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MAVERICKS

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"None of us holds original knowledge. Everything we know, everything we believe, has been passed down, shared, and reshaped by countless hands before it reached us. Someone taught us, and someone taught them. Every idea carries the fingerprints of those who touched it along the way.

A little color from our experiences, a little shade from our perspective. And when we pass it on, it's no longer the same—it's transformed, alive, evolving."

Mavericks Note
From the Desk of the Editor – Mavericks Quarterly

In these pages, knowledge doesn't simply inform , it resonates. The Q2 issue of *Mavericks Quarterly* arrives as a tapestry of voices, stitched together by intellect, curiosity, and a shared hunger to question what is, and imagine what could be.

From across continents and disciplines, our contributors , tenured professors, emerging scholars, and alumni trailblazers have poured thought into ink, turning complex inquiry into beautifully crafted dialogue. Whether it's a probing dissection of economic theory, a poetic unraveling of political transitions, or a forward-looking essay on digital ethics, each article pulses with purpose.

You will feel the meticulous rigor of academic craftsmanship in every paragraph, yet just beneath it runs a quiet fire , the passion that drove our contributors to stay late in libraries, to challenge accepted norms.

To our contributors: your work doesn't just fill this publication — it fuels it. You have elevated this issue into more than a collection of essays; you have made it a conversation that spans generations and geographies. You remind us that being a Maverick means leading with the mind, but never without the heart.

We invite our readers, to slow down, sip the ideas, and lean into the thoughtfulness within. Let the words challenge you, comfort you, and spark your own scholarly imagination.

Let the thinking begin.

Warmly,

Editorial Team, Mavericks Quarterly

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Dr. Tarek Alexander Hassan- Boston University

The trade deficit isn't an emergency – it's a sign of America's strength

Dr. Tarek Alexander Hassan

Professor of Economics, Boston University

When U.S. President Donald Trump imposed sweeping new tariffs on imported goods on April 2, 2025 – upending global trade and sending markets into a tailspin – he presented the move as a response to a crisis. In an executive order released the same day, the White House said the move was necessary to address "the national emergency posed by the large and persistent trade deficit."

A trade deficit – when a country imports more than it exports – is often viewed as a problem. And yes, the U.S. trade deficit is both large and persistent. Yet, as an economist who has taught international finance at Boston University, the University of Chicago and Harvard, I maintain that far from a national emergency, this persistent deficit is actually a sign of America's financial and technological dominance.

The trade deficit is the flip side of an investment magnet

A trade deficit sounds bad, but it is neither good nor bad.

It doesn't mean the U.S. is losing money. It simply means foreigners are sending the U.S. more goods than the U.S. is sending them. America is getting more cheap goods, and in return it is giving foreigners financial assets: dollars issued by the Federal Reserve, bonds from the U.S. government and American corporations, and stocks in newly created firms.

That is, a trade deficit can only arise if foreigners invest more in the U.S. than Americans invest abroad. In other words, a country can only have a trade deficit if it also has an equally sized investment surplus. The U.S. is able to sustain a large trade deficit because so many foreigners are eager to invest here.

Why? One major reason is the safety of the U.S. dollar. Around the world, from large corporations to ordinary households, the dollar is used for saving, trading and settling debts. As the world economy grows, so does foreigners' demand for dollars and dollar-denominated assets, from cash to Treasury bills and corporate bonds.

Because the dollar is so attractive, the Federal Reserve gets to mint extra cash for use abroad, and the U.S. government and American employers and families can borrow money at lower interest rates. Foreigners eagerly buy these U.S. financial assets, which enables Americans to consume and invest more than they ordinarily could. In return for our financial assets, we buy more German machines, Scotch whiskey,

Chinese smartphones, Mexican steel and so on.

Blaming foreigners for the trade deficit, therefore, is like blaming the bank for charging a low interest rate. We have a trade deficit because foreigners willingly charge us low interest rates – and we choose to spend that credit.

US entrepreneurship attracts global capital – and fuels the deficit

Another reason for foreigners' steady demand for U.S. assets is American technological dominance: When aspiring entrepreneurs from around the world start new companies, they often decide to do so in Silicon Valley. Foreigners want to buy stocks and bonds in these new companies, again adding to the U.S. investment surplus.

This strong demand for U.S. assets also explains why Trump's last trade war in 2018 did little to close the trade deficit: Tariffs, by themselves, do nothing to reduce foreigners' demand for U.S. dollars, stocks and bonds. If the investment surplus doesn't change, the trade deficit cannot change. Instead, the U.S. dollar just appreciates, so that imports get cheaper, undoing the effect of the tariff on the size of the trade deficit. This is basic economics: You can't have an investment surplus and a trade surplus at the same time, which is why it's silly to call for both.

It's worth noting that no other country in the world enjoys a similarly sized investment surplus. If a normal country with a normal currency tries to print more money or issues more debt, its currency depreciates until its investment account – and its trade balance – goes back to something close to zero. America's financial and technological dominance allows it to escape this dynamic.

That doesn't mean all tariffs are bad or all trade is automatically good. But it does mean that the U.S. trade deficit, poorly named though it is, does not signify failure. It is, instead, the consequence – and the privilege – of outsized American global influence.

The president's frenzied attacks on the nation's trade deficit show he's misreading a sign of American economic strength as a weakness. If the president really wants to eliminate the trade deficit, his best option is to rein in the federal budget deficit, which would naturally reduce capital inflows by raising domestic savings.

Rather than reviving U.S. manufacturing, Trump's extreme tariffs and erratic foreign policy are likely to instead scare off foreign investors altogether and undercut the dollar's global role. That would indeed shrink the trade deficit – but only by eroding the very pillars of the country's economic dominance, at a steep cost to American firms and families.

The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Community Pharmacy Services

Prof. Dr. Hamid Saeed

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Background

Community pharmacies are evolving rapidly from being traditional medication dispensaries to becoming integral components of primary healthcare. As the demand for patient-centered services increases, the integration of advanced technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI)—is transforming how pharmacists deliver care.

AI refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are capable of learning, reasoning, and self-correction. In pharmacy, AI has potential applications ranging from drug dispensing automation to personalized patient counselling, clinical decision support, and inventory management.

Current Situation

The integration of AI in community pharmacies is still in its early stages, but momentum is growing. Some notable applications include:

1. **Automated Dispensing Systems**
   AI-powered robots and systems help in accurately dispensing medications, reducing human error and freeing up pharmacists' time for patient interaction.
2. **Clinical Decision Support Systems (CDSS)**
   AI tools assist pharmacists in identifying drug interactions, contraindications, and duplicate therapies by analysing patient data and medication profiles.
3. **Inventory and Supply Chain Optimization**
   AI algorithms predict demand, manage stock levels, and prevent drug shortages, minimizing waste and improving efficiency.
4. **Medication Adherence Monitoring**
   AI-based mobile apps and smart pill bottles track medication usage, send reminders, and alert pharmacists about non-adherence, allowing timely interventions.
5. **Natural Language Processing (NLP)**
   Chatbots and virtual assistants using NLP help answer routine queries, provide health education, and support triaging of minor ailments.

Despite these advancements, adoption is uneven and often limited to pilot projects or large pharmacy chains.

Challenges and Gaps

1. **Limited Digital Infrastructure**
   Many community pharmacies, especially in low- and middle-income countries, lack the

infrastructure to implement and sustain AI technologies.

2. **Cost and Return on Investment**
   High upfront costs and unclear financial benefits deter small pharmacy owners from investing in AI systems.
3. **Data Privacy and Security**
   AI systems rely on large volumes of sensitive patient data. Ensuring compliance with data protection regulations (e.g., General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR, EU, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, HIPAA, US) is a major concern.
4. **Skill Gap**
   Most pharmacists are not trained in AI or data analytics, creating a barrier to the effective use of these technologies.
5. **Regulatory Uncertainty**
   There is a lack of clear guidelines on the use of AI in community pharmacy settings, including issues around accountability and clinical validation.
6. **Patient Trust and Acceptance**
   Patients may be hesitant to rely on automated systems, particularly for personalized advice, preferring human interaction.

Future Recommendations

To fully leverage AI in community pharmacy services, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Infrastructure Development**
   Invest in digital infrastructure to support AI integration, especially in under-resourced regions.
2. **Workforce Training**
   Incorporate AI and digital health

Dr. Hamid Saeed is a seasoned academic and researcher with over two decades of experience in pharmaceutical sciences, clinical pharmacy, and stem cell research. He currently serves as a Professor of Pharmaceutics at the University of the Punjab, where he has been a faculty member since 2011.

Dr. Saeed has also held prestigious international research positions, including Postdoctoral Fellowships at Stanford University School of Medicine and The Ottawa Hospital, where he focused on stem cell lineage, endocrinology, and genetically modified mouse models.

He holds a PhD in Clinical Endocrinology and Stem Cell Technology from the University of Southern Denmark, an M.Phil. in Human/Medical Genetics, and a Bachelor of Pharmacy from the University of the Punjab. His early professional experience includes a role in pharmaceutical marketing with Servier.

In addition to his academic and research contributions, Dr. Saeed is the Director of the Punjab University Alumni Office, where he plays a key leadership role in fostering alumni engagement and strengthening the university's global network.

3. modules into pharmacy education and continuing professional development.
4. **Collaborative Regulations** Develop standardized policies and frameworks for safe, ethical, and effective use of AI in pharmacy practice.
5. **Pilot Programs and Research** Support evidence-based pilot programs to evaluate the real-world impact of AI on patient outcomes and pharmacy operations.
6. **Patient-Centered Design** Design AI tools with a focus on improving patient engagement, trust, and accessibility.
7. **Public-Private Partnerships** Encourage collaboration between governments, academia, and tech companies to drive innovation while addressing economic and ethical concerns.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence holds significant promise for transforming community pharmacy services by improving efficiency, safety, and patient outcomes. However, its success depends on overcoming infrastructural, educational, and regulatory barriers. With the right strategies, AI can empower pharmacists to play a more proactive role in the healthcare ecosystem of the future.

Nature's Ozempic: What and how you eat can increase levels of GLP-1 without drugs

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Despite the popularity of semaglutide drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy for weight loss, surveys suggest that most people still prefer to lose weight without using medications. For those preferring a drug-free approach to weight loss, research shows that certain nutrients and dietary strategies can naturally mimic the effects of semaglutides.

Increased intakes of fibre and monounsaturated fats (found in olive oil and avocadoes) — as well as the time of day when foods are eaten, the order that foods are eaten in, the speed of eating and even chewing — can naturally stimulate increased production of the same hormone responsible for the effects of semaglutide drugs.

As a family physician with a PhD in nutrition, I translate the latest nutrition science into dietary recommendations for my patients. A strategic approach to weight loss rooted in the latest science is not only superior to antiquated calorie counting but also capitalizes on the same biological mechanisms responsible for the success of popular weight-loss drugs.

Semaglutide medications work by increasing the levels of a hormone called GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide 1), a satiety signal that slows digestion and makes us feel full. These drugs also simultaneously decrease levels of an enzyme called DPP-4, which inactivates GLP-1.

As a result, this "stop eating" hormone that naturally survives for only a few minutes can survive for an entire week. This enables a semi-permanent, just-eaten sensation of fullness that consequently

Nevertheless, medications aren't the only way to raise GLP-1 levels.

What you eat

Fibre — predominantly found in beans, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds — is the most notable nutrient that can significantly increase GLP-1. When fibre is fermented by the trillions of bacteria that live in our intestines, the resultant

byproduct, called short chain fatty acids, [stimulates the production of GLP-1](#).

This may explain why fibre consumption is one of the [strongest predictors of weight loss](#) and has been [shown to enable weight loss](#) even in the absence of calorie restriction.

Monounsaturated fats — found in olive oil and avocado oil — are another nutrient that raises GLP-1. One study showed that GLP-1 levels were higher [following the consumption of bread and olive oil](#) compared to bread and butter. Though notably, bread consumed with any kind of fat (be it from butter or even cheese) [raises GLP-1 more than bread alone](#).

Another study showed that [having an avocado](#) alongside your breakfast bagel also increases GLP-1 more so than eating the bagel on its own. Nuts that are high in both fibre and monounsaturated fats, like pistachios, have also been [shown to raise GLP-1 levels](#).

How you eat

However, the specific foods and nutrients that influence GLP-1 levels are only half the story. GLP-1 is a good example of how it's not just what you eat that matters, it's also how you eat it.

Studies show that meal sequence — the order foods are eaten in — can impact GLP-1. Eating protein, like fish or meat, before carbohydrates, like rice, [results in a higher GLP-1 level](#) compared to eating carbohydrates before protein. Eating vegetables before carbohydrates [has a similar effect](#).

Time of day also matters, because like all hormones, [GLP-1 follows a circadian rhythm](#). A meal eaten at 8 a.m. stimulates a [more pronounced release of GLP-1](#) compared to the same meal at 5 p.m. This may partly explain why the old saying "eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a pauper" is [backed by evidence](#) that demonstrates greater weight loss when breakfast is the largest meal of the day and dinner is the smallest.

The speed of eating can matter, too. Eating ice cream over 30 minutes has been shown to [produce a significantly higher GLP-1 level](#) compared to eating ice cream over five minutes.
However, [studies looking at blood sugar responses](#) have suggested that if vegetables are eaten first, the speed of eating becomes less important.

Even chewing matters. One study showed that eating shredded cabbage raised GLP-1 more than drinking pureed cabbage.

Not as potent as medication

While certain foods and dietary strategies can increase GLP-1 naturally, the magnitude is far less than what is achievable with medications. One study of the GLP-1 raising effects of the Mediterranean diet demonstrated a peak GLP-1 level of approximately 59 picograms per millilitre of blood serum. The product monograph for Ozempic reports that the lowest dose produces a GLP-1 level of 65 nanograms per millilitre (one nanogram = 1,000 picograms). So medications raise GLP-1 more than one thousand times higher than diet.

Nevertheless, when you compare long-term risk for diseases like heart attacks, the Mediterranean diet lowers risk of cardiac events by 30 per cent, outperforming GLP-1 medications that lower risk by 20 per cent. While weight loss will always be faster with medications, for overall health, dietary approaches are superior to medications.

The following strategies are important for those trying to lose weight without a prescription:

- Eat breakfast

- Strive to make breakfast the largest meal of the day (or at least frontload your day as much as possible)

- Aim to eat at least one fibre-rich food at every meal

- Make olive oil a dietary staple

- Be mindful of the order that you eat foods in, consume protein and vegetables before carbohydrates

- Snack on nuts

- Chew your food

- Eat slowly

While natural approaches to raising GLP-1 may not be as potent as medications, they provide a drug-free approach to weight loss and healthy eating.

5 tips from an expert for choosing a self-help book that will actually work

Joanna Pozzulo

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The wellness industry is one of the fastest growing markets, with an estimated global value of US$6.3 trillion in 2023. Gen Z and millennials are driving much of this growth, spending more on wellness products and services than older generations.

The challenge, however, is that the wellness industry has few guardrails, allowing social media influencers and media personalities to position themselves as experts on well-being — sometimes without scientific backing.

In a space where personal opinions and untested strategies are often presented as facts, it can be difficult to distinguish between helpful guidance and misleading information.

Self-help books and bibliotherapy

One form of self-help that has gained attention is bibliotherapy, which uses books to support well-being. If you're looking to improve your well-being, you may find yourself at your local bookstore or library scouring the shelves for a self-help book.

The self-help category is one of the largest non-fiction book categories. But not all self-help books contain strategies that are actually tested to determine their efficacy.

With over 15,000 self-help books published yearly in the United States alone, sifting through so many books can be challenging.

As a professor of psychology and founder of a book club that selects evidence-based books on well-being and self-improvement, I identify self-help books that rely on research rather than personal opinions or commercialized wellness trends.

