

Trump vs Ryan, Clinton's Veep choices, and how Chinese imports are tearing US politics apart: US national blog roundup for 7 – 13 May

USAPP Managing Editor, **Chris Gilson** looks at the best in political blogging from around the Beltway.

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The 2016 Campaign and the primaries

American Thinker is [keen](#) to reform the presidential primaries. They say that many may be so disgusted by the present outcome; they may just want to stay at home. Their suggestions for reform include closed primaries across the states, and all states holding their primary on the same day. Speaking of the primaries, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that while Democratic primary voters are fairly representative of the country's demographics, Republican primary voters are not, having remained mostly unchanged (and white) over the past eight years.

On Saturday, *Political Animal* [wonders](#) if Donald Trump – now essentially the Republicans' presidential nominee – could mean that Georgia is now in play for the Democratic Party this fall. They say that, but for Trump, the largely red state wouldn't have been a demographically viable prospect for the Democrats for another five years or so. *Monkey Cage* [writes](#) that this week, that there's one big obstacle preventing Donald Trump from redrawing the electoral map – the fact that there are now smaller year-to-year swings in the states.

Could Hillary Clinton lose to Trump this fall by ignoring America's desire for change? *Political Animal* [argues](#) this week that while it would be difficult for the former Secretary of State to lose the election, she should be wary of misunderstanding Trump's strengths and weaknesses, and missing the electorate's desire for change. For many, the current election cycle has been fuelled by anger. *The Atlantic* [dissects](#) the wave of outrage that has fuelled Donald Trump's candidacy, and comment that the New York billionaire has seized on people's feelings of helplessness, making them feel that if they turn this into rage, it will accomplish something. *Kevin Drum* [writes](#) this week that while there's a great deal of qualitative data showing that people are angry over perceived economic unfairness in the country, there's literally no quantitative data which says the same thing.

Daily Kos, meanwhile [looks](#) at what they say is the new force in campaign contributions – women. They report that 43 percent of all contributions to federal candidates have come from women, according to new data.



On Sunday, *American Thinker* [comments](#) that the 2016 contest, does not have to be “just Trump vs. Hillary”, and suggests a strategy to deny both the presidency. They say that if one or two states went to an independent candidate, then that might deny either Trump or Clinton the 271 electoral votes needed to enter the White House, meaning that it would fall to the House of Representatives to determine who is president. In a similar vein, *Hit & Run* [reports](#) this week that the 2012 nominee for the Libertarian Party, Gary Johnson, has been pitching himself as the independents’ choice for president, arguing that more than 50 percent of Americans identified themselves as independent. *The Atlantic*, meanwhile [wonders](#) if we are seeing the Libertarian Party’s moment after years of it essentially being a nonentity.

On Sunday, *Daily Kos* [tells readers](#) to “take a deep breath” over a new poll which shows that Donald Trump leads Hillary Clinton 41-39. They comment that the Rasmussen poll is likely to be biased, and aimed at driving a pro-Trump media narrative. *White House Dossier* meanwhile [says](#) that new polling shows Trump and Clinton to be equal in the swing states of Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. *The Upshot* on the other hand, [reckons](#) that these battleground states are not a ‘terrific fit’ for Trump given their population demographics and Clinton’s national polling lead. *The Atlantic* [says](#) that a new group of polls released this week show a surprisingly close race between Trump and Clinton – a Clinton landslide this fall may not be inevitable after all. *FiveThirtyEight* [counsels](#) us not to be worried about the Electoral College math at the moment. Given uncertainty about state polling it’s better, they say, to look at the average of national polling.

