

WORLD NEWS & CURRENT AFFAIRS

RUSSIA ANXIOUS ABOUT WESTERN BORDER AS NATO WELCOMES FINLAND

On April 4th Finland became the 31st member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a result of an accession protocol, which was signed on July 5th, 2022. All 30 member states have ratified Finland's membership, making them the 31st ally.

Finland's accession has received a lot of support from the other member states. In his speech Antony Blinken, the Secretary

General of NATO said: "Finland is safer, and NATO is stronger with Finland as an Ally. Your forces are substantial and highly capable, your resilience is second to none and for many years troops from Finland and NATO countries have worked side-by-side as partners. From today, we stand together as Allies." The Secretary General also wishes that Sweden join the alliance and becomes the

32nd member. He views this as crucial to the safety of the Nordic states and to gain more control over Russian borders.

Ever since the end of WWII, Finland has remained neutral, creating a buffer zone between the Soviet east and the American west. However, with NATO's creation and mainly expansion, the buffer zone has been closing and allying with NATO member states. Before the Russian invasion into Ukraine, Finland still wanted to remain neutral, with only 30% of its population wanting to join NATO. This immediately changed after the invasion, when the number jumped up to 80%, which sped up the process. Now with Finland in NATO, the land border of NATO members with Russia doubled, making Russia even more locked inside their own country.

Russia is feeling threatened by the changing situation; Vladimir Putin has stated that if any NATO troops are deployed along the Russia border, Russia would react immediately by deploying Russian troops on their side of the border with NATO, if this happened Russia

would have to take some of their troops out of Ukraine, making them lose the conflict. This puts Russia in a much more disadvantageous situation than they would have hoped for when invading Ukraine more than a year ago. Russia had hoped to create a divided Europe and gain territory and mainly influence from it, however it has made NATO and the EU present a more united front than before.

As Blinken stated in his speech after the accession, the plan now is to accept Sweden into NATO to strengthen the alliance even further. Sweden applied to join NATO on May 18th 2022. So far most of the member states have ratified the membership, however Erdogan's Turkey is strongly against their membership, due to their conflicting views on the Kurdish minority. Some concerns were voiced against Finland in their admission process, however later even Turkey ratified the membership. This has contributed to NATO expanding and possibly becoming an even more powerful alliance.

FILIP GROSS



Source: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pictures/images_mfu/2022/1/24c-visit-swe-fin-mfa/220124c-001.jpg

BEGINNING OF END OF COLD WAR IN MIDDLE EAST

Beijing: The ministers of foreign affairs of Iran and Saudi Arabia shook hands. The meeting, being the first meeting of the two countries' top diplomats in the last seven years, produced an extensive agenda on warming the diplomatic relations between the Middle Eastern powers. Both countries agreed to re-open embassies, re-establish direct flights between the two countries and are willing to cooperate in the future in order to solve the Middle East's pressing issues.

The history of bilateral diplomatic relations between the countries, being one of the coldest in the world, has caused many armed and unarmed conflicts in the Middle East. What do Syria, Yemen and many others have in common? The foreign influence of the Middle Eastern powers. It is no secret that both parties have been (and still are) funding proxy wars against each other through smaller and less developed Middle Eastern nations. In addition, both countries have strong support from world powers. Saudi Arabia, for example, keeps receiving mil-

lions of dollars in weapons, military equipment and other support from the United States to fight the war in Yemen. On the other hand, Iran has been, for a long time, receiving similar support from Russia and China to help stabilise the oppressive regime in Syria. Therefore, the re-opening of bilateral diplomatic relations is a first step on the path to peace of the entire region.

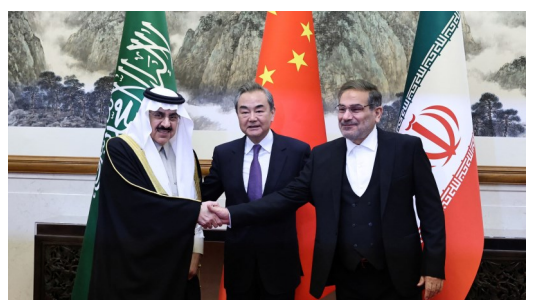
Both parties ceased their diplomatic relations in 2016, after Saudi Arabia had executed Nimr-al-Nimr, a Shia Muslim spiritual leader, and Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran. Since then, diplomatic relations have been non-existent, which many believe to be one of the driving catalysts of the rise in violence and hostility in the region. We of course do not know to which extent the proxy wars in the Middle East were actually led by Iran and Saudi Arabia and to what extent they were "proxy wars squared" of the world powers, however it is clear that if the countries had at least some level of diplo-

matic communication, many lives could have been saved.

The agreement is also an important development on the religious front. Sunni and Shia Muslims have been in conflict for centuries. The deal sends the message that it is time to put religious differences and old conflicts aside and to take responsibility as regional powers.

The bitter Middle Eastern powers and even the whole region are not the only ones benefiting from the agreement. It also benefits China who brokered the deal and offered Beijing as neutral ground for the meeting. China has not only been enjoying rapid economic growth in the past decades, but also strengthening its position in the international diplomatic sphere. With this step, China is showing its power and capability to broker international deals. Additionally, China is challenging the United States' throne as the most influential superpower in the region.