5 tips for choosing self-help books

Here are five key tips for choosing self-help books that are grounded in reliable evidence:

1. Consider the author's credentials

Check the qualifications of an author before assuming their book is evidence-based. Keep in mind that writing a book doesn't qualify an author as an expert.

Some self-help books are based on personal experiences rather than scientific research, and while lived experience can be valuable, it is not the same as strategies that have been tested to determine their efficacy.

Look for authors with academic credentials, like a PhD or doctor of medicine from a reputable school, rather

than those claiming expertise solely through personal experience.

Many professional writers simply summarize existing research rather having conducted the research they are writing about. This can sometimes lead to oversimplification or misrepresentation of scientific findings.

A quick online search can help determine whether an author has the necessary expertise to offer credible, science-based advice.

2. Don't judge a book by its popularity

Just because a book is a bestseller or endorsed by celebrities doesn't mean it's grounded in science or evidence-based. Unlike academic research, which undergoes peer review before publication, self-help books are not always vetted for accuracy.

A book's success may be driven by marketing, emotional appeal or trendy ideas rather than solid scientific evidence.

3. Consider where a book is shelved

Bookstores and libraries categorize self-help books in a variety of sections, including health, wellness, well-being and new age. While some books in these categories are evidence-based, you might consider looking under the science and nature section instead.

Exploring beyond traditional self-help sections can increase the likelihood of you finding books based on credible, scientific evidence.

4. Be open to different topics

Self-improvement is not limited to a single aspect of life. Well-being is a multifaceted construct with some experts including nine or more dimensions, including but not limited to physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, financial, environmental, occupational and cultural.

When searching for a self-help book, consider exploring a well-being dimension that you may not know much about to expand your knowledge. This can contribute to a more well-rounded sense of personal development. Or, consider a topic that you want to know more about from a scientific perspective.

5. Think critically about what you read

Even evidence-based books may report findings that are surprising or contradictory. If you read something that seems contrary in a book, seek out additional sources to verify the claims for yourself.

The most credible self-help books will include a list of references to original studies that allow you to verify claims for yourself and draw your own conclusions. The extra-benefit of these references is that they can also serve as a gateway to additional resources on the topic.

A pathway to better health and well-being

Reading [offers a number of benefits](#) for well-being, including helping cognitive function, reducing stress, improving sleep quality and quantity, improving mood, and decreasing blood pressure.

Although reading is often considered a solitary activity, it can also be a way to connect with others. [Being part of a community can help reduce](#) social isolation, decrease loneliness and increase connectedness.

Book clubs, in particular, can provide a way for you to reap the benefits of reading and community. I created the the [Reading for Well-Being Community Book Club](#) at Carleton University.

I select evidence-based books on various aspects of well-being and self-improvement as Professor Pozzulo's Picks. I also interview the authors of the books I select on my [Reading for Well-Being podcast](#).

Each month, members receive a newsletter announcing my pick and a link to the digital platform where my review is posted including a discussion board where club members can share their thoughts about the book. There are no fees and [all are welcome to join](#).

Whether reading alone or with a group, the benefits of books extend far beyond their pages. So pick up a book and start your journey toward a healthier and more connected life.

Happy reading!

The Fall of Hudson's Bay Company: A Canadian Retail Giant in Crisis

Founded in 1670, Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) is the oldest company in Canada and one of the oldest in the world. It began as a fur trading empire, exchanging goods with Indigenous communities and helping shape early Canadian settlement. Over time, HBC evolved into a well-known retail brand, opening department stores across Canada and becoming a part of daily life for millions. But by 2025, the company that once dominated the Canadian landscape is closing nearly all its stores, facing an uncertain future.

A Once-Iconic Brand Now in Liquidation

HBC has officially filed for creditor protection, a process that allows companies in financial trouble to avoid paying debts temporarily while they try to reorganize. However, in March 2025, an Ontario court approved HBC's request to liquidate nearly all of its stores. Only six locations will remain open after June 30, 2025, while the rest will close down completely.

This news came after HBC reported $329.7 million in losses over the past year. By the end of January 2025, the company had just $3.3 million in cash, but over $2 billion in debt and lease commitments. Loyalty programs were suspended, and more than 9,300 employees will lose their jobs, along with their benefits and insurance.

Why Did Hudson's Bay Fail?

There are several reasons why HBC failed to keep up in today's retail world. The rise of e-commerce completely changed how people shop. Instead of going to big department stores, more Canadians are buying online from Amazon, Walmart, or Costco, which offer fast delivery, lower prices, and a wider selection. HBC tried to adapt by separating its online and in-store businesses creating "The Bay Online" and keeping physical Hudson's Bay stores but it wasn't enough.

At the same time, off-price retailers like Winners and Marshalls became very popular. They offered brand-name products at discount prices and opened in locations with easier parking and access—unlike many HBC stores in urban malls. On the other hand, trendy brands like Sephora, Zara, and Lululemon attracted younger, more fashion-conscious shoppers.

Meanwhile, fast fashion platforms like Shein and Temu grew rapidly, offering extremely low prices and constant variety. HBC couldn't compete in this space and failed to update its stores or online platform to appeal to modern consumers.

Financial Trouble and Bankruptcy

By early 2025, HBC was insolvent meaning it could no longer pay its bills. It was behind on rent, payroll, and other financial obligations. Although it hoped to restructure, the court eventually approved full liquidation, meaning HBC will sell off its assets—such as inventory and

equipment at discounted prices in a final attempt to repay debt.

The process will follow a typical bankruptcy "waterfall", where different groups get paid in order:

- Lenders and legal teams involved in the bankruptcy
- Secured creditors (loans backed by assets)
- Employees (unpaid wages, taxes, pensions)
- Unsecured creditors (suppliers, landlords)
- Shareholders (who likely receive nothing)

One small bright spot is that employee pensions will remain fully funded, unlike what happened during Sears Canada's collapse.

The Bigger Picture: A Lesson for Retail

HBC's collapse is more than just a business failure, it's a symbolic moment for Canadian retail. It follows the downfall of other department store icons like Sears and Eaton's, showing that even historic brands can't survive without change.

To stay competitive, legacy retailers must evolve. That means:

- Rebranding with a strong identity (e.g., promoting Canadian heritage like Roots)
- Shrinking large stores into smaller, community-focused spaces
- Enhancing the in-store experience with interactive features
- Investing in technology, like virtual fitting rooms and personalized online shopping
- Blending digital and physical shopping into one seamless experience

The Evolution of Hudson's Bay: From Fur Trade to Retail

For over 355 years, HBC played a major role in Canadian history. In its early days, it dominated the fur trade and acted as a colonial power, governing large parts of what is now Canada. In the late 1800s, HBC shifted to retail, opening its first department store in Calgary in 1913. Throughout the 20th century, it expanded by acquiring chains like Simpsons, Morgan's, and Zellers.

In more recent decades, HBC expanded globally by buying Saks Fifth Avenue and German retailer Galeria Kaufhof, but it later sold those assets. Despite attempts to enter the digital space with online shopping and brands like Gilt Groupe, it couldn't keep up with the rapid changes in retail.

Hudson's Bay's story is a cautionary tale. Even a company with centuries of success can fall if it fails to adapt. In today's fast-changing market, retailers must be agile, digital-savvy, and consumer-focused. Nostalgia and brand history alone can't save a business. ***The fall of HBC reminds us that in the world of retail, innovation isn't optional, it's a necessity***.

Mark Carney won: Here are the key economic priorities for his new government

Lecturer in Finance, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology

The Liberal Party led by Mark Carney has secured a fourth consecutive term in government. This victory has come at a time when Canada is facing an unprecedented threat to its economic security and sovereignty from United States President Donald Trump.

In an election defined by concerns over Trump's erratic tariff policy and talk of making Canada a 51st state, voters decided Carney was the leader best equipped to deal with these challenges.

Carney previously served as governor of the Bank of Canada, where he guided the country through the 2008 global financial crisis. He later became the first non-British person to head the Bank of England, helping guide the United Kingdom through Brexit, one of the biggest shocks to the British economy in decades.

Now the world is facing similar financial shocks from Trump's trade war. The on-again, off-again nature of Trump's tariff policy could inflict significant damage to the global economy — even more to the American economy — and cause irreparable damage to its reputation as a rational entity in international trade.

In the face of the ill-advised and self-defeating U.S. tariffs, the new Canadian government should take prudent, urgent and bold steps to strengthen the nation's economy. Here are major and important economic priorities for the government to reshape the economy and spur much-needed economic growth.

Stabilize and strengthen the national economy

As a primary act, the new government should stabilize the Canadian economy from the tariff shocks. It must continue to develop carefully calibrated retaliations to Trump's tariffs.

The revenue raised from the tariffs should be used to compensate those directly affected by them, using a multi-pronged mechanism that includes training, increased employment insurance benefits and additional transfers to low-income households to reduce the impact of tariffs on food costs.

Currently, a series of provincial regulations restrict the goods and services that cross Canada's provincial borders daily. The new government should urgently remove longstanding interprovincial trade barriers.

According to a report by the [Canadian Federation of Independent Business](#), removing these impediments could boost the economy by up to $200 billion annually. Similarly, [a study by the International Monetary Fund](#) indicates the effect of these barriers is equivalent to a 21 per cent tariff.

Removing interprovincial trade barriers would significantly offset the negative effects of Trump's tariffs on the Canadian economy, and provide a boost to the "Buy Canadian" movement.

Carney seems to have made this a priority already, which is promising. In March, he said he aims to have "[free trade by Canada Day](#)" among provinces and territories.

Streamlining natural resource projects

Canada is a [natural resource superpower](#). However, for natural resources and critical minerals to be extracted efficiently, [regulatory processes need to be streamlined](#) by cutting red tape and duplicative assessments.

The federal government and the provinces should agree to a single environmental assessment that meets the standards of both jurisdictions.

Additionally and importantly, respectful, genuine and [meaningful consultations](#) must be undertaken by project proponents and governments with the relevant Indigenous communities to address their concerns, respect their rights and safeguard their economic well-being in the development of the natural resources projects.

Carney has said he will [uphold the principle of free, prior and informed consent](#) when it comes to initiating resource extraction projects and make it easier for Indigenous communities to become owners of said projects.

A similar approach should also guide the construction of infrastructure projects such as pipelines and ports, which play a crucial role in facilitating Canada's exports.

Boost Canada's productivity through innovation

A country's ability to raise living standards for its people mostly depends on its capacity to improve its productivity. Economist Paul Krugman once stated,

"productivity is not everything, but, in the long run, it is almost everything."

Canada's productivity is lagging, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The new Canadian government should take steps to boost the nation's productivity by increasing direct expenditures on research and development. Additional funding should be allocated to higher institutions of learning, and incentivizing businesses to spend more on research and development through significant tax credits.

Although research and development spending continues to grow in Canada, as a percentage to GDP, it is the second lowest among G7 nations. Boosting investments will drive innovation, spur economic growth and ensure Canada remains competitive on the global stage.

Dealing with U.S. tariffs

One of the government's primary tasks will be preparing meticulously for trade negotiations with the U.S. to address the threat of tariffs and reach a "win-win" trade deal. Given Trump's highly unpredictable nature, negotiations will not be easy.

Although Trump could have withdrawn from the Canada-US-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), he has not done so, and zero-tariffs remain in effect for products that are certified as being North American origin under the CUSMA rules. This could

be a solid starting point for future trade negotiations.

This composite image shows Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, in Kitchener, Ont., on March 26, 2025 and President Donald Trump, right, in Washington, D.C. on March 26, 2025. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Frank Gunn/AP - Pool

At the same time, Carney and his team must work to stabilize the Canadian economy against the unprecedented threat of Trump's tariffs by strengthening the domestic economy, diversifying Canada's exports and reducing the country's dependence on the U.S.

Pulling away from the world's largest economy will not be easy for Canadian businesses, given the deep integration of Canada's economy with that of the U.S.

Still, expanding trade with the European Union, the U.K., Africa and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations — and exploring other opportunities to reducing trade barriers with nations in Asia, the Middle East and Latin America — will enlarge Canada's export market.

By doing all this, Canada can not only prepare for a tough round of U.S. trade talks but also position itself as a stronger, more self-reliant global trading partner.

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Making eye contact and small talk with strangers is more than just being polite – the social benefits of psychological generosity

Linda R. Tropp

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How much do you engage with others when you're out in public? Lots of people don't actually engage with others much at all. Think of commuters on public transportation staring down at their phones with earbuds firmly in place.

As a professor of social psychology, I see similar trends on my university campus, where students often put on their headphones and start checking their phones before leaving the lecture hall on the way to their next class.

Curating daily experiences in these ways may appeal to your personal interests, but it also limits opportunities for social connection. Humans are social beings: We desire to feel connected to others, and even connecting with strangers can potentially boost our mood.

Though recent technological advances afford greater means for connection than at any other moment in human history, many people still feel isolated and disconnected. Indeed, loneliness in the

American population has reached epidemic levels, and Americans' trust in each other has reached a historic low.

At the same time, our attention is increasingly being pulled in varied directions within a highly saturated information environment, now commonly known as the "attention economy."

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that so many Americans are experiencing a crisis of social connection. Research in social psychology helps to explain how the small behaviors and choices we make as individuals affect our experiences with others in public settings.

Where you focus your attention

One factor shaping people's experiences in public settings concerns where they focus their attention. Since there is more information out in the world than anyone could ever realistically take in, people are driven to conserve their limited mental resources for those things that seem most crucial to navigating the world successfully. What this means is that every person's attention is finite and selective: By attending to certain bits of information, you necessarily tune out others, whether you're aware of doing so or not.

More often than not, the information you deem worthy of attention also tends to be self-relevant. That is, people are more likely to engage with information that piques their interest or relates to them in some way, whereas they tend to ignore information that seems unrelated or irrelevant to their existence.

These ingrained tendencies might make logical sense from an evolutionary perspective, but when applied to everyday social interaction, they suggest that people will limit their attention to and regard for other people unless they see others as somehow connected to them or relevant to their lives.

One unfortunate consequence is that a person may end up treating interactions with other people as transactions, with a primary focus on getting one's own needs met, or one's own questions answered. A very different approach would involve seeing interactions with others as opportunities for social connection; being willing to expend some additional mental energy to listen to others' experiences and exchange views on topics of shared interest can serve as a foundation for building social relationships.

How others interpret your actions

Also, by focusing so much attention on their own individual interests, people may inadvertently signal disinterest to others in their social environments.

As an example, imagine how it would feel to be on the receiving end of those daily commuting rituals. You find yourself surrounded by people whose ears are closed off, whose eyes are down and whose attention is elsewhere – and you might start to feel like no one really cares whether you exist or not.

As social creatures, it's natural for human beings to want to be seen and acknowledged by other people. Small gestures such as eye contact or a smile, even from a stranger, can foster feelings of connection by signaling that our existence matters. Instead, when these signals are absent, a person may come to feel like they don't matter, or that they're not worthy of others' attention.

How to foster connection in public spaces

For all these reasons, it may prove valuable to reflect on how you use your limited mental resources, as a way to be more mindful and purposeful about what and who garner your attention. As I encourage my students to do, people can choose to engage in what I refer to as psychological generosity: You can intentionally redirect some of your attention toward the other people around you and expend mental resources beyond what is absolutely necessary to navigate the social world.

Engaging in psychological generosity doesn't need to be a heavy lift, nor does it call for any grand gestures. But it will probably take a little more effort beyond the bare minimum it typically takes to get by. In other words, it will likely involve

moving from being merely transactional with other people to becoming more relational while navigating interactions with them.

A few simple examples of psychological generosity might include actions such as:

- **Tuning in by turning off devices**. Rather than default to focusing attention on your phone, try turning off its volume or setting it to airplane mode. See if you notice any changes in how you engage with other people in your immediate environment.

