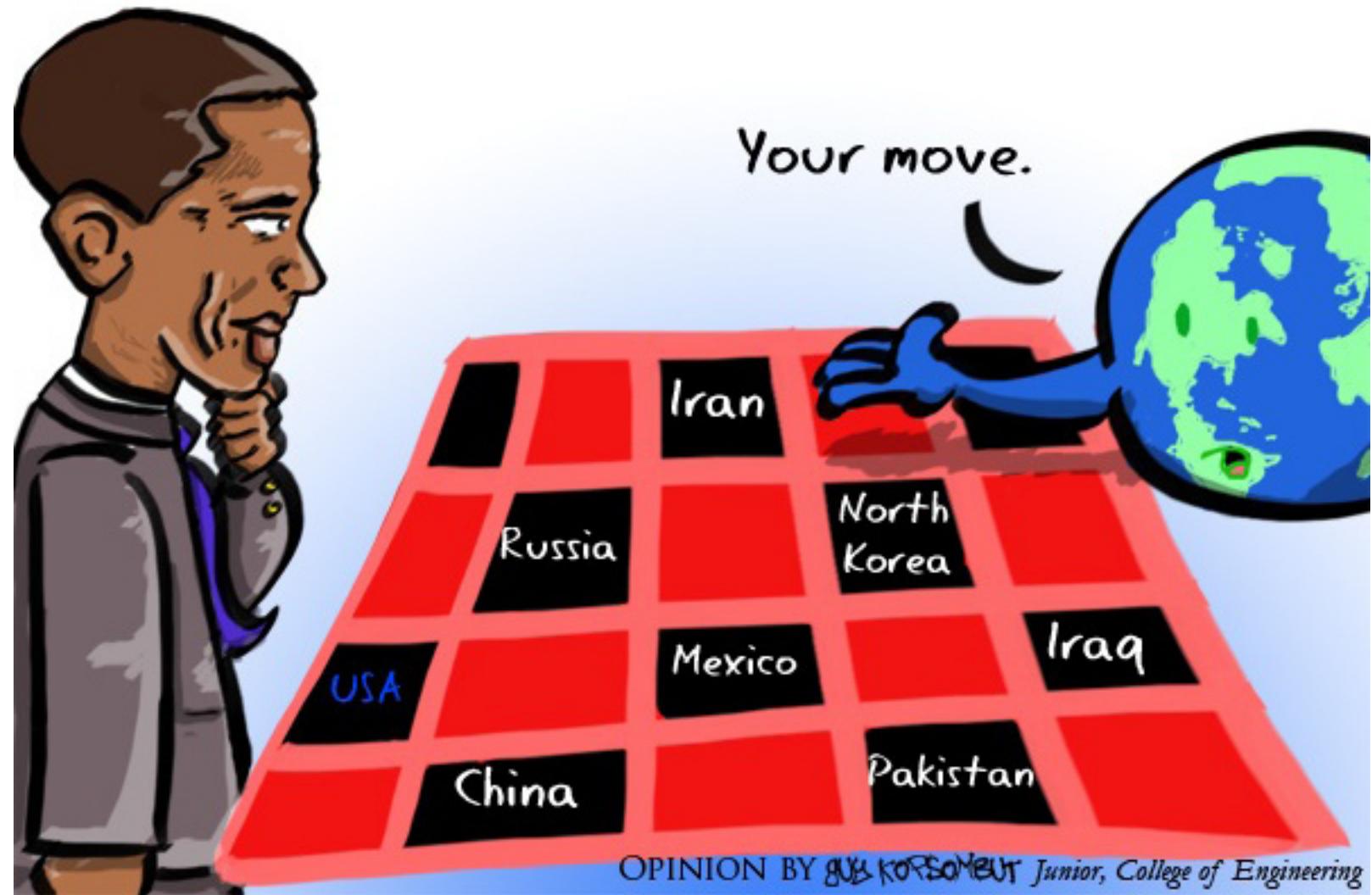


THE VANDERBILT POLITICAL REVIEW

WHAT'S NEXT FOR U.S. FOREIGN POLICY?



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FROM THE BOARD: PRESIDENT OBAMA

Sean Tierney, Vice President, *The Vanderbilt Political Review*

No doubt everyone who picks up this issue is already tired of hearing about President-elect Obama's stunning victory, his ongoing transition, and the promises and problems he will need to address come January 20th. Indeed, the world has paid so much attention to Obama and the 2008 campaign season that one could hardly be blamed for forgetting that George W. Bush is still our sitting president.

Bush won two elections in part because he was able to connect to the average citizen. Yet he alienated a great many colleagues along the way – especially on the international circuit. Even as Bush has followed a more moderate path these last few years, he has found it difficult to remain effective, or even relevant, on the world stage.

Politics, even in its most idealistic strains, is personal. Every government needs a face. International relationships are created ambassador by ambassador, head of state by head of state. Trust is built up connection by connection, and entire policies can be redesigned over a bruised ego or small suspicions (did Fidel Castro's chilly reception from President Eisenhower push him into the arms of the Soviet Union?). Bush's more pragmatic stances of today are paying the price for the toes he stepped on in his first term.

However much we may cringe at the voter who choos-

es based on which one windsurfs and which one hunts, the ability to relate is an important tool for any leader. If a politician can relate to enough ordinary folks across diverse swaths of America, chances are higher that he will also be able to relate to a foreign prime minister. Likability is often the lynchpin to successful diplomacy. Being liked by the leader of a foreign nation sometimes can be the first step towards lasting international cooperation.

Sure, Bush had likeability, but it was of an American brand that did not translate well overseas. Obama, on the other hand, has already won over state leaders the world around. Of course, his unique biography and the fact that he is not Bush have much to do with this. Still, Obama does not seem likely to alienate his colleagues anytime soon.

Obama's election does not prove that America is a meritocracy – merely that we are not so racist as to discount him entirely. Undoubtedly, many voted for Obama not because they felt his ideas were better but because they simply liked him better. Yet the likability vote has given us a President that the world wants to succeed and is lining up to work with.

