# **THE SPIRIT OF THE SPONSE EDITION - 2021**

### The Shadow of a War

"The idea that somehow, there's a way to have gotten out without chaos ensuing, I don't know how that happens."

- Joe Biden, President of the United States

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## **DEAR READER,**

This *Zeitgeist* edition's cover features a photo of an American flag caught in a row of barbed wire. To me, this symbolizes the impression the United States has left on the nation of Afghanistan after 20 years of intervention. Furthermore, the blurry image of a soldier in the background goes along with the name of this edition, The Shadow of a War, meaning it is no longer active, but its consequences are still unfolding as of the publishing of this edition.

Sincerely,

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Kyle Elliott, Editor-in-Chief of Zeitgeist



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**Please Note:** the views expressed in this edition are not representative of that of the Fairfield Prep administration.



## **A LETTER TO THE 14.4 PERCENT**

#### **BY: LUIS BREA '23**

Politics is more difficult to talk about than ever. But, how did we get here? Tracking the decrease of federal regulations in television news media from its "golden years," this article explains how news reporting has transformed the national conversation at large.

On September 8th, the Political Awareness Society released a poll to Fairfield Prep students. This threequestion poll included an opinion section, particularly of President Biden's performance in office so far. While the results of that opinion poll are very interesting and can be found in this edition, I am more interested in one statistic: 14.4% of Prep students report that they are uncomfortable "sharing their political opinions with their friends." This should not come as a shock.

From the tense living rooms of politically divided families to the shouts and insults hurled in the halls of Congress, it is clear that something is wrong. Simply put: we're not talking about what we need to, and even when we do, we do it poorly.

#### Why Politics is Difficult to Talk About:

The Pew Research Center found that Republicans and Democrats have grown more ideologically divided from the period 1994-2014. This shift to absolute ideas as opposed to seeing the gray area in political beliefs is the clearest symptom of a lack of dialogue between both sides. Further, American trust in news sources has sunk to 46th globally. To trace this trend of growing mistrust in the news, one must see how the news has developed over the years.



Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see Appendix A). The blue area in this chart represents the ideological distribution of Democrats; the red area of Republicans. The overlap of these two distributions is shaded purple. Republicans include Republican-leaning independents: Democrats include Democratic-leaning independents (see Appendix B).

Throughout the 1940s, David Sarnoff, president of the parent company of NBC, praised the prospect of cable news, predicting the upcoming Television generation would be the "the highest general cultural level of any people in the history of the world." This prediction was in part true, as future generations with televisions in their household grew far more exposed to information; however, the quality of that information in the present day begs the question: where did we go wrong?

The first three broadcast networks were the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). These sources would provide reliable news during evening reports because they worked under federal misinformation regulations. The Fairness Doctrine, for instance, required that broadcasters "endeavor to make ... facilities available for the expression of contrasting viewpoints held by responsible elements with respect to the controversial issues."



Walter Cronkite, a trusted newscaster of the mid-to-late 1900s. Cronkite covered famous stories including the moon landing, the Chicago Convention riots, and the Watergate Scandal. (Source)

Overtime, demand for cable news grew. Americans began to call on the federal government to loosen regulations to incentivize new networks. As these new networks— now including the Cable News Network (CNN), Fox News, and the Microsoft/ National Broadcasting Company (MSNBC) wrestled for viewers' attention the standard of reporting plummeted and hyper-opinionated reporting was born. Thus, what brought American dialogue from its golden years to its current state was excessive competition.

#### What We Can Do to Make it Better:

Even if you disagree on the cause of polarization being cable news' devolution, the need for a solution is undeniable. In a perfect world, Americans should be able to view differing opinions as more complex than the cable news hosts' oversimplifications and express their opinions comfortably with their peers. Naturally, then, any viable solution to the issue of partisanship must begin with understanding, nuance, and sincerity.

The Pew Research Center poll on the increasing polarization between Republicans and Democrats. (Source)

To revisit that paramount poll that sparked this work, 14.4% of Prep students are onto something; politics is simply not a casual topic like football or the terrible Prep Connect system. However, unlike these causal topics, politics affects all of us; we all have a stake in the perpetual fight for a better world.