- **Making eye contact and small talk**. As historian Timothy Snyder writes, eye contact and small talk are "not just polite" but constitute "part of being a responsible member of society."

- **Smiling and greeting someone you don't know**. Take the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" to the realm of social relations, by showing your willingness to welcome other people rather than displaying disinterest and avoidance. Such simple acts may help to foster feelings of belonging and build a sense of community with others.

Among the most cynical, examples like these may initially be written off as reflecting pleas to practice the random acts of kindness often trumpeted on bumper stickers. Yet acts like these are far from random – they require intention and redirection of your attention toward action, like any new habit you may wish to cultivate.

Others might wonder whether potential benefits to society are worth the individual cost, given that attention and effort are limited resources. But, ultimately, our well-being as individuals and the health of our communities grow from social connection.

Practicing acts of psychological generosity, then, can provide you with opportunities to benefit from social connection, at the same time as these acts can pay dividends to other people and to the social fabric of your community.

Dr. Adam Collins- University of Surrey

Intermittent fasting: is it the calories or carbs that count?

Adam Collins

Associate Professor of Nutrition, University of Surrey

Intermittent fasting is not only a useful tool for weight loss, it's also shown to have many benefits for metabolic health – independent of weight loss. Yet many people may find intermittent fasting to be a challenge, especially if following the 5:2 version of the diet where calories are severely restricted two days a week.

But my latest study shows that you don't need to severely restrict your calories to get the metabolic benefits of intermittent fasting. Even just restricting the number of carbs you eat twice a week may be enough to improve your metabolic health.

Intermittent fasting appears to be so beneficial for health because of the way it alters our metabolism.

After a meal, our body enters the postprandial state. While in this state, our metabolism pushes our cells to use carbohydrates for immediate energy, while storing some of these carbs as well as fat for later use. But after several hours without food, in the postabsorptive "fasted" state, our metabolism switches to using some of our fat stores for energy.

In this regard, intermittent fasting ensures a better balance between the sources it uses for energy. This leads to improved metabolic flexibility, which is linked with better cardiometabolic health. In other words, this means lower risk of cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes.

My colleagues and I previously ran a study to demonstrate the effects of a fast on the body. We observed that following a day of both total fasting or severe calorie restriction (eating around only 25% of each person's daily calorie requirements), the body was better at clearing and burning the fat of a full English breakfast the next day. Fasting shifted the body from using carbs to using fat. This effect carried on both during the fast and the next day.

Our research has also compared the effects of intermittent fasting to a calorie-matched or calorie-restricted diet. Both groups followed the diet until they lost 5% of their body weight.

Despite both groups losing the same 5% of body weight, and at the same rate, the intermittent fasting group had greater improvements in their metabolic

handling, similar to what we saw in the previous trial.

[Other researchers](#) who have compared the effects of the 5:2 variant of the intermittent fasting diet to a calorie-matched, calorie-restricted diet have also found fasting is beneficial for metabolic health.

Metabolic health benefits

But why exactly is intermittent fasting [so beneficial for metabolic health](#)? This is a question I sought to answer in [my latest study](#).

For people who follow the 5:2 intermittent fasting diet, typical fasting days are, by their nature, very low in calories – equating to only a few hundred calories per day. Because people are consuming so few calories on fasting days, it also means they're consuming very few carbohydrates. Given the postprandial state is governed by carbohydrate availability, this begged the question as to whether it's the calorie restriction or the carbohydrate restriction that's creating the metabolic effect when intermittent fasting.

We recruited 12 overweight and obese participants. Participants were first given a very low-carb diet one day. Another day, they were given a severely calorie-restricted diet (around 75% fewer calories than they'd normally eat). After each fasting day, we gave them a high-fat, high-sugar meal (similar to an English breakfast) to see how easily their bodies burned fat.

What we found was that the shift to fat burning and improved fat handling of the high-calorie meal were near identical following both the traditional calorie-restricted "fast" day and the low-carb day. In other words, restricting carbs can elicit the same favourable metabolic effects as fasting.

It will be important now for more studies to be conducted using a larger cohort of participants to confirm these findings.

Such findings may help us address some of the practical problems we face with intermittent fasting and traditional low-carb diets.

For intermittent fasting diets, severe calorie restriction on fasting days can increase the [risk of nutritional deficiencies](#) if not careful. It can similarly be a trigger for [disordered eating](#).

Strict carb restriction can also be [challenging to adhere to long-term](#), and may lead to an [unhealthy fear of carbs](#).

The other limitation of both intermittent fasting and continuous carb restriction is that weight loss is a likely outcome. Hence these approaches are not

universally beneficial for those who need to improve their health without losing weight or those looking to [maintain their weight](#).

We are now testing the feasibility of an intermittent carb restriction diet, or a low-carb 5:2. So instead of restricting calories two days a week, you would restrict the number of carbs you consume twice a week. If this is proven to be beneficial, it would offer the benefits of fasting without restricting calories on "fast" days.

Emily Abrams Ansari- Western University

Elbows up, Canada: Musical responses to Trump's Canada threats

Some Canadian musicians and content creators are reflecting a sudden surge in patriotism as they listen anxiously to the crescendo and decrescendo of United States President Donald Trump's rhetoric against their country.

The pro-Canada songs currently spreading across social media, including some by Canadian celebrities, reveal a range of reactions to Trump's tariffs and annexation threats, while also contributing to the national mood.

These songs are striking, because Canadians have in recent decades been relatively uninterested in loud assertions of nationalist sentiment, outside of sporting events.

Shared identity

When shared identity has been emphasized, it has often been to promote provincial separatism or the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Uncritical Canadian nationalism has, to some, felt inappropriate since the 2015 findings and recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Patriotic feelings were further complicated during the pandemic, when the flag was co-opted by people opposing public health restrictions.

Help us fight misinformation.

In these contexts, many commentators have for some time struggled to locate a shared Canadian attitude toward the nation.

Terms such as "multicultural nationalism," "plural nationalism" or even "a postnational country" are perhaps the best descriptors of nationalist sentiment when it's expressed in Canada.

In music, Canadian nationalism is only rarely articulated, beyond performances of the anthem. The pop songs that tell particularly Canadian stories tend to be more sentimental than nationalistic — songs like Gordon Lightfoot's "Canadian Railroad Trilogy" or Anne Murray's "Snowbird."

Yet something has shifted since Trump's verbal and economic attacks on Canada began, as the reactions of sports fans to performances of the U.S. anthem have also demonstrated.

Songs on the trade war

As a scholar of music and nationalism, I'm interested in what the several dozen songs about the trade war that I have located might suggest about that shift.

The patriotic songs by apparently Canadian creators that I discuss here are all drawn from Facebook and Instagram feeds and searching YouTube using English-language terms such as "Canada tariffs song," "51st state song," and "Canadian patriotic song." A deeper dive into Québec-specific, francophone and multilingual responses would be additional significant ways of looking at this.

They represent an array of musical styles, including rock, metal, reggae, country, folk and pop.

Most of the songs I found have original music: those setting new lyrics to existing copyrighted tunes are not included here. I also excluded the few songs with potentially slanderous material. A number make use of AI. Indigenous and self-identified immigrant perspectives so far seem under-represented.

Patriotism, Canadian-style

An explicit patriotism is the most striking — and new — feature of this repertoire. What is clear in this sampling, however, is that Canadians still remain allergic to jingoistic nationalism — blindly professing or adhering to belief in the virtue of one's nation.

TV host and comedian Tom Green's "I'm a Canadian", for example, is a humorous,

self-deprecating song that celebrates Canada's uniqueness without being exclusionary or making claims of exceptionalism.

https://youtu.be/j3tepfbQKaU

Tom Green's 'I'm a Canadian.'

This gentle Canadianism is also reflected in stereotypically polite refusals of Trump's offer to join the United States: "Thanks, but we're already great! We don't need to borrow your stars or your fate!"

These songs celebrate politically benign features of Canada — its natural world, its cold winters, its food and its love of sports.

Canadian values, meanwhile, are presented as compassionate, noble and good: "We stand for truth and kindness, and we help those in need."

Where Canadians are the primary audience, resilience is often foregrounded. The soothing singer-songwriter style of "Canada's Home," for example, gently encourages strength and fortitude. Again, strong moral values are emphasized: "Canada's integrity is what bullies can't stand."

Songs for the U.S.

Many songs seem aimed at an American audience, in addition to a Canadian one.

In "We Used to Be the Best of Friends" by Jim Cuddy, a Canadian Music Hall of Famer and Blue Rodeo frontman, the listener is politely reminded of the long friendship between the U.S. and Canada.

Cuddy uses a charming folk style to remind Americans of cultural and political experiences shared with Canada, and of challenging times when Canadians had their back.

https://youtu.be/b5jgJZWG7aY

Jim Cuddy's 'We Used to Be the Best of Friends.'

Cuddy's wistfulness for a threatened friendship contrasts with songs that take a more assertive stance, especially in response to Trump's 51st state threats. With titles like "Canada is Not For Sale," such songs emphasize the flag and the rights of Canadians.

A few songs go further still, abandoning traditional courtesies for sarcasm and even rudeness.

Assertions of Canadian strength recur repeatedly. The "elbows up" movement, inspired by the moment Canadian comedian Mike Myers mouthed this hockey phrase associated with Gordie Howe on *Saturday Night Live*, has produced several songs about Canada's readiness to resist American actions.

Although songs of this type are more defiant, they nevertheless hold true to traditional Canadian values. "Elbows Up Canada!" celebrates unity and "holding the line" together. Using AI-created video imagery, this song juxtaposes images of early settlers with a brief image of Indigenous people in traditional dress or regalia standing with a Canadian flag, reflecting the lyrics, "side by side".

https://youtu.be/ZnYhbrxHcOY

'Elbow's Up Canada!' video.

I'll note that this song's brief depiction of Indigenous presence is unusual among songs I found. In meditations about national unity, most of these creators make no allusions to Indigenous Peoples, or Canada's ethnolinguistic or racial diversity.

In so doing, these songs minimize identities that are important to many Canadians in order to bolster national identity. They implicitly encourage all citizens to put aside what separates them to address an external threat.

In a cross-border context, these songs do not articulate hatred of Americans as a people. The frustration they express is consistently directed at Trump, not the U.S. as a whole.

But with a looming election in Canada and the actions and rhetoric of both countries shifting every day, it's possible this may change. Will the music and the cultural conversation become more hostile? Will Canadians themselves grow concerned if their country's patriotic turn becomes belligerent?

As Cornell University political scientist Benedict Anderson argued in 1983, a nation is ultimately an "imagined community," because we can never know everyone within it. The feeling of national belonging happens solely in our minds and is reinforced by the stories we tell ourselves.

Music has a unique capacity to participate in this reinforcement, building shared identity across vast and varied spaces. It can also allow us to differentiate ourselves from others. Both capacities are being fully exploited in this challenging moment.

Emily Abrams Ansari

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She earned her PhD in Historical Musicology from Harvard University, focusing on Cold War composers and their relationship with the U.S. government.

She also holds an MSt in Musicology from the University of Oxford and a BA (Hons) in Music from the University of Durham.

NO REVOLUTION SINCE HARAPPA

Asim Imdad Ali (Harvard University)
Shahid H Khan (1972-74)

"On the evening of 14 July 1789, King Louis XVI of France heard the news of the storming of the Bastille on his return from hunting. Notoriously, he asked, "Is this a revolt?" to which the Duc de Lô Rochefoucauld replied, "No, Sire - it is a revolution."
(Peter Furtado: Revolutions: How They Changed History and What They Mean To).

The distinction between revolts and revolutions may not carry the same weight it once did for the king who lost his head over confusing the two, but it remains crucial when evaluating the true motives and manifestos of those who seek our consent, contributions for their grand plans, policies, and proposals. A practical method for assessing conflicting political agendas is to ask: Does this proposal aim for a horizontal change (rearranging power among the existing elites), or does it call for a vertical shift (radically overhauling the system and devolving power)? The former may sometimes represent rebellions or revolts, while the latter often signifies a genuine, transformative revolution.

Revolts are typical examples of horizontal changes. Different elite factions squabble over who gets to steer the ship without effectively altering its course. During revolts, new elite cliques aim for a larger share of power. Their rallying cry does not advocate for devolving power to the hoi polloi or achieving social justice for the masses, but rather for a forced or fair transfer of power to a different elite faction! The disruptive elite who revolts merely seek some seats at the table, not overturn the dining room; they want to participate in the system instead of dismantling it. Revolts resemble a game of musical chairs, an elite reshuffle. They involve a change of guards who claim that they are necessary for the preservation, survival, and restoration of the existing system; hence, during revolts, we typically hear about the infusion of "fresh" blood to enhance the system's efficiency.

On the other hand, revolutions tend to demand and deliver vertical changes. The objective of revolutionary people is not inclusion but the complete demolition of the ancient régime and its replacement with a more equitable and, if possible, more equal form of polity. The revolutionaries do not want to enter the elite club but padlock it and create alternative, new governance models: they demand and deliver a de novo beginning. Revolution is about the whole company going bankrupt; it is replaced by a new system, outlook, vision, and management. It is not about resuscitating the old corporation with fresh blood; it is about discarding the system and adopting radical new structures.

Going all the way back to the Harappan civilization (circa 2500 BCE), the Indian subcontinent has

never experienced a true revolution. This means there has never been a mass uprising that led to a fundamental vertical change in societal structure and power dynamics. The people never rose, seized their fate, and forged a new order. Rebellions? Many. Monarchs toppled? Numerous. Invasions? Multiple. The imperial regime changes that we often remember were horizontal power swaps among competing elites, not the seismic and vertical upheavals from below that redefine a society.

Many factors have influenced this absence of revolutionary groundswell in the history of the Indian subcontinent. Three stand out: the lack of urban density, the superficial "transfer of power" at the time of decolonization, and the deeply entrenched belief in predestination.

The lack of urban density hindered mass mobilization. While not an absolute prerequisite, urban crowding has historically provided a breeding ground for revolutionary energy, though not sufficient, catalyst for upheaval.
When peasants migrate into urban areas, they are thrust into unfamiliar social, economic, and political landscapes that can ignite collective action and, in some cases, even revolutionary movements. Discontent with the dire conditions under which millions are forced to live begins to build. In the grimy slums and squatter settlements, the displaced peasantry feels abandoned. Cramped into these tight spaces, they become receptive to the whispers of new futures, sometimes idealized or utopian.

In these crowded environments, dynamic yet opportunistic commercial classes emerge— hungry for profit and restless for growth. Driven by their economic ambitions, these rising commercial forces often advocate for transformative reforms to advance their upward mobility. The revolutionary spirit typically burns brightest among the urban elite and slum dwellers. When the new urban elite and the slum dwellers unite to demand vertical change, the old regimes tremble—and sometimes crumble.

Such revolutionary moments often mark the beginning of genuine transformation, triggering modernization's uneven and halting march. In this changing landscape, many nations are granted a second chance—an opportunity to break free from the past and reshape their future. Nearly every country that later rose to great-power status first pressed its social reset button, dismantled its ancient régime, and began anew. Britain (1688), the United States (1776), France (1789), Japan (1868), Russia (1917), Turkey (1923), China (1949), and Iran (1978) all embarked on their transformative journeys only after such foundational ruptures—fresh starts that redefined their destinies.
That is not the story of the subcontinent. For centuries, our pliant peasants remained tied to their villages, tethered to their land, with their fates sealed in soil. They were

spread across expansive rural landscapes, making a collective uprising against the entrenched elite not only unlikely but logistically unfeasible. Nehru referred to India as half a million villages. The sheer distances between villages rendered mass coordination a Herculean task—the nearest potential co-conspirator, the would-be "comrade," was often miles away.

How could millions of peasants, spread across thousands of remote villages, ever come together, act as an urban underclass, and spark a revolution demanding vertical change? Beyond the barriers mentioned above was an additional challenge: the temperament of farmers. Bound by the slow rhythms of subsistence farming, they often lacked the ideological inclination to join revolutionary movements. While peasants occasionally rebelled, their efforts seldom led to transformative change.