Here's to having a beer and some arugula with our new President.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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DEFENSE AFTER BUSH: NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES IN THE OBAMA PRESIDENCY

Dr. Lawrence J. Korb, Senior fellow, National Security and International Policy, Center for American Progress

Eight years ago, during the 2000 presidential campaign, the quality of people serving in our armed forces was higher than at any point in our nation's history. Our military was also well equipped and ready to carry out two major regional contingencies.

The U.S. was also the most admired and respected country in the world, primarily because of the values we stood for. President Bush put it well in his successful campaign for the White House: "If we're an arrogant nation, they'll resent us; if we're a humble nation, but strong, they'll welcome us."

U.S.-led intervention had stopped the genocide in the Balkans, Europe had integrated most of the former Warsaw Pact nations, and the U.S. and Russia were working together on common problems. Although the Palestinians and Israelis had not yet finalized an agreement, the U.S. was heavily involved in trying to bring about an accord. North Korea had suspended its plutonium enrichment programs and permitted UN inspectors to check on its compliance, and Iran had not yet begun its nuclear enrichment program.

After the attacks of September 11th, 2001, the US had an opportunity to bring the world together to fight the threat from groups like al-Qaeda and create a new security framework for the post-Cold War world. The French newspaper Le Monde symbolized the feelings of other countries toward us with its "We are all Americans" headline. After the attacks, NATO invoked Article Five, which said that these attacks were an attack on the entire alliance. Iran condemned the attacks and the Iranian people held candlelight vigils and observed a moment of silence at a football stadium. Tehran offered to work with us to remove the Taliban and al-Qaeda from power in Afghanistan, and offered to negotiate a comprehensive arrangement with us.

Moreover, after the attacks of 9-11, the American people were willing to make all manner of sacrifices, including monetary, to help wage the Global War on Terrorism. At that time, the federal budget had a surplus of about 2.5 percent of the GDP, which was being used to replenish

the social security trust fund to deal with the onslaught of the baby boomers toward the end of the decade.

Today the situation is markedly different. The Army has had to lower its educational, aptitude, and moral standards to unprecedented levels to meet its recruiting goals. West Point graduates are leaving the Army in numbers not seen since Vietnam. Suicides, divorces, and the occurrence of mental problems in soldiers have skyrocketed. All the armed forces, particularly the Army, the Army National Guard, and the Marines, are short of equipment because so much of it has been destroyed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our military is so overstretched that it does not have sufficient ground troops to send to Afghanistan, let alone enough to deal with unforeseen contingencies.

US standing in the world, even among our traditional allies, has sunk to all time lows. For example, in 2007 in Turkey, only 9% of the people had a favorable view of the U.S. (as opposed to 52% in 2000). In Germany, U.S. favorability sunk from 78% eight years ago to 30% today. Both of these countries are strong voices in NATO, and Turkey is a key strategic bulwark against Islamic extremism.

North Korea has tested a nuclear weapon and developed enough material for up to 10 nuclear bombs. Iran has continued to enrich uranium and has dramatically increased its influence and power in the greater Middle East. NATO is in shambles as a consequence of ignoring Russia's concerns about its near abroad, and Russia has put a stop to NATO expansion.

The U.S. is no longer liked, feared, or respected in the Middle East. This was vividly demonstrated in May 2008, when despite U.S. objections, Qatar brokered a peace deal between Lebanon's disparate factions, Turkey began mediating peace talks between Israel and Syria, and Egypt began brokering a cease fire between Israel and Hamas.

Al Qaeda has regrouped in Pakistan, the situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate, and the Iraqis have not yet made the political compromises necessary to bring about meaningful political reconciliation, but are asking

us to set a timeline for withdrawal. And, seven years after 9-11, Osama bin Laden is still on the loose.

Finally, the country is broke. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are the first significant wars this country has fought for which it not only has not raised taxes, but has reduced them. As a result, the country has accumulated some \$4 trillion in debt just over the past seven years, and the fiscal year 2008 deficit will be the highest in U.S. history.

Now that Senator Barack Obama has been elected the next Commander-in-Chief of the US Armed Forces, the time is ripe for broad reform in US defense and national security policy. Specifically, President Obama and his national security team will need to look at options for the following issues:

1. How to draw down forces from Iraq and strengthen US military efforts in Afghanistan.
2. The Iranian nuclear situation and Iranian support for terrorism, and what sort of US diplomatic leverage might be employed to resolve those problems.
3. How to reform the Defense Department budget, and how best to strengthen the military for the irregular wars it is fighting today while hedging against threats from

conventional forces at some point in the future.

4. How to renew the strength of a military that is overstretched by two simultaneous wars, and whether or not a draft should be instituted to resolve those problems.

5. How best to expand NATO while also dealing with a resurgent Russia, and whether or not a missile shield should be deployed to Eastern Europe in defiance of Russian wishes.

President Obama will need to chart a course on defense and national security policy that are both firm and subtle, simultaneously resetting and reinvigorating the US military and reengaging with US allies, while also confronting the threats and challenges emanating from an unstable and uncertain world.

Dr. Lawrence J. Korb is a senior fellow in National Security and International Policy at the Center for American Progress. His previous positions include Senior Fellow and Director of National Security Studies and the Council on Foreign Relations; Assistant Secretary of Defense—Manpower, Logistics, Installations, and Reserve Affairs; and as a Naval Flight Officer. He retired from the US Naval Reserve with the rank of Captain.

PROVIDING THEIR OWN SECURITY

Joshua E. Thomas and Thomas W. Rosen, Juniors, College of Arts and Science

While Iraqi security appears to be improving overall, with a 75% decrease in deaths since 2007 and total security incidents falling to their lowest levels in four years, the US and coalition forces need to make sure this is not just ephemeral progress. Enhancing Iraq's own security forces is the best way to achieve this end. Not only would a more robust Iraqi army accelerate the long withdrawal of US and coalition forces, it would also benefit Iraq's political autonomy and enhance the prospects for Iraqi security well into the future.

