



INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

THE CONSEQUENCES OF RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Hadisa Zahirzai

Prohibition of education for Afghan girls has resulted in a profound crisis, which impacts both local communities and the entire nation. Over the past 1,000 days, 1.5 million Afghan girls have lost over three billion hours of learning due to the Taliban's restrictions on secondary and higher education. Since the Taliban regained power in 2021, they have enforced severe restrictions on women and girls, including the closure of their schools and universities. In addition, they banned women from parks, gyms, and other public spaces. They have erased half of the population from society. This is not just a loss of basic human rights but also a significant setback to the country's growth, which deepens gender inequality and jeopardizes Afghanistan's future. This article explores the broader consequences of depriving Afghan girls of their education and highlights the importance of empowering them for a better future.



As Afghan girls are denied access to education, the consequences affect not only their lives but the whole nation's future as well. If the three million girls currently deprived of education could finish secondary school and join the workforce, they could contribute at least \$5.4 billion to Afghanistan's economy. Educated women are more likely to work in higher-paying jobs, manage businesses, and contribute to the country's economic development. Millions of Afghan girls are deprived of the opportunity to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

However, this catastrophic situation goes beyond economic losses. Education is a key factor in empowering Afghan girls to make life decisions. Currently, Afghan girls are at high risk of early and forced marriages. According to the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Taliban's prohibition on girls' education has led to a 25% increase in child marriages and a 45% rise in childbearing across Afghanistan, which results in a cycle of poverty and poor health outcomes. Girls who marry as teenagers are more likely to experience maternal mortality and endanger the well-being of their children. Their lack of education also means they may not have the knowledge to advocate for themselves or their families, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.





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The psychological impact of restrictions on the education of girls is equally profound. Education is a source of hope, identity, and purpose in life. When the Taliban announced that girls were prohibited from attending school and universities because of their gender, it left girls powerless and excluded from meaningful roles in their own country. Feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, and depression are widespread, as girls see their dreams are being erased.

According to a UN Women report in April 2024, seven out of ten Afghan women suffer from anxiety, isolation, and severe depression. This data highlights the immense mental health crisis created by the restrictions on girls' education

The consequences of denying Afghan girls their basic human rights are extremely serious. Afghan girls deserve and have the potential to learn, dream, and shape the future of their country. Their education is more than a right; it's the foundation upon which a brighter and stronger Afghanistan can be built. The global community must act now to ensure Afghan girls are not forgotten. Investment in their education is a necessity for Afghanistan's growth and a powerful contribution to a more equitable and prosperous world. Together we have the power to change history.



The consequences of restrictions continue into the next generation. Educated women tend to marry later, have fewer and healthier children, and are more likely to ensure their children are educated. This creates a cycle of development. Without this opportunity, Afghan girls risk passing their poverty, inequality, and lack of opportunity to the next generation. Consequently, the continuation of these challenges will hold Afghanistan back economically, socially, and politically.

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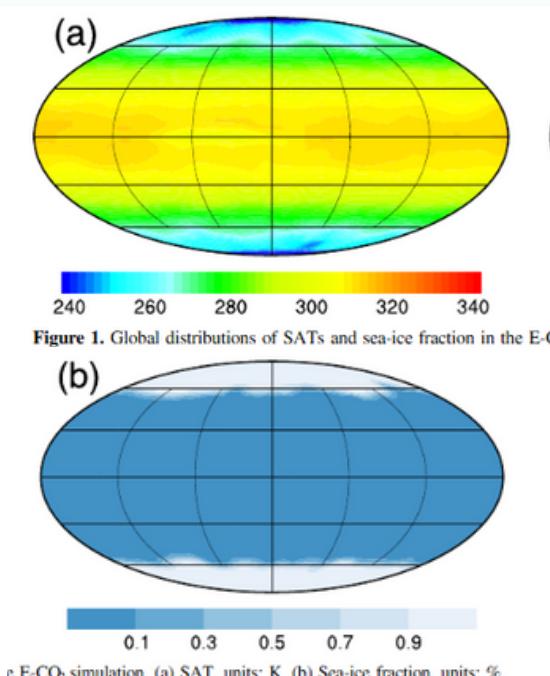


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HOW COLD, GIANT PLANETS CAN SUPPORT LIFE

Yaksh Dharod

Searching for life outside the solar system is based on the fact that life as we know it sustains on planets that are neither too hot, nor too cold; they lie in the habitable zone. Until now, it's been thought that similar worlds covered in ice would likely be too cold for life. But new research suggests that might not always be the case, and that some of those planets could have habitable land areas. This could include distant planets carrying the right conditions for liquid water under blankets of gas.



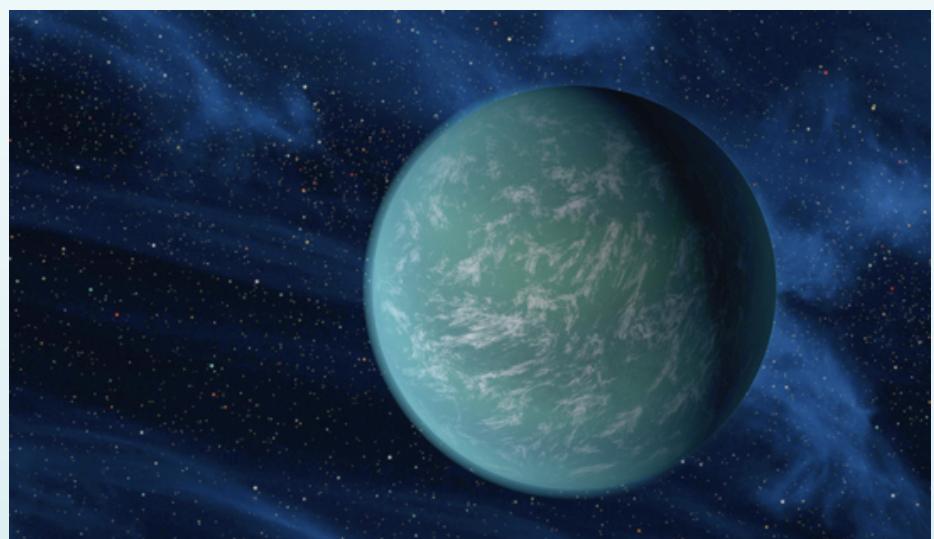
Somewhere in the universe, there may be rocky worlds perhaps twice as distant from their host stars as Earth is from the sun. Being considerably far from their stars' warmth, these planets should be quite cold, and any water on their surfaces should be frozen. But planetary scientists say there could be a class of rocky exoplanets covered in thick blankets of hydrogen and helium gases.

If those layers insulate the planets' cores from the harsh chill of space, their surfaces might just be the right temperature to host liquid water. And, if that's the case, it's possible that these worlds are habitable.



Findings also state that the sweet spot for long-term liquid water is if the hydrogen and helium-dominated atmosphere is between 100 and 1,000 times as thick as Earth's atmosphere, the planet's mass is one to 10 times that of the Earth's, and it sits at least two times as far from its star as Earth does the sun.

The findings suggest that some snowball planets (rocky planets like Earth with their oceans frozen thought to be too cold for life) could still have land areas near their equators, with temperatures in those regions warm enough to make them more habitable. The researchers used a computer program to simulate different climate variables, accounting for conditions like the amount of sunlight available and configuration of the land areas apart from ice and ran a simulation of how they might evolve over time.



According to these scientists, one of the key variables is Carbon Dioxide. As we know from climate change studies, carbon dioxide is great at trapping heat in a planet's atmosphere. When there's enough of it, a planet can remain warm enough for liquid water. But if there's too little of this gas, a planet will freeze. Mars is a good example; its atmosphere is primarily composed of carbon dioxide, but the atmosphere itself is too thin to retain much heat. So now the planet is cold and dry.

As such, it's still unknown whether such habitable Earth exists, but experts have shown that with this kind of diversity of planets, the whole range of planets that can exist is actually extremely big; if they do exist, many questions remain about how such a chilly, wet world might come to be?

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ANIMAL TESTING: SCIENCE OR SUFFERING?

Hai Lam (Apple) Ngoc



Animal testing has long been a central pillar in the world of research and science, capturing the attention of researchers and the curiosity of society for decades. This practice includes conducting various procedures on living animals to gain insights into biology and better understand diseases that affect both humans and animals. However, the topic of animal testing is steeped in controversy. It's crucial to explore this multifaceted issue from different angles to grasp its significance and the far-reaching implications it holds for scientific advancement and animal welfare.

The Role of Animal Testing

Numerous experiments in research laboratories have demonstrated that animal testing plays a crucial role in medical breakthroughs. According to Britannica, it has contributed to treatments for conditions like breast cancer, childhood leukemia, and tuberculosis, underscoring its historical significance in research. Additionally, key advancements in animal testing continue to evolve, particularly in vaccine development. The Foundation for Biomedical Research states that research on cows led to the first vaccine, which helped eradicate smallpox, and studies involving primates contributed to the polio vaccine and treatments for cancer, HIV/AIDS, and malaria. There have also been instances where animal testing has proven essential. For example, animals were used to test the potential of penicillin as an antibiotic, determining its effectiveness in treating infections.

Thanks to animal testing, penicillin became a crucial medicine for treating bacterial infections in soldiers during World War II.

The Ethical Argument

Animal testing is inhumane and goes against basic animal rights. When animals are brought to laboratories, it violates animal rights because the animals are not given a choice. They were forced to endure pain and suffering such as getting their organs or tissues surgically removed or getting injected with harmful substances just for the sake of research, which can cause death to the animals by the end of the experiment.

Sometimes, we humans tend to forget that animals are sentient beings too.

When scientists keep them locked in cages—which are usually small—it can cause the animals to develop feelings of isolation, anxiety, and fear due to being confined in such a tiny space in an unfamiliar environment. People For The Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) presented The Silver Spring Monkey case, where 17 monkeys were caged in tiny rusty wired cages and were only brought out so the Institute For Behavioral Research in Silver Spring, Maryland could study neuroplasticity. PETA claims "The trauma of the monkeys' imprisonment and treatment was so severe that many of them had ripped at their flesh, and they had lost many of their fingers from catching them in the rusted, jagged cage bars". This just shows how cruel the practice of animal testing is.



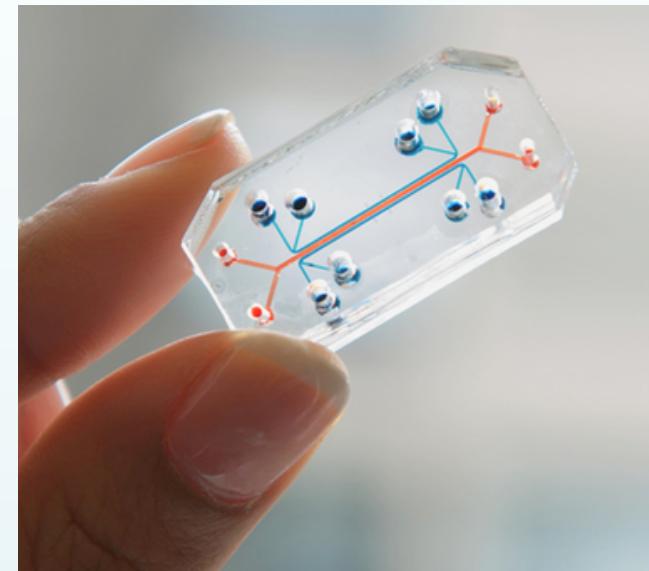
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Animal testing is expensive and time-consuming. When scientists want to conduct testing on an animal, they have to spend a huge amount of money on factors such as skilled personnel, breeding, and experimental equipment. When these factors are added up, the sum can be a large amount of money. Imagine having to pay this much money for the long duration of the experiment. For example, an article by Humane Society International states "It takes about a decade and \$3,000,000 to complete all of the animal studies required to register one single pesticide with the US Environmental Protection Agency." Not to mention, if scientists are unsuccessful in their predictions in their experiments, their company could lose a great deal of money. For example, an article written by Cruelty Free International argues that

"92% of drugs fail in human clinical trials despite appearing safe and effective in animal tests, often on safety grounds or because they do not work."



Alternatives in Development

When considering the broader picture, there is a viable alternative to animal testing: organs-on-chips. Developed by researchers, these chips incorporate human cells cultivated within engineered systems. The human cells are arranged to replicate actual human organs' functions and associated systems. By using this innovative approach, we can adopt a more ethical method for investigating diseases and testing drugs, moving away from the reliance on animals. These chips prove to be particularly effective, as the human cells they house can more accurately reflect human physiology, unlike animals, which have different biological structures.

This shift not only reduces the need for animal testing, thus alleviating concerns about animal welfare, but also accelerates drug development and safety testing cost-effectively. Moreover, this technology paves the way for personalized medicine through the development of patient-specific models. Companies such as Emulate and Nortis are already implementing these chips in their research, aiming to replace traditional animal testing methods.

A Conclusion

The debate over animal testing involves major scientific advancements and ethical concerns. While animal testing has contributed to medical breakthroughs, the suffering of animals raises moral issues. Alternatives like organ-on-chips offer promising and moral solutions. Overall, we must learn to balance scientific progress with the humane treatment of animals in biomedical research to ensure a knowledgeable, safe community.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF BILINGUALISM

Sanjana Vijayan

Imagine being able to switch between two languages effortlessly in a conversation. While it may seem like an enticing dream for some, it is a reality for millions around the world. This language fluidity is also known as bilingualism.

43% of the world's population, 3.3 billion people, are currently bilingual. (Gration, 2024).

Bilingualism is becoming more prevalent in contemporary society, with more parents than ever opting to foster this skill in their children (Byres-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2018). While an age limit to learning a new language does not exist, the earlier one is presented with opportunities to pick it up, the more beneficial it is. There are a plethora of benefits bilingualism can cultivate, a fact that reinforces the importance of possessing this skill. In this essay, I will focus on the sociocultural, economic, and cognitive advantages of being bilingual.

As we live in an increasingly interconnected world, we are exposed to various cultures and traditions. Sustaining one's own culture and traditions is crucial, and bilingualism has been proven to provide benefits in sociocultural aspects. Singapore can be used as a primary example. As a multi-racial country, it is home to many cultures of Chinese, Indian, and Malay origins. Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat mentioned that, while English is useful in making connections with those of differing races, utilising one's respective "mother tongue" languages in various ways is beneficial in retaining cultural beliefs, customs, and legacies (Goh, 2023). A few physical manifestations of this are the local newspapers, television channels, and education policies that promote the practice and use of the main languages in Singapore (Mandarin, Tamil, and Malay). In terms of social benefits, discrimination based on race is not as common in bilingual children compared to monolingual children (Singh, 2018).