Is this deal going to immediately help to stop the bloodshed and atrocities com-



Source: <https://static01.nyt.com/images/2023/03/11/multimedia/11dc-alliances-mfbq/11dc-alliances-mfbq-videoSixteenByNine3000.jpg>

mitted in the Muslim world? Probably not. Is this deal an important step in the right direction and might it eventually lead to peace in the Middle East? Almost certainly yes. And that is why this deal is important. After decades of rivalry and 7 years of lacklustre diplomatic relations, the two countries showed that they are willing to sit in a room and discuss a joint approach in order to finally bring peace and stability to the Middle East.

ADAM CHRISTL

PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK VERSUS DONALD J. TRUMP

For the first time in history, a former US president has been arrested, arraigned, and charged with a crime. Donald Trump is facing charges on 34 counts of falsifying business records with the intent to commit another crime.

The whole story began in 2006, just one year into Trump's marriage to his current wife, Melania, when at a private golf resort in Nevada, Trump had an affair with Stormy Daniels, an American porn star. Daniels wanted to publish the story one month before the presidential elections of 2016, which would have undoubtedly shaken Trump's popularity during the vote. However, Trump decided to silence her through a "catch and kill" scheme he had previously used to silence Dino Sajudin, his doorman who wanted to speak out about Trump's affairs at the Trump Tower, or Karen McDougall, a model with a similar story to that of Daniels. Trump's close friend, David Pecker, who had been publishing the tabloid National Enquirer agreed to purchase exclusive rights to all these stories for hundreds of thousands of dollars. After he purchased the rights to all the stories, he decided to bury them and never publish them. Given that he held exclusive rights to them, the victims were

unable to contact other media houses with their stories. Trump financed the acquisition of the exclusive rights and directly paid out hush money to the victims for the stories not to go public. Not only did Trump label these transactions as business expenses, falsifying the invoices, but also categorized them as deductible legal fees as he paid them out via his lawyer, Michael Cohen, who then paid the women off using a shell company.

In early April, this year, Trump voluntarily turned himself in after he was indicted on the charges. Upon his arrival to Manhattan, he was greeted by massive crowds of his supporters, rivals, and the media. Trump arrived at the courthouse after several traffic blockades by the NYPD and approached the police officers inside, who formally arrested him, told him his rights, and took his fingerprints. The media was not allowed to the subsequent court hearing where Trump pleaded not guilty. The whole event was surrounded by uncertainties as such an event has never occurred in history. Trump's lawyer, Joe Tacopina, even commented on the event as "I honestly don't know how this is going to go - hopefully as smoothly as possible". Trump request-

ed not to have a mugshot taken and not to be placed in handcuffs as he was being arrested, which after a prolonged period of speculations was respected.

Trump did not hesitate to create a photomontage mugshot of his own that he started selling on t-shirts. Trump's arrest benefited him financially as he presented the whole process as political, united his followers, and raised over 8 million dollars. In the end, Trump was released without bail as there was no reasonable suspicion of him not returning to his next hearing later this year. He was asked by the judge to stay moderate and to not incite hate and violence (he has previously shared a photo of the lead prosecutor Alvin Bragg next to a baseball bat). Trump fulfilled the request until he touched down in Florida on the same day, where he spoke out against the prosecutor again, accused the judge of being "anti-Trump" and accused the judge's wife and daughter of working for Kamala Harris, an event once again unprecedented in modern US legal history.

As Trump prepares for his presidential run in 2024, for which he was recently favored by an ABC poll with a slight edge over Biden, he is faced with a plethora of other legal trouble this year. Trump faces

two cases from the Department of Justice over the January 6th insurrection, the found box with classified documents in his Mar-a-Lago mansion, a defamation case in New York, and a 250-million-dollar fraud case. This means that Trump won't be able to focus fully on campaigning and that a big sum incurred as legal fees will mount together with a rising level of uncertainty.

Bragg, who has already successfully filed over 117 felony counts, stands a good chance against Trump who faces clear and convincing evidence of business record manipulation. Since the events took place just a couple of months before the elections, he is likely to be told that he withheld the information from the voters in an attempt to manipulate the elections aside from attempting to commit tax fraud. Each one of these charges, if proven, would classify him as eligible to face penalties, together adding up to 136 years in prison, even though any major punishment is considered highly unlikely. Even if Trump was sentenced to prison, he could still run for president from prison as Eugene Debs already did in 1920.

NICOLAS IVANOV

BATTLE FOR ABORTION RIGHTS IN THE UNITED STATES

After the Supreme Court in the US overruled Roe V. Wade, many states banned abortions and abortion pills became the most common method of ending a pregnancy in the US as many women view them as an easy and discreet way to do so. A recent legal case in Texas could change that and make Mifepristone, a common abortion drug, inaccessible to millions of women across the USA. So, what is the deal with Mifepristone? This abortion pill, which has already been approved by the FDA in 2000, terminates the pregnancy by blocking the hormone progesterone, which is essential for the

pregnancy to continue. The treatment is usually accompanied with the usage of a second drug, Misoprostol, which helps to empty the uterus afterwards.

