

# **JFKS IDEAS**

**VOLUME XXII, Spring 2025**

A stylized illustration of the Earth, showing green continents and light blue oceans. The Earth is centered within a tilted orange rectangular frame. The word "HOPE" is written in bold black capital letters across the middle of the Earth.

**HOPE**



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# Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

A looming cloud of hopelessness seems to be descending upon us in recent times. If statistics show that living standards have been climbing, why exactly do we feel increasingly hopeless? Concerned by the trend towards hopelessness, the IDEAS team collectively decided to devote this journal to the theme of hope. In the current political and economic situation, we can and should turn to hope. With the help of our talented team of student writers, we curated various perspectives on this critically important topic.

Whilst Frida Katzenstein acknowledges the value of hope and how it is viewed by Friedrich Nietzsche, Hayden Evan explains the hopeless algorithm of media and how it fosters a mindset of hopelessness. Furthermore, Alice Jung looks at how our brains are wired for hope and positivity, which is essential to understanding the relationship between hope and passivity as explored by Sophia Hansel. Such passivity

is often seen in the fight against global warming, as Evelin Vogel investigates in her piece about how we should view climate change differently. Without fighting passivity, the normalisation of extremism infects society. This normalisation is now affecting the order of Europe, as questioned in a piece by Luise Massen and Susannah Skinner. Also considering hope for international cooperation, Benjamin Mosseri describes critical moments in history when hope for communication and reconciliation has triumphed over despair. This undying commitment to hope has inspired leaders to act courageously and against all odds, as elucidated by James Martin. Similarly, Giselle Bullion explores how women have often challenged the status quo, thus shaping a world with more hope and more opportunity. With this in mind, Nina Schulz reviews Isobel Coleman's book *Paradise Beneath Her Feet: How Women are Transforming the Middle East*.

For my part, I hope that these articles, taken together, will challenge readers to think carefully about hope and to critically reflect on the degree to which and the ways in which they are hopeful.

If you want to explore important themes like these writers have, or just discuss them with fellow students, please come to our weekly IDEAS meetings every Monday at 12:20 in B209.

Sincerely,

Aurica Mosse  
Editor-in-Chief

# Quotes on Hope

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.” — Desmond Tutu

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” — Martin Luther King Jr.

**“WHILE THERE’S LIFE, THERE’S HOPE.” – CICERO**

“Hope is a passion for the possible.” — Søren Kierkegaard

“Hope is the only bee that makes honey without flowers.” — Robert Green Ingersoll

**“To live without hope is to cease to live.” — Fyodor Dostoevsky**

“Everything that is done in the world is done by hope.” — Martin Luther

“In all things it is better to hope than to despair.” — Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

“Hope is the pillar that holds up the world.” — Pliny the Elder

“Hope is not pretending that troubles don’t exist. It is the trust that they will not last forever.” — Unknown

***“Hope is the companion of power, and mother of success; for who so hopes strongly has within him the gift of miracles.” — Samuel Smiles***

“Hope is a discipline.” — Mariame Kaba

“Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies.” — Stephen King

“Hope is not an emotion; it’s a way of thinking or a cognitive process.” — Brené Brown

**“Hope is not something we find. It’s something we become.” – Valarie Kaur**

“Radical hope is not so much something you have but something you practice.”  
— Junot Díaz

“Hope is a form of resistance.” — Rebecca Solnit

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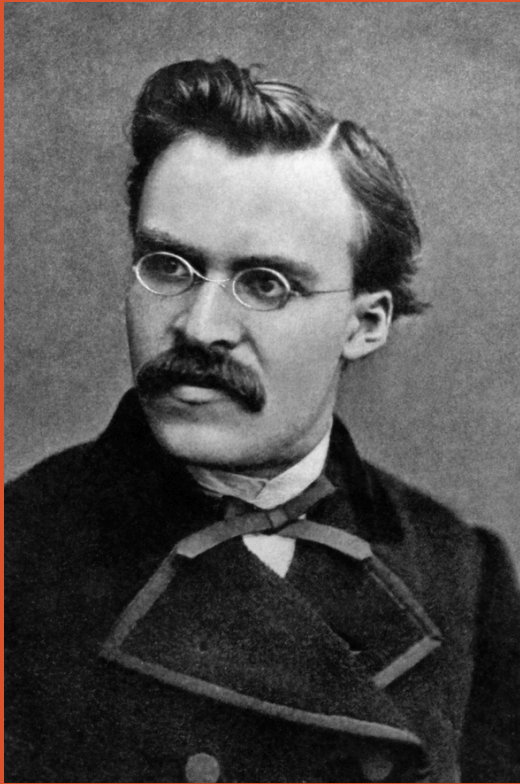
# HOPE

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chilliest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.

