with an aura of danger; and 3) Curriculum: the medieval curriculum offered in the madrasa doesn’t teach, it indoctrinates; it is irrational, backward, and outdated. With special reference to the effort to advance scientific and theological literacy through the “Madrasas Discourses Project” at the University of Notre Dame, this essay identifies some sources of the negative perceptions of the madrasa and the challenges that these perceptions pose to reform efforts.

Islamophobia

Scholars of religion classify Islam as a Western tradition. The third in the Abrahamic triad, Islam originated in the broader Semitic culture of the Near East, but within a few centuries of its emergence, Islamic thought successfully adopted the Hellenic rational tradition. You wouldn’t know this if you get your Islam from Hollywood blockbusters, newspaper headlines, or talking heads on cable news. Why is that? That is because when Islam is discussed in popular

culture, it happens under the force of an Islamophobia industry.¹ This industry fuels an irrational fear or “anxiety of Islam” that spreads like wildfire under the influence of market forces.

Sensationalism sells. Whether it’s clickbait on social media or the next breaking news alert on cable television, keeping people tuned in is the name of the game. Anything that feeds into what one is predisposed to hear keeps the media machine humming.

“Unfortunately,” note the authors of *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy*, “American and European attention has focused most readily on divergence instead of convergence” when it comes to Islam and the West.² “The authors believe that ‘Islamophobia’ accurately reflects a *social* anxiety toward Islam that is...deeply ingrained in...Americans.”³ They find it easy to demonstrate this through survey research in which the average person associates all things negative—such as violence, oppression, and backwardness—with Islam and Muslims.⁴ Although rigorous studies corroborate the claim that there is widespread Islamophobia in American culture,⁵ a recently published work *On Islam* presents this in very stark terms. Rosemary Pennington, a reporter, surveyed attitudes toward religion in Indiana, was able to have friendly Midwestern conversations with people on the street until she uttered the word “Islam”: One woman “actually physically jumped the way you might jump from a slight shock or from touching a hot pan...And then came the onslaught of slammed car doors, of being called un-

¹ See “Fear, Inc.: The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America.” <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/religion/reports/2011/08/26/10165/fear-inc/>.

² Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg, *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy* (PLACE: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 5.

³ *Islamophobia*, 5.

⁴ *Islamophobia*, 3.

⁵ See, for example: “Assaults against Muslims in U.S. surpass 2001 level,” Pew Research Center, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/15/assaults-against-muslims-in-u-s-surpass-2001-level/>. UC Berkeley’s Center for Race & Gender operates an “Islamophobia Research & Documentation Project” with an annual conference and journal: <https://www.crg.berkeley.edu/research-projects/islamophobia-research-documentation-project/>.

Christian, or being actually cursed at... Each time the person I was talking to would shut down immediately... One gentleman actually told me to get out of the way because he'd have no problem hitting me with his car... People physically recoiled from the words 'Islam' or 'Muslim'... It was, by far, the most difficult reporting day I've ever had."⁶

Those who think we got here because of 9/11 need to be reminded of Edward Said's cleverly titled *Covering Islam* published in 1981.⁷ Some would imagine the mistrust between "The West" and "Islam" as dating back centuries or millennia.⁸ Today, we hear of actual government policies that translate into public discourse as "Muslim Bans."⁹ Whereas cultural memory is significant and creates momentum, I don't think that history makes our present predicament inevitable. In this age of twenty-four-hour news cycles, when a rhetorical battle between the "dotard" and "little rocket man" can turn into a love affair overnight,¹⁰ or when Congress can remove the "French" from the "fries" at whim,¹¹ there are no millennia-old friendships or enmities; there are only news cycles, and those cycles shape our reality.

⁶ Rosemary Pennington and Hilary Kahn, *On Islam: Muslims and the Media*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 12-13.

⁷ Edward. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. (PLACE: Pantheon, 1981).