Furthermore, bilingual children are more empathetic (Singh, 2018). All these skills can positively aid children in forming bonds with others. Therefore, bilingualism can positively impact one in a sociocultural aspect.

Another aspect in which bilingualism creates positive effects is the economy. This impacts multinational corporations, countries, and even individuals. By possessing the ability to converse in more than one language, more avenues of income are unwrapped, as opportunities for overseas partnerships are increased. The ability to communicate in a different language than English can develop and establish important commercial alliances related to trading (Hardach, 2018). This further increases the income revenue for companies (Hardach, 2018), boosting the economy. Correspondingly, potential employees who are proficient in more than one language are perceived as possessing a competitive advantage over monolingual candidates. As such, employers tend to lean towards candidates who are proficient in more than one language. This linguistic proficiency can enhance their prospects of securing employment opportunities. Apart from linguistic excellence, bilingual candidates are also perceived as more competent, further amplifying their prospects. Thus, a positive benefit of bilingualism is the improvements it brings to the economy, either through companies or individuals.

Lastly, there are cognitive benefits of bilingualism. The practice of speaking and thinking in two languages has contributed to profound perks for one's intellectual abilities, ranging from skill sets to academics. Firstly, through the utilisation of two languages, a more versatile mindset is developed, which allows for improved problem-solving skills (St. Augustine College, 2024). Furthermore, to be able to switch between two languages, systematic conduction of the content and usage of both languages is crucial, as such, bilingual individuals demonstrate stronger competencies when making decisions and in tasks requiring memory (St. Augustine College, 2024). As a result, bilingual students tend to perform well academically (St. Augustine College, 2024).

It was found that children exposed to a bilingual environment could manage their attention well, and their adult counterparts displayed better execution of skills regarding sensory and response interference (Bialystok & Craik, 2022). Therefore, another impact of bilingualism is the cognitive benefits one can gain.

Being bilingual can either be cultivated through one's heritage or simply out of interest in another language. However, the substantial benefits that are produced along with bilingualism significantly prove why it is crucial to be bilingual. To reiterate, bilingualism can bring about positive impacts in sociocultural, economic, and cognitive areas. In essence, as quoted by Ludwig Wittgenstein, 'the limits of my language are the limits of my world'.

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ADDRESSING ILLEGAL SAND MINING, SCARCITY, AND OUR ROLE IN CHANGE

Chimwekele Okoro

Due to increased sand mining operations, sand suitable for construction is becoming increasingly scarce. Between 32 billion and 50 billion tonnes of sand and gravel are extracted from the Earth each year. This amount is enough to cover the entire continent of Australia with a layer of sand 2.6 to 4.1 millimeters thick. Considering the vastness of Australia, this comparison highlights the sheer volume of sand extracted from the earth yearly.

Now, you may be wondering, "Why is this such a big issue? Can't we just use desert sand?"



Construction sand (technically known as aggregate), is often extracted from riverbeds, beaches, quarries, island dunes, or seabeds. It can also be manufactured by crushing rocks, quarry stones, or even glass. It does not solely comprise what one might usually think about when 'sand' is mentioned.

Desert sand is not suitable for construction, since the roundness of its grains makes it too weak to use in construction projects. It has been eroded by wind, rather than water. Therefore, even though there is an abundant presence of sand dunes in deserts, the sand cannot be used for construction projects. Construction sand has angular grains of different sizes, which is different from wind-weathered desert sand. Nevertheless, as global demand for aggregate increases, and more sand is extracted for construction, many people have lost their homes, livelihoods, and entire communities.

In Vietnam's Mekong Delta, home to about 20 million people, the rising waters and continued sand extraction rapidly consume about 540 feet of land daily. For comparison, this is equivalent to a large shopping mall, or a city block. Despite its devastating effects, sand mining continues to occur in this area, threatening the very existence of ancient land, and the collective well-being of those living within the Mekong Delta community, Southeast Asia, and the world as a whole.

In Uttar Pradesh, India, many journalists have been killed because of their persistence in exposing illegal sand mining activities. There are many incidents caused by the continued extraction of sand. Illegal construction mining accounts for a large percentage of unpaid labor, most of which is not accounted for. However, it is important to highlight possible solutions to this problem.

To combat this global sand shortage, the solution is not to continue mining sand from communities that are already suffering from the consequences of these activities. The solution is to find ways to recycle what is currently available so that communities do not suffer from a lack of government accountability.



Manufactured sand currently makes up 10-15% of the amount of sand used in construction projects. In order to maintain sustainability and protect the livelihoods of people, this number must increase. Whether it is crushing and reusing concrete from demolished buildings, replacing sand with crushed glass, foundry sand, and quarry dust, or creating ways for desert sand to be used in construction projects, there must be a fundamental change in how sand is used for construction. In addition, governments must continue to be held accountable to prevent the perpetuation of illegal sand mining activities and human trafficking associated with sand.

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BRAIN ROT: THE EFFECTS OF DOOM SCROLLING

Teu-Khanh Phuong



Imagine you have a free day all to yourself. What would you do? Some would choose to take a camping trip; others would seize this opportunity to hang out with their families. However, the majority of the youngest generations would prefer to scroll on their social media for hours. This has long been the norm for numerous teenagers worldwide.

Recently, the word “brain rot” has been chosen as Oxford Word of the Year 2024 by the Oxford University Press. Oxford defines it as “the supposed deterioration of a person’s mental or intellectual state, especially viewed as the result of overconsumption of material (now particularly online content) considered to be trivial or unchallenging.” In simple terms, brain rot is used to describe the effects of being “immersively online” and consuming large amounts of low-value content, particularly on social media. However, few people are aware of how doomscrolling is rotting our brains and how our grey matter is being destroyed by compulsive usage of social media.

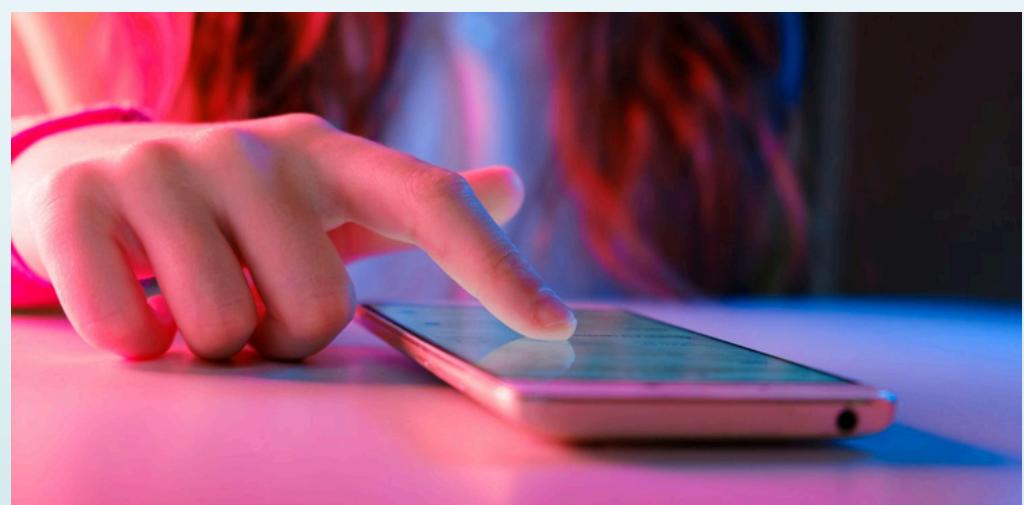
What is doomscrolling?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2020) defines doomscrolling or doom surfing as the tendency to continue obsessively surfing for bad news, even if it causes unhappiness and despair, especially during the pandemic. This involves scrolling for an extensively long period, often for 2 to 3 hours each day. This behavior stems from a desire to keep up with global news, along with the need for entertainment and relaxation after an industrious day of studying and working.

Why do teenagers engage in doom-scrolling?

The group of people that are often associated with doomscrolling are teenagers. According to a 2023 Gallup survey, teenagers, specifically from the age of 13 to 19, spend at least four hours daily on social media, with the most significant reason being doomscrolling. There are several key factors that explain why teenagers are so drawn to social media.

Adolescence is usually described as a problematic age, especially as many changes occur during this time. Those changes can be related to emotional or physical well-being, cognitive development, and social change. Therefore, during times of stress or uncertainty about their identity, teenagers often turn to social media to find answers to their questions and problems. Another factor contributing to this addiction is emotional sensitivity, according to Imagine Boise - a blog specialising in Teen and Adolescent Mental Health Treatment.



Teenagers experience emotions more intensely, making them vulnerable to the emotional effects of pessimistic news. This results in a cycle where teens seek additional information to relieve their worry and pressure, only to feel worse as they consume more disturbing content.

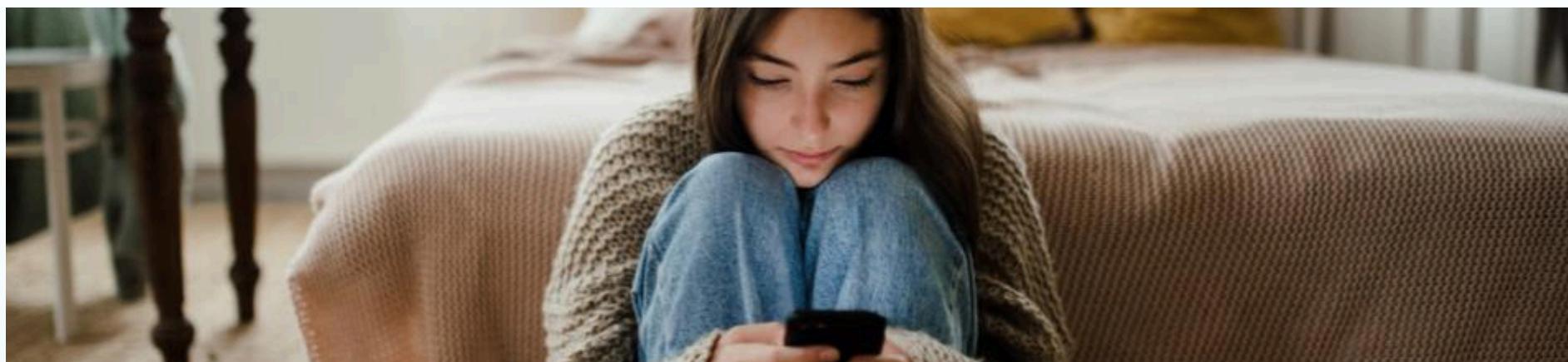
Another underlying reason teenagers doom-scroll is a fear of missing out, commonly known as FOMO. FOMO is a feeling in which one might feel they missed out on new opportunities and exciting events. Teenagers accurately exemplify this situation, as they have constant feelings of missing out on the latest news, trends, or updates from peers. Particularly in the new digital age, keeping up with the latest global news is crucial for every teenager, as it widens their perspective. However, the frequent use of social media can pose a threat to their mental health.



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Teu-Khanh Phuong



Is doom scrolling an effective way to reduce stress?

Some critics may argue that doomscrolling has been helpful in times of depression and anxiety. They further claim that doomscrolling helps people escape from negative emotions and tiredness from the workplace or low exam results. By scrolling on their favourite influencers' pages or watching some "silly, entertaining" videos, their pains and sufferings may be alleviated. However, the effects of doomscrolling can have a profound and far-reaching negative impact on teenagers.

Firstly, mental health is closely linked to adolescents' habit of continuous use of social media. Numerous studies have shown that being exposed to negative content through doomscrolling can, over time, worsen mental well-being and life satisfaction. Notably, Harvard Health has reported that "doom scrolling evokes greater levels of existential anxiety — a feeling of dread or panic that arises when we confront the limitations of our existence." The ongoing exposure to distressing content not only provokes a person's emotional responses but also shapes and changes a person's perception of reality and social matters, making it seem like the world is full of negativity and insensitivity. This doesn't stop there. Harvard Health goes in-depth by mentioning the problems in our brains that are associated with doomscrolling in the article on doomscrolling dangers: "On a practical level, Dr. Nerurkar says, doomscrolling can give us 'popcorn brain,' which happens when we spend too much time online.

'It's the real, biological phenomenon of feeling your brain is popping because you're being overstimulated online,' she explains. 'Then it's hard to engage with the real world, which moves at a much slower pace.'

Secondly, doomscrolling doesn't just affect a teenager's mental health, but also their physical health. Adults are also affected by doom scrolling, but teenagers are the most vulnerable stakeholders when it comes to its consequences. Harvard experts have mentioned the following physical effects from their article on the dangers of doomscrolling:

"Perhaps unsurprisingly, stomach-churning news has a tendency to turn our stomachs. But nausea is far from the only physical effect of doomscrolling. Others can include headaches, muscle tension, neck and shoulder pain, low appetite, difficulty sleeping, and even elevated blood pressure."

Lastly, a decrease in concentration and productivity is a result of excessive use of the Internet. People, in particular teenagers, tend to take their time for granted. Their time spent surfing the Internet could have been better used for other important pursuits, such as self-studying, trying out a new hobby, or engaging in extracurricular activities. A study in Computers in Human Behavior in April 2024 offered a new perspective on a reduction of productivity associated with doom scrolling: "employees who doomscroll while at work may become less engaged with their professional tasks."

Overall, doomscrolling has adverse effects on a person's development and well-being. It is up to us to prioritise our main objectives in life and set realistic goals to mitigate social media usage. For example, establishing a fixed schedule for news consumption or setting a time during the day for news updates can allow people to keep up with the latest news without feeling too overwhelmed and stressed out. By taking small steps towards minimizing this habit, everyone can achieve much more in life.

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DELAY, DENY, DEPOSE

Mercy Olanrewaju

On the 4th of December, 2023 Brian Thompson, the CEO of UnitedHealthcare was walking down 54th Street, in Manhattan, New York. The street was opposite the Marriott hotel where he was staying. It was approximately 6.45 a.m. local time when he was shot with a pistol by a man in a hooded jacket. He was then taken by paramedics to Mount Sinai West hospital and was pronounced dead less than half an hour later. The entire situation was very sudden, leaving everyone wondering who shot him, and what was the motive for the murder?

Brian Thompson became the CEO of UnitedHealthcare in 2021, the largest health insurance company in the US with a 15% market share in 2023. His tenure as CEO was marked by an increase in profits for the firm, but the company consistently had high rates of denial of claims, as data shows that the company denies 32% of claims, a higher rate than that of their competitors.