-Emily Dickinson (1861)



Source: Wikiquote

# Competing Perspectives on the Value of Hope

By Frida Katzenstein

Hope is an omnipresent force in our lives. Take a minute and consider how much time you have spent hoping for the future, hoping for things out of your control. Perhaps you had short-term hopes—like catching the bus so you wouldn't be late to class, or hoping for a good lunch menu. Maybe you're also carrying long-term hopes: getting a scholarship for a school you dream of attending, or wishing for a happy and fulfilling life.

How do you experience and perceive hope?

Hope is a powerful feeling and many have attempted to define or describe it in literature and poetry. Art and music can arouse the feeling of hope. Although so many people write about it, it is heavily debated on what hope actually is. The Oxford Dictionary defines hope as “a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen.” Others say hope is “an optimistic state of mind that is based on an

expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's own life, or the world at large.” However, I find the definitions of hope in music, philosophy, poetry and literature to be at very least as conclusive as a classroom definition.

Hope is mostly defined in a positive way as it is thought to motivate us through hard times. Often, we do not question the positive nature of hope, though Nietzsche did. He claims that hope is a deceptive trap of the gods: it tempts us to wait, to suffer, to endure, in the passive expectation of a better future. We hope for salvation instead of accepting reality or taking action ourselves. He calls upon people to not believe in an afterlife just because this world is painful.

According to Nietzsche, because the world is full of suffering, hope becomes the most insidious illusion — a cunning ruse of the gods. It lures us into passivity by tempting promises that make us endure, wait, believe in salvation by an external force, or the messiah in religion. Most major religions promise people a better world beyond, making them wait in foolish hope



rather than to confront reality head-on and shape lives with their own hands. Nietzsche urges humanity not to cling to dreams of a messianic savior or an afterlife to escape the burdens of existence.

Hope is powerful and like any powerful thing, it can not only be something good, it can be misleading, painful and even dangerous when abused. We can see the danger Nietzsche is describing when examining the abuse of hope in current day politics, propaganda and populism.

Hope is a central part of any religion and while it has helped some people find happiness, it has caused damage. For example, the Catholic church has in several cases abused hope.

This phenomenon typically took place before the great Enlightenment. The feudal society was heavily influenced by the church, who profited immensely off of the social system that ensured their power. Farmers and peasants were exploited and the church kept protests and revolts at bay by giving them hope, by promising that the afterlife would reward their sufferings and glorify their hard work. Clerks would sell letters of

indulgence, that promised to right the people's wrongs when brought, exploiting people's fear of hell and hope for salvation.

In other words, hope made people accept their suffering, rather than revolt and fight against the injustices. Without the hope of a grandiose afterlife, how would they have gone on with a life unworthy of their human dignity rather than fight for change?

So after considering Nietzsche's argument about these downsides of hope, we also need to contemplate what life might be like in the absence of hope.

I would argue that hope is one of the defining characteristics of humanity. I will even go as far as to claim that life is hope. The pessimist wastes their life immersed in a constant state of bleakness, while the optimist enjoys the colorful beauties of life.

Humanity cannot afford to give up hope. We must have hope in the good nature of humankind. If one always believes the worst in everyone, and trusts no one, they will be condemned to misery. Indeed, it would be a life not worth living.

Unlike Nietzsche I do not believe that hope is always passive. It can empower





people to act! And if we give up hope, we essentially stop fighting for climate justice, killing off the planet, our very basis of life. We must not give up on the planet, because not acting is not an alternative that we may choose. Living in Germany, we are privileged. With our privilege and power comes responsibility to do what is in our power to protect humanity's basis of life. Hope is at the heart of this.

Hope can result in disappointment, but that is not an excuse to give up. We need hope. Indeed, we can't exist without it.

# The Good News and Bad News on the Endless Stream of Bad News

By Hayden Evan

Many media experts, including well-known German psychologist Michaela Meier, refer to an American study, which

concludes that, “in the past 30 years, approximately 90 percent of the reporting has been negative.” This imbalance between the positive and the negative is a common phenomenon in news. We’ve all seen it. The endlessly bleak political, economic, and social images throughout the last few years has led to a decrease in hope and an increase in mental health issues. The question is: how can we find hope in a world where the media works to create negativity?

## Bad News First...

Sadly, the issue that has led to such a negative media culture is partly inherent in our nature. A research report published by the National Academy of Sciences has shown that all humans share a “negativity bias,” no matter their cultural background or their national identity. There are different theories as to how this bias has overtaken us. One hypothesis is rooted in evolutionary theory, which argues that humans focus more on negative news as it poses a possible threat to our existence. Another theory focuses on the shock factor of such information. Negative reports spark increased extreme reactions such as sadness, anger, or disgust, each more impactful

than positive emotions when taking in hopeful stories. As Stuart Soroka argues in *The Journal of Politics*, “negative information is in certain situations viewed as being more important than equally positive information.” The fact is that no matter what theories one looks at, the reality stays the same.

