GLOBAL. news

JARED KUSHNER. THE COAST. A COUNTRY IN PROTEST.

THE FLAMINGO REVOLT



A luxury development. A disputed future. How the argument over Albania's coast grew into a wider demand to be heard.

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25 And an AIDS cure?

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FROM THE EDITORS

THE FALL ISSUE

A WORLD IN QUESTION.

04

Politics.
History.
Science.

Who gets to decide what happens next?

A stretch of Albanian coastline becomes an argument about power. Arctic journeys become national stories. A word from the twentieth century keeps returning to political debate. Beyond Earth, the promise of Mars meets the machinery of staying alive. In medicine, rare HIV remissions open possibilities that still demand careful language.

This fall issue moves between politics, history and science. Its questions are different. Its approach is shared: look closely, keep the human consequences in view, and ask what the evidence can actually support.

GLOBAL. brings those perspectives together in five features, tracing the evidence from the places where decisions are made to the lives and landscapes they reshape. There is always more to understand. That is why we keep looking.

GLOBAL. Science, Politics and Affairs

FOUNDERS
Austin Wallace
Brennan Mckeaney

ISSUE 04 / FALL 2026
A magazine from GLOBAL.'s Science, Politics and Affairs teams.
Meet the GLOBAL. team on page 29.

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THE COAST



Narta Lagoon, 2 July 2025. Wildlife context, not a protest scene.
Arbenllapashtica / CC BY 4.0. Cropped; full record p30.

THE COAST AND THE COUNTRY

WHO DECIDES?

Plans for a luxury resort helped ignite a protest movement. By autumn, the argument had grown far beyond a stretch of coastline - to who gets to decide Albania's future.

BY THE GLOBAL. AFFAIRS TEAM



Vjosë-Nartë landscape, Albania, 9 June 2024. Wildwheelwildsoul / CC0. Archival landscape context; image record p30.

LAND. POWER. CONSENT.

WHO SHOULD DEVELOPMENT SERVE?

A resort proposal, a contested coast and a wider argument over public consent.



SUBJECT: JARED KUSHNER
His Albanian resort plans are examined in this feature. Archival Ramstein portrait, 2017. Dominique A. Pineiro / US Navy; public domain.

A bird becomes a political symbol

A pink flamingo is an unlikely emblem for a confrontation over political power. In Albania this summer, it became a way to connect a threatened landscape with a much wider question: who is development for? Reuters reported on June 5 that thousands had demonstrated in Tirana after groundwork near Zvërnec prompted local opposition. The disputed tourism venture involved the investment firm of Jared Kushner, Donald Trump's son-in-law. Protesters carried inflatable flamingos and challenged the government's handling of the coast. Developers said their approach would protect and improve the environment. [1]

The bird made the dispute visible. It also made a complicated argument portable. A proposal on the coast could be discussed in the capital as a question about accountability, access and national belonging. That does not make every protester's claim correct, or every proposed investment harmful. It explains why the argument could no longer be settled by showing people an attractive hotel rendering.

Two places, different questions

Sazan Island and the mainland area around Zvërnec are connected in the public controversy, but they are not interchangeable parcels. In a June 15 statement, Prime Minister Edi Rama's office said Sazan remained state property and that the proposed arrangement involved state participation in an investment, rather than an island sale. It described the mainland transactions as private purchases from registered owners, while acknowledging competing claims before the courts. These are the government's positions, not a GLOBAL. determination of title. [2]

That distinction matters. Ownership, permission to build, ecological effects and public consent are separate questions. A registered transaction cannot, by itself, answer whether a particular development should happen. Nor does opposition to a project establish that its investors acted unlawfully. The documents and the decisions need to be examined on their own terms.

The landscape beneath the argument

Environmental objections preceded the large street marches. In January, a letter coordinated by Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania, signed by 41 organisations from 28 countries, sought suspension of construction initiatives on Sazan. It identified risks to coastal habitats, underwater seagrass and Mediterranean monk seals, and questioned the compatibility of the proposed development with conservation commitments. This was an advocacy intervention by conservation organisations; its warnings describe anticipated risks, not a completed assessment of damage from a finished resort. [3]

The important issue is scale as well as footprint. Roads, sewage, lighting, boat traffic and water demand connect a hotel to a wider environment. A promise to be responsible needs measurable conditions, independent scrutiny and consequences if those conditions are

CONTINUED

breached. A protected landscape should be assessed as a living system, rather than as the space left over after a building has been placed on a map.

Why investment still matters

The economic case deserves a serious hearing. Albania has places where tourism is creating work and supporting businesses. In August 2025, the World Bank described restoration and infrastructure work in Berat, Gjirokastra, Përmet and Saranda that helped develop local tourism services. Its account included improved public spaces and heritage assets, rather than only new private accommodation. [4]

That example broadens the choice. The debate need not begin with an assumption that Albania must choose between investment and a future. It can ask which investments create durable livelihoods, which costs are carried by residents, and which benefits remain locally. Hotel spending, public access and ecosystem protection are different measures. A credible proposal should explain how they fit together, with evidence that residents can inspect.

