

‘Politics and war’: Why life on other planets would look a lot like our own

If [other beings](#) do populate the universe, what are they doing out there?

Are the possible inhabitants of Teegarden b, some 12 light-years from Earth’s solar system, driven to explore and migrate? Do they have a great power rivalry with the citizens of Teegarden c? What about the potential folks on the “super Earth” exoplanet K2–72 e? Are they inclined to hate and love according to tribe?

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Science cannot tell you the precise social details of an alien society — is there democracy? Do otherworldly beings go through courtship? But the principles governing atoms, chemistry, and fundamental forces everywhere can be used to infer its broad shape. If there are technological societies in space, for instance, the extraterrestrial population almost certainly lives in cities and uses language, since such cooperation underpins civilizations. Given that legislatures, iPhones, and Simone Bileses do not arrive from nowhere, its population is the beneficiary of competition and cooperation. There would have to be politics and war, since that is how disputes are resolved. There would be a locus of power in the form of leadership.

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Despite the exoplanet revolution, there has been no conclusive sign of [alien life](#), which means Fermi’s question persists: “Where is everybody?”

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