Rather than struggling to win over hearts and minds, the US and coalition forces need to focus on the protection of the Iraqi citizens. What good is a new power station or hospital if insurgents can and will destroy it as soon as it is up and running? A considerably larger portion of economic and human resources need to be allocated to training efforts for the Iraqi Army.

The need for an effective and efficient Iraqi Army is even more urgent given the financial climate surrounding Iraq's oil market. Recently, Iraqi Oil Minister Hussain Al Shahristani has taken steps to provide temporary oil con-

tracts to a limited group of international oil companies. Mr. Al Shahristani's actions are paving the way for a burgeoning Iraqi oil industry. However, this industry's hopes are stymied by oil fears concerning security. If the Iraqis can provide a secure environment, then oil revenue can begin to flow into the country, which will, in the long run, improve the quality of life for more Iraqis. The implications are simple: if you want oil, security is essential.

There are several avenues that the U.S. should pursue to attain this incredible boost in security, such as shifting resources to new programs and increasing funding to successful missions. First, the current practice of pairing a military transition team (MiTT) with an Iraqi unit at the battalion level must be strengthened. Current teams consist of 10-12 U.S. soldiers and a field grade officer specially trained for the transition mission. These numbers should be doubled, either through an increase in US soldiers or the employment of contractors so that the MiTTs are operating with 20-24 personnel and are giving more training exposure to smaller Iraqi units at the company and platoon levels.

Once trained, there are specific areas where Iraq's army needs to focus. Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) remains a persistent threat to security and continually relocates throughout the nation, creating a game of "cat and mouse" between Coalition troops, Iraqi forces and AQI. Continual pressure on insurgent operatives within Iraq as well as dispatching forces to more effectively monitor their practices is essential, and more resources need to be allocated to enhance this mission. With AQI still receiving considerable support from the Sunni population it claims to defend, Iraqi and Coalition security forces need to move their resources to areas where AQI retains popularity, such as south of the major city of Basra and AQI's most recent stronghold in the Upper-Euphrates.

Similarly, despite attempts to secure Iraq's border since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom, Syrian and Iranian militants still penetrate Iraq's border with

ease and support insurgent efforts. Syria remains a safe haven for insurgents eluding Iraqi and Coalition forces, while the government of Iran quite openly transports weapons into Iraq. Considering the permanence of these neighbors and their open hostility towards the new Iraqi regime, securing Iraq's borders should become one of the Iraqi Army's primary missions.

The aim of activating more Iraqi Army battalions provides a valuable goal that has tangible results and is clearly measurable, thus allowing the new President a means of translating success to the American public and the international community. If these new programs and current missions are properly funded and manned, the security situation in Iraq will improve and give Coalition Forces and, more importantly, the Iraqi people the chance to safely rebuild Iraq into a stable and prosperous nation.

A NEW COLD WAR? WELL... YES AND NO, (MOSTLY YES).

Andrew Boulineau, Candidate for Doctor of Jurisprudence, Vanderbilt Law School

You may have noticed that, during the recent Presidential campaign, if either candidate were asked about Russia or the situation in the Caucasus, the first response was always "We are not entering a new Cold War." The reason for this is obviously because we actually are entering a new Cold War. Rather, we never really disengaged from the old one. Do not panic. Right now, it is mostly being contested in the former Soviet sphere. Here is the story.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia fell on hard times. The country was beset on all sides by nationalist movements in regions that had been under Russian rule for centuries. The economy and the infrastructure were in a shambles, and the mafia rose in power and wealth more and more as the days went by. The administrations of Boris Yeltsin – a man beset by health problems and alcoholism – seemed to only be pushing the country further down the road to ruin.

Enter Vladimir Putin wearing white. Putin's administrations seemed to put Russia back on course. The disorganized, underfunded, and under-equipped military was somehow hammered back in shape to put down a separatist movement (with radical Islamist overtones) in the Caucasian province of Chechnya. The government acquired a majority stake in the giant petroleum producer,

Gazprom, and began putting the massive oil wealth of one of the world's leading petroleum producers to public use. This allowed Putin to announce the first major weapons purchases since the 1990s, and to start using Russia's position as a major petroleum supplier to further foreign policy goals. He was reelected by a landslide for his second term, and, when term limits prevented him from running for a third, Russians elected his hand-picked successor, who ran on a platform of naming Putin prime minister. I am, of course, speaking of Dmitry Medvedev, the current president. (Incidentally, Mr. Medvedev has proposed extending the presidential term from four years to six, so when Putin becomes eligible to run for president again....).

Unfortunately, these gains for Russia were purchased in some rather shady transactions. For instance, the pro-Moscow regime in Chechnya is currently headed by Ramzan Kadyrov, whose major policy initiatives include (a) enriching himself through illegal oil sales, and (b) organizing militias that roam the streets at night raping and murdering his political opponents.

As for Gazprom, it is currently the only oil company of any size in Russia, but this has not always been the case. Once, a company named Yukos produced about 20% of

Russia's oil – that's 2% of the world's supply. After Putin's first election, Yukos found itself under investigation for tax evasion, and very soon after, found itself moving towards bankruptcy. Negotiations began to sell off the company's assets to our own beloved Exxon, but then, Yukos's president was arrested for fraud, and the Russian government took over the sale. The pearl of Yukos's assets, a subsidiary called Yuganskneftegas, went for a fire sale price to Baikalfinansgrup, a stealth company that had been incorporated a mere 13 days earlier. Four days after the auction, Baikalfinansgrup was bought by the company that had financed its bid in the Yukos auction – Rosneft. About 75% of Rosneft stock is held by the Russian government.

In other words, by hook or by crook, Vladimir Putin has consolidated domestic power and put practically the entire Russian oil industry in his own hands. With 25% of the European Union's oil coming from or at least through Russia, and with Russian oil being practically the only oil supply for Eastern Europe, the Russian government's stock portfolio translates into the power to shut down the former Soviet sphere of influence at will and cause severe economic turmoil in the European Union. Not that Russia would ever do that, mind you...

