

BROMFIELD POLITICAL PULSE

BROMFIELD POLITICS CLUB



ISSUE 1

A COLLECTION OF NEWS STORIES AND RESPONSES
FROM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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THIS WAS WRITTEN BY BROMFIELD POLITICS CLUB WHOSE AIM IS TO PROMOTE POLITICAL DISCUSSION, USE OUR VOICES, AND ANALYZE NEWS OBJECTIVELY. THIS MAGAZINE AIMS TO DISCUSS CONTRASTING VIEWPOINTS AND REMAIN RESPECTFUL.

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VENEZUELA CRISIS

FACTS:

Venezuela, a country known for its riches in crude oil and socialism. After former left-wing President Hugo Chavez died, setting out reforms in unemployment for the working class and indigenous communities, his designated successor, Nicholas Maduro was unable to contain inflation that surpassed 1 million percent. Maduro increased public spending which initially supported the economy however the government soon resorted to printing money to finance the increasing deficit. In 2017, the United Nations' Human Development Program ranked Venezuela's Human Development Index at .761, higher than neighboring Colombia and Brazil. This figure, with 1.0 being the highest possible score, is an indicator used by economists to measure the extent to which people are able to be and do desirable things in life. Venezuela's HDI climbed under Chavez and peaked during Maduro's administration at .778 in 2014. This led to mass shortages in essential products for at least two million Venezuelans.

On January 23, Juan Guaido, the leader of the opposition party, declared himself the interim president. Maduro has dismissed Guaido as a US-led conspiracy, with the military backing him. Maduro has tightened control of the country's media, restricting and domestic press reporting his government negatively. With mass protests by Venezuelan citizens on the presumed fraudulent reelection of Maduro, lack of supplies and the week-long power outage caused by a lack of renovation of power lines has caused a tension-filled country. Guaido used the event to depict the event as another reason for Maduro's incompetence as a leader, while Maduro has blamed Washington claiming "the electric war announced and directed by American imperialism against our people will be defeated". Many have already died in competing protests across the country, and the economic plight of the people has been devastating.

The US, combined with other countries in the EU and countries in Central America, have spoken of their support for Guaido, while China and Russia have been strong supporters of the Maduro regime.



Hostilities between the US and Venezuela have been strong since the early 21 century, and with recent sanctions imposed by US President Donald Trump on the government's ability to issue or restructure debt have caused more tension. The US is considering imposing sanctions that would prohibit Visa, Mastercard, and other financial institutions from processing transactions to increase pressure on the Venezuelan government. "The purpose of these sanctions is to continue to deprive the illegitimate Maduro regime of access to funds and deny their ability to continue stealing from the Venezuelan people," the official said. The US has withdrawn all diplomats from the embassy in Venezuela, as they continue to support opposition leader Juan Guaido. US President Trump claims he has not ruled out military intervention to overthrow Maduro.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee has approved bills that restrict the export of tear gas, riot gear, and other items that could be used to control crime. The House also urges the Trump administration to provide \$150 million in humanitarian aid with a required assessment of Russian influence in Venezuela conducted by the State Department and other intelligence agencies. After a failed delivery of a US aid convoy that was held by the Venezuelan government, Netherlands and the US have agreed to use Curacao as a possible aid hub. They hope to use the Dutch Caribbean island to possibly distribute aid for civilians only if the Venezuelan government agrees to the aid. President Nicolas Maduro has called the aid a US-led aid effort a veiled invasion to possibly form a coup against his government.

SHOULD THE US MILITARY GET INVOLVED IN THE CRISIS IN VENEZUELA?

YES: written by Raiya Suliman

There is no question that the United States has dropped the ball when coming to Latin American intervention. You've heard of the catastrophic Panama ordeal by now, and the media will continue to milk it until the current Trump Administration washes its hands of possible armed interventions. But what if a military interposition in a battered, yet salvable Venezuela could actually prove beneficial? The few arguments in favor of such action may just be enough to oust Maduro, and destroy his seemingly immovable base.