Based on scientific research, Mifepristone is not dangerous, there are five deaths per million users according to the FDA, which is four times less than, for example, penicillin, contrary to the claims of anti-abortion advocates, who believe "chemical abortion" is risky and ineffective. Furthermore, studies show that this two-step medication abortion regimen is effective in ending pregnancy in over 95% of cases. The safety of the drug is also underlined by the fact that more than 300 pharmaceutical executives have already called for the Texas decision to be reversed as it disregards all scientific evidence and is written from a solely conservative perspective.

Currently, a judge in Texas has decided that the FDA had improperly approved Mifepristone more than 20 years ago. This means that if there hadn't been any government appeal in 7 days after the release of this 67-paged ruling, the pill would have been removed from all pharmacies. The decision sparked a public debate, which made a judge in Washington rule that the FDA cannot take any action at the moment to further constrain access to abortion pills based on the Texas ruling, preserving access to this essential medication only in 17 US states as the others will be affected by the Texas ruling, when it is declared official.

Additionally, the Biden administration was also quick to appeal to the ruling of the Texas judge via the Justice Department and the administration is ready to fight a long battle in order to keep this drug on the shelves of pharmacies. This means the case will probably be handed over to the Supreme Court in the upcoming months.

Not only could the ruling negatively affect access to abortion pills, but the precedent could also apply beyond abortion medication. This precedent could enable judges to overturn long established FDA

decisions. Thus, it could raise a wave of other judicial rulings contradicting the FDA.

It also once again opens the abortion debate which is still a burning topic as states such as Idaho are still passing new laws criminalizing the practice of non-parents helping children seek abortion. The ability to make decisions about female reproductive rights is in that way increasingly being handed to the judiciary, disregarding the voices of women outside the courtroom nation-wide. Although many discontent women take to the streets to reclaim autonomy over their reproductive systems, they are met with an equally fierce opposition made up primarily from conservatives which uses its platform to speak out in favor of current reforms making abortion even less accessible. In a call for a better future, Senator Elizabeth Warren tweeted: "We can't let one right-wing extremist overrule women, their doctors, and the scientists."

BARBORA VOTLUČKOVÁ



Source: <https://cloudfront-us-east-2-images.arcpublishing.com/reuters/QWY3ZWOEH5N3PPUXBZ4U74L6BU.jpg>

PRANKS GONE WRONG

On April Fools' Day in 1957, the BBC aired a segment showing a family in Switzerland harvesting spaghetti from trees in what became known as the 'Spaghetti Tree Hoax.' Many viewers believed it to be true, and some even called in asking how to grow their own spaghetti trees. The hoax was meant to be a light-hearted joke, but it went too far when people took it seriously.

In 2011, a Dutch news program's April Fools' Day prank announced a new law requiring all school children to learn Arabic. The announcement caused outrage and accusations of cultural insensitivity. The program apologized for any offense caused, highlighting the importance of being careful with April Fools' Day jokes that could be offensive or controversial.

A newspaper in India published a fake news article for April Fools' Day in 2014, claiming the discovery of a new dinosaur species with a name that offended a local linguistic community. The article led to protests and outrage, prompting the newspaper to retract the name and apologize for any offense caused, highlighting the importance of being culturally sensitive in pranks.

DANNY SMÍŠEK

HAIKU POETRY

Sparrow
In search of home he
Glides jumps, rushes around and
Yet he's but a bird

Unforgiven
Death is like the wind
Always by your side and yet
Spring breeze travels on

Drops
It started raining.
It was salty, it's my tears
My melancholy

Palette
I watch flowers born
pink blossom, brown drought,
black death.
What colourful life

Searing Summer
Hammer falls anvil calls
Summer forges memories
Smith drinks tea, content?

SERGEJ ŽUKOV

SPRING PHOTOS PT. 1



DANIEL STRNAD

SPRING PHOTOS PT. 2



SERGEJ ŽUKOV

EASTER TRADITIONS THAT MIGHT SHOCK YOU!

The Czech Republic and Slovakia are prime examples of how bizarre Easter traditions can become. Take "Whipping Monday," a playful tradition where boys whip girls with willow branches, believed to bring health, beauty, and fertility. This peculiar tradition might leave some foreigners questioning our values and customs, but we're not alone in embracing the abnormality of this holiday. Easter traditions from around the world defy reason, showcasing the astonishing creativity of humans and our open-mindedness to accept and embrace the strange.

Let's begin our journey in Mexico, where Easter brings forth the odd ritual of "Cascarones." Forget about softly breaking eggs in the morning. In Mexico, egg-cracking is taken to a whole new level. Consider this: instead of boiling eggs, they fill them with confetti and engage in huge egg-smashing battles! It's like a con-

fetti-filled war, with players joyously cracking eggs on each other's heads.

In Australia, Easter comes with an odd twist. The Easter bunny is replaced by a natural mammal known as the bilby. This adorable creature takes centre stage, decorating chocolate wrappers and serving as the Easter symbol. Why bother with bunnies when you can have bilbies? It's a cute and unusual way to raise awareness about this endangered species while enjoying some chocolate.

Moving on to the Philippines, we encounter a vivid display of devotion every Good Friday. The annual re-enactment of Jesus Christ's crucifixion in San Fernando, Pampanga, leaves observers astonished. Devotees, known as "Penitentes," actively participate in an inhumane ritual of self-flagellation and crucifixion. Nails are pounded through their palms and feet as they are lifted onto wooden crosses. This gruesome show of pain and suffering is

meant to bring them closer to Christ and grant spiritual redemption. It serves as a harsh reminder of the depths to which people may go in the name of religious devotion.

