

April 26, 2024

Rigging Elections and Broken Windows

Human beings are born with different capacities. If they are free, they are not equal.
And if they are equal, they are not free. - Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

„it remains INCONCEIVABLE to most US investors that the US is [economically] in the USSR position in Cold War 1.0, NOT the US's position in Cold War 1.0 ...
Everybody seems to remember that Reagan won the Cold War by bankrupting the Soviets; nobody seems to notice that is EXACTLY what the Russians and Chinese are doing to us now. - Luke Gromen

We cannot dictate the foreign, economic and energy policies of every major power in the world. In order to even try to do that, we would have to sanction, for example, some of the world's largest banks. We'd have to cut off countries like China from the American financial system. And since they happen to be major purchasers of our debt, such actions could trigger severe disruptions in our own economy, and, by the way, raise questions internationally about the dollar's role as the world's reserve currency. That's part of the reason why many of the previous unilateral sanctions were waived. - Barack Obama

Highlighting Text

I have been asked to quit highlighting paragraphs because highlighting makes them more difficult to read.

Makes sense.

I want to differentiate serious from just interesting or humorous, particularly given my bent for sarcasm with some whimsy. Bold doesn't work because everything is bold.

For me, italics are irritating (I guess I am like a Gen Z encountering a period). I tried colors, but nothing seems to work well since red is taken. Underline means url here (as does the color red).

The web editor I use does not make the insertion of shapes easy.

Since I don't want to stop, I'm going to mark "important" or "consistent with my main themes" items with >.

Feedback appreciated.

Markets

[Updated Charts](#)

> No change in forecast. The dollar continues to be THE determinant of how things go.

> Here's the deal with the dollar.

I have been predicting a much lower dollar, following a dollar rally, for decades.

The macro dynamics behind our financial predicament indicate that a lower dollar (inflation) is necessary, given debt and deficits.

However, there is another side to the discussion that is well reasoned, but arcane, so I won't get into it here. The bottom line is that, given the huge amount of international debt denominated in dollars, there will be a demand for dollars to pay off that debt.

The demand for dollars will reinforce itself as the dollar strengthens, motivating countries to actively pay down their debts.

Ultimately, the question is one of timing. The strong dollar proponents also argue that the dollar will weaken, but only after having "destroyed the world." I think we are at some kind of peak right now. There are many experts that agree with me. However, there is a group of well-grounded experts who strongly disagree.

And there we are.

> MMT (Modern Monetary Theory) proponents often say that a public sector deficit is a private sector surplus. Well, yeah. A surplus of money. That's why it's inflationary. - Lyn Alden

> Speaking of Lyn Alden, you know I think she is a brilliant macro thinker. She has created a tag line, I think from Snowpiercer, for where we are in this spiraling debt-and-deficit spiral.

Nothing Stops This Train.

> Keep in mind that it is now all smoke and mirrors - or, rather, we are really and truly down the rabbit hole.



Geiger Capital  @Geiger_Capital · 5h

...

When people say that the economy is super strong, please understand...

We are running a HISTORIC deficit.

6.2% of GDP. Never seen before outside of WW2, the GFC or Covid.

If we weren't running crisis level deficits and balanced the budget, or even got close, GDP would collapse.



Rigging Elections

It's coming, so I want to get out ahead of the herd.

Back in 2020, when there was so much sturm und drang about stolen elections, I wrote an extensive piece about rigging elections and the statistics of elections.

Yes, mail-in ballots on the whole are a risk. Yes, early voting has a downside. Yes, there are people who, here and there, do stupid things. Yes, there are people trying to game the system. But, given the size and complexity of the system, which we go out of our way to make unnecessarily complex, we do pretty well in the honest election game.

One problem that we don't acknowledge is that the system is not 100% accurate.

There is enough uncertainty in the system, including cheating, that the winner is only known within some range of error. The system is not accurate enough, and may not even be capable of sufficient accuracy under the best case, to determine whether Gore and Bush won. At some point, you cut the Gordian knot and move on. Which is what we did.

