

INDEPENDENCE

Issue #5

BEDËR
YOUTH
MAGAZINE

"Developing the capacity to interact with society rather than cutting off links with it the key to true independence."

PAG.13

*What Does Being a Truly Independent Individual Mean?
Aren't We social Beings?*



February 2025



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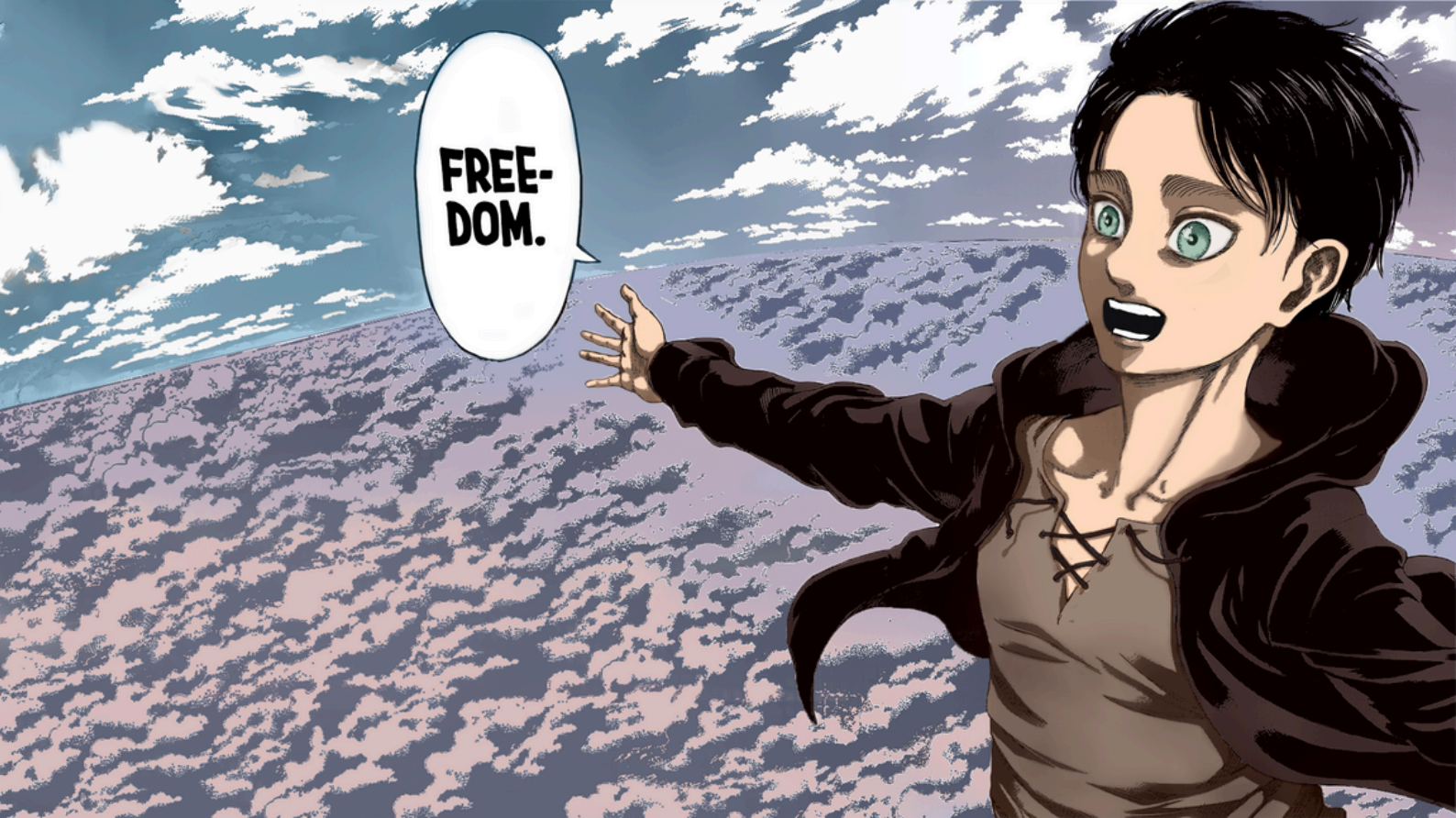
Fabiola Markola

BEDER YOUTH MAGAZINE

DIFFERENT OPTIONS

Beder Youth Magazine serves as a dynamic platform for the artistic expression of Beder University's diverse student community. It is a symphony of voices, celebrating excellence in writing, photography, and the arts, channeling the creative energy that flourishes within our university.

This issue of Beder Youth Magazine highlights the theme of 'independence,' encouraging students to embrace their individuality while understanding their interconnectedness. It inspires readers to explore what it truly means to stand on their own, take control of their journey, and find strength in shaping their own path toward personal and collective growth.



Being Free Through Writing and Literature

Oppressed feelings, unsupported thoughts, secret truths, the best witness and keeper of the past, the mysterious predictor of the future...

These and anything beyond words is what literature presents and represents. It is indeed a battle between truths and lies, obedience and rebellion, a clash which sometimes surpasses the expectations and goes down in history. A new perspective is everything it takes to change the current and become the master of your world; once it is brought to life, it does not matter whether people embrace this concept or throw it away. Keeping it for yourself or destroying it does not matter either. If literature and writing fill a void or provide oxygen out of your spacecraft for a while, then it is the best thing to be done.

If the main concern about writing is the long-term effect it should accomplish, then it is not free writing anymore. Wanting to be exposed as a doll in a glass cube and get the best impression from passers-by would make anyone keep their distance from one's self. The American writer Jodi Picoult says "You can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank page." Free writing requires a free state of mind, which allows a person to judge the work and improve it with fresh and mature thoughts. Picturing them on the ceiling in the middle of the night and letting overthinking take control over every single idea is exactly striving to edit that blank page. When writing feels like a tormenting process rather than inspiring, it is a lack of confidence and independence. No one should write because of being forced by someone, but because of that inner inspiration willing to come out and confess what cannot even be whispered.

"Reading is like breathing in, and writing is like breathing out." Wanting to exhale without breathing in the air first is biologically impossible. In the same way, in literature, the sense of relief does not come unless accepting to undertake the therapy. What Pam Allyn means is that setting the soul free through literature is a process that requires initially cleansing the mind through reading, and then preparing the self for the great challenge. But, what to read? The world of literature expands to infinity on one side, and the possibilities of finding what fits best to the context grow on the other side, encompassing philosophical and historical dimensions.

The concept of being free in the world of literature means having no walls inside your brain. It certainly appears like a giant maze, confusing at times, but not insoluble. A shackled mind can only stare at the blank page, but physical imprisonment does not prevent a person from being independent and devoted to literature. What truly makes literature survive for centuries is that it seems to be written in the wrong time, forbidden events and cases, which later on turn out to be the voice of the voiceless, or the truth.

In conclusion, literature is not just an art form, possessed by a particular group of professionals; it is a means of self-expression and a tool of gaining freedom that surpasses time and boundaries. It offers a space for individuals to explore their deepest thoughts, confront hidden truths, and challenge societal norms. The power of writing lies in its ability to be both profoundly personal and universally influential, allowing individuals to give voice to what might otherwise remain unsaid. Whether it is a quiet form of rebellion or a journey of personal growth, literature remains a timeless medium that inspires, heals, and transforms. It is through literature that we come to understand ourselves and the world around us, embracing the freedom of thought and expression that ultimately shapes our collective future.





