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POLITICS

Federal judge strikes down Trump order targeting the law firm Perkins Coie

MAY 2, 2025 · 9:44 PM ET


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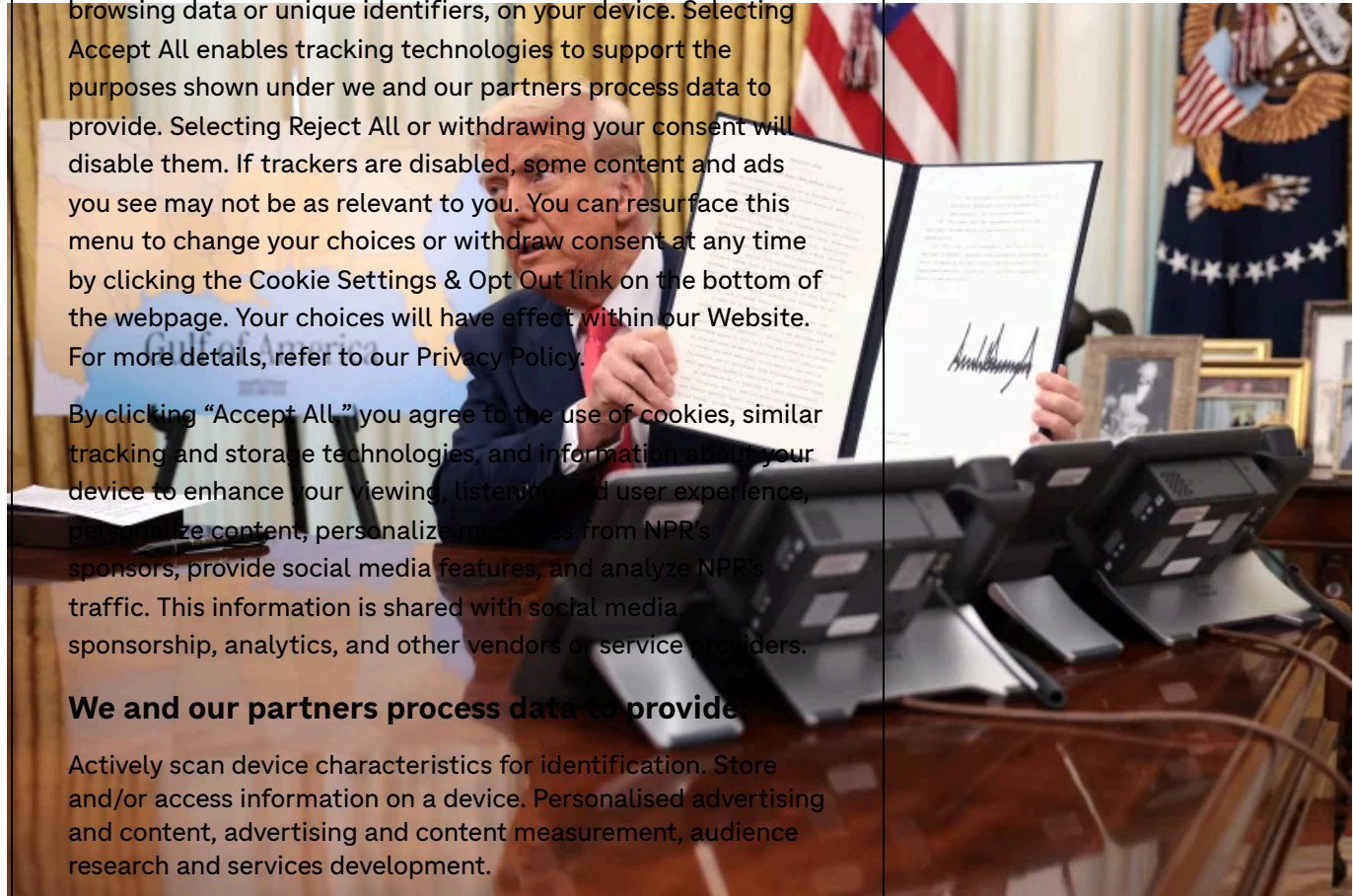
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President Donald Trump signs executive orders in the Oval Office of the White House on March 6, including an order terminating the security clearances of those who work at the law firm Perkins Coie.

Alex Wong/

A federal judge on Friday struck down President Trump's executive order targeting the prominent law firm of Perkins Coie, finding it unconstitutional and declaring it an attack on the foundational principles of the American legal system.



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The ruling from U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell is the first to permanently block an executive order issued by Trump punishing a law firm for representing clients or causes that he dislikes.

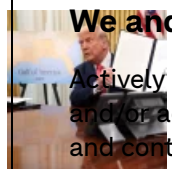
"No American President has ever before issued executive orders like the one at issue in this lawsuit targeting a prominent law firm with adverse actions to be executed by all Executive branch agencies," Howell wrote in her 102-page ruling.

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"But, in purpose and effect, this action draws from a playbook as old as Shakespeare, who penned the phrase: 'The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers!'"



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Law firm says Trump order targeting it specifically is attack on rule of law
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Perkins Coie was the first law firm targeted with a sweeping executive order that imposed potentially existential punitive measures on it. Trump's order suspended security clearances for the firm's employees, barred its attorneys from access to government buildings and officials, and ended government contracts with the firm.

Trump has issued similar executive orders against several other prominent law firms that he views as political enemies. Three of those firms, in addition to

Perkins Coie, have sued to challenge Trump's actions, and won court orders temporarily blocking enforcement of the orders.

Perkins Coie's case is the first to be permanently blocked.

In her ruling, Judge Howell framed the targeting of Perkins as an attack on the independence of the legal profession and the judicial system.



LAW

Trump attacks on law firms begin to chill pro bono work on causes he doesn't like

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"The importance of independent lawyers to ensuring the American judicial system's fair and impartial administration of justice has been recognized in this country since its founding era," she said in her ruling. This case, she added, "presents an unprecedented attack on these foundational principles"

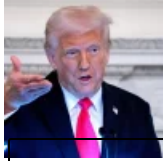
Trump's order, the judge wrote, "stigmatizes and penalizes a particular law firm and its employees," from partners through mailroom attendants because of the firm's representation of clients pursuing claims and taking positions that Trump doesn't like

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"In a cringe-worthy twist on the theatrical phrase 'let's kill *all* the lawyers,'" she adds, Trump's executive order "takes the approach of 'let's kill the lawyers *I don't like*,' sending the clear message: lawyers must stick to the party line, or else."