Based on several studies, it seems that one negative piece of information will, on average, lead to at least two stories, while one piece of positive news only has a 1 in 4 chance of being covered in the media. So, bad news is the motor of mass media. Or, as the old adage goes, “if it bleeds, it leads.” The attention we award negative news leads to a disproportionate. This partiality to negative news leads to a decrease in quality of life. It leads to depression, anxiety, and health problems brought on by stress. People are tired of only seeing the negative in our world. But we instinctively crave it and media brands profit from it.



## Now, the Good News!

There are many studies, including one published by the Southern Political Science Association that suggest news often exaggerates the state of the world to increase engagement and that there may be “systematic differences between news content and the real world” (Soroka 1, p. 515). However, there is an approach to reporting known as “constructive journalism” which focuses on journalistic objectivity instead of evoking strong emotions. There is a space for constructive journalism in new media outlets like Substack.

Another piece of good news is that by accepting our own biases, we can control how much negative news we take in. Especially on social media, where algorithms manipulate and profit from our biases towards negativity, many teenagers struggle to see hope in the world. However, there are ways to combat this media culture.

“By intentionally watching positive news and creating a balance on our news feeds and our lives, we can break the spell of platforms like TikTok or Instagram.”

Photo by [camilo jimenez](#) on [Unsplash](#)



The best way to combat such negativity is to distance ourselves from the constant onslaught of negativity. We must have hope in ourselves to be powerful enough to break the spell. Take time away from social media. Go outside and engage with your community. Be the hope you wish to see in the world. Maybe you will be one of the positive stories in the media one day!

# Wired for Hope: The Mind-Body Power of Optimism

By Alice Jung

Can something as intangible as hope truly alter the chemistry of your brain and your body? Hope is more than just a poetic concept, it's a measurable, biological force, constantly shaping how we heal, cope, and even survive. From reducing the risk of chronic illness to improving recovery rates after surgery, optimism has profound effects on both mental and physical health. This article explores the

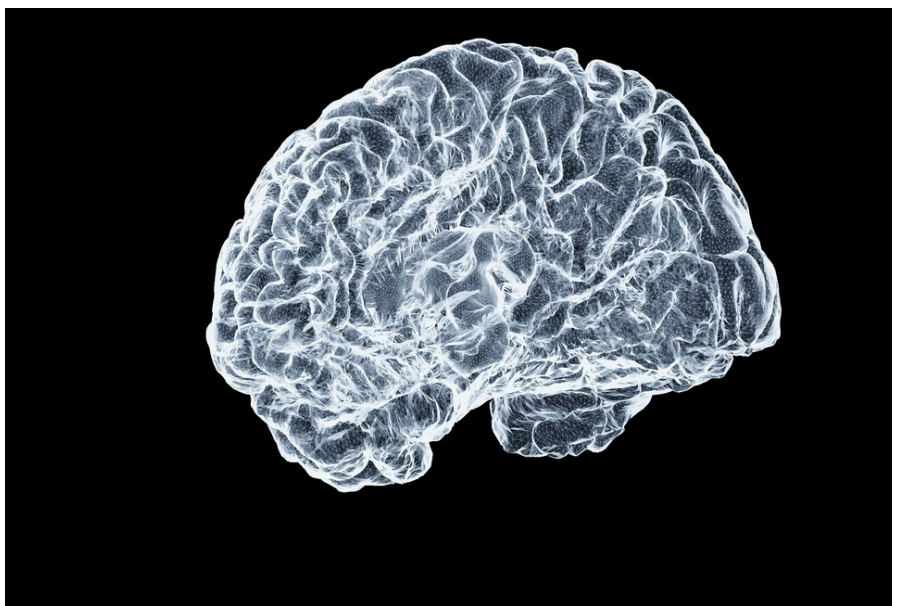


Photo by [Shawn Day](#) on [Unsplash](#)



science behind hope, examining how a positive outlook alters brain function, affects stress hormones, and even predicts long-term well-being. As we navigate a world where uncertainty often dominates, understanding the health benefits of hope could be more essential than ever.

Psychologists have long known that hopeful people tend to be more resilient, but only recently have neuroscientists begun to map how optimism impacts the brain. Functional MRI studies show that hope activates the prefrontal cortex – the region responsible for planning and goal-setting. This neural activity encourages proactive coping strategies, which help individuals manage anxiety and depression. Psychologist Charles Snyder, who

pioneered hope theory, argues that, “[h]ope is not a feel good emotion; it’s a cognitive process involving the belief that you can find pathways to your goals and become motivated to use those pathways.” This mindset-shift can be life-changing for individuals facing trauma, grief, or chronic stress.

The benefits of hope extend far beyond the mind. In a 2019 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association’s Open Network*, researchers tracked over 70,000 people and found that those who scored higher in optimism had significantly lower risks of heart disease and early death (Krittanawong). Hope influences behaviors: optimistic individuals are more likely to exercise, eat well, and follow medical

advice. But the biology runs deeper. Hope lowers cortisol, the body’s primary stress hormone, and strengthens immune function. In short, your attitude doesn’t just color your experience – it can alter your physiology.