The older struggle over land

The coast also carries a history that no new project begins. A 2012 World Bank brief described overlapping difficulties in Albania's property transition: incomplete registration, disputed ownership, informal construction and unfinished restitution or compensation. That historical diagnosis cannot establish who owns a particular parcel in 2026. It does explain why a boundary on a development plan may sit on top of an unresolved argument about loss, recognition and the authority of the state. [5]

Reform is continuing. A UNOPS announcement in December 2025 described a €9.5 million EU-funded property-rights project, running into 2028, to improve land administration, cadastral information and transparency. Better records are necessary infrastructure for both residents and investors. They do not replace accessible remedies when a person contests those records. [6]

An argument that outgrew the resort

By October, the movement could no longer be described only as an environmental campaign. Reuters reported on October 17 that students had joined mass protests, bringing grievances about jobs, corruption and whether government worked for them into the confrontation. It described violent incidents and police responses after months of mostly peaceful demonstrations. Rama denied wrongdoing and said he would not resign. Reuters also explicitly reported that it had found no evidence of wrongdoing by Kushner, who was not directly involved in the villagers' land dispute. [7]

By 25 October, Rama had announced a package of proposed protest restrictions and penalties, a register of people referred or under investigation for violent offences, and compensation for damaged businesses. The government presented the measures as protection for peaceful protest and public order. [9] In a 22 October joint statement, 45 civil-society organisations condemned attacks on police and property while warning that alleged excessive force, arbitrary detention and threats against journalists required independent investigation. [10] The argument now concerned not only development, but the institutions deciding how dissent would be heard.

Who gets to decide what development is for?

What transparency must deliver

On October 3, the government launched a bilingual resource it called Flamingo Mirror, presenting official material about Sazan and Zvërnec. At the launch, Rama said environmental impact studies and architectural designs were not yet in the file because they had not been submitted. The government's claim of transparency should be judged against what the file actually makes available and whether people can challenge decisions effectively. [8]

The test is practical: clear ownership records, published assessments, meaningful consultation and enforceable conditions. Albania's coast has become a stage for an argument about power, but the people living with the outcome need more than a stage. They need a process that can answer questions before the landscape is changed. The flamingo's political strength is that it asks who will still belong there when the investment is complete.

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GLOBAL. news STORIES.

FOLLOW THE MONEY.

AI. Illicit finance. The government response.



Austin Wallace with Felizitas von Sanden. Actual GLOBAL. episode frame, 00:01:30. Photo: GLOBAL.

The Role of Technologies in Terrorism Financing

WATCH THE CONVERSATION

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THE NORTH WAS NEVER EMPTY.



Jakobshavn / Disko Bay, 28 July 2023. Modern landscape context.
© Giles Laurent, gileslaurent.com, License CC BY-SA 4.0. Cropped; p30.

THE ARCTIC, CLAIMED

The history of the north is often told through the people who arrived. Looking again reveals the people already there - and how voyages, knowledge and national ambition became entangled.



The six members of the 1888 Greenland expedition before departure. Sámi members Ole Ravna and Samuel Balto stand at the ends of the back row. Siems & Lindegaard / National Library of Norway, bldsa_f3b030. Full record p30.

GLOBAL. AFFAIRS TEAM

BEFORE THE FLAGS

WHOSE KNOWLEDGE COUNTS?

A history told from more than one point of arrival.

Before the flags

Six men pose with skis, snowshoes and a sledge before the 1888 Greenland expedition. Fridtjof Nansen sits at the front. Ole Ravna and Samuel Balto, the two Sámi members, stand at opposite ends of the back row. The photograph holds a larger history than the familiar image of one heroic explorer: a journey depended on several people, carrying different knowledge into a place with histories of its own. [1]

The Arctic was never one blank space waiting for a European name. Greenland's National Museum places the arrival of its earliest known inhabitants around 4,500 years ago. Saqqaq and Independence communities developed specialised ways of living through hunting and close knowledge of their environments. Later migrations brought further cultures. These were distinct peoples and periods, not one unchanged population stretching conveniently across the centuries. But their presence makes the starting point clear: Nordic arrivals do not mark the beginning of Greenland's human story. [2]

Norse farmer-hunters began arriving from Iceland in the tenth century. In southern Greenland, the landscape now recognised by UNESCO as Kujataa preserves their farms alongside the much later development of Inuit farming communities. Agriculture, grazing and marine-mammal hunting supported lives at the edge of what the climate allowed. The Norse settlements belonged to a medieval North Atlantic world; they were not outposts of a single, timeless Nordic empire. Nor should their history swallow the Inuit histories that followed and overlapped the wider Arctic story. [3]

A past that could be claimed

The Norse settlements disappeared during the fifteenth century. In European imaginations, however, their inhabitants remained remarkably alive. Historian Robert Rix traces the persistence of stories that descendants might still be living somewhere beyond the ice. Even the name Eastern Settlement helped mislead outsiders: the settlement had been on Greenland's southwestern coast, not its eastern shore. Uncertainty became a resource. A supposedly lost European community offered explorers, writers and imperial interests a reason to imagine Greenland as a place to recover. [4]