Following a recent nationwide power outage, it is hard to understand how Maduro has continued to maintain his power structure within a blacked-out grid. The answer is daunting, and it roams the streets in motorcycles, armed and ready: the colectivos. Often recognized as Maduro's paramilitary forces, colectivos carry out the disputed president's dirty work in impoverished regions. They employ scare-tactics to undermine protesting efforts and, ultimately, proliferate fear amongst the opposition. In the face of a blacked-out grid, these colectivos continue to rampage communities in need of food, water, and electricity. Without the colectivos, Maduro's power over the poor would inevitably topple, and the Venezuelan military would assume a much larger role in maintaining the corrupt government. These colectivos, however, are likely to falter in the face of U.S Armed Forces, who are far better equipped and respected. What will happen if Maduro's only bridge between fearful citizens and his intimidation is destroyed?

Along with understanding the complex power structure that keeps Maduro out of exile, it is important to acknowledge that military intervention does not always mean the deployment of American troops in a targeted area. This course of action is incredibly risky as it will require a bulletproof rationale as to why an unprovoked U.S military would carry out such an operation. Nonetheless, the question is raised whether or not an isolated extraction of Maduro himself will end the crisis.

To most, the answer is clear: Maduro is the face of an appalling movement, and without his leadership and cult of personality, the vision of Venezuela he has come to fight for will vanish forever.

NO: written by Angela Xing

No doubt military intervention will accomplish its intended goal: oust Maduro. Yet, more issues will arise as a result - issues that take time and resources. Not to mention the resources it will take for the US to accomplish ousting Maduro. Venezuela is about twice the size of Iraq, so an intervention of this size would require about 100,000 troops or more. Plus, Maduro and his armed forces block any entry point into Venezuela, meaning high tech weaponry is needed just to penetrate that blockade.

Currently, government positions are held by a group of elites Maduro has rewarded for their support, and because of the mismanagement caused by these officials, the economy has completely tanked. Replacing those government positions, in and of itself, is a large job. Just look at Iraq. Though it's not completely the same situation, it serves as an example of the difficulties that arise from rebuilding a government. Thousands of Hussein loyalists were removed from power in Iraq and US forces remained while the country attempted to rebuild its economy for years, a costly process. So, the US would need to devote its resources to maintain order while the country rebuilds itself.

Along with rebuilding the government and economy, military intervention would cause more unwanted violence as a result. Maduro's paramilitary forces, the colectivos, will likely cause more violence considering their growing power in the country. Once again, Iraq can serve as an example of an increase in violence resulting from regime changes. This violence could then spread to Colombia with the potential of causing a regional war. Also, more controversy could arise from the countries who back Maduro. Thousands of Cubans currently reside in the country, while Russia and China support the current regime, and these two countries have the ability to veto UN supported military intervention. If they were to veto, conflicts could arise between the two countries and the US. Though US military intervention has its pros and cons, the pros just do not outweigh the problematic cons that arise as a result.

HUAWEI: A MISSING OPPORTUNITY?

FACTS: written by Athena Wang and Emily Rypinski

Huawei is a telecommunications company based largely in China. It is currently the second largest smartphone provider in the world and is involved in developing 5G, an updated cellular communications system; however, it does not have any carrier stores in the United States. It has recently become the center of a clash between the United States and China, as the United States accused Huawei of being a national security threat with growing concerns over hacking.

President Donald Trump signed a bill in August 2018 to ban the federal government from using any and all Huawei technology alongside ZTE, another telecommunications company, and other China-based companies. Other countries and companies have been pulling away from Huawei as well. AT&T, who proposed a carrier deal with Huawei in 2018, backed out of the deal after coaxing from the U.S. government.

The British Telecom has also pulled away from using Huawei technology, including components that are used to create 5G; Australia and New Zealand have also stopped using Huawei technology, and U.S. lawmakers have lobbied the Canadian prime minister to do the same. On the other hand, a few experts are apprehensive of the federal government's actions and mention that American and Chinese tech industries are codependent; they are strongly tied together.



YES: written by Athena Wang

Considering the advancements in technology that Huawei has made with their phones, along with their sales, it is obvious that Huawei should be allowed to create carrier partnerships in the United States.