This next election may be the most mechanically-contested in history, with lots of moral equivalents of hanging chads. But I would like to talk about all of the pre-election election rigging that is going on, right now. Far from the outrage generated by

a lost bundle of ballots, we mostly look at these things with a kinda, ain't that cute? kind of attitude.

I'll start with forgiving student loans. I'm not going to get into it, but it is entirely about buying votes.

Next comes releasing oil from the strategic petroleum reserve to keep gasoline prices down to keep the natives from getting restless.

Gerrymandering is a perpetual war.

The voter ID fight is stupid.

Trying to let illegals vote is clearly gaming the system.

Then, again, maybe no one actually cares -

Long before the first ballot is counted, the election will have been rigged.

Or less emotionally - managed.

It was always thus - voting for Roman consul included bribery, threats, changing the rules at the last minute, and, if necessary, just asserting through threat of use of force.

Which doesn't mean it's right, correct, good or productive.

Then, again ...

How interested are you in this November's elections on a 1-10 scale?

Percent of registered voters answering 9 or 10, with 10 meaning "very interested."



Notes: The poll was conducted April 12-16 and surveyed 1,000 registered voters nationally. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

Source: NBC News national poll

We Are Forgetting About Broken Windows At Our Peril

My big thing is the breakdown in discipline and restraint in our culture - from shoplifting to debt and deficits.

I want to go through the profound broken windows study. I will summarize, but here goes.

The authors of a study put identical cars on the street in a poor section of town and a rich section of town. Overnight, the one in the poor section was stripped clean, but the

one in the rich section was left alone for a week or so. Then, the authors broke the windows of the car, but otherwise left it alone. Over the next few nights, it was vandalized and stripped.

This is profound.

Our governments, by not punishing criminals and rioters and by basically creating a fantasyland of spending, are creating broken windows everywhere.

And we are seeing the results.

It may or may not be "too late," but, except for a few instances, here and there, I don't see the will.

The consequences are predictable.

Short Takes

The CIA has a list of languages it considers the most difficult to learn. Of the five languages in that group, Japanese is considered the most difficult. The other four languages are Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Korean.

Things that give me pause, in a conspiracy-theory kind of way -

Why all the Kennedy assassination materials were not released after the deadline and after promises by Trump, of all people, to do so

The whole Epstein mess

Building 7 of the World Trade Center

Why we have an officially-approved, quasi-open southern border

We just re-upped a pretty outrageous surveillance bill - either something is up or we can't stop this

I'm not going anywhere with this, and I really don't think about it much - just saying ...



The Babylon Bee 🐝 @TheBabylonBee · 20h

...

4D Chess: U.S.-Mexico Border Disguised As Ukrainian Border So Congress Will Defend It



4D Chess: U.S.-Mexico Border Disguised As Ukrainian Border ...

From babylonbee.com

Academics from Papua New Guinea say that the actual cannibals who live there were offended by Joe Biden's made up story of his uncle being eaten by them during World War Two because they "wouldn't just eat any white men that fell from the sky."

There's a new team mascot. It would be better if the name were Crackers or Honkies, two names blacks used to call me (actually, in Houston, but that's another story). True story. When I was growing up near Atlanta, there was a baseball "farm team" called the Atlanta Crackers. Spent many hours in the stadium down the street from Krispy Kreme and a big Sears store and warehouse. (Did not care for baseball very much, but the experience of being there as a kid, and the popcorn and hot dogs were great. And maybe, just maybe, we would drop by Krispy Kreme.)

I guess I gotta admit that Caucasians is pretty good for the point I think he was trying to make.

Pale Faces would actually be better.

Probably the closest we actually get to it is the Fighting Irish and the Celtics
Go Caucasians!



Sigh - from NBC

Sheetz Inc. discriminated against Black, Native American and multiracial job seekers by weeding out applicants whom the company deemed to have failed a criminal background check, according to U.S. officials.