Returning to Europe, we stumble upon a unique tradition in the French village of Bessieres. Here, Easter takes a delicious turn by creating a colossal omelette. Imagine a scene in which a large group of hungry locals come together to make an omelette that could satisfy the appetites of an entire army. The pan is filled with a truckload's worth of eggs. How many eggs were used, you might ask? A whopping 15,000! Now that's breakfast!

These outlandish practices encourage us to celebrate our diversity, discover joy in the unusual, and create beautiful moments that cross borders. Each country has its unique tradition, but in the end, we are left with the same joyful realization: this holiday is about embracing laughter, joy, and the unexpected.

SOFIA DAŇKOVÁ

THE FUTURE OF ELECTRIC CARS

What took Paul Revere an entire night in his famous midnight ride could be done by an average family sedan in under thirty minutes. His night-long journey to spread the word that THE BRITISH WERE COMING can now be accomplished by a nobody with a car, a half tank of gas, and a megaphone. The only reason this option exists is because of the technological progress that took place between 1775 and now. Armies spent months trekking a path that can now be traversed by a few trucks in a matter of days, nay hours. And this comes at a cost. An advancing army burns through fuel quickly, and that burned fuel releases its stored greenhouse gases back into the atmosphere. Hitler and the Allies didn't know this back in the day, but we do now. That's why we keep coming up with clever ways to combat global warming all of the time. And one of the most clever ways is with electric cars. It makes sense since transportation makes up 28% of all annual global greenhouse gas emissions, of which cars and trucks play a key role. Electric vehicles are our best bet to reduce transportation-based emissions, so it's essential to look forward and see where electric vehicles are headed and what adjustments we need to make in order to avoid a global disaster.

When one compares electric vehicles (EVs) to internal combustion engine vehicles, abbreviated as ICEs, one can see the true benefits that come from going full electric. These benefits mostly come from the long-term effects of phasing out ICE vehicles, such as overall reduced emissions, but also from the change that needs to be facilitated to accommodate for the new spike in demand. In its optimistic predictions, the International Energy Agency says that by 2030, the world's roads will be rife with over 350 million electric cars. To accommodate this number of electric cars, nations need cheap and high-quality sources of power, which

is where clean energy comes in. Such a massive demand for electricity opens the door for new opportunities in the field of green energy, such as renewables, nuclear, or perhaps even fusion. Renewables are already getting cheaper every day, and the additional normalization of electric cars is creating an incentive for further green energy research and implementation. **All in all**, an exponentially increasing demand for energy is bound to push forward innovation in one of the above-listed disciplines, evolving the technology further and making it cheaper, safer, and more widely accessible.

A frequently brought up myth is that driving and charging an electric vehicle still ends up releasing more emissions than with an ICE car. Even when accounting for the emissions generated by the power plant from which the electric vehicle gets its power, an EV still produces less CO₂ and methane than an ICE vehicle, and that's before considering the fact that the source of energy might be 'green.' Electric vehicles, unlike gas-powered vehicles, have the ability to change where their power source comes from. While an ICE-powered car has only petroleum in one of its many forms, an EV can draw its power from solar panels, a hydroelectric dam, or wind turbines. As this technology becomes cheaper and more widely implemented, EVs will emit less and less overall emissions. Whilst we slowly phase out coal power plants and replace them with nuclear or renewable ones, the emissions of driving an electric vehicle will finally go down to 0. In contrast, the average ICE car expels 5.2 metric tons of CO₂ per year. For context, the current US average for an EV is about 2 metric tons annually. With that in mind, when one considers the impact that the 1 billion or more gas-powered cars present in the world right now make, the idea of 0 metric tons of CO₂ per year per car starts to look much more lucrative.



Source: <https://insideevs.com/news/654106/tesla-model3-price-less-than-average-new-car-transaction/>

EVs are not yet infallible, and they do, to a certain extent, pollute the planet. The discussion regarding the pollution of a car during its lifespan has to start somewhere, so why not with its inception? It is true that it takes more CO₂ to make an EV than a vehicle that runs on fossil fuels, but EVs make up for it in the long run. An EV's manufacturing carbon footprint averages about 9.5 metric tons of CO₂, unlike that of a mid-range ICE car that produces approximately 7 metric tons of CO₂ in the process of its construction. This large initial footprint is mainly caused by the EV's battery, which requires many rare earth metals such as lithium or cobalt to function. The issue here stems from the fact that rare earth metal extraction is an environmentally pricy thing. The process in which lithium is mined, for example, releases tons of CO₂ and methane into the atmosphere. On the other hand, the extraction of petroleum and its refinement also contributes massively to the pollution of the planet. In the case of a total exchange of EVs for ICEs, we'd be interchanging where the pollution comes from, the mining of lithium and other metals for natural gas extraction. Notably, in an ideal future, an EV's carbon footprint ends the minute it rolls off the production line.

With an ICE car, the pollution ends at the scrapyards.