Despite being banned from the US government and having a lower popularity rate in the United States, Huawei is still the second highest selling cell phone brand in the world, topping Apple, and still playing catch-up behind Samsung. With a company so large that it overcomes Apple, wouldn't it be expected to see Huawei brand tech everywhere in the US? Because of the US government's fear of national security, Huawei has not been able to spread their brand very far into the US through the use of Carrier partnerships, which is how the majority of phone and tech companies spread their products. After AT&T announced a possible partnership with Huawei in 2018, it was quickly canceled after the US government urged AT&T to drop the partnership. But why? With technology so advanced, couldn't Huawei be an asset to the United States' technology world?

With Huawei's significant contributions to the advancement of 5G, it is clear that Huawei would be an essential asset to the technology industry of the United States, and would highly increase internet speed for many future users around the world. It would clearly be a loss for the United States to not allow Huawei to distribute their products on the same level as Apple and Samsung, considering Huawei and China are both leaders in the telecommunications industry and have plenty of innovations to offer. Along with this, Huawei's development of a full-screen foldable phone may be superior to even Samsung, according to BusinessInsider.

If Huawei is able to advance their technology further and finish the development of 5G, they may be an essential player in the advancement of technology over the world. Therefore, they could help to push the US into a new age of advanced internet and technology, which is beneficial to everyone.

CONT. HUAWEI: A MISSING OPPORTUNITY?

NO: written by Emily Rypinski

Based on Huawei's past actions leading up to this year, it is clear that Huawei should not be allowed to create carrier partnerships in the United States.

The United States District Court, Eastern District of New York indicted chief financial officer Wanzhou Meng on Jan. 24. Meng was accused on 13 counts including but not limited to bank fraud, wire fraud, conspiracy to defraud the United States, money laundering, and obstruction of justice. One main point of the allegation is that Huawei attempted to cover up many of its operations, including its relations to Skycom Tech Co., a telecommunications company based in Hong Kong that did work in Iran alongside Huawei. The United States, the plaintiff in this trial, also accused Huawei of ignoring U.S. sanctions against Iran.

The United States accused Huawei of not being a completely private company separate from the People's Republic of China's government. As of now, both Huawei and another Chinese company ZTE have been pushed out of the American market; ZTE has also been accused of trading with Iran and North Korea while aware of U.S. sanctions against both countries [2]. The federal government has alleged that Huawei is a threat to the United States as well[3]. From all these allegations and the trial held against Meng, it is clear that Huawei will not comply with U.S. sanctions, which indicates that Huawei may be unwilling to abide by other U.S. regulations.

If the allegations against Huawei are true, then it is clear that Huawei is not a trustworthy company. Based on what Huawei has been accused of, it is difficult to predict if Huawei will or will not continue to ignore U.S. sanctions while on the U.S. market and should not be allowed to create carrier partnerships as a safety measure. No matter what technology Huawei can develop and market, the possibility of Huawei continuing to commit fraud against the United States outweighs the benefits of having technology that can be developed independently of Huawei.

THAT REALLY HAPPENED?

A collection of odd news stories from around the world

- [1] "Try again in 25,536,442 minutes" – A man's three-year-old tried to unlock his iPad so many times, it's locked until 2067.
- [2] "She's not so keen to come back and visit" – A woman found a snake in her shoe while unpacking after a trip to Australia.
- [3] "He can now do 15 push-ups in a row" – Martin Shkreli, the Notorious "pharma bro" who hiked up drug prices by 5000% leading him to be convicted for fraud, is apparently bulking up in prison.
- [4] "There's not a lot of people who can understand" – A woman used a DNA test and found out she has 29 siblings thanks to a sperm donor.
- [5] "They can be quite tenacious when they are in a pack" – Chickens ganged up to attack a fox that broke into their barn.



US-TALIBAN PEACE TALKS: IS PEACE FINALLY HERE?

FACTS: written by Meenu Ramakrishnan

Nearly 11 days after peace negotiations between the United States and the Taliban began with high hopes, it has become clear that any resolution to the 18-year Afghan war could be slow.

One of the most prominent issues thwarting progress is a disagreement over a fundamental question: What is terrorism, and who is a terrorist?