Meanwhile, as Vladimir Putin gathered strength, the other side of the first Cold War did not sit on its hands. Seven nations that had been members of the old Soviet Union – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia – entered the European Union. Two more – Hungary and Bulgaria – have applications pending. All of these nations are members of NATO, and two more – Ukraine and Georgia – have applications pending. In Eastern Europe, that leaves Belarus and Moldova as the only nations who have not definitively traded in Russian hegemony for a portion in the West. If Ukraine joins NATO, more than two thirds of Russia's huge Western border would have a NATO member on the other side.

Furthermore, George W. Bush has extended an open invitation to former Soviet nations to join his anti-terrorism network of radar and missile installations, in exchange for which said nations would receive significant military equipment upgrades. The Bush administration has vehemently denied that this network would be installed to counter Russia. (The reason we need anti-ballistic missiles in Poland is to keep Iran from nuking Sweden, apparently). Russia, unfortunately, doesn't seem to be buying it.

All of this happened, though, without anyone asking

questions about a new Cold War. The questions started only when Russia started pushing back against what it perceived as the West's encroachment on its historical sphere of influence. I'm talking about the short war in the NATO-applicant nation of Georgia.

Now, the President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, is a Columbia-educated lawyer, who practiced at a high-powered New York firm before embarking upon his Georgian political career. He heavily influenced the former Soviet state in a Western direction, instituting free market reforms, courting European and American investors, and applying for NATO membership. He also managed to consolidate the power of the central Georgian government by re-incorporating certain parts of the country that had essentially become independent since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Most importantly, though, Saakashvili had sealed the deal on the construction of three pipelines running from the new oil fields of Azerbaijan, through Georgia, to ports on the Black Sea. In other words – the only supply line into Europe from the East not controlled by Russia. (And... there is talk that the Caucasian supply lines could even start extending into the rich, untapped fields of Central Asia – the next big source of Gazprom expansion).

A few months ago, Saakashvili tried to reassert control over the breakaway Georgian province of South Ossetia by force. Russia – which claims the title of Protector for such breakaway Caucasian provinces (at least the ones in Georgia) – swiftly retaliated. They occupied both of Georgia's breakaway regions and some pretty significant areas of Georgia proper, indicating that they intended to stay where they were until Georgia foreswore the use of force, and until the EU sent a peacekeeping force. Their conditions met, Russia obligingly withdrew from the indisputably Georgian parts of their occupied area, poured 7,000 troops into the disputed provinces, and recognized their independence from Georgia.

After Georgia, things started happening rather more quickly. Mere days after the conflict began, Poland joined up with the Bush administration's defense network plan. The nations of Eastern Europe loudly denounced Russia's actions, proclaiming parallels with the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The Bush administration also (albeit rather hesitatingly, in the view of some commentators) spoke out against what it saw as Russia's "overreaching."

In Russia, President Medvedev proclaimed the five principles of Russia's new foreign policy. First, he ac-

nowledged the supremacy of international law. Second, he asserted that a “unipolar” (i.e. exclusively American-oriented) world order was inherently unstable. Third, he said Russia sought no conflict with anybody. Fourth, he pledged to protect Russian citizens “wherever they are” (a not-terribly-veiled reference to the South Ossetians, most of whom carry Russian passports). Fifth, he noted that “Russia, just like other countries in the world, has regions where it has its privileged interests.”

Since that time, Russia has set up naval exercises with the perennially pro-American regimes in Venezuela and Cuba (that’s sarcasm, folks), and started flooding Ukraine’s Crimean peninsula with Russian passports. The day after Barack Obama won the American Presidential election, President Medvedev pledged to station

new missiles in Kaliningrad – Russia’s postage-stamp exclave on the Baltic Sea – pointed at America’s proposed defense network installations in Poland. For good measure, he also pledged to electronically jam the network.

America and Europe have so far responded to all of Russia’s recent activities with... talk, mostly. Oh... and funds have been pledged to rebuild Georgia, but that’s about it. When the President of Poland recently told the world he had Obama’s assurances the defense network installations would go forward, the President-elect issued a press release correcting him. Apparently, he had made no such assurances.

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SYSTEMATIC DISRUPTION: A NEW APPROACH TO THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

Dan de Wit, Senior, College of Arts and Science

Now that Senator Obama has been elected as the 44th President of the United States, it is time to reexamine US strategy in the Global War on Terror and devise policies that will be more effective at fighting al-Qaeda and ending their ability to commit terrorist acts around the world. Most of these initiatives will need to be non-military in nature, but there will still be an important role for kinetic, forceful action to capture or kill irreconcilable militant Islamists and disrupt the al-Qaeda network.

For several years now, military experts have recognized that the Global War on Terror is not so much a counterterrorism campaign in the classical sense as it is counterinsurgency on a global scale. This has important implications. Most critically, it means that simply killing off the leaders of al-Qaeda and like-minded terrorist groups will have only a negligible effect on the groups’ ability to wage terror around the world. It is far more important to isolate the members of al-Qaeda and other irreconcilable jihadists from the larger Muslim populations that they seek to influence, disrupting their ability to connect with like-minded elements around the world. When the al-Qaeda network is dismembered into small groups and individuals who cannot interact with one another, the group will be for all intents and purposes impotent, though some of its members will remain alive and at large.

The tools that the US government needs to accomplish this mission are overwhelmingly non-militaristic in nature. The most critical element in the strategy will be efforts to bolster non-militant Islamist thinkers, who can present to the Muslim world a credible Islamist political philosophy that de-legitimizes terrorism as a method for bringing about change. It will also be important to address the economic disparity between the Muslim world and the developed West, as this disparity is a major source of anti-Western anger and resentment, even amongst Muslims such as Osama bin Laden, who are personally wealthy.