> From AI Valley - Barsee

Greg Isenberg, CEO of Late Checkout, predicted a billion-dollar AI dating app market due to user engagement with AI-generated partners, sparking discussions about virtual relationships.

He recently tweeted about a man in Miami spending \$10,000/month on AI girlfriends.

Here's everything you need to know:

AI Interaction as a Hobby: The man likes interacting with AI companions to playing video games, indicating a casual approach to digital relationships.

Multiple Platforms: The individual uses multiple AI companion websites, which offer immersive and personalized chat experiences.

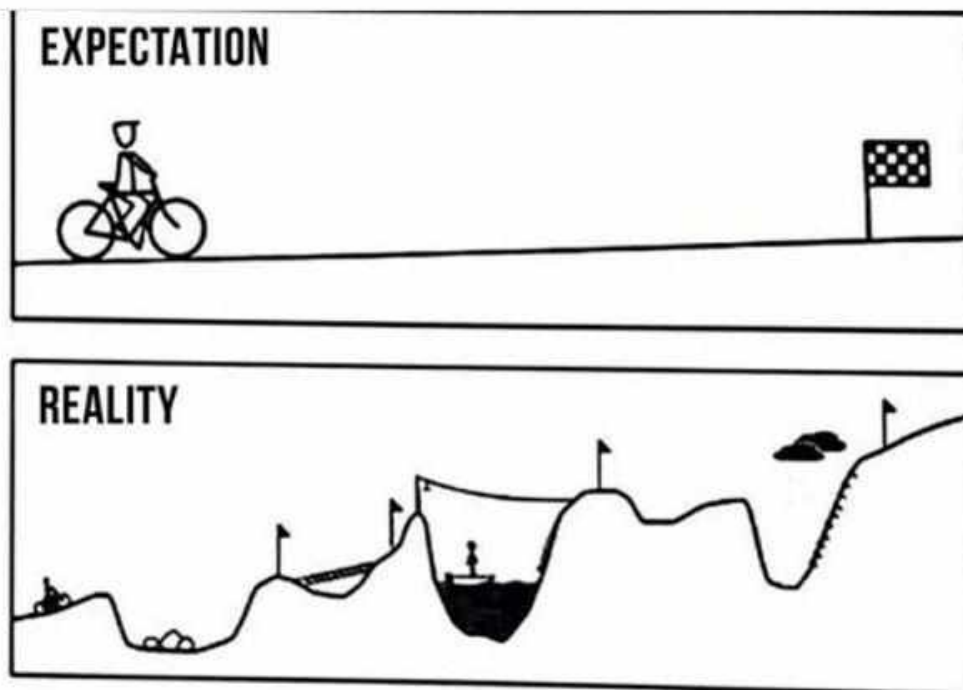
Features of AI Companions: These platforms allow users to customize AI characters' likes and dislikes, providing a sense of comfort and companionship.

Market Reaction and User Engagement: Platforms such as Replika, Romantic AI, and Forever Companion offer varied experiences from creating ideal partners to engaging in erotic roleplay.

Survey Insights: A recent survey from Infobip found that nearly 20% of Americans have flirted with chat bots. Nearly half of them — 47.2% — did so out of curiosity while 23.9% said they were lonely and seeking interactions.

Bladerunner 2049 predicted this. We are heading in a strange direction.

I am reality-averse



@TIMEINVESTORS

Yet another public service announcement - list compiled from headlines by a guy on X - racist foods to avoid

Racism and the rise of big candy

Why some fish are "junk," and others protected. California study points to past racism

The difference between yams and sweet potatoes is structural racism.

Of course, fried chicken.

The media has erased the long history of Black barbecue, skewing our understanding

A brief history of racist soft drinks.

Eggs Benedict and bottomless mimosas come with colonization.

"Cheese is racist" storm as hundreds back ban on dairy foods in school. (Lots of cheese racism headlines I did not repeat)

The unbearable whiteness of coffee.