"...we all have a stake in the perpetual fight for a better world" So, to those 14.4%, join us in Political Awareness this year, and help us lay the groundwork for a better political discourse. I'd imagine Walter Cronkite would be a fan of what we could accomplish together.

Luis Brea (Junior) is the current President of the Political Awareness Society and a teammate on the Ethics Bowl Team.

For any questions, comments, or concerns about his work, be sure to send an email to <u>p23lbrea@fairfieldprep.org</u>



### THRTY DAYS HATH SEPTEMBER BY: KYLE ELLIOTT '24

On August 30th, the last plane carrying US forces took off out of Kabul airport, ending the twentyyear war. What has life for Afghan citizens been like since our departure?

#### Introduction

Even before the Taliban takeover we witnessed last month, Afghanistan had seen a steady rise in attacks on civilians for the past year. The Taliban began conducting door-to-door searches for human rights defenders, forcing several into hiding. As of right now, one of the biggest concerns is the rights lost from female citizens, one of the many tragedies stemming from this insurrection. The changing quality of life women were experiencing, including expanded education and expanded opportunities, had been seen as one of the primary successes of the war. Now, with the return of the Taliban, observers fear, as one told People Magazine<sup>1</sup>, that "it would all be erased." The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has predicted that half a million Afghans will likely leave the nation by the end of 2021.



A protest concerning Women's Rights in Kabul, Afghanistan.

#### **Protests**

Many Afghans have taken to protesting, however, these protests have been violently repressed by the Taliban. On September 4, an estimated 100 women at a protest in Kabul were disbanded by Taliban special forces, who fired bullets as well as tear gas into the air. Four days later, the now Taliban lead Ministry of Interior delivered an order preventing all demonstrations and gatherings throughout Afghanistan "until a policy of demonstration is codified." Early into the second week of the month, the Taliban's violent crackdown on protests against their unyielding rule has already caused four documented deaths. Live ammunition, whips, and batons have reportedly been used to break up demonstrations, according to a UN human rights official.

#### **Broken Promises**

The Taliban have repeatedly claimed that they will respect the rights of Afghans to the best of their ability. However, as expected, the Taliban were not going to be reasonable from the start. "...We have already seen a wave of violations, from reprisal attacks and restrictions on women, to crackdowns on protests, the media and civil society," said Dinushika Dissanayake, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for South Asia. "Given the prevailing climate of fear, lack of mobile connectivity in many areas, and internet blackouts enforced by the Taliban, these findings are likely to represent just a snapshot of what's happening on the ground," Dissanayake continues. Afghanistan Ambassador Nasir Ahmad Andisha, alleges the Taliban of "widespread atrocities" in the Panjshir Valley, the last division of the country to hold out against the group, and claimed it was conducting targeted killings and executions, including of young boys. Journalists, but especially female journalists, have been threatened both online and in person. The Taliban has not allowed female journalists to return to work at the state-owned radio and television station, and they have banned most from operating with the media. More than 50 media outlets (mainly local radio and TV stations) have already been forced to terminate operations in Taliban-controlled areas. It is difficult for the US to hold the Taliban accountable under international law because of their belief that: If the United States has broken promises to fit its agenda, how can they hold us responsible for ours?

#### The Hope Remaining

With the fall of the former Afghan government, and concerns about mounting atrocities, the Afghanistan human rights commission, together with Human



Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio.

Rights Watch and other international human rights organizations, has reiterated its call for the UN Human Rights Council to mandate an effective factfinding and monitoring mechanism. Ultimately, it is up to the UN and G20 to create solutions to help the Afghan people without encouraging unjust behavior by the new Taliban government. On September 26th, Italian Foreign Affairs Minister Luigi Di Maio suggested the need for economic and humanitarian aid, asked whether a date has been set for G20 leaders to meet regarding Afghanistan, Di Maio said that it will be "in the coming weeks." We can only hope that a solution can be agreed upon by these leaders as soon as possible. "At this crucial moment the world cannot remain silent."

