

# THE VANDERBILT POLITICAL REVIEW

You should have  
been more responsible.



OPINION BY **GUY KORSEMEUT** Junior, College of Engineering

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# THANK YOU!

A Letter from the VPR Staff

This third issue of The Vanderbilt Political Review was funded by donations of \$25 or less from our family and friends. Without their love, support, and encouragement, the continuation of VPR would not have been possible, at a time when political discourse and civic engagement are more crucial than ever. We thank them all profusely, and promise to use this journal to encourage all members of the Vanderbilt Community to collaboratively discuss and analyze the global issues we are now facing. During these difficult times, our efforts may not lead to actual solutions. However, increased political awareness on this campus will most certainly lead to progress. Thus, all of their small contributions are making a big difference, and we could not be more grateful.

Sincerely,  
THE VPR STAFF

## ON THE COVER



OPINION BY ~~GUY KOPSOMBUT~~ Junior, College of Engineering

Political cartoon designed by Guy Kopsombut, Computer Engineering, Class of 2010.

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# FROM THE BOARD FREE TRADE HAS NOT PAST ITS EXPIRATION

DATE

*Matt Orton*

*Treasurer, The Vanderbilt Political Review*

As we approach the midpoint of 2009, much in American trade politics has that old, familiar ring. The trade deficit has reached new heights: US buyers import, incredibly, more than \$9 in goods for every \$5 they sell overseas. Members of both parties were targeting China, whose unprecedented bilateral imbalance with the United States was fueled by a relatively low currency value, until credit markets seized, spreading panic throughout the world. Meanwhile, our commitment to free trade is faltering as “Buy American” clauses are being surreptitiously added to economic stimulus legislation.

Yet what strikes me is not continuity but change. In the 15 years since Congress approved the Uruguay Round agreements that established the World Trade Organization, business protectionism has faded, social concerns over globalization have grown, and partisanship on Capitol Hill has become ever more rancorous. In January, we ushered in a new President that campaigned on the promise of change – but what sort of change can we expect to see as the economic crisis continues to unfold across the world?

President Obama has not deviated from past policies on free trade. Robert Kagan wrote in the *Washington Post* March 9, 2009, that Obama’s foreign policy was “Bushian” because it has changed so little from George W’s time. Anthony Faiola writes in the *Washington Post* on March 10 that Obama’s trade policy will emphasize global warming and displacement of American workers, using social issues as a reason to promote or slow trade during a global economy that Obama has called a “catastrophe.”

We have learned lessons from the past on the consequences of closing our ports during times of global economic turmoil. The recessionary consequences of the Smoot-Hawley tariff, though a more radical example, certainly highlight the potential problems we could face.

The importance of free trade in our current economy cannot be overstated. Free trade is about beating poverty and expanding economic opportunity. Today, the \$12 trillion U.S. economy is bolstered by free trade, a pillar of America’s vitality. While working through policy legislation this year, Congress will have the opportunity to advocate free trade and to help America and the world reap the rewards that accrue from such policies.

Free trade is clearly an important issue, but it is not alone. The United States and the entire global community will face many other important issues relating to foreign policy. The problems caused by the current economic crisis are real, Vanderbilt, including VPR, has had to start scaling back (we didn’t choose this black & white paper for no reason). However, we cannot overlook other important issues. The essays contained within this publication all discuss extremely polarizing and issues facing our nation and the world. Whether you agree or disagree with the views of these talented writers, I hope at the very least you will learn something new and keep these issues in mind during class, at work, and into the future. Enjoy!

Matt Orton  
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# A PROFESSOR’S PERSPECTIVE

THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY

*Dr. Stephen Buckles*

**VPR: Can you try to explain what caused this economic crisis?**

It’s a challenge to say, “This is the

one cause.” I like to think of it as more of a “perfect storm.” We had a boom in the late-1990s in the stock market. The stock market collapsed, we went into a recession in 2001, and then 9/11 happened right at the end of that recession. So the Federal Reserve stimulated the economy with very low interest rates and rapid growth of the money supply. People turned to buying houses instead of stocks. The low interest rates contributed to a housing boom. The rest of the world was experiencing a savings glut. A safe place to put that money was in the US. When it came here, much went into mortgages. It made it even easier to buy houses.

In the late 1980’s, early 1990’s, the way we made mortgages changed. Now, mortgage brokers make them and then sell them to somebody else. So the incentives aren’t there for the mortgage brokers to care as much as a bank making the loan about whether you, as a borrower, are going to be able to make your mortgage payments. So we made more mortgages to people who couldn’t necessarily make the payments.

Those mortgages were packaged together with other mortgages and then sold to foreigners who were saving more and to people in the US who were searching for ways to earn a bit more on their financial investments. Ratings agencies gave quality ratings for bonds for these mortgages that weren’t necessarily well examined or well understood. Some of them were risky, but they still got high ratings so people were willing to buy them. People on Wall Street and investment firms were looking around for ways to increase their returns because they had just gone through this boom, interest rates were really low, and they knew stocks weren’t going to go back up quickly. They couldn’t earn a lot from just normal interest rates so they tried to package these loans to reduce the risk and earn a bit more. Just a little bit of extra income meant a big difference in their own incomes so they purchased the new instruments and actually added extra risk by doing so. All of that combined



to bid up the price of housing. Way up. In essence, it doubled it from the late 1990's until 2001. It reached its peak in 2006 and 2007. Then, we had the start of a recession. And the story goes on.

**VPR: Do the prescriptions of both Democrats and Republicans have merit, or is one plan more detrimental than the other?**

They both have merit. Look, we have to have a stimulus. There are some people who think we should do nothing and let the economy cure itself. The vast majority of mainstream economists, Democrats and Republicans alike, say that if we do that, the chances of our suffering a very long, serious recession are quite good. We've used monetary policy. It seems to be working, but we need fiscal stimulus also, particularly since interest rates are low and monetary policy may have limited further options. That's where the political difference comes from. If you use fiscal policy do you spend (primarily the Democrats) or do you cut taxes (primarily the Republicans)? The stimulus package has a large part of both. There's a part that goes to state governments so they don't have to cut their spending because of falls in revenues. There's a part of it that goes directly into spending on the part of the federal government, and a large part of tax cuts. So it's a real compromise. Apparently it didn't satisfy the Republicans enough. I don't know that it satisfied the Democrats fully, either. I think most economists, again independently of politics, would say it may be somewhat small, at least now. It's a huge package, but it's spread out over several years. Ideally we want an increase in spending in the economy this year. The immediate effects of an increase in spending are going to be greater than a decrease in taxes. And I don't think there's much difference among Republican and Democratic economists on that. The cut in taxes will not have a very quick, very large affect on the recession. Lower taxes may be good for the long run, but they are unlikely to have a very large effect on consumption spending now. In the short run, that is, in this

recession, tax cuts are going to have a smaller effect than an increase in government spending.