Despite its benefits, hope is not evenly distributed. Socioeconomic hardship, systemic inequality, and global crisis can alter a person’s sense of agency and future. But hope is also a skill – one that can be taught, practiced, and reinforced. Techniques like cognitive-behavioral therapy, gratitude journaling, and goal setting exercises have been shown to increase hopeful thinking. Schools and communities that actively nurture hope, especially among youth, are investing not just in mental health, but in long-term resilience.

Hope is more than wishful thinking – it’s a biological survival tool, a mental health strategy, and a physical health asset. In a time when despair can feel overwhelming, science affirms what our instincts have always known: hope heals. As we search for light in uncertain times, hope might just be the most powerful medicine we have.

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# Hope as the Driving Force of Change

By Sophia Hansel

In the 1920's, in another politically anxious era, Bertrand Russell said, "extreme hopes are born of extreme misery." But how well do these words hold up in today's context amidst global crises and rising tensions? Are political calamities probing our resilience, or are they testaments to evaporating humanity? The answer to this question hinges on one key factor: perspective. While hope has the potential to save, despair has the power to extinguish. We are privileged enough to choose which one dictates our future. It is essential for each and every one of us to explore the link between hope and despair as it relates to activism or passivity.

Ironically, hope and despair have a far stronger connection than one might assume. In the limited space between an optimistic vs. pessimistic view of our world, even a slight gap that might allow for indifference or passivity is tied directly to despair. In his essay *Apathy*

and *Despair*, psychoanalyst Michael Schreiner argues that, "apathy is the behavioral manifestation of the deeper, usually less conscious experience of despair", proving that passivity and despair are simultaneous phenomena, each fostering and reinforcing the other. Additionally, despair causes a perceptual shift, forcing individuals to view the world through increasingly cynical lenses, which leads to despondency. Once we begin to believe in a distorted catastrophic worldview exaggerated by hopelessness, the temptation to refuse accountability arises. This is because submission nullifies belief in salvation, consequently suppressing activism. Politics can be used to contextualize this better. In times of crisis, there is an abstract uncertainty to despair that empowers powerful, populist politicians to successfully sell themselves as saviors. By believing these people in positions of power, we jeopardize our autonomy for

a temporary and false sense of security.

Certainly, we must not lie to ourselves about the state of the world. There's no need to sugarcoat our worldview; we must face certain horrors. But there is a crucial difference between necessary acceptance and subservient submission. Think of the civil rights, feminist, and climate movements; all of these prove Bertrand Russell's argument that hope requires some form of misery to develop. The American writer and activist Rebecca Solnit remarks in an editorial in *The Guardian* on the seemingly paradoxical connection between hope and despair, stating, "the vision of a better future doesn't have to deny the crimes and sufferings of the present; it matters because of that horror".

“Where chaos is the breeding ground for despair, hope is the driving force of change.”



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The mere belief in a better future despite contemporary challenges is enough to inspire us to take initiative, adopt a sense of urgency through accountability, and at the bare minimum, spread awareness about a pressing cause.

Hope offers us the opportunity to evolve and to take responsibility for seizing the chance to right our wrongs. We must think critically, take action, and use our voices to deploy our privileges for the greater good. Cooperation and the crafting of practical, long-term solutions are essential to collectively emerging from crisis. But most importantly, we must maintain a conscious room for hope, as today's intention determines tomorrow's fate.

# **A Burning World**

## **- What now?**

By Evelin Vogel

When we look at the news today, all we see is ineffective climate policies and agreements, natural disasters, and record temperatures. Understandably, many young people feel an immense amount of anxiety about their future. Recent political developments add to the hopelessness people feel about whether humanity will be able to minimize the effects of climate change. However the data offers a different perspective. In contrast to the bad news we see everyday, we can see the actual progress we have made and the many future possibilities that can still get us to our goal.

Already, the world has many of the technologies needed to move to a low-carbon economy. The main question is how fast they can be implemented so as to keep overall levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as low as possible. Many governments seem to be moving away from policies

that would implement these solutions more quickly. However, many of the technologies, such as solar power and electric cars, are gaining popularity anyways, mainly because they are economical.