Hans Egede's arrival in 1721 opened a new colonial chapter under Denmark-Norway. It is tempting to reduce the expedition to a mistaken search for lost Norse Christians. University of Greenland scholar Ebbe Volquardsen warns against that comforting version. European authorities already knew that Inuit lived on Greenland's west coast, and missionary intentions cannot be treated as an accidental discovery after the Norse failed to appear. Religious conversion, economic interests and geopolitical competition belonged to the same history. The colony was an assertion of power over a populated place. [5]

Even the questions asked of the ground could reflect that imbalance. Denmark's National Museum records Egede digging inside the ruined church at Hvalsey in 1723, followed by generations of investigation into Norse Greenland. Such research has produced valuable knowledge. Yet

CONTINUED

asking repeatedly where Europeans had lived can also make everyone else seem peripheral. In 1981, responsibility for Greenland's ancient monuments transferred to Greenland Home Rule. Who has authority over the past is part of the story, too. [6]

Science, commerce and the national hero

By the nineteenth century, exploration could offer a state something less tangible than a colony: international stature. It could also offer merchants a practical route. Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld's Vega expedition completed the Northeast Passage in 1878-79. Gothenburg University Library's account places scientific investigation alongside the search for future trading connections. King Oscar II, businessman Oscar Dickson and Russian merchant Alexander Sibiryakov shared the costs. Scientists and naval personnel from several countries travelled aboard. A voyage later celebrated as a national achievement was international in its financing and labour. [7]

Nansen's Greenland crossing followed in 1888. He and five companions crossed the inland ice from east to west, then spent the winter in Godthaab, now Nuuk. The achievement was real. So was the difference between crossing an ice sheet and discovering an inhabited country. The Fram Museum describes Nansen's close interest in Inuit life during that winter. The journey's history becomes more revealing when survival, learning and encounter remain in view alongside the finish line. [8]

Ravna's life makes the limits of the heroic frame especially clear. A reindeer-owning Sámi from the Karasjok area, he was recruited because Nansen expected Sámi experience to suit a long journey over snow. He was also a husband and father, uneasy about parts of an expedition planned by someone else. The museum's account records his scepticism, homesickness and endurance. These details restore a person where national mythology can leave only a supporting character. Expertise was essential; equal control over how the expedition was remembered did not automatically follow. [9]

Beyond the line on the map

Exploration, commercial activity and sovereignty were connected, but they were never interchangeable. Svalbard offers a different history from Greenland's. Norway's parliament describes seventeenth-century competition over whaling and rival claims, followed much later by mining interests and negotiations over government. The 1920 Svalbard Treaty recognised Norwegian sovereignty while establishing equal treatment for nationals and companies of treaty parties in specified activities. A flag planted during a journey cannot explain that legal settlement. Diplomacy, resources and competing states did. [10]

The Nordic countries therefore cannot be compressed into one explorer, one crown or one imperial project. Medieval settlement, Danish-Norwegian colonisation, Swedish-led science and Norwegian nation-building had different institutions and consequences. What links these histories is the power to turn a journey into an authoritative account: to say whose knowledge counts, whose presence is visible and who may decide what happens next.

ON THE RECORD

1721

Egede's colonial mission [5]

1878-79

Vega's Northeast Passage [7]

1888

Nansen's Greenland crossing [8]

1920

Svalbard Treaty [10]

1996

Ottawa Declaration [11]

A different principle appears in the Arctic Council's founding Ottawa Declaration of 1996. It recognises Indigenous knowledge and establishes Permanent Participation for Indigenous organisations, with active participation and full consultation as its purpose. That arrangement is not the same as state membership, and it does not settle every struggle over land or decision-making. It does place Arctic peoples inside the formal conversation rather than leaving them outside the map. [11]

A fuller Arctic history can admire the difficulty of a voyage while asking what followed it. Who supplied the knowledge? Who carried the equipment? Who faced conversion, regulation or exclusion? And who gets to tell the story now? The north becomes easier to understand when arrival stops being the only event that matters.

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1945 The war ends. The argument continues.



Nuremberg defendants, circa 1945-46. Ray D'Addario / US National Archives. Complete photograph; full record p30.

1945

NUREMBERG

The international trial opens.

1948

ITALY

A constitutional break with fascism.

1949

WEST GERMANY

The Basic Law takes effect.

Defeat, law, memory. After 1945, the meaning of fascism becomes a struggle over how the past should shape the present.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT / SOURCES [9], [4], [5] ON PAGE 28

THE WORD THAT WOULDN'T DISAPPEAR.

A historical category, a warning and a political weapon: the same word has carried different burdens since the war. Using it well means understanding which one we mean.

THE LANGUAGE OF COMPARISON

1995

UMBERTO ECO

Ur-Fascism examines recurring political habits and warning signs. [8]

1998

ROBERT PAXTON

The Five Stages of Fascism follows movements, alliances and the exercise of power. [7]

GLOBAL. POLITICS TEAM

A WORD. A WARNING. A POLITICAL WEAPON.

A movement, an established party and a regime are different historical situations. Comparison needs context.

The war ended. The question remained.