**VPR: You say the stimulus needs to be bigger. Is that politically possible?**

I don't know if it's politically possible right now. It is eventually possible if things don't get better. Increasing spending over what we're already doing right now or even decreasing taxes faster would help. About 25% of the total package occurs this year. The rest occurs in the future years – primarily 2010 and 11. We can't wait that long. That's what people are really talking about when they say we need a bigger stimulus now. I hope that people who say that it needs to be bigger, myself included, are wrong. I hope this stimulus works.

Eventually we do have a federal budget deficit problem and eventually we will have to cut federal spending and raise taxes. That's sometime in the future. We don't have to worry about that now in the middle of a serious recession. That's a future problem that's coming.

**VPR: Are people right when they say that we shouldn't be helping the ones who got us into this crisis in the first place, or is it a necessary evil?**

It's a necessary evil. We're not bailing out AIG because we really care about AIG or AIG employees. We're really worried about the small businesses in the Midwest who can't borrow very easily and therefore have to layoff their employees and cut back production. We're worried about the effects of the financial crisis and the recession on the rest of the economy.

I don't think the US would be bailing out AIG or Merrill Lynch/Bank of America, or Citibank if they were having financial problems and the problems were only with those corporations. AIG is one of the largest, if not the largest, insurance companies in the world. The fact that they were having financial problems connected with all these events meant that people wouldn't make loans

to them, they couldn't make loans to other people, and they couldn't insure all kinds of different activities. That, along with other companies' finances, put a lot of pressure on our whole financial system. That's why we're trying to help them out. Yes, the politics are messy and it's not whether you're Republican or Democrat. The idea of using tax money to help corporations survive, and then it looks like the tax money is going to pay bonuses of millions of dollars to people who helped get us into this mess...that's hard to sell politically. But I think that, if this were a Republican administration, we would be doing very much the same thing we're doing right now. The people in the Republican Congress don't say that, but I don't see it. I think we would be doing something very close to what we're doing.

**VPR: Is there an end in sight?**

We're already on the road. Economists are really bad forecasters. Particularly in this crisis, we've been wrong many times. There have been a lot of new things happening. But I think we're doing basically the right things with the stimulus package and with monetary policy. The financial crisis is not anywhere close to as bad as it was, and if we can get businesses and consumers confident about the future I think we could begin to see the end. It could easily last for the rest of this year, but I would hope that by the end of the summer or fall at least we will be able to say that we've reached the bottom. Then the decline will slow down and we will slowly start to come out of this. The stimulus package will get us out slowly. Again, the best news would be reaching the bottom this summer or fall. However, it could go on beyond that point.

Professor Stephen Buckles  
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# WILL THE STIMULUS ACT CHANGE WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN?

*Kenneth Colonel*

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, also known as the economic stimulus package, is a bill passed through Congress and signed by the President in February 2009. The legislation spent \$787 billion on tax cuts, healthcare, education, unemployment relief, infrastructure investment, housing, scientific research, and no earmarks<sup>1,2,10</sup>. Earmarks written by legislators, all across the aisle from Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY)<sup>3</sup> to Representative John Murtha (D-MA)<sup>4</sup>, have been included in many pieces of legislation, like the omnibus spending bill, but not in this stimulus bill. To the emphasis of Democratic Congressional leaders Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senator Harry Reid, the Stimulus Act was partisan and directly followed suit with expenditures and some tax cuts. The economy must resolve itself with a restoration in consumer confidence. The real problem with the American economy is its uncertainty, which directly dissuades that consumer confidence.

If Americans are to truly propel the private sector into predominance, we must remember that the intricate economy cannot and should not be oversimplified and dissected with vague terms of stimulative and not stimulative. America's prosperous capitalist economic model proliferated with the ingenuity and prosperity in dominant domestic industries like automobile manufacturing. The pride of the working class through their labor and well-being attributed to much of America's prosperity. Over the past few decades, the middle class was steadily ignored and forgotten in favor of corporate greed and the welfare state.

President Obama's priorities for re-

form and change reflected in the stimulus bill fund solutions to alternative energy research, expanding health care coverage, and improving education. The short-term benefits from economic stimulus derive primarily from its tax cuts. Obama's tax plan that repeals the Bush tax cuts and awards middle class tax rebates are a more progressive tax. A lack of consumer confidence delays the "un-freezing" of liquidity through borrowing because the majority of consumers are hesitant to spend money. In the fourth quarter of 2008, Gross Domestic Product decreased by a stark 6.2%<sup>11</sup>. Distributing tax rebates to the middle class will allow them to pay off debt, increase consumer spending, and help banks recuperate with more financial activity.

Pessimism is justified by the bleak outlook of economic indicators like the the Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA). The DJIA has lost half its value over the last year. Plummeting indexes halted in mid-March with an atypical week of positive growth<sup>5</sup>. While this trend cannot be expected to continue, good signs like Citigroup reporting a profit for the first two months of 2009 should be met with optimism<sup>6</sup>.

The long-term benefits are seen in government expenditure projects that will shape the American economy for the future. The resurrection of consumer confidence will take several years to recover despite the daily drops and rises in the DJIA. Research in alternative energy will erase questions of efficiency and allow the United States to pioneer a global market to compete with oil. The consequences of natural disasters will decrease with infrastructure investments. The infrastructure disrepair in the United States has led to a massive water pipe that burst in Bethesda, Maryland in December 2008<sup>7</sup>, the New Orleans levees' miserable failure as water barriers<sup>8</sup>, and the American Society of Civil Engineers awarding the United States the grade of D for overall national infrastructure<sup>9</sup>. The United States is broken both financially and physically. The 'excessive spending' that this legislation entails will yield

positive results to make America safer and stronger financially.

Excessive spending inhibits long-term economic growth, but the grim outlook of the financial crisis indicates cannot be addressed hastily or lightly. Many of President Obama's actions, like his refusal to veto either the stimulus act or the omnibus spending bill, were justified as an effort to not delay government action in response to the receding economy. In the words of former President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, "There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction."