Despite commentary mere months ago that the US House of Representatives would be out of reach for the Democrats for ‘a generation’, it may now be in play because of Donald Trump, [argues](#) *Americablog*. That said, *FiveThirtyEight* [reckons](#) that Republican Party doesn’t seem to be “cracking up” in down-ballot races; the people who are running for open seats this year at the state level are the type of people who have traditionally done well in previous elections. *Political Animal* [disagrees](#) with this analysis, arguing that the GOP are indeed cracking up in down ballot races. They argue that there may be a time lag for the effect of Trump being the head of the party, and the party’s realignment into something that appears to be denying power to the rich may well be harmful for the GOP at the state level.

The West Virginia primary

This week saw the now not so significant West Virginia primary election. On Tuesday, *Outside the Beltway* [reminds us](#) that in 2008, Hillary Clinton “trounced” the then Senator, Barack Obama in the state. Now, they comment, she looks likely to lose to Vermont Senator, Bernie Sanders. And win Sanders did. *PoliticoUSA* [comments](#) that while Sanders did manage to win in West Virginia, he is still unable to halt Hillary Clinton’s march towards the Democratic nomination.

Given that he had no real opponents, it surprised no-one that Donald Trump came away the winner in West Virginia

in the state's Republican primary. *Red State* [says](#) that, unusually for him, Trump had no complaints over the fairness of the contest.

The Democratic Campaign and the Candidates

This week saw former Alaska Governor, and 2008 Vice Presidential candidate, Sarah Palin, enter the election fray, with her criticism of US House Speaker Paul Ryan for his reticence for endorsing Donald Trump (of which more later). *Red State* [reckons](#) that Palin is the Democrats' best friend, given that she helped get a Democrat elected in Alaska, and that she supports Trump, who has been a Democratic donor in the past.



Credit: Public Citizen (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

On Monday, *The Hill's Congress blog* writes on what they say is the “Democrats’ dark money hypocrisy”. They [argue](#) that despite Clinton and Sanders’ apparent commitments to campaign finance reform, they and their party (and groups aligned to them) profited from more than \$420 million in union donations between 2012 and 2014.

Political Animal [writes](#) Friday that the Democratic presidential primary has sparked a discussion on the left about the value of bold proposals vs incrementalism. They say that when it comes to governing, bipartisan negotiations are more about leverage than opening bids, meaning that ambitious ideas – such as single-payer healthcare- are just not going to make it to the negotiating table.

Moving on to what the two candidates have been up to this past week:

Hillary Clinton

- Is Clinton actually likely to appoint a cabinet that’s made up of half women and half men? Maybe. ([Monkey Cage](#))
- Clinton has committed to her opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, and has signaled a real shift in her attitudes towards free trade agreements ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Shockingly, the State Department has been unable to locate the emails which might implicate it in any federal crimes that occurred during Hillary Clinton’s tenure as Secretary of State ([Red State](#))
- Given the near impossibility of Sanders’ winning, why can’t Clinton clinch the nomination? ([The Atlantic](#))
- Why Clinton is lucky that social media was not around early in her career ([Townhall](#))
- Who might Clinton choose as her Vice-President? Top of the list could be Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA), followed by Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Julian Castro ([Sabato’s Crystal Ball](#))
- Selecting Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), on the other hand, might have some pitfalls ([Smart Politics](#))
- Clinton is in favor of changes to the top ranks of the Federal Reserve which have been championed by progressive groups ([Wonkblog](#))

- Clinton has a keen interest in extraterrestrials, which shows that at least she wants to be transparent about something ([Hit & Run](#))
- A new scandal for Clinton involves donations from the Clinton Global Initiative to friends of the Clinton family ([Powerline](#))

Bernie Sanders

- Some advice for the Vermont Senator – keep it positive, and stop attacking Hillary Clinton ([Political Animal](#))
- That's sage advice, given that Sanders didn't press the issue of poverty after slamming Clinton for her record on it ([Wonkblog](#))



Credit: Bob Simpson (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-SA-2.0)