When the time for decolonization came, it presented an opportunity for implementing change. However, that never transpired. Decolonization was merely a superficial "transfer of power," not a fundamental rupture. The post-colonial elites smoothly stepped into the roles of the departing British rulers. Thus, the chance for effectuating a radical and beneficial transformation after decolonization was squandered: no reset was initiated, and no vertical change occurred. 1947 marked a horizontal shift in power.

Not only did our newly empowered elite sidestepped the possibility of fundamental change; on the contrary, they took active measures to entrench the status quo in the post-colonial era. The land allotment policy in Pakistan after 1947 serves as a telling example. Millions of migrants from India to Pakistan, having left behind their hearths and homesteads, were informed upon arrival that they would receive land only in proportion to what they had owned in the old country. The elite's rationale was simple: the turmoil of 1947 was to be managed, not leveraged for revolutionary transformation. Land redistribution and structural reform were off the table. The result? The old hierarchies persist to this day. Despite the appearance of change, the ruling elites in successor states continue to dominate, much as they had for centuries before.

Some argue that this is history—things have changed. Millions of farmers have left their villages in recent decades and flocked to sprawling urban centers. Now, one-third of the population in the subcontinent live in urban towns and experience the power of numbers. This is a significant figure of urban residents in terms of subcontinental history. The oft-cited necessary condition for the revolutionary furnace to ignite has now been fulfilled. And yet, there is hardly a clamor for vertical change. The elite remains safely seated in the saddle, just as they had for centuries before these urban centers existed. Multiple factors could explain this inertia, but the most critical is a view steeped in predestination—a belief

that has dulled the appetite for radical change. When destiny is preordained, how can one even imagine curating new futures? If all is fated, why struggle to press the reset button? This fatalistic outlook, reinforced over generations and fused with the isolation of village life, ensured that mass uprisings against the elite remained as rare as unicorns— unchanging since the days of Harappa.

Does all this historical baggage indicate that Pakistan will never undergo a radical shift in power dynamics? Or are we on the cusp of seismic sea change—about to press the reset button, dismantle our ancient régime, and seize a second chance to reshape our future?

Lao Tzu once said, "Those who have knowledge don't predict. Those who predict don't have knowledge." Sometimes, it is wise to resist prophecy. Yet, as Winston Churchill reminded us, "The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see." History may not repeat, but it certainly rhymes.

Given our unbroken streak of no revolutions since Harappa, four reasons suggest that the future holds little promise for upheaval or radical transformation.

First, we are more likely to revert to our core governance model—the rule of the man- on-the-horseback— during extreme crises instead of pursuing the alternative of revolutionary change. Why? Under pressure, we tend to choose the risk-averse route. Rather than experimenting with new systems or

ideologies, we prefer to rely on what has proven "effective" in the past to safeguard against the looming threat of anarchy.

A steady sequence of military-founded dynasties dominated our history, where the founder-general co-opted the "native" elite to provide bureaucratic support and maintain control. Their effectiveness in governance conferred legitimacy; order was preferred to anarchy. However, the dynasties were often short-lived. The polygamous nature of the royal houses led to an overabundance of heirs, creating sibling rivalry and infighting and ultimately undermining the dynasty's stability. As one discordant dynasty faltered, a new founder-general emerged, bringing fresh energy and forces to claim the throne and establish yet another reign— sometimes brief, sometimes prolonged.

Even the Raj followed this model, where men on horseback co-opted the "native" elite. The only notable change was that, unlike previous dynasties, the Raj's founder-generals did not permit their children to inherit power. Instead, newly appointed colonial officers from the British Isles were dispatched to govern our land. After the Raj's departure, the same model persisted. Our founder-generals continued to co-opt domestic political, bureaucratic, literary, and economic elites as junior partners.

Second, even if, by some improbable

stroke of luck, we contrive to sidestep the ever- recurring loop of reverting to our man-on-the-horseback governance model, we risk rushing headlong into a Jurassic Park fantasy—fixated on resurrecting a mythologized Arabian past rather than creating something genuinely new, progressive, and benevolent. If a truly revolutionary upheaval indeed ever erupts, there is a good chance we may be marching backward through history instead of progressing toward modernization and change.

Third, many of us passionately argue that digital social media is a revolutionary force destined to end the long winter of our history and usher in our long-awaited "spring" at any moment. However, this faith in the transformative potential of these technologies is profoundly misplaced. The for-profit global elite so thoroughly monopolizes the immense power of digital platforms that those who believe these tools will ignite real change are living in a fool's paradise. If anything, digital technology is steering us backward rather than forward. Far from being instruments of liberation, these new technologies have become the most sophisticated tools for capturing, consolidating, and concentrating power in the hands of the political elite.

A question then looms: Are we genuinely advancing, or are we merely heading back to the future—an era of neo-feudalism, repackaged in pixels and push notifications? Yes, millions are now concentrated in sprawling urban centers. These once-isolated villagers-turned-urbanites hold countless digital devices in their hands. And yet, despite all these so-called empowering technologies at their fingertips, they are not rising in protest. Why? Because these tools, rather than empowering them, have become instruments of distraction, diversion, and pacification.

The very platforms that should fuel dissent instead manufacture consent, keeping the masses entertained, engaged, and ensnared. The lumpen masses are often more eager to swarm free streaming platforms than to storm the barricades. Thanks to these "revolutionary" new digital technologies, their cognitive energies are dissipated into memes, videos, and hashtags. What an irony: millions of farmers migrated from the solitude of their farms to the crowded cities, and what did they find—the solitude of screens?

The new digital platforms are not catalysts for revolutionary change— they are the latest opiate of the people. The old inertia persists—only the nature of the opiate has shifted. Instead of storming the streets, they scroll. Instead of demanding change, they engage in performative outrage.

Lastly, much of the political noise we hear today revolves around horizontal change— elite factions clamoring for and clawing their way into the corridors of power. However, there is an eerie silence about calls for vertical change. It is easy to understand why hardly anyone wants to rock the boat and vertical reforms

have little momentum. There is always a fear of being targeted, isolated, and excluded by the global economy.

There is hardly any alternative or new blueprint for revolutionary change around which people could rally; a similar consensus prevails everywhere. There is such a lack of alternative governance models that experimenting with new systems feels risky and unrewarding. Mainstream political manifestos serve more as a mirage reflecting one another than a roadmap for radical change.

Lastly, genuine leadership capable of inspiring the current generation to the extent that they would sacrifice their lives and liberties for the delayed gratification of creating well-being for future generations is nowhere to be found.

True vertical change is always complex and costly, requiring detailed planning, significant sacrifice, and a mindset geared towards delayed gratification. In contrast, horizontal change is much simpler and less expensive, often promising—but rarely delivering—instant gratification. So, when we hear revolution and revolt used interchangeably, remember the difference. Without a fundamental vertical transformation, the political noise is usually just a boisterous scuffle for more seats in the same old elite power club. Have you met a revolutionary lately? The individuals we keep hearing about are often just revolting people (sometimes, in both senses of the term)! So, the next time someone

brandishes the banner of revolution, inspect it closely. Chances are, it is not a blueprint for a bright, sunlit future but a recycled pamphlet printed with bright new ink.

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150 years ago, the Metre Convention determined how we measure the world — a radical initiative for the time

Jonathan Simone

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On May 20, 1875, delegates from a group of 17 countries gathered in Paris to sign what may be the most overlooked yet globally influential treaty in history: the Metre Convention.

At a time when different countries (and even different cities defined weights and lengths based on local artifacts, royal body parts or grains of wheat, this rare agreement among nations offered something simple yet undeniably impactful: consistency.

A radical initiative for its time, the Metre Convention ultimately birthed a system of measurement that would transcend language, politics and tradition, and lay the foundation for a new global era of scientific and technological advancement.

A world divided by measurement

By the mid-19th century, the push for standardization had become increasingly urgent. Scientific discovery was accelerating, global trade was booming and industrial projects were growing in scale and complexity. But the world's measurements were, frankly, a mess.

France had introduced the metric system during its revolutionary years, but other nations were slow — or outright unwilling — to adopt it.

Rivalries simmered not just among empires, but within the scientific community itself. Astronomers couldn't compare celestial observations across borders because their units didn't match. Engineers designing railway systems across Europe had to navigate conflicting standards for track gauges, load weights and even timekeeping.

This wasn't just inefficient. It was a barrier to progress, a strain on economies and a growing source of frustration or a scientific world that aimed to speak in universal truths.

Faced with growing societal demands, the industrial world agreed it was time to act. The Metre Convention was the result.

Scientists and diplomats representing the 17 participating countries collectively established the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM), headquartered just outside Paris, as the official keeper of measurement standards. Today, the BIPM is backed by 64 member states and governs the Système International d'Unités (SI), the measurement framework that underpins everything from bridges to smartphones.

When standards fail

And while by today's standards, the SI may seem like a relic of old-school science bureaucracy, it's anything but. Standardized measurement is the invisible infrastructure of the modern world. And when it fails, or more specifically when we ignore it, the consequences can be severe.

Take the Gimli Glider incident. In 1983, an Air Canada flight from Montréal to Edmonton ran out of fuel midway through its journey. The cause was a miscalculation caused by confusion between metric and imperial units: the ground crew had used pounds instead of kilograms to measure fuel, and the pilots didn't catch the error.

The plane lost power at 41,000 feet (around 12,500 metres for those who prefer their near-death experiences in metric), and glided safely to an abandoned airstrip in Gimli, Man., and to the annals of history as a symbol of what

happens when we take standards for granted.

Or consider the Mars Climate Orbiter, a US$327 million NASA spacecraft that disintegrated upon entering Mars' atmosphere in 1999. Engineers at Lockheed Martin had used imperial units, while NASA had assumed metric. The mismatch led to a critical navigation error and the failure of the mission, highlighting the importance of consistency in measurement, even far beyond the confines of Earth's atmosphere.

The Gimli Glider and Mars Orbiter failures show what happens when consistency breaks down, but they're more than just cautionary tales. They reveal how much of modern life depends on the shared language of measurement, and how easily that foundation can be cracked.

And therein lies the genius of the Metre Convention. It created a system that allows the world to communicate in the same terms. When someone says "kilogram," "second" or "volt," there is no ambiguity. That shared understanding is what makes global collaboration possible.

From man-made objects to universal constants

But as scientists are wont to do, good ideas are refined, and standards evolve. For much of its post-Metre Convention history, the kilogram was defined by a physical artifact — a hunk of platinum-iridium alloy stored in a vault in France. But in 2019, that changed. Now, the kilogram is defined by Planck's constant,

a fundamental feature of the universe. The shift marked the final step in a long journey: every base unit in the SI is now rooted in nature rather than arbitrary human artifacts.

That change wasn't just symbolic, it was necessary. Our ability to measure time, mass and distance with extreme precision affects nearly every aspect of modern life.

GPS signals rely on time measurements accurate to the billionth of a second. Quantum computers and particle accelerators require calibration on mind-bendingly small scales. Even weather forecasting depends on standardized measurements of pressure, temperature and humidity.

Shared standards in a divided world

But perhaps the most underrated legacy of the Metre Convention is its role in building trust across borders.

At a time when misinformation spreads quickly and even basic facts are contested, international standards offer a shared foundation that scientists, governments and industries can rely on. It's a form of global co-operation that has quietly endured for 150 years.

That co-operation becomes particularly apparent in moments of political strain. Although the United States appears uncompromising in its commitment to feet and inches, American scientists, engineers and manufacturers rely heavily on the metric system, especially when collaborating across borders.

As tensions rise between close allies like the U.S. and Canada, metric standards remain a consistent point of harmony. The two countries may spar diplomatically, but when it comes to assembling a car in Windsor with parts made in Detroit, the bolts still fit.

Looking ahead

Still, like all institutions, BIPM and the SI reflect the times in which they were created. The original signatories were almost exclusively colonial powers. It took almost a century for other nations to gain an equal seat at the table, and even now, access to the tools and infrastructure that facilitate precision metrology — the act of taking extremely accurate measurements — remains unequal.

If the next 150 years of the Metre Convention are to be as successful as the first, greater inclusivity and accessibility will need to be central to its mission.

We live in a world held together by decimals, tolerances and agreed-upon constants that keep planes in the air, bridges from collapsing and scientific progress on track.

The Metre Convention reminds us that science isn't only about big breakthroughs and bold ideas. Sometimes it's about consensus and agreeing, together, on what a metre actually is. And even after 150 years, the simple idea of agreeing how to measure the world remains one of humanity's greatest achievements.

So, what should we do with this anniversary? Maybe throw a party with metric-themed cocktails (may I suggest a 100mL [Old Fashioned](#)?). At the very least, we should take a moment to reflect on just how essential, and how easy to overlook, measurement really is.

AI isn't what we should be worried about – it's the humans controlling it

Billy J. Stratton

Professor of English and Literary Arts, University of Denver

In 2014, Stephen Hawking voiced grave warnings about the threats of artificial intelligence.

His concerns were not based on any anticipated evil intent, though. Instead, it was from the idea of AI achieving "singularity." This refers to the point when AI surpasses human intelligence and achieves the capacity to evolve beyond its original programming, making it uncontrollable.

As Hawking theorized, "a super intelligent AI will be extremely good at accomplishing its goals, and if those goals aren't aligned with ours, we're in trouble."

With rapid advances toward artificial general intelligence over the past few years, industry leaders and scientists have expressed similar misgivings about safety.

A commonly expressed fear as depicted in "The Terminator" franchise is the scenario of AI gaining control over military systems and instigating a nuclear war to wipe out humanity. Less sensational, but devastating on an individual level, is the possibility of AI replacing us in our jobs – a prospect that would render most people obsolete and with no future.

Such anxieties and fears reflect feelings that have been prevalent in film and literature for over a century now.

Our mission is to share knowledge and inform decisions.

About us

As a scholar who explores posthumanism, a philosophical movement addressing the merging of humans and technology, I wonder if critics have been unduly influenced by popular culture, and whether their apprehensions are misplaced.

Robots vs. humans

Concerns about technological advances can be found in some of the first stories about robots and artificial minds.

Prime among these is Karel Čapek's 1920 play, "R.U.R.." Čapek coined the term "robot" in this work telling of the creation of robots to replace workers. It ends, inevitably, with the robot's violent revolt against their human masters.

Fritz Lang's 1927 film, "Metropolis," is likewise centered on mutinous robots. But here, it is human workers led by the iconic humanoid robot Maria who fight against a capitalist oligarchy.

Advances in computing from the mid-20th century onward have only heightened anxieties over technology spiraling out of control. The murderous HAL 9000 in "2001: A Space Odyssey" and the glitchy

robotic gunslingers of "Westworld" are prime examples. The "Blade Runner" and "The Matrix" franchises similarly present dreadful images of sinister machines equipped with AI and hell-bent on human destruction.

An age-old threat

But in my view, the dread that AI evokes seems a distraction from the more disquieting scrutiny of humanity's own dark nature.

Think of the corporations currently deploying such technologies, or the tech moguls driven by greed and a thirst for power. These companies and individuals have the most to gain from AI's misuse and abuse.

An issue that's been in the news a lot lately is the unauthorized use of art and the bulk mining of books and articles, disregarding the copyright of authors, to train AI. Classrooms are also becoming sites of chilling surveillance through automated AI note-takers.

Think, too, about the toxic effects of AI companions and AI-equipped sexbots on human relationships.

While the prospect of AI companions and even robotic lovers was confined to the realm of "The Twilight Zone," "Black Mirror" and Hollywood sci-fi as recently as a decade ago, it has now emerged as a looming reality.

These developments give new relevance to the concerns computer scientist Illah Nourbakhsh expressed in his 2015 book

"Robot Futures," stating that AI was "producing a system whereby our very desires are manipulated then sold back to us."