An Interview with:

Prof. Surja Shehu M.D.

So that students get to know you better through the pages of BYM, could you please tell us a bit about your academic and professional background and, perhaps, highlight a challenge in your career?

I come from a family of educators—both my parents are teachers. A significant part of my extended family is also involved in education.

Although I completed a degree in Medicine and later specialized in Forensic Medicine, I have always been deeply engaged in education. My work has consistently revolved around the field of education, whether it's preparing high school graduates for university, supporting students at lower educational levels, analyzing academic programs, or organizing various student activities. At Bedër, I previously held the position of Dean of Students, but now I serve as the Head of the Board of Administration. Despite my professional background, my focus has always been on youth and students. In my current role, I aim to continue supporting initiatives at even higher levels—not solely in the academic context, but also beyond. Like anyone else, I've faced challenges, particularly those tied to my dual professional paths. Balancing my expertise as a forensic medicine specialist with my passion for education has been one of the most intriguing aspects of my journey.



How has your journey at Bedër University College shaped your perspective on higher education in Albania? Could you share what a typical day at Bedër looks like for you?

The process of education is challenging, and within the framework of the Albanian education system, it is even more so—especially in the current era where many aspire to go abroad. This increases the responsibility significantly. I've experienced this process at all levels. I've been fortunate to participate as a student myself, completing a Professional Master's program in Marketing to deepen my knowledge in the field. However, the overall experience at Bedër, particularly the collaborative work environment—both academically and administratively—and the preparation and performance of students, along with co-organizing numerous activities, has been a strong motivator for me.

My day at Bedër has changed slightly over time, yet I remain a person of action. While I spend some time in the office working on administrative tasks, I'm more often out in the field, participating in various activities or attending meetings, especially in my current position. A typical day starts with coffee and discussions with colleagues about the day's or week's plans. I, then, spend one or two hours handling emails and preparing for my other tasks and responsibilities.

At least once or twice a day, the Board holds meetings with different departments, and I also take part in the various activities organized at Bedër, whether academic or student-focused. It's not unusual for me to be involved in multiple programs in a single day, each bringing its own positive energy. This isn't just my perspective—many visitors from various fields share similar impressions. They often compare Bedër favorably with both public and private universities in Albania and even abroad. Life and the dynamic atmosphere at Bedër are truly unique.

How do you see the role of education, particularly institutions like Bedër, in shaping Albania's future as an independent and progressive nation? What are some key achievements of Bedër that you believe contribute to Albania's educational progress?

A renowned writer who analyzes societies, claim that societal issues often stem from ignorance, which leads to poverty, and poverty, in turn, leads to division. Unfortunately, these problems are present in most countries, including Albania. The solution, however, begins with education. An educated generation can build the qualities needed to address both social and financial challenges, paving the way for comprehensive development. A well-educated society, positioned on solid ground, is less likely to face division in the future. This holds particular importance for Albania, where educational institutions bear a significant responsibility.

When youth and society drift away from education, the consequences are evident and unavoidable. If we aim to rebuild a society or a nation, I believe education is the foundation—the most critical element. It's essential to strive for and hope that educators at all levels remain dedicated to providing high-quality education. This involves not only imparting knowledge but also shaping generations who are valuable to themselves and their families. I genuinely hope we have achieved this goal.



There have been many accomplishments, but one of the most notable is the creation of a highly social and supportive environment. Thanks to the efforts of the staff, students feel a strong sense of belonging and wellbeing, receiving more than just academic knowledge but also opportunities for personal and social development.

Guided by Bedër University's motto, "In the Name of Values," I hope that students graduate enriched with values that will benefit them in the future. Bedër University has the potential to become a leading driver of internationalization. This includes not only attracting international faculty but also welcoming students from abroad.

From the very first years, Beder has welcome foreign students, and the diverse geographic representation brings a positive dynamic by blending different cultures. Additionally, participation in various national and international exchange programs, along with the development of dual-degree programs through collaborations with foreign universities, further strengthens this vision.



Are there any specific partnerships or projects you're excited about that could enhance Bedër's global standing and the promotion of its value on an international level?

Efforts to revitalize existing agreements, whether at the national or international level, remain significant, alongside the continuous search for new opportunities for collaboration, supported by the staff of the Office of International Relations. Currently, we are engaged with numerous institutions—though I will set aside the national ones for now, as they are already well-established—and focus on international partnerships, primarily with higher education institutions.

These include exchange programs with esteemed universities in Italy, Spain, Croatia, Slovenia, England, and most recently, Germany. Beyond our connections with many European Union member states, we also have a fruitful relationship with the United Arab Emirates, now in its fourth year of development.

I have closely followed this project, which provides direct support to students while also offering ongoing activities and training programs for both students and staff. We are currently in discussions to expand this collaboration further, with the aim of elevating Bedër University to an even higher international standing.

How would you describe the level of academic freedom in Albanian universities, particularly in research and structuring of study programs and syllabuses?

I would describe Bedër as a truly international institution, where the academic staff has consistently focused on designing and offering the most contemporary, integrated curricula that align with rapid technological advancements. Currently, we are striving to incorporate artificial intelligence and its various components into our programs.

It is no secret that in most of the programs we offer, the curricula are organized and updated according to the international standards, which means added quality. This is achieved thanks to the experience, persistence, and individual or collective contributions of our academic staff.

I believe this commitment will continue, ensuring strong support for advancing scientific research, academic activities, curriculum development, and creating the best opportunities for students.

What are some challenges you believe Albania's institutions of higher education face today, and how can they be overcome?

Unfortunately, the education system is in a series of challenges in our country and the main challenge are double-folds. The first is in the great discovery of the number of young people leaving - especially students - and this is undoubtedly the main challenge of all institutions of higher education in Albania, whether public or not.

I would also like to point out the approach of the majority of Albanian society; when it comes to education and achievements through education we are always looking further and further away.

This has made the orientation, preparation and persuasion of the youth even more challenging because the best solution – also taking into consideration what was mentioned previously-, is encompassing education, because a student is not educated only for a specific profession but, at the same time, for all the challenges of life. I think these are the two main challenges.

How do you see the role of education, particularly institutions like Bedër, in shaping Albania's future as an independent and progressive nation? What are some key achievements of Bedër that you believe contribute to Albania's educational progress?

I would emphasize it as one of Beder's strongest points. Time itself has changed a lot of things; if we go back in time - about five or ten years ago - in reality, an opportunity to be employed at all was a challenge in itself. We witnessed that the majority of those who graduated in Albania encountered the obstacle of experience, when they applied for a job either within the country or abroad. In order to overcome this challenge, Beder's focus was on two main points. The first was to create the possibility of different practices and internships for our students, either at private or state-owned companies, depending on their study program.

Thanks to this, our students overcome the challenge of experience. There are numerous cases in the field of Communication, Law, PR as our first programs, whose graduates were employed immediately after their practice or internship ended, either at the very same institution or one of the same profile.