- How Sanders can avoid becoming the Ted Cruz of the left ([Political Animal](#))
- Win or lose, Sanders has been the most influential insurgent candidate since the 1970s ([Kevin Drum](#))
- The Federal Elections Commission has let the Sanders campaign know that thousands of its contributors may be violating federal limits by donating more than \$2,700 ([The Atlantic](#))
- Why we need to stop telling Bernie to drop out of the race ([Political Animal](#))
- Is Sanders staying in the race because Clinton might be indicted by the FBI over her use of a private email server while she was Secretary of State? ([Hit & Run](#))
- Sanders' healthcare plan is short by \$17 trillion ([Wonkblog](#))

The Republican Campaign and the Candidates

American Thinker [writes](#) this week on “Donald Trump’s GOP” – the party that the current Republican Party will morph into following Trump’s rise to become its presidential nominee. They comment that the GOP will not be the same whether Trump wins or loses in November, given that new generation of conservatives are taking it over. *Outside the Beltway* meanwhile [wonders](#), “where were the sane Republicans?”, during the rise of Donald Trump. *American Thinker* this week [argues](#) that conservatism and “reactionary Trumpism” cannot coexist within the Republican Party, and later that the party [died long before](#) Trump turned up. On Wednesday, *Monkey Cage* [wonders](#), “Is Trump the last gasp of the Republican Party?” *Red State*, meanwhile [considers](#) Trump’s “very different” coalition, and argues that he needs more educated, religious, women, and conservative voters in order to be successful in the fall.

Kevin Drum [reports](#) that the former GOP House Speaker, Newt Gingrich, has some lessons for the party, including that “big ideas can attract donations”.

Daily Kos [writes](#) that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) appears to be gambling that if he ignores

Donald Trump by pushing regular spending bills through the Senate, he'll go away.



Speaker Paul Ryan Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

The big GOP campaign news this week was the developing spat between Donald Trump and US House Speaker, Paul Ryan. On Monday, *PoliticoUSA* [says](#) that Trump called for “consequences” for Ryan if he (as Chairman of this year’s Republican National Convention) contests his nomination. Shortly thereafter, Ryan stated that he would be happy to step down from the Convention in July, if Trump wished him to, [reports](#) *Crooks & Liars*. *The Hill’s Congress blog* [argues](#) Wednesday that Trump should not control the convention gavel, given that it would depart from the traditional means of choosing a presiding officer. *Daily Kos* [says](#) that the Ryan/Trump stoush has developed, with Sarah Palin (mentioned above), attacking the Speaker this week for “being insufficiently Trumpy”. On Tuesday, *Red State* [writes](#) that by not pushing back, Ryan is “playing Trump like a Grand Piano”. *Hit & Run*, meanwhile [looks at](#) why Paul Ryan might not back Trump – and why he should not. On Thursday, Trump and Ryan had a well-anticipated meeting. *Daily Kos* [says](#) that while they both spoke of party unity after the meeting, Ryan has not given Trump his all-important endorsement. *The Atlantic* [reckons](#) that Paul Ryan had signaled “his surrender” at his post-Trump meeting press conference, by not stating (as he had before) that Donald Trump still needed to alter his views to suit the GOP.

On Tuesday, *Monkey Cage* [says](#) that it’s surprising that Republican leaders are not falling into line behind Donald Trump, given that this is what they normally do after someone wins the party’s presidential nomination. *Hit & Run* [reckons](#) that GOP leaders do want to unify around Trump, and that this will only make the Republican Party’s problems worse.

On Wednesday, following his West Virginia primary win, *Outside the Beltway* has the [news](#) that Donald Trump is within 102 delegates of securing the GOP nomination.

The Atlantic [takes a look](#) at what they term “America’s conservative political crisis”, which means that some of the country’s fringe parties are now having a moment of their own. Could #NeverTrump Republicans take over the Libertarian Party? Yes, [says](#) *Hit & Run*...if they could convince 500 people who attend state Libertarian Party Conventions and be sent as delegates to their national convention.