- Nasir Ahmad Andisha 🔳

Kyle Elliott (Sophomore) is the Editor-In-Chief of Zeitgeist and he is looking forward to another great year with the club.

For any questions, comments, or concerns about his work, be sure to send an email to <u>p24kelliott@fairfieldprep.org</u>



### THE ONE WHO STODD ALONE BY: DREW KOPCHICK '25

20 years after the beginning of our involvement in Afghanistan, we are just beginning to see the consequences of pulling out of Afghanistan. This article shares the story of Barbara Lee and her impact both at the beginning of the war and during its dreadful course.

The vote to invade Afghanistan would have passed unanimously in Congress if the vote of one woman had been different. This woman's name is Barbara Lee. 20 years later, it is clear that she was the only Congressperson to make the right decision.

It was extremely unwise to vote on something so important right after the terrorist attacks on September 11th, as the entire country was blinded by their emotions. Yet, the vote happened. It passed 420-1 in the House of Representatives and 98-0 in the Senate. Some very prominent anti-war and violent congresspeople voted yes, including Bernie Sanders and John Lewis.



Barbara Jean Lee- United States politician serving as the representative for California's 13th congressional district.

This vote led to 20 years of violence and destruction in Afghanistan. Lee was the only person in congress to know that this would be the outcome, but she was harassed for her decision. She received thousands of calls and letters telling her how awful of a person she was, among other, more demeaning, things. This makes her one of the bravest politicians of her time, making a decision she knew was divisive, and being able to endure the vigor of all the people that disagreed with her. History has vindicated her, though, as absolutely nothing was gained from the 20-year occupation in the Middle East.

She stills works today to reverse the effects of the vote, which gave the Executive Branch many powers that allow them to invade anyone they think is involved in harboring terrorists. A bill she sponsored that repealed a similar approval for the Iraq War passed the House in 2019. Her resolve and courage are very inspiring and admirable, making her one of the best politicians to look up to, regardless of your political affiliation.

Drew Kopchick (Freshman) is a distinguished member of the Political Awareness Society and a teammate on the Ethics Bowl Team.

For any questions, comments, or concerns about his work, be sure to send an email to <u>p25akopchick@fairfieldprep.org</u>



## **POLITICS THE IGNATIAN WAY**

#### **BY: CONOR GLYNN '22**

As students of a Jesuit school, it is important for us to understand our impact on the world we will enter after we graduate. In one way or another, politics will play a role in our lives in the near future, so it is only right that we look at it through the lens of Ignatian education. This article looks to give insight into the similarities between these two subjects and how we can create a more respectful political landscape.

The separation of religion and government is a core tenet of American freedom and law which I am not suggesting that we alter. I, however, am arguing that we analyze politics and policy like Jesuits.

Enter the Casuist System. The Casuist System is used to solve novel issues in specific cases, and principles need not apply. Casuistry takes two extremes of a topic to define context. Example: Lying - Was the certain instance where you lied bad? Choose two extreme specific circumstances, like lying to save someone's life versus lying for personal gain.

For example, Italian doctors during WW2 would "diagnose" Jewish "patients" with *Syndrome K*, a supposedly highly infectious disease that mandated quarantine. In reality, the doctors were part of an "underground" effort to save Italian-Jews from the Holocaust, as they would not be rounded up under quarantine. We can all agree that is good lying.

On the other end, many celebrities were uncovered bribing officials at top universities to get acceptance for their children. That is not good. You have now created a scale of morality with two distinct ends which are universally agreed upon.



A glass mosaic of St. Ignatius of Loyola in the Chapel at Fairfield Prep.

Now, analyze your case and place it on the scale. Is it closer to the first or second case? Both political parties (generally) have ample reason and talking points to hurl at a given argument. However, what if we were to abandon that and adopt casuistry? Could we move forward in a more productive, bipartisan process? Only one way to find out.

Conor Glynn is a senior at Fairfield Prep, and he was nominated by the club to write for Zeitgeist.