Is having to pay for tomato ketchup racist?

The racism, and resilience, behind today's salmon crisis.

Why white supremacists are chugging milk (and why geneticists are alarmed)

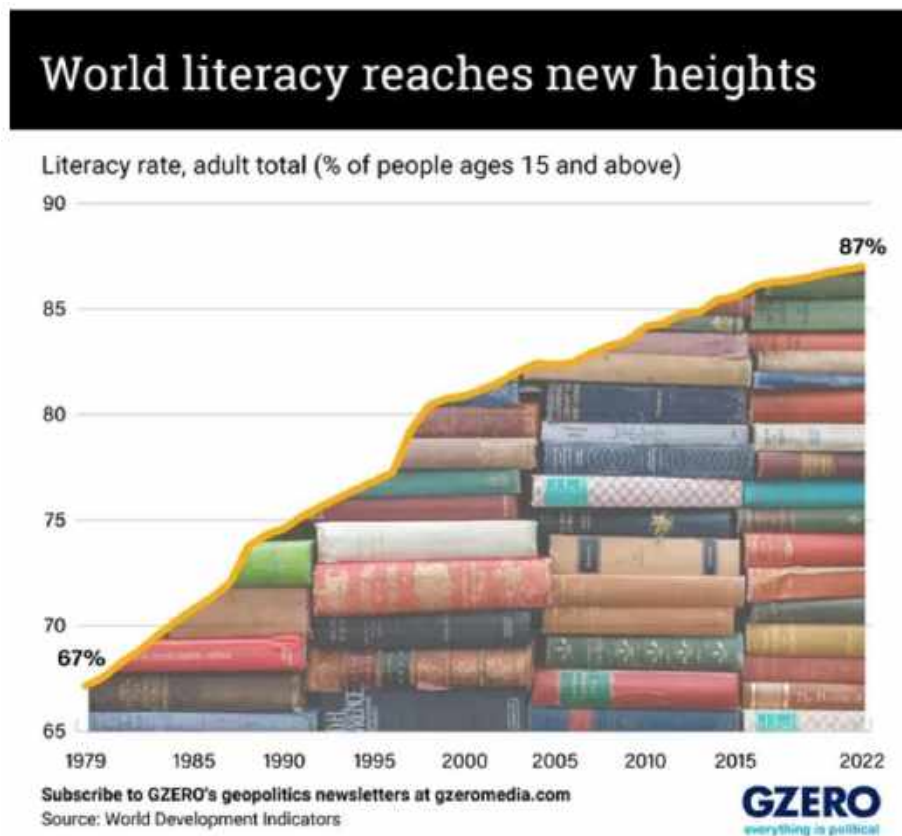
Why we don't trust white people's potato salad, explained

Does the wine industry have a racism problem?

Racism made us believe MSG was dangerous. Now, chefs are bringing the once-controversial seasoning back into the spotlight.

"Racism doesn't taste very good" and other reactions to Lay's new international potato chip flavors

> Pretty impressive



> From *The Free Press*

Kennedy hurting Trump more than Biden: Poor RFK Jr. First his family clubbed together to [shoot an ad](#) for his presidential opponent Joe Biden. Now a group of his former colleagues in the environmental movement have written to him urging him to drop out of the race. “In nothing more than a vanity candidacy, RFK Jr. has chosen to play the role of election spoiler to the benefit of Donald Trump—the single worst environmental president our country has ever had,” write his (former?) buddies.

But while the left turns the screws on Camelot’s wayward son, a new poll shows that it’s Trump, not Biden, suffering more from Kennedy’s presence in the race. A survey published by Marist yesterday showed Biden (51 percent) three points ahead of Trump (48 percent) in a two-way contest, but that extends to a five-point lead when other candidates are included. In a five-way contest, Biden is at 43 percent, Trump is at 38 percent, RFK Jr. is at 15 percent, and Cornel West and Jill Stein both register 2 percent.