⁸ Sophia Rose Arjana, *Muslims in the Western Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). And Minou Reeves, *Muhammad in Europe: A Thousand Years of Western Myth-Making* (New York: NYU Press, 2003).

⁹ See the *New York Times* piece on "Trump's Travel Ban: How it Works and Who Is Affected," <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/01/world/americas/travel-ban-trump-how-it-works.html>. The ACLU documents who the ban impacts the real lives of people, <https://www.aclu.org/issues/immigrants-rights/living-muslim-ban>.

¹⁰ See, for example, *The Washington Post* article, "The 'dotard' meets 'Little Rocket Man': Trump and Kim are adversaries with many similarities," https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/the-dotard-meets-little-rocket-man-trump-and-kim-are-adversaries-with-many-similarities/2018/06/09/583b9ddc-6a89-11e8-bea7-c8eb28bc52b1_story.html?utm_term=.62ffd4dae7cc.

¹¹ See *The Atlantic*'s piece, "Beyond Freedom Fries: The Roots of American Francophobia," <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/04/beyond-freedom-fries-the-roots-of-american-francophobia/256253/>. This is an especially telling article. It shows how a turn in the headlines leads to the discovery of history.

By connecting data to images, the Mapping Islamophobia project visually demonstrates the link between fiery political rhetoric and anti-Muslim sentiment.¹² Our friendly reporter on Islam Rosemary Pennington reminds us: “Media matters. Words matter...the way journalists choose to cover communities, particularly marginalized communities, plays a big part in shaping how the public views those communities.”¹³ Philosophers of science tell us that observations are theory-laden.¹⁴ Scholars of language tell us that rhetoric shapes reality.¹⁵ If one approaches a subject predisposed with hate or fear, the interpreter will focus on the negative and reinforce that hate or fear. On the other hand, for some of Islam’s defenders, even blemishes appear as virtues. The truth is usually somewhere in the middle, and when it comes to Islam and Muslims, we are far from the middle.

The anthropologist Munir Jiwa, Director of Berkeley’s Center for Islamic Studies, speaks of five “media” pillars of Islam through which information about Islam filters through to the general public: 1) 9/11 serves as a kind of temporal frame—so in some ways history begins then and the future is to be assessed in terms of our responses to 9/11. 2) A second media pillar of Islam is “violence,” and 9/11 is merely a sensational illustration of a general kind of tendency that is unique to Islam. Words such as jihad, al-Qaeda, terrorism, ISIS, security, immigration are all viewed through this frame. 3) A third pillar is the veiling of Muslim women. Bans on religious symbols tend to target the veil; conversations by outsiders on the identity of Muslim

¹² Mapping Islamophobia is a website curated by Caleb Elfenbein at Grinnel College, <http://mappingislamophobia.org/>.

¹³ *On Islam*, 12.

¹⁴ Theory-ladenness is one of the central concepts in Thomas Kuhn’s influential work on *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

¹⁵ See, for example, Sonja K. Foss. *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 4th ed. (PLACE: University of Colorado, Denver, 2009), 5: “Another communicative function that rhetoric performs is that it tells us what reality is.” Toshihiko Izutsu uses the same theory of language by applying an empirical approach to the study of language in his analysis of *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Koran*.

women tend to revolve around the presence or absence of the veil. 4) A fourth media pillar sets up Islam against the West: Detractors say “they hate our freedom” and “they want to establish sharia law.” The absurdity of this pillar was on display when advertisers pulled out of a reality show called “All American Muslim” that portrayed the lives of everyday Arabs and Muslims living in Dearborn Michigan. One of the complaints was that the show portrayed them as normal, thereby lulling the unsuspecting public into complacency in the face of the threat they pose to our way of life. 5) The final media pillar of Islam is spatial as the first is temporal. It conflates Islam with the geographic Middle East. According to this pillar, Islam is somewhere over there; the “over there” frame keeps the politics of the region connected to threats posed by Islam, while at the same time associating Islam with the foreign and exotic.¹⁶