It's also important to remember that over 100 years have passed since Henry Ford unveiled his Ford Model T. Since then, ICE manufacturing has been perfectly streamlined, from the extraction of iron, which is used for the construction of the hull, to the moment the car rolls off the lot. The process of EV manufacturing is not at that same level, as it is only about 15 years since the first mass produced electric car came on to the market. This would explain the disparity between these two types of machinery. With more time and investment, this gap can be decreased, if not completely eliminated, and the production pollution of an electric car will be less than that of an ICE car...

It's easy to think of electric cars as a new and shiny piece of new technology that's locked away, accessible only to the top 1%. This will soon no longer be the case. The popularity of electric cars will increase, the price of certain models will decrease, and one day, everyone in the world will be able to enjoy pollution-free transportation.

DANIEL ADAMEC



This edition of the OG Chronicle is dedicated to Nicolas Wichert, an Open Gate alumni who sadly passed away earlier this year. During his studies, Nick was an active member of the Journalism Club and contributor to this section, Social Commentary & Opinion, and further served as its Student Editor from 2019 until his graduation in 2021. Nick could always be counted on to provide excellent leadership for his team and ensure that the content they produced was well-written, thought-provoking and in general a pleasure to read. Everyone who was fortunate enough to know Nick will remember that he always had a smile on his face, and couldn't help but be touched by his subtle charm and big heart. The world is a lesser place without him and he will be missed. May he rest in peace.

-The OG Journalism Club

How Big of a Climate Betrayal is the Willow Oil Project?

President Biden's approval of ConocoPhillips' \$8 billion plan to extract 600 million barrels of oil from federal lands in Alaska has been met with a sense of betrayal and an air of inevitability. During his campaign, Biden vowed to end drilling on federal lands altogether. Despite the push towards renewable energy sources and the huge investments made into them, there has been little concerted effort in the United States to truly reduce their excessive use of fossil fuels.

While it is true that we are experiencing a rapid green transition, faster than many advocates thought possible just a few years ago, more than simply relying on infinite clean energy, which does not solve the problem. To make real progress toward reducing emissions and global warming, we must replace "dirty" fuel with cleaner alternatives.

Although American emissions have been steadily decreasing since 2005, primarily due to natural gas replacing coal for electricity generation, the decline has been slow, with concessions being made regularly for fossil fuel companies, resulting in hypocrisy regarding climate change policy. Last year alone saw more oil and gas expansion approved by America than any other nation globally.

America already ranks first worldwide for oil production and consumption while ranking third globally regarding coal usage. However, according to Energy Information Administration projections, it will soon become the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas by year-end amidst predictions that its exports will double within the next decade. In fact, the U.S. Energy Information Administration predicts that oil and gas will continue to be America's primary energy sources by mid-century when it has pledged to reach net-zero carbon emissions.

Despite being hailed as a significant piece of climate legislation, even the somewhat optimistic analyses suggest that the Inflation Reduction Act might not reduce domestic oil production by a single barrel over the next decade. However, there are some encouraging signs globally, such as the EU's agreement to push for the fossil fuel phaseout at Dubai's UN climate conference in December 2022.

Furthermore, renewables are beginning to outcompete with fossil fuels. According to an International Energy Agency report analyzed by Carbon Brief, renewables are set to become the world's

top source of electricity within three years, while global emissions should peak in 2025.

While this sounds like good news, for it is, it only means we won't damage our planet more each year compared to previous years. Nonetheless, further harm is still implied, albeit slightly reduced. A sustained plateau would be even less impressive than reaching such peaks. To stabilize our planet's temperature, we need to drastically reduce annual carbon emissions from current levels of 40 billion metric tons to zero, which poses enormous challenges across technical, industrial, political, and societal spheres, as noted by economic historian Adam Tooze recently.

The Willow project, which is expected to produce oil for decades, will generate 9.2 million additional metric tons of CO2 each year if approved as predicted - equivalent to adding two new coal plants or two million gasoline cars on the road.

While this may not seem like a significant addition to current American emissions (0.2%), it highlights the nature of an issue that permeates almost every aspect of postindustrial civilization: the scale of the challenge involved argues for urgency while also advocating indifference.



Source: <https://friendsofanimals.org/bidens-betrayal-of-his-promise-to-fight-climate-change-and-protect-arctic-wildlife/>

For decades, economists have proposed carbon tax as a market-based solution. Still, the Green New Deal policies emerged favoring incentives and rewards rather than heavy-handed intervention, resulting in a politically appealing soft-touch approach. Yet, risks being too slow given fossil fuels remain a lucrative business. As Saudi Aramco recently posted a record \$161 billion profit for 2021 alone, more than the combined profits of other major oil companies making headlines last year, it is unlikely these businesses would go quietly into the night anytime soon while the US government continues sending over \$10 billion subsidies annually towards the fossil fuel industry, despite Biden claiming intent to scrap them.

We need urgent action before it's too late!

OLIVER ERBEN

Why Do We Waste Millions of Tonnes of Food, While People Starve?

In today's world, food has become an integral part of our lives. However, it often happens that we do not finish a meal and throw away the leftovers into the garbage. At first glance, this does not look like a problem. But can you imagine how many natural resources have also been thrown away with the leftovers? Or that it impacts climate change?

What is food waste anyway? Food waste is food intended for human consumption and is wasted or lost. There are two types of food waste. The first is "food loss," which is food that we lose in the early stages of production. The second is "food waste," which is food perfectly suitable for human consumption but is thrown away for various reasons. We will consider "food waste" because this stage concerns us consumers.