Greenhouse gas emissions today are split up mainly between energy, food, transport, and industry. In the energy sector, there are many possibilities to move to clean energy: solar, wind, nuclear, geothermal, and hydropower. Over the past 15 years the price of solar and wind energy has gone below the cost of gas and coal energy, making it extremely cost competitive. More importantly, many countries are using this to their own advantage. Currently the Middle East is the fastest growing renewables market outside of China. One might argue that the environmental impact of changing to renewable energy sources caused by mining and other construction issues will be immense. However, when compared to the amount of mining we do for non-renewables, it can still be less environmentally harmful. In addition to this, we could power the whole world through solar or wind on less than 1% of earth's land, so the minimal environmental



impacts are worth it in comparison to continuing with non-renewables.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, in 2024, 90% of all new power installed was from renewables. According to Imagine 5, seven countries now run almost entirely on renewable electricity. Albania, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Iceland, Nepal, Paraguay and the Democratic Republic of Congo are getting at least 99.7% of their energy from wind, solar, hydro or geothermal power. Many others are getting closer. Norway, Brazil and New Zealand are all powered by over 80% renewable energy.

Another sign for hope is the transport sector which offers many opportunities for clean energy. Although an electric vehicle has a larger embedded carbon footprint than a petrol or diesel car due to its battery, the emissions become less than a normal

car after just one year of driving it. And EVs are becoming more and more popular in many countries. In Jordan they made up more than half of all car sales in 2024 and in Norway they made up 88% of new car sales. In fact, some estimates predict that the world has already passed the peak of petrol and diesel car sales in 2018.

In addition to signs for hope in the transport sector, there are signs for hope in the food production sector. The production of food plays a large role in our greenhouse gas emissions because of land use and people's eating habits. Today, we use 50% of the earth's habitable land for farming. These issues can potentially be solved by using land more efficiently by adopting new farming practices, producing less meat and dairy products and wasting less food. Meat and dairy products produce at least 10 times as much

greenhouse gas emissions as plant-based foods. If we farm and consume less of these products, this would lower the impact that food has on our environment. While government efforts to encourage people to eat less meat are not very popular, alternatives to animal products, such as oat milk and veggie burgers, are more available and more popular than ever—often because they have health benefits and taste almost the same as the original animal-based products.

A final significant part of the world's emissions comes from manufacturing and construction. The main emissions come from using fossil fuels for energy and CO<sub>2</sub> emitted through chemical reactions while making raw materials like cement. We have already found solutions for the former by switching from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. There are

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several possible solutions for the latter issue. For instance, one could capture the CO<sub>2</sub> produced during the manufacturing process and either store it in the produced cement, potentially making it stronger, or store it in the ground to prevent it from making it into the atmosphere. There are also alternative methods for manufacturing cement that do not produce as many greenhouse gasses. One of many alternatives is ECOPact. The material offers at least 30% less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions during its concrete production while keeping the same properties as conventional concrete. The next step is to make it cost competitive,

If we earnestly look at the data, we should conclude that we have all the technologies and opportunities for lowering our emissions and slowing climate change. It is just a matter of leveraging these technologies in a time effective manner. In the end, it is counterproductive to consume a steady media diet of bad news and doomsday predictions because fear only leads to helplessness and hopelessness and paralysis. And what we need today is to take action.

# Authoritarianism, Adversary and the European Beacon of Hope

By Luise Massen and Susannah Skinner

Around the world, enemies of democracy are gaining traction and intensifying their attacks. Countries that once occupied the grey area between democracy and autocracy are shifting towards the latter. Even within long-established democracies, internal forces are rising, pushing national policies towards hatred and violence. As key players reverse course, the international world order is undergoing a shift. The role of European institutions such as the European Union (EU), founded on the principles of human rights, democracy, and individual liberty, is increasingly unclear. In the wake of America's flurry of executive orders and rapid changes in foreign policy, European leaders are scrambling to shore up defenses and determine the next steps. Yet, Europe has the potential to resist the rise of authoritarianism and serve as a bulwark against this growing threat.

The recent rise of right extremism and authoritarian values is becoming more and more prominent in European countries, with extreme examples being Poland and Hungary. Poland's authoritarian tendencies became visible in 2015 after the right extremist party, known as the Law and Justice Party, was voted into office. They immediately started to dismantle democratic systems, gaining control over the Polish government's legislative and executive branches. They restricted free speech, filled the constitutional court with party supporters, as well as reduced the qualifications required for civil servants in order to fill jobs with loyalists. Similarly, Hungary saw a dramatic downfall in democratic values during the 2010s, and got degraded from "mostly free" to "partly free" by the Freedom House in 2019. After gaining power, the government exerted their power by



imprisoning opposing party members, took control over the media, religious groups, academics, NGOs, and the courts. With heavy restrictions being put on asylum seekers and the private sector, Hungary is further distancing itself from democratic values, democratic allies, and the EU as a whole. Yet this does not go by without repercussions, with EU courts voting to punish Hungary for their “breach of core values”, and fining them over 200 million euros for their asylum policy. But is this enough to stop the rise of authoritarianism within the European Union?