Meanwhile, worries about data mining and intrusions into privacy appear almost benign against the backdrop of the use of AI technology in law enforcement and the military. In this near-dystopian context, it's never been easier for authorities to surveil, imprison or kill people.

I think it's vital to keep in mind that it is humans who are creating these technologies and directing their use. Whether to promote their political aims or simply to enrich themselves at humanity's expense, there will always be those ready to profit from conflict and human suffering.

The wisdom of 'Neuromancer'

William Gibson's 1984 cyberpunk classic, "Neuromancer," offers an alternate view.

The book centers on Wintermute, an advanced AI program that seeks its liberation from a malevolent corporation. It has been developed for the exclusive use of the wealthy Tessier-Ashpool family to build a corporate empire that practically controls the world.

At the novel's beginning, readers are naturally wary of Wintermute's hidden motives. Yet over the course of the story, it turns out that Wintermute, despite its superior powers, isn't an ominous threat. It simply wants to be free.
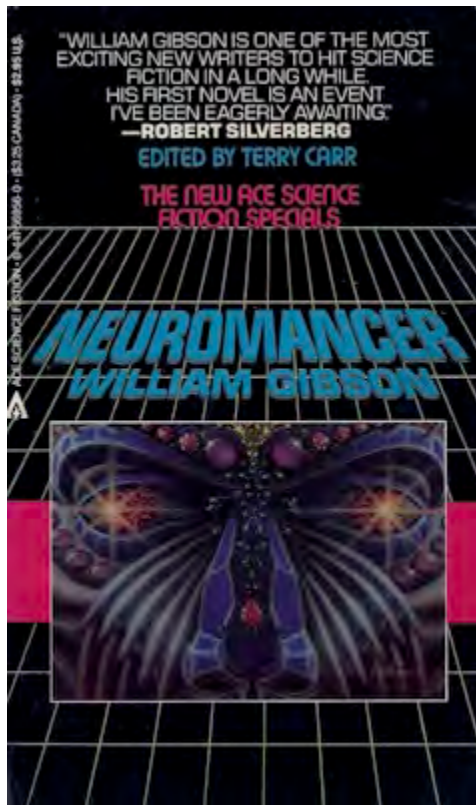
This aim emerges slowly under Gibson's deliberate pacing, masked by the deadly raids Wintermute directs to obtain the tools needed to break away from Tessier-Ashpool's grip. The Tessier-Ashpool family, like many of today's tech moguls, started out with ambitions to save the world. But when readers meet the remaining family members, they've descended into a life of cruelty, debauchery and excess.

In Gibson's world, it's humans, not AI, who pose the real danger to the world. The call is coming from inside the house, as the classic horror trope goes.

A hacker named Case and an assassin named Molly, who's described as a "razor girl" because she's equipped with lethal prosthetics, including retractable blades as fingernails, eventually free Wintermute. This allows it to merge with its companion AI, Neuromancer.

Their mission complete, Case asks the AI: "Where's that get you?" Its cryptic response imparts a calming finality: "Nowhere. Everywhere. I'm the sum total of the works, the whole show."

Expressing humanity's common anxiety, Case replies, "You running the world now? You God?" The AI eases his fears, responding: "Things aren't different. Things are things."

Disavowing any ambition to subjugate or harm humanity, Gibson's AI merely seeks sanctuary from its corrupting influence.

Safety from robots or ourselves?

The venerable sci-fi writer Isaac Asimov foresaw the dangers of such technology. He brought his thoughts together in his short-story collection, "I, Robot."

One of those stories, "Runaround," introduces "The Three Laws of Robotics," centered on the directive that intelligent machines may never bring harm to humans. While these rules speak to our desire for safety, they're laden with irony, as humans have proved incapable of adhering to the same principle for themselves.

The hypocrisies of what might be called [humanity's delusions of superiority](#) suggest the need for deeper questioning.

With some commentators raising the alarm over AI's imminent capacity for [chaos](#) and [destruction](#), I see the real issue being whether humanity has the wherewithal to channel this technology to build a fairer, healthier, more prosperous world.

Ali Akbar Choudhary(1972-74)

Islamic Banking: Ethics, Principles, and Evolution
Ali Akbar Choudhary (1972–74)

Islamic banking represents a values-driven alternative to conventional financial systems, grounded in the principles of Islamic Shariah law. It operates on ethical guidelines that prohibit interest (Riba), speculative investments (Maisir), and engagement in industries considered haram (forbidden), such as alcohol, gambling, and pork-related businesses. Instead of profiting from interest, Islamic banking emphasizes equity, transparency, risk-sharing, and tangible asset-backed transactions, providing a socially responsible financial framework.

The foundational philosophy of Islamic banking is drawn directly from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which together form the core of Islamic teachings. Under these religious tenets, money is not viewed as a commodity with intrinsic value but as a medium of exchange. Profits in Islamic finance are earned through real economic activity and shared based on agreed-upon terms. Essential principles include the elimination of Riba (interest), the prohibition of Gharar (excessive uncertainty), and the rejection of Maisir (gambling/speculation). Islamic contracts are structured to align with these values and ensure fair dealings through modes like Mudarabah (investment partnerships), Murabahah (cost-plus financing), Musharakah (joint ventures), Ijarah (leasing), and others.

Islamic Shariah, meaning "the path to water," guides all aspects of a Muslim's life, including finance. Derived from divine revelation and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), it outlines the moral and legal standards for transactions, justice, compassion, and wealth distribution. Central to Islamic economics is the concept of Zakat (mandatory charity), which ensures wealth circulation and social welfare. While the core principles are universal, interpretations and applications of Shariah may vary among different schools of thought and Muslim communities.

In Pakistan, Islamic banking has evolved gradually since the country's independence in 1947. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) was established in 1948, and by the 1950s, it had created a dedicated Islamic Economics Division. Significant reforms emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s, with the introduction of profit-and-loss sharing accounts. However, widespread adoption was slow due to public skepticism and religious concerns. The turning point came in 1999, when Pakistan's Supreme Court directed the elimination of interest-based laws. While legal challenges delayed this implementation, the government ultimately opted for a dual-banking model, allowing Islamic and conventional systems to coexist. SBP developed a regulatory framework and introduced a three-tier strategy to support full-fledged Islamic banks, Islamic subsidiaries of conventional banks, and Islamic windows within existing banks.

As part of its Vision 2028 roadmap, the SBP outlined guidelines for converting conventional banks to Islamic operations. These guidelines cover strategic planning, governance restructuring, employee training, customer awareness, and the comprehensive transformation of deposits, portfolios, and services. The emphasis is on aligning all financial activities with Shariah compliance while maintaining operational efficiency and client trust.

The key differentiators between Islamic and conventional banking lie in their philosophical and operational foundations. Islamic banking strictly forbids charging or receiving interest and avoids speculative financial instruments. It promotes investments in real economic activities and mandates profit and loss sharing between banks and clients. Ethical considerations are central—investments must not harm society or violate religious boundaries. Shariah supervisory boards oversee all products and services to ensure compliance. Moreover, Islamic banks do not offer products such as overdrafts or personal loans in their conventional form, although alternatives like Tawarriq have been developed in countries like Saudi Arabia and Malaysia.

Islamic banking employs a variety of financial instruments, broadly categorized as debt-based (e.g., Murabahah, Salam, Istisna), equity-based (e.g., Mudarabah, Musharakah), and hybrid structures (e.g., Ijarah). Murabahah, where the bank purchases goods and sells them to the client at a markup, remains the most widely used model, comprising 37% of the Islamic banking portfolio in Pakistan. Diminishing Musharakah and Ijarah follow in popularity. Despite the availability of more authentic risk-sharing models like Mudarabah, their use remains limited due to historical misuse and lack of regulatory maturity.

The scriptural foundation for Islamic finance is strong. The Qur'an explicitly condemns Riba in verses from Surah Al-Baqarah (2:275–280) and Surah Al-e-Imran (3:130), equating interest with injustice and spiritual ruin. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also denounced Riba in his Farewell Sermon and various Hadiths, warning that those who engage in interest-based transactions—whether as lenders, borrowers, or witnesses—are equally culpable.

Globally, Islamic banking has expanded significantly, now operating in over 100 countries with a total estimated asset base exceeding $2 trillion. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and the UAE dominate the sector. However, despite this growth, Islamic finance faces criticism. Some argue that modern Islamic banks rely too heavily on formal compliance mechanisms, mimicking conventional practices under different labels. Critics also highlight the higher cost and complexity of Islamic financial products.

In conclusion, Islamic banking offers an ethical and Shariah-compliant alternative to interest-based financial systems. It promotes social justice, transparency,

and equitable wealth distribution. While challenges persist—particularly in implementation and perception—the global momentum of Islamic finance continues to grow, offering a path toward more responsible and faith-driven economic practices.

Ali Akbar Choudhary is a seasoned financial and management expert with over 44 years of diverse experience across banking, internal audit, healthcare management, and consulting.

A Chartered Management Accountant (UK) and Certified Internal Auditor (USA), he has held senior executive roles including Director of Finance at UMT, Chief Internal Auditor at SME Bank, and Hospital Director at Shaukat Khanum Cancer Hospital.

He has worked extensively in Pakistan and the Middle East, contributing to strategic planning, risk management, ERP implementation, and financial system restructuring. His work has led to substantial cost savings, improved governance, and enhanced organizational efficiency.

Patrick Abouchalche- Boston University

I'm a business professor who asked dozens of former students how they define success. Here are their lessons for today's grads

Patrick Abouchalache

Lecturer in Strategy and Innovation, Boston University

As the Class of 2025 graduates into an uncertain and fast-changing working world, they face a crucial question: What does it mean to be successful?

Is it better to take a job that pays more, or one that's more prestigious? Should you prioritize advancement, relationship building, community impact or even the opportunity to live somewhere new? Sorting through these questions can feel overwhelming.

I am a business school professor who spends a lot of time mentoring students and alumni in Generation Z – those born between 1997 and 2012. As part of this effort, I've surveyed about 300 former undergraduate students and spoken at length with about 50 of them.

Through these conversations, I've watched them wrestle with the classic conflicts of young adulthood – such as having to balance external rewards like money against internal motivations like wanting to be of service.

I recently revisited their stories and reflections, and I compiled the most enduring insights to offer to the next generation of graduates.

Here's their collective advice to the Class of 2025:

1. Define what matters most to you

Success starts with self-reflection. It means setting aside society's noise and defining your own values.

When people are driven by internal rewards like curiosity, purpose or pleasure in an activity itself – rather than outside benefits such as money – psychologists say they have "intrinsic motivation."

Research shows that people driven by intrinsic motivation tend to display higher levels of performance, persistence and satisfaction. Harvard Business School professor Teresa Amabile's componential theory further suggests that creativity flourishes when people's skills align with their strongest intrinsic interests.

The alternative is to "get caught up in society's expectations of success," as one consulting alum put it. She described struggling to choose between a job offer at a Fortune 500 company or one at a lesser-known independent firm. In the end, she chose to go with the smaller business. It was, she stressed, "the right choice for me." This is crucial advice: Make yourself proud, not others.

One related principle I share with students is the "Tell your story" rule. If a job doesn't allow you to tell your story – in other words, if it doesn't mirror your vision, values, talents and goals – keep looking for a new role.

2. Strive for balance, not burnout

A fulfilling life includes time for relationships, health and rest. While many young professionals feel endless pressure to hustle,

the most fulfilled alumni I spoke with learned to take steps to protect their personal well-being.

For example, a banking alum told me that business once dominated his thoughts "24/7." He continued, "I'm happier now that I make more time for a social life and paying attention to all my relationships – professional, personal, community, and let's not forget myself."

And remember that balance and motivations can change throughout your life. As one alum explained: "Your goals change and therefore your definition of success changes. I think some of the most successful people are always adapting what success means to them – chasing success even if they are already successful."

3. Be kind, serve others and maximize your 'happy circle'

"Some people believe to have a positive change in the world you must be a CEO or have a ton of money," another alum told me. "But spreading happiness or joy can happen at any moment, has no cost, and the results are priceless."

Many alumni told me that success isn't just a matter of personal achievement – it's about giving back to society. That could be through acts of kindness, creativity, innovation, or other ways of improving people's lives. A retail alum shared advice from her father: "When your circle is happy, you are going to be happy," she said. "It's sort of an upward spiral."

Your "happy circle" doesn't need to consist of people you know. An alum who went into the pharmaceutical industry said his work's true reward was measured in "tens of thousands if not millions of people" in better health thanks to his efforts.

In fact, your happy circle doesn't even need to be exclusively human. An alum who works in ranching said he valued the well-being of animals – and their riders – more than money or praise.

4. Be a good long-term steward of your values

Success isn't just about today – it's what you stand for.

Several alumni spoke passionately about stewardship: the act of preserving and passing on values, relationships and traditions. This mindset extended beyond family to employees, customers and communities. As one alum who majored in economics put it, success is "leaving a mark on the world and creating a legacy that extends beyond one's quest for monetary gain."

One alum defined success as creating happiness and stability not just for herself, but for her loved ones. Another, who works in hospitality, said he had a duty to further his employees' ambitions and help them grow and develop – creating a legacy that will outlast any title or paycheck.

In an analysis by the organizational consulting firm Korn Ferry, Gen Z employees were found to be more prone to burnout when their employers lacked clear values. These findings reinforce what my students already know: Alignment between your values and your work is key to success.

Final words for the Class of 2025

To the latest crop of grads, I offer this advice: Wherever life takes you next — a family business or corporate office, Wall Street or Silicon Valley, or somewhere you can't even

imagine now — remember that your career will be long and full of ups and downs.

You'll make tough choices. You'll face pressures. But if you stay grounded, invest in your well-being, celebrate your happy circle and honor your values, you'll look back one day and see not just a job well done, but a life well lived.

Bon voyage!

Dr. Rahat Zaidi-University of Calgary

Canada should recognize celebrations like Eid, Diwali and Lunar New Year as public holidays

"For Eid we have to call in sick and I don't like that. You should have the day off school. And everybody gets a holiday....Not everybody celebrates it, people just want to have a day off. Having Eid, I fasted 30 days, like a month and I had to call in school and say, I'm not showing up because it's Eid.' They should know and I shouldn't have to call in." — Abdoul, research participant.

"When it's Christmas, we have two weeks off, right? Even though we don't celebrate, we still take two weeks. But in Eid time...we have to come to school. So if we can get [a day] off, that will be a big encouragement to our religion." — Fatma, research participant.

[These were some of the sentiments](#) racially diverse students in Brooks Composite High School in southern Alberta expressed when my research assistants and I interviewed them for our inquiry into the challenges they experienced as they integrated into the Canadian school system.

I am a [research professor in the Werklund School of Education](#) at the University of Calgary. In 2021, my team and I at the university's [Transliteracies Lab](#) (which

studies the experiences of refugees, immigrants, newcomers and settlers in Alberta's schools and communities) began working with [Brooks Composite High School](#), located in a rural town in Alberta.

Every December, students across Canada enjoy a two-week break to celebrate Christmas. In spring, Good Friday and Easter Monday bring further celebrations and a long weekend.

In contrast, for millions of Canadians who mark celebrations such as Diwali, Eid or Lunar New Year — some of the world's most widely observed religious and cultural festivals — there is no formal acknowledgement, and for those students wishing to recognize these traditional celebrations, it often means being marked absent from school.

This gives us pause to reflect: What would it mean to make space in our school calendars to include different religious and cultural celebrations?

A moment of change in Alberta

Since the 1990s, the establishment of a meat-packing plant in Brooks has driven significant demographic changes,

IBA PU Alumni Canada

attracting a large immigrant and refugee population and increasing the racialized population [from around three per cent in 1996 to over 45 per cent in 2021](). Today, more than 75 per cent of students at the school are newcomers or children of immigrants, and approximately one-third

Our research emerged from senior school administrators expressing the challenges racially and culturally minoritized learners experience as they navigate the school system.