After the shooting (which was caught on CCTV), the killer fled on an e-bike through Central Park. Three fired cartridge cases that were found at the scene of the murder had the words: 'delay', 'deny', and 'depose' written on them. This was suspected to be a play on words for a phrase known in the insurance industry: 'delay, deny, defend', and alludes to companies' efforts to not pay out insurance claims. He also disposed of a bag in Central Park, containing a Tommy Hilfiger coat and a large amount of Monopoly money, which was found by the NYPD after the shooting, and which many found to be ironic. He got onto a bus terminal and managed to make his way to Altoona, Pennsylvania. The NYPD initially offered \$10,000 for information. The FBI also offered \$50,000 for any information that could lead to arrest and conviction.



Altoona police arrested Luigi Mangione in a McDonald's 5 days after the shooting. An employee called the police saying a customer recognised him as the shooter from images released by the NYPD. What further inspired intrigue were the items found on his person - a 3D printed gun which matched the gun used for the crime and a 3-page hand-written document which was characterised as a manifesto. He was charged with carrying a gun without a license, forgery, falsely identifying himself to the authorities, and possessing "instruments of crime". He was taken to court so he could be extradited to New York.

The suspected killer, Luigi Mangione, came from a well-to-do family from Baltimore, Maryland, known for their many businesses. He was a highly academic student, being valedictorian at Gilman School, an all-boys highschool in Baltimore. He attended the University of Pennsylvania and earned both a bachelor's and master's degree in computer science. Internet users investigated his social media profiles, such as his X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, YouTube and Goodreads, and began to draw conclusions. His Instagram mainly just included pictures of all the trips he went on. However, on his Goodreads profile, he read two books about back pain, one of which is called *Crooked: Outwitting the Back Pain Industry*.

Sarah Nehemiah, who knew him during the time he spent at a co-living surfing community in Hawaii, told CBS he left due to a back injury, which was worsened by surfing and hiking.

On his X header, there were three images: one of Breloom (A mushroom pokemon) with the number 286, an X-ray of his spine, and an image of him hiking. After his arrest, his YouTube channel, named Luigi Mangione, posted a 1 minute and 24 second video titled 'The Truth', which featured an initial 5 second countdown and then 60 second countdown, and then finally the message: "If you see this, I'm already under arrest". It is suspected that his back injury and subsequent encounters in the healthcare system radicalised him. He had also been out of touch with his family for some time, as his mother had reported him missing in July.



INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

DELAY, DENY, DEPOSE

Mercy Olanrewaju

Online conspiracy theorists have thoroughly analysed his social media profiles and come to a multitude of conclusions. Some believe that he was a 'fall guy' for the crime, citing the shape of his eyebrows in mugshots compared the CCTV images released by the police as evidence. It has also been noticed that in the multiple images of the suspect released by the police, the suspect is wearing different jackets. Others have focussed on the number '286'. The Pokémon on his X page has the number 286 and some also believe the number is a reference to Proverbs 28:6, which states: "Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity, than a person who is crooked though he is rich". The number also has relevance in the healthcare system, as it corresponds to a denial code used when the appeal time limits for a healthcare claim are not met. All of these discoveries have led to the overall conclusion that he has a strong disdain for the insurance system.

The public's reaction to the crime was varied. Many politicians voiced their condolences to the family of the victim, such as VP nominee Tim Walz and Senator Amy.



He is also facing 4 federal charges including first-degree murder and first-degree murder in furtherance of terrorism. The latter charge has stirred controversy, as many suspect that the charge was to disincentive others who are aggrieved with the state of the USA to take such drastic measures. It has also been mentioned that there have been many mugshots and instances of Mr Mangione being "paraded" in front of media, and it has been argued that this is an attempt to deter copycat crimes. He's currently being represented by Karen Friedman Agnifilo and Mark Agnifilo, and has pleaded not guilty to the state charges.

As of now, Luigi Mangione has been extradited to New York. He is facing 11 state criminal charges from the state of New York, and could potentially be executed for his crimes.



The president-elect Donald Trump said during a conference that the killing was terrible and criticised those who admired the killer. The reaction from these political leaders, however, was opposite to that of many average Americans. It is a common feeling for working-class Americans to feel disdain for the healthcare system as well, as many are one health emergency away from bankruptcy. The overall interpretation of the situation is that the death of Brian Thompson was unfortunate, but that there is a much bigger problem in the country in regards to how the healthcare and insurance systems function.

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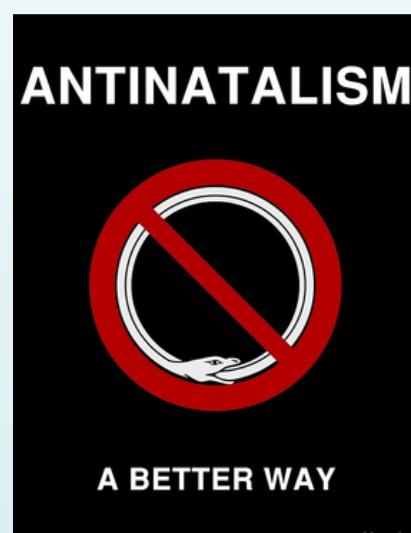
ANTI-NATALISM - THE WAY OUT OF "SUFFERING" FOR THE NEXT GENERATION?

Ha Nguyen

Businessman Raphael Samuel, currently the CEO of a business in Mumbai, India, has filed a lawsuit against his parents for giving birth to him. Raphael believes that it was a mistake; his life is a sea of suffering, and he did not ask to be born. Unhappiness didn't cause his lawsuit: "I love my parents, and my family is happy. My life is not worth complaining about, but I still feel that there is no reason to live, go to school, find a job, because I do not want to be in this world". Raphael's parents are certainly not happy that their son is suing them for the silly reason of giving him life. If anything, they are quite surprised.

Raphael is a leading exponent of anti-natalism, a branch of modern philosophy that raises the question: If life is inherently miserable, is being born better than never having been born?

If each of us lived to be seventy, we would have at least 25,000 days on earth, and those days would be mixed with joy and sadness. However, the human brain is very special, always focusing on the negative (a relic from prehistoric times when we had to worry and fear to survive), and can never achieve eternal happiness. While doctors show us many chronic pains, it can be difficult to find an instance of chronic joy.



This is a delicate issue because its view goes against our basic biological impulses (reproduction is for the sake of continuity), but it is also worth paying attention to because it relates to a vexing philosophical question: Is life worth living?



Are there any bad aspects of our life in the modern world? Yes. There are thousands and thousands of them: war, epidemics, environmental pollution, moral degradation, natural disasters... the list goes on. Modern people are under all kinds of pressure, family, society, food, clothing, money, psychology, and emotions. "A life worth living" is a concept that few people can confidently define. Our lives also have an impact on the environment; the amount we consume, hunt, destroy, and discard into nature have reached all time highs. According to statistics, the amount of household waste in Vietnam alone has reached over 27 million tons/year and increases by 5% each year; each urban resident throws away 1.6 kg of waste/day, and plastic consumption has increased more than 10 times in 25 years. If Mars could think, it would feel lucky not to have to give birth to any life, unlike its unlucky neighbor in the same solar system. Simply put, life is much worse than most people realize, and yet there are powerful forces that support it. Indeed, one can be living a life that is not worth living with, without realizing it.

In terms of spirituality, for Buddhists, there are a few arguments that can resolve the anti-life ideology. They believe life is a sea of suffering; the Saha world of the Tathagata Buddha. We are blinded by ignorance so we cannot see the impermanence of life. We only focus on pleasure, and thus are deceived and cannot be satisfied with what we have. Buddhist practices all aim to eliminate this ignorance to achieve spiritual sublimation, helping people calmly accept and feel comfortable in this "boundless" sea of suffering. Perhaps it is because of these ideas that Buddhist-majority countries tend to be among the most optimistic in the world. But what would Buddhists think when anti-natalism points out that lives get off to an unnaturally bad start? Is it necessary that children are born with birth defects? That thousands of people starve to death every day due to natural disasters, despite struggling to make ends meet, and that people with incurable diseases caused by genetic defects are forced to endure excruciating pain? Do we need to suffer to have joy? Is there any doctrine that can enlighten the minds of those lives? Buddhists will explain that it is due to Karma from previous lives, but is there any way to avoid it? This is when anti-natalism raises its hand again.

However, I believe that each of us in this world has a reason to live, and our life, even if it is not lucky, is still a life with its own color.

Anti-natalism should not be judged as the ideology of those who despise life or the creatures it represents. It is a contrasting perspective for us to thoroughly reflect on our own existence, to realize the true value of life.

What Buddhism's lessons can help us do is erase prejudices so that we can accept in a "gentle, calm, and carefree" way the harsh truth that we were born and that there is no other way to find happiness but to choose a way of life that makes living worthy!

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NO RECOGNITION, NO RETREAT: THE CASE OF SOMALILAND

Morgan Dinh



You've probably heard of Somalia—a country too often associated with instability, conflict, and piracy in the Horn of Africa. But to its northwest lies a place that defies this narrative: Somaliland. Tucked away in the Horn of Africa, this de facto state has spent over three decades pursuing international recognition.

Historical Foundations of Independence

Somaliland's identity, as a distinct region within the broader Somali context, can be traced back to the late 19th century. Under British administration as a protectorate, the territory operated separately from Britain until gaining independence in June 1960. Just five days later, it united with the territory of present-day Somalia, which had been governed by Italy, to form the Somali Republic. However, the union was fraught with tension from the outset, as many in Somaliland opposed the concentration of power in the southern part of the country.

Discontent simmered as political and economic marginalization of Somaliland's northern regions grew under the central government in Mogadishu. The situation deteriorated further during the rule of Somali dictator Siad Barre, who had come to power through a military coup in 1969. Between 1987 and 1989, Siad Barre's regime carried out widespread atrocities against the Isaaq clan, the dominant group in Somalia's northwestern region. Approximately 200,000 Isaaq people were killed in what is now recognized as a brutal campaign to suppress their push for independence. Experts estimate that Somaliland is now home to over 200 mass graves, with a significant number concentrated in an area grimly known as the Valley of Death.

Barre's genocidal campaign also included the bombing of Hargeisa, now Somaliland's capital, killing over 40,000 people and leaving the city in ruins.

During this time, anger and resentment towards Barre's regime gave rise to the Somali National Movement (SNM), an armed and formidable opposition group based in Somaliland. They fought tirelessly to overthrow Barre's regime. In January 1991, Barre's regime was finally ended by a coalition of insurgent groups, including the SNM. However, discord among these factions prevented the establishment of a unified interim government. Rejecting the authority of the new administration led by rival militias, the SNM declared Somaliland's independence in May 1991, with Hargeisa designated as its capital.

The declaration marked the beginning of a new chapter for Somaliland— one defined by a steadfast commitment to building peace and stability within its borders.

The subsequent decade saw Somaliland embark on a challenging journey to solidify its governance structures. Through a series of national conferences and dialogues, delegates negotiated and eventually ratified a new constitution. In 2001, this constitution was overwhelmingly endorsed by the populace in a referendum, marking a pivotal transition from clan-based power sharing to a multiparty democratic system. While the peaceful referendum garnered praise from some international observers, it failed to secure formal recognition from any foreign governments.

Quest for Recognition

Somaliland asserts its case for independence based on its long-standing de facto statehood, which includes functioning democratic institutions, an independent currency, security forces, and the issuance of passports. The region's government holds regular democratic elections and has developed a robust governance system, despite not receiving formal recognition from the international community. Somaliland argues its case based on historical precedent, including the recognition of other breakaway states like Eritrea and Bangladesh, while also highlighting its historical distinction from Somalia prior to unification in 1960. The de facto state contends that its status aligns with African Union (AU) principles. The AU has acknowledged the "unique" nature of Somaliland's situation but has not yet taken decisive action, largely due to concerns about altering the continent's colonial borders and the risks of setting a precedent for other secessionist movements.

Despite being denied recognition, Somaliland has been able to maintain internal stability, making it a relative "oasis" of peace in a turbulent region. It has established diplomatic contacts with countries like Ethiopia, the UK, Belgium, and South Africa, and has even engaged with the EU and the United Nations. However, the lack of formal recognition, especially from the AU, has hindered Somaliland's ability to engage fully in international trade and development.



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NO RECOGNITION, NO RETREAT: THE CASE OF SOMALILAND

Morgan Dinh

Somaliland-Ethiopia MOU

On January 1, 2024, the Horn of Africa was jolted by a seismic shift as Ethiopia and Somaliland signed a groundbreaking and controversial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

For years, Ethiopia, though a regional power, had kept a delicate balance in its dealings with both Somalia and Somaliland. Yet, in a bold and unexpected move, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Somaliland's President Muse Bihi Abdi agreed to a deal that secured Ethiopia a 50-year lease on a 20-kilometer stretch of Somaliland's coastline, where it will establish a naval base, enhancing its access to the sea. In exchange, Ethiopia has agreed to support Somaliland's long-sought bid for international recognition as a sovereign state, potentially offering economic stakes in Ethiopian Airlines or EthioTelecom to Somaliland. Ethiopia will also invest in infrastructure, including roads and rail links to connect the base to Berbera port, a strategic trade route for landlocked Ethiopia. While the MoU is seen as a political breakthrough, it remains controversial, particularly given Somalia's claims over Somaliland and the uncertainty surrounding the recognition of Somaliland's independence. The agreement strengthens ties between the two nations, with mutual benefits in trade, security cooperation, and economic development, especially through the development of the Berbera port.

Rising Tensions in the Horn of Africa

The MoU between Ethiopia and Somaliland has triggered widespread backlash, particularly from Somalia, which considers Somaliland part of its territory. Somalia swiftly recalled its ambassador and declared the agreement "null and void," while also blocking Ethiopian flights to Somaliland. The Somali government has framed the deal as an infringement on its sovereignty, accusing Ethiopia of meddling in its internal affairs and fueling suspicions of territorial expansion. Egypt, Djibouti, and other regional players have also expressed concerns, fearing the strategic shift could alter the balance of power in the Horn of Africa. Moreover, the militant group Al-Shabaab has threatened Ethiopia with "bitter consequences," as it seeks a unified Somalia under its control.

The agreement risks not only deepening divisions within the Horn of Africa but also destabilizing Somaliland itself, where internal opposition to independence remains strong.



What may be next for Somaliland?