Perkins Coie welcomed her ruling.



LAW

In back-to-back rulings, federal judges rule against Trump orders targeting law firms

"This decision affirms constitutional freedoms all Americans hold dear, including free speech, due process, and the right to select counsel without the fear of retribution," a spokesperson said in a statement. "We are pleased with this decision and are immensely grateful to those who spoke up in support of our positions. As we move forward, we remain guided by the same commitments that first compelled us to bring this challenge to protect our firm, safeguard the interests of our clients, and uphold the rule of law."

The Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

While Perkins and three other firms have challenged Trump's orders, at least nine other firms have either cut deals with the president to get him to lift an order against them or to avoid the possibility of expensive litigation. In return, they've agreed to provide hundreds of millions of dollars combined in free legal work on causes they and the president support.

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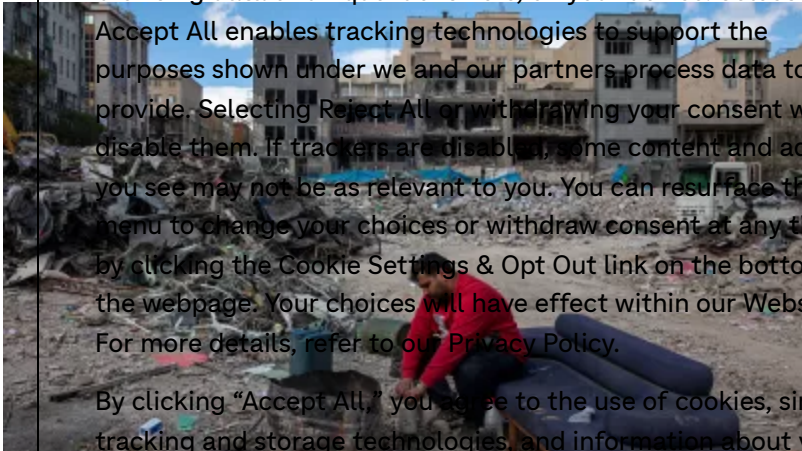


This form of mental exercise may cut dementia risk for decades



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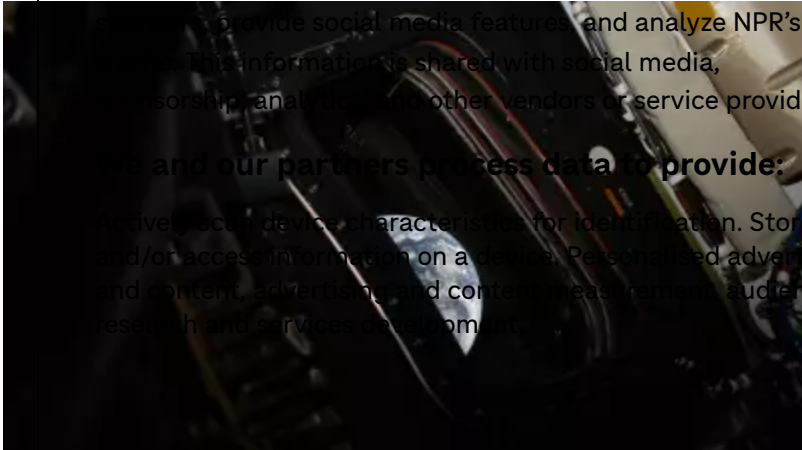
Trump shared a racist "joke." That humor is an American tradition : Code Switch