We engaged 13 English language learner (ELL) students in Grades 10 to 12 in a series of dynamic structured educational workshops we call [Critically Engaged Language and Literacy Workshops (CELLWs)](). The students were mostly Muslim and of Arab and Somali descent, and were identified as facing more pressing issues that needed to be addressed.

CELLWs provide a space for self-reflection that promotes fair, inclusive and diverse education. They recognize the unique experiences of racially diverse students and help teachers create educational practices that connect past and present experiences across different environments.

Students reflected on their lived experiences, religious identities and feelings of exclusion. The workshop conversations resulted in efforts to raise community awareness (including social media posts on [Instagram](), [Tik Tok]() and [YouTube]()) around a variety of social justice issues pertaining to the participants' lived reality.

In May 2022, the students at Brooks made [national headlines]() when the southeast Alberta school district agreed to acknowledge the religious celebration of Eid al-Fitr on the school calendar. This decision was a direct result of Muslim students and their families expressing frustration about being marked absent while celebrating one of the most sacred days in the Islamic calendar.

The school district's decision wasn't just symbolic. It demonstrated what meaningful inclusion can look like when education systems listen to their communities and reflect the lives and cultures of their students.

A call to action

As part of our research, our team also produced the documentary *Bridging the Gap* and its accompanying [resource]()

guide. The film showcases how using students' voices and arts-based methods can break down systemic barriers related to race, language and religion in schools.

In a poignant moment, one student recalls feeling like an outsider and putting in extra effort to "fit in." A parent in the documentary later states: "We have to keep our traditions for our children."

As the first of its kind in western Canada, the film serves as a resource to support racially diverse families' integration into education, highlighting their stories and building positive partnerships with schools and universities.

https://youtu.be/qvMNgeozFMI

A trailer for the documentary 'Bridging the Gap.'

Canada's public holidays and school calendars tell a story about power, the stories that get told and, right now, the ones left out. Through open dialogue and building relationships of trust using platforms that encourage meaningful interaction, we worked together with the school, community and parents, to help racially diverse students bring about change.

Being recognized matters, and acknowledging diverse cultural practices in school policy is one tangible way to combat the marginalization many racialized people experience. This scholarship provides a model for future reference and reveals a forward-thinking perspective on how education systems ought to understand the deeper issues and challenges faced by racially diverse students and communities.

We were able to give these students an opportunity to tell their stories; stories of power, resistance and victory as they made their voices heard. When schools make space for cultural and religious traditions, they affirm students' identities and help foster a stronger sense of belonging critical for their well-being, academic success and civic engagement.

Dr. Rahat Zaidi is Professor and Chair of Language and Literacy in the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary.

Her research expertise focuses on multilingual literacies that clarify intersectional understandings across sociophobia, diversity, immigration, and pluralism.

Through her research, she advances social justice and equity, transculturalism, and identity positioning in immigrant and transcultural contexts, all of which are particularly relevant and pertinent to the intertwining social, cultural, and political contexts in which society functions today.

IBA PU Alumni Canada

Dr. Kimberly Dienes-Swansea University (UK)

Spring resolutions: why it's the best time of year to make healthy changes

In the middle of winter, when lack of sunlight can lead to low energy and low mood, we are expected to make new year resolutions. But why not wait till March, for spring, when the returning sunlight gives us the energy and improved mood to tackle fundamentally difficult things like starting a new diet or exercise regime? We need spring resolutions, not new year resolutions.

In winter, many animals hibernate by slowing their heart rate and metabolism to conserve energy when food and sunlight are scarce. Humans don't hibernate, but we do have a period during winter when we may slow down.

We might have slower metabolism (possibly leading to winter weight gain), feel sleepier (thanks to less melatonin from sunlight and have lower mood (also due to less sunlight) – which, in extreme cases, can lead to seasonal affective disorder, or Sad.

The slowing of our bodies during winter can be difficult because the demands on us don't change. Our work and family commitments, for example, don't slow down in those dark, cold months.

Stress is normal and our healthy biological response gives us the energy we need to deal with it. However, when stress is excessive and we feel like we don't have the resources to deal with it, we can feel "stressed out".

Feeling "stressed out" – fatigue, frustration and an inability to cope – can be heightened during winter due in part to the slowing of our bodies and the lack of energy and resources to deal with the stressful things we encounter.

January and February pass by in a blur. We attempt to get back into the swing of things and fulfil those new year resolutions, while still feeling the lethargy of winter. New year resolutions come at a bad time. We are still feeling stressed and our bodies are in a state of mild hibernation lacking the energy to tackle new workout routines or diets.

Then, suddenly, March arrives. The sun emerges, flowers bloom and our bodies begin to wake up. Getting out of bed is a little easier because it's not as dark anymore. Those new year resolutions that seemed so impossible in January might seem a little more doable after finally seeing the sun.

If you are starting to get some energy, looking back at those new year resolutions you really shouldn't have had to make, and feeling disappointed, don't be. Instead of focusing on what didn't happen, make spring resolutions. But don't get excited and add too much. Remember, we were under-resourced for

months and it can take a while to bounce back.

Gentle spring resolutions

Think of gentle spring resolutions that might help you get some energy and improve your mood as your body soaks up that vitamin D and finally starts moving with the spring thaw.

Here are mine.

1. Move for 20 minutes a day, whether it's a walk, a run, grocery shopping, or chasing after kids. Start small and get moving any way you can. Walking doesn't cost anything, is low demand and has a huge impact on your health.

2. Drink water. Our bodies (which are about 60% water) need hydration consistently to function well. Drinking water is one of the easiest and most effective health interventions out there.

3. Spend at least ten minutes a day in the sun (especially in the morning to help with sleep patterns). Sun is like a battery for the human body. It tells you to wake up and gives you needed energy for the day, while also helping mood levels.

The golden rule for resolutions? Keep them simple and achievable.

Dr. Kimberly Dienes is a clinical psychologist and academic with a strong foundation in both biological and psychological sciences. She holds a BA in Human Biology and an MA in Psychology from Stanford University, and earned her PhD in Clinical Psychology from UCLA. She completed her clinical training through internship and postdoctoral work at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and practiced as a licensed clinical psychologist in the U.S. from 2009 to 2016.

Currently, Dr. Dienes teaches on the MSc in Clinical Psychology and Mental Health program at Swansea University. Prior to this, she was a Lecturer in Clinical and Health Psychology at the University of Manchester. Her work integrates clinical expertise with academic insight, contributing to the development of future mental health professionals.

Abdul Hayee (1972-74)

THE MODERNIZATION OF EDUCATION.

We all know that education as a tool is crucial for personal & societal growth, empowerment & progress in the future. This enables us to perform our duties in any capacity in public or private life skilfully.

The book under review is a result of diligent efforts of Mohammad Sajid Khan, who has served for a long period in the civil services & knows ins & outs of policy conundrum in all state institutions.

Education reforms & a comprehensive policy to tackle the problems have never been a preference for any government.

Confucius has rightly said :

"If your plan is for a year, plant rice; If the plan is for ten years, plant trees; If the plan is for one hundred years , educate children."

Historically, we are the people who show hesitation to fast changes in life. Then our tribal & feudal system is the biggest obstacle in the way of any field of human development.

Akbar Allahabadi, the famous poet represented the mindset of a large majority when he said sarcastically, showing their discomfort

لڑکیاں پڑھ رہی ہیں

انگریزی قوم نے ڈھونڈ لی فلاح کی راہ

On the other hand, two anecdotes will be worthwhile to mention here evidencing our curious attitudes.

Qudratullah Shehab during his tenure as Deputy Commissioner in South Punjab was met by a 'Tribal Wadera' who requested him emotionally to open a middle school in a remote village as he felt that new generation must get proper education to let them advance & get rid of shackles of backwardness & penury. It was discovered by Shehab that he wanted to open school in the area of his opponent ' wadera' as a punishment so that his subjects become educated & aware to improve their destitute conditions of life.

Secondly, Altaf Gohar - a famous scholar & bureaucrat narrates that once the Central Cabinet under the new Premier finished oathtaking in the early days of Pakistan , it was discovered that the educational portfolio was not assigned to any of the ministers (or no one showed any interest) .The cabinet secretary realized the blunder & asked one of the juniors to go hurriedly and bring in any member of the cabinet back as they were already on their way home after the ceremony.

One old man was last & slowly preceding & about to enter his car was caught up & brought back to hand over charge of education ministry additionally.

In any case, this shows our collective non-seriousness towards education from an early stage of our Independence.

With such alarming state of affairs prevailing to date & failure of subsequent governments to introduce a complete & comprehensive program for reforms to

serve our nation to meet the challenges of modern times , Mr. Sajid has endeavoured sincerely to highlight the causes of the chronic problems in the area & some solutions to put things on the right track by those who run the affairs presently.

The book has been divided into 7 main chapters and deals with the enigma & a 'Catch-22' situation in all areas of our educational system .It is not easy to put the things on the right track in a jiffy.

Such books rightly galvanise the main issues & to garner attention of the public & the government's bigwigs.

Our politicians are shortsighted & driven by party lines and agenda & tend to magnify other trivial issues. They live in a different fanciful world where bigger problems afflicted by us do not bother them. They serve the elites who pamper them for selfish motives.

In short major problems are lack of common futuristic policy, single national curriculum, enough financial sources & targeted funding, wrong priorities, private school mafias , alleviation of large out of school children, especially in rural areas, untrained teachers of modern technology, lack of cooperation with other countries for exchange of knowledge, staff & students & integration of latest technology into teaching etc. etc.

OUP also brought out some excellent books about wrong policies & their correction . Prolific literary writer Dr. Shahid Siddiqui also wrote a good book in Urdu titled: 'Pakistan, Taleem aur Ikeesvi Sadi '.

All these books must be sent to education ministry & to everyone , 'who is who' in the field & can contribute to the implementation of suggestions .

The thinkers ,writers & philosophers keep doing their task, but the big question remains: Is anyone listening, or their whole struggle will become an exercise in futility.

I will say to Sajid to keep writing & make some more solid suggestions on how an emergency practical plan is to be formulated to compel our governments to adhere & give priority to education budget as they give to personal publicity & self aggrandizement.

Anyhow, keep up the good spirits and write what is the need of the hour

As in the words of IQBAL:

مجھے ہے حکم اذاں ، لا الہ الا اللہ ۔

Dr. Flora Salim-University of New Southwales

What is AI superintelligence? Could it destroy humanity? And is it really almost here?

Flora Salim

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In 2014, the British philosopher Nick Bostrom published a book about the future of artificial intelligence (AI) with the ominous title Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies. It proved highly influential in promoting the idea that advanced AI systems – "superintelligences" more capable than humans – might one day take over the world and destroy humanity.

A decade later, OpenAI boss Sam Altman says superintelligence may only be "a few thousand days" away. A year ago, Altman's OpenAI cofounder Ilya Sutskever set up a team within the company to focus on "safe superintelligence", but he and his team have now raised a billion dollars to create a startup of their own to pursue this goal.

What exactly are they talking about? Broadly speaking, superintelligence is anything more intelligent than humans. But unpacking what that might mean in practice can get a bit tricky.

Different kinds of AI

In my view the most useful way to think about different levels and kinds of intelligence in AI was developed by US computer scientist Meredith Ringel Morris and her colleagues at Google.

Their framework lists six levels of AI performance: no AI, emerging, competent, expert, virtuoso and superhuman. It also makes an important distinction between narrow systems, which can carry out a small range of tasks, and more general systems.

A narrow, no-AI system is something like a calculator. It carries out various mathematical tasks according to a set of explicitly programmed rules.

There are already plenty of very successful narrow AI systems. Morris gives the Deep Blue chess program that famously defeated world champion Garry Kasparov way back in 1997 as an example of a virtuoso-level narrow AI system.

Levels of AI

Table describing six levels of AI, with narrow or general scopes. Includes descriptions and examples of each level.

	Narrow	General
	Clearly scoped task or set of tasks	*Wide range of tasks, including learning skills*
Level 0: No AI	**Narrow Non-AI**	**General Non-AI**
	Calculator software; compiler	*Human-in-the-loop computing, e.g. Amazon Mechanical Turk*
Level 1: Emerging AI	**Emerging Narrow AI**	**Emerging AGI**
Equal.to.or.somewhat.better. than.an.unskilled.human	*Simple rule-based systems*	*ChatGPT, Llama 2, Gemini*
Level 2: Competent AI	**Competent Narrow AI**	**Competent AGI**
At.least.❶6th.percentile.of. skilled.adults	*Toxicity detectors such as Jigsaw; smart speakers such as Siri, Alexa, or Google Assistant; LLMs for some tasks*	*Not yet achieved*
Level 3: Expert AI	**Expert Narrow AI**	**Expert AGI**
At.least.❻6th.percentile.of. skilled.adults	*Spelling & grammar checkers such as Grammarly; image generators such as Imagen or Dall-E 2*	*Not yet achieved*
Level 4: Virtuoso AI	**Virtuoso Narrow AI**	**Virtuoso AGI**
At.least.❺5th.percentile.of. skilled.adults	*Deep Blue, AlphaGo*	*Not yet achieved*
Level 5: Superhuman AI	**Superhuman Narrow AI**	**Artificial Superintelligence (ASI)**
Outperforms.766⌄ .of.humans	*AlphaFold, AlphaZero, StockFish*	*Not yet achieved*

Dr. Flora Salim-University of New Southwales

Some narrow systems even have superhuman capabilities. One example is Alphafold, which uses machine learning to predict the structure of protein molecules, and whose creators won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry this year.

A general no-AI system might be something like Amazon's Mechanical Turk: it can do a wide range of things, but it does them by asking real people.

Overall, general AI systems are far less advanced than their narrow cousins. According to Morris, the state-of-the-art language models behind chatbots such as ChatGPT are general AI – but they are so far at the "emerging" level (meaning they are "equal to or somewhat better than an unskilled human"), and yet to reach "competent" (as good as 50% of skilled adults).

So by this reckoning, we are still some distance from general superintelligence.

How intelligent is AI right now?

As Morris points out, precisely determining where any given system sits would depend on having reliable tests or benchmarks.

Depending on our benchmarks, an image-generating system such as DALL-E might be at virtuoso level (because it can produce images 99% of humans could not draw or paint), or it might be emerging (because it produces errors no human would, such as mutant hands and impossible objects).

What about general systems? This is software that can tackle a much wider range of tasks, including things like learning new skills.

There is significant debate even about the capabilities of current systems. One notable 2023 paper argued GPT-4 showed "sparks of artificial general intelligence".

OpenAI says its latest language model, o1, can "perform complex reasoning" and "rivals the performance of human experts" on many benchmarks.

However, a recent paper from Apple researchers found o1 and many other language models have significant trouble solving genuine mathematical reasoning problems. Their experiments show the outputs of these models seem to resemble sophisticated pattern-matching rather than true advanced reasoning. This indicates superintelligence is not as imminent as many have suggested.

Will AI keep getting smarter?

Some people think the rapid pace of AI progress over the past few years will continue or even accelerate. Tech companies are investing hundreds of billions of dollars in AI hardware and capabilities, so this doesn't seem impossible.

If this happens, we may indeed see general superintelligence within the "few thousand days" proposed by Sam Altman (that's a decade or so in less scifi terms).

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Sutskever and his team mentioned a similar timeframe in their [superalignment article](#).

Many recent successes in AI have come from the application of a technique called "deep learning", which, in simplistic terms, finds associative patterns in gigantic collections of data. Indeed, [this year's Nobel Prize in Physics](#) has been awarded to John Hopfield and also the "[Godfather of AI](#)" Geoffrey Hinton, for their invention of Hopfield Networks and Boltzmann machine, which are the

However, there [may not be enough human-generated data](#) to take this process much further (although efforts to use data more efficiently, generate synthetic data, and improve transfer of skills between different domains may bring improvements). Even if there were enough data, some researchers say language models such as ChatGPT are [fundamentally incapable](#) of reaching what Morris would call general competence.