Hundreds of thousands of people are starving, and at the same time there are 59 million tons of food waste in Europe alone. If we convert that into finance, that's 132 billion euros. Can you imagine how much money we have thrown away, let alone natural resources?

Food waste is a significant environmental issue. It is not only about the fields that are flooded by food, but also

about the natural resources that were wasted during production. Among them is soil, which is essential for growing crops and animal products since animals need grazing land. Agriculture uses 11.5 million hectares of the global land surface. Another wasted resource is water. For example, throwing away one kilogram of beef is equivalent to throwing away 50,000 liters of water. Or if you pour a glass of milk down the sink, you waste almost 1,000 liters of water. It is not just about wasting water, but also about consuming oil, diesel, and other fuels.

This waste also greatly impacts climate change. While food rots in our landfills, it releases methane, a greenhouse gas that is 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. When released, methane lingers for 12 years, trapping the sun's heat. It is responsible for 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions. If you look at the greenhouse gas emissions released by natural resource use, the contribution to climate change is staggering. Experts

say 11% of global greenhouse gas emissions could be avoided if there was a sensible system for disposing of food waste.

Nevertheless, we consumers can help conserve water, soil, and other natural resources and slow down climate change. Firstly, we can start counting the amount of food we buy and avoid buying more than needed. It is better to buy less rather than end up throwing half of it away. Secondly, food should be stored properly as

sometimes we forget to store the groceries in the refrigerator.

Our food wastage impacts the environment. If everyone tried to consume food more carefully, it would help immensely. This way, we can slow down climate change and save pure water, soil, other natural resources and our planet.

OLEKSANDRA SUPYLNYK



Source: <https://foodtank.com/news/2021/09/apps-preventing-household-food-waste-and-protecting-the-planet/>



FLOATING WITH(IN) MUSIC

A lonely wave in the incomprehensible scale of the ocean. On the 24th of April, 1976, an American composer named Steve Reich unveiled his newest ensemble piece, titled *Music for 18 Musicians*. I will immediately bury the lede about this event, which is that David Bowie attended this performance and was subsequently inspired by it for his so-called "Berlin trilogy". With that out of the way, let us get directly to the point. *Music for 18 Musicians* is one of the most stunning, immediately captivating pieces of music that I have ever heard. It feels exaggeratory to say that, as if I was perhaps overreacting due to external factors, but no, it really is that powerful. The critical consensus largely agrees with me, and while I can certainly gush about this record for the rest of this article, tell you to listen to it immediately (and do not worry, I will definitely do that), I also feel like I will not be giving this work the proper attention and care that it deserves if I simply shower it in praise. So, throughout this article, I hope to introduce you to the world of Steve Reich, minimalism, and the circular nature of all music with as much care as possible.

Many people are aware of the word minimalism through its use in pop-culture, but even more are unaware of its use in music. Put simply, minimalism as a form of music focuses on creating compositions out of minimal elements. However, what falls under "elements" can be anything from the number of instruments, or notes, to the length of a phrase.

Take, for example, John Cage's master-class troll-work, *4'33"*, in which musicians sit on the stage and play nothing, with the actual music being the environment around the concert hall. While most minimal music does not go to that extreme, a majority of it is cyclical in nature, droning, suspended in stasis. This is where Steve Reich found opportunities.

The first two pieces of Reich's long career were 1965's *It's Gonna Rain* and 1966's *Come Out*, and while they seemingly cannot be any further from our main subject in terms of sound, we can already see the seeds of Reich's main compositional tricks growing out. The two works use the medium of looping audio tape to an extreme, with the former sampling a sermon, and the latter using a clip of one of the falsely accused "Harlem Six". They only use short, 3-second-long clips, but as multiple of these recordings start entering the listener's ear, they begin phasing in and out of each other, like a crowd from a nightmare that gets louder and louder. They are fascinating as audio experiments, but many people will struggle with fully listening to them. Reich was initially sceptical of translating this phasing effect for human musicians, however, subsequent pieces, like *Piano Phase*, *Violin Phase*, and *Clapping Music* all proved that the initially perfect and psychedelic timings of Reich's earlier tape works could also work when performed with instruments. Around this time, in the 70's, Reich also

explored rhythm during a five-week trip to Ghana and his study of the Indonesian gamelan music, both of which inspired him to write the 90-minute piece *Drumming*. With all of this work under his belt, Reich felt confident enough to start jotting down notes on his combination of these techniques in May 1974.

In an introduction to the piece, Reich wrote the following: "There is more harmonic movement in the first five minutes of *Music for 18 Musicians* than in any other work of mine prior to 1976," a funny quote considering the piece, totalling at 50 minutes, has 11 chords in total. While it may seem ridiculous, it is actually completely true. The first section of 13 in the piece is titled *Pulses* and it sets up the entire work perfectly, with the 11 chords used in the entire piece played throughout. The main rhythmic idea of the piece is also introduced, with melodic percussive instruments and pianos hitting chords while the woodwinds and even human voices can be heard, echoing into the background. This was actually inspired by Reich's trip to Ghana, where drum circles would have a person yell out loud when they wanted to change to a different section. The main effect is seen in the transitions between the different sections of the piece, with the cue to transition being three long droning notes from a vibraphone, which is never necessarily written at a specific time, but decided by the performers organically during the performance itself.