The two sides had already agreed in principle on a framework for two crucial issues: the withdrawal of American troops, and a commitment that Afghan soil would not again be used to launch terrorist attacks against the United States and its allies, as Al Qaeda did with its strikes on Sept. 11, 2001. That attack led the Americans to invade Afghanistan in an effort to hunt down Al Qaeda's mastermind, Osama bin Laden.

The Taliban have said they would not allow Afghanistan to be used as a launching pad for international attacks. American negotiators have insisted on specifying that Afghanistan not be used by "terrorist" groups, but the Taliban have resisted, saying there was no universal definition of terrorism.

The Americans have tried to link any progress on a withdrawal timeline to the Taliban engaging with Afghans, including the government. Afghan political leaders regularly caution the chief American negotiator against any agreement with the Taliban on withdrawing troops that would result in the Americans losing their leverage before making progress on the political front. "I am ready to even sacrifice my life for peace, but not for a peace that will be a new chapter of carnage," Afghan president Ashraf Ghani said in a speech on Wednesday.



YES: written by Fiona Morrison

Over two weeks of peace talks between Americans and Taliban members have ended with some progress toward peace, and there is some reason to hope for even more. In 2014, these five men were released as a part of a deal to exchange their freedom for that of Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl the only known service member held as a political prisoner in Afghanistan at the time. The goal of these talks was to bring the military conflict in Afghanistan to an end as well as prevent any terror attacks from Afghanistan directed at the United States or its allies in the future. In addition, members of the Taliban envoy wish to remove the United States military forces from Afghanistan as soon as possible.

Simply the fact that a meeting such as this has taken place shows that significant progress has been made. For years the United States and the Taliban have communicated chiefly via violence rather than through diplomacy. Not only this, but both sides believe that their talks have been worthwhile. The chief American peace envoy Zamaly Khalilzad stated, "My time here was well spent. We made progress, and we had detailed discussions to reach an understanding of issues that are difficult and complicated".

From the perspective of the United States, progress has been made through a Taliban promise that they will not allow terrorist attacks from Afghanistan to take place. From the Taliban's perspective, progress has been made in planning to remove foreign troops from Afghanistan. At the peace talks, several representatives made emotionally charge speeches demanding the removal of troops within six months. The United States' responded by saying that they with a proposed plan of withdrawing troops over the next three years. Ultimately both sides goal is peace, a spokesperson for the Taliban stated, regarding the top two issues discussed by the Taliban representatives in private that "Those two issues were the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan and preventing anyone from harming others from Afghan soil".

[CONT.] US-TALIBAN PEACE TALKS: IS PEACE FINALLY HERE?

NO: written by Shreya Kumar

The longest direct peace talks ever held between the U.S. and the Taliban ended recently with both sides proclaiming progress towards ending the almost two-decade long war in Afghanistan, but with several questions left unanswered. The talks lasted thirteen days, with U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad meeting face-to-face with Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, co-founder of the Taliban organization and veteran battlefield commander. Khalilzad said that they were unable to persuade the Taliban to conduct peace talks with the U.S. backed government in Kabul, which the Taliban view as corrupt and under too much American influence.

Although the U.S. envoy was simply trying to move the talks to another location, admittedly to place the potentially volatile situation under a little more American control, the Taliban officials adamantly refused. This underlines the difficulty presented with controlling the situation. Knowing what the Taliban are capable of, extreme caution needs to be exercised here. They are prone to not cooperating with the efforts of the American government, so further negotiations and peace talks are looking like they will become increasingly more difficult.

In addition, the two sides seem to be in agreement about the withdrawal of American forces, but they continue to disagree on what is perhaps the most important and effectual decision - the timeline and whether a residual force will remain. The situation in this country should be prevented from potentially being put out of control. One way that the American government has ensured this is by placing troops there. The timing needs to be such that there will be little threat of the situation escalating to such an extent that it is destructive. This decision may not be entirely in our hands and thus, ill timing may cause more problems than it should. A residual force would ensure that the American government still has some influence in the area, albeit minimal. This would just make sure that there is some control over the area, again, to prevent any unwanted action taken and unnecessary destruction.

Even if the American government does agree to pull out the American forces, they may encounter logistical difficulties in withdrawing 10,000 troops along with heavy equipment and machinery from the country.