In the photographs from Nuremberg, the men who had helped rule Nazi Germany sit in a courtroom dock. The image offers an apparent ending: power brought before a tribunal, the regime defeated. But the work beyond that courtroom was less contained. The Allied Museum distinguishes prosecutions for particular crimes from denazification, the much wider attempt to remove Nazi influence from German public life. A government could surrender. A society could not be remade by the signature alone. [1]

That gap helps explain why fascism remained in the political vocabulary after 1945. The word named a historical catastrophe, but it also carried an urgent question about the future. Could something like it happen again? The problem was not simply whether the old uniforms would return. It was whether political habits, institutions and loyalties could survive the destruction of the regimes that had organised them.

The term had never been perfectly stable. Writing in 1944, George Orwell described it being thrown at a bewildering range of political opponents and ordinary activities. He worried that a word for a political system was becoming a general expression of contempt. That complaint predates the postwar era. Loose usage is not a recent corruption of an otherwise pristine vocabulary; it is part of the word's history. [2]

There is still a useful historical centre. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum describes fascism as an ultranationalist, authoritarian political philosophy that places the nation above individual rights, rejects pluralism and democratic government, and accepts violence in the national cause. Italy and Nazi Germany provide central cases, with important differences between them. A strict boss, an unpopular law or a politician's arrogance cannot establish that whole pattern by themselves. [3]

Memory became a political foundation

After the war, some of that memory was written into the structure of government. Italy's Constitution prohibited the reorganisation, in any form, of the dissolved Fascist Party. The provision names a particular historical organisation. It records the new republic's refusal to treat the dictatorship as an ordinary government that had simply lost its turn in office. The constitutional break was part of rebuilding political life. [4]

West Germany's Basic Law took another institutional approach. Adopted in 1949, it placed human dignity at the beginning of the constitutional order. Its Article 21 provides for parties seeking to undermine or abolish the free democratic basic order to be declared unconstitutional, with the Federal Constitutional Court deciding that question. The distinction matters: a public accusation and a constitutional finding are different acts, made through different processes. Democratic self-defence requires evidence and procedure as well as conviction. [5]

Across the Cold War divide, the language of anti-fascism could also serve an authoritarian state. East Germany presented the Berlin Wall as an anti-fascist protective barrier. The Bundesarchiv's account shows the practical purpose: stopping people from leaving and securing the ruling party's power. It records repression of people who criticised the barrier. Invoking the struggle against fascism did not guarantee political freedom. A state could claim that moral inheritance while policing its own population. [6]

These histories left the word doing several jobs at once. It could mark a

CONTINUED

legal boundary, honour resistance, identify a dangerous political tradition or discredit an enemy. Those uses were not equivalent. But each drew power from the memory of what fascist rule had done. That is why disputes about the word can feel much larger than disputes about a definition: they are also arguments over who has understood the past, and who is entitled to speak in its name.

A movement is not yet a regime

Historians have tried to make comparison more exact without making it impossible. In his 1998 essay The Five Stages of Fascism, Robert Paxton separated the creation of a movement, its establishment within a political system, its acquisition of power, its exercise of power and its longer-term radicalisation or decline. The stages ask readers to look beyond a collection of alarming statements. How does an organisation act? What alliances make its growth possible? What changes once it gains office? [7]

Paxton also warns against identifying fascism through appearance alone. Other regimes borrowed its spectacle, while a movement suited to a different country might use familiar local symbols rather than an imported uniform. His approach shifts attention towards political behaviour and relationships. It also makes the comparison more demanding: a fringe group, an expanding party and an established dictatorship cannot be treated as the same historical situation. [7]

Umberto Eco approached the problem from another direction in his 1995 essay Ur-Fascism. Drawing on his childhood under Mussolini, he explored recurring habits of thought, including hostility towards disagreement, fear of difference and the promise of belonging through enemies. He also acknowledged that his proposed features could contradict one another and appear in other forms of despotism or fanaticism. His essay is a warning about possibilities, rather than a mechanical test that settles every disputed case. [8]

Read together, these approaches offer a productive tension. Habits of exclusion can be recognised before a dictatorship is complete. Yet recognising a resemblance does not remove the need to investigate institutions, political violence, organisation and context. A comparison should make us look more closely. If it saves us the trouble of looking, it has become a shortcut.

What a useful warning asks of us

There is no historical clock that makes the term return at regular intervals. Calling its history a cycle is a metaphor. What recurs is the pressure to explain threatening political change through the most charged examples available. The risk runs in two directions. Using fascism for everything can flatten important differences. Reserving it only for an exact reconstruction of the 1930s can make historical knowledge arrive too late to help.

A responsible argument therefore needs to show its working. Is it describing a direct organisational inheritance, a shared political project or a limited analogy? Which actions support the comparison? Which differences weaken it? Citizens do not need to agree on a final label before scrutinising attacks on rights or demanding that political leaders obey the law. The specific action remains open to judgment even while its historical classification is debated.

A useful comparison makes us look more closely.

Movements and regimes require different comparisons. Paxton [7].