In 2011, the Center for American Progress published a report called *Fear, Inc.* This report traced the source of Islamophobia in America to a “rather small, tightly networked group of misinformation experts” and their “media partners.”¹⁷ It is known that military analysts on Cable News, who are almost always retired generals, coordinate talking points behind the scenes to further military interests.¹⁸ These interests partner with the corporate media to operate what may be the most sophisticated propaganda machine in history.¹⁹ This propaganda machine is sinister because it poses as a free and independent press, when it is being controlled by an “invisible

¹⁶ Munir Jiwa, “Five Media Pillars of Islam,” presented at “Reel Jews & Muslims: Representations of Jews and Muslims in American Media,” which is a joint Madrasa-Midrasha Day of Learning at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, sponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies and the Center for Islamic Studies, Feb 10, 2013. The video of the talk can be seen here: <https://vimeo.com/59459241>.

¹⁷ “Fear, Inc.,” op. cit.

¹⁸ For example, see *The New York Times* report “Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon’s Hidden Hand,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/20/us/20generals.html>.

¹⁹ The classic in this area is Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (PLACE: Pantheon Books, 1988). For a more recent work related to recent conflicts, see Anthony R. DiMaggio, *Mass Media, Mass Propaganda: Examining American News in the “War on Terror”* (PLACE: Lexington Books, 2009).

hand.” Whereas Adam Smith used this term to suggest natural or unintended benefits to the common good as a consequence of the individual pursuit of economic happiness, this essay suggests that that invisible hand also causes unintended negative consequences, and these seem to be accelerating in a world where public opinion is shaped by political demagoguery and the short-term interests of media conglomerates that are driven by the rapid advance of technology.

Jihad

Beyond the “war on terror” lies the walls of the madrasa, and they are painted with the brush of Islamophobia. The Islamophobic remarks of General Mike Flynn are well known.²⁰ But we forget the likes of General William Boykin back in 2003: “[W]ho is the enemy? It’s not Osama bin Laden...we are a nation of believers...And the enemy that has come against our nation is a spiritual enemy. His name is Satan.”²¹ When speaking of an enemy combatant, the General said: “I knew that my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God, and his was an idol.”²²

Like many authors trying to write fairly about Islam today, Ebrahim Moosa is compelled to begin his work on madrasas by addressing misperceptions. In fact, the entire framework of *What is a Madrasa?* is designed to combat misperceptions. Its conclusion consists of letters to the madrasa leadership and American leadership in a plea for sanity. In the Prologue, Moosa reminds us of the views of Donald Rumsfeld and Colin Powell: “General Colin Powell claimed madrasas are malevolent and a breeding ground for ‘fundamentalists and terrorists.’ Former

²⁰ See *The Washington Post* story, “Fear of Muslims is rational.” https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/11/18/trumps-new-national-security-adviser-has-said-some-incendiary-things-on-the-internet/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.f57df21774e3.

²¹ *Islamophobia*, 13.

²² *Islamophobia*, 14.

secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld stated, ‘There are a number of schools [in Pakistan] that train people to be suicide killers and—and extremists, violent extremists.’”²³

That Rumsfeld and Powell would have such ideas is not surprising. First of all, the word “Taliban” literally means “students” (of madrasas). Secondly, the madrasa was instrumentalized toward the end of the Cold War in the fight against the Soviets in the 1980s. The United States played a key political and military role in that fight. Those were the days when Osama bin Laden was our man. It was the time when Rumsfeld took photo-op handshakes with Saddam Hussein²⁴ and when jihad in certain parts of the world was known as a freedom struggle, and the “mujahideen” were called freedom fighters.²⁵ In those days, we saw the mujahideen favorably in Hollywood sagas: Oxford educated Afghans in turbans were rescuing James Bond and fighting alongside Rambo as Rocky Balboa punched the lights out of the formidable Russian boxer Ivan Drago.²⁶ Grade school textbooks produced in Pakistan were funded from U.S. grants housed in places like the University of Omaha in Nebraska. Consider a few examples of how a first grade textbook teaches the alphabet:²⁷

“*Alif* [is for] Allah.