The lack of responsibility and accountability within the legislative branch approving the insurmountable spending can be addressed once the economy has stabilized. For now, New-New Deal level of spending is necessary to address the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Sacrificing federal dollars for domestic investment will yield external benefits much greater in value than the amount spent. This package of domestic spending will create jobs, improve the public education and opportunities for higher education, improve technology, and help begin to restore consumer confidence.

The results of the economic stimulus act may not revive the American economy in the near future. Without certainty, the exorbitant spending will both make conservatives cringe and make a difference. Aiding American consumers with the stimulus programs and tax cuts will lead the economy to prosperity. Once the United States has laid the infrastructure for a successful capitalist model, its people can build an economy of greater strength than its former self.

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## IN DEFENSE OF FISCAL CONSERVATIVISM

### A LOOK AT THE REAGAN ECONOMIC RECORD

*Cedric Karaoglan*

Many liberals will argue that the economic mess is proof that fiscal conservatism does not work. Critics believe that conservative policies lead to high deficits while benefiting the rich at the expense of the poor. However these people fail to realize that President Bush and the Republican Congress did not govern the economy conservatively. Fiscal conservatism is usually associated with reduced government spending and lower taxes. While Bush did decrease taxes he also increased the federal budget by 104% during his eight years, compared to 11% during the Clinton Administration. President Bush presided over a significant increase in education and agricultural spending and the largest single expansion of Medicare ever, while paying for two wars abroad. Before President Bush, the last President to practice fiscal conservatism was Ronald Reagan. Although Reagan did increase the budget by spending more on defense, he cut non-military spending by 10%.<sup>3</sup> The

Reagan economic record clearly shows that fiscal conservatism is effective.

Much like President Obama, Ronald Reagan inherited an economy in shambles. In 1981, the American economy suffered from the highest inflation rate since 1947 and a vast amount of unemployment. Reagan believed in lowering taxes for all (rich and poor) in order to stimulate the economy. He believed that lower taxes combined with spending cuts allow the economy to thrive and the wealth would “trickle-down.” The idea is that rich people spend money, start businesses and employ people who are poorer. When Reagan entered office, Americans in the top tax bracket were paying 70% of their income to the government. Reagan slashed that rate to 28% by the end of his presidency.<sup>1</sup>

Low tax rates provide incentive for people to work their hardest. If the government takes a huge portion of the money you earn and gives that money to people through social programs, you are less likely to be motivated to work. To better understand the Laffer curve, which illustrates this concept, one should think about the extreme values. If the government taxes you at a 0% rate, then tax revenue will be zero. If the government taxes you at a 100% rate, then tax revenue will be zero or very low because taking all of your income gives you no incentive to work or you will avoid paying taxes. So the idea behind the Laffer curve is that the government can increase tax revenue by finding the ideal tax rate on the curve.<sup>4</sup>

Reagan managed to successfully turn around the weak economy he inherited from Jimmy Carter. On eight of ten economic variables examined by the Cato Institute, such as real economic growth, real median family income, interest rates, inflation, and unemployment, the American economy was stronger after his presidency. The only economic variable that was worse was the savings rate. During the pre-Reagan years the productivity rate was higher but much lower in the post-Reagan years.<sup>1</sup>

There are three common arguments

against Reaganomics: Tax cuts lead to deficit explosion, the rich get richer while the poor get poorer, and African Americans are not helped. All three arguments, however, are flawed. Reagan’s tax cuts stimulated the economy and led to a near doubling in tax receipts from 1980 to 1990. When compared to the increase in tax receipts during the Clinton years, the rate of increase is about the same. This is no surprise to Dr. Byron Schломach, the Goldwater Institute’s Chief Economist. He points out that in order to achieve maximum growth, the government should tax no more than 17% of the GDP. Any higher rate will slow growth and economic activity. Today, our government takes 23% of the GDP.<sup>4</sup>

Ronald Reagan once said, “I’m not worried about the deficit, it’s big enough to take care of itself.” Reagan was showing off his sharp sense of humor as he really thought the budget deficit was “the greatest disappointment of his presidency.” So what caused the deficit? Certainly a massive increase in defense spending, which Reagan supporters credit for the collapse of the communist Soviet Union, is one reason. But it is also the Democratic Congress’ fault, as it outspent every one of the nine budgets Reagan proposed, but one. Congress also agreed in 1982 that for every \$1 increase in taxes, \$3 of spending would be reduced, but this spending reduction never happened. Some would say that since George Bush (Sr.) and Clinton raised taxes, the deficit fell at a slower rate than would have under Reagan’s policies.<sup>2</sup>

The argument that the rich got richer and the poor got poorer is also flawed. It is true that from 1980 to 1988 the wealthiest 5% of the country increased their share of total income from 16.5% to 18.3% while the poorest saw their share fall from 4.2% to 3.8%. However, what actually happened is the rich got richer and the poor got richer. Every income quintile gained during the Reagan years. If you were in the bottom 20% of income before Reagan, there was an 86% chance that you would not just earn more, but



you would move up to a higher quintile by 1990. If you were in the poorest 20% you had a better chance of being in the top 20% than remaining at the bottom by 1990.<sup>1</sup>

Some critics will say that Reaganomics did not help African Americans. Again, the facts seem to disprove this. The income of African Americans increased at an 11% rate compared to 9.8% for whites. In the eight years before Reagan, African Americans saw their salary decrease at a rate of 4.4%.

A study published by the Rio Grande Foundation shows the benefits of cutting taxes and spending. In the top ten states with the highest tax rates, the poverty rate increased 2%, while childhood poverty rates fell 2.8%. In the ten states with the lowest tax rates the poverty rate declined 9% and childhood poverty rates dropped 10.3%. This ties back to the Laffer curve and fiscal conservatism. Low tax rates stimulate the economy, and people (rich and poor) earn more money. Interestingly, the ten states with the lowest-per-capita spending reduced poverty rates by 8.42% while the ten states with the highest-per-capita spending actually saw a 7.6% increase in poverty.<sup>2</sup>

A few conclusions about fiscal conservatism can be made. Since tax revenue increased under Reagan, the budget deficit was caused by the combination of increased military spending and not enough spending reductions. While counterintuitive, lowering tax rates increase tax revenue by stimulating the economy. Based on the statistics, the Reagan years were a time of prosperity for all. Rich and poor people earned more and improved their lives. Reagan's conservative policies successfully brought down poverty and created a thriving economy. The Rio Grande Foundation study proves that the same policies that worked under Reagan in the '80s still work today.