A second important strategical step is that, in addition to the highly-qualified staff that Beder recruits, we have constantly tried to recruit part-time staff from the industry, who have brought a very good experience and, at the same time, have turned into connecting bridges with companies or institutions, providing tangible employment for our graduates.



Today the challenge is a little different. With the large decrease in the number of young people, the demand in the work market is also affected. The difficulty is not the same as before; at the present it lays in the correct orientation of the graduates as well as in the creation of concrete employment possibilities in their particular field, mainly through the collaborations with private or state, national or international institutions.

We want to offer our graduates the opportunity of growth, as well. As former Dean of Students, this was one of my top priorities and our very high achievements. We have programs where employment in years has been up to 100%, not to mention the usual 90-95%. I would add a third strategy: cooperation with our graduates. With the alumni we've a solid partnership, a real friendship, I'd say. Their orientation to our students is in two-folds.

First, graduates have always functioned as references for prospective students, and our graduates' success in their various positions is itself a reference for generations of future graduates. For example, a Beder graduate journalist has served as a reference for other graduates and as a role-model for prospective students. We are proud of this inter-generational cooperation and spirit built in Beder.

What are the primary challenges you encounter as a university professor and Head of the Administrative Board, and which strategies do you employ to address them effectively?

One of the biggest challenges, as mentioned above, is the decreasing number of students choosing to study in Albania. I believe that the efforts to address this challenge are multifaceted. Internationalization has also been emphasized as a very important value, ensuring that Albanian students gain international experiences. Efforts are being made to expand these opportunities for the international work market, which is currently limited to what is offered solely by Albania.

This does not mean that we are urging and creating opportunities for students to leave; on the contrary, we strive to educate professionals that can operate in international conditions and contracts, while serving in their home country.

At the same time, there is a focus on recruiting foreign students. Year after year, Albania, and the Balkans in general, are increasingly recognized as excellent alternatives for the obtaining of a high-standard education. Some of these graduates continue to contribute to Albania, while others return to their home countries to contribute there.

We strive to prepare all students to succeed wherever they go. It is important to emphasize that our students come from a diverse range of geographical backgrounds, benefiting from the accreditation and quality of education we provide.

They are equipped with the Beder diploma, skills and knowledge that enable them to seek employment opportunities and be successful worldwide.

What is your relationship with your colleagues - Bedër staff- and students? What is the model Bedër follows to make everyone feel welcome, accepted and comfortable enough to contribute with devotion?

This is one of the factors that sets Albanian society apart from others. When staff members feel comfortable and secure in their working environment, the quality of the product is undoubtedly improved. This is one of the factors Bedër constantly focuses on. Bedër is like a big family, where cooperation and understanding among the staff extends beyond academics to include administrative and management levels.

This collaborative spirit has been strong, and I hope it will continue to thrive. We often explain this to the students, as well. Students can easily contact to the dean, the rector, the head of the department, and their professors.

These connections have consistently influenced the quality of education they receive and have helped maintain relationships after graduation, contributing to their future endeavors. I believe we are making significant progress in this area, and it is important to continue on this path!

What motivates you the most in your current role, and how do you balance your aspirations and other responsibilities beyond Bedër with the demands of your position?

My primary motivation arises from the quality we observe in our students and their achievements. In Albanian institutions, the selection of outstanding students consistently gives excellent results, and we have numerous examples of this. Students who enter Bedër with average or above-average GPA and work hard often achieve high results, which greatly motivates me.

The mission of an educational institution is to educate all generations, not just a select few who excel, although they certainly hold a special place.

Secondly, the cooperation and understanding we have among the staff is an invaluable motivation source. The staff supported the Board in all decision-making processes, challenges, and events, and we have always aimed to maintain a campus-like atmosphere that includes all staff members.

This collaborative approach has undoubtedly led to better, more comprehensive decisions and often more positive outcomes.

What is your vision for the future of Bedër University College, and how do you see it evolving in the next five or ten years?

After being appointed to this position, at the beginning of the academic year, I have made an effort to highlight several key points that will be essential for the future. Higher education institutions must operate with a long-term perspective, investing with a vision of minimally five to ten years.

What is your vision for the future of Bedër University College, and how do you see it evolving in the next five or ten years?

After being appointed to this position, at the beginning of the academic year, I have made an effort to highlight several key points that will be essential for the future. Higher education institutions must operate with a long-term perspective, investing with a vision of minimally five to ten years. The dynamics of various professions and programs are constantly evolving, and institutions must remain at the forefront, anticipating these changes.

One area in which I believe we have consistently excelled is the alignment of curricula; with market needs and major technological advancements. I think we have achieved it, and are currently operating at a very good level.

However, since this is an ongoing process, we will continue to renew and enhance what we offer to our students. Another important aspect is the continuation of the process of internationalization, which involves increasing cooperation with institutions that possess greater experience than we do, particularly European universities. We are also looking to continue our partnership with the United Arab Emirates, which has had positive outcomes for both sides and inspire us to move forward.

Currently, we are involved in numerous projects funded by the European Union and beyond. These initiatives will help propel the institution forward while ensuring that we maintain the quality of education for our students. These key points are essential and will always remain a priority.

Thank you for your time and frankness!

Thank You!



Interviewers:

Sara Pashollari
Fabiola Merkola

**BEDER
YOUTH
MAGAZINE**

Independence,

BEYOND THE CONTEMPORARY MISCONCEPTIONS

The modern world has rendered the perception of independence. It is portrayed as the foundation of both individual development and societal advancement, a characteristic that sets the independent person apart from the dependent masses.

However, a major misunderstanding that frequently occurs in this celebration of freedom is that independence entails living apart from the ties that bind us to one another.

This view expresses a significant dilemma: how can we reconcile the idea of independent individuals with the fact that humans are essentially engaged in intrapersonal circumstances—making them human beings? A more nuanced view of independence can be as perceiving it not as a rejection of social ties but as an empowerment within them. This essay will discuss what independence is, dispel common misconceptions about it, and look at how our social nature supports rather than undermines the need for independence.

Fundamentally, independence focuses on agency—the capacity to act, make choices, and move through life with confidence and accountability. It is thought as freedom itself, implying a life free from outside restrictions.



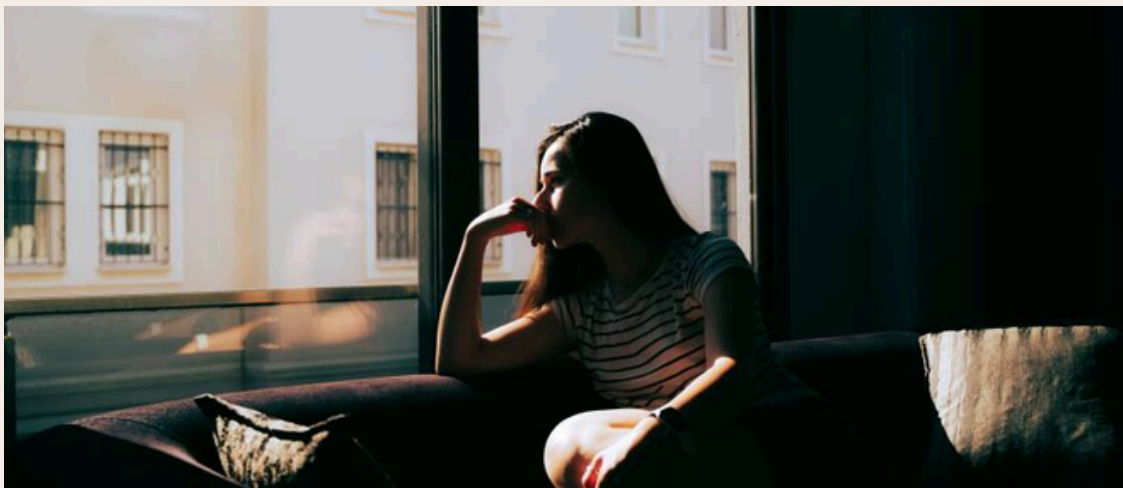
However, the view of independence as isolation may result from this interpretation. In addition to being unrealistic, such a vision is essentially incorrect because it goes against the essence of human life. Humans are social beings by nature; they are formed to connect and interact with other humans. It would be unnatural and horrific to our growth and well-being to distance ourselves from society.