In conclusion, Somaliland's future remains uncertain, as its push for international recognition needs to be first approved by the African Union - where many member countries are hesitant and opposed to its recognition, as they fear subsequent secessionist movements arising and destabilizing the region. While the recent MoU with Ethiopia could pave the way for broader recognition, it risks exacerbating tensions between Somaliland and Somalia. Domestically, Somaliland faces opposition to its pursuit of independence from certain factions within its population, particularly in areas like Las Anod, where clashes between local militias and the Somaliland government have occurred. On the international stage, the absence of widespread recognition complicates Somaliland's efforts to gain full sovereignty.

As Somaliland continues its quest for recognition, the evolving political, economic, and security changes in the Horn of Africa will be crucial in determining whether international recognition will be reached or greater instability will ensue.

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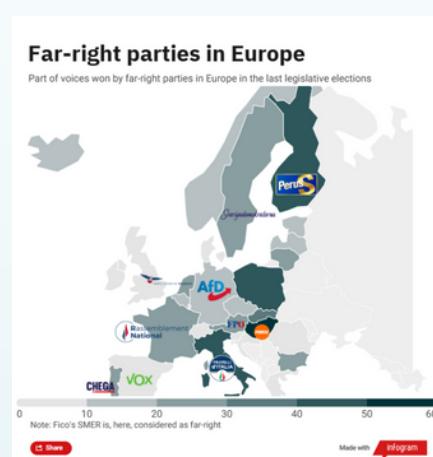
INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

SHAPING EUROPE IN A WORLD OF BRUTES

Matiss Hyenveux

"Faced with the re-election of Donald Trump, the European Union must take its destiny into its own hands".

This is the recommendation of the Union of European Federalists which was published on November 6. But seeing the turmoil in Germany with a political crisis, in France with similar but more severe issues, or in Romania and its canceled presidential election, it seems that the "destiny" which Europe has to pursue is far away. This article examines the current European political climate.



The Far-Right Parties in the Spotlight

The first key observation is that Europe is experiencing a surge in xenophobia, euroscepticism, and nationalism.

Some of these parties are eurosceptic and nationalists. More than this, many consider AfD and FPÖ as neo-nazist parties. Where they are leading the way, they have damaged democracy, especially in Hungary where individual liberties and press independence are greatly reduced.

To illustrate this push to the far-right, recent Politico 28 nominations replaced, for example, Emmanuel Macron with Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Rally.

Building Europe with... that.

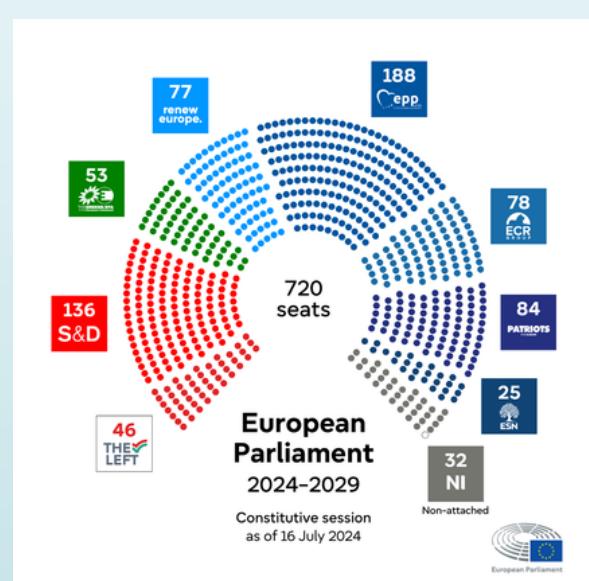
It is complicated to act in the European Parliament with some eurosceptic parties in the game. For six months, the Hungarian presidency of the Council paralyzed decision making within the EU, and the new Patriots group in the Parliament shows, with the higher percent of right-wing parties in the EP, that the balance is tipping to one side. Consequently, rather than reacting strongly with unity in Europe against Trump's isolationism as UEF asked, we can see some political personalities hope that the Trump election might help them reach the head of their State. Viktor Orbán was the first to congratulate Donald Trump for his election, even followed by president Emmanuel Macron, the same who said Europe has to be an "omnivore". It's impossible to stand against the US without unity, isn't it?

The far-right parties, talking about restraining immigration, national pride, closing the borders, or avoiding war in Ukraine and conflict with Putin, are gaining increasing support in every election. In Italy, Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia won the 2022 elections, in Germany, the AfD took place for the first time in regional parliaments (in Thuringia and Saxony), in France the Front National arrived first in the European elections, and is currently holding its best number of seats in French national assembly from all its history. In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders is the prime minister, in Austria the FPÖ is leading the way in the assembly, in Hungary and Slovakia Orbán and Fico are destabilizing the EU and promoting 'illiberal democracy'. And eventually, Călin Georgescu emerged from nowhere to win the first round of the presidential elections, causing trouble as Russia is suspected of "hybrid attack" on Romania, taking part in and influencing the elections. The decision of the Supreme Court of Romania to cancel the elections only added turmoil in the country. Finally, even in the Scandinavian countries the far-right or at least right movements are gaining force. In Denmark, Venstre and Dansk Folkeparti imposed the promotion of anti-immigration policies along with coercitive actions against jobless people, in Sweden the far-right party SD is holding one seat of about five in the parliament, and in Finland the Finns Party is the second most important in the national assembly.

As a result of this, Europe is preparing to negotiate. Yes, plans are ready to do commercial war with the US, but it seems that everyone wants to talk. With Russia as well, it seems, for many like Orbán or Georgescu.

An Inefficient Europe

In addition, the franco-german engine is broken, both having their important political crisis, and economic difficulties. In France an important debt scares everyone, in Germany there's a shrinking domestic production, especially in its key automotive sector. With Italy 'only' speaking about migrants or restrictive rights for some minorities (and Giorgia Meloni considered by Politico 28 as the most influential person in Europe), Spain remaining largely absent on the international stage, and Benelux - especially Belgium that tries to relaunch the European machine - unlistened, all seems blocked.





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SHAPING EUROPE IN A WORLD OF BRUTES

Matiss Hyenveux

Donald's Hope

The hope for Europe might come from Donald. Not Donald Trump, that actually failed to spark an extraordinary European reaction, but Donald Tusk. The Polish prime minister is trying to do the job. Having won against the PiS coalition last elections, and building the only European army that can hold a frontline, with the most important part of GDP in NATO spent in Defense (4.7% prevision for 2025), Poland has a voice. Important in the trilateral discussions with France and Germany, the eastern country is seeing Russia as an existential threat, and Europe as a hope to silence it. The idea of a European Army is not ridiculous there. Wanting to improve European integration and keeping transatlantic relations, Donald Tusk might be decisive in the European actions in the upcoming years. Coupled with a presidency of the European Council since January, maybe Tusk's Poland will shape Europe against... certain "brutes".

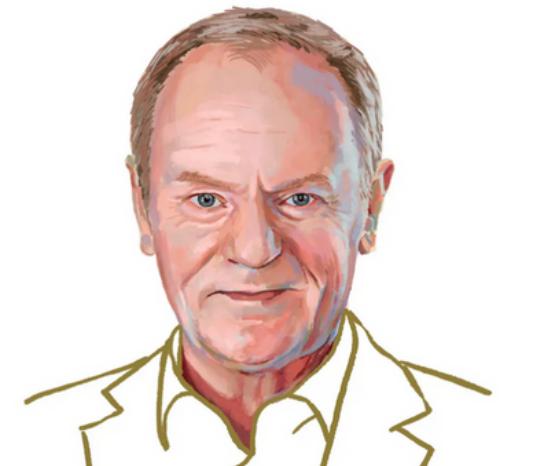
Living with brutes

Europe will face, and already faces what Enrico Letta calls "brutes". On the one hand, there is Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. The first sparked a war in Europe, the second controls some market shares in the Old Continent, helping its enterprises with big state subsidies, and putting pressure on the China meridional sea, taking, illegally, control of islands.

On the other hand, there is the newly elected president of the USA, Donald Trump, who raised tariffs against Europe during his last mandate. And many are fearing the same will happen again, in addition to the threat of a US disengagement in NATO.

More than all of this, the world is globally becoming more aggressive: Erdogan actions in Cyprus seas, North Korea's men in Ukraine, or less and less democracy in the world according to the Global Democracy Index. An index which indicates that more than half of the world is now composed of authoritarian regimes.

"We see images of a G20 summit and notice that the best democratic guaranteed elected participants are less than half. When we consider gender equality or State secularity, we notice that half of the world does not operate like us. Without mentioning workers rights or childhood protection, to limit us to a few examples. And that is not all. How not to see that, in the public debate animating our European democracies, the temptation exists to import foreign models. How many aficionados of Putin, Erdogan or Trump are in Europe?



We are losing the global battle of values.
We are losing the new war of influences.
Keeping on dividing us, we will marginalise us and end up to count for nothing in this world which, without exaggerating, may really end becoming a world of brutes."



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These words are translated from *Faire l'Europe dans un monde de brutes*, written by Enrico Letta and first published in 2016. But eight years did not change their importance, or their relevance. Because, yes, the popularity of eurosceptic visions, the disparities between the Member States, the lack of unity and a European sentiment are still true and currently giving relevance to Letta's words.



But the message of the current president of the Jacques Delors Institute is that Europe has to act against "winds and tides", or suffer. That "in front of Trump, become adults", and that "we have to reconcile democracy with politics. Populations [being] attached to the first, but [rejecting] the second". His conclusion: "To propose the best and not only an alternative to the worst".

Is this true? I am not here to say my point of view, but let you think about the current state of Europe.



What is sure is that the Old Continent will face difficulties, but still has to survive. Maybe stronger, or maybe divided. However, it is necessary to understand that in Europe, only a few are really following this idea of a unified Europe, a lot more that nations are more important. There is a majority that accepts the existence of the supranational entity the EU is, though without really dreaming about it.

May Europe find a way to exist in a world of brutes, without becoming one.

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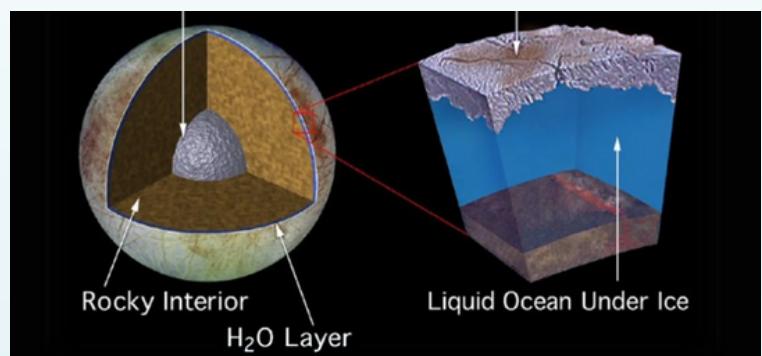


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COULD THERE BE LIFE ON ONE OF JUPITER'S MOONS-EUROPA?

Adwaith R. Nair

Besides the planet Earth we as humans live on, the most researched and studied second base of life has been Mars. It has the pro of being relatively easy to access for exploration compared to most planets because of its favourable proximity to Earth. Another benefit is the proven existence of liquid water that existed decades ago on Mars' surface. These discoveries have led many astrobiologists and specialists to suggest that life could be viable on Mars, because where there is water there is a possibility of life as well.



But what about life a little further? We've talked about what's on Mars, but what about one of Jupiter's moons-Europa? This moon is the fourth largest out of the 95 moons that orbit around Jupiter, the sixth closest in vicinity to Jupiter, and was discovered in 1610 by Galileo. The frozen moon is about 380 million km away from planet earth and holds temperatures as cold as -170 °C (-260 °F) causing it to have an icy shell. Other than the icy shell on the surface of the moon it is also primarily composed of silicate rock and possibly has an iron-nickel core.

In the recent decade of research, there has been more emphasis towards the exploration of this moon, and this is due to the speculation of a possibility that Europa is capable of carrying life. Strong evidence has been shown by NASA that beneath Europa's frozen exterior of ice lies an ocean of liquid water, which is also one of the essential ingredients for all living organisms. Many scientists also agree that this vast subterranean sea could host multiple microorganisms similar to the proportions of bacteria found on earth. While some argue that the thick ice layer blocking sunlight would hinder processes like photosynthesis, others suggest alternative energy sources could support life on Europa.

According to Chyba, a likelier source of energy may come from fast-moving, charged particles

that pound Europa from the atmosphere of Jupiter; the planet itself has the strongest magnetic field (about 10 times that of Earth's) which affects Europa due to its orbital path. The magnetic field causes ions to slam into the icy surface at high velocities, potentially triggering chemical reactions. For example, frozen water molecules and carbon dioxide can transform into an organic compound such as formaldehyde, which can act as an energy source for a common bacteria on Earth known as *Hypomicrobium*.

One of the biggest challenges however, isn't the distance or the magnetic field radiation, but the ice sheet that hides the surface of the liquid ocean on this moon. The ice layer is estimated to be about 80 to 170 km thick (50 to 100 miles), if it is said that microorganisms can survive on this terrain, there has to be a way for these compounds to get through the dense layer of ice into the ocean. Thankfully a hopeful solution to this is the tidal heating faced on the moon. As Europa orbits Jupiter, the immense gravitational pull causes the moon to flex.

This constant flexing generates heat through friction within the ice and the underlying rock, which may cause ice to thin out in certain areas. Heat from Europa's rocky mantle, combined with tidal stresses, may drive hydrothermal activity at the seafloor; this heat could transfer upward, thinning the ice or melting it in specific regions. There has been evidence of all of this occurring, where the presence of chaotic terrain (regions of broken and tilted ice blocks) suggested melting or partial liquefaction beneath the surface.

Moreover, while the rate at which the natural heating occurs on the surface may be slow paced, and could take several decades for any major effect, with further research and experiments on the composition of the surface, more breakthroughs could come about, especially when missions like the Europa

Clipper by NASA are underway. This mission in particular was launched in October of 2024 and is expected to arrive in 2030. The mission's main purpose will be to determine if life is possible on Europa, through a series of experiments namely to determine the thickness of Europa's icy shell, the moon's composition, and to characterize Europa's geology and determine if there are places below the surface that could support life.

But let us consider what this could mean for humanity. Not only would we have multiple breakthroughs in our understanding of biology and chemical processes or elements that occur on the moon, but it could ultimately show that there could be multiple other astronomical objects capable of hosting life. The possibility of life on Europa challenges us to rethink the uniqueness of Earth as a cradle for life and expands our understanding of habitability in space. Discovering even the simplest organisms beneath its icy crust would affirm that life can be possible in diverse and extreme environments, which would inspire hope that the universe teems with living worlds.