While these “soft power” tools will need to be the focus of a new Global Counterinsurgency campaign, there will still be some committed jihadists who will remain a major threat as long as they retain the ability to strike around the world. This will remain the case even if sentiments amongst Muslim populations have been turned so completely against terrorism that these jihadists can win no new supporters. Thus, there is still an important role for the use of forceful, or “kinetic” action to target these committed terrorists and disrupt their networks. However, rather than focusing these kinetic efforts on killing or capturing as many of these terrorists as possible, the US should concentrate its resources towards disrupting

the ability of terrorist groups to coordinate and move weapons, finances, and supplies around the world. Such a strategy recognizes that the war of attrition US forces have been waging against al-Qaeda is ineffective. Low-level foot soldiers in al-Qaeda's ranks are a dime-a-dozen, and rolling up numerous men at this level will have no effect on the group whatsoever. In the same vein, the group's leadership can be replaced quickly. However, by employing US intelligence and military resources against mid-level facilitators, real progress can be made against the al-Qaeda network. Mid-level targets form the connective tissue between al-Qaeda leadership and low-level extremists who actually carry out attacks. They are the ones who move the information, money, weapons, and in some cases people, into place so that terrorist acts can be undertaken. Without them, al-Qaeda's senior leadership will be nothing more than a group of angry men sitting in the mountains of western Pakistan, unable to influence events around the world. By the same token, the jihadists at the lowest level will be unable to coordinate their actions for maximum effect, and the threat they pose will be of only the lowest magnitude.

Such a strategy will take a page from the lessons of maneuver warfare, which states that an enemy can be defeated most effectively not by simply capturing or killing the majority of his forces, but by targeting the few elements that are absolutely necessary to his waging a coordinated campaign. By focusing maximum force on

these key points, one can systematically disrupt and render completely impotent an enemy force without actually having to destroy it entirely. Such a strategy is preferable when fighting a terrorist group such as al-Qaeda because the network's ability to hide amongst the larger Muslim population renders America's overwhelming firepower, always an advantage in attrition warfare, almost completely useless. US efforts to capture or kill the entire al-Qaeda network will almost certainly fail, and may well backfire by generating more recruits.

Rather, by pursuing a strategy that is both subtle and strong, combining both broad "soft power" and precise "hard power" tools, the US is far more likely to render al-Qaeda totally inoperative in the long run.

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A PROFESSOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Omar Ali, Professor, The College of Arts and Science; Author, In the Balance of Power

VPR: How did you decide to write on the topic of African Americans and independent politics?

I decided to write about the topic when I was approached by Ohio University Press to produce a book that would do a sweep of the history of African Americans and their involvement with the independent political movement and third parties. It was the result of a proposal that Paul Finkleman, of the University of Baldwin Law School, gave on my behalf. I actually gave him a couple of pages of ideas and he shipped it/shopped it around. That's how the actual thing came about and I decided to write full steam ahead once I was given a contract. Before that, I had spent basically the last twenty years involved in looking at the history of African Americans and third party politics both when I began in college as a student activist and then as a scholar looking at the material. One

of the important things to understand about this is that if you want to understand American democracy, it's critical to understand the role of African Americans within it, who worked to push for change from the outside (that is, through independents and people involved in third parties). Today marks the day, the beginning of a new chapter in American history, where you have the first African American President elected and that came about as a result of decades of black political struggle with white independents trying to make a day like this happen for somebody of that stature. Barack Obama could bring together the country around issues of political reform, which is really what he is talking about when he talks about "change." He is talking about political reform changing the culture of politics, things both domestically and abroad. He is, in some ways, a product of African Americans and indepen-

dents and the mix black independents, so there is a lot of history to all of this and I happen to be the person at this point who has written about it most recently.

VPR: As a political historian, you have obviously been watching trends in electoral behavior very closely. Was the election of the first African American President of the U.S. something out of the blue, or were there specific events in our history that pointed to the fact that it would be happening soon?

In 1988, you see the beginnings of a shift among the African American electorate, which was starting to question the validity and helpfulness of the two-party system. That year, the first woman and the first African American got on the ballot in all 50 states. Her name was Dr. Lenora Fulani. It was the same year that the Reverend Jesse Jackson ran as an insurgent democrat but did not get the nomination. Dr. Fulani's campaign was to challenge the idea that the Democratic Party was most helpful for the black community than the Americans in general. And since that time, you see a growing movement away from the two major parties among Americans of all backgrounds, left, right, conservative, liberal, black, white, Latino, and Asian. And the people who have been leading that charge which cuts across all these groups are the younger generation. They have been most identified as independent in survey after survey so today is also a product of the youth vote coming out from the mass to counter what people are talking about as the "Bradley Effect" and to work with other like-minded Americans to see political reform. So I would start with 1988 as the beginning of a new chapter in American history, with 1992 producing Ross Perot and twenty million people voting for an independent, and then continuing with that history, which is what I talk about in my book.

VPR: How have independents shaped the 2008 elections?

Both Barack Obama and Senator McCain were beneficiaries of the independent support that they got in the primaries. McCain's campaign was basically dead in the water until New Hampshire, where independents helped to give him his victory, and from that point on he won primary after primary. At the same time, Obama was the beneficiary of the independent white vote he got in the primaries along with African Americans. Both Obama and McCain are in some way "mavericks" in the sense that they have both challenged the partisanship of Washington DC politics. McCain, by reaching across the aisle with his legislative reforms, and Obama, by speaking

to Americans of all backgrounds. You'll note in this Election that both candidates were speaking to not just their base, but also reaching out to people who are not in their party, like Obama speaking about democrats, republicans and independents. McCain mostly talked about republicans and independents, but independents were part of that mix and that represent the political change that is necessary in this country. They in some ways are in the balance of power in the margin, which has helped to produce both sides for their candidacies and now we have the first African American President.

VPR: Historically, during the past twenty years, people have turned towards a more aggressive foreign policy. Do you think voter turnout this time around maybe have changed that?

Obama has a tremendous challenge, but just the fact that he has been elected will allow for new policies that I think will bring the war to a close. I think that he said that we can't pull the troops out immediately, but he is looking for a way to pull out over a period of time. He is quoted as saying "six months" but that might change due to conditions. However, there is definitely a spirit to get troops and personnel out of there. I think that the US, unfortunately, under the Bush administration has created a real problem in the Middle East and internationally by going to Iraq the way that we did and I think that there will be some kind of inevitable vacuum. I don't know if there is an easier or cleaner solution for this, and I think that Obama is going to have to struggle with this as the President of our nation. Clearly, a part of his mandate was anti-war sentiment in this country, which was very, very strong amongst young people.