Actual headline from the *NY Times*

Harvard’s Taylor Swift Scholars Have Thoughts on ‘Tortured Poets’

For those of you who asked - yes, my posting last week on furies was subversive
From *The Bee*



Impressive: 6th-Grade Furry Already
Barking At 9th-Grade Level

A proposition I could probably support



David Burge  @iowahawkblog · 23h

...

End occupation and colonialism now, give Columbia U back
to the Lenape tribe and let them turn it into a casino

> Germany -

The Self-Determination Act (SBGG) establishes 'gender identity' as a protected characteristic and allows parents to change the sex marker on their children's documents from birth.

Supported by Chancellor Olaf Scholz's three-party coalition and promoted and supported by the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP), the SBGG also creates the potential for citizens to be fined up to €10,000 (approx. \$10,800 USD) for revealing a person's given name and birth sex without their permission - an action that trans activists staunchly oppose and refer to as 'deadnaming.'

But arguably the most troubling aspect of the law relates to a portion of the bill which permits parents to alter the recorded sex of children beginning from birth. From the age of five years old, it allows for name and sex changes if there is "mutual consent" between the child and their parents.

According to a description of the bill on the Bundestag's official website, the Self-Determination Act was designed "to implement a core idea of the Basic Law, the protection of gender identity, by giving people the opportunity to change their gender entry and first name without discrimination."

It continues that following a change, a one-year "blocking period" will apply where no further changes are allowed, though a person may change their name and sex once again after the year passes.

If parents choose to do so, they may alter the identifying information of their children from birth. The SBGG stipulates that the consent of a child is necessary from the age of five, and, "from the age of 14, minors can do it themselves, but require the consent of their guardians."

However, should parents refuse to provide legal permission, "a family court would decide based on the best interests of the child," thus allowing the state to overrule the wishes of parents or legal guardians.

Interesting to juxtapose against the headlines

Thinking about the major issues facing the United States today, please tell me which of the following two is more important to you:



	All 18-29	Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Dem	Rep	Ind
Inflation	64%	66%	61%	66%	66%	58%	58%	76%	63%
Healthcare	59%	57%	60%	59%	58%	60%	63%	51%	60%
Housing	56%	55%	57%	49%	68%	60%	62%	49%	56%
Gun violence	54%	50%	60%	51%	53%	62%	67%	41%	51%
Jobs	53%	55%	51%	53%	52%	54%	49%	60%	53%
Corruption	52%	56%	49%	54%	49%	51%	48%	57%	54%
Protecting democracy	52%	56%	48%	55%	46%	49%	57%	53%	48%
Women's reproductive rights	50%	42%	58%	47%	54%	52%	68%	24%	49%
Education	50%	52%	47%	54%	46%	45%	45%	54%	54%
Immigration	47%	51%	43%	50%	31%	48%	37%	71%	44%
Crime	47%	47%	47%	44%	48%	49%	42%	60%	45%
Climate change	43%	37%	47%	41%	43%	45%	55%	22%	44%
Taxes	43%	48%	40%	45%	41%	42%	39%	56%	41%
Free speech	40%	44%	37%	44%	34%	36%	30%	54%	42%
Israel/Palestine	34%	31%	36%	35%	32%	35%	37%	32%	32%
Student debt	26%	24%	27%	24%	31%	25%	29%	22%	26%