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SPACE

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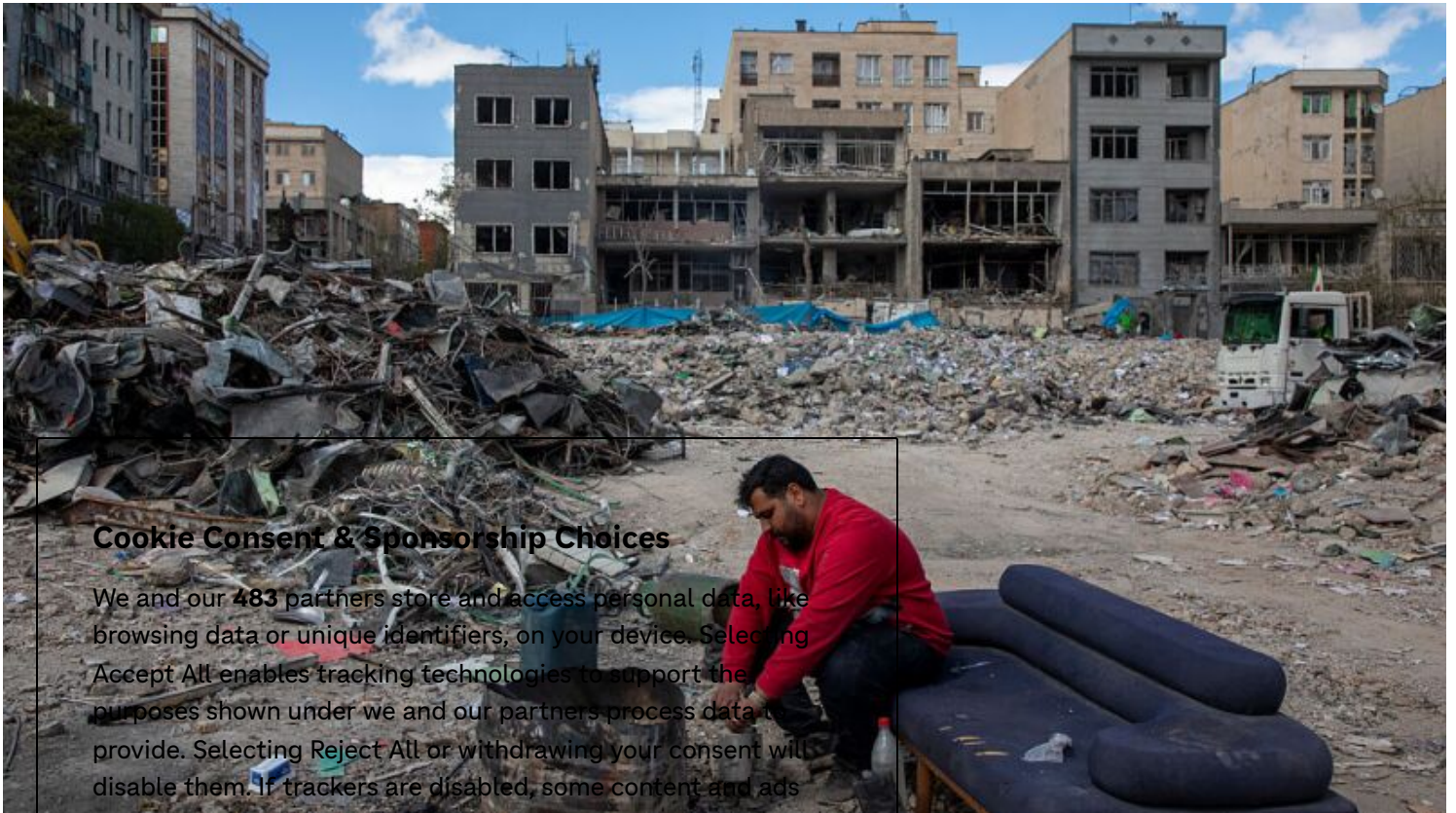