Turning now to the GOP’s candidates, and beginning with The Donald:

Donald Trump

- How not everyone who opposes Trump in the GOP are establishment elites ([The Lonely Conservative](#))
- Trump’s four betrayals in less than two days ([Red State](#))

- Did Trump backtrack on his tax and minimum wage policies, or did he simply lie? ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- Where do Trump's bad ideas – like negotiating forgiveness on US debt – come from? ([The Conscience of a Liberal](#))
- Did Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts' pro-Obamacare ruling in 2012 encourage the rise of Donald Trump? ([Hit & Run](#))...
- ...or did the Tea Party? ([The Atlantic](#))
- How Howard Stern and Pat Buchanan laid the groundwork for Donald Trump's candidacy ([The Atlantic](#))
- Why we shouldn't underestimate the anger and determination of the #NeverTrump movement ([Red State](#))
- What do pundits and politicians mean when they call Trump "dangerous"? ([Monkey Cage](#))
- Five propositions on Trump ([Powerline](#))...
- ...and five ways that his supporters are like cult followers ([Red State](#))
- How Trump's call of "America First" is a battle cry for the oppressed Middle Class ([Townhall](#))
- A new poll shows that Trump's supporters aren't all that smart ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- We should stop "misunderestimating" Trump; he will win in a landslide this fall ([Red State](#))
- Why the general election will be different from the primary for Trump – it's all about the media ([Red State](#))
- Why Trump might want to rethink his snub of the GOP base ([Townhall](#))
- For someone who seems very against international trade Trump has engaged in a great deal of it as part of his businesses ([The Lonely Conservative](#))
- Trump's potential Veep choices all have one thing in common – homophobia ([Daily Kos](#))
- The old Trump says, "The party must unify" – but the new Trump says "Never mind that unity business" ([The Lonely Conservative](#))
- Trump is fiddling while the GOP burns ([Daily Kos](#))
- New Jersey Governor, Chris Christie will head up Trump's White House transition team, if he gets there ([Red State](#))
- ...and Trump may also ask former New York Mayor, Rudy Giuliani to be his 'immigration Czar' ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- Why Trump should create a 'shadow Cabinet' ([Townhall](#))
- Trump would very graciously allow London's new Mayor, Sadiq Khan, to visit the US under a Trump presidency, despite being Muslim ... ([Red State](#))
- ...though it turns out that Khan himself has turned Trump down, stating that he will not be an exception ([The Atlantic](#))
- Trump actually backed off on his proposed ban on Muslims coming to the US this week ([White House Dossier](#))
- Trump has earned widespread support from far-right leaders in Europe ([Daily Kos](#))



New Jersey Governor Chris Christie Credit: Gage Skidmore (Creative Commons BY SA)

- Forty percent of Sanders voters say they'll vote for Trump over Clinton in November ([Red State](#))
- Four ways to oppose Trump besides voting for Clinton ([The Federalist](#))
- The Trump campaign blamed a “database error” after they selected a white nationalist as a delegate in California. ([Mojo](#))
- Trump advisor, Paul Manafort this week said that the presidential election is the “ultimate reality show” ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- How Trump has betrayed some of his supporters by his move to court big-money donors ([The Atlantic](#))
- Florida Senator (and former GOP presidential nomination contender) now supports Donald Trump ([Red State](#))
- Trump has discovered this one weird trick to get people to agree with him ([Wonkblog](#))
- Trump has promised to deliver four or five anti-abortion Supreme Court justices, if he wins the White House ([Daily Kos](#))
- Trump's plans to meet his deficit reduction targets now involve some pretty large tax increases ([Red State](#))
- There will be no Trump General Election pivot ([FreakOutNation](#))
- Trump is now claiming that he never made his “insane” policy proposals ([PoliticusUSA](#))
- The GOP's 2012 presidential candidate, Mitt Romney, reckons that Trump's refusal to release his tax returns disqualifies him from being president ([Red State](#))
- Remember when Donald Trump lavished praise on Hillary Clinton? ([The Atlantic](#))
- Trump's claim that receiving 40 percent of the GOP primary vote gives him a mandate is more about power than votes ([Mischiefs of Faction](#))
- The longtime butler of Donald Trump – Anthony Senecal – reckons that President Obama should be shot ([FreakOutNation](#))
- How Donald Trump is the anti-Ronald Reagan ([American Thinker](#))
- It turns out that donations to Trump's campaign are really going to his own pocket ([Red State](#))
- Did Trump pose as his own PR agent in the 1990s? ([White House Dossier](#))
- Trump really can win the youth vote ([The Hill's Congress blog](#))