Allah is one.”

“*Ti* [is for] Rifle (*tufang*).

Javad obtains rifles for the Mujahidin.”

“*Jim* [is for] Jihad.

Jihad is an obligation. My mom went to the jihad. Our brother gave water to the Mujahidin.”

²³ Moosa, Ebrahim, *What Is a Madrasa?* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), p. 4.

²⁴ See the report by *Aljazeera*, “When Rumsfeld was Chummy with Saddam...”
<https://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2003/09/200849162656400767.html>.

²⁵ The conservative *Heritage Foundation*’s headlines from this period serve as a point of reference: “Updating U.S. Strategy for Helping Afghan Freedom Fighters,” <https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/report/updating-us-strategy-helping-afghan-freedom-fighters>.

²⁶ This is not the result of a systematic analysis, but simply my observations. See *Rocky IV* (1985); *The Living Daylights* (1987); *Rambo III* (1988). For pioneering work in this area see Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. 3rd ed. (PLACE: Olive Branch Press, 2014).

²⁷ Craig A. Davis, “‘A’ is for Allah, ‘J’ is for Jihad,” *World Policy Journal*, 19.1 (2002): 90.

“Zhi [is for] Good news (*muzhdih*).

The Mujahidin missiles rain down like dew on the Russians. My brother gave me good news that the Russians in our country taste defeat.”

“Zal [is for] Oppression (*zulm*).

Oppression is forbidden. The Russians are oppressors. We perform jihad against the oppressors...”

“Vav [is for] Nation (*vatn*).

Our nation is Afghanistan...Our Muslim people are defeating the communists... The Mujahidin are making our dear country free.”

You should see the math problems: “The speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 meters per second. If a Russian is at a distance of 3,200 meters from a mujahid, and that mujahid aims at the Russian’s head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian in the forehead.”²⁸ While the original purpose of madrasas was the transmission of traditional learning from generation to generation, a minority of madrasas in Pakistan, perhaps 10-15%, have become radicalized because of the geopolitics of the region in recent history.²⁹ The minority has a spillover effect that reaches deep into the culture of the madrasa scholarly community. Nobody can deny that there is some cause for concern. But the way to move forward is not by rewriting history, ignoring complicity, reducing complexity, and scapegoating an entire civilization. We are in this together.

Curriculum

Islamophobia poses a challenge to reformers who are working for intellectual renewal from within the halls of the madrasa. The challenge is to work for change—indeed, admitting

²⁸ “A” is for Allah, “J” is for Jihad,” 92-93.

²⁹ This number is according to the Brookings Institute report: “Madrasahs: Ensuring a System of Education, not Jihad,” <https://www.brookings.edu/research/pakistans-madrassahs-ensuring-a-system-of-education-not-jihad/>. For a historical perspective, see Mumtaz Ahmad, “Madrasa Education in Pakistan and Bangladesh,” in *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*, Satu P. Limaye, et. al., eds. (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004), 101-115. Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey’s “The Madrasa Scapegoat” in *The Washington Quarterly*, 29.2 (2006) empirically refutes the connection between madrasa education and terrorism. Going further, Charles Kurzman questions the exceptionalism of Islamic violence altogether in *The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

that there is need for change—without reinforcing negative stereotypes. When Muslims from around the world were asked about the one thing that could improve relations between Islam and the West, they said: “R.E.S.P.E.C.T.”³⁰ Change will come by working through history, creed, scripture, and tradition, not by jettisoning a cherished heritage. Change will not come from skeptics who abhor Islam, who make the abandonment of core convictions of faith a prerequisite to progress. Change will come from leaders who believe and practice the faith alongside partners from outside who are able to honor Muslim traditions. That is precisely the premise of an important project to “enhance” madrasa education spearheaded by the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy,³¹ and that is the approach taken by our project to advance scientific and theological literacy in Madrasa Discourses at the University of Notre Dame.³²