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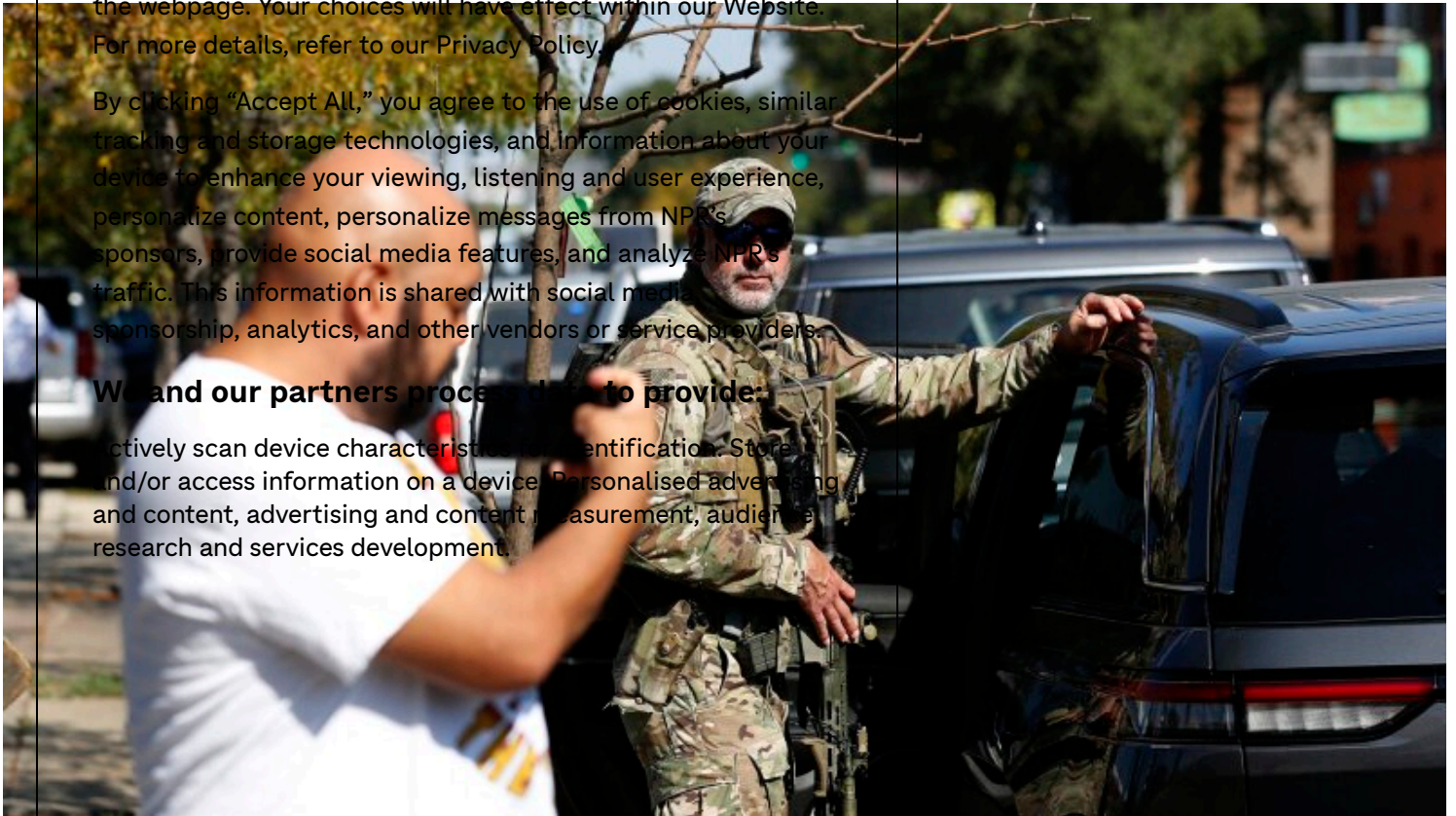
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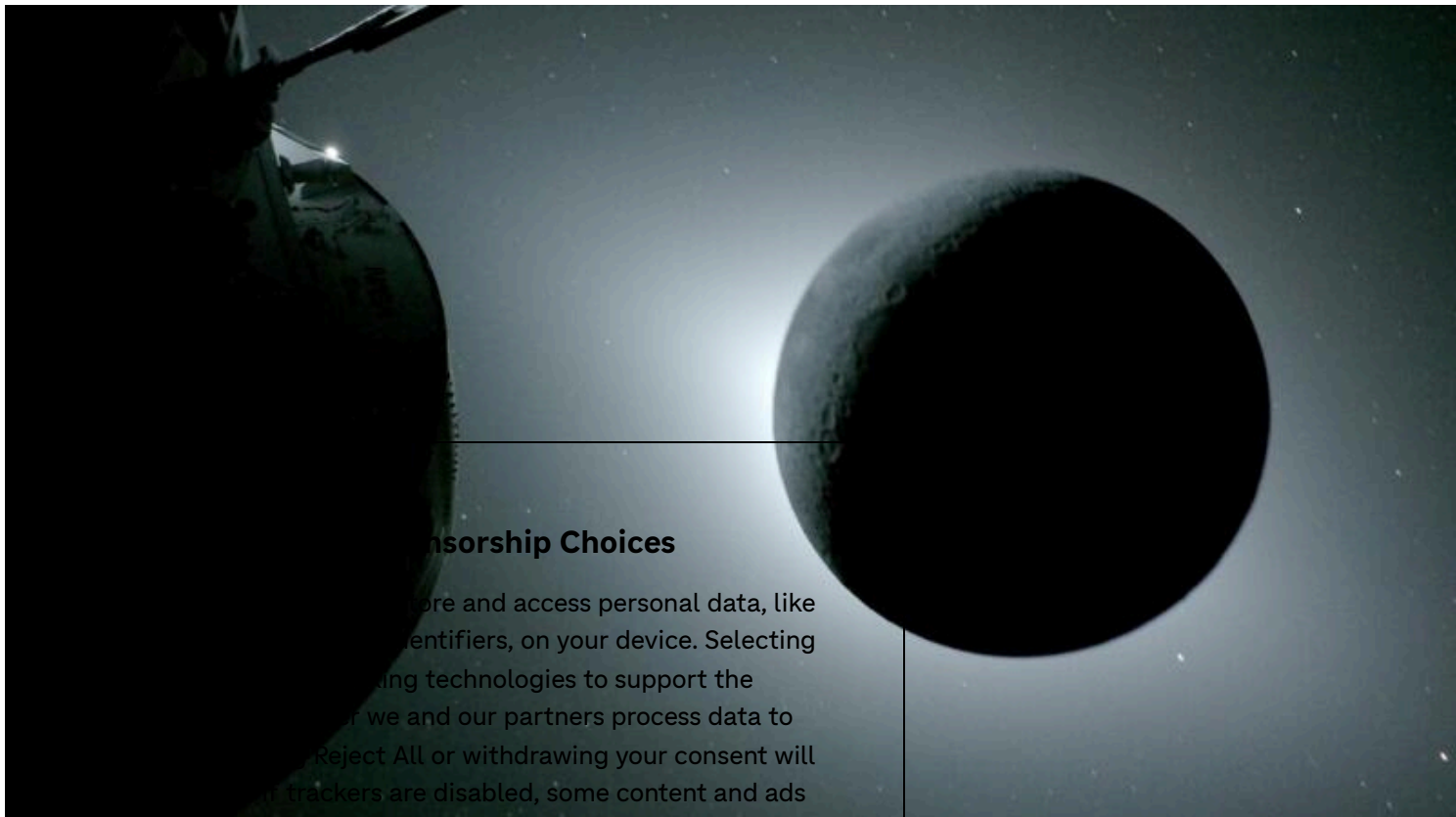