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## HEALTHCARE PAYMENT REFORM A NECESSITY

*Aniket Rali*

The United States spends more on healthcare every year. However, the population is becoming progressively sicker. Health care is currently the largest and fastest growing category in the annual federal budget. Although the United States spends 17% of its GDP on health care, it ranks 24th in its overall health among industrialized nations. According to the CIA World Factbook, the U.S. is ranked 30th in the life expectancy of its citizens, significantly lower than that of other developed countries like Germany, Switzerland and Japan. Additionally, we have a high infant mortality rate for being a developed country, ranking 29th overall. These statistics, in addition to many others, show that the United States' health care system is in a state of crisis and is in need of urgent action.

Where is all of this money going if it is not improving citizens' overall health? The Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the number of health care administrators has increased by 2500% since 1970, while the number of physicians has only marginally increased. A conservative estimate of administrative costs holds that they account for 27% of total health care costs. In other words, more money is being spent on paperwork than

on the delivery of health care. Government regulations are not the leading cause of higher administrative costs. Alternatively, it is the bureaucracy within private insurance companies that costs more once individuals get insured. The Veterans Affairs Health Care program incurs only 4% administrative costs; a seventh of what it costs private insurers. A lot of time and money is spent by private insurers manipulating how much money insurers owe versus how much money the patient is responsible for paying through deductibles and co-pays. This is something that can, and must, be avoided.

In addition to administrative costs, the financial incentives in the United States' payment system lead to over treatment and, as a result, higher health care costs. Our fee-for-service payment model encourages providers to make more money by performing more services. If a hospital or an independent provider is able to get its patient to come back for additional treatment, it makes more money. This means that if hospitals and providers figure out a way to keep their patients healthy, they go broke. Health care providers cannot be blamed for seeking larger profits, since they live in a capitalist system. This means that the method of payment needs to shift from the number of services provided to the outcome of those services. The system needs to create a serious monetary incentive for providers to build healthy communities. The United Kingdom proves that such a system, with incentives for better, rather than more, health care is not only possible but also sustainable. Primary care physicians in the U.K. act as gate keepers through which every patient needs to go in order to consult a specialist. These primary care physicians earn a bonus when their patients do well without having to consult specialists. This is an effective way of ensuring equal and quality health care. Contrary to popular belief, over treatment is just as dangerous as no treatment.

People often correlate increasing



healthcare costs with technological innovation in medical procedures. However, statistics have a different story to share. Japan, the country with the greatest life expectancy in the world, uses twice as many MRI scans per capita as the United States (and eight times as many as the UK) and yet spends only 8.1% of its GDP on healthcare as compared to the US' 17%. How is Japan able to provide efficient universal health care without forcing individuals and families into bankruptcy? The answer lies in its payment system. Japan uses a single payer model where government and physicians negotiate the prices of each service on a bi-yearly basis. Every citizen contributes to a social insurance fund that ensures universal health care. When all payments for medical services are made by a single entity, the costs of healthcare are significantly reduced by avoiding administrative expenses that go into determining who pays what and to whom. Furthermore, a fixed fee for each MRI and X-ray scan in Japan has encouraged companies, like Toshiba and Olympus, to develop efficient and cheaper scanners that can reduce a physician's cost of providing treatment. The features of this healthcare system can be implemented in reforming our own system.

There may be disagreements about which model would work best. Arguably, Universal Coverage is not only the most ethical, but also the most practical solution to our current crisis. The cost of treating the uninsured, all 46 million of them, further drives premiums and co-pays higher for the insured. In Wisconsin alone, for every uninsured person, \$ 910 of unpaid medical bills per year is shifted to higher premium costs for those with insurance. Hence, it is absolutely critical that we reform our healthcare system to provide comprehensive and yet affordable coverage to every citizen. Universal Coverage is a reality in several other industrialized nations and I am confident that we can achieve the same level of success in a capitalist society through careful payment system reform.

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**TIBET, CHINA, AND  
AMERICAN FOREIGN  
POLICY IN  
THE ECONOMIC  
CRISIS**

*Andrea Clabough*

Given that the new Obama administration was elected on the ideals of "hope" and "change," it is hardly surprising that such optimism has been translated into the desire to promote goodwill internationally. It is also hardly surprising that the promotion of such values has been sidelined by the economic crisis that dominates the attention of the American government and public. While this pre-occupation is not unjustified, there is a danger that such a narrow domestic focus can cause us to neglect humanitarian crises abroad that directly violate our democratic values. Unfortunately, neglecting such international problems becomes even more convenient when the recognition of their severity would endanger relationships with the states that our frail economy depends upon.

The United States' relationship with China over the issue of Tibet is one example of this exact situation. While the Obama administration expresses support for the Tibetan cause, any efforts to address the issue are hindered by American dependence on Chinese investments.

The fact that China is currently the largest holder of the US government's debt underscores China's importance to the United States (MacLeod 2009). The situation in Tibet is a clear case of the familiar conflict between America's humanitarian values and its pressing geopolitical needs.

**The Crisis in Tibet**

The discussion over the issue of Tibet is not new to political science; rather, the debate is rooted in the 1949 invasion of Tibet by the China. As Chinese political authority over Tibet was consolidated through brutal suppression by 1959, the Tibetan government under the Dalai Lama was forced to flee (alongside thousands of refugees) into the surrounding countries of Nepal and India (ITC 2009). The Chinese have argued that Tibet was always historical part of China and was merely reintegrated in 1949. This claim, in light of international standards on the sovereignty of states, is weak. The traditional government under the Dalai Lama was fully functioning without interference until the invasion, even to the point of signing treaties with foreign nations (ITC, 2009). From the Tibetan perspective, China's actions from 1949 onward have been a direct violation of a sovereign state's autonomy for exploitation. Officially, modern Tibet is an "autonomous region" of China, which implies national autonomy under the umbrella of Chinese authority (CIA, 2009). The reality in Tibet, however, is anything but autonomous. Reports of massive political repression as well as complete subjugation of the Tibetan region under Chinese authorities have circulated the international community since the exile of the Dalai Lama's government in 1959.