VPR: Where did McCain go wrong when it came to attracting these independent voters?

I think that he did not go after them enough. What you started to see in the polls in the last week-and-a-half and two weeks was that independents were breaking by at least 12 percentage points more for Obama than McCain and I think a part of that was because McCain became hysterical. It's unfortunate because he really was the voice of independents at an earlier point, like in the year 2000, when he ran for President. Independents were very attracted to him because he had this "maverick" status and "Straight Talk Express," which was nowhere to be found in this election. It was unfortunate because he was this tragic figure who was not going after the independents. He undermined his campaign and independents, not just in terms of rightwing independents or people on the right,

but people who are also on the left who might have supported him earlier on in the campaign. He continued to isolate with his rhetoric in terms of the war as well as his pick of Sarah Palin, which people saw as somewhat reckless. I think independents did not take to her strong rhetoric against Obama and generally felt that she was unprepared for the job as President.

VPR: What's in the future for our country's political makeup?

I don't know what the future will hold, but I think what we are seeing is the possibility of a transformation of the political culture in this country, where young people have been a critical part of in this election cycle. If the country is going to move in a developmental direction,

what I mean by that is a direction where there is less partisanship, with policies that help the poor and working people, and the US being seen in a more positive light internationally, it is going to come about not just through laws but through the environment that's created. An environment where a person like Obama can reconcile with people who he may not agree with, which is a lesson that I think we can all learn from in some ways. His ability to, if you will, bring folks together and to reach out and listen to people he may not agree with and be respectful is, in some ways, critical to any healthy republic.

*Interview performed by Elizabeth Lopez
Director of Affairs, The Vanderbilt Political Review*

THE RACIAL DIVIDE: WHY THE BLACK ELECTORATE HAS ALIGNED WITH THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Ryan Stewart, Junior, College of Arts and Science

Barack Obama's historic election to President of the United States is unquestionably an amazing step for African Americans in this country. Therefore, it is not surprising that the final exit polls showed that 95% of black voters supported Obama, to only 4% for John McCain.

What is more intriguing is the fact that the African-American population has voted for the Democratic Party in significant numbers for the past few decades. In national elections from 1972-2002, black voters identified themselves as Democrats between 75% and 80% of the time, while voting Republican only 5% to 11% of the time. In fact, in the 2000 election, Democratic nominee Al Gore claimed 90% of the black vote. While conventional political theory argues that the Democrats' role in the Civil Rights movement has aligned African-Americans with the party for the indeterminable future, I challenge that this is not true, and that the racial gap today is formed by support for welfare and false portrayal in the media.

In partisan politics, the ruling party is often given credit for successes and failures on the national level, regardless of the party's actual impact. This is exactly why the Civil Rights movement is remembered as a focal point of a Democratic administration and Congress working in progressive unison. In reality, however, many Demo-

crats went above and beyond to hinder the success of the movement for racial equality. As shown in the figure below, the Republican Party voted in much greater favor for civil rights legislation than the Democrats.

The pieces of legislation in the table were some of the most essential and progressive acts in the Civil Rights movement. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed Jim Crow-style voting laws that had hindered blacks' ability to vote in the South. Similarly, the Civil Rights Act of 1968 pushed for the integration of neighborhoods, prohibiting discrimination in selling or renting of housing based on race.

Even more condemning than these statistics is the way in which congressional Democrats handled the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Perhaps the most important piece of legislation for the movement, the act outlawed racial segregation in schools and also prohibited employment discrimination based on race, color and sex. Not only did Republicans favor this act with much greater fervor than Democrats (as shown in the above figure), but Democrat Party leaders also attempted to stop the bill without passage. Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV), who has held several party leadership positions including Democratic whip, along with other segregationist Dixiecrats filibustered the act for 83 days in an attempt to kill the bill. Fortunately,

Table 1: Vote on Civil Rights Bills by Party

ACT	HOUSE DEM (Y-N)	HOUSE REP	DIFF.	SENATE DEM	SENATE REP	DIFF.
C.R. 1964	63% - 31%	80% - 20%	REP +17%	69% - 31%	80% - 20%	REP +11%
Voting Rights 1965	73% - 27%	94% - 6%	REP +21%	78% - 22%	82% - 18%	REP + 4%
C.R. 1968	71% - 29%	91% - 9%	REP +20%	63% - 37%	54% - 46%	DEM + 9%

Republicans and other Democrats were able to come together and meet a two-thirds majority approval, defeating the filibuster.

Not only do Democrats have a worse record on race than they are given credit for, but the Republican record has been underrepresented. David Duke, a Ku Klux Klan member, attempted to run for President as a Republican in 1968 but was run out by Republican Party leaders. Twenty years later, Duke was permitted to run in the Democratic Presidential primaries. In the same way, Branch Rickey was a conservative Republican and owner of the Dodgers baseball team. Having moved from St. Louis, Rickey found himself with an opportunity to accomplish his “great experiment.” Later that year, he acquired Jackie Robinson as the first black professional baseball player, fueling the Civil Rights movement.

Economically, blacks have prospered under Republican administrations. With the Reagan tax cuts in the 1980s, the number of black families making at least \$50,000 a year doubled. Similarly, black-owned firms increased by over 35% from 1982-1987 and these businesses tripled their growth rate for that period. The African-American electorate favors Republicans on many political issues as well. Because blacks are the most religious racial group, they tend to have conservative viewpoints on social issues such as abortion, gay marriage and stem cell research. Republicans have also consistently appointed African Americans to historic roles. Under Reagan, Colin Powell became the first black National Security Advisor. Meanwhile, under George W. Bush, Condoleezza Rice became the first black female National Security Advisor and Colin Powell became the first black Secretary of State.

What is it then that compels African-Americans to identify with the Democratic party in such a significant way?