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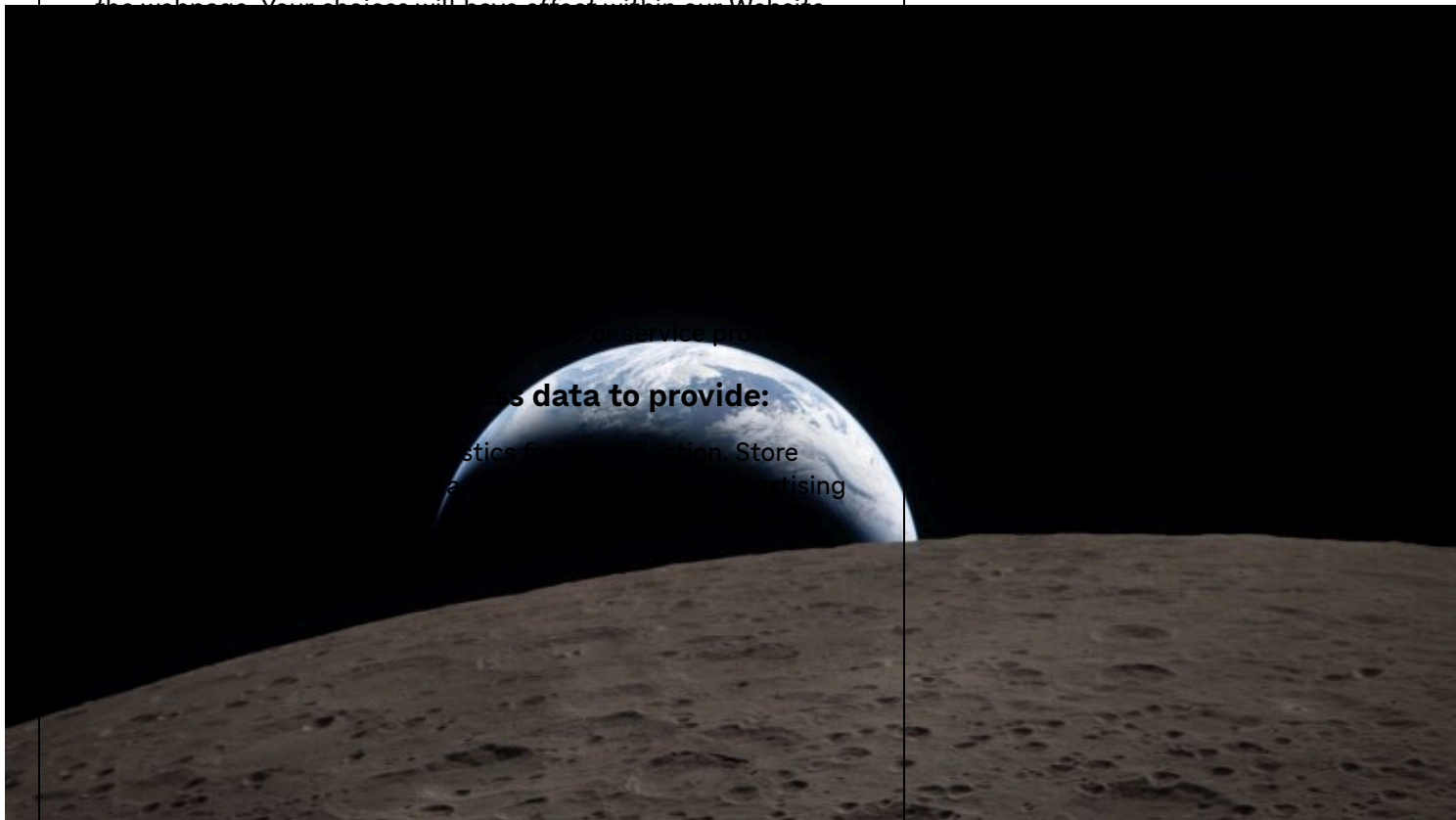
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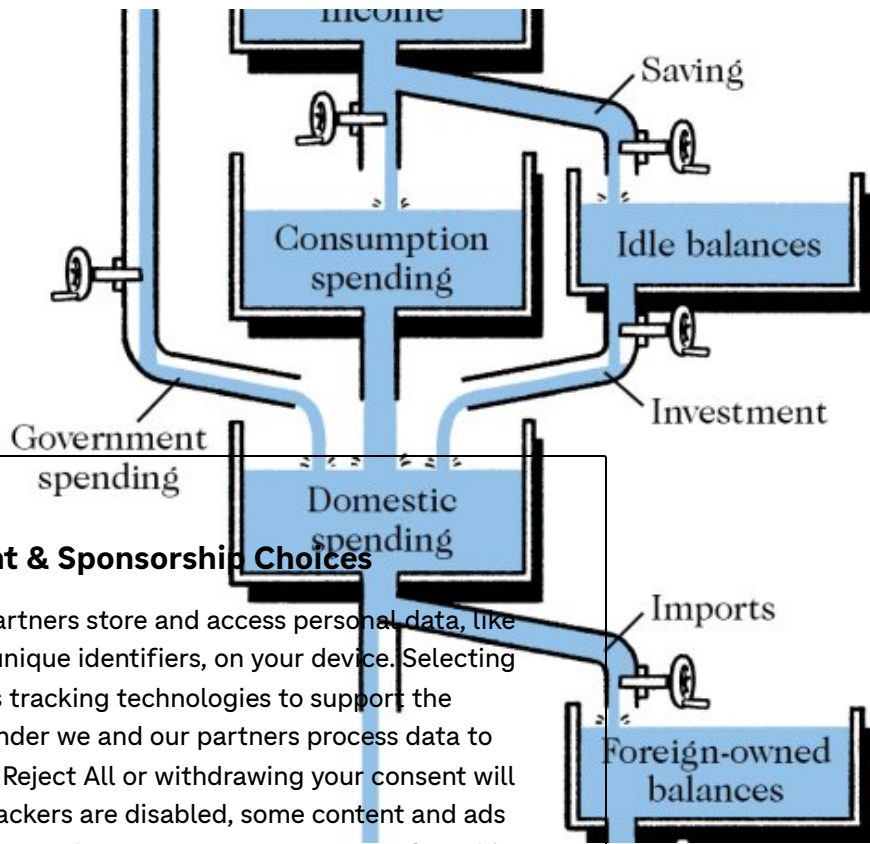