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INSPIRE YOUTH JOURNAL

AN INTRODUCTION TO STOCKS AND BONDS

Vedika Jain



Fundamentally speaking, stocks and bonds are both popular investments globally but there are few differences between them from the perspective of risk, ownership and returns.

What are Stocks?

Stocks in layman language means owning a piece of a company. Once we buy a stock we are owning a fraction of the company. The Stock is traded on the stock exchange, the price varies as per the conditions of the market.

Stocks are inherently growth-oriented investments, with returns derived from capital appreciation (the increase in stock price over time) and, in some cases, dividends. These payments, distributed from the company's profits, provide an additional income stream to shareholders. Stocks tend to offer higher long-term returns compared to other asset classes, but this potential comes with significant risk. Stock prices are highly volatile and influenced by factors such as company performance, market sentiment, and economic conditions. As a result, investors in stocks must be prepared for substantial price fluctuations and the possibility of losing a portion or even all of their investment.

Key Characteristics of Stocks

- Ownership: The owner of the stock has a share of the company that has a fluctuating price.
- Types of stocks: There are 2 types of stocks which are:
 - Common stock: The stock owned by a common investor with no voting rights on the decisions made by the company.
 - Preferred stock: Higher priority stock where the stakeholder is given a preference in case of the company's liquidation.
- Dividends: Dividends are often paid to the shareholders on a quarterly/monthly basis depending upon the company.
- Price Volatility: The price of the stocks continually fluctuates depending upon the market conditions.
- Capital Appreciation: If the price of the stocks bought by investors gradually increases over the time, it leads to high capital gains.

- Risk: Stocks are risky, when the price of stocks increases it leads to gains but can cause losses of large amounts of money if the market is unstable.
- Liquidity: We are easily able to sell off the shares.
- Market Price: Stocks have a market price that continues fluctuating depending on the condition of the market. It also depends upon the company's performance and broader market trends.



What are Bonds?

Bonds are any type of debt security. It is like lending money to a company against a fixed return. The company pays the interest monthly, quarterly, or annually as per the mutual agreement. The Bonds have a fixed maturity period and the company has to return the principal after the maturity.



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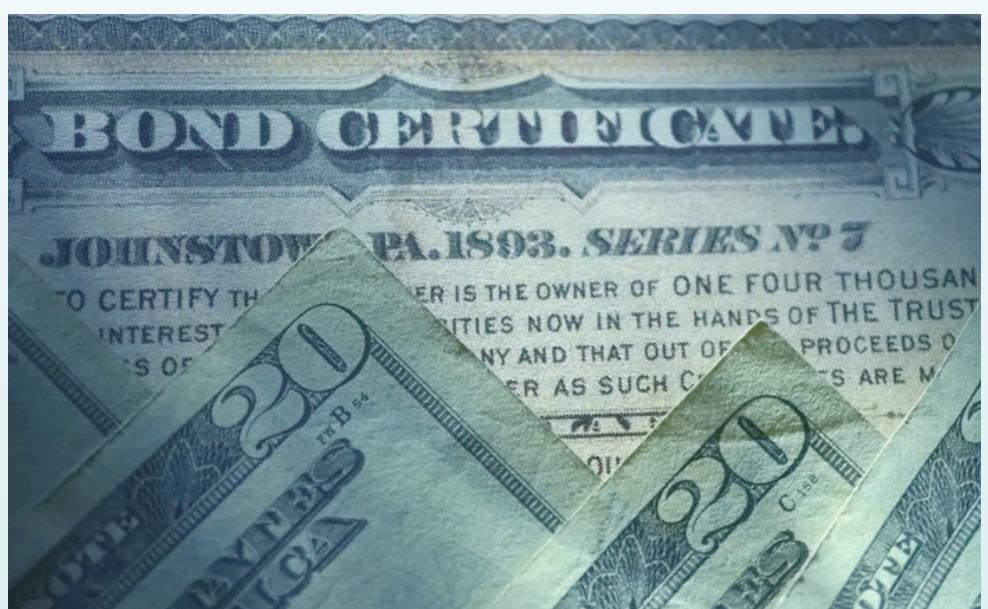
Key Characteristics of Bonds

- Face Value: It is the amount that the bond will pay back to the bondholder at maturity.
- Coupon Rate: It is a kind of interest that the issuer agrees to pay the bondholder which is literally a percentage of the face value.
- Maturity Date: The maturity date is when the face value of the bond is repaid to the bondholder and thus the bond is called 'mature'.
- Issuer: There are three types of issuer:
 - Governments: Some of the bonds are issued by the government, which are typically considered safer in stable economies (eg. Karnataka State Financial Corporation).
 - Municipalities: Type of bonds that are provided by cities and states.
 - Corporations: Corporate bonds are issued by companies and their prices depend upon the company's working.
- Price: The price fluctuates but it is not very volatile. Overall, it is comparatively stable compared to stocks.
- Agreement: The bond issuer has an agreement with the investor that they will pay back the agreed interest and the principal.
- Risk: The bondholder has various risks including default of payment in case of liquidation, inflation and low interest rate.



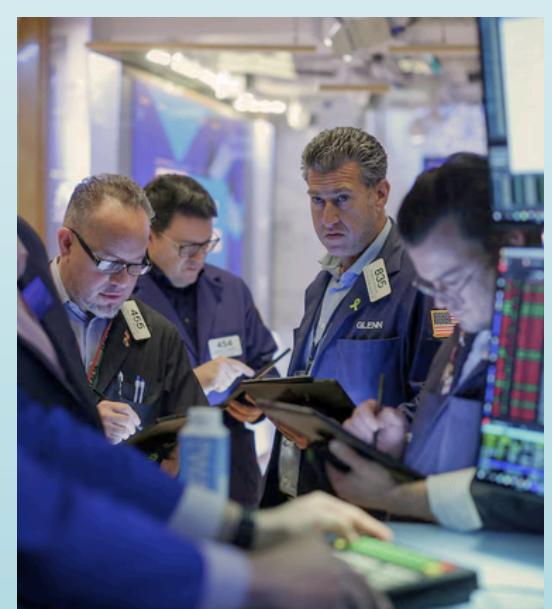
Which one is riskier?

Stocks are generally riskier than bonds as their prices fluctuate based on the market condition. There is no commitment from the company about the price of the stocks. On the other hand, bonds are a committed instrument released by the company wherein it binds itself to a fixed interest commitment.



The primary risk in the private company bond is that of bankruptcy. Government company bonds on the other hand are much safer with minimal to no risk.

Stocks are instruments which are very high on their return but less predictable. Investors might earn a fortune if all goes well, but end up losing everything if things go poorly.





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Key Differences Between Bonds & Stocks

The key distinction between stocks and bonds lies in ownership versus lending. Stocks give you partial ownership of a company, while bonds are loans made to the issuer. This fundamental difference drives their roles in a portfolio. Stocks are favored by investors seeking long-term growth and willing to accept higher volatility. Bonds, on the other hand, appeal to conservative investors who prioritize stability and income, particularly retirees or those nearing their financial goals.

Another critical difference is the priority in bankruptcy proceedings.

Bondholders, as creditors, are prioritized over shareholders, meaning they are more likely to recover some or all of their investment in case the issuer defaults.

Feature	Stocks	Bonds
Ownership	Ownership in a company	Creditor to the issuer
Risk	High, variable value	Lower, fixed returns, less volatile
Returns	Capital gains and dividends	Interest (coupon payments) and principal return
Income	Dividends (if paid), capital gains	Regular interest payments
Market Behaviour	Can be volatile, influenced by company performance	Generally more stable, influenced by interest rates and credit risk

Shareholders, however, are last in line and may lose their entire investment if the company becomes insolvent. This distinction underscores the relative safety of bonds compared to stocks.

A wise choice would be to allocate funds in both instruments based on an individual's risk appetite. In short, stocks are about owning a piece of a company and taking on higher risk for the potential of higher returns, while bonds involve lending money with a promise of fixed returns and lower risk but also lower potential for high rewards.

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From a tax perspective, returns on stocks and bonds are treated differently. Stock returns are subject to capital gains tax when shares are sold at a profit, while dividends may also be taxed, depending on jurisdiction. In contrast, interest income from bonds is generally taxed as ordinary income, though certain government or municipal bonds may be tax-exempt, offering an advantage to specific investors.





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FACING THE FISCAL FUTURE: HOW VALUE-ADDED TAX IMPACTS GENERATION Z'S CONSUMPTION IN INDONESIA

Giacinta Pradita

Increasing the VAT from 11% to 12% is Mandated by Law

In accordance with law (UU) Number 7 of 2021 concerning Harmonization of Tax Regulations (HPP), the Indonesian government is required to raise the VAT rate to 12% by January 2025 for luxury goods only – which applies to certain goods and services including luxury shopping, housing, rice, premium meat and fish, as well as international schools and some hospitals. The government will set a zero rate for certain staple foods to support the less fortunate. This rate will be the same as the Philippines' VAT rate and the highest compared to ASEAN countries with similar social and economic conditions. However, it will still be lower compared to other OECD countries.

The Impact on the Macroeconomy

The increase in VAT rates will cause the Consumer Price Index and Inflation to rise. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics shows an increase in inflation when the VAT rate increases. A VAT rate adjustment from 10% to 11% has an impact on the increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or inflation by 0.4%.



In 2025, when the VAT rate increases to 12%, inflation is predicted to reach 4.11%. When inflation increases, household consumption will also be affected.

Based on Indef researcher Ahmad Heri's analysis, a VAT rise will lessen competitiveness in a country for a number of reasons. These include a 0.97 percent increase in inflation, a 1.2 percent increase in investment costs, a 0.94 percent decline in national employment, a 1.41 percent decline in exports, and a 0.26 percent decline in family consumption. Demand slows and costs rise as a result of VAT increase. It is anticipated that this will lead to changes in labor and other manufacturing inputs, which could result in lower income taxes.

Gen Z's Financial Reality

Indonesian Gen Z have emerged as the biggest demographic group in the country, shaping the country's economy, politics, and culture. According to the latest research results from the Center of Economic and Law Studies (Celios), this generation known as the motor of household consumption must handle expenses of IDR 1,748,265 per year due to the increase in tax rates.



This increase will certainly have an impact on their ability to invest or save for the future in the long term.

Generation Z will find it increasingly difficult to prepare reserve funds. This is due to the pressure of spending expenses that are not comparable to an income that isn't increasing. These issues make Gen Z at risk of not being able to buy a house or prepare for retirement funds.

In 2022, a survey by Harmony Healthcare revealed that 31% of Generation Z faced mental health challenges, with anxiety being the most significant issue. A subsequent report by Deloitte titled "2024 Gen Z and Millennial Survey" identified cost of living as the primary concern for 34% of respondents. This concern about the cost of living significantly overshadows other issues such as climate change, unemployment, mental health, and crime/personal security. Moreover, the VAT can exacerbate the rising cost of living for Gen Z, who tend to have a consumptive lifestyle that does not align with their earnings. In Indonesia, for instance, many Gen Z individuals earn less than Rp 2.5 million per month, resulting in lower purchasing power compared to millennials. This financial strain highlights the challenges faced by this generation in managing their expenses while grappling with mental health issues and economic pressures.

Celios research identifies possible responses from Gen Z regarding the 12 percent VAT increase. First, some may continue to shop for VAT-adjusted items but rely on loans or debts, risking being trapped in wasteful behavior due to future disappointment or disaster spending. Secondly, some Gen Z are turning to lower-priced goods and services and adopting a more frugal lifestyle. Thirdly, they may shop at informal retailers, thrift stores, or through personal shopping services to avoid tax.

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CHILD LABOR IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Tran Ngo Minh Khang

Due to the ongoing crisis in Syria, many children have fallen victim to exploitative labor to support their families, often under harsh conditions. Losing parents, being sent to work in other areas or across borders to generate income, and avoiding recruitment by armed groups are the major triggers for this situation.



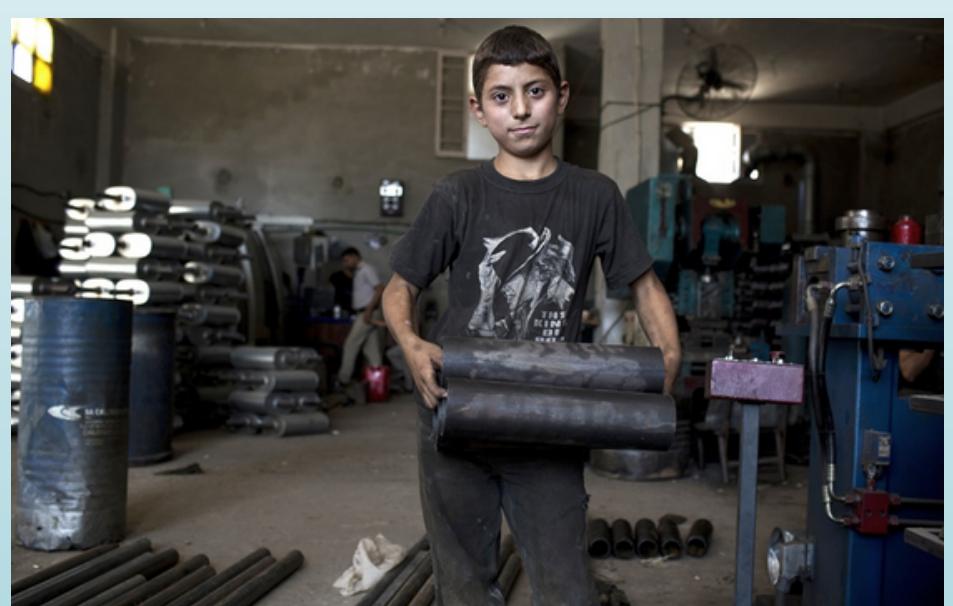
In Jordan, nearly half of Syrian refugee children are primary breadwinners who have to work six to seven days a week. In Lebanon, 6-year-old children are involved in agriculture, construction, and street vending while children in Syria carry out smuggling, oil collection, and other manual labor, being subject to 12-hour working schedules daily under the threat of abuse. The most vulnerable ones even end up in armed conflict, sexual exploitation, and illicit activities. As a result, these marginalized children are prone to serious health risks.

Specifically, in Jordan's Za'atari refugee camp, 75% reported health problems, among which 40% suffer injuries.

In Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, 35.8% of working children are illiterate, the majority of whom are not sent to school. Such hazardous work conditions in Syria pave the way for abuse and exploitation, severely affecting their health, education, and overall well-being.