The millennial generation is hungry to make new connections in a global age. They are looking for something new.³³ That’s true of students in the Midwest, and it’s true of students in the Madrasa. Our project brings the two together for conversations around faith and ethics in a rapidly changing and pluralistic world that some view in terms of irreconcilable civilizational conflict. But the experiences in the project have been transformative. After a series of difficult conversations, for example, one Notre Dame student reflected on her transformation:

It became increasingly clear to me that we really were much more similar than different. We are all trying to find our place, and our guiding principles and purpose, in a world that seems plagued with political

³⁰ John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (PLACE: Gallup Press, 2007), xiii.

³¹ See the monograph length report authored by Douglas Johnston, Azhar Hussain, and Rebecca Cataldi, “Madrasa Enhancement and Global Security: A Model for Faith-Based Engagement,” <https://icrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Madrasa-Enhancement-and-Global-Security.pdf>.

³² Visit the Madrasa Discourses project website: <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/about/research-areas/madrasa-discourses/>.

³³ Millennials all over the world are experiencing interconnected global pressures that bond them together, perhaps better aligning them with others of their global cohort than those of different generations within their own societies. An incisive read on this topic is Malcolm Harris, *Kids These Days: The Making of Millennials* (PLACE: Little, Brown, and Company, 2017).

unrest and senseless violence. In an increasingly secular and pluralistic world, coexistence is the goal for many peace builders. This experience made clear that not only is tolerance possible, so is harmony. None of this can be achieved, however, if we hold to this idea of “otherness.” The simplest and most effective way to challenge it is to have personal interactions with people from different countries, cultures, and faiths. In these interactions, our similarities seem much stronger than our differences, and as a result it is easier to talk honestly and constructively about the barriers we face on our way to living in a peaceful world. Every person is unique, but we have a shared humanity stronger than our individual identities which makes communication possible.³⁴

Notre Dame students participate in the program eagerly because they are interested in peace studies and global affairs. They participate to improve their cultural literacy, hoping to make the world a better place. What about the Madrasa graduates? Why do they participate? Most of the participants are either teachers or students who have enrolled in conventional graduate programs at the university. When asked why they want to join the program, they tell us they desperately need new perspectives. The world is changing. There is dissonance between text and experience. They have questions that their madrasa program did not address. In some cases, questions are being asked of them that they don’t even understand. They join our program to learn more about contemporary challenges to Islamic thought; and understanding the challenges is a necessary prerequisite to addressing them.

Although participants from both sides come with misunderstandings about the other, it is refreshing to see both sides coming to the table with goodwill. And whereas face-to-face encounters help to dispel misunderstandings—Madrasa students are not bloodthirsty killers of infidels and Americans are not irreligious people who lack virtue or humility—but the program’s curricular engagement goes much deeper. We teach that civilizations are cosmopolitan, traditions are internally contested, and change is driven by both internal and external factors. Classical Islamic thought was neither isolated nor monolithic. Appeals to return to a “golden age” are

³⁴ Margaret Feighery, “The Tragedy of Otherness,” <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/field-notes/the-tragedy-of-otherness/>.

ahistorical. And the “West” is grappling with some of the same questions of meaning, purpose, and relevance.