Instead of experiencing the growth and development that has characterized the past half century in China, Tibet is on the verge of a humanitarian disaster. Modern Tibetans are increasingly a subjugated people within their own country. They are outnumbered 7.5 to 6 million by Chinese immigrants who hold absolute political power (TYC, 2009). Ti-

betan Buddhism, arts, and language are actively suppressed, as evidenced by the destruction of over 6,000 monasteries and the prohibition the Tibetan writing system (ITC 2009). Not surprisingly, over 70% of Tibetans are illiterate and unable to participate in their own government (TYC, 2009). Similarly, Chinese exploitation of the Tibetan region has had devastating consequences on the ecosystems of the Tibetan Himalayas. Since 1949, the Chinese government has destroyed millions of acres of woodlands and utilized Tibet's mineral wealth in order to provide raw materials for China's own industrial revolution (TYC, 2009).

### Policy Initiatives and the Future of Tibet

The situation in Tibet is at best a tragedy, and at worst a cultural genocide on par with any in global history. The Dalai Lama himself has traveled widely to gain international support for the Tibetan cause, and to dispel any misconceptions about his goals for Tibet. Since 2002, the Dalai Lama has offered to negotiate a settlement in which Tibet would remain an official part of China, but with true autonomy that would allow for Tibetan leadership under a democracy as well as the reinstatement of Tibetan educational, religious, and cultural institutions (ITC, 2009). Thus far, such negotiations with the Chinese leadership have proven ineffective, and it is clear that international pressure on China will be necessary to facilitate a solution.

Unfortunately, the United States is hindered in its support of Tibet by the heavy Chinese investment that supports its struggling economy. However, American leadership cannot risk neglecting the basic humanitarian values upon which our democracy is based for the sake of expediency in difficult circumstances. While we depend upon China for investments, China still depends on U.S. markets for its own economic stability in the current crisis. The situation in Tibet is not and should not be acceptable to our policy-makers, and we should employ the extensive diplomatic leverage we still possess with China to promote

open discussions with the Tibetan government-in-exile. To completely retreat from our humanitarian standards whenever their promotion is "difficult" would represent a defeat not only for the Tibetans, but for all people who are threatened by prejudice and injustice worldwide. As a global leader in democracy, this is a defeat that the United States cannot allow.

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## EFFECTIVENESS, RELEVANCE OF UN IS OPEN TO DEBATE

*Bob Youngerman*

It is time that we examine the U.N.'s record in maintaining peace or preventing armed conflict since its birth following World War II. As this record is examined, it is essential that we take into account the effectiveness of the U.S. as a world arbiter in the development of U.S. foreign policy. The concept of a multinational body of nations which could bring international pressure to prevent armed conflict between nation states is a worthwhile goal, but unfortunately is has yet to materialize.

Since its founding, the U.N. has been impotent in preventing armed conflict between nation states, all of whom are U.N. members. Endless examples abound all across the globe: North Ko-

rea invades South Korea. North Vietnam invades South Vietnam. Iran vs. Iraq. India vs. Pakistan. Great Britain vs. Argentina. China vs. Tibet. The Soviet Union vs. Afghanistan, etc., etc. Unfortunately, all these involve one nation state against another.

If the U.N. has been helpless in preventing armed conflict between nation states, what kind of record has it had in the past, or can it have in the future, involving civil war, revolution, or repressive regimes slaughtering their own people? What did the U.N. do about any of these types of situations, Cambodia and Rwanda being the most egregious?

The main problem in today's world is that every ethnic or religious group such as the Kurds, Chechens, Serbs, or Catholics in Northern Ireland, wants their own country. In Africa and Asia, armed conflict with its senseless murder of one group by another gets down to the tribal level. It seems that very few ethnic, religious, or tribal groups want to live in peace with those who are different. Look at Bosnia and Kosovo, where next-door neighbors were, and still are, fighting and killing each other, with peace hanging on by a thread.

Should not someone have stepped up to do something about the killing of innocent civilians in the Cambodias and Rwandas of the world? Would the U.S. have been wrong to have stepped into those types of situations to save lives while the U.N. stood idly by doing nothing? Does anyone believe that other nations like France, Germany, Russia, or China would step up and do something to save lives of innocent civilians around the world? Highly unlikely.

The facts of the matter are that the U.N. is not set up or organized to do anything about most types of armed conflict that afflicts the world today. If the United States doesn't do something, nothing is done. The result is the discovery of mass graves à la Iraq all over the world.

The most reasonable explanation for U.S. unilateral action in the world's hot spots is humanitarian purposes. Isn't the use of U.S. power to stop the killing of

the innocent a worthwhile endeavor?

If not the U.S., then who? The U.N.? Hardly. The time has arrived to initiate a serious dialogue about the U.N.'s ineffectiveness. When countries like Syria, Libya, China, and Cuba are members of the U.N.'s Council on Civil Rights, I contend the U.N.'s credibility is at stake. When the U.N.'s Conference on Racism selects only Israel for condemnation, something is amiss.

Instead of the U.N., I would promote more effective diplomacy between two nation states or small groups of nations to resolve differences and solve problems. That is precisely what is occurring with North Korea. The nations most affected—South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia—will ultimately solve the problem.

Although I recognize that many of my fellow Americans believe that the U.N. is the only hope for world peace, I would beg to differ for the reasons stated above. If ever there is an issue deserving of debate, it is the continued relevancy and effectiveness of the United Nations.

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## INTRODUCTION

In January 2009, President Barack Obama called for the closing of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, a major pillar of the Bush Administration's "national security" strategy in the war on terror.<sup>1</sup> The announcement followed the landmark decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Boumediene v. Bush*,<sup>2</sup> which extended the Constitution's reach to protect the right of noncitizen detainees held at Guantanamo Bay to seek a writ of habeas corpus in U.S. courts.<sup>3</sup> Since 2002, approximately 770 individuals have been held at Guantánamo Bay, and currently about 250 remain captive there. It took more than six years to complete the first trial, and most detainees have been subjected to violations of due process, physical and verbal abuse, and solitary confinement, among other abuses.<sup>4</sup> The illegal detention and mistreatment of noncitizens at the detention facility has led to several suicides and more than 40 attempted suicides.<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International described the Guantánamo detention program as "the gulag of our time."<sup>6</sup>

The Guantánamo detention program has strained America's relationships with its allies and compromised its reputation as a champion of human rights and the rule of law. Although the law of armed conflict permits the detention of enemy combatants outside the justice system during wartime, such detentions must comply with internationally recognized standards for the protection of human rights. These standards are defined principally in the Geneva Conventions,<sup>7</sup> and more broadly in the Universal Dec-

laration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 (ICCPR).<sup>8</sup> The U.S. Government has ignored these conventions by detaining individuals indefinitely and depriving them of their basic rights. The Bush Administration classified the Guantanamo detainees as "unlawful enemy combatants" to avoid having to comply with the Geneva Conventions. There is no such intermediate status under international law.