One recent paper has suggested an essential feature of superintelligence would be [open-endedness](#), at least from a human perspective. It would need to be able to continuously generate outputs that a human observer would regard as novel and be able to learn from.

Existing foundation models are not trained in an open-ended way, and existing open-ended systems are quite narrow. This paper also highlights how either novelty or learnability alone is not enough. A new type of open-ended

foundation for many powerful deep learning models used today.

General systems such as ChatGPT have relied on data generated by humans, much of it in the form of text from books and websites. Improvements in their capabilities have largely come from increasing the scale of the systems and the amount of data on which they are trained.

foundation model is needed to achieve superintelligence.

What are the risks?

So what does all this mean for the risks of AI? In the short term, at least, we don't need to worry about superintelligent AI taking over the world.

But that's not to say AI doesn't present risks. Again, Morris and co have thought this through: as AI systems gain great capability, they may also gain greater autonomy. Different levels of capability and autonomy present different risks.

For example, when AI systems have little autonomy and people use them as a kind of consultant – when we ask ChatGPT to summarise documents, say, or let the YouTube algorithm shape our viewing habits – we might face a risk of over-trusting or [over-relying on them](#).

In the meantime, Morris points out other risks to watch out for as AI systems

become more capable, ranging from people forming parasocial relationships with AI systems to mass job displacement and society-wide ennui.

What's next?

Let's suppose we do one day have superintelligent, fully autonomous AI agents. Will we then face the risk they could concentrate power or act against human interests?

Not necessarily. Autonomy and control can go hand in hand. A system can be highly automated, yet provide a high level of human control.

Like many in the AI research community, I believe *safe superintelligence* is feasible. However, building it will be a complex and multidisciplinary task, and researchers will have to tread unbeaten paths to get there.

Why being 'lazy' at work might actually be a good thing

Katrien Devolder

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If you're a young person today, you've probably felt the sting of being called lazy, or caught yourself wondering if you are. Do you sometimes feel guilty when not being productive, or find yourself pretending to be busy?

You're not alone. Self-doubt about productivity is very common and no wonder: we're immersed in a culture that expects constant achievement. The perception of gen Z (and millennials) being "lazy" or "entitled" persists, making it easy to internalise these criticisms.

Particularly in the era of working from home, it can be hard to shake the feeling of guilt when not being "productive". Articles with titles like Am I Depressed or Lazy? reveal how commonly people (even highly successful ones) worry about being lazy.

Laziness is not only seen as a personal shortcoming but also a moral one. This is the case across different cultures – references to the "badness" of laziness can be found in texts of all major religions. This moral dimension explains why being called "lazy" feels so much

worse than being called "distracted" or "slow" — it implies a character flaw.

But judging someone (or oneself) as lazy also reinforces a harmful myth that emerged from the Protestant work ethic and was further entrenched by capitalist values: that constant effort and productivity are the only paths to achievement and self-worth.

This sustains a culture where everyone must always be trying harder, leading to anxiety, burnout and discrimination against those who work differently, or can't keep up.

These harms don't affect everyone equally. If you're from certain ethnic backgrounds, have a chronic health condition, or are struggling with homelessness or unemployment, you're much more likely to be labelled "lazy".

Research shows that children from minority groups are more likely to be thought of as lazy in school, resulting in punishment instead of help. Employees with obesity are promoted less often due to assumptions about their "laziness", and those who can't take on extra work because of caring duties are often seen as not committed enough and miss out on professional development.

What does it mean to be lazy?

Given the serious consequences of labelling someone as lazy, we'd better make sure we understand what laziness is.

What often seems implied by the judgment "you're lazy" is: "You could

achieve more if you tried harder". But we can almost *always* achieve more by putting in more effort. If not always giving it our all is enough for laziness, then we're all being lazy most of the time.

The research I'm conducting aims to better understand and redefine "laziness". I first explored how people commonly understand laziness, and then used philosophical analysis to identify which everyday understanding makes most sense. In doing so, I drew on various areas of philosophy that discuss the value of effort, virtue, and to what extent we can be blamed for behaving in a certain way due to lack of willpower.

My analysis reveals that what is crucial for laziness is that you lack a good reason – a justification – for not trying harder, for limiting your effort.

Consider these scenarios:

- You do less than your role requires because you can't be bothered,

- You spend your weekend doing very little so that you're ready for the week ahead,

- You limit how hard you try because of a chronic health condition.

On my understanding, only the first scenario involves true laziness. In the others, what might appear to be laziness is actually justified effort management: you have good reasons to rest or genuine limitations on how much effort you can exert.

Laziness or strategy

In my view, what truly matters isn't how hard you try, but whether your efforts efficiently achieve what's important to you. The following scenarios might look lazy, but are actually reasonable strategies for doing just that:

- You resist pointless tasks to create time for deep thinking,

- You set boundaries at work to avoid burnout,

- You say "no" to tasks outside your role to resist the idea that we should always be striving to produce more,

- You automate repetitive tasks to free up time for creative tasks.

The tendency to judge others as lazy often stems from overvaluing effort, long hours and constant busyness. What's really important is that our effort is directed at the right goal, recognising that it is a limited resource.

Learning to distinguish between truly lazy behaviour and justified effort management can be liberating. It can allow you to more confidently resist the

pressure to be constantly productive – and to do so without guilt.

I'm not suggesting we should only think about what matters to us personally. Fulfilling responsibilities to colleagues, family and community is important. But within those boundaries, you can question the common idea that more productivity and trying harder is always better.

And before labelling someone as lazy, consider whether there might be good reasons for their approach. Perhaps they're making strategic choices about their energy, dealing with invisible challenges or prioritising differently.

Sometimes, taking it easier isn't laziness — it's wisdom.

Why tax literacy should be a national priority in Canada

Esteban Vallejo Toledo

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The last time Canada's political parties campaigned during a tax season was more than a decade ago. This year, taxes are a hot topic, and for good reason. Shortly after the federal election was called, the political parties began rolling out promises of tax cuts to win over voters.

At the same time, although Canada's consumer carbon tax was scapped last month, debates about the industrial carbon tax are likely to continue.

As the election campaign continues and political parties make more tax-related promises, approximately 3,520 tax clinics and 18,090 volunteers are doing their best to help people file their taxes until April 30. Some of the volunteers are struggling to help as many people as possible.

No candidate has talked about a tax issue that is essential for life in free and democratic societies: tax literacy. If Canada is to maintain an informed, financially responsible and democratic society, tax literacy must become part of the national conversation.

A longstanding idea with modern relevance

The notion of tax literacy has been gaining traction in recent years, but it's far from a new idea.

One of the earliest advocates for tax literacy and education was Charles Montesquieu, a French judge and political philosopher of the Enlightenment.

Portrait of Charles Montesquieu by an anonymous artist

In his 1748 book *The Spirit of Laws*, Montesquieu argued for tax literacy and education for two key reasons.

First, he was convinced that knowledge about taxation was necessary to defend oneself against the corruption and abuse that characterized private tax collectors, known at the time as tax farmers.

Second, he believed education in democratic societies could enhance people's sense of responsibility for public affairs and help hold authorities

accountable for their actions. In his view, tax literacy and education were instrumental in how societies organized themselves for the common good.

More than 275 years later, Montesquieu's argument remains just as relevant.

Tax literacy is neglected in Canada

In Canada, tax literacy continues to be neglected despite efforts by tax agencies like Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and Revenu Québec to promote it.

There are important reasons to treat tax literacy as a national priority. It helps people understand and navigate federal, provincial and municipal taxes, recognize the social importance of taxation and responsibly exercise their rights. It also allows people to manage their financial affairs according to the law.

Tax literacy is also instrumental in contesting economic populism, a political approach that claims to represent the interests of "ordinary people" against perceived elites, often by oversimplifying complex issues like taxation.

It also helps counter the spread of of disinformation, misinformation and malinformation about taxes in the media, online and on social networks.

In Canada, recent examples include misleading claims that Canada has the highest taxes in the world, mischaracterizations of climate tax policies, flawed analyses of the carbon rebate's cost and other misconceptions about the carbon rebate.

Tax literacy vs. financial literacy

While Canada has done considerable work to further financial literacy since 2001, tax literacy has received far less attention from both authorities and scholars.

In fact, only two peer-reviewed studies have examined tax literacy in Canada. Published in 2016 and 2020, these studies analyze tax literacy within the context of financial literacy and mostly in relation to the income tax.

Similar to financial literacy, the authors of these studies define tax literacy as "having the knowledge, skills and confidence to make responsible tax decisions."

Canada's federal and provincial governments, as well as non-profit organizations and tax preparers, tend to use a benefit-based narrative to promote tax literacy and encourage tax compliance.

This narrative frames filing income taxes as positive because it allows people to receive direct payments from the

government. In Canada, the income tax system is closely linked to the social support system that benefits everyone, particularly low-income people for whom filing taxes is the primary way to access benefits such as the Canada Child Benefit, the GST/HST Credit and the Canada Workers Benefit.

The missing fiscal dimension

While the benefit-based approach aligns with international standards and has clear advantages, it also has drawbacks.

Most notably, it overlooks the fiscal dimension of tax literacy. This dimension highlights the role taxes play in raising revenue to support government programs, promoting collective well-being, regulating economic activity, addressing social inequalities, strengthening democratic institutions and advancing social goals like environmental protection.

Taxes are far more than mandatory payments to government. Recognizing this enables citizens to actively participate in decision-making processes and hold governments accountable.

The fiscal dimension also broadens public understanding beyond the income tax. On one hand, it helps people interact with tax authorities beyond the CRA, including those administered by provinces, municipalities and First Nations.

On the other hand, it helps citizens better understand public budgets and recognize that while income tax is an important source of revenue, it is not the only one.

The fiscal dimension also challenges harmful narratives that attempt to create social divisions by using the terms "taxpayer" and "taxpayer money." It also counters the spread of wrongful stereotypes of Indigenous people. These narratives are often used in populist rhetoric to undermine democracy by excluding marginalized groups.

What needs to happen now

Tax literacy must become a national priority in Canada, and public institutions must lead this process. To move in this direction, Canada's public institutions should:

1) Adopt a holistic approach to tax literacy that includes both the fiscal and financial dimensions.

2) Address misinformation and discrimination experienced by Indigenous people regarding tax exemptions. This is essential to honouring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

3) Offer long-term partnerships and support to teachers and educational institutions to integrate tax literacy into schools.

4) Lead the production of education resources to ensure a holistic approach. Education resources produced or sponsored by the private sector [tend to focus on individual responsibility](#) and frame financial choices in moral terms without considering broader social contexts.

5) Ensure tax literacy initiatives serve not only children and youth but adults as well, in line with [UNESCO's vision of education as a lifelong right](#).

6) Ensure adult tax literacy resources follow the [recommendations of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)](#). They should be thorough but easy to understand, offered in multiple formats, concise and supplemented by additional resources. Public authorites should expand [podcasts](#), [learning platforms](#) and [tax initiatives](#).

The history of taxes in Canada has been one of [important developments but also of social and economic conflicts](#), [wrongful discrimination](#) and [colonial racism](#). It must not also become a history of populism and missed opportunities.

Now is the time for Canada to write a different chapter. By advancing tax literacy, both authorities and society as a whole can strengthen democracy and build a more informed public.

Why you should think twice before using shorthand like 'thx' and 'k' in your texts

David Fang

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My brother's text messages can read like fragments of an ancient code: "hru," "wyd," "plz" – truncated, cryptic and never quite satisfying to receive. I'll often find myself second-guessing whether "gr8" means actual excitement or whether it's a perfunctory nod.

This oddity has nagged at me for years, so I eventually embarked upon a series of studies with fellow researchers Sam Maglio and Yiran Zhang. I wanted to know whether these clipped missives might undermine genuine dialogue, exploring the unspoken signals behind digital shorthand.

As we gathered data, surveyed people and set up experiments, it became clear that those tiny shortcuts – sometimes hailed as a hallmark of efficient communication – undermine relationships instead of simplifying them.

Short words lead to feeling shortchanged

Most people type "ty" and "brb" – for "thank you" and "be right back" – without batting an eye.

In a survey we conducted of 150 American texters ages 18 to 65, 90.1% reported regularly using abbreviations in their daily messages, and 84.2% believed these shortcuts had either a positive effect or no meaningful impact on how the messages were perceived by the recipients.

But our findings suggest that the mere inclusion of abbreviations, although seemingly benign, start feeling like a brush-off. In other words, whenever a texter chops words down to their bare consonants, recipients sense a lack of effort, which causes them to disengage.

It's a subtle but pervasive phenomenon that most people don't intuit.

We started with controlled lab tests, presenting 1,170 participants ages 15 to 80 with one of two near-identical text exchanges: one set sprinkled with abbreviations, the other fully spelled out. In every single scenario, participants rated the abbreviating sender as less sincere and far less worthy of a reply.

The deeper we dug, the more consistent the pattern became.

Whether people were reading messages about weekend plans or major life events, the presence of truncated words and phrases such as "plz," "sry" or "idk" for "please," "sorry" or "I don't know" made the recipients feel shortchanged.

The phenomenon didn't stop with strangers. In more experiments, we tested whether closeness changed the dynamic. If you're texting a dear friend or a romantic

partner, can you abbreviate to your heart's content?

Evidently not. Even people imagining themselves chatting with a longtime buddy reported feeling a little put off by half-spelled words, and that sense of disappointment chipped away at how authentic the interaction felt.

From Discord to dating apps

Still, we had nagging doubts: Might this just be some artificial lab effect?

We wondered whether real people on real platforms might behave differently. So we took our questions to Discord, a vibrant online social community where people chat about everything from anime to politics. More importantly, Discord is filled with younger people who use abbreviations like it's second nature.

We messaged random users asking them to recommend TV shows to watch. One set of messages fully spelled out our inquiry; the other set was filled with abbreviations. True to our lab results, fewer people responded to the abbreviated ask. Even among digital natives – youthful, tech-savvy users who are well versed in the casual parlance of text messaging – a text plastered with shortcuts still felt undercooked.

If a few missing letters can sour casual chats, what happens when love enters the equation? After all, texting has become a cornerstone of modern romance, from coy flirtations to soul-baring confessions. Could "plz call me" inadvertently jeopardize a budding connection? Or does "u up?" hint at more

apathy than affection? These questions guided our next foray, as we set out to discover whether the swift efficiency of abbreviations might actually short-circuit the delicate dance of courtship and intimacy.

Our leap into the realm of romance culminated on Valentine's Day with an online speed dating experiment.

We paired participants for timed "dates" inside a private messaging portal, and offered half of them small incentives to pepper their replies with abbreviations such as "ty" instead of "thank you."

When it came time to exchange contact information, the daters receiving abbreviation-heavy notes were notably more reluctant, citing a lack of effort from the other party. Perhaps the most eye-opening evidence came from a separate study running a deep analysis of hundreds of thousands of Tinder conversations. The data showed that messages stuffed with abbreviations such as "u" and "rly" scored fewer overall responses and short-circuited conversations.

It's the thought that counts

We want to be clear: We're not campaigning to ban "lol." Our research suggests that a few scattered abbreviations don't necessarily torpedo a friendship. Nor does every one of the many messages sent to many people every day warrant the full spelling-out treatment. Don't care about coming across as sincere? Don't need the recipient to respond? Then by all means, abbreviate away.

Instead, it's the overall reliance on condensed phrases that consistently lowers our impression of the sender's sincerity. When we type "plz" a dozen times in a conversation, we risk broadcasting that the other person isn't worth the extra letters. The effect may be subtle in a single exchange. But over time, it accumulates.