That is the more useful inheritance of the argument since 1945. The word matters because the history matters. But its value depends on the attention it directs towards people and power: whose belonging is questioned, whose freedom becomes conditional and whose voice can still challenge the state. History offers no automatic verdict on the present. It gives us harder questions - and a reason to keep asking them.

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01 TODAY

02 STORIES

03 WORLD



Actual GLOBAL. web app / World view / 30 October 2026.

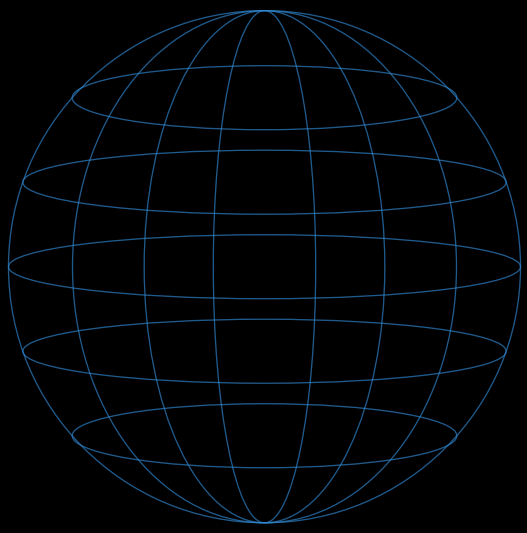
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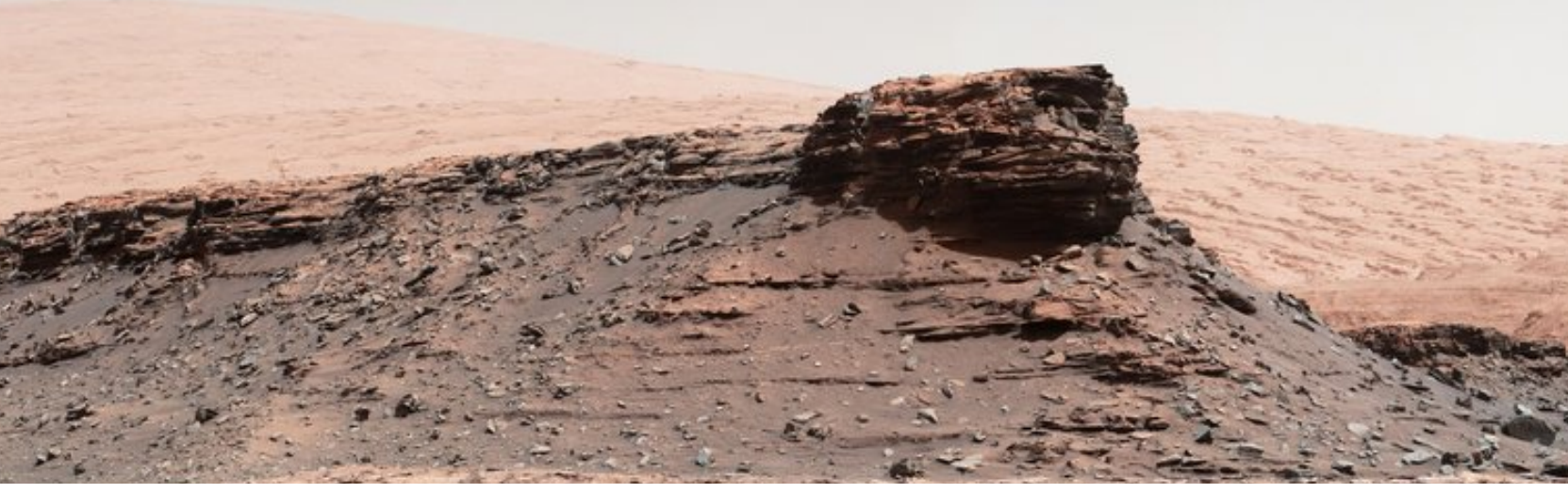


MARS?

NASA/JPL-Caltech. Color-enhanced Viking Orbiter mosaic. Archival planetary data; not a 2026 photograph or evidence of a human expedition.

MARS? ARE WE SURE?

The case for exploring Mars is powerful. The case for sending people depends on a harder question: can every system needed to keep them alive work together, far beyond rescue?



Murray Buttes, Mars, 18 August 2016. Detail from a Curiosity Mastcam mosaic; NASA/JPL daylight-adjusted color. NASA/JPL-Caltech/MSSS. Rectangular crop of photographed terrain.

GLOBAL. SCIENCE TEAM

THE MACHINERY OF AN ORDINARY DAY



EVERY BREATH. EVERY DROP.

Exploration depends on the systems that sustain an ordinary day.

Koch assists Hague and McClain before an ISS spacewalk, 22 March 2019. NASA. Earth-orbit operations, not Mars. Display crop.

After the photograph

The first photograph of a person standing on Mars would travel home faster than the person could. Behind the visor, the landscape would be extraordinary. Behind the camera would be the less visible achievement: breathable air, clean water, dependable power, working equipment and a credible route back. A landing would be one moment in a mission whose success depended on everything that happened afterwards.