The Supreme Court, too, has refused to enforce these conventions in ruling on habeas petitions filed by the detainees in U.S. court. In *Boumediene*, the Court refrained from applying international law and, instead, extended the reach of the Constitution beyond America's shores to protect the right of noncitizen detainees to petition for a writ of habeas corpus. Harvard Law Professor Noah Feldman praised the Court's decision as "an act with tremendous international resonance . . . that makes the Constitution available to all persons – no matter where they might be."<sup>9</sup> Conservative legal scholars, such as Jack Goldsmith, found the decision to be misguided and even dangerous, arguing that the Constitution should not be interpreted in a way that undermines America's security and sovereignty.<sup>10</sup> Neither viewpoint is accurate. If anything, the decision highlights the Supreme Court's intention to strictly limit the Constitution's reach and its reluctance to enforce international law conventions that are clearly applicable to the case.

Even though *Boumediene* extended the Constitution's reach beyond America's shores, the Supreme Court nevertheless adopted a restrictive view of alien

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# CLOSING AMERICA'S GULAG: THE AFTERMATH OF THE GUANTANAMO DETENTION CASES AND THE LIMITS OF THE CONSTITUTION'S REACH TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS

1. In numerous speeches and legal briefs, Bush administration officials advanced the claim that "national security" and the safety of American citizens took precedence over all other concerns and, therefore, measures taken to combat terrorism which also violate human rights law were justified.

2 *Boumediene v. Bush*, 553 U.S. \_\_\_, 128 S.Ct. 2229 (2008).

3 The privilege of the writ of habeas corpus is enshrined in Article I, section 9, clause II of the Constitution. The clause states that "the privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion, the public Safety may require it." CONST., § 9, cl. 2.

4 The first trial of a detainee was not completed until August 2008 when al-Qaeda member and former driver for Osama Bin Laden, Salim Hamdan, was convicted of providing material support to terrorism and sentenced to five and a half years in prison. After credited with time served,

Mr. Hamdan was released to Yemen to carry out the remaining few months of his sentence. U.S. Sending a Convict Back to Yemen, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 25, 2008, at A23. Prior to Mr. Hamdan's conviction, Australian David Hicks was convicted by a military commission, but that conviction was obtained by voluntary plea. Hicks pled guilty to material support for terrorism and was sentenced to nine months of confinement in his home country. Demetri Sevastapulo, U.S. Court Dismisses Guantánamo Charges, June 4, 2007, available at [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com).

5 David Bowler and David Kaye, Guantánamo By the Numbers, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 10, 2007, A27.

6 See Lionel Barber & Paul Taylor, Clinton Slams Guantánamo, FIN. TIMES, June 20, 2005, at 1.

7 The Geneva Conventions of 1949 define the requirements for a wartime captive to be eligible for treatment as either a "lawful combatant" or an "unlawful combatant." The critical distinction is that a "lawful

combatant" cannot be held personally for acts committed during combat, unless the acts constitute crimes against humanity or war crimes. Lawful combatants must be treated as prisoners of war (POWs), a legal status that comes with certain protections. The rules governing the treatment of POWs are enshrined in the Geneva Conventions relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (GCIII). See generally Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Aug. 12, 1949 [1955] 6 U.S.T. 3316. If there is any doubt about whether a detainee should be classified as a "lawful combatant", then Article 5 of the GCIII states that their status may be determined by a "competent tribunal" and, until such time, they are to be treated as POWs. A nation holding POWs must try them in the same courts that would try the country's own military officers, which in the United States are court-martial proceedings.

8 The ICCPR, in particular, sets forth the basic political and civil rights of individuals and is binding on those parties who have ratified it



detainee rights by limiting that reach to Guantánamo Bay only. The decision has no bearing on the precedent established in *Johnson v. Eisentrager* which delineated a clear line between the jurisdictional treatment of citizen enemy combatants and alien enemy combatants detained outside of the United States.<sup>11</sup> According to Justice Jackson:

[O]ur law does not abolish inherent distinctions recognized throughout the civilized world between citizens and aliens. . . the nonresident enemy alien, especially one who has remained in the service of the enemy, does not have even this qualified access to our courts, for he neither has comparable claims upon our institutions nor could his use of them fail to be helpful to the enemy.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, once the Guantanamo detention facility is officially closed, *Eisentrager* will live on and the issue of whether the Constitution guarantees certain basic human rights to noncitizen detainees offshore will become moot.

Furthermore, the Court's decision in *Boumediene* takes a domestic-centered, rather than an "outward-looking," view of the law, placing the idea of national sovereignty above the interests of promoting a more legitimate international legal order. A strong case could have been made that the Guantánamo detention program violated the binding obligations imposed upon the U.S. by the ICCPR and the Geneva Conventions as well as the spirit of the UDHR. The Supreme Court refrained from considering these issues and instead applied its own sovereigntist worldview of the Constitution. By failing to apply clearly applicable international law to the case, the Supreme Court missed an opportunity to strengthen the role of international law

in American jurisprudence.

In the end, the *Boumediene* Court rightfully held that the President could no longer operate Guantánamo Bay as a law-free zone. Today, Guantánamo detainees have the same rights and access to federal courts as noncitizens captured and detained in Washington, D.C. or South Carolina. However, *Boumediene* in no way reaffirms the legitimacy of international law or signals an outward-looking direction in applying the Constitution beyond America's shores. What the *Boumediene* decision stands for is a temporary broadening of U.S. jurisdiction to noncitizens detained at a single detention facility offshore; nothing more, nothing less. Once the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay is closed, the law's status quo under *Eisentrager* will resume.