To protect children against child exploitation, Syria has ratified all eight International Labor Organization core Conventions and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as the Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and child exploitation.

The country also adopted a National Work Plan complying with the CRC and ILO Conventions No. 138 and 182, through which a minimum age of 15 for child labor is strictly required. Additionally, Syria modified its Penal Code with a view to criminalizing those - especially armed forces and armed groups - recruiting children under 18. On the global level, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MoSAL), UNICEF, and the ILO have launched prompt intervention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) in Syria to reduce WFCL and protect affected children. The result is 180 cases of children engaged in WFCL being closed, rehabilitated, and reintegrated into education. At the same time, case managers, social workers, and community facilitators on child protection and identification of child labor are undergoing intensive training.





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Despite the national and international past efforts, the ongoing Syria crisis has hindered the enforcement of launched laws, particularly those related to the protection of children from labor exploitation and recruitment. This is largely caused by a shortage of labor inspectors and unclear procedures. Furthermore, insufficient coordination among national authorities, international agencies, and civil society organizations has resulted in ineffective mechanisms to mitigate child labor exploitation. Insufficient nationwide data impedes the development of effective policies focused on the best interests of children.

Despite the Syrian government's 2013 law criminalizing the recruitment of children by armed forces, such protections have been systematically ignored by armed groups since 2014.



As there are still limitations that hinder the cause of child protection, more initiatives should be created to mitigate the child labor exploitation in Syria. The first recommendation is promoting birth registration systems, thus ensuring all children possess birth certificates verifying they are below the legal working age. For those being removed from labor, they should enjoy the privilege of having a safe return to school or experiencing vocational training while they access comprehensive social services to keep them protected with their families. In addition to that, international organizations should partner with the national and local governments to prevent violence, exploitation, and abuse. Most importantly, organizations should emphasize community education to challenge harmful social norms that perpetuate child labor, in turn breaking the systemic cycle. Multinational cooperation should be made related to child trafficking in order to minimize the number of children being exploited to do labor under the threats of abuse.

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PHILOSOPHY'S EFFECT ON MODERN LIFE

SaiShruthi Avutapalli



Philosophy- “the love of wisdom” one of the vastest, most charming, captivating, and coherent yet paradoxical fields of study. As ancient as humanity itself, it is a vast field encompassing metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic, aesthetics, and so much more. It has influenced human thought and action over several millennia, and is more than just an artistic expression or a mere idea — it is a tool that paves a way of life, that encourages humanity to ponder questions that otherwise would be unasked, and otherwise unexplored. The beauty of this study is its fluidity and adaptability — it shapes how we see ourselves and the world. It shapes human minds and human intellect in a way that not many things in the world can. It ponders on the cogency and validity of the known and unknown, the mysterious and the obvious, the beautiful and the ugly. Yet in a technology-infused and fast-paced world, one question arises: is philosophy still relevant? Is it still appreciated enough?

Philosophy, as many know it, is not just the mere study of ancient facts and theories. It doesn't always study “elusive marvels” or “recherché secrets”, it is in fact, something to be learned and pursued in daily existence, in the little things. One's actions are based on what is believed and what is practiced, which in a more practical sense is a major part of what philosophy means. It shapes the rights and the wrongs, the ethical and the devious — it is “intertwined with human experience” as rightfully put. One of the most enchanting facets of philosophy is its timeliness, and how continually for generations, it has impacted wisdom and knowledge. Many modern practices and traditions today are defined and rooted in ancient philosophy- One great example is how ancient Greek stoicism played a pivotal role in inspiring modern cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).

“Hypnotism and early twentieth-century rational psychotherapy, continuing through early behavior therapy, rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT), and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), the links between Stoic philosophy and modern psychotherapy are identified and explained.”

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) also has been derived from stoicism by Albert Ellis. “Modern “third wave” CBT takes this initial CBT theory, disputing irrational thoughts, reinforcement, and repetition of more effective behaviors, and takes adaptations, if not derivations, from Eastern Philosophies of Acceptance and Mindfulness (See Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)).”

These therapy styles encourage victims to get out of their shells in unconventional, yet rational ways, that have time and again been proved to work effectively. They aim to replace ludicrous ideas with more methodical ways of thought. The fact ancient Greek philosophy from over 2400 years ago, ancient philosophy from 1900 years ago, medieval philosophy from 1000s of years old—studies and records from several thousands of years bygone - are still being corroborated today, just proves to us how impactful the study of philosophy is, and has been.

Does this imply that there is no necessity to develop a personal philosophical framework that resonates with the complexities and realities of the contemporary world?

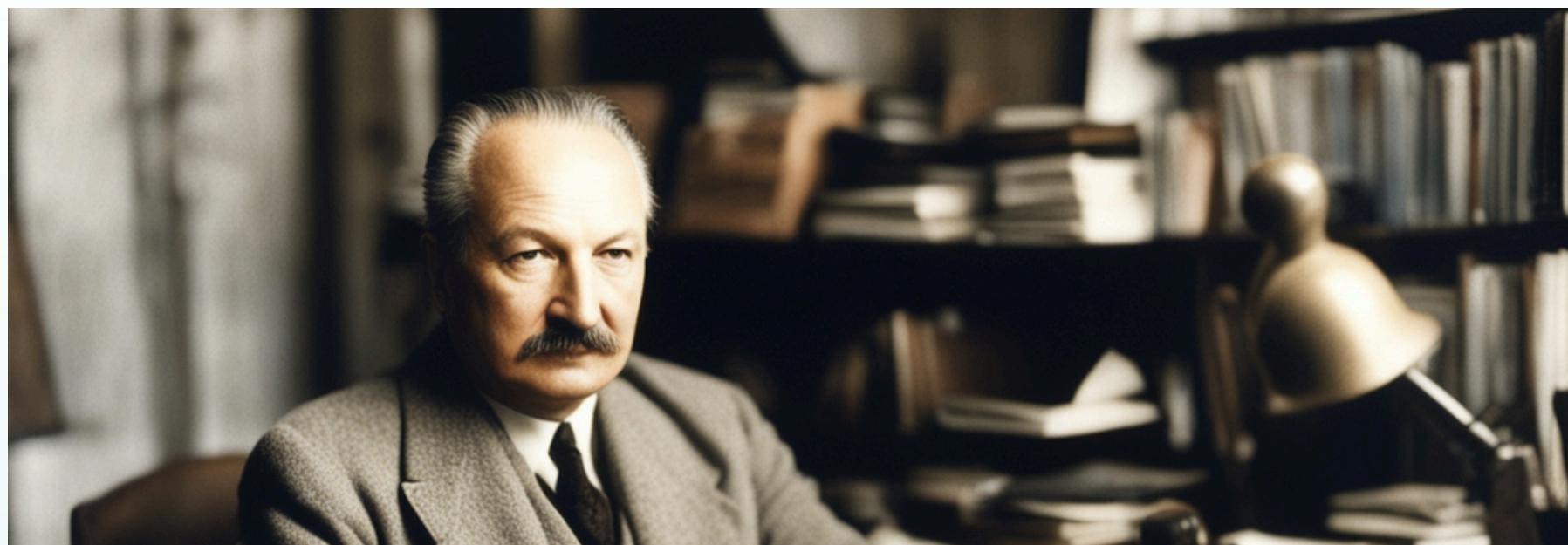
The philosophy of ultra-modern society is called “contemporary philosophy”. It is considerably more aligned with today's day and age, on par with urbanization, globalization, diversity, sustainability, etc.— all of these standpoints relating to how individuals today survive and how lifestyles have been shaped. Contemporary philosophy is more based on recent “theoretical” philosophy rather than practical. The intent behind preferring a conceptual perspective of study is to obtain a better understanding of the current state of wisdom, which would likely help today's generation utilize diverse perspectives and methodologies, and would encourage humanity to ponder. Especially in an increasingly technology-based society, the effects of philosophy are expected to be more prevalent to protect a certain level of morality. From ethics in AI-related fields to technological regulation, so much of technology's usage can be guided by philosophy.



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Frameworks like utilitarianism, deontology, epistemology, etc. often usher humanity in the direction of right and wrong, helping address technology-related and several other dilemmas.

After all, technology is a human construct shaped by human values. The interesting thing is that the opposite of that can be validated as well—to an extent human values are also shaped by technology, therefore implying technology does have a significant impact on mankind. Thinkers like Martin Heidegger (Heidegger, 1962) and Jacques Ellul (Ellul, 1964) have expressed views of technology being an “autonomous force that determines society”. Although these ideas prove to be right on several levels and have been a significant standpoint, philosophers like Langdon Winner (e.g. Winner, 1980) have brought up the view of the contrary—

“technology is basically a human product shaped by human interests and values, and it can also be shaped by these according to human will”.

Several age-old concerns, such as gender equality rights, civil rights, individual well-being, and human rights have been persistent issues that have been marginalized and overlooked over eras, but which cannot be called erroneous because of the effect of momentary societal priorities. What helped society today overcome them, has been studying, analyzing, and examining, guided by the enlightenment of philosophy—the road to which has not been easy, filled with crevices of movements, activism, and struggle. With that said, it is also important to note that new eras bring new muddles—climate change, increased economic inequality, overconsumption, social cohesion, erosion of traditionalism, along with theoretical convictions of political beliefs, religious beliefs, ethical and moral philosophy, philosophy of science, etc- all of which, also, must be tackled delicately and precisely. It is crystal clear to us how with changing times, there are changing needs, and society must find ways to harmonize with that and strike a healthy balance of theoretical study as well as real-time, practical observation.

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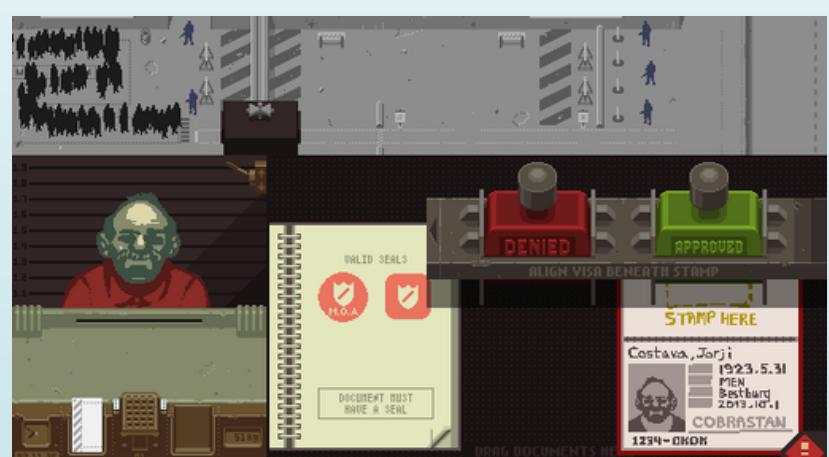
BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT: VIDEO GAMES AS A MEDIUM FOR EMPATHY

Aarna Kapadia

Imagine making life-or-death decisions in a war-torn country or being an immigration officer in an imaginary land. While most never live such experiences, video games enable players to embody these roles and explore them in meaningful ways. Initially, video games served as a stimulating form of entertainment, with apparent benefits such as improved cognitive abilities and problem-solving skills. Today, they have become more sophisticated, often including elaborate narratives that deeply immerse the player. Through this prevalence of narratives in video games, a new benefit has arisen: improved empathy and global awareness. This can be seen in the rise of games with serious undertones utilizing the medium to convey important themes; however, with this, challenges also occur.

How Do Video Games Foster Empathy and Global Awareness?

The secret to this new power of video games lies in the medium's ability to tell stories. Whether it is video games, books, or movies, storytelling has always been a method that engages audiences in a narrative, allowing them to assume a new perspective and build emotional bonds with characters. Nevertheless, one key difference among storytelling mediums is interactivity. In video games, players are cast in lead roles of stories and make choices that have real consequences. This enables audience-immersion on a new level. When used morally, great benefits can be reaped. A study done by The University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2018 demonstrated this by having one hundred and fifty middle school students play a game titled 'Crystals of Kaydor'. In the game, players are transported to another planet, where the only way to communicate with human-like aliens living there is by deciphering their facial expressions.



After as little as two weeks, the study found that the students' neural pathways related to empathy became stronger.

Hence, a well-thought-out video game can be used as a medium to spread valuable messages in a way that is entertaining, poignant, and collaborative.

How Has This Worked in Practice?

Numerous games have used the potential benefits of empathy successfully, impacting thousands. One such game includes 'That Dragon, Cancer'.

It is a deeply personal game about a family's experience raising a son with a terminal illness. The game has moved players to tears, raising awareness about grief and resilience. Another example is 'Papers, Please' which, while taking place in an imaginary country, expresses stories that are very real. It puts the player in the role of a passport inspector, who not only hears the stories of refugees and other individuals aiming to pass through border control, but also their devastating responses when they cannot. Both games have utilised compelling storytelling and immersive gaming to express distinct and important values to their players. Generally, these games have garnered unanimous feedback among critics and players alike, expressing that it has broadened their perspectives and made them more aware of current global issues.

What Are the Challenges of Developing Such Video Games?

Unfortunately, developing a game that can foster an impactful response poses numerous challenges. These include the risk of oversimplification, accessibility barriers, and balancing education and entertainment.



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Firstly, while games can increase awareness of prevalent issues in our world, one problem is the simplicity of video games. Individuals may miss deeper messages, assuming real-world challenges can be reduced to simple choices. While some video games pose these choices as simpler than others, this is a risk undertaken by all video games.

Secondly, not everyone plays video games or even owns the resources to do so. Thus, the outreach of the message, and its impact, is reduced. One case of this is the video game 'Eco', a multiplayer survival game that focuses on environmental sustainability. While praised for its balance of innovation and education, many were deterred from playing due to its hefty PC setup and internet connection requirements.



Finally, there is the issue of a game not being entertaining enough for its audience. When video games sacrifice amusement for awareness, people often become less inclined to play, therefore lowering their impact once again. The video game 'Fate of the World', featuring scenarios where the player is put in charge of a fictional international organization has suffered such a fate. The magazine and website 'PC Gamer' claimed that "It's a worthy and handsome effort, but frustratingly badly explained, making it hard to play".

In general, developers must be extremely mindful of striking a balance between education and awareness, and also ensure that the actual storylines within the games are of good quality.

While these factors make it challenging, the potential benefits and success stories prove the value of video games as more than just entertainment. With effort and care, the ability to create meaningful video games is feasible and valuable.