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Photos: NASA releases first images from moon flyby



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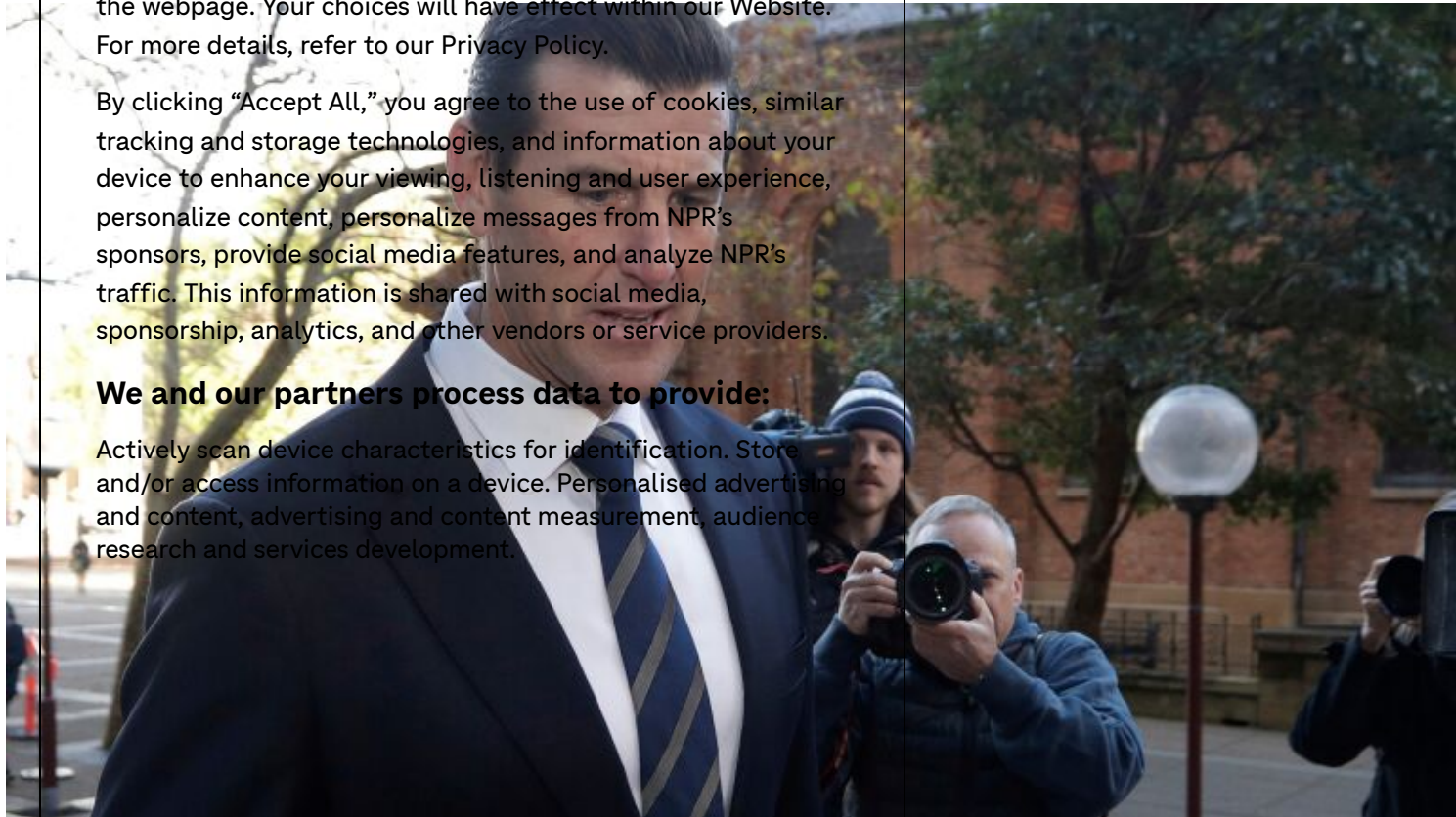
How Bill Phillips used flowing water to model the economy