One example will suffice: the myth of Islam and science. Most madrasa students will say that Islam has never had a problem with science. There are scientific miracles in the Quran. Galileo was persecuted for his science, while Islamic civilization was a promoter of science. This is why the religion-science debates in Christianity and the West do not have parallels in Islamic thought. In our section on the history and philosophy of science, we engage the Galileo affair with some care. Through the prism of scientific worldviews, we systematically reconstruct the Aristotelian-Medieval worldview of science along with its ontological assumptions, epistemological foundations, and cosmological picture. Within that worldview, it would be very difficult for any rational person to have believed Galileo. It is only in hindsight and from the lens of an entirely different worldview that we can assess things differently today. It is sloppy to project the theories and methods of one age onto another, a caution we hope students learn through their study. Strikingly, Galileo’s debate on the interpretation of scripture with the representative of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Bellarmine, mirrors closely an exchange between two South Asian scholars of the early twentieth century.³⁵ Not only does this show that the scientific revolution was not a revolt against God, it also shows that our own intellectual history, when dissected, displays a similar kind of complexity. Complexity is a good thing. It nuances. It divests zeal. It helps one see more than one side of the story. But it can also unhinge, and that is an unavoidable risk. The haunting words of President Ronald Reagan come to mind, when he

³⁵ See my more expansive piece on the Madrasa Discourses project and curriculum: <https://www.themaydan.com/2018/09/scientific-literacy-madrasa-graduates-project-religious-renewal-university-notre-dame/>.

consoled the nation after the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster: “The future doesn't belong to the fainthearted; it belongs to the brave.”³⁶ There will be casualties, but to the heavens we are bound.

Concluding Paradoxes

I would like to conclude with three paradoxes. The first apparent contradiction is that despite the Islamophobia industry, goodwill abounds. When the Muslim ban was announced, what seemed like the entire country came out in protest.³⁷ Even devout Catholics at Notre Dame stood up to say: “We are all Muslim today.” That is nothing short of magnificent. What does this indicate? It shows that propaganda has limits in an information age. Whereas mass media has more power than ever before, and social media reinforces prejudices, the information age has also broken down barriers like never before, allowing people to see past the smoke and mirrors.

The second paradox is the paradox of “fake news.” This essay makes the case that the media distorts reality, much like a funhouse distorts an image in a curved mirror. Funhouse mirrors can make you look fat or thin, tall or short. Some mirrors combine features: stretching here, squishing there. American mass media, a different sort of funhouse, gives the public distorted representations of Islam and Muslims. The distortion creates an anxiety around all things Islamic that we call Islamophobia. Since media mirrors mistake the distorted for the real, it might be fair to suggest that the circulating representations of Islam and Muslims are “fake news.” The paradox here is that those who harness the power of Islamophobia for nefarious ends, like the Muslim Ban, also complain of being the victims of “fake news.”³⁸

³⁶ See the transcript of Ronald Reagan’s address to the nation on January 28, 1986: <https://history.nasa.gov/reagan12886.html>.

³⁷ See noteworthy headlines like this one published in *Haaretz*: “Jews and Muslims Unite in New York to Protest Trump’s Travel Ban,” <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-jews-and-muslims-unite-in-new-york-to-protest-trump-s-travel-ban-1.6218512>.

³⁸ See, for example, this *New York Times* report: “Trump Calls the News Media the ‘Enemy of the American People’,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/17/business/trump-calls-the-news-media-the-enemy-of-the-people.html>.

The third paradox concerns the apparent contradiction between individual freedom and structural determinism. News editors and party politicians with their corporate sponsors are bound to respond to the demands of polls and stocks. But what if these demands lead to catastrophically harmful choices? There are good people on all sides, and there are bad actors on all sides. I am convinced that the good outweighs the bad when it comes to individuals, but when it comes to structures and institutions, “the invisible hand of the market” has somehow partnered with the centers of political power to amplify extremism, resulting in a blend of bombastic rhetoric and actual bombs. Educational institutions need to partner with the mass media to harness shared benefits while maintaining their independence from the invisible hand. And politicians need to figure out a way to lead and inspire, not simply listen and obey. But that can be difficult. In the age of nationalism and populism, of tweets, soundbites, and bots, I don’t know if anything short of a total transformation of the structures of national and global institutions is going to let that happen. At the same time, I hold out hope that people around the world—just enough people—will listen to their better angels.