Mars remains a stated horizon for human exploration. NASA describes the technologies needed to live and work there as systems still being developed. That distinction belongs near the beginning of every conversation about a departure date. An agency ambition, a proposed architecture and a demonstrated ability to sustain a crew on another planet are different kinds of evidence. The scientific reasons to go deserve serious attention; so does the unfinished engineering. [1]

A journey measured in human limits

NASA groups the hazards into radiation, isolation and confinement, distance from Earth, changing gravity, and hostile or enclosed environments. These categories interact. A tired crew must still repair machinery; an enclosed habitat must remain both a functioning machine and a place people can tolerate living. Ground simulations and the International Space Station help researchers study those problems, while leaving important differences from an interplanetary mission unresolved. Experience in one environment has to be tested before being carried into another. [2]

Distance changes the nature of an emergency. NASA describes communication delays of up to about 20 minutes each way, alongside equipment failures and medical problems a crew may have to manage with limited help. A conversation can become an exchange of messages. Advice from specialists is valuable, but a distant specialist cannot reach into a broken pump or examine a patient. Supplies, crew skills and procedures therefore become part of the medical system as well as the spacecraft. [3]

Radiation is another problem that a dramatic launch cannot settle. Beyond Earth's protective magnetic field and atmosphere, energetic particles can damage bodies and equipment. [4] A March 2026 ESA account of new research offers a useful complication: increased solar activity can reduce exposure to galactic cosmic rays, even while solar eruptions remain a hazard requiring protection. Its modeled missions show that trajectory and timing matter. They do not establish that any spacecraft, departing at any convenient moment, is safe. The result gives designers choices to evaluate, with shielding and operations still essential. [5]

CONTINUED

The machinery of an ordinary day

There has been tangible progress. MOXIE, the oxygen experiment carried by Perseverance, extracted oxygen from the Martian atmosphere in 16 runs and produced 122 grams in total. The instrument demonstrated that a local resource could become something useful for future explorers. It did not supply a human settlement. NASA's description of a next step includes a full-scale oxygen generator together with equipment to liquefy and store the oxygen. Production, storage and reliable delivery have to become one working system before a crew can depend on them. [6]

Water recovery has advanced too. In 2023, the space station's life-support equipment demonstrated recovery of 98 percent of water, helped by a processor that reclaimed water remaining in urine brine. That is a major reduction in what must be carried. It is still a recovery rate achieved by specific hardware, with filters, processing and purity checks. Calling a system nearly closed does not make it maintenance-free, nor does it mean every material a crew uses is replenished automatically. Long-duration reliability is part of the achievement that must be demonstrated. [7]

Food and electricity complete the picture. NASA is researching food systems for a Mars round trip without regular deliveries of fresh food, and power sources that can operate in the planet's conditions. [1] These are quiet requirements with enormous consequences. An expedition needs more than a menu that looks adequate at departure or a generator that works on its first day. It needs a convincing account of deterioration, failures and the work required to keep the habitat functioning. A successful component test is a step towards that account.

A planet with evidence of its own

Human survival is only one responsibility. Mars also holds evidence that explorers hope to understand. In September 2025, researchers reported potential biosignatures in a Perseverance sample from the rock called Cheyava Falls, encountered in July 2024. The mineral patterns and chemistry warranted investigation of a possible biological origin. Nonbiological explanations could not be ruled out. The finding was an invitation to further testing, rather than a discovery of Martian life. Keeping that distinction intact protects the significance of the work. [8]

Planetary protection addresses contamination in both directions: carrying terrestrial organisms and organic material to other worlds, and returning potentially hazardous material to Earth. It helps preserve the ability to tell what a sample represents. [9] The issue becomes especially demanding when people and their equipment enter an environment being examined for life. A NASA workshop report released in March 2026 identifies precursor missions, knowledge gaps about Mars weather, and integration of science, engineering and operations as continuing priorities. Scientific care belongs in the mission design from the start. [10]

What would count as ready?

The strongest argument for going should be able to survive specific questions. Which systems have operated for the required duration?