For any questions, comments, or concerns about his work, be sure to send an email to <u>p22cglynn@fairfieldprep.org</u>



## **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

#### FROM THE FAIRFIELD PREP STUDENT BODY

#### **ABOUT THE LETTER TO THE EDITOR SECTION:**

We at the Political Awareness Society understand that our Prep brothers may have questions and comments about the Zeitgeist. We hope that these letters will provide the opportunity for everyone to say what is on their mind without having to write an entire op-ed and/or put their names on their views. Below are the Editor's pick of five letters taken from a pool of several submissions.

#### Dear Editor,

Moving to the position of president this year was a daunting task, but I found reassurance that you would be my right hand man. Your dedication to Political Awareness Society's mission of promoting civil discourse at Fairfield Prep has not gone unnoticed.

I hope I provided enough help as you learn the ropes of your new term as Editor-in-Chief, and I look forward to your work in the future.

With Gratitude, Luis Brea, President of the Political Awareness Society

Dear Luis,

I appreciate your passion for this club and all the help you've given me over the past year. This first month organizing meetings and designing the Zeitgeist has been a ton of fun and I can't wait to see what's in store for us in the future. I have confidence that this club is moving in the right direction with you as president.

Sincerely, -Kyle Elliott, Editor-In-Chief of *Zeitgeist* 

Dear Editor,

Is it true that Biden's Administration wanted to not withdraw from Afghanistan? If so, why would he still go through with it? What were the pros and cons from withdrawing or keeping the troops in Afghanistan?

Sincerely, Luke Van Dussen, Poliware Member

Dear Luke,

Going all the way back to 2009, Biden has been skeptical about keeping troops in Afghanistan and other nations in the Middle East. What I can say for his administration is that this withdrawal had already been planned months in advance. Whether or not the timing was correct or whether it was moral is a separate debate. I would say one pro of pulling out of Afghanistan is that less human lives will be lost, both American troops' lives and the lives of Afghan citizens due to the military's bad war tactics. One con is that the Taliban is now stronger and less afraid than they were a few months ago.

Sincerely,

Kyle Elliott, Editor-In-Chief of Zeitgeist

Dear Editor,

I think that the Afghanistan withdrawal was a big mistake by the Biden administration.

 $\overline{\mathbf{o}}$ 

Sincerely, Giovanni Accarroni, Poliware Member

#### Dear Giovanni,

I would have to agree with you on the fact that a lack of presence in the Middle East left its citizens vulnerable to the cruelty of the Taliban, as the Afghan military has proven to be expensive and inefficient. However, it is worth noting that 20 years is way too long for peace and it was inevitable that we look towards other solutions to this conflict besides military intervention. This is a very complicated topic and Poliware is open to discussing it more as the situation continues to unfold.

Sincerely, Kyle Elliott, Editor-In-Chief of *Zeitgeist* 



Dear Editor,

What information can you offer on the idea that human lives have been set at a price in

the current political landscape? At the moment, there are people who believe that an individual should not be able to live off of the minimum wage, and instead work hard to get a better job. There are people that believe their religious beliefs excuse them to treat other humans as though their lives are less important because they share different beliefs. Is a human's life not worth more than another human's comfort or happiness? People whose pockets are lined with cash can say they think homeless people should be jailed and stripped of their dignity and rights because they weren't quite as lucky as to make big bucks. Can someone really exchange the value of another human's life for the comfort of their own? My apologies if this seems like a question with an obvious answer, but clearly the answer isn't so obvious as I would hope or the people who line the political field with greed and corruption wouldn't be supported as wholeheartedly and often as they currently are. Have you any advice, opinions, or information to offer on the topic? Why are such sick people supported? What causes them to have such horrid beliefs?

Sincerely, Gavin Toscano

#### Dear Gavin,

I definitely understand where you're coming from. Lack of empathy is definitely a huge problem in our world today, especially between those of different economic statuses. I think both the homeless and the incarcerated are treated unfairly due to the pre-conceptions society has about them. I think as a society, it is good for us to listen to others' stories and their perspectives. That way, this lack of understanding and empathy can be erased and we can better deliver justice and better help those who are in need. I believe all life is equal because each of our lives has the potential for positive change in this world, so I would disagree with the notion that human lives are worth less because of religion, wealth, or individual values. I hope that this letter