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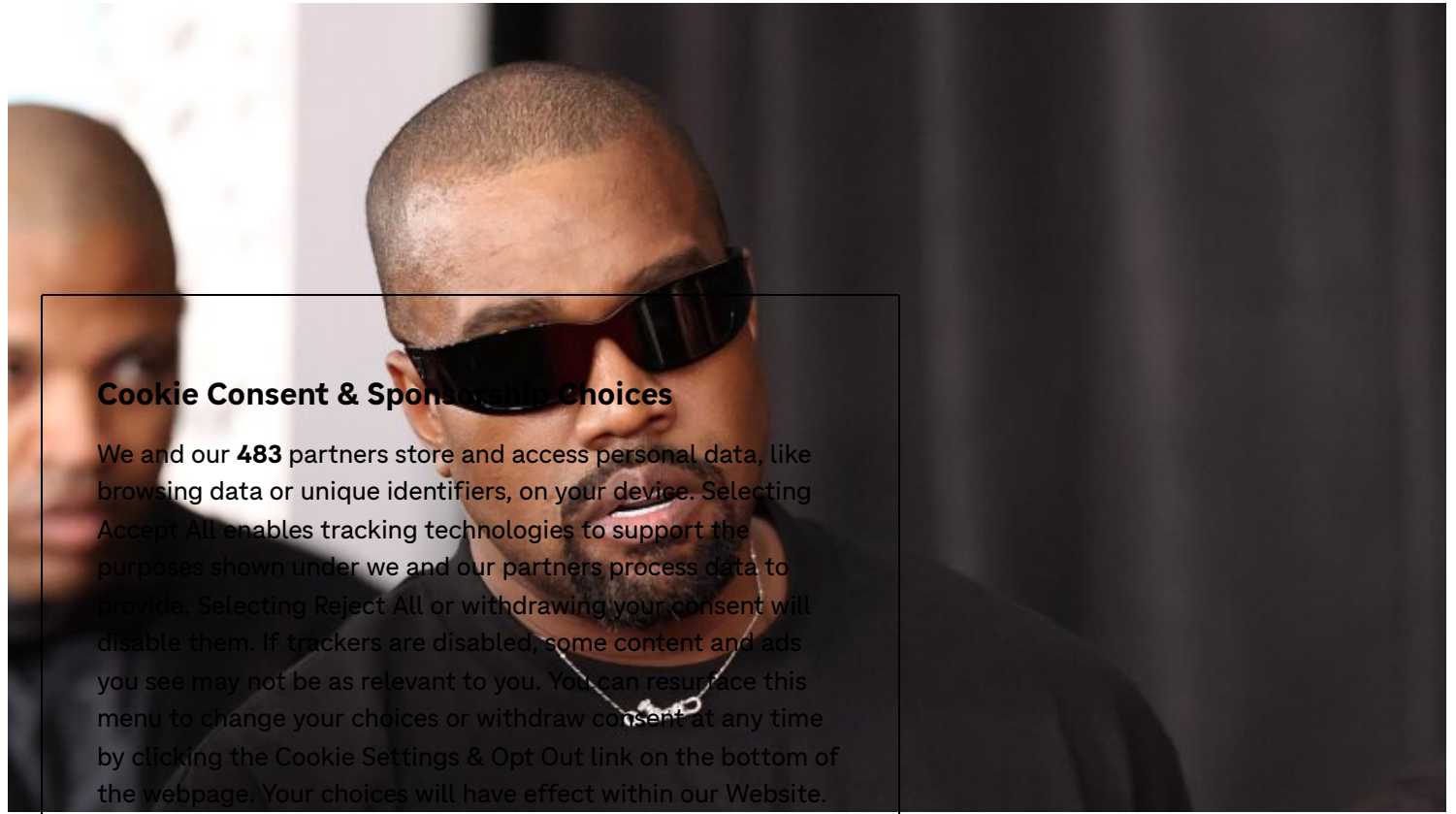
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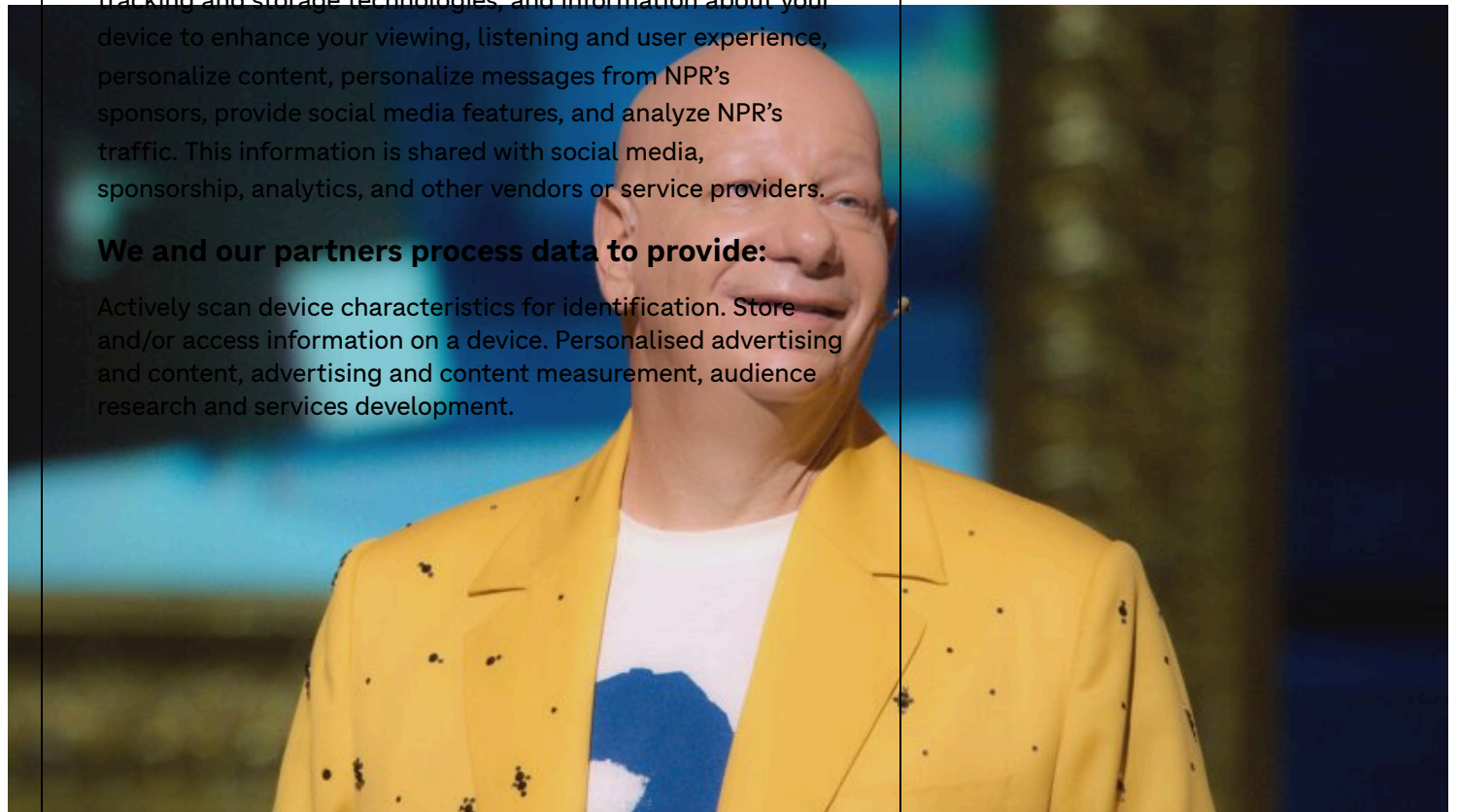
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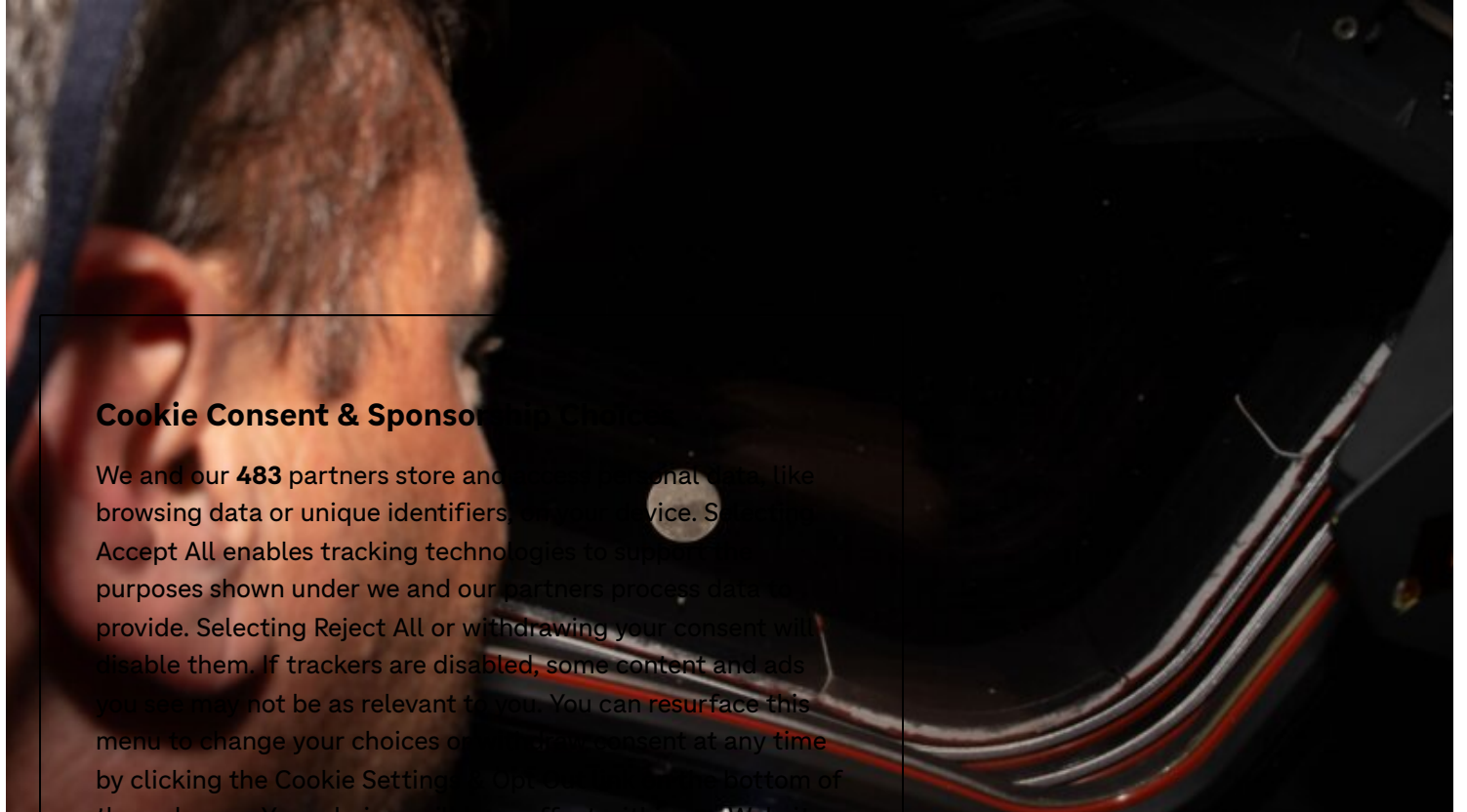
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SPACE