Ted Cruz

While the Texas Senator has suspended his campaign, we shouldn't completely count him out of the race just yet:

- Cruz could reinstate his campaign if he were to win Nebraska's Republican primary ([Crooks & Liars](#))
- It turns out that Cruz is still working a ground game in several states ([Red State](#))

The Obama Administration

On Monday, *Townhall* [describes](#) more examples of what they term “Obama cronyism”. They comment that the Federal Communications Commission is about to legalize theft by opening copyright for free to ‘crony’ companies, which can then sell it on.



Credit: whitehouse.gov

Red State [reports](#) this week that President Obama has admitted – at a commencement speech at Howard University – that he has not been able to create a ‘post-racial’ society. They argue that racial tensions in America have only increased since Obama came to office. With the president due to give another commencement speech at Rutgers University (his 23rd in total), *FiveThirtyEight* [notes](#) that sitting presidents give far more such speeches than they used to. Prior to George H.W. Bush, they write, presidents usually gave only one or two commencement speeches every year.

PoliticusUSA [has the news](#) this week that in the wake of Donald Trump essentially winning the Republican presidential nomination, President Obama’s approval rating has jumped by three points to 53 percent. Not unsurprisingly, Obama is still not very popular with GOP voters. *Daily Kos* [says](#) that 64 percent of Republicans (incorrectly) think that unemployment has increased during Obama’s presidency.

On Thursday, *White House Dossier* [reports](#) that the Obama administration is planning to issue a “sweeping” directive instructing all public schools to allow transgender students to use the bathrooms which match their gender identity.

The Beltway and the Supreme Court

On Wednesday *Federal Insider* [writes](#) that the Secretary of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson keeps trying to make his employees happy, given that only 47 percent of them are happy with their jobs. His latest tactic is a new mission statement for the department: “*With honor and integrity, we will safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values*”. Speaking of security, *Hit & Run* says that [according to a new report](#), the federal government has given \$2.2 billion worth of military gear to local police departments in the past ten years (including over 5,600 bayonets!).



Credi: whitehouse.gov

Moving on to Congress, *The Atlantic* [has the news](#) that a bill passed Monday which would remove the last uses of racist terms such as 'Oriental' or 'Negro' from federal law, and replace them with more modern terms._

In the House, *PoliticusUSA* [reports](#) that Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) is planning to cut \$23 billion to food stamps in a budget plan that he will soon take to the floor. They say that the plan will end waivers that mean that some adults can get food stamps while they are in school or in job training programs. *The Atlantic* meanwhile [writes](#) that the House Freedom Caucus – 40 odd far right Republicans – are trying to be reasonable at the moment. How? They're happy to support the current budget blueprint before Congress of \$1.07 billion if there is a subsequent \$30 billion cut in entitlements or a similar reduction in the federal government's improper payments.

The Federalist [says](#) that the Senate has no business investigating Facebook, after allegations surfaced that the social media giant might be biased against mentioning conservative news sources in its Trending Topics feed.

Foreign policy, defense and trade

American Thinker [wonders](#) Saturday if the next US president will be friends with Saudi Arabia. The question comes after the former Saudi intelligence chief called for a "recalibration" of the relationship between the two countries given differences in attitudes towards the fight against terrorism.