In Germany, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) has gained significant support, particularly in eastern regions, and is under domestic intelligence surveillance due to suspected extremist ties. The party promotes strict anti-immigration policies, opposes EU integration, and has surged in polls ahead of the 2024 EU elections. In France, Marine Le Pen’s National Rally has rebranded to appeal to mainstream voters, focusing on anti-immigration, anti-EU, and nationalist themes, with strong electoral results in recent years. Both parties continue to spread anti-

democratic values and often discuss leaving the EU, sparking further conversation about its role in global politics.

The EU was founded on the basis of free trade, terming itself as a “peace project” but has historically pursued a primarily economic role. Yet, as its 27 members are increasingly recognizing that the United States of America, with its aggressive and confrontational stance towards the EU, is an unreliable ally, the bloc is reconsidering their military budgets. With the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022, EU leaders began to increase their military spending, a stance that has gained more traction since the inauguration of President Donald Trump. The USA is

the primary funder of Ukraine's defense, yet Trump has threatened to revoke that support, thereby leaving it to its European allies. In response to Trump's stark reversal in policy, the leaders of EU Member States and the United Kingdom rallied behind Ukraine, meeting to discuss further aid. These countries have long promoted democratic growth within Ukraine through financial support and thus to see its steadfast commitment to ones of its own, despite its adversary, is a signal of hope. Beyond this, there is finally an agreement that military spending for Europe as a whole must be increased, however, that is how far the agreement goes, as the bloc continues to struggle to find a united path. One cannot ignore the



hole the USA leaves behind as it begins to show autocratic tendencies and cut its budget for international matters. This leaves a gaping financial hole behind, one that leaves space for autocratic models such as China to step up and fill said space. A question remains as to whether Europe can compete with the perceived stability that these autocratic models offer.

But what can we do against the formidable rise of authoritarianism in the EU and beyond? In countries such as Hungary where the authoritarian regime continues to exert its power, the people continue to unite to protest, risking their lives, and their futures in doing so.

“As democracies crumble around us, we must stop to admire and celebrate those who fight and continue to democratic values. We must realize that we the people do have the power to make a change.”

By staying educated, involved, and unafraid to raise our voices, we can resist the erosion of democratic values and work collectively to fight against authoritarian voices.



Source: Wikipedia - Christmas Truce

## Hope Amidst War?

By Benjamin Mosseri

It's the Cold War. The United States and the Soviet Union are neck and neck, racing to be the dominant world power and to control the skies above. It is hard to imagine that these foes cooperating at all, much less cooperating about some of the most pressing issues of their time. Cold War events such as the Cuban Missile Crisis and the wars in East Asia caused existential stress and tension. These years, filled with fear, made the time seem hopeless, millions dying in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and the whole world dreading what would become of the weapons in Cuba; yet, despite this competition, both the Soviets and Americans understood that mutually assured destruction

was in the interests of no one. Without some level of cooperation annihilation was inevitable.

This led these rivals to establish multiple measures to avoid this. In fact, after the scare of the Cuban Missile Crisis, there was a direct hotline created between Washington and Moscow as a symbol of re-established relations between the superpowers. Later on, the Soviets and Americans created more measures like the Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers, and had Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties.

The Cold War is not an isolated case. As far back as the Napoleonic wars, nations have been cooperating to avoid excessive destruction. For example India and Pakistan, both capable of

nuclear destruction, were at war in 1999, Pakistani soldiers infiltrated some key military points for India, but instead of retaliating too strongly India decided to resolve this conflict through their diplomatic prowess. Senior Fellow with the Strategic Studies Programme at the Observer Research Foundation, Kartik Bommakanti explains how the whole international community was worried about escalation. In fact, he argues, “Indian military restraint that confined combat operations to its side Line of Control started to take a toll and by early June, it became increasingly evident that India’s eviction operations would take longer than expected...However, India’s pressure through second-order coercion was starting to bear fruit,” showing the ability to avoid conflict through peaceful negotiation and not a show of arms.

Even smaller-scale acts of cooperation can show humanity's spirit to avoid conflict. For instance, on Christmas of 1914 in the heat of the First World War I, the opposing French, British, and German troops decided to temporarily stop firing at one another and instead sang and celebrated with each

other, enjoying the holiday season in a time of dread. German Artillery Officer Rickner describes the events as such: “I remember very well Christmas, I remember the Christmas Day when the German and the French soldiers left their trenches, went to the barbed wire between them with champagne and cigarettes in their hands and had feelings of fraternization.”

Despite the division and the dread that defines wars, history has proven that even the biggest of foes can creatively find spaces for cooperation. Whether it was Cold War superpowers avoiding catastrophe, India and Pakistan circumventing conflict, or soldiers in WWI sharing a moment of humanity amidst the horrors of battle, history shows how even in the darkest of times, the instinct to find common ground prevails. These examples evidence how our hopes for diplomacy and mutual understanding can triumph over the darkness of conflict.