From a historical perspective, humans' capacity for collaboration and community building allowed them to survive and flourish. People who lived alone had a lower chance of surviving or even succeeding in hostile conditions. The continuation of life depended on mutual assistance, shared resources, and group defense. This dependence on community is still engrained in our genetics and psyche and is not just a holdover from the past. Despite this, contemporary culture frequently promotes the idea of a lonely, "independent" person; the businessman who started their company from the ground up, the artist who worked alone, or the explorer who survives alone in the woods. Although these stories emphasize positive qualities like bravery and resiliency, they frequently downplay the importance of support networks in these accomplishments.

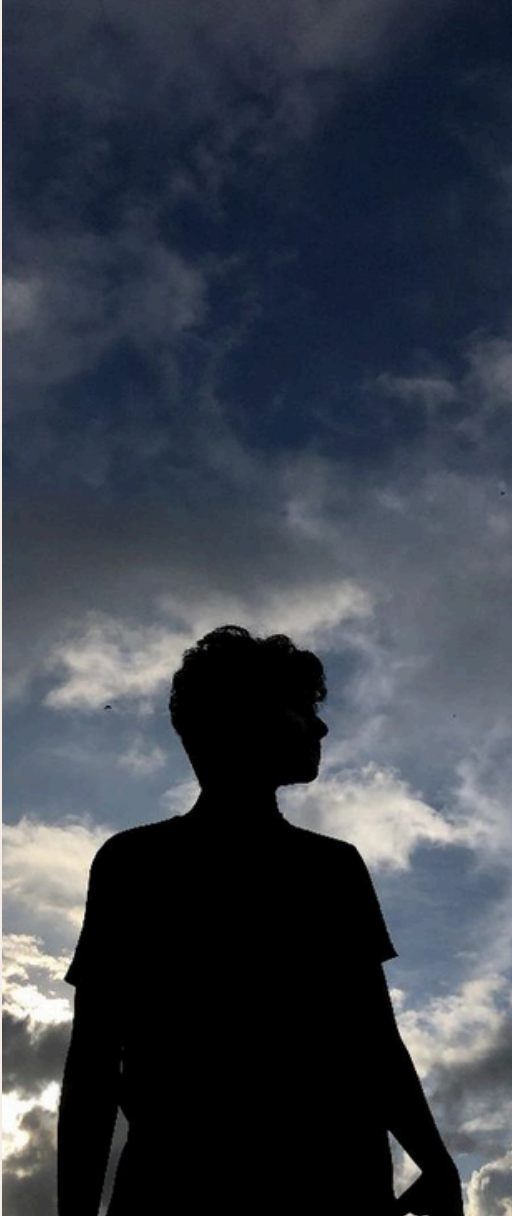
Every success story has a set of connections, mentors, and resources that have helped the person achieve that mere success. The praise of these narratives feeds the false belief that interdependence is the opposite of independence.

A false belief is that reliance is always bad. Dependency on others is often seen as a sign of weakness and people want to also “punish” themselves for working alone. In addition to discouraging people from asking for assistance, this idea promotes an unhealthy culture of independence that can result in loneliness, burnout, and even mental health issues. Dependency is a strength rather than a weakness when it is reciprocal and balanced. Developing the capacity to interact with society rather than cutting off links with it is the key to true independence. It is about gaining the abilities, know-how, and self-assurance necessary to get by in life and keep deep relationships.

The argument over independence and interdependence in philosophy has been popularized. Philosophers of the Enlightenment period like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke highlighted individual liberties and rights, expressing that human dignity depends on autonomy. They also acknowledge the significance of social interaction, which is a structure that allows people to live together and work together for mutual benefit. This concept emphasizes a crucial point: uniqueness exists within the community, not in opposition to it. This interaction has been further portrayed by contemporary philosophers, with the likes of Charles Taylor, who contend that the relationships and cultural environments we live in influence who we are. Pursuing independence without taking into account these influences is a pointless and unrealistic goal.



The conflict between independence created new perceptions in a globalized world. In an interdependent system where social concerns are the same across national boundaries, no person or group can exist in isolation. In addition, climate change is a problem that requires cooperation. Countries must form a balance between their commitment to international cooperation. Globalization has made it simpler than ever for people to access a range of viewpoints, concepts, and resources, and to develop personally in ways that would be impossible to do alone



The connection between social ties and independence is complicated by technology. Digital tools enable people to express themselves, gain information, and advance their careers. Concerns regarding the decline of in-person relationships have also been raised by the growth of remote interactions. Social media gives people a medium to express themselves, but it can also lead to echo chambers. The difficulty is in using technology to complement real human connections rather than replacing them. Virtual learning environments and collaborative platforms are examples of how technology may promote individual autonomy and group collaboration.

Considering our cultural beliefs and personal habits is necessary on the path to independence. The first step is realizing that independence is a dynamic process rather than a stagnant position. We must continually adapt, develop, and even rely on others to overcome different situations. Emotional intelligence is also increased during this process. Since information and skills are crucial for navigating a changing world, it calls for lifelong learning and advocates for the development of deep connections that offer assistance and the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

In conclusion, our social persona and being an independent individual are not incompatible. Finding one's place in society rather than rejecting it is the path to true independence. It is the capacity to make decisions, accept responsibilities, and work toward individual goals while appreciating the connections that support us. We can establish a culture that values both individuality and community by adopting this comprehensive view. By doing this, we respect the intricacy of the human experience, in which independence and society coexist in a potent medium.