This may have unintended effects on the timeline and the attitude of the Taliban on the American government, perhaps affecting planned peace talks in the future. Both sides of the argument have continued to battle it out even during peace talks, neither side calling a ceasefire. Even if the Taliban agree to halt their military operations (as they are expected to) they may not act against other militant operations. The Taliban have been unable to dislodge an Islamic State affiliate group from its power in the eastern Nangarhar province.



After a withdrawal, the U.S. armed forces will have difficulty getting involved as well, leaving that group still in their position of power. Other militant groups, such as al-Qaeda and the Haqqani network, are affiliated with the Taliban and are still active in areas of Afghanistan. The Taliban may be able to convince such groups to lay low, but they are unlikely to take active action against their anti-Western efforts. Thus, agreeing with the Taliban's conditions for the peace talks may not actually result in what was intended for them. The situation is unpredictable as to their efforts in the American favor and how effective their influence over other militant forces will actually be. It may not be able to be trusted.

Overall, there is too much unpredictability that comes with the Taliban regime for them to be trusted to comply with the terms of the agreements. Peace talks will most likely result in too much American acquiescence and not enough Taliban cooperation. The resulting actions taken will not advance American interests to the extent which they should be for peace talks of this caliber. The effects of this peace talk have the potential to save countless lives and improve the efforts for global peace significantly. The American government should not be the side making compromises.

2020 ELECTION: WHO ARE THE CANDIDATES: A CONTINUING REVIEW OF PROSPECTIVE 2020 CANDIDATES



JULIAN CASTRO [D]

written by Fiona Morrison

Julian Castro is a 44 years old, a former secretary of housing and urban development under Barack Obama and former mayor of San Antonio, Texas. He decided to not challenge Ted Cruz for the senate during the 2018 midterm elections. He announced an exploratory committee on December 12, 2018, and his official candidacy on January 12, 2019, Castro is adamant about taking action and working hard to improve one's community. In Castro's People First Immigration Policy, he states that reforming the United States immigration policy is a priority as well as creating a humane border policy. This includes a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and DREAMers, reforming the visa system to reunite families, ending the three and ten year bar system which requires undocumented immigrants to leave the country before becoming citizens, rescinding Trump's Muslim and Refugee ban, and a number of other actions.

In addition Castro wants to establish a 21st century "MARshal Plan" for Central America. This would include prioritizing diplomacy, expecting a higher standard for governance and transparency from all to promote a better relationships, increasing economic development, and targeting crime. Castro also supports universal pre-kindergarten, and medicare for all.



IS THERE ANY POINT OF A REPUBLICAN NOMINEE OTHER THAN TRUMP?

written by Fiona Nash

Fourteen Democratic candidates have announced that they will be running for the Democratic nomination. Meanwhile, on the Republican side of things, many potential candidates like John Kasich and Larry Kogan are laying low. Why? Jevon O. A. Williams, a member of the Republican national congress and the national committeeman for the Virgin Islands, has urged fellow members of the RNC to thwart inner party threats to the current president, Donald Trump, who is up for reelection in 2020. However, while many Republicans are holding back, William Weld, former governor of Massachusetts from 1991-1997, announced that he was forming an exploratory committee on February 15th.

Weld is running because he thinks that Trump is "unstable" and he "cannot sit any longer quietly on the sidelines." He takes a more moderate stance on issues such as abortion; in fact, he is pro-choice. One of his main goals is to cut government waste by 20%. On the topic of health care he would like to make tweaks to Obamacare so that there are more free market choices. Regarding immigration, he sees the value in foreign graduates and entrepreneurs so he would like to grant more H-1B visas. Although it is unlikely that he will win the nomination, he isn't really running to win; he is running to make a statement.

Since the government shutdown earlier this winter, Trump's approval ratings have plummeted from 42% just a month earlier to 34% now, an all year low. This has raised the question "Will Trump win the 2020 election?". Most, when looking at the situation objectively, argue yes. He has a lot of advantages over Democrats: the power of incumbency, a good economy, low unemployment, and a united party. While we don't know definitively who will win what, what we do know is that this election is going to be one for the books.



FOR MORE INFORMATION FIND OUR SOURCES HERE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION FIND OUR SOURCES HERE

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