First, social welfare programs are one of the few political issues on which blacks overwhelmingly agree with the Democrats’ perspective. Compared to the White electorate, there is a greater percentage of low-income citizens in the black electorate. As a result, many African-Americans are supportive of social relief programs such as affirmative action, unemployment benefits, and wel-

fare that benefit low-income citizens. This is, in essence, politics in its most simple form. Voters will elect those representatives that will most help the voters themselves. In a 2005 Gallup poll, 72% of black citizens supported affirmative action programs. Comparatively, only 44% of white citizens were supportive. Similarly, only 26% of African-Americans feel that efforts to promote equal rights have gone too far, while nearly half of the Caucasian population feels they have.

Secondly, while we have seen that the Democrats were not the cause of success in the Civil Rights movement, history has written otherwise. President John F. Kennedy is remembered as the force behind the movement, even though Black Panther and other progressive group leaders at the time felt that JFK was ambivalent towards their cause.

Students grow up being taught that Democrats pushed through Civil Rights legislation and the fact that blacks vote consistently Democratic supports the notion. But the actual statistics show otherwise. Therefore I argue that history books and the media have aligned the black electorate on the Democratic side by implying Democrats as the progressive force. Polling data has shown that blacks are, in fact, supporting Democrats over Republicans more strongly now than they had shortly after the Civil Rights movement. This represents a timeline that shows blacks originally somewhat weary of the Democratic Party for hindering their equality, but as time wore on and history was re-written in the media, young blacks are now more likely to align themselves with Democrats, unaware of the party’s actual record.

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TIGHT BUDGET TO LIMIT CHANGE FOR OBAMA

Ned Bryan, Junior, College of Arts and Science

Americans are looking forward to the numerous changes that Barack Obama has promised to bring to Washington during his next four years in office, but many people may be disappointed with what Obama is actually able to achieve while he is President. Obama has capitalized on the word “change” during his campaign for the White House, and although it has proven to be an effective way of appealing to voters, there is a big difference between what he said on the campaign trail and what he will be able to accomplish while in office. One of the biggest issues that has surfaced, and one that threatens to take attention away from some of his campaign promises, is the economic crisis that has gripped the U.S. When he takes office, Obama must be focused on reviving the failing economy, which may keep him from implementing the dramatic changes on issues such as education and healthcare that he promised to the American people.

According to Rahm Emanuel, Obama’s appointed chief of staff, Obama plans to pursue a stimulus package that will give tax cuts to middle class Americans in January. The aim of this stimulus package is to provide monetary relief to the working class and to promote an increase in jobs in order to address the rising rate of unemployment. Although the objectives of this stimulus package address the most important issue facing Americans right now, the estimated \$190 billion package combined with the \$700 billion already allocated to the crisis will put a huge constraint on the budget allotted to Obama. When faced with a tighter budget than originally thought, some of Obama’s extensive campaign promises will inevitably have to be reduced in size and effectiveness, or postponed altogether.

An example of an issue that was at the center of Obama’s campaign, and is now in jeopardy, is healthcare reform because of the large amount of money it will require to create a new system. Obama’s healthcare plan to provide affordable health coverage for 95% of Americans may be delayed due to the 75 billion dollars that is needed to fund the program for its first year of operation. Although the plan aims to make healthcare more affordable for the majority of Americans by reducing costs by \$2,500, some health policy experts doubt that savings will be that high. Taking into consideration the vast sums of money that are required to stabilize the economy, it does not seem that this is the opportune moment to introduce a policy change that will cost billions of dollars, even with the elimination of programs such as Medicare, especially when the projected benefits are questioned by experts. Although the current healthcare program has many flaws and needs to be reformed in some way, the implementation of a completely new system while the U.S. is in this fragile economic state carries unnecessary risks and can wait until the economic crisis is solved. In addition to providing fiscal constraints on larger issues similar to healthcare, the financial crisis has also taken political and media attention away from less momentous issues such as education and immigration.

In an interview with CNN a couple of days before the election, Obama was asked to rank issues in terms of priority. The five issues were healthcare, energy independence, a new tax code, education, and immigration. Although they are not the most pressing issues at the moment, education was last in Obama’s list, and immigration was not even mentioned. These are examples of is-

sues that received attention when Obama was charming voters, but may be neglected due to the economic crisis and other issues taking precedent. Although it is not reasonable to expect Obama to address and solve every issue facing American society, that is the image he projected on the campaign trail. Even if he successfully implements solutions to his top priority issues, there is still a long list of other issues Obama led the public to believe he was able to address. Obama proposed \$8 billion to re-stimulate Bush's No Child Left Behind program in order to make it more effective, and another \$10 billion to expand early childhood education. If Obama is unable to secure funding for this proposed spending on education, he has the possibility of leaving education not much better off than when he found it. It is the less pressing issues such as education and immigration that are going to be postponed while the larger issues such as the economic crisis

and energy independence get the attention and funding from Obama's government.

The financial crisis has illuminated one of the main difficulties facing Barack Obama while President. Obama has promised change on all levels of government, and has not taken into account the possibility of unexpected events. By trying to inspire hope in the people of this country, Obama has pledged to do too much, and will not be able to fulfill his all of his campaign promises. Before taking office, Obama is already faced with a crisis that will inevitably impact the amount of change he will be able to affect in the government, and it has forced him to alter his agenda in order to address the current situation. No matter what happens with the headline issues Obama chooses to focus on, the neglect of promised change in all areas of the government, including education and immigration, will ultimately disappoint the American public.

THE WORLD'S EXPECTATIONS

Kyle Nelson, Junior, College of Arts and Science

OK, it's over. We know Senator Obama will be President. We know Senator McCain will not be President. But what else do we know? Not much. Senator Obama shattered the traditional mold of Presidents, executed a campaign that finally got youth involved, constantly reminded everyone that he is not President Bush, and made a lot of promises that look great on paper. And this, apparently, has the entire world thinking they know a lot more about the future than they actually do.