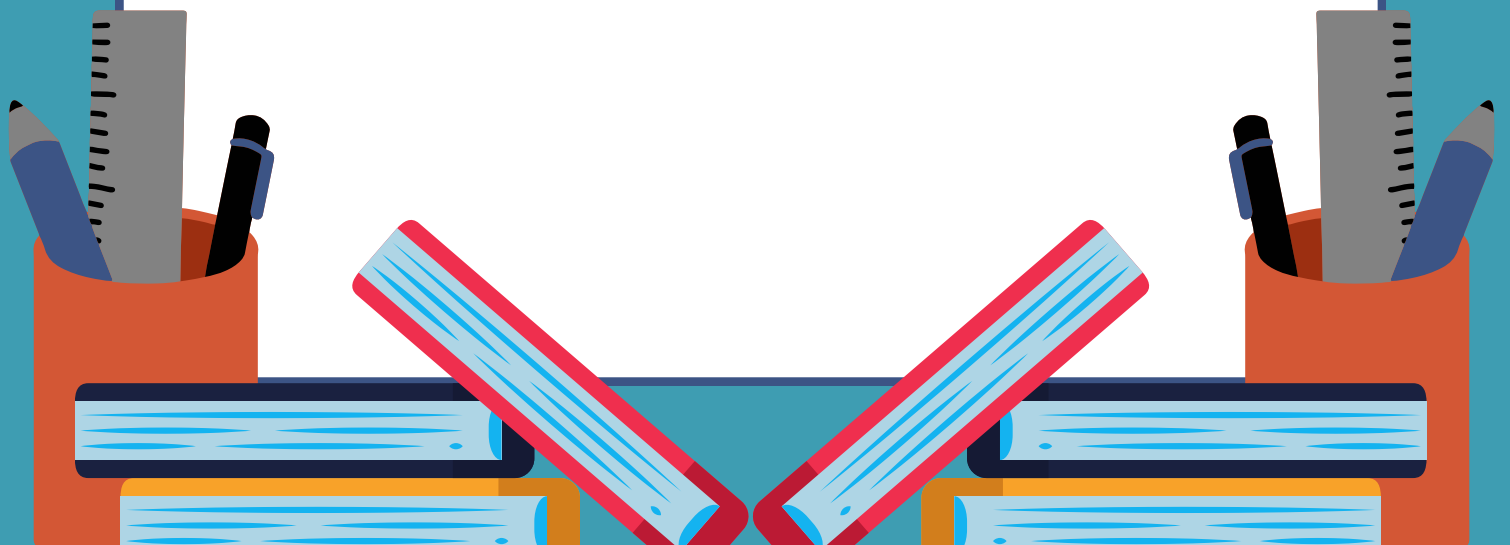
Being an Independent Student?

Why and How?

In a world that's constantly evolving, the ability to learn independently has become a vital skill. It's not just about doing well in school—it's about developing the tools to thrive in life. An Independent learner takes charge of their education, explore beyond the classroom, and cultivate skills that last a lifetime.

Independent learning helps develop key life skills. It teaches self-discipline, time management, and the ability to solve problems—skills that are crucial in navigating both academic and personal challenges. Additionally, learning independently builds confidence. When you make decisions and solve problems on your own, you gain a sense of accomplishment that strengthens your self-belief. This confidence prepares you to face future responsibilities with ease.

Most importantly, it sets the stage for lifelong learning. In a fast-changing world, staying curious and adaptable is essential. Independent learners are better prepared to embrace new opportunities, challenges, and knowledge throughout life. We can achieve this by setting clear goals. Knowing what you want to achieve is the first step. Break big goals into smaller, manageable tasks to track your progress. We can try managing our time. We can start by using planners, calendars, or apps to stay organized and avoid procrastination. Effective time management helps balance schoolwork, hobbies, and relaxation.

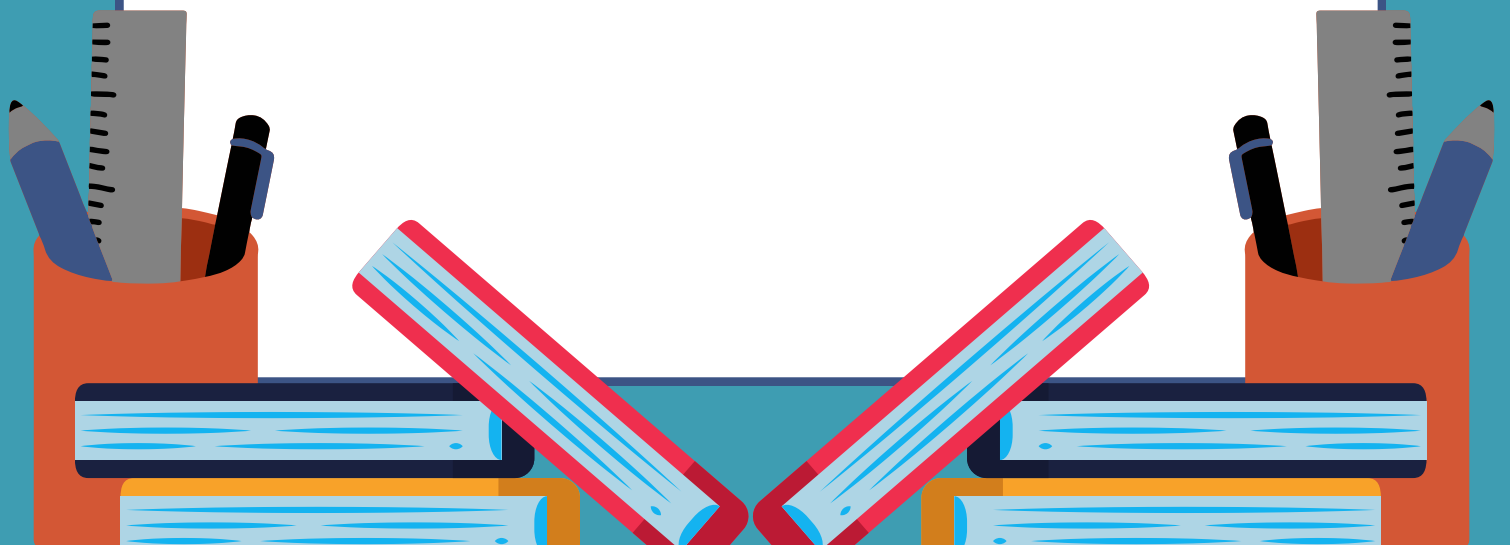




Being an Independent Student? *Why and How?*

We can certainly develop research skills, by learning how to use libraries, trusted websites, and other resources to expand our knowledge. Strong research skills help you explore new ideas and think critically. We should also seek feedback, and mustn't be afraid to ask for feedback from teachers or peers. Evaluating your progress regularly allows you to make improvements and stay on the right path. What is utmost important is to stay motivated, by celebrating small victories and reminding ourselves why our goals matter.

Becoming an independent learner is about more than succeeding in school—it's about building a foundation for a successful and fulfilling life. By taking responsibility for your learning, you develop the skills, confidence, and mindset needed to thrive in an ever-changing world. So, take charge, stay curious, and embrace the journey of lifelong learning!