Source: Medium - Temiloluwa Fayemi

## Hope from History: A Historical Figure who Inspired Hope and Change

By James Martin

Thomas Sankara argued that, "you cannot carry out fundamental change without a certain amount of madness." His life is one of history's strongest examples of how adversity cannot kill hope. As the President of Burkina Faso from 1983 to 1987, Sankara fought to uplift one of the world's poorest countries. Born into a colonized country, facing political enemies domestically and abroad,



Source: thomassankara.net

Sankara's story shows how seemingly impossible change can be achieved even when the world seems to be against you. His leadership proves that no matter the obstacles, it is possible to fight for a better future and lead others towards hope.

Sankara grew up in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) under French colonial control, and later military governments that worked for foreign interests. As a young man, he realized how unfair his society was, especially how it was kept poor by those who were supposed to help it. Training as a military officer gave him an education, it also exposed him to how easily governments gave in to corruption. Sankara refused to be part of that system. After rising to power in a popular coup, he renamed his country Burkina Faso,

meaning "Land of Upright People," and set out to fight poverty, hunger, and inequality. Even though he had the weight of foreign powers and local elites against him, Sankara pushed through reforms like land redistribution, vaccination campaigns, education programs, and women's rights initiatives.

Many people inside and outside the country wanted Sankara to fail. He once said of foreign aid that, "he who feeds you, controls you." He refused foreign aid that he knew he could not repay, angering powerful nations and business interests alike. Inside Burkina Faso, wealthy elites, many of them corrupt, were furious that he was taking land and power away from them. He would travel by bicycle, living modestly, and cutting government salaries, including his own.

Sankara's belief that change needed action, not just words, inspired people who had been told their whole lives that they were foolish to hope for more.

In the end, Sankara's enemies caught up to him. In 1987, at only 33 years of age, he was assassinated during a coup led by former allies who had turned against him. His death was tragic, but it didn't erase what he had set in motion. Even today, Sankara's words and reforms inspire movements for justice, equality, and independence across Africa and beyond. Thomas Sankara's life shows that while change doesn't come easily, facing hardship with hope and determination can leave a lasting impact.



# What Happens When Women Lead?

By Giselle Bullion

As of January 2025, 28 women serve as heads of state of government across 25 nations. While this may sound like progress, it underscores how much further we still have to go. At the current pace, true gender equality in the world's highest political offices remains 130 years away. Only 18 countries have a female Head of State, and just 16 have a female Head of Government, clear evidence that women remain significantly underrepresented in top leadership roles.

The picture isn't much brighter at the cabinet level. Globally, only 22.9% of ministerial cabinet positions responsible for leading policy areas are held by women. Moreover, women are often assigned to ministries focused on gender equality, social development, or culture, while they are rarely appointed to key ministries such as defense or finance—positions typically regarded both as more influential and as direct pathways to the top.



Nevertheless, national parliaments are showing signs of progress. Since 1995, the proportion of women in lower houses has more than doubled, reaching 27.2% in 2025. Twenty-one nations have achieved a 40% representation rate, and six nations—including Rwanda, Cuba, and Mexico—have reached or exceeded that number, with women holding 50% or more of the seats. However, disparities remain stark; in 21 countries, women make up less than 10% of legislators, and three parliaments have no female members at all.

Yet numbers only tell part of the story. What makes the growing presence of women in politics so promising is the impact they have once in power. Studies show that women often prioritize issues like social services, infrastructure, and family welfare. In India, for example, villages governed

by women-led local councils implemented 62% more drinking water projects than those led by men. In Norway, greater female representation has been linked to improved access to childcare.

Women also tend to work across party lines, advocating for causes like gender-based violence prevention, parental leave, pension reform, and electoral change. Their leadership styles often emphasize more community-focused, inclusive, and forward-thinking.

We are still far from achieving full equality, but

“the rise of women in politics is not just symbolic—it is transformative.

The world needs more women in power—not only to achieve equality but to build stronger, more just societies for everyone.

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# Book Review of Isobel Coleman's Paradise Beneath her Feet: How Women are Transforming the Middle East

By Nina Marie Schulz

In Isobel Coleman's book *Paradise Beneath her Feet: How Women are Transforming the Middle East*, an Afghan mullah is quoted as saying, "education is like sun and water. Without it, you can't grow anything. But if girls are educated, they can change our whole society." His idea reflects the mindset starting to flourish among people in the Islamic world as they fight for the right for female education and a more just gender balance.

For centuries, women have struggled for equality. For the women living in the Middle East, it remains a constant battle against the rise of political Islam that threatens women's empowerment and condemns it as western cultural imperialism or even anti-Islamic. Women are forced to conceal themselves and hide their voices while their rights are stripped away and gender roles are normalized within regions in the Middle East. Isobel Coleman, an author,

entrepreneur, and diplomat who also served as a U.S. Ambassador to the UN from 2014 to 2017, underlines these struggles that Muslim women face and their journey to reshaping their home. In *Paradise Beneath her Feet*, Coleman shines a light of hope for women in the Middle East. She travels all throughout Southwest Asia, interviews experts, government officials, and local leaders. Moreover, she researches various non-governmental organizations and local development projects to get a better understanding of women's rights and roles in this region.