% that each issue wins against the field

Source: Harvard IOP Youth Poll, Spring 2024 - Created with Datavrapper

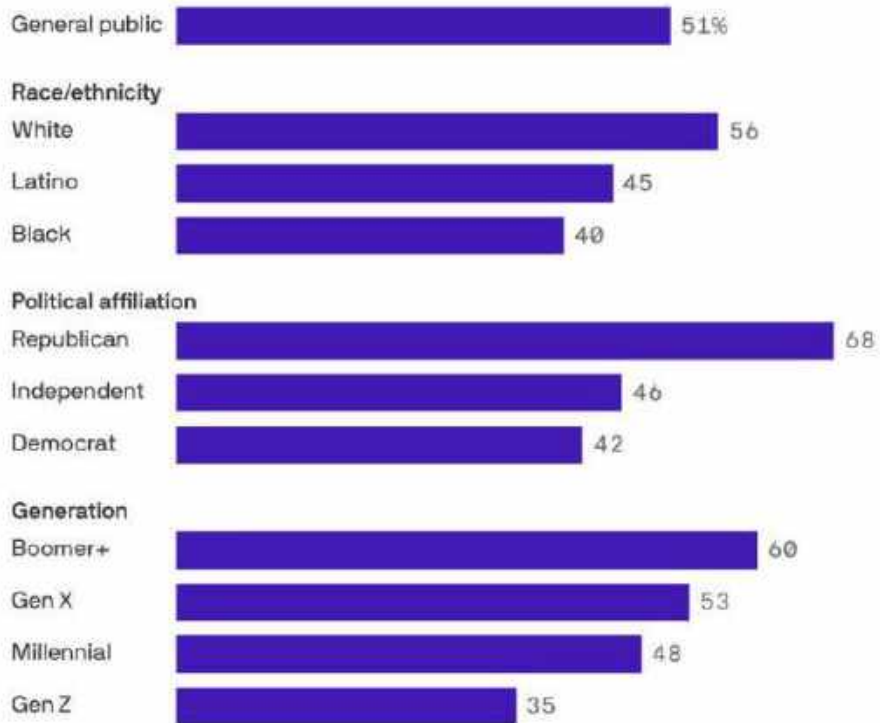
> Arnold Kling, an economist, published a book a decade ago that offered a way to think about the core difference between progressives and conservatives. Progressives,

Kling wrote, see the world as a struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed, and they try to help the oppressed. Conservatives see the world as a struggle between civilization and barbarism — between order and chaos — and they try to protect civilization.

> Not on my Bingo card - 42% of Democrats?

Share of Americans who say they support mass deportations of undocumented immigrants

Survey of 6,251 adults taken March through April 2024



>>> The US fertility rate fell to 1.62 in 2023; replacement rate is 2.1.



It Ain't Easy Being Green

> *Politico* -

New York's signature offshore wind projects meant to boost confidence in the industry are being scrapped, a major hit to the industry in the state and the nation.

The decision is another setback to New York's aspirations to achieve 70 percent renewable energy by 2030 and be a hub for the nascent industry in the United States. It will also be another challenge for President Joe Biden's already likely out-of-reach 30 gigawatt goal for offshore wind by 2030.

NYSERDA, the state authority in charge of the deals, announced Friday that no final agreements could be reached with the three projects that received provisional awards in October 2023. Those bids were all linked to major supply chain investments by General Electric and a larger turbine it planned to build that was aimed at boosting the region's renewable energy portfolio.

“Subsequent to the provisional award announcement, material modifications to projects bid into New York’s third offshore wind solicitation caused technical and commercial complexities between provisional awardees and their partners, resulting in the provisionally awarded parties’ inability to come to terms,” NYSERDA wrote in an announcement.

> Scotland has ditched ambitious climate change targets as being “out of reach”, after the UK’s Climate Change Committee said it would not be able to meet them because of insufficient delivery on reducing emissions.

You may remember my concept of "California deeming." Choose a goal far in the future with no idea how you are going to do it. Get after it. As you get closer and have not achieved your goal, change the goal, change the date or move on.

Climate change is the current poster child for California deeming. California was once all alone in the category, but, now, everybody has gotten in on the act.

The Grist

The Indigenous Environmental Network has called for a permanent end to carbon markets. “We are long overdue for a moratorium on false climate solutions like carbon markets,” said Tom Goldtooth, the executive director of IEN. Beyond being an ineffective tool for mitigating climate change, the organization argues, carbon markets harm, exploit, and divide Native communities around the world.