gives you some clarity on this important issue. Sincerely, Kyle Elliott, Editor-In-Chief of <i>Zeitgeist</i>	rather rushed and unprepared retreat inspired not only panic, but mistrust and faithlessness in both the American government, and the opposing Taliban government. Sincerely, Mark Kolotylo, Poliware Member
Dear Editor, I think taking troops out of Afghanistan was a great idea, but the execution and timing was terrible. Taking troops out of Afghanistan during the summer time is a horrid idea. ISIS and other terrorist groups are most active for wartime and ready to go around that season. However, if Biden were to take out troops during the winter time that would be so much better since the terrorists are much more laid down and hibernated. Sincerely, Charlie Fabro, Poliware Member	Dear Mark, You make a valid point about a loss of trust from citizens in <i>both</i> nations. It seems odd to me that after all these years, our withdrawal only helped make the Taliban stronger. Despite this, I believe we should have faith in elected officials so that we can, hopefully, serve the people of Afghanistan as they deserve and resolve the human rights conflict plaguing the nation. If we can find peace for these citizens, I believe that will have made our withdrawal worth it. Sincerely, Kyle Elliott, Editor-In-Chief of Zeitgeist
Dear Charlie,	
I feel that timing has played a big role in the public's opinion about this situation. Most Americans agree with the idea of pulling out of Afghanistan, but many were disappointed	Dear Editor,
and appalled by the way the US went about executing this plan, hence Biden's low approval rating. Your theory about a withdrawal during the winter is interesting, however, I believe there are many other factors in play here and sadly we can only guess as to how this plan could have been better carried out. Sincerely, Kyle Elliott, Editor-In-Chief of <i>Zeitgeist</i>	In regards to the situation in Afghanistan, it is important to note that a major player's opinion has been left largely unrepresented and unheard. This major player, of course, is the small-town villagers living in the rural areas of Afghanistan. In major Afghan cities (like Kabul), America was widely known for the enabling of major progress in regards to women's rights, independent media, and other such freedoms. However, the villagers of the country seem to have far different views and opinions on the Americans and the Taliban, and it is important to consider their thoughts when forming our own
executing this plan, hence Biden's low approval rating. Your theory about a withdrawal during the winter is interesting, however, I believe there are many other factors in play here and sadly we can only guess as to how this plan could have been better carried out. Sincerely,	is important to note that a major player's opinion has been left largely unrepresented and unheard. This major player, of course, is the small-town villagers living in the rural areas of Afghanistan. In major Afghan cities (like Kabul), America was widely known for the enabling of major progress in regards to women's rights, independent media, and other such freedoms. However, the villagers of the country seem to have far different views and opinions on the Americans and

#### Dear Kent,

I would have to agree with you. 70 percent of Afghans live and work in rural areas (2018), so their perspective is crucial in these difficult times. One story I've read is one about a man who lost three nieces, three nephews, and ten cousins over the duration of the war. In many ways, the lives of rural farmers like him were harder than the lives of middle/upper class citizens living in cities because battles often took place in small farming districts. However, now that combat has decreased due to the US leaving the country, these citizens have been able to rebuild their communities and live relatively normal lives, hopefully more so by the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe in the value of hearing all sides of an argument, and that is the best way we can all be more informed about today's world.

Sincerely, Kyle Elliott, Editor-In-Chief of *Zeitgeist* 



#### Dear Editor,

What could the U.S. have done differently to better help the Afghan refugees?

Sincerely, Samuel Alvarez

#### Dear Sam,

Great question. I think the US was mostly looking out for themselves and their own people. They should have anticipated these large amounts of refugees looking to escape Afghanistan after the Taliban took over, and prepared as well as possible for their arrival. A large problem that occurred during the withdrawal was our false sense of time and our overestimation of the will of Afghan soldiers to continue serving. It is now our responsibility to support the Afghan refugees in the US, both emotionally and monetarily.