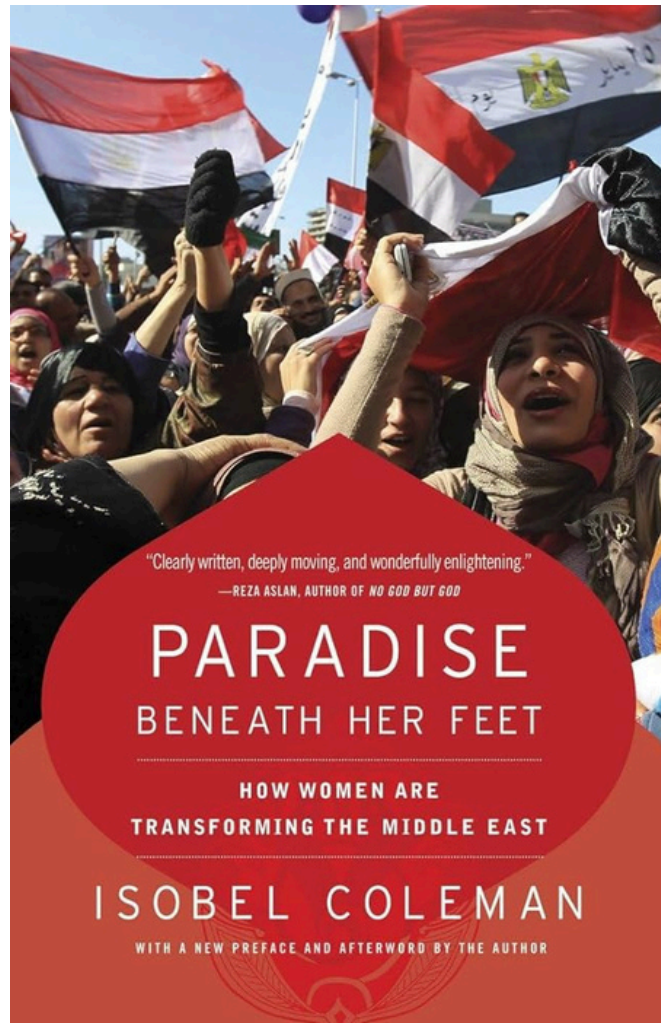
Throughout her book, she introduces multiple Islamic feminists fighting for women's empowerment in Islam. These women are using the Quran in order to point out and re-analyze the meaning of texts talking specifically about the treatment of women, promoting justice and equality instead. For instance, she highlights Sakena

Yacoobi, the founder and director of the Afghan Institute of Learning, who fights for girls to have the right to an education and access to schools in Afghanistan. She also explores the work of Dr. Riffat Hassan who became one of the first women to study the Quran and Hadith on her own, highlighting the, "discrepancies between the treatment of women in the Quran and the treatment of women under supposedly Islamic cultural and legal systems."

Coleman provides readers with an understanding of the deeply rooted culture, and explains how it could take decades, if not centuries in order to undo these gender roles and bring gender equality to the Middle East. She states that only "by providing arguments that make social and legal changes for women more compatible with religion" will Islamic feminism be able to

encourage women's empowerment "at the grassroots level where traditions run deepest". The author hopes to solve issues of inequality not by going against religion, but by working with it. She also focuses on the small, yet sometimes drastic changes happening as a result of the movement for women's empowerment, shedding light on several Muslim-majority countries, such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, who by the close of the twentieth century, had elected female leaders.

Multiple inspirational quotes and stories are weaved throughout the book from both women and men of the Middle East, showcasing their fight for equality within the most conservative and restrictive lands. In fact, the book opens with an



inspirational quote from the Egyptian poet, Hafez Ibrahim, who argues that, "a mother is a school. Empower her and you empower a great nation." Coleman handles these themes with plenty of insight and sensitivity, offering us a book filled with evidence of hope for the future of women living in the Middle East.





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*Chorus from The Cure at Troy*  
Seamus Heaney (1991)

Human beings suffer,  
They torture one another.  
They get hurt and get hard,  
Can fully right a wrong  
Inflicted and endured.

History says, Don't hope  
On this side of the grave,  
But then, once in a lifetime  
The longed-for tidal wave  
Of justice can rise up  
And hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea-change  
On the far side of revenge.  
Believe that the farther shore  
Is reachable from here.  
Believe in miracles  
And cures and healing wells.

Call miracle self-healing,  
The utter self-revealing  
Double-take of feeling.  
If there's fire on the mountain  
And lightning and storm  
And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing  
The outcry and birth-cry  
Or new life at its term.  
It means once in a lifetime  
That justice can rise up  
And hope and history rhyme.



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