The 11 sections following *Pulses* are the

real meat and potatoes. They all focus on just one of the 11 while putting down new melodic ideas over them, often slowly developing them throughout the section until the section itself could be a piece in its own right. This is where the cyclical nature of the work really becomes apparent, as a lot of these sections follow an ABCDCBA format, where they start with a simple idea, expand on it, and then slowly return back to transition into a new section, chord, and melodic idea. This structure also means that while skipping through the pieces may make the differences between the sections apparent, the experience of the composition itself is completely seamless, like the natural conclusion to this holistic piece of music.

By the time you work your way to the 13th section, a different version of *Pulses*, the rest of this experience has already taken you aback. There is something so human and life-affirming about the repetitive nature of *Music for 18 Musicians* that it cannot be called anything other than incredible. Its construction was anything but simple, and yet there is a dramatic universality within it that makes the piece a must-listen for anyone interested in these compositions, as well as modern classical music that is both musically complicated, yet understandable for most. A true masterpiece, the kind that makes you close your eyes, and imagine yourself floating in water, like...

IVAN PAVLOVEC

THE TIMES ARE ... CHANGING?

As spring slowly but surely gets underway, flowers and trees start to bloom, the air becomes warmer, and little drops of rain may surprise us in the afternoon. The feeling of spring coming back is a beautiful one, and there is a particular moment each spring which exaggerates this, a sudden shock that changes the pace, and most importantly contributes to the feeling that days last longer and evenings are brighter. Yes, this is the artificial time change, which occurs annually. But did you know that this might actually not be the case for much longer?

Summer Time (also known as Daylight Savings Time; DST) was introduced throughout the world across the 20th century, but today, only Europe, North America, Chile, Paraguay, New Zealand and a several regions of Australia remain using it. Usually, the change takes place on the last Sunday of March (and respec-

tively the return to Standard Time in autumn on the last Sunday of October). There have been various reasons for its implementation, but the most important one is practicality - we prefer to have one more hour of sunlight in the evening rather than the sun waking us up too early. In theory, it should have also been beneficial for lowering energy consumption, but that has rarely been effective, with many studies showing insignificant changes in heat or light consumption with and without DST. Nevertheless, the tradition of adjusting our clock and adapting to the artificial time has become a normal part of peoples' lives. But there is also a negative side to this - because of the quick change, people naturally feel more tired or even experience health problems as their internal clock is suddenly out of order. Moreover, the solar clock adjusts itself over time and in the summer months, the change is

barely noticeable. Regions further from the equator illustrate that there isn't a need for this artificial change at all, as they experience extreme natural changes because of the Earth's axial tilt, for example settlements far inside the Arctic Circle experience Polar night and Midnight sun.

So, if there are no clear benefits, and the ritual of adjusting the clock can cause harm, why are we still using it? To put it simply, there is not enough time to discuss the issue (pun intended). Although the European Commission revealed a proposal to abolish Summer Time back in 2018 after a series of discussions and a small-scale public referendum, no real plan or outline has been put into place. For the change to go through, agreements between all of the member states would have to be secured, not even accounting for the problem of Europe's tricky time zones, which are based on politics and

trade, not geography. Because of the instability caused by Brexit negotiations in 2019, followed by the Covid pandemic and now the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it only makes sense that governments aren't concerned with such a relatively unimportant issue. However, that doesn't mean that the proposal is off the table - quite the opposite, it is more than possible that the EU will return to this topic in the following years and go ahead with any new agreements. This issue raises a number of interesting questions. For example: would you choose Standard Time or Summer Time as the only valid one? Either way, it will be interesting to watch the developments. So, whether you consider yourself in favour of or against the time change, it is not gone just yet, so enjoy it (or endure it) for at least a few more years!

PAVEL GALYÁŠ

THE MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF SPORTS: WHY EXERCISE IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR MIND

We all did some form of sport at some point in our lives, whether it was scoring goals for fun, shooting hoops with our friends, practicing any kind of martial art, or even just simply exercising once in our life and figuring out that it is not for us. So, when you think of sports and exercise, what comes to your mind? Many people would tend to think that sports are just physical activities, nothing else. However, did you know that sports and exercise could be doing wonders for your mental health as well as your physical health? Whether you are a beginner or a seasoned athlete, it is important to know about the many benefits that sports and even the littlest of exercise can provide for your mental health. From reducing stress and anxiety to enhancing cognitive function and building social connections, regular physical activity can help you achieve a healthier mind and body, as you can become more confident in yourself. (More on all these later-) Generally speaking, participation in any form of exercise can make you feel a lot better mentally overall; therefore, we will cover how and why it happens so, you can feel secure that at the very least, your experiences with the sport will affect something in you. So, to sum up, everything that was stated so far, this report will explore the numerous ways that sports can improve your mental well-being and offer tips for incorporating physical activity into your daily routine. So, let us get started and discover the power of sports!