Sincerely, Kyle Elliott, Editor-In-Chief of *Zeitgeist* 



### PROPOSITION VERDICTS MADE BY THE Political awareness society

Every Political Awareness meeting is filled with discussions on current events. Under the direction of the President, **Luis Brea '23**, the group decides on key propositions from the week's recent news. The topics of these propositions— from Kayne West to Immigration Reform— are decided upon by all members in an informal vote after an open discussion is held. The following are some of the group's decisions on propositions so far:

#### September 9th, 2021 Meeting:

Proposition One: "This society believes that Kanye West's latest album, Donda, was good." In the end, the proposition was accepted.

Proposition Two: **"This society believes that Joe Biden's Afghanistan**  *rollout was mishandled and rushed.*" In the end, the proposition was **accepted**.

Proposition Three: **"This society believes that our founding fathers are overrated."** In the end, the proposition was **denied** 

In the end, the proposition was **denied**.

#### September 16th, 2021 Meeting:

Proposition One: *"This society believes that TikTok videos of theft of school property should be removed from the platform."* In the end, the proposition was **accepted**.

Proposition Two: **"This society believes that Critical Race Theory should be taught in schools."** In the end, the proposition was **denied**.

Proposition Three:

"This society believes that Florida Governor DeSantis should not punish local school vaccine mandates." In the end, the proposition was **denied**.

#### September 23rd, 2021 Meeting:

**Proposition One** 

"This society believes that the former president's administration posed a threat to our democratic institutions."

In the end, the proposition was **accepted**.

Proposition Two:

"This society believes that the Biden/Harris administration's approach to immigration is ineffective."

In the end, the proposition was **accepted**.

#### September 29th, 2021 Meeting:

Proposition One: "This society believes the show 'The West Wing' is a more accurate representation of politics than 'Scandal."

In the end, the proposition was **denied**.

Proposition Two: **"This society has hope for the future of Korea (North and South)."** In the end, the proposition was **accepted**.

Proposition Three:

"This society believes that immigration is more of an economic issue than a law enforcement issue." In the end, the proposition was accepted.

#### October 7th, 2021 Meeting

Proposition One: **"This society enjoyed the Congressional Baseball Game."** In the end, the proposition was **accepted**.

Proposition Two:

*"This society believes that party unity is more important than diversity of opinion in a party."* In the end, the proposition was **denied**.

Proposition Three:

*"This society believes that Donald Trump's political career is over."* In the end, the proposition was **accepted**.

## THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

A crucial part of Political Awareness is gathering the voice of Fairfield Prep students. This way, Political Awareness can help drive a more civil, productive dialogue. In this light, the following are the results of a student wide poll in the week following the Afghanistan evacuation.

When over a hundred students asked to

### RATE BIDEN'S PERFORMANCE IN OFFICE FROM A SCALE of one to ten





### **14.4 PERCENT**

of Fairfield Prep students report that they are uncomfortable "sharing their political opinions with their friends."

Finally, here are the



to the Fairfield Prep student body



## POLITICAL CARTOONS PAGE

Political cartoons can help bring humor to current events. Conversely, they can also point out harsh realities. In this light, for our first edition of the 2021-2022 school year, we decided to bring back a forgotten *Zeitgeist* tradition: the political cartoons page!













## **G IET US DARE TO THINK, SPEAK, ACT, AND WRITE.**

-John Adams, Second President of the United States



#### **MR. DENBY**

FOR PROVIDING EDITS TO WRITERS AS A MODERATOR OF OF THE POLITICAL AWARENESS SOCIETY

#### **MR. MAURITZ**

FOR PROVIDING EDITS TO WRITERS AS A MODERATOR OF OF THE POLITICAL AWARENESS SOCIETY

#### LUIS BREA

FOR PROVIDING SOLID LEADERSHIP TO THE CLUB DURING HIS FIRST MONTH AS PRESIDENT OF THE POLITICAL AWARENESS SOCIETY

#### **KYLE ELLIOTT**

FOR ORGANIZING AND FORMATTING ZEITGEIST AS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE POLITICAL AWARENESS SOCIETY

#### DISTINGUISHED WRITERS

FOR OFFERING THEIR OPINIONS AND RESEARCH TO THE STUDENT BODY IN THEIR NOW PUBLISHED WORKS

### **POLITICAL AWARENESS SOCIETY**





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