ONE WORKING SYSTEM

AIR

WATER

POWER

COMMUNICATIONS

RETURN

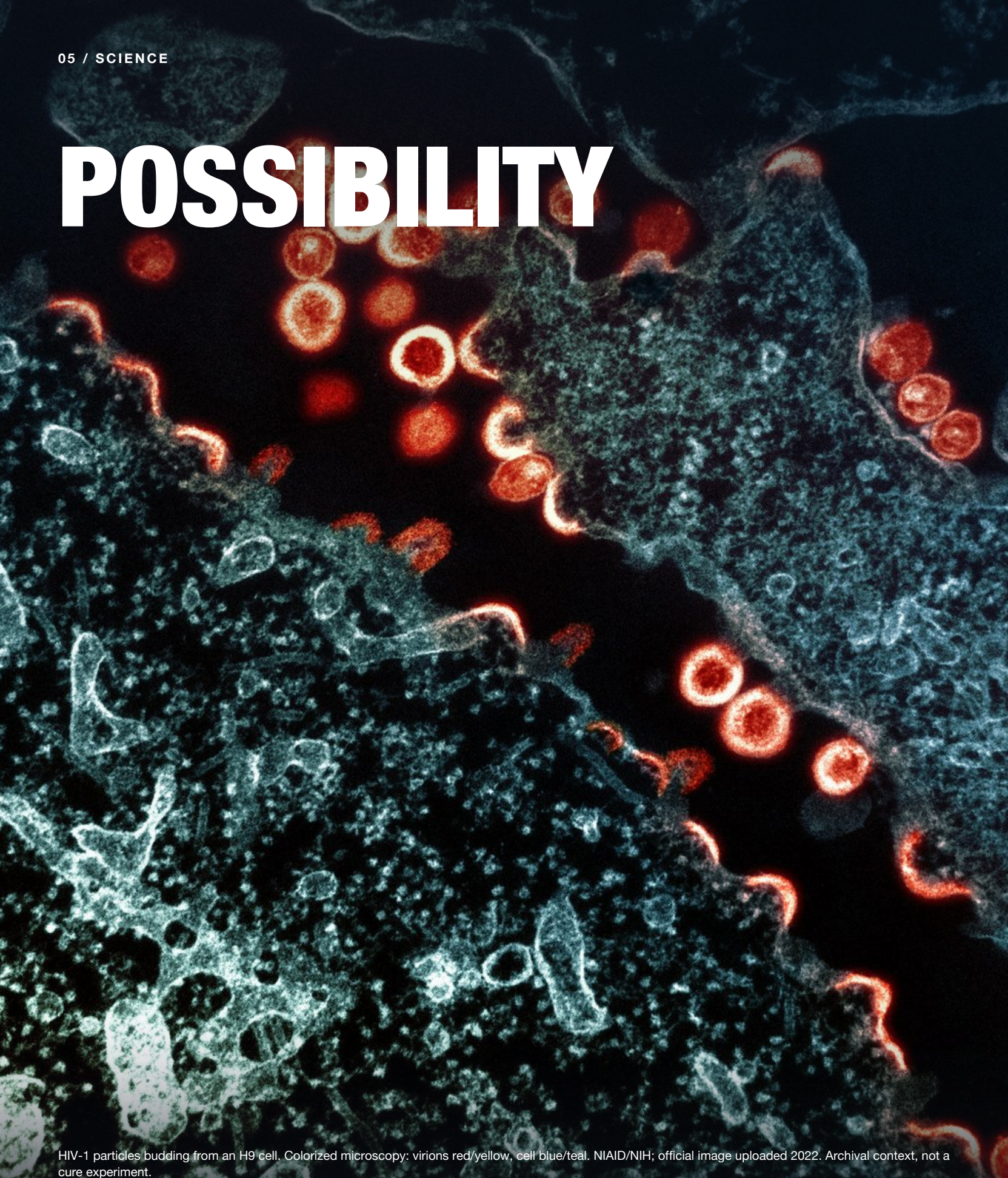
NASA mission systems: [1]-[3], [6]-[7].

What happens when several fail together? Which observations must robots make before a crew arrives? What uncertainties are the people travelling accepting, and who has assessed them? These questions turn excitement into something that can be examined. A proposed year on a calendar is less informative than the evidence beneath it.

There is room for courage in that approach. Exploration has always required acting with incomplete knowledge. It also requires deciding which unknowns are tolerable and which make a mission premature. Mars can be a compelling destination without becoming a promise of inevitable settlement. The photograph will matter. So will the accumulated, less photogenic work that allows the people in it to come home.

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POSSIBILITY



HIV-1 particles budding from an H9 cell. Colorized microscopy: virions red/yellow, cell blue/teal. NIAID/NIH; official image uploaded 2022. Archival context, not a cure experiment.

AND AN AIDS CURE?

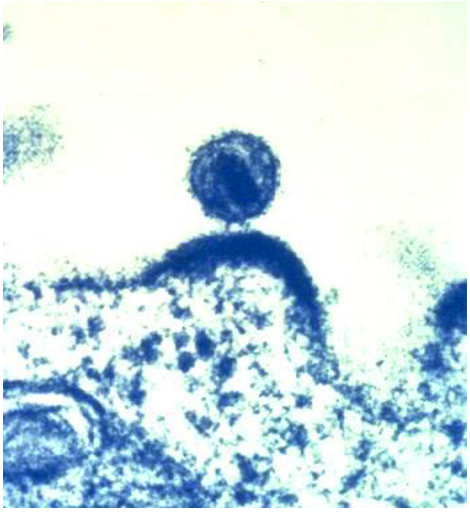
Rare HIV remissions. No general cure.

Rare HIV remissions have changed what researchers believe is possible. They have not produced a cure available to everyone. HIV is the virus; AIDS is the advanced clinical stage it can cause.

Exceptional remissions inform research.
Antiretroviral therapy remains standard care.

GLOBAL. SCIENCE TEAM

HOPE, AT ITS ACTUAL SCALE.



A case report. A defined study. Another question.

Exceptional outcomes. Careful interpretation.

NIAID / CDC PHIL 18142. Archival colorized electron micrograph, 2012. Display crop.