The Obama fervor generated outside the United States is outlandish. You really have to experience it first hand in order to understand. In my initial experiences, I tried to treat the situation with humility: it's difficult seeing so many people care about your election when you know almost nothing of theirs. However, after a while, you see the real situation. I have lost track of how many times when people find out that I'm American, they raise a fist and exclaim "Obama!" It's remarkable. If I then ask a person why they wanted Obama to be elected, they usually respond with: "Change!" Press them further, you don't get much. This is not an attack on Obama or his campaign. If anything, it's an attack on the culture that has hailed Obama as a messiah, never stopping to think of the limited scope of his power, and the inability of one man, no matter how powerful, to swiftly fix all of the problems in the world.

For voters, the line between public stature and celebrity status is becoming more vague, more blurred, and sadly,

less important. Obama has done such a superior job marketing himself that he is no longer just a policy maker or even a figurehead for the world's premier superpower; he is also a pop icon, an ideal, and above all a celebrity which voters have used to define their own personality; a Barack Obama personality. With the battle of electing Obama concluded, where do these obsessed voters turn? Will continuous blind reverence be a staple of the next four years, or will there be pressure for Obama to fulfill his multitude of promises, both domestically and internationally?

Look no further for Obama's rushed celebrity status as a savior than the Obama shirts fashioned in the same manner as the mass produced, cliché yet for some reason still considered counterculture, Che Guevara t-shirts. The best part about these t-shirts is that both Obama supporters and his critics wear them (with very slight variations). Supporters seem uninformed about how silly it is to draw a parallel between their now pop art communist hero (as if "fashionably communist" isn't an oxymoron) to the senator who was recently elected President in a Democratic state. Critics are simply ignorant to the utter impossibility of Barack Obama turning out to be within a hundred shades of Che Guevara. It's a true testament to the naiveté of these voters; their willingness to follow for means of a fashion statement, of creating a personality for a senator about which they clearly know little. Stereotyping is clearly accepted in contemporary culture

as a means of making a statement; and this, regrettably, seems to be more important than focusing on the efficacy of candidate policies.

If you want to look further than the Che confusion, look to the Shepard Fairey produced political posters, which are reminiscent of a Warholian pop portrait. Warhol, who indeed coined the phrase “15 minutes of fame,” would have loved this painting: it’s an inadvertent tribute to the acceptance of mass production and indiscriminate sameness that Warhol depicted in his work so well. Perhaps the mass production of the words “change” and “maverick” are good examples throughout the election; hear it enough and you accept, without ever considering the policies behind it, never challenging rhetoric but rather looking for a reason to say “I’ll follow.”

This is the point where I must clarify. Most Obama voters and most McCain voters are not willfully misinformed. If McCain had won, this article would probably address McCain voters much more than Obama voters. Obama simply did a better job of appealing to voters (and, let’s be honest, t-shirts and posters of a wrinkly old man and a winking maverick just don’t sell).

So what does this all mean? Probably nothing. But maybe it means that along with the financial crisis, immigration issues, healthcare issues, and two wars, president-elect Obama will have to deal with the astronomical expectations that have been created for him. Of course only time will attest to his ability to control all these factors, and let’s hope for the world that he is capable of doing his part.

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The Vanderbilt Political Review is looking for intelligent, motivated, and politically active students from the Class of 2012 to become a part of the VPR staff. These students will be involved with the selection of the essays that are published in each issue, editing, fact-checking, encouraging others from their class to write, and even writing some of the essays themselves.

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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.

CHANGE THE WORLD

Alternative Summer Break

Alternative Summer Break is a community service organization governed by students with a common vision to volunteer, unite, and to provide solutions for social injustices by combining education, direct service, and reflection on the national and international levels. ASuB '09 will take place May 2-9 or May 9-14. Sites include Memphis, New Orleans, Lewis County-Kentucky, and Memphis. Participant Applications will be available Spring '09. Be a part of a change—Leave Your Mark!

For more information visit www.vanderbilt.edu/asub or email vandyasub@gmail.com



Volunteer Tennessee

The mission of Volunteer Tennessee is to encourage volunteerism and community service. This program is affiliated with Americorps. They are a great resource for planning volunteer programs and for helping to find placements for interested volunteers.

Serving through local nonprofits and schools, national service members and volunteers tutor children, coordinate service-learning and after-school programs, build homes, organize neighborhood watch groups, clean streams, recruit volunteers, and do other things to improve and strengthen communities. Whether serving full- or half-time, as a part of AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, or the Senior Corps, citizens of Tennessee are making schools better, children healthier, streets safer, and the environment cleaner.

For more information, e-mail jim.snell@state.tn.us or visit <http://www.state.tn.us/finance/rds/tcnscs.htm>

Mentor TennisSee

Mentor TennisSee is a non-profit, student-led program that brings the game of tennis to inner-city youth. Through an integrated program of tennis instruction, college access initiatives, academic tutoring, and job skills seminars, Mentor TennisSee offers a multi-faceted approach to combating the many ills that plague high poverty communities. Vanderbilt is the host to first Mentor TennisSee chapter; student leaders at Fisk University, Tennessee State University, and UT-Knoxville will soon operate their own programs in their communities under the Mentor TennisSee umbrella. The Vanderbilt chapter is looking for volunteer tennis coaches (no tennis experience necessary!) and volunteer tutors. The program has been operating out of an East Nashville Community Center, and will soon expand to include students from local schools.

For more information on how you can help, please contact Jeff Berry (Vanderbilt '10), Founder and President. He can be reached by email (jeff.berry@vanderbilt.edu) or by telephone (215-688-7379).

The Lost Boys Foundation

The Lost Boys Foundation of Nashville was created in the fall of 2004 by photographer Jack Spencer and a small group of volunteers, after witnessing first hand the tragic circumstances many of the young men still face in the Nashville community. The Foundation's mission is to the reunification and living enhancement of the Lost Boys of Nashville by working with the Lost Boys of Sudan and their leadership to create and fund a community complex.

This foundation hosts fundraisers and utilizes volunteers. For more information, visit www.thelostboysfoundation.org.