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**TEN BILLION  
DOLLARS, ZERO  
RESULTS:**

PAKISTAN IN DANGER OF BE-  
COMING A FAILED STATE

*Matthew Sen*

Six months after General Pervez Musharraf announced his resignation as President (Military Leader) of Pakistan, it is still unclear exactly who, if anyone, has filled the power void he left behind. The highly-publicized power struggle between current President Zardari (widower to Benazir Bhutto and head of the Pakistan People's Party) and opposition leader Nawaz Sharif over the reinstatement of Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry as Chief Justice gives the impression that these two men are the primary figures in Pakistani politics. A closer look renders the notion of civilian control in Pakistan questionable. Militant groups continue to control parts of Pakistan, and

there is evidence of a lack of government control over its own forces. As Pakistan approaches ever closer to a state of utter turmoil, it must be made clear who controls their military and intelligence forces, because it does not appear to be the civilian government. While Musharraf declared his opposition to terrorist organizations in 2001 at the United States' behest, there is little to show for the \$10 billion the US has given Pakistan to wage the War on Terror.

On March 16, Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani declared the reinstatement of Chaudhry as Chief Justice, ending the protest march to Islamabad led by opposition leader Nawaz Sharif. Chaudhry's appointment was highly opposed by current President Zardari, as Chaudhry has vowed to reverse all constitutional changes made under Musharraf, including the legal reprieve Musharraf gave to Zardari for corruption charges. While Sharif, former prime minister and leader of the Pakistan Muslim League (N), played the role of the people's hero in praising the decision to reinstate the chief justice, his self-righteous rhetoric failed to mask his primary motivation for backing Chaudhry: removal of Musharraf's changes would include a clause preventing Sharif from running for a third term as Prime Minister. As the cycle of corruption continues, Zardari's government demonstrates that it is not in control of the country.

While Pakistan's political elite has been keen to feud over the judiciary, it has not seen it fit to address adequately the growing turmoil throughout Pakistan. Whether Pakistan's dealings with its terrorists can be termed as a war or not is questionable. In many cases, militants have been allowed to retain their autonomy as long as they sign documents promising that they will not commit further acts of terrorism (this is dubbed a "victory" by the military). Despite Pakistan's repeated guarantees that it is doing all it can, one cannot help but wonder why the military was able to deploy itself ever so swiftly along the Indian border following the 2008 Mumbai attacks, yet

such as the United States. Among the rights provided for in the ICCPR are the right to presumption of innocence until proven guilty (Article 14(2)), the right to counsel and a speedy trial (Article 14(3)), and the right to privacy (Article 17). The ICCPR also forbids inhumane or degrading treatment (Article 7), arbitrary arrest and detention (Article 9), and ensures freedom of movement within one's own country without interference (Article 12).

<sup>9</sup> Noah Feldman, *When Judges Make Foreign Policy*, N.Y. TIMES MAGAZINE, Sept. 28, 2008, at 55.

<sup>10</sup> See generally JACK GOLDSMITH & ERIC POSNER, *THE LIMITS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW* (2005).

<sup>11</sup> *Johnson v. Eisentrager*, 339 U.S. 763, 70 S.Ct. 936 (1950).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 779.



finds itself in a strategic debacle within its own borders. The jingoistic attitudes expressed by Pakistani leaders toward India despite their failure to control their own country are alarming, but not anything new.

Pakistan's reluctance to fight terrorist organizations in practice is not surprising, given the state's history of using terrorism as a tool of warfare. The Pakistani Intelligence Services (ISI) created the terror organization known as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) for the purpose of waging jihad against India. Since its inception in the 1950s, the ISI has been responsible for supporting proxy-groups and guerrillas such as LET in clandestine operations against India, recently including the 1999 Kargil war (orchestrated by the esteemed Prime Minister Sharif), the 2001 attack of the Indian Parliament, and the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Although Pakistan banned the LET in 2002 under UN pressure, it allowed LET-run schools, communities, armories, and training camps to continue under a name change and police supervision which lasted at most a few days. Last December, the LET and Al Qaeda pledged their support to Pakistan should war break out with India. Meanwhile, Pakistan has made assurances that they have been waging war against these groups for years.

Any promises made by the civilian government are negligible at best, as it may not, in fact, control its armed forces. When accused of complicity in last November's Mumbai attacks, the ISI refused governmental orders to work with India. Police with instructions to keep Mr. Sharif under house arrest conveniently disappeared when crowds of his supporters arrived in protest. The attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore, coincidentally in Sharif's home state of Punjab, ended with none of the assailants captured or killed, despite promises made by the government to provide the Sri Lankan team with "Presidential" security. Zardari's promise to bring those responsible to justice look grim, as Pakistan has not solved one out of the hundreds of militant attacks it has suffered

since the 1980s.

Considering Pakistan's lackluster performance against its own terrorist militants and trajectory toward a state of chaos, the West must re-evaluate its strategy in the region. America's present difficulties in Afghanistan, fighting militants armed with weapons once supplied by the US to fight against the Soviet Union, should have taught the US that an enemy's enemy is not necessarily a friend. What Pakistan has done with America's \$10 billion is anyone's guess. We can only hope it has not, in a cruel twist of irony, funded Pakistan's terrorist networks. As for the impotent, unpopular President Zardari, he will likely not remain in power for long. Many predict that Mr. Sharif will take advantage of the situation and rise to power himself (assuming that Chaudhry changes the constitution). As long as the civilian government is unable or unwilling to control the army or intelligence services, it hardly matters who is in charge. If the state continues to degenerate into lawlessness, Pakistan may experience an all-too-familiar reinstatement of military rule. Meanwhile, the United States is deluded enough to believe that the Pakistani military is actually going to destroy terrorist cells that it regards as valuable assets in waging its illegal war against India. It is high time the US strategy toward Pakistan changed, and it is going to take more than the lobbing of a few missiles.

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**NO COMPROMISE  
WITH THE TALIBAN**

*Jesse Jones*

**O**n March 17, 2009, *The New York Times* published an editorial by Army Lieutenant Kristen L. Rouse, which I quote below:

One afternoon in April 2006...

the Taliban had attacked a primary school just east of us in Asadabad. The school taught young boys and girls together in an open courtyard outside a mosque. One rocket made a direct hit on the children as they sat in class. A second rocket exploded nearby. Seven children were killed. Thirty-four were wounded.

The Taliban kill children for attending co-educational schools. They force women to wear body-length veils under penalty of death. They teach their sons nothing but their radical interpretation of the Qur'an. And these are only the beginnings of their radical beliefs.