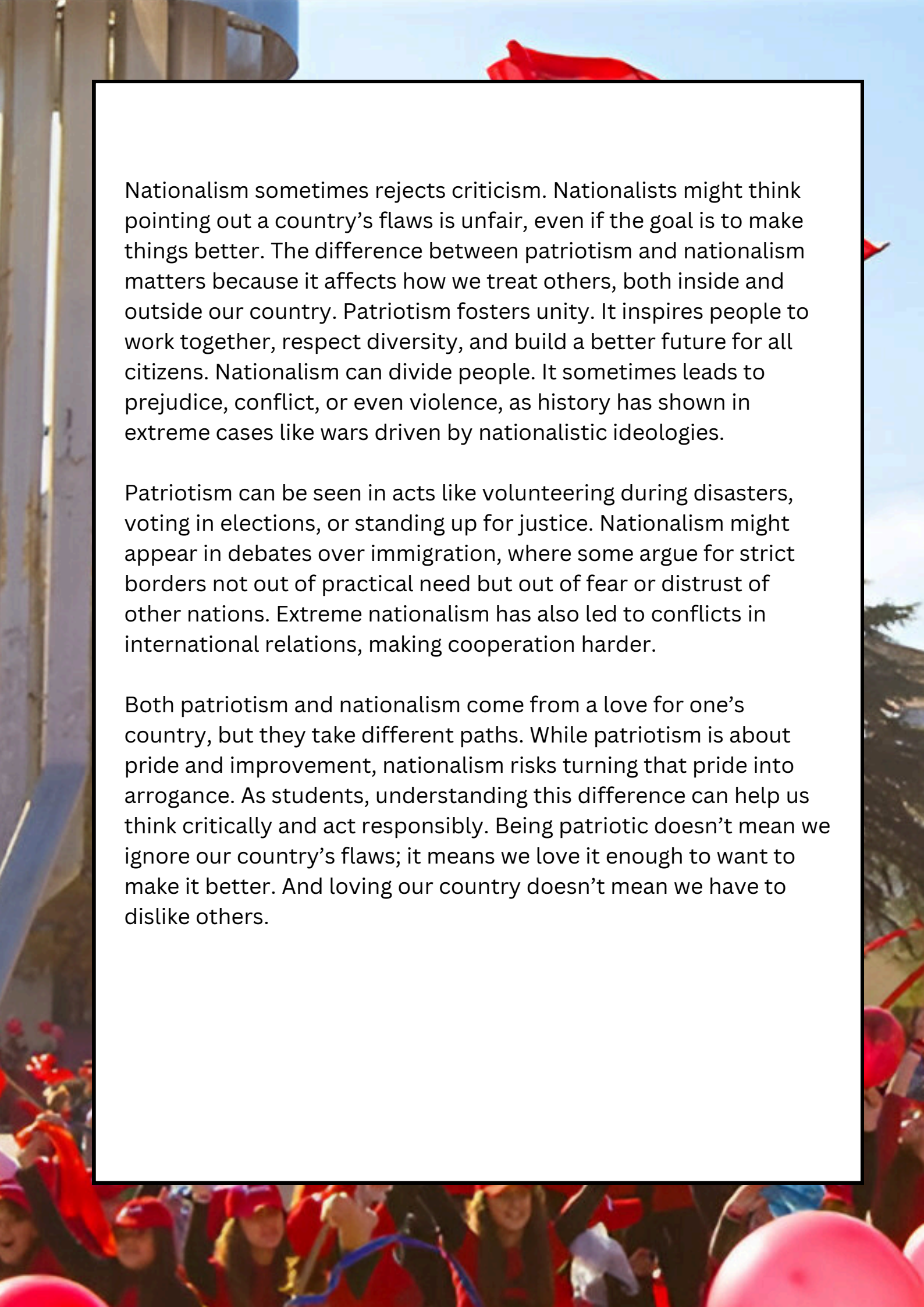


The Difference Between Patriotism and Nationalism

When we hear the words “patriotism” and “nationalism,” they might sound similar; both are about loving one’s country. While they are similar, they talk about very distinctive attitudes and behaviors. Comprehending these differences is important because they shape how people interact with each other and the world. Patriotism is about loving your country and being proud of it. Patriots support their country in positive ways. They celebrate its achievements, honor its values, and are willing to work hard to make it better.

For example, if our school wins a sports race, we feel proud, not because we think our school is better than others, but because we admire the teamwork and effort that went into the victory. That’s like patriotism, it’s about love and pride, not competition. Patriotism also welcomes honest feedback. Patriots believe in improving their country by addressing its flaws. Think of it as giving constructive criticism to someone you care about so they can grow.

Nationalism also involves loving one’s country, but it goes a step further, and not always in a good way. Nationalists often believe their country is superior to others. This can lead to an “us vs. them” mentality, and other nations are seen as competitors or threats. For instance, instead of celebrating our school’s win fairly, we might mock other schools or believe our school is the best, no matter what. Nationalism can make people overly-focused on proving their country’s greatness, even at the expense of others.



Nationalism sometimes rejects criticism. Nationalists might think pointing out a country's flaws is unfair, even if the goal is to make things better. The difference between patriotism and nationalism matters because it affects how we treat others, both inside and outside our country. Patriotism fosters unity. It inspires people to work together, respect diversity, and build a better future for all citizens. Nationalism can divide people. It sometimes leads to prejudice, conflict, or even violence, as history has shown in extreme cases like wars driven by nationalistic ideologies.

Patriotism can be seen in acts like volunteering during disasters, voting in elections, or standing up for justice. Nationalism might appear in debates over immigration, where some argue for strict borders not out of practical need but out of fear or distrust of other nations. Extreme nationalism has also led to conflicts in international relations, making cooperation harder.

Both patriotism and nationalism come from a love for one's country, but they take different paths. While patriotism is about pride and improvement, nationalism risks turning that pride into arrogance. As students, understanding this difference can help us think critically and act responsibly. Being patriotic doesn't mean we ignore our country's flaws; it means we love it enough to want to make it better. And loving our country doesn't mean we have to dislike others.

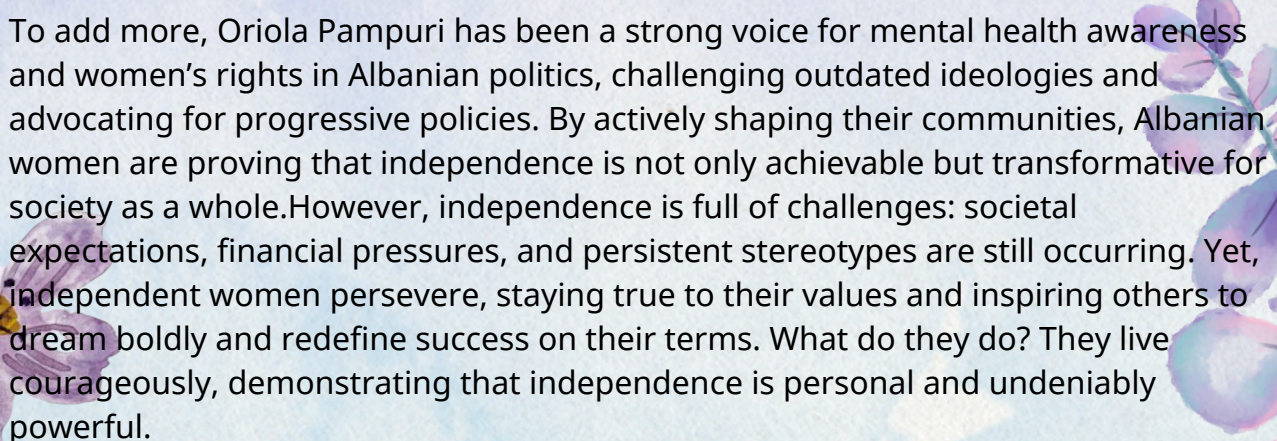


INDEPENDENT WOMEN: REDEFINING THEIR PATHS

Being an independent woman today transcends financial freedom—it encompasses embracing agency, purpose, and self-reliance. Independent women could be entrepreneurs, artists, leaders, and stay-at-home parents who live authentically, challenging societal norms that clash with their aspirations. In the workplace, they break glass ceilings, build innovative businesses, and excel in traditionally male-dominated fields. Beyond professional achievements, they find fulfillment in pursuits such as travel, art, and mentorship, creating lives shaped by intention rather than conformity.