This month President Obama will visit the Japanese city of Hiroshima, the site of a US atomic bomb attack at the close of World War II. *The Atlantic* [says](#) that the president's visit will be historic, as he would be the first sitting president to visit the city.

Moving on to military matters, *The Daily Signal* [argues](#) that women should not be considered for the draft as part of a proposal in the latest National Defense Authorization Act which is headed to the House floor. Their justification? Women apparently have a higher risk of injury in combat, meaning that they would be more vulnerable whilst engaging the enemy. *Red State* meanwhile [comments](#) that the next President needs to rebuild the Navy. They say that fleet maintenance is taking too long, which means that it is taking longer to deploy the Navy's "world-beating" aircraft carriers.



Credit: Michael Mandiberg (Flickr, CC-BY-SA-2.0)

Who is left at Guantanamo? It's a question [pondered](#) by *The Atlantic* this week, as they review the prison's status. They say that out of a total of 780 inmates, only 80 remain, some of whom it turns out do not actually want to be released.

Turning to trade policy, *Wonkblog* [writes](#) that trade with China is tearing US politics apart. They say that new research shows that voters in places which are exposed to more competition with Chinese imports are more likely to elect lawmakers with more extreme views.

Obamacare and health policy

On Saturday, *Daily Kos* [writes](#) that lawmakers in GOP-dominated states are trying to have Obamacare in their states, but without calling it that. They say that in order to sell Medicaid expansions in their states, some GOP Governors are selling it a contraction, by moving some groups to different programs. *Kevin Drum* [comments](#) that despite the GOP's dire predictions, Obamacare continues not to be doomed (though it's not perfect).

Townhall is [less effusive](#) about government healthcare, commenting that supposed 'free' health care can actually cost people their lives, as has been the case with poor care provided by Veterans Affairs.



Credit: ep_jhu (Flickr, CC-BY-NC-ND-2.0)

This week also saw a federal district court in Washington rule in favor of the House of Representatives in their suit against the Obama Administration over Obamacare's cost-sharing subsidies. *The Volokh Conspiracy* [says](#) that the government is likely to appeal the ruling based on whether or not the House has standing to sue the executive in court.

Federal Insider this week [has the story](#) that taxpayers have actually covered \$14 billion in erroneous charges for

private health care plans which pay for seniors' care. They say that this is part of a growth across government in "improper" payments, where billions are paid out to recipients which should not have been, either because of fraud or through mistakes.

On Thursday, *Wonkblog* [looks](#) at the "battle" over high drug prices between the companies which make them and those which provide prescription coverage. They say that both types of companies often make shifting alliances with patients in order to protect their own interests.

The economy and society

Both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders are (or at some point have been) in favor of a minimum wage rise. *Hit & Run* [says](#) that such a policy would be a bad idea, given that it would increase unemployment, and would take the bargaining chip of working for less away from workers. *Wonkblog* [writes](#) that (perhaps because the minimum wage is so low), a "staggering" number of people with factory jobs still need government help. While in the past, blue collar jobs provided a leg up to the middle class for those without college degrees, that's really no longer true.

On Monday, *TPM* [says](#) that despite Donald Trump's claims that he could try and get US bondholders to accept less than they are owed, the country is not a "highly leveraged casino" – something that Trump has more experience with.



Recent months have seen a good deal of controversy over state laws restricting access by the transgendered to public bathrooms. *Daily Kos* [writes](#) this week that nearly 60 percent of Americans oppose such laws, and 75 percent favour laws which would guarantee equal protection to the transgendered.

On Tuesday, *The Atlantic* [writes](#) on the mystery of why Black Americans are living longer. They say that on average, African-Americans, especially young black men are living far longer than they were 20 years ago.

On Friday, *Daily Kos* [looks](#) at Walmart's reliance on the government, with the retail giant often using local police forces as its own private security force.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of USAPP– American Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

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