Conclusion

On the whole, video games are emerging as a platform for conveying messages, not just entertainment. By fostering empathy and encouraging globalisation, video games are capable of educating individuals and driving change for serious topics. In a world filled with endless digitalisation and short attention spans, it is imperative to find new ways to teach the new generations. In this world, video games can be a solution, rather than a problem.

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UNLOCKING THE POWER OF WAQF: INVESTING IN SOCIETY

Alex Lo Storto

Waqf.org Definition: A sustainable, ongoing charitable endowment.

A **Waqf** is one of the most enduring forms of sadaqah jariyah¹ (continuous charity) in Islam, designed to provide ongoing support and lasting impact without the need for repeated donations. Rooted in Islamic tradition, a Waqf functions as a perpetual charitable fund where donated resources are strategically invested to generate consistent benefits for noble and community-focused causes.

I chose to explore the topic of Waqf because, as a Muslim, I have observed a growing stigma around investing within my community. Many of my friends, and even members of the broader Muslim community, have expressed concerns about the permissibility of investing, with some outright labeling it as haram (prohibited in Islamic law). This misunderstanding often leads to missed opportunities to align financial growth with Islamic principles. Through this article, I aim to shed light on Waqf as a powerful example of how investing can serve not only monetary objectives but also religious and community-driven goals. Waqf demonstrates that ethical and purposeful investment can deeply benefit society while remaining firmly rooted in Islamic values.

Types of Waqf

Waqf can be categorized into three main types—Religious, Philanthropic, and Family Waqf—each serving distinct purposes while collectively contributing to the spiritual, social, and economic welfare of the community².

Religious Waqf includes mosques and properties dedicated to their maintenance and operational expenses. This type of Waqf serves the spiritual and religious needs of the community, ensuring access to places of worship and related services for future generations.

Philanthropic Waqf is designed to benefit society at large by supporting public utilities such as parks, roads, and bridges, as well as social programs like education, healthcare, libraries, and scientific research.



"Imagine a field is donated as Waqf Fund. The community may use the field in a way that is beneficial - by planting fruits and vegetables. For instance, when ripe, the harvest will benefit the whole community. However, because nobody owns the field itself, the donation is ongoing and will support generation after generation." (Waqf.org)

It also addresses the needs of the poor and vulnerable. An example is the Waqf established by Uthman ibn Affan, who bought a well in Madinah and dedicated it to providing free water for the community.

Family Waqf is established to provide income or benefits to the founder's family and descendants. Any surplus revenue from this type of Waqf is used to support charitable causes, such as aiding the poor. This form of Waqf reduces the burden on future social welfare systems while ensuring long-term familial security.



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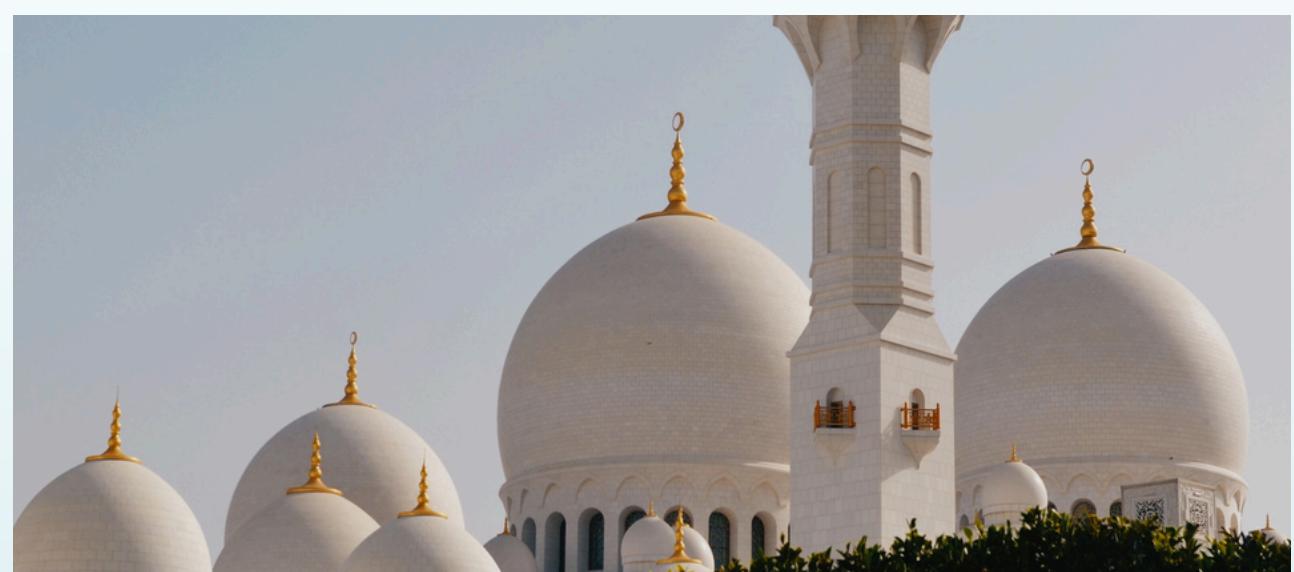
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Socioeconomic Impact of Waqf

The socioeconomic impact of Waqf is extensive, addressing societal and economic challenges through sustainable resource allocation for public benefit. As Sadeq (1987) highlights, the Islamic concept of human welfare is 'more comprehensive than economic welfare alone', with Waqf serving as a vital instrument for wealth redistribution, employment generation, and infrastructure development³. Waqf reduces government expenditures and borrowing, as noted by Cizakca (1998), who argues that it leads to 'significant reductions in government expenditure and borrowing', enabling alternative uses of tax revenues for public goods³. Moreover, Waqf addresses poverty's multiple dimensions, including hunger, healthcare, education, and housing, providing tangible benefits that many modern states struggle to achieve.



Waforever⁴ highlights the intersection of Waqf and real estate investment as a means of supporting charitable efforts, particularly in Gaza. By investing in UK properties, Waqforever ensures a sustainable flow of income, with proceeds directed towards humanitarian relief, healthcare, education, and other essential services.



As real estate generates steady returns, this reduces reliance on traditional donations. This approach leverages the stability of the property market to create a perpetual funding source for ongoing aid, demonstrating how a single donation can impact many generations to come!

Conclusion

In conclusion, Waqf offers a powerful model for combining ethical investment with social impact. It shows that investing, when aligned with Islamic principles, can generate lasting financial growth while also benefiting society for generations to come.

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SEWAGE WASTE TREATMENT PLANTS

Moon Tran

Introduction

Millions of people lack access to fresh water, making water scarcity one of the world's biggest issues. In several nations, untreated wastewater is extensively utilized in agriculture. This is one of the most important environmental and public health issues around the globe because. Treated wastewater is a more practical and environmentally beneficial alternative to untreated wastewater, and untreated water can cause environmental toxicity brought on by exposure to solid waste. Therefore, it is important that we work to provide people with clean water and that it is safe to put it in different water sources.

Wastewater reclamation is crucial as freshwater supplies are depleted and demand has increased in recent decades. Agriculture uses 92% of the world's water, with 70% coming from rivers and subterranean sources.

40% of the world's population live in water-stressed basins, indicating an irrigation water crisis.

Reusing wastewater for non-potable uses is essential. Wastewater reuse has become a global health concern, linked to environmental and public health issues. The World Health Organization established rules in 1973 to protect public health, but recent studies have highlighted health hazards, including exposure to chemicals and infectious pathogens, anemia, and delayed physical and cognitive development due to wastewater exposure.

Consequences of Untreated Wastewater (Environmental)

Larger applications for treated wastewater include firefighting, groundwater recharging, toilet flushing, and irrigation.



Major collection sites for various harmful elements, pathogenic microbes, and heavy metals are municipal wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs). They gather wastewater from several sources, including urban runoff, industrial, clinical, and hospital wastewater, as well as domestic sewage. In contrast to groundwater (GW) irrigation, Alghobar et al. (2014) found that crops and grass watered with sewage and treated wastewater are higher in heavy metals. However, heavy metals such as cadmium, lead, mercury, copper, and iron are classed as dangerous elements. Excessive exposures or doses of certain heavy metals may pose ecological and health hazards.

These heavy metals are classed as dangerous elements. Drinking water is one of the main sources of these heavy metals. This could be because wastewater is dumped into rivers or because contaminated land contaminates groundwater.

Short-term effects include microbial and heavy metal contamination, and pathogenic interaction in soil and crops may result from direct discharge into rivers or from reusing wastewater for irrigation. Additionally, it has long-term effects, such as increasing soil salinity with frequent use of untreated wastewater. Using wastewater for irrigation improperly is dangerous and harmful to the environment. Heavy metals are transferred to the soil through irrigation with a variety of wastewater types, including liquid sewage sludge, municipal and agricultural wastewaters, and industrial effluents. Inappropriate water usage techniques cause these metals to accumulate in crops. Heavy metals have been found to enter aquatic resources through this important pathway (Agoro et al., 2020). According to Khaskhoussy and Hussain, it has been found that the content of heavy metals was higher in soil that was irrigated with treated wastewater from large-scale sewage treatment plants than soil irrigated with regular ground water.



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Negative Human Health Impact

When releasing untreated wastewater, it can cause serious and dangerous health concerns. Many scientists have discovered that sewage from the city carries a large number of pathogenic microbes and organic compounds and that these microorganisms have the ability to spread different types of diseases such as typhoid, dysentery, diarrhea, vomiting, and malabsorption. Because of these health risks, pharmaceutical factories play an important role in regulating these toxic microorganisms. The sludge has 2 types of contaminations that are separated into 2 groups: chemical contamination and microbial contamination

1. Chemical contamination: Chronic dermatoses, skin cancer, lung infections, and eye irritation are among the illnesses brought on by chemical compounds found in factories, tanneries, workshops, irrigated areas, and household wastewaters. They persist in aquatic bodies, build up in food chains, and are intractable and non-biodegradable.

2. Microbial contamination: Scientists have discovered various types of diseases that are connected with the contaminants in untreated wastewater. These types of contaminants can cause many types of diseases (e.g. campylobacteriosis, diarrhea, encephalitis, typhoid, etc.). Not only does it harm people on a minor scale, it also may be released into the environment from multiple sewage water networks, hospitals, and animal husbandries and can get into food chains.



Negative Agriculture Impact

Farmers heavily rely on water to grow crops, plants, and seeds, and take up to 70% of global water usage. Wastewater is used to irrigate an estimated 20 million hectares of land globally, indicating it as a significant irrigation source.



The biggest problem is that most of the wastewater that is used for watering is untreated and has dangerous contaminants.

Especially in developing countries, this is a large problem that they have to face. The wastewater often contains a large amount of chemical contaminants from waste sites, chemical wastes from industrial discharges, heavy metals, textiles, fertilizers, paper, trash, and especially pesticides. Many organizations have attempted to warn people about this disastrous problem as it poses health risks to communities living near the wastewater sources and areas with untreated wastewater. For farmers, the plants and crops would die out, and many people would be affected by this as they heavily rely on the farmers for food and survival.

Sewage Water Treatment Plants

Although the sewage water treatment plant's procedures can be somewhat intricate, they are the most effective means of eliminating all waste from the water so that it can be safely consumed by humans and disposed of in other water sources. It first undergoes the pretreatment procedure. Large solids like metal cans, papers, and plastics can be removed from the sewage water by passing it over vertical bars or grids.



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After that, it undergoes the primary therapeutic procedure. The sand pebbles and soil sink to the bottom of the grit chamber as the sewage passes through it extremely slowly. Subsequently, the wastewater enters the sedimentation or settling tank, where solid wastes, such as excrement, are permitted to settle and wastes such as oils, grease, and soaps rise to the top. There are two types of waste materials: sludge, which sinks to the bottom, and scum, which floats. After that, scum is eliminated using a skimmer, and every few days, sludge is eliminated with a scraper. Clarified water is the name given to the water that is left out.

It then undergoes the secondary treatment procedure. This is divided into three parts: digester, clarifier, and aeration chamber. In the aeration chamber, biological or organic wastes are eliminated by blowing bubbles to get rid of many bacteria and using beneficial bacteria to eat away the bad ones. The clarifier comes next. The remaining water enters the digester while the sludge is separated by gravity. Good bacteria breaks down the water as it enters the digester, producing biogas for power and fuel. The remainder is sent to the sand drying bed for use as fertilizer or compost.

The tertiary therapy is the last step. They must first disinfect the water by chlorinating it, which eliminates phosphate and nitrogen, and then expose it to a series of UV lights to ensure that all the bacteria are dead since people can become ill if the water is not properly treated. After that, it remains in the factory for a period to allow for testing and sampling to ensure that the water is safe to discharge into rivers, seas, etc.

Conclusions

This paper discusses the environmental and public health issues related to untreated wastewater in agriculture. It highlights the need for holistic approaches and proposes solutions for wastewater treatment and reuse potential.

Our planet's growing population threatens water resources, and wastewater generation in developing countries like India and Asian countries has potential for rice agriculture.

The paper explores current and future research on wastewater treatment methods, including traditional and advanced techniques. This technique the paper has proposed can be both used for drinking water and used for fertilizer and energy at the same time.



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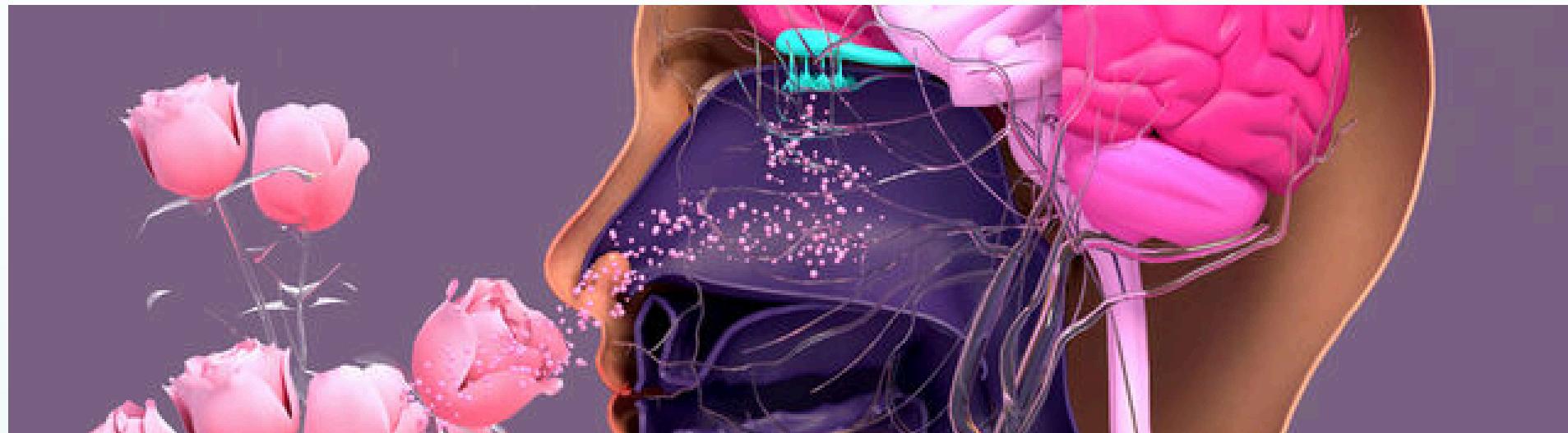
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PHENOMENA OF OLFACTORY MEMORY AND ITS POTENTIAL TO DETECT NEUROLOGICAL DISORDERS

Sarah Fathi



Key definitions:

Biomarker: A biomarker is a characteristic that can be objectively measured and evaluated as an indicator of normal biological processes, pathogenic processes or pharmacological responses to a therapeutic intervention.