A possibility, with conditions

In April 2026, a Toronto research team reported sustained HIV remission in a man who had received a bone marrow transplant for leukemia. He had stopped antiretroviral therapy in July 2025 and still had undetectable HIV levels at the April follow-up. Presented as a conference case report, the finding was described by the team as a possible cure. It was evidence from one patient, not a generally available treatment. [1]

The question in this headline needs a distinction of its own. HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus, attacks cells involved in immune defence. AIDS, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, is a late stage of HIV infection associated with severe immune damage. People living with HIV do not inevitably develop AIDS when effective treatment is available. Researchers seeking a cure are trying to remove HIV or establish durable control without ongoing antiretroviral therapy. Describing every person with HIV as having AIDS obscures both the biology and the lives people lead today. [2]

What treatment already achieves

Antiretroviral therapy, usually shortened to ART, suppresses HIV replication and gives the immune system an opportunity to recover. It has made long, healthy lives possible for people with HIV. It remains the standard treatment, rather than an interim measure made obsolete by a striking case report. ART is not a cure: suppressing a virus and eliminating it are different achievements. Medicine should receive credit for the first without being described as having accomplished the second. [3]

An undetectable viral load means standard testing cannot detect HIV in the blood at that very low level. People who take HIV treatment and maintain an undetectable viral load do not transmit HIV through sex. That established public-health message is compatible with the virus remaining in the body. It does not mean infection has vanished, or that a future cure must be awaited before a person can live well or have relationships without sexually transmitting HIV. These distinctions are central to accurate reporting, and to reducing stigma. [8]

The virus that remains

The difficulty is partly a problem of hiding. Some infected immune cells enter a resting state without producing new virus particles. Those cells form a latent reservoir that can persist for years in different parts of the body. Drugs that prevent active replication do not simply empty that reservoir. If infected cells become active again, they can produce new virus. A blood test showing successful suppression therefore answers an important question, but it cannot establish that every source of replication-capable HIV has disappeared. [4]

This leaves researchers with several possible goals. One is to eliminate the reservoir. Another is to silence it so durably that it no longer restarts infection. Investigational approaches include reactivating hidden virus to expose infected cells, keeping it

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dormant, or using gene-based interventions. These are research strategies, with substantial obstacles still to solve. NIH describes these as experimental approaches, with no broadly applicable method yet shown to eliminate the reservoir. A name for a strategy is not a result, and a result in a laboratory is not yet a dependable clinical outcome. [4]

Learning from the exceptions

Stem-cell transplants have provided exceptional evidence that prolonged remission can happen. A case presented at the 2024 International AIDS Conference involved a man treated for acute myeloid leukemia who had remained without detectable HIV after stopping ART in 2018. His donor carried one copy of the CCR5-delta32 mutation, rather than the two copies associated with several earlier reports. CCR5 is a receptor that many HIV strains use to enter cells. The finding widened the questions researchers could ask about how transplantation and donor immunity contribute to control. [5]

The Toronto case offers another carefully bounded example. The patient had a transplant to treat a life-threatening blood cancer, using donor cells selected for a CCR5 mutation associated with resistance to HIV. Researchers described sensitive testing and a decline in viral genetic material. [1] The scientific value is considerable. The procedure's risks are considerable too: WHO stresses that these complex transplants have been reserved for people needing them because of malignancy. They are not a broadly applicable treatment for HIV alone. [5]

Even routine transplant care illustrates how much the headline leaves out. NIH guidance describes specialist coordination, complex interactions among medicines and the need to maintain viral suppression around transplantation. [6] These cases are not a simple exchange of vulnerable cells for resistant ones. Their value to the wider cure effort lies in understanding which biological effects can eventually be reproduced with a safer and more accessible intervention.

Progress beyond the case report

Antibody research is exploring a different route. A September 2026 Nature Medicine report examined secondary and exploratory outcomes from RIO, a randomized phase 2 trial of two long-acting broadly neutralizing antibodies. Its 68 participants were adult men, predominantly white, who had started ART during primary or early infection. The antibody group had delayed viral rebound and longer ART-free control than the placebo group. The analysis also found that antibody sensitivity and resistance helped shape rebound. Those details make the result more informative than a declaration that antibodies simply cure HIV. [7]

The limits matter as much as the promise. Findings in a small, selected population cannot automatically describe outcomes for everyone living with HIV. ART interruption occurred within monitored research; these antibodies are not an established replacement for standard treatment. [7] Future studies must show how durable control is, who benefits, what risks remain and how an intervention could work across populations and health systems. A cure that succeeds only under extraordinary conditions would leave much of the public-health problem unresolved.

TREATMENT REMISSION CURE

Different words. Different evidence. ART suppresses replication; rare remission is not a general cure. [2]-[4], [8]

The rare remission and the widely available medicine belong in the same story. One expands scientific possibility; the other protects lives now. As of October 2026, the evidence supports serious optimism about cure research while leaving a generally available cure unestablished. [3] [8] Progress deserves reporting at its actual scale: an exceptional person, a defined study, an answer that leads to another question. For people waiting for a lasting breakthrough, precision is a form of respect.

SOURCES 28

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