Albanian women express this spirit of independence, balancing tradition with modernity. While many are deeply rooted in cultural values emphasizing family and their identity, they are increasingly stepping into leadership roles across politics, business, and the arts. Despite challenges posed by gender and economic limitations, Albanian women showcase resilience; inspiring change within their society and beyond. Their journey reflects the struggle for equality, yet their triumphs reveal the strength of determination and vision.

Take, for instance, the growing presence of Albanian women in business leadership. Figures like Inva Mula have redefined success by achieving international recognition in the arts while uplifting her heritage. Similarly, local organizations led by women, like "GjejZâ," amplify women's voices and advocate for gender equality in Albania. These efforts highlight that independence is not a solitary endeavor but a collective movement of redefining roles and empowering communities. Such stories are contemporary examples of how women navigate challenges while creating paths that inspire the next generation. These examples emphasize that independence, whether rooted in tradition or innovation, is a personal journey that reshapes not just individual lives but the societal fabric as a whole.



To add more, Oriola Pampuri has been a strong voice for mental health awareness and women's rights in Albanian politics, challenging outdated ideologies and advocating for progressive policies. By actively shaping their communities, Albanian women are proving that independence is not only achievable but transformative for society as a whole. However, independence is full of challenges: societal expectations, financial pressures, and persistent stereotypes are still occurring. Yet, independent women persevere, staying true to their values and inspiring others to dream boldly and redefine success on their terms. What do they do? They live courageously, demonstrating that independence is personal and undeniably powerful.



COMMENTARY ON THE CONFLICT IN THE SAHEL REGION IN AFRICA

The conflict in the Sahel region of Africa is a multifaceted crisis with profound implications for security, governance, and human development. Stretching across countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, and northern Nigeria, the Sahel has become a flashpoint for armed insurgencies, ethnic tensions, and socio-economic challenges. The Sahelian states have faced major challenges such as ethnic conflict, drug and human trafficking, and terrorism, caused by bad governance, population growth, resource trafficking, military coups, and marginalization of the youth.

Key Aspects of the Conflict: Extremism and Insurgencies:

The growing strength of violent extremist groups in the Sahel, like JNIM, ISGS, and ISWAP, threatens regional stability, exacerbates the humanitarian crisis, and poses security risks to the U.S. and Europe. Weak regional leadership and declining international counterterrorism efforts have created a vacuum, allowing these groups and actors like the Wagner Group to expand their influence. Increased cooperation among terrorist and criminal organizations could amplify the threat both within and beyond the region. They have exploited weak state institutions to establish footholds. These groups engage in terrorism, targeting both civilians and government forces.

Weak Governance and Corruption:

Fragile state institutions, corruption, and inadequate public services have eroded public trust. This governance vacuum allows militant groups to offer alternative forms of justice and protection, further undermining state authority. Corruption and conflict are closely linked, with corruption fueling violence and thriving in conflict-affected regions. In the Sahel, poor governance and corruption undermine the legitimacy of security forces, making them contributors to conflict rather than protectors. This erodes public trust and exacerbates grievances, further destabilizing fragile governments. Armed groups exploit these weaknesses, establishing control in neglected areas by offering security, justice, and basic services. Addressing corruption is therefore essential, not just as a consequence of conflict but as a root cause that must be tackled to achieve sustainable resolution.

Ethnic Tensions:

Ethnic rivalries, exacerbated by competition over scarce resources like water and grazing land, have fueled intercommunal violence. Pastoralist and farming communities often clash, leading to cycles of reprisal attacks.

Climate Change and Resource Scarcity:

The 2020 Ecological Threat Register recognized the Sahel belt as one of three ecological hotspots, which include regions with increased environmental stress that are more prone to collapse.

The Sahel climate is characterized by extreme temperatures with fluctuating periods of rainfall and intense drought. The area is particularly vulnerable to climate change, according to the United Nations, with temperatures increasing at 1.5 times the rate of the global average. In recent years, droughts have been more frequent in the already-arid conditions and increasingly posing challenges for crop production.

The Sahel is highly vulnerable to climate change, with increasing desertification and irregular rainfall. This has intensified competition for resources, fueling migration and conflict over land and water.

International Involvement:

A decade after international actors launched their first operations in the Sahel, the widespread recognition of their collective failure highlights the inadequacy of traditional approaches. The Sahel's multidimensional crisis exposes the obsolescence of bilateral and multilateral mechanisms established since the 1990s to prevent and manage conflicts. Similarly, the military and civilian instruments deployed at international and regional levels appear outdated and ill-suited to address the region's complex challenges.

This failure underscores the need for innovative, inclusive, and context-specific strategies that prioritize local governance, community resilience, and sustainable development. Without addressing the root causes of instability such as poverty, corruption, climate change, and social inequality efforts to stabilize the Sahel will remain insufficient and risk exacerbating the crisis further.

Regional and international actors, including France (Operation Barkhane), the United Nations (MINUSMA), and African Union forces, have been involved in counter-terrorism and stabilization efforts. However, these efforts have been criticized for lacking coordination and effectiveness.



Humanitarian Crisis:

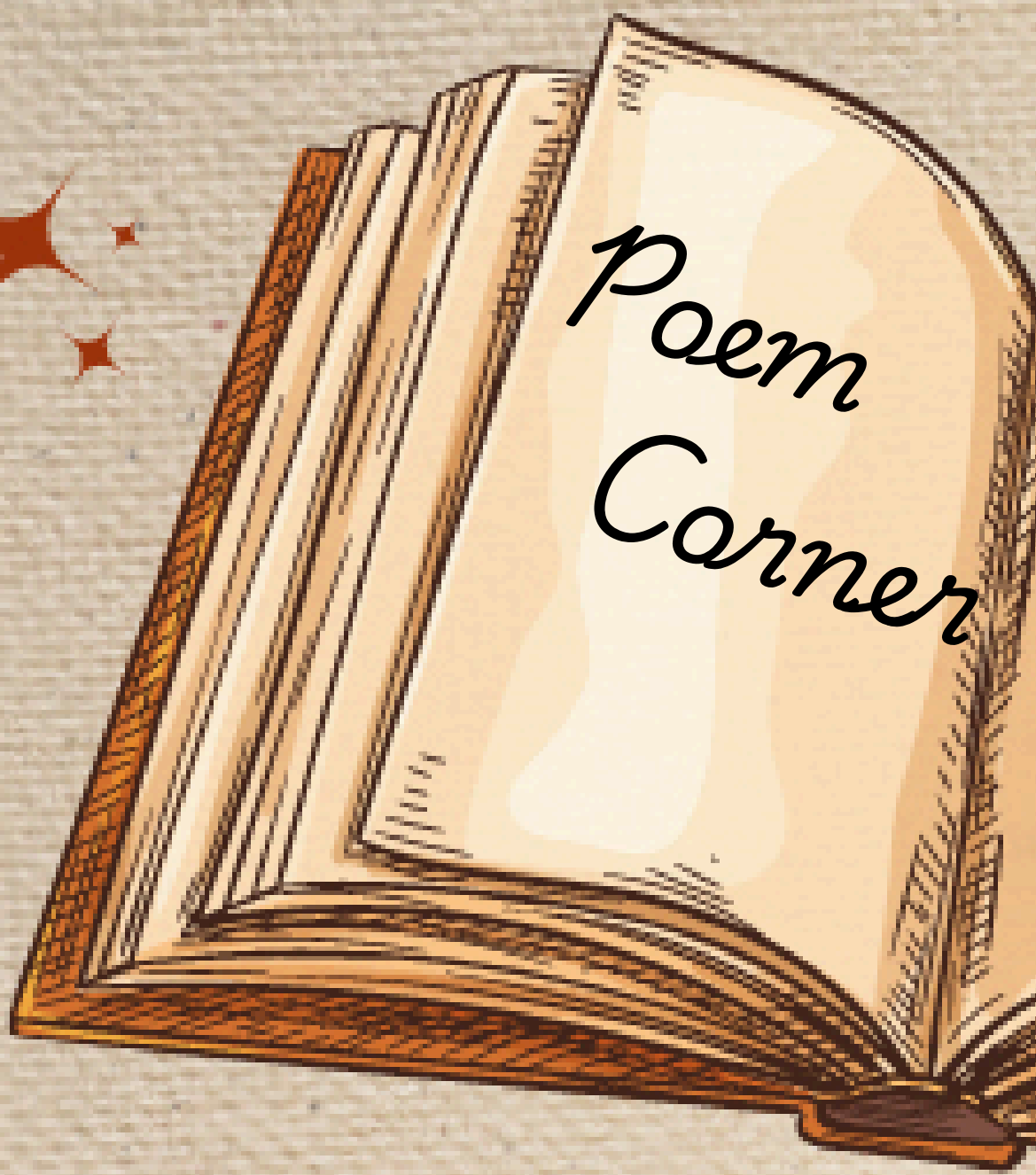
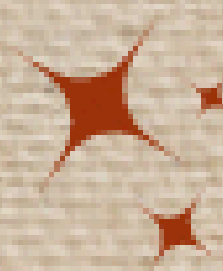
The Sahel region faces a worsening humanitarian crisis driven by armed conflict, poverty, climate change, food insecurity, and political instability. In 2022, over 33 million people across Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria required life-saving aid—a 25% increase in five years. The crisis is marked by significantly lower life expectancy, high maternal mortality, limited healthcare access, and frequent epidemics like cholera and yellow fever.

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded challenges, with no Sahelian country meeting vaccination targets and health facilities under strain. Despite urgent needs, only 50% of the 2021 health appeal funding was met. WHO has mobilized resources, including \$8.3 million from emergency funds, to provide critical aid and support national health systems. However, sustained international funding and coordinated efforts remain essential to address the region's escalating needs. The conflict has displaced millions, leading to food insecurity and inadequate access to basic services. The humanitarian crisis is compounded by limited international funding and persistent insecurity.



Conclusion:

The conflict in the Sahel region represents a multifaceted crisis driven by extremism, corruption, weak governance, climate change, and socio-economic disparities. The inability of international and regional efforts to adapt to the region's complexities has allowed instability to persist and escalate. Addressing the Sahel's challenges requires a shift from outdated strategies to integrated approaches that prioritize good governance, community-led solutions, climate resilience, and sustainable development. Without tackling the root causes of conflict, the region's humanitarian crisis will deepen, posing continued risks to regional and global security.



Poem
Corner

"Killing the brightest smile"

Come, you gravedigger...another life awaits you! Come and
end this endless agony!
Insult me, hit me like you always do
And let my soul die, let it die in misery!
...a sip of elixir to quench my thirst!
Please, give me! But take heart...it's not worth it anymore.
Oh, but take my heart and let me die first!
'Cause I don't seek eternity from this world...
If only I could turn into a marionette
So that I wouldn't hear your murderous smile, Not even to
see your bloody silhouette,
I wish I could be a wooden doll for a while.
My heart is broken, but my soul still lives...
It hurts so much, I will not lie,
That even in a skull with dark cavities
Traces of tears, don't think that you won't find!
Some people see brightness in smiles
And I carry their envy on my shoulders every day. If they
knew what it's like to endure knives
For just a single word I dare say!
In the depths of the soul, endless,
Barefoot I walked thousands of times...
There I found strength, like Prometheus in shackles To keep
smiling, hopefully, in the daylight!



"Silence..."

When hope is torn apart like a useless paper,
When light fails to touch the once gleaming eyes,
Oh, but when silence wraps you like a raper
Your soul raises walls, who knows if it cries?

Such bloodsucker is never seen before,
Such dirges no bell ever rang so viciously
That hell is so abruptly willing to implore
For hearts to be imprisoned everlastingly.

The silence's womb, a grave dug with nails,
A well of smothered lives and desires,
Where they, to this day, are still locked in jails
With no obstacles to echo their criers.

Seems to be a curse... why being so?
If up in the heavens God the almighty rests
He will set you free if you're feeling low
Or is He still letting silence build its lifelong
nest?

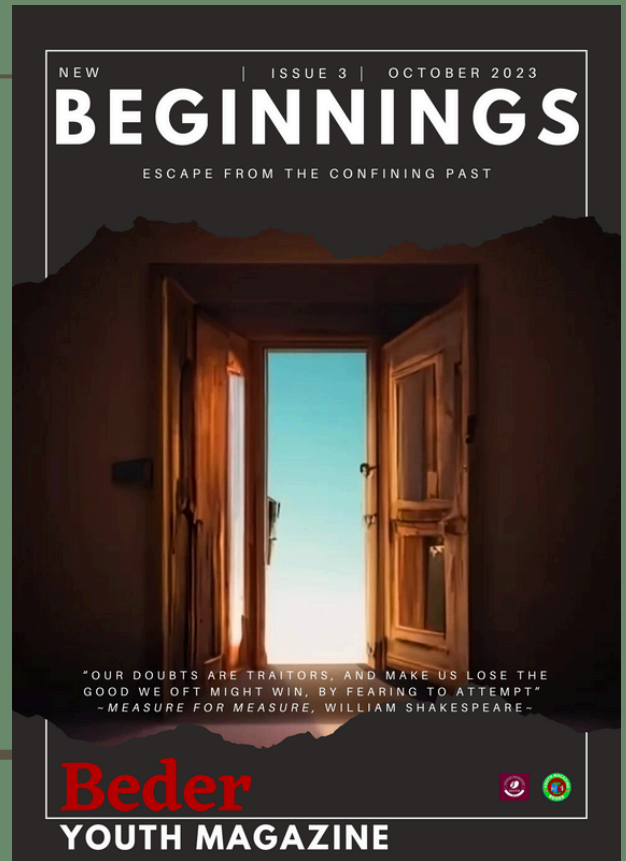
"If thy soul is finally refined, may it be the best!"

*Some new
from new
Some new
Some new*



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