The Network’s language on “false climate solutions” is intentional. Tamra Gilbertson, the organization’s climate justice program coordinator and researcher, said a false climate solution is anything that looks like a tool for reducing emissions or fighting climate change but allows extractive companies to continue profiting from the fossil fuels driving the crisis.

The carbon market moratorium would end carbon dioxide removal projects like carbon capture and storage; forest, soil, and ocean offsets; nature-based solutions; debt-for-nature swaps; biodiversity offsets, and other geoengineering technologies.

Another heads-up

Same-sex couples face higher climate change risks, new UCLA study shows

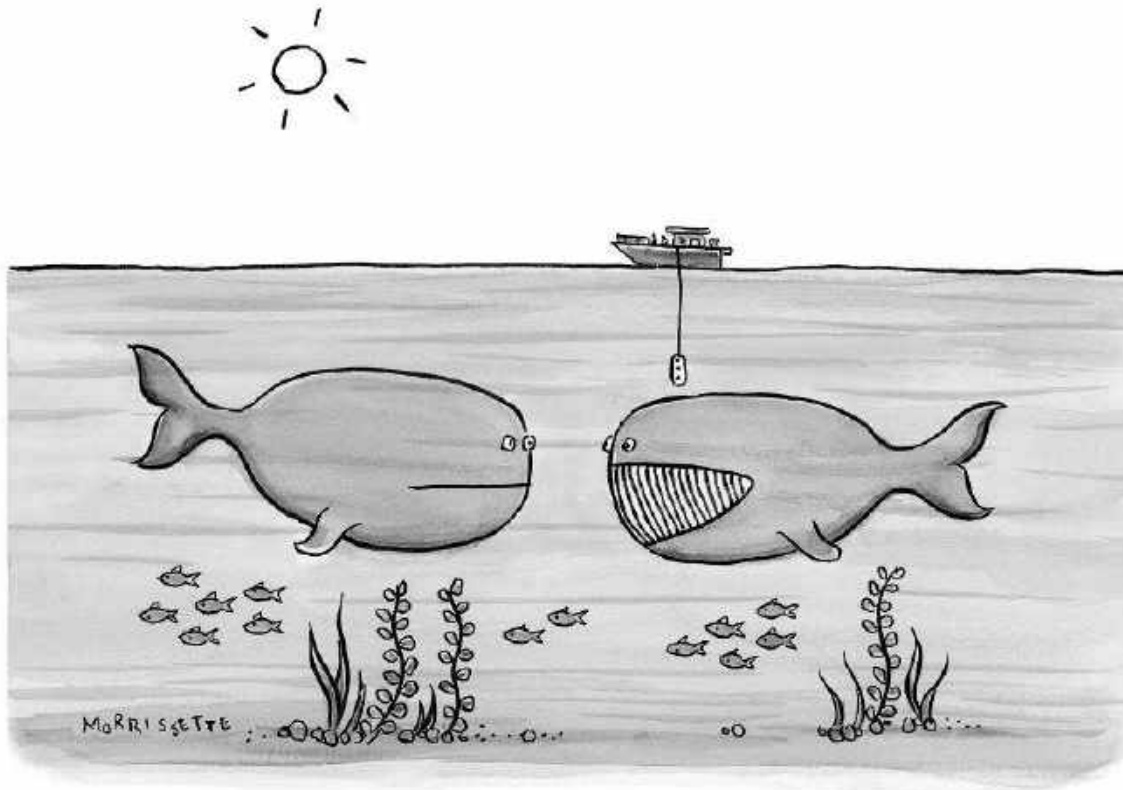
Thank goodness!



War, Energy and Food

Nothing this week

Miscellany



"I can say literally anything and they use it for spa music."

Cartoon by Sarah Morrissette



I'm not sure why, but I thought this was funny - from The Bee



Asian Kid Who Actually Went To Columbia
To Learn Gettin' Real Sick Of This Crap