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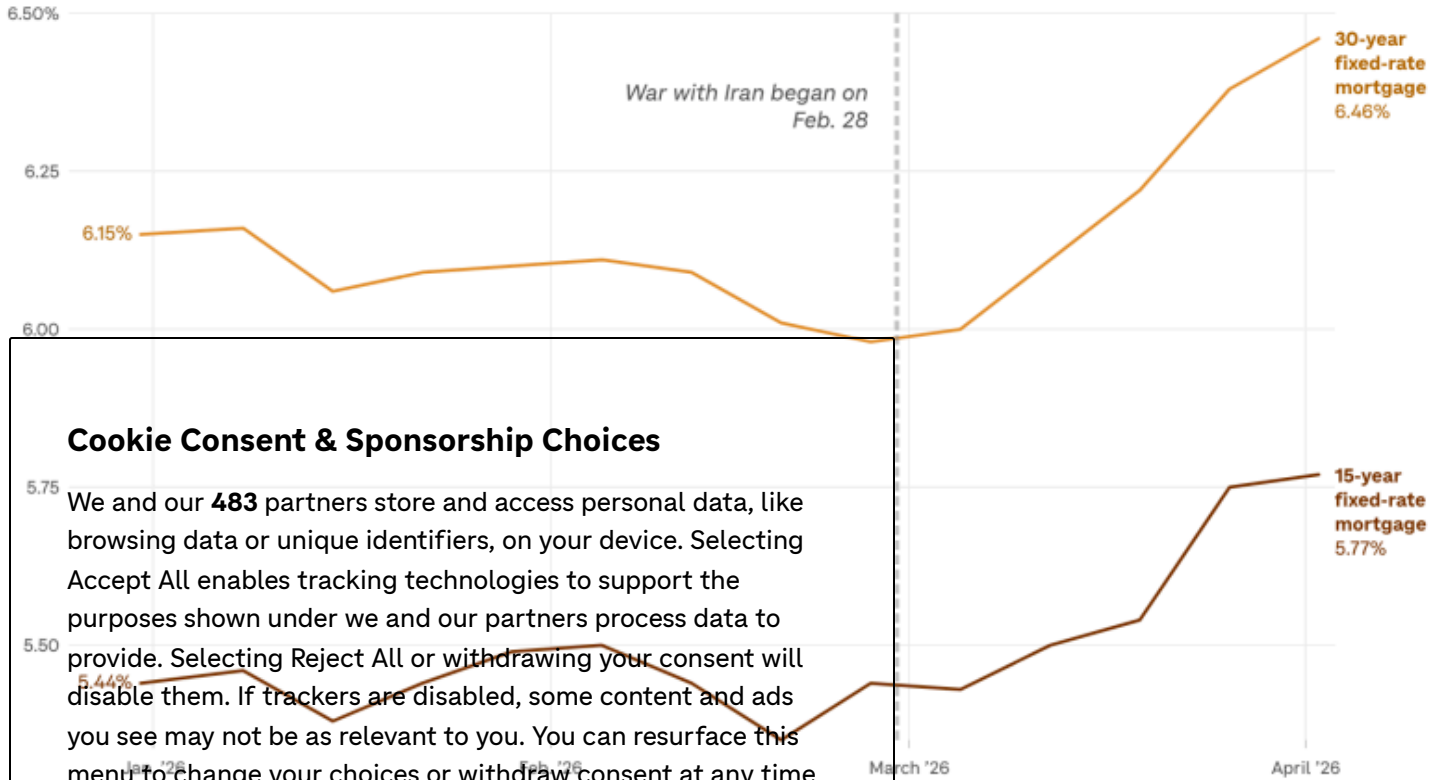
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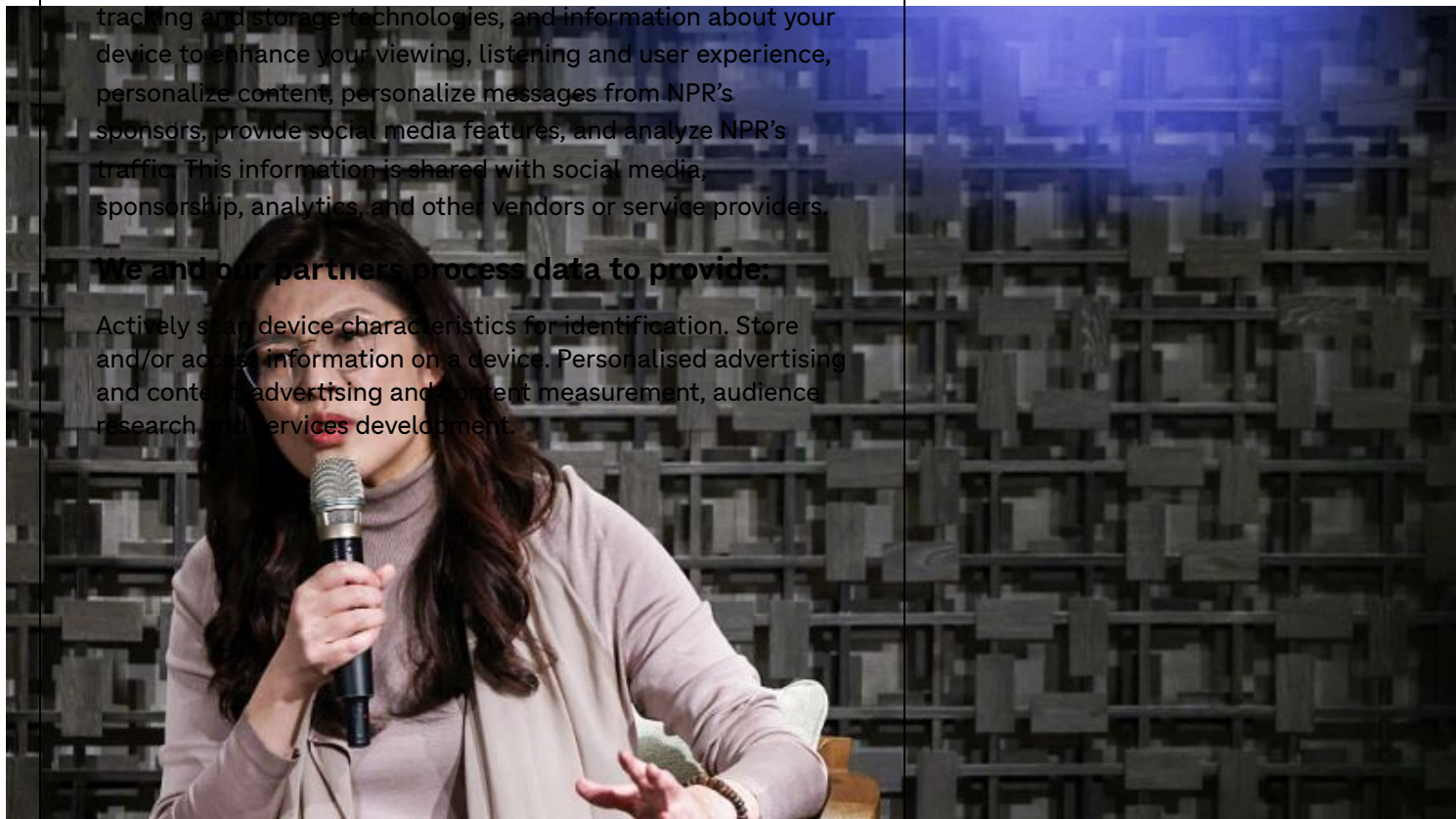
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