REDUCED STRESS AND ANXIETY

We all know that life can get stressful sometimes (after all, we are at Open Gate). Whether you are dealing with school pressure, family drama, or just the daily grind, stress, and anxiety can really take a toll on your mental well-being. Sports and exercise can be a wonderful way to combat those negative feelings! When you exercise, your brain releases a chemical called endorphins. Endorphins are something like natural happy pills;

they make you feel good, relaxed, and even euphoric. Exercise in general also lowers the level of a stress hormone called cortisol in your body. Too much cortisol can cause problems like anxiety, depression, and weight gain. That is why after a good workout, or a tiring performance, you might feel like you are on top of the world, feeling nice, happy, and healthy about yourself. But it is not always only a temporary feeling, as much research has shown that regular exercise can reduce overall levels of stress and anxiety.

If you are looking for a sport that is particularly effective for reducing stress, you might want to try martial arts. Martial arts require a lot of focus and discipline, which can help you calm your mind and block out negative thoughts. Plus, there is something very satisfying about getting to punch and kick a bag or practice your moves on a partner. Of course, you do not have to be a black belt to enjoy the stress-reducing benefits of sports. Any type of physical activity can be helpful, whether you are playing basketball with your friends or going for a run in the park. So, next time you are feeling stressed or anxious, try getting active and see how it makes you feel.

However, it is also important to mention that exercise is not a cure-all for stress and anxiety for everyone. So, if you are really struggling, it is important to talk to a professional like a therapist or counsellor. They can help you work through your feelings and develop coping your own personal coping strategies. Still, try exercising, who knows, it may be just the perfect solution for you! You do not know until you try.

SELF-ESTEEM, CONFIDENCE, SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Now, playing sports can also help boost your self-esteem and confidence. It feels good when you work hard to improve your skills and see your progress, as it can give you a sense of accomplish-

ment (sort of like being proud of yourself). This also goes for exercising, as when you engage in physical activities in general, you start to see your body in a different way; as something that is strong, capable, and something that evolves and gets better with the effort you put into it, rather than just something that looks a certain way. This can help you feel more comfortable in your own skin and more confident in yourself overall, whilst also expanding your ability to communicate, work in a team, and sportsmanship in general.

Plus, when you play on a team or in a group, you get to share in each other's successes and support each other through challenges. This can help you feel more confident in yourself and your abilities, which can carry over into other areas of your life like school or work. Sports in general can also help you make new friends and build stronger relationships with people. When you play on a team or in a league, you get to meet new people who share your interests and passions, which tends to make you feel at home with the collective you are in. You get to bond over the love of the game and work together towards a common goal. This can be a terrific way to break out of your comfort zone and build connections with people whom you might not have met otherwise. It is also a fantastic way to start feeling more committed and passionate about your goals!

COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS

Exercise also improves your cognitive functions! Now, your first question may be, what is a cognitive function? Well, a cognitive function is a mental process that allows us to think, reason, learn, and remember. These processes include things like attention, memory, problem-solving, and decision-making. Sports can be a wonderful way to improve these processes and enhance your overall cognitive function. For example, participating in sports requires a lot of focus and attention. You need to be able to stay alert and aware of your surroundings, anticipate the movements of your opponents, and react quickly to changing situations. This can help improve your attention and concentration skills, which can carry over to other areas of your life.

One other way that sports can help improve is through your memory and learning abilities. When you are learning a new skill or a new strategy in a sport, you need to be able to remember and apply that knowledge in real time. This can help strengthen your memory and recall abilities, which are useful for anything in our lives. Sports can also help improve your

problem-solving and decision-making abilities. When you are playing a sport, you need to be able to analyse the situation, weigh different options, and decide quickly. This can help develop your problem-solving and decision-making skills, which can be valuable in a variety of contexts.

Furthermore, sports can enhance cognitive functions through the development of new neural connections in the brain. Physical activity has been shown to promote the growth of new brain cells and increase the number of connections between them, which can lead to improved cognitive function over time.

This means that sports can help to reduce processes like inflammation in the brain, which is linked to several cognitive disorders such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Another way that sports can improve cognitive function is through the release of certain neurotransmitters in the brain, such as dopamine and serotonin. These chemicals are associated with feelings of pleasure and well-being and can help to improve mood and reduce stress levels. This, in turn, can lead to better cognitive function, as stress and anxiety can interfere with cognitive processes (which we discussed before). Finally, sports can also help to improve executive function, which is the ability to plan, organize, and manage one's time and resources effectively. This is because sports often involve setting goals, developing strategies, and working towards a common objective, all of which can help to improve executive function over time.

SUMMARY

To sum up everything that we have talked about, we can conclude that playing sports is not simply good for your physical health - it is also equally great for your mental health! Regular physical activity can help to reduce stress and anxiety, boost self-esteem and confidence, improve your cognitive function, and even reduce the risk of depression. Playing sports can also help to boost your self-esteem and confidence. Furthermore, sports can help to improve cognitive function, which is how our brains process information. By engaging in physical activity, you can improve your memory, focus, and ability to learn and retain new information. Also, when you exercise, your brain releases chemicals called endorphins, which can make you feel good and reduce feelings of pain and stress. This can help you feel more relaxed and less anxious, which can have a positive effect on your mental health.

MIKULÁŠ BOLCEK



Source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/cs/search/2/film?phrase=kids+team+huddle>



WORDS HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD, SO WE'VE BEEN CHOOSING THEM CAREFULLY FOR SIXTEEN YEARS.

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