Olfactory Memory: Refers to the recollection of odors. Studies have found various characteristics of common memories of odor including persistence and high resistance to interference.

Olfactory Memory and the Proust Effect

Olfactory memory—otherwise known as odor-evoked memory—is commonly referred to as the "Proust effect phenomenon" (Jellinek J. S. 2004). It is named after Marcel Proust's novel "In Search of Lost Time" that describes the scent and taste of madeleines to transport the narrator back to his childhood (Proust, M. 1928). Olfactory memory is the recollection of a memory or multiple strings of memories, triggered by a specific scent. The process involves the brain's capability to process, encode, and store scents, primarily utilising the hippocampus and olfactory bulb.

Short-Term and Long-Term Olfactory Memory

The paper "Olfactory Memory: The Long and Short of It" (White, 1998) reviews the nature of olfactory memory, proposing that it consists of short-term and long-term components, similar to other sensory memory systems.

White 1998, a study on verbal and perceptual components in short-term memory (White et al., 1998), conducted two experiments using odourant triads as stimuli. Each triad included a target odor which could be substituted in memory by either similar verbal labels or similar olfactory cues; verbal foils, which were distinct in scent but had names resembling the target odour, and odour foils, which had similar scents but different names. An analysis of the errors subjects made while trying to remember the target odour showed that a substantial part of short-term olfactory memory relies on how it was perceived by their senses, although there was also evidence of verbal processing involved.

Overall, these experiments indicate that the perceptual characteristics of an odour play a key role in performance on short-term memory tasks.

Research on long-term memory for odours has suggested that a substantial number of odour-evoked memories can be retained over extended periods, although some loss in memory typically occurs due to insufficient first encoding.

Olfactory Memory and Neurological Disorders

Given the extensive ability of both short-term and long-term olfactory memory, it becomes fitting to explore how these systems might be disrupted in the initial stages of neurological disorders. Alterations in olfactory memory, as shown by research in patients with conditions such as Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease, could thus serve as early biomarkers, indicating underlying neurological changes before more conspicuous symptoms develop over time.

Challenges in Diagnosing Neurological Disorders

Despite advancing medical technology in today's society, challenges in identifying and diagnosing neurological disorders still pose a consistent issue. Neurological disorders all stem from affecting the intricate nature of the nervous system as well as the peripheral nervous system, which extends to all parts of the body.



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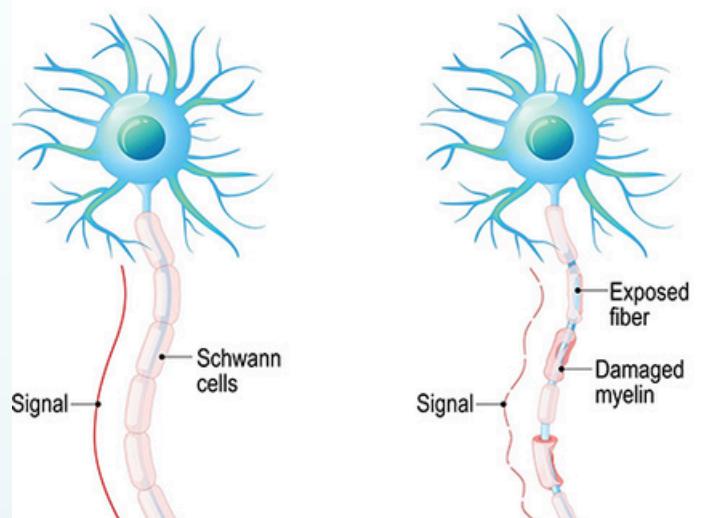
Sarah Fathi

Neurological disorders like Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and schizophrenia, among others, present with symptoms like lack of spatial awareness, memory loss, and impaired cognition (Das 2020). These early symptoms can be vague, making specific diagnoses challenging for clinicians. As a result, the gradual onset and progression of such diseases often lead to delayed identification and diagnosis, which allows the disease to advance to more severe stages before being detected, further diminishing the remaining quality of a patient's life.

Therefore, early diagnosis is crucial.

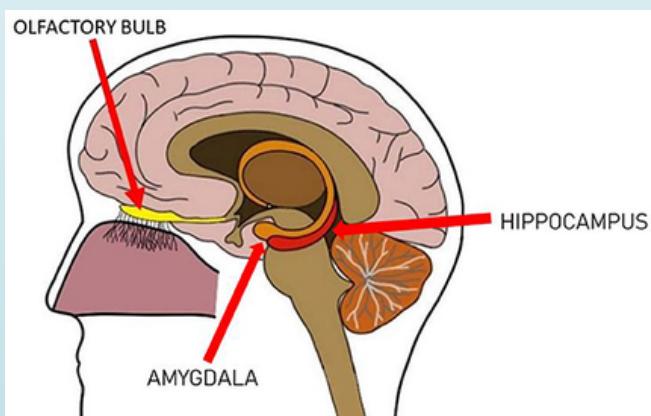
However with the current lack of diagnostic tests for neurological disorders medical histories, physical examinations and scans are relied on in making a diagnosis. These methods can fall short of providing adequate results because they struggle to detect subtle changes in brain function or structure that can occur before more recognizable symptoms appear.

Multiple Sclerosis



Olfactory Memory as a Biomarker

Due to these limitations, research into potential biomarkers has shown importance and has indicated that it could play a role in improving the accuracy of future diagnoses. Despite this research still being an ongoing process, a promising field of research is the role of olfactory memory as an early biomarker in the progression of neurological disorders.



Research has indicated that deficits in olfactory memory may be one of the earliest signs of neurological decline.



The olfactory system's unique connection to brain regions involved in memory and cognition suggests that olfactory memory could serve as an early indicator of neurodegeneration, which can bring value towards clinicians making early diagnosis in certain neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease.

Conclusion

Overall, the comprehension and understanding of these olfactory memory deficits is important for a multitude of reasons. The potential for them to be used as an early indicator of certain neurological disorders can help in making early diagnosis and therefore intervening before disastrous outcomes. Encouragement for research could potentially also open new avenues in the development of more effective treatments in such diseases as the underlying causes of certain disorders could be made by more extensive research into olfactory and cognitive impairments.

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HOW SOCIETY OVERLOOKS WOMEN

Riyad Maroof Hassan

The Rig Veda, an ancient Indian collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns, has noted, in one of its hymns known as the Devi Sukta, that women are the origin of creation, the main source of energy, and the basic god. It demonstrates a deep and holistic perception of the self, and points out the long-standing recognition in the Indian culture of the higher consciousness of women. Moreover, it presents the idea of the Divine Feminine as a transcendent active principle.

Unfortunately, in many ways, the ideology rests only in the texts and not in the minds of the people. Books and their philosophies lie printed and collecting dust in some unnoticed corner of libraries.

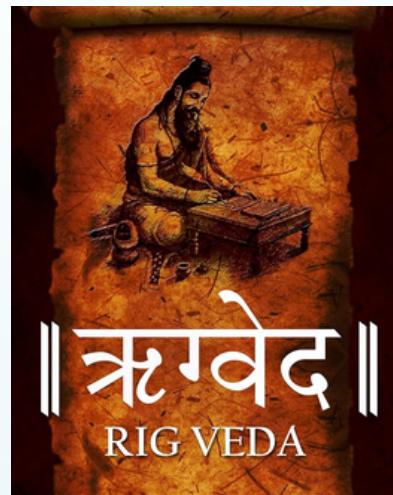
Women play a large role in the workforce but this sadly isn't as safe as it should be.

In five regions across the world, 82% of women parliamentarians reported having experienced some form of psychological violence while serving their terms.

This included remarks, gestures, images of a sexist or humiliating sexual nature, threats, and mobbing. A global survey revealed that 73% of female journalists have experienced online violence.



Additionally, an estimated 119 million school-aged and adolescent girls are not in school as of 2024, and more than a quarter of these girls are in conflict or crisis-affected countries. According to a report by CARE



(Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) in 2023, although the media coverage of conflicts increased more than six times between 2013 and 2023, only 5% of the articles focused on women's experiences in war, and only 0.04% highlighted women's contributions as leaders in peace processes.

Many highlight these burning issues, but in the process, they completely overlook a graver and more insidious cause of suffering amongst women: ignorance.

Though it is undeniable that women shape societies, their endeavors singularly dominating the very cores of critical hotspots like peace processes, this silent force endures. Data from the UN-Women's Women in Peace Processes Monitor 2023 shows that women make up merely 9.6 percent of negotiators, 13.7 percent of mediators, and 26.6 percent of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements. Shockingly, if Colombia's agreements are excluded, the proportion of female signatories drops a stunning 1.5 percent.





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Society seems determined to forget women's struggles by systematically closing off their avenues of success. Not only does this perpetuate inequality but also allows injustices to run rampant. It is in this realization that ignorance breeds room for atrocities, deepening the very divides we seek to mend. Only by confronting this oversight shall we hope to build a just future for all.

We can undeniably refer to how women's issues are often taken lightly and de-emphasized, even reinforcing the stereotypes that limit their roles to domestic spheres, for instance. This treatment welcomes the consequences of ignorance on social progress and personal development of women because their views and experiences are devalued in the first place.



We cannot deny that patriarchal structures and gender stereotypes have led to the systematic exclusion of women from education, leadership, and other opportunities, leaving their potential unrecognized and their voices unheard.

As such, it implies the need for more education awareness and reform to overcome these historical injustices and stereotypes perpetrated against women around the world.

*And what can women truly do,
When for centuries, their stories were written by men,
Framed by hands that never felt their struggles,
Shaped by minds that could not comprehend their strength?*

The world will progress once women are the ones telling their own stories, and shaping their own narratives. However, true development will only come when society begins to believe that equal opportunities must be available. It will take many mindsets to be aligned with this equality for real development to be achieved - eventually creating a safer, stronger environment that promotes equal masculinity and femininity for both women and men.

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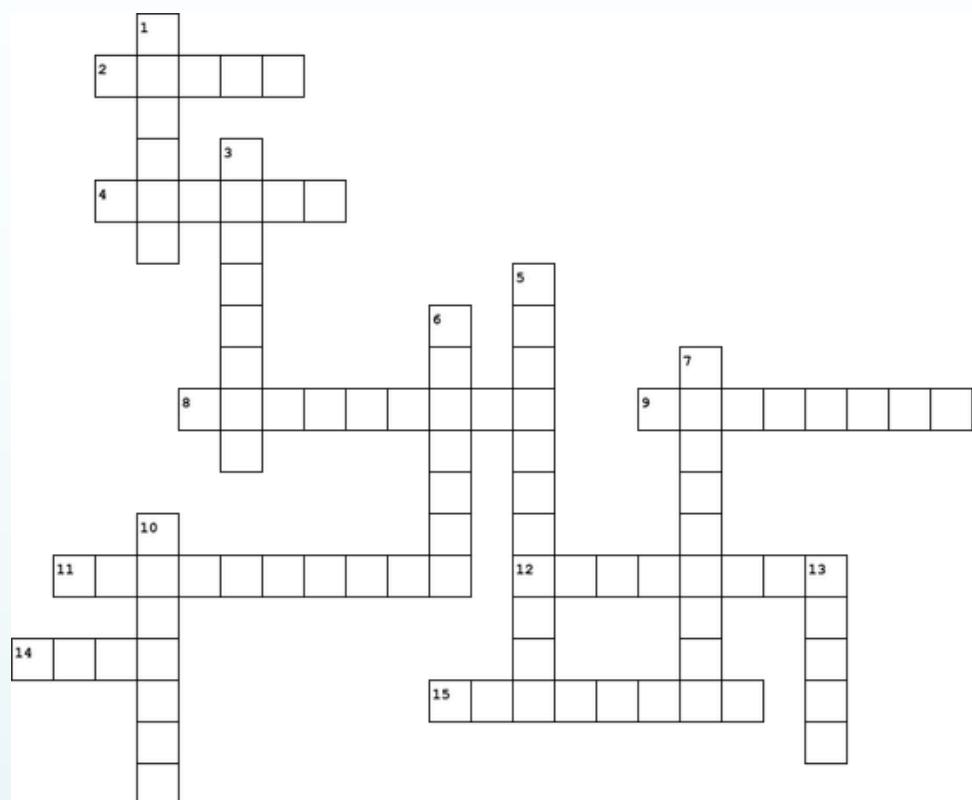
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Crossword: *The Meaning of Life*



Across:

2. Pregnancy is the leading cause of this.
4. What villains usually lack.
8. ie. joy
9. The main religion of China.
11. The study of knowledge and existence.
12. The big bang is one of many of these.
14. The opposite of death.
15. A system of ideals.

Down:

1. Something often gained with age.
3. What pi is not.
5. _____ drawings. Art that often includes vanishing points.
6. What the T in CBT stands for.
7. This is often paired with pain.
10. A problem with two possible options.
13. What you may do right before a test.

Word Search: *Into the Future*



Word Bank:

europa
habitable zone
helium
hydrogen
jupiter
life
liquid
planet
radiation
water

Crypto-Quote: *A Continent Divided*

**"IB OYB MJPXWL EQB LMJAOM
AOEEMB JR KOMFBP.
IB OYB MJPXWL EQB WBZ ZOY
JR XWRMFBWDBP."
-- BWYXDJ MBEEO**

Rules:

Figure out the quote from one of these articles by figuring out a simple code. In this code one letter will replace another, (it will be the same letter throughout the puzzle). Example: KLFFRFLP = SYNONYM. Solution is found through trial and error.