There is a growing chorus of voices calling for compromise with the Taliban. It is too easy to believe that by giving them some concessions, everything will work out in the end. The Taliban's philosophy does not recognize compromise, and granting them concessions would be an admission of defeat. We cannot hope to create a democratic state in Afghanistan as long as the Taliban exists. It is a contradiction in terms. Because the Taliban do not play by the rules of democracy, they lose their right to participate in a democratic government. In fact, because they target innocent civilians, they lose their right to exist.

While we Americans too often view the war in Afghanistan in terms of statistics (casualties suffered, years and billions spent) the Taliban sees its struggle against Western culture as eternal. We need to view our struggle against radical Islam for what it is: a clash of civilizations, the same way we saw Communism during the Cold War. We need our president to issue an ultimatum to the Taliban along the lines of Reagan's "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

We must back up our words with action. The relative calm in Iraq has provided the space for an offensive on the Taliban. While Obama's addition of 17,000 troops to Afghanistan is a step in the right direction, it is not enough. We need to provide engineers, teachers, doctors, and even more soldiers. We must secure peace in the Afghani villages, then go on the offensive against the Taliban.

We cannot stop at the border. We need to go after the Taliban in Pakistan with or without the help or approval of whoever is in charge in that country. Eventually we will disrupt Al Qaeda operations, perhaps even kill or capture Osama bin Laden.

Some will argue that, like poppy fields, the Taliban will continue to come back in rural Afghanistan no matter how hard we fight them. If this is so, then so be it. We will have to eradicate them each time they return. Losing to the Taliban would strengthen the resolve of radical Islamists the world over, creating even more problems later on.

The history of asymmetric warfare suggests that against a determined opponent, technological advantage disappears. We know our Western values of freedom, tolerance, democracy, and capitalism are powerful, but we must develop them among the Afghani populace. We need to rededicate ourselves to eradicating the Taliban once and for all, not just for our own sake, but for the safety of Afghanistan's innocent children.

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## A HAND OUT IS NOT A HAND UP

*Catherine Spaulding*

Aid to the developing world has long been provided by a slew of eager organizations and charitable givers. In 1984, Bob Geldof and Midge Ure prompted the rest of the world to sing along as they raised money through Band Aid/Live Aid to fight the Ethiopian famine of 1984-1985. More recently, Rick Reilly sent the sports world into a mosquito net-buying frenzy when he urged readers in *Sports Illustrated* to donate ten dollars for a net, in order to save some of the 3,000 African children that die each day from Malaria. As exhorted by his column, "Buy a net. Bang. You

just saved a life. Take the rest of the day off."

Though emergency aid is undoubtedly necessary at times, these charities have perhaps deepened the humanitarian catastrophes that plague most of Africa today by engendering a dependence on external assistance. While mosquito nets may have the potential to save lives, what is the outcome after they exceed their four years of functionality, a fact Rick Reilly failed to mention? True, there may be hundreds of new schools dotting the landscape, but how can this help when many African cultures prohibit young girls from being educated? Yes, we have successfully provided food for hungry children, albeit thousands of children, but what results when the outpouring of food aid stops?

The cycle of poverty continues unabated. Today, we are witnessing the consequences from having collapsed the distinctions between emergency aid and long-term, sustainable development. In 2002, the declared value of American secondhand clothing exported to Africa was \$59.3 million. Of this, about \$2.3 million went directly to Uganda, where it accounted for 81% of garment purchases that year.

For the Kasenyanku Women's Group of Jjayna, Uganda, this influx was devastating. Their handmade gomesi (traditional dress for women) were no match for the used, less expensive American clothing. Six years later, the Kasenyanku Women's Group still exists, however their survival depends on the microcredit they are currently receiving from organizations such as Kiva: Loans that Change Lives. Despite being a sustainable and progressive form of development, microfinance loans are undercut with every sock, t-shirt, or pair of jeans we donate to Africa. These items not only suppress economic growth, but discourage individuals from developing the private sector in their homeland.

In the end, we are solving the puzzle only to erase our answers. Although food aid has declined from 20% in the 1960's to 5% in 2005,<sup>4</sup> we are still feeding Af-

rica today. According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, 35% of the world's food aid arrives at African shores, despite only having 14% of the world's population. Thus, Africa's once known export markets have migrated to other lands. Coffee once purchased from Ethiopia is now grown in Vietnam, and in greater amounts than produced by all of Africa. Palm Oil had long been West Africa's leading export, yet today Indonesia supplies the world's major quantities

While we may have demonstrated our charitable nature with our boxes of school supplies and secondhand clothing, the cost of giving is high. Such actions lack development strategy, namely the generation of sustainable societies no longer in need of global assistance. More critically, these actions alter the way in which we view the African people. Too often, we come to think of the hungry as "mouths to feed," or the poor as passive recipients. With this mindset, we fail to consider the possible unintended effect of our actions: the loss of dignity and the disempowerment of the human spirit. It is time for us to see African people in their whole being – not just as a man suffering from AIDS, or a woman prohibited from an education, but as a people whose lives teeter precariously on the outcome of a multiplex of issues.

As Alex Perry says, "Give a starving man a fish, sure. But when he's recovered, give him a rod and have a chat about contraception." We must move to a holistic approach, one that reaches beyond the current top-down conventional models of aid and lays a foundation built through the empowerment of the African people. We must reinvest the people in their future, engage them in their community, and create circumstances that encourage the basic needs and development of the whole person.

Let's build a new school, but instead of parading as knights in shining armor, let's involve the people who live there in its planning and development. Then, let's work to ensure gender equality – to guarantee that the school will provide an

equal education for girls and boys of all ages. While we are at it, let's make sure those children never miss a lunch. Let's work with the parents, encourage their education and literacy, and grant them micro finance loans to get a small business going. Let's provide antiviral drugs and free health education to prevent yet another orphan from walking through those school doors. Let's fill the library with books, but not our old copies of Harry Potter or Nancy Drew. Let's fill it with books written in native languages, and by local authors who can profit from such an opportunity while helping their community. Most importantly, let's develop an equal partnership, so that when we say the word "let's," we will never again think we are talking only about ourselves.

This is strategic planning for the future. A holistic approach that builds a foundation through the empowerment of the African people. With their self-reliance comes great inspiration, and great possibility. Only then can a difference really start to be made. Maybe Rick Reilly shouldn't have been so quick to say, "Take the rest of the day off."

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The Vanderbilt Political Review selects essays based on how well they are written, not the stance that an author takes on a particular issue. If you have any questions about its nonpartisan method of selection, please direct them to the gmail account.

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