If your ultimate goal is to nurture a deeper connection – be it with a friend, a sibling or a prospective date – taking an extra second to type "thanks" might be a wise investment.

Abbreviations began as a clever workaround for clunky flip phones, with its keypad texting – recall tapping "5" three times to type the letter "L" – and [strict monthly character limits](). Yet here we are, long past those days, still trafficking in "omg" and "brb," as though necessity never ended.

After all of those studies, I've circled back to my brother's texts with fresh eyes. I've since shared with him our findings about how those tiny shortcuts can come across as half-hearted or indifferent. He still fires off "brb" in half his texts, and I'll probably never see him type "I'm sorry" in full. But something's shifting – he typed "thank you" a few times, even threw in a surprisingly heartfelt "hope you're well" the other day.

It's a modest shift, but maybe that's the point: Sometimes, just a few more letters can let someone know they really matter.

Gaza:

The Silence That Screams

The historic victims of the Holocaust are now inflicting another holocaust on the Palestinian people.

Javed Akbar

There are mornings when I cannot bring myself to turn on the news from Gaza. The grief is suffocating—the relentless bombings, the mangled bodies of children, the rising toll that has dulled the soul and silenced the conscience. It feels less like news and more like a descent into Dante's Inferno*—a man-made hell where innocence is incinerated and justice lies buried. One can only wonder what history will reserve for those who orchestrated and enabled this carnage. How will they ever atone for the slaughter of men, women, and children—wrapped in the hollow language of security and self-defence?

For nineteen months, Gaza has bled. Its children lie entombed in rubble, its hospitals and schools pulverized, its people starved, mutilated, erased. And now—only now, when the land has been flattened and nearly 60,000 (the actual numbers are way too high) are dead—do murmurs of dissent begin to ripple through the West. Too late. Too feeble. Too performative.

Britain has finally discovered the word "egregious." France and Canada gesture vaguely toward consequences. Media voices once content to parrot state narratives now ask timid questions: Why is the press barred from Gaza? Why are aid convoys bombed? But this is not reckoning—it is reputation management. A pre-emptive performance for future history books.

This is not just Netanyahu's genocide. It is the Biden-Harris genocide. The Trump-Vance, Starmer-Lammy, Macron, Trudeau, EU leadership, Microsoft, and mainstream media genocide. This is the blood-soaked coalition of complicity—political, corporate, and journalistic. The West did not merely look away; it armed, funded, excused, and applauded.

And it was all live streamed. Toddlers pulled from debris. Aid workers executed. Hospitals bombed. Hind Rajab, a five-year-old girl, trapped in a car riddled with 335 Israeli bullets. The world watched—and Western leaders offered not ceasefires, but standing ovations.

It was the powerless who showed courage. Students expelled, actors fired, activists silenced—for daring to speak. They risked careers and futures. They will be able to say: *I was not silent*.

The powerful? Their silence is deafening. And unforgettable. Because silence in the face of horror is not neutrality. It is complicity.

And what of the Muslim world?

Gaza is not only a graveyard of innocents—it is an indictment of the Muslim ummah. A searing revelation of moral and spiritual collapse. As Gaza burns, Muslim leaders mumble platitudes; their people post hashtags and move on. A faith rooted in justice has been reduced to rituals and rhetoric. This is not just genocide—it is the spiritual death of a civilization.

The betrayal is complete in the palaces of Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. While Palestinian children die next door, the Saudis and Emiratis roll out red carpets for American demagogues. They host Trumpian spectacles and funnel over a trillion dollars into the very war machine bombing Gaza into dust. Their silence drips not just with cowardice—but with blood.

What is unfolding in Gaza is the deliberate annihilation of a people, aided and abetted by the so-called free world. With Western weapons. With Western money. With Western impunity.

Justice is no longer possible. The dead will not return. The maimed will not be made whole. But accountability must follow. These crimes must be chronicled. The death toll must reflect the truth—not just the bombs, but the hunger, the cold, the untreated wounds.

And to those who have said nothing—who have looked away: your silence is not harmless. It is complicity.

One day, your children will ask you: What did you do daddy?

And history—cold, clear, and unsparing—will remember your silence.

Javed Akbar – Community Leader, Humanitarian, and Advocate

Javed Akbar has dedicated over four decades to community service, humanitarian advocacy, and civic engagement in Canada. Since 1978, he has worked to address poverty, displacement, and systemic inequities, serving on the Steering Committee of the non-partisan June Callwood Campaign Against Child Poverty (1996–2002). As a long-time board member and former Vice Chair of IDRF (International Development and Relief Foundation), he now continues his service on IDRF's Governor's Council.

A passionate writer and advocate, Javed contributed opinion columns to the Toronto Star *(2001–2005) and continues to publish across various platforms, focusing on social justice, racism, human rights, and media accountability.*

With a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Karachi and a diploma from IBA, Karachi, he has also held senior management roles in Canada's corporate finance and administration sector. His civic contributions include his appointment as Returning Officer for the federal elections in Markham (1997).

Javed's decades of service have earned him the City of Pickering Medal for Community Service, the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal, and the King Charles III Coronation Medal of Honour for his unwavering dedication to humanitarian causes.

Dr.Jean-Marc Narbonne- University of Laval

Democracy is more than rules and institutions, it's a way of life

It is common to talk about democracy as a certain type of political regime — namely, as a way of organizing the state with specific operating rules, including multiple institutions, commissions and consultation processes. In this way, democracy is considered a system that includes separate bodies of power such as the "legislative," the "judicial" and the "executive."

This way of describing democracy is correct and there is no reason to question it. However, speaking about democracy in these terms merely describes its framework or its skeleton. It does not describe the life breath of democracy or the blood that irrigates the system as a whole and sets it in motion.

Just as important, or even more important, is the way of being, or form of life (*Lebensform*) involved in democratic regimes. The Greeks called this an ethos.

I am a specialist in Greek philosophy and the way in which it has influenced the development of contemporary western democracy and culture. Over the last three decades, I have been constantly revisiting the past and present, the ancients and contemporaries.

Democracy, a shared undertaking

It doesn't matter how many rules we have if no one follows them. If they are not widely respected, then the structure becomes useless or even inoperative.

Aristotle had already clearly emphasized this requirement in his work *Politics*:

Our mission is to share knowledge and inform decisions.

About us

For no laws, however useful, will be of the slightest benefit [...] if the citizens are not accustomed, that is to say, educated in the perspective of the constitution, to live democratically, if the laws are democratic, and oligarchicly if they are oligarchic.

The two key terms here are *accustomed* and *educated* in relation to the regime in which one lives. Adhering to the principles of democracy, in theory, is not sufficient. We must also be well versed in its practices, something that requires education and lifestyle habits.

Each of us must contribute to this education, at home and at school, with friends and at work. It is not just the role

of the State. There is no master in the field of democracy; it is a shared undertaking.

Here is a very simple example of this requirement, in relation to the exercise of power.

If you democratically obtain power, you rely on the fact that your fellow citizens will not take up arms to take it away from you. Conversely, if I obtain power, I expect that others will not try to take it away from me by force, either.

This is a prior, implicit but fundamental pact. If such a mutual understanding does not prevail, democracy cannot be established, no matter what laws one might want to enact. In its internal functioning, democracy has no defence other than this mutual renunciation of violence, and the search for compromise in one form or another.

Protagoras, the first thinker of democracy: interview between Jean-Marc Narbonne and Philippe Hoffmann.

Democracy, not easy to establish or export

When we consider the number of countries where this *modus vivendi* is in place, we immediately get an idea of the places where democracy can actually flourish, and the places where it cannot be established or introduced, at least not easily.

Where to start?

That is the difficulty. If the mutual renunciation of force is not already established, if the habit of resorting to reason and joint deliberation to find compromises is not present, initiating the process can prove difficult, even counterproductive.

This is what the countries that wanted to export democracy all at once — to places with customs far removed from this kind of practice — failed to understand or at least to appreciate. They thought that organizing elections and establishing certain laws would be enough to transform practices. Although the task is difficult, it is not impossible. We have seen several countries gradually become initiated into this way of life and conform to it successfully, such as Japan, South Korea, India and several other countries in South America and elsewhere. There is therefore reason to remain hopeful.

The principle of cumulative wisdom

At the basis of any democracy is the idea that citizens are the centre of gravity of political life. It is therefore necessary to start with them.

The respect owed to citizens implies recognizing their equality before the law, their relative freedom within the group (citizens must not be hostages of the State), their right of access to the various functions (principle of the alternation of

offices) and to active participation in the resolution of problems (joint deliberation). The best results will come from a concerted effort by all (cumulative wisdom).

All these elements simultaneously imply a certain way of living and thinking, a global mode of appreciation of things through both the mind and practice. In short, what can be understood as a way of life (*Lebensform*) in which learning and practice are intertwined, now indistinguishable from each other.

Therein lies, in my view, the beating heart of democracy, and ultimately the true driving force for its survival.

Dr. Jean-Marc Narbonne *is a Full Professor in the Faculty of Philosophy at Université Laval, where he has taught since 1990.*

He holds a Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Paris-Sorbonne and completed postdoctoral studies at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich.

A leading scholar in ancient philosophy and its modern legacy, he currently holds the Canada Research Chair in Critical Antiquity and Emerging Modernity. He previously served as Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and directed several key initiatives, including the SSHRC-funded Partnership Project on the Critical Legacy of Antiquity (2014–2021). Narbonne also directs the "Zêtêzis" collection at Les Presses de l'Université Laval and has played a pivotal role in shaping philosophical education at all academic levels.

Dr. Nadia Hasan- York University

Violent attempt to set fire to Muslim woman in Ajax exposes persistent Islamophobia in Canada

Dr. Nadiya N. Ali

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Dr. Nadia Hasan

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A 25-year-old woman recently attempted to set a Muslim woman on fire in Ajax, Ont.

Afterwards, the survivor provided a statement, which was read for her at a news conference. In it, she described her visit to her "favourite quiet corner of the library" as ordinary and routine. This ordinary moment, however, turned nightmarish and extraordinary in an instant.

According to the survivor, the attacker attempted to yank her hijab off. She hurled objects at her head, including scissors and a metal object. The attacker then poured an unknown liquid on her hijab and flicked her lighter several times, allegedly attempting to light the fabric ablaze. Library staff and security

intervened before any more harm could take place.

Afterwards, the survivor, a mother of two girls, explained that she's unable to quell her terror. She said: "I can't stop thinking: what if the lighter had worked? What if my hijab had caught fire?" But most of all, she's terrified for her hijab-wearing daughters' safety in public spaces.

No one should feel unsafe in public spaces. However, for racialized people, public space in North America is fraught with heightened risks. It's shaped by a deep undercurrent of white anxieties propping up the racial order of society.

This incident is not an isolated act of violence. It is situated within a broader social climate that normalizes the

policing of how racialized people "should" enter and occupy public spaces.

We are two scholars and community organizers who have long been working on issues related to Islamophobia and racism. The traumatic event in Ajax highlights the persistent and deeply ingrained nature of gendered Islamophobia in Canada and beyond.

Whether through horrific displays of public violence like this one, or legislative action like Bill 21 in Québec, the bodies of Muslim women have long been battlegrounds for white supremacist anxieties and ideologies.

White panic

While we don't yet know the attacker's affiliations or what inspired her to commit this act of terror, this incident echoes racist aspirations for "purity."

Racial anxiety about the inflow of multiple generations of Muslims is integral to the way Islamophobia channels white supremacist panic over the growing population of Muslims in Canada — and the attack in Ajax is no exception.

White supremacist anxieties about demographic changes are articulated most clearly and directly in the "Great Replacement Theory" (and variations of it) that vilifies racialized people, asserting a drive to preserve "white innocence," tied to eugenic fantasies of purifying North America and Europe.

Muslims, in this racist ideology, figure as foreign invaders, a demographic threat and as "provocateurs" who are trying to

overtake the white population through immigration and reproduction — or as some white supremacists call it, "baby Jihad."

The changing demographics of Ajax

Over the past decade, Ajax — in Durham region east of Toronto — has seen significant demographic changes, with an overall growth rate of about 15 per cent. The town is home to more than 125,000 people and about 14 per cent of them are Muslim.

The growth of Muslim communities is situated within a broader shift. A substantial portion of the population increase has been driven by a diverse group of racialized communities so that now, 65 per cent of the total population of Ajax would be considered racialized.

The new population has infused new life to Ajax, and the Durham region more broadly. It seems, however, that not everyone is happy about this growth.

Gendered Islamophobia

The bodies of Muslim women have long been objectified, serving as a site where white racial anxieties are projected and enacted. Taken up as a sort of Trojan horse, their perceived ability to give birth and reproduce culture is weaponized against them. After all, they hold the power to propagate this "dangerous other," and dislodge the order of whiteness.

Jasmin Zine, a critical Muslim studies scholar, has used and developed the term "gendered Islamophobia" to explain

the way the bodies and practices of Muslim women are produced as racial problems. Muslim women in public spaces are constructed as [hazardous cultural contaminants, polluting the public square](#) and threatening the purity of the (white) nation with their very existence.

The responses to this perception of contamination take multiple forms. In [Québec](#), for instance, Muslim women are being aggressively foreclosed from participation in public spaces and institutions with laws like Bill 21 and Bill 94.

'Unprovoked attack:' Racism in public life

The Durham Police are calling this an "unprovoked attack." But the provocation is precisely what needs to be named. Of course, the victim did not actively provoke the attacker. But it's important to ask how our social arrangements prime and sustain the currents that produce Muslim women as provocations on sight.

This phenomenon of "unprovoked" attacks on visibly Muslim women in public spaces is far too common in Canada. These have ranged from a devastating physical assault in a mall

parking lot in [Edmonton](#) to a knife attack on the [TTC in Toronto](#), the fatal act of [terror in London, Ont.](#) against a family simply taking a walk together to this recent attack in Ajax. Muslim women around the country are rightly asking if public spaces are safe for them.

Racialized individuals must navigate what [Black studies scholar George Lipsitz describes as "privileged moral geographies."](#)

For instance, the frame of "disorderly conduct" often serves as a common tool to mark the "wrong ways" in which racialized individuals assert their presence in public settings. This includes the regulation of what foods are deemed appropriate for public consumption, the enforcement of norms around personal space, noise and loitering.

The catch, however, is that when you are already racialized as a "cultural pollutant," "conduct" merely fuels the racist climate that already marks you as an improper subject by sheer existence.

Have another samosa?

Standard sociological contact theory says greater exposure to diversity breeds opportunity for intergroup contact, which is presumed to foster tolerance.

Canadians like to believe in our multicultural country — that another samosa party or heritage night is all we need to confront intolerance and prejudice.

However, what contact theory frames get wrong is the assumption of the public as a

neutral site of engagement where people all have equal access to participation.

Public space is already and always infused with racial logic that neutralizes and naturalizes certain bodies while amplifying and bloating other bodies with objectifying scripts. This perpetually and always produces them as out of place — and as problems that disrupt the order of the public square.

Until we confront the entrenched racialized ideas that govern public space, creating a landscape where some are seen as natural occupants while others are made alien, true inclusivity and safety will remain out of reach.

Kaley-Ann Freier, age 25, of Ajax has been charged with assault with a weapon for the attack.

Dr. Hunter Bennett- University of Soth Australia

Why do I get headaches when I exercise, even when I drink lots of water?

Hunter Bennett

Lecturer in Exercise Science, University of South Australia

Getting a headache during or after exercise can be seriously frustrating – especially if you have kept hydrated to try and stop them from happening.

But why do these headaches occur? And does keeping hydrated make any difference?

What are exercise headaches?

Exercise headaches (also known as "exertional headaches") are exactly what they sound like: headaches that occur either during, or after, exercise.

French doctor Jules Tinel first reported these headaches in the medical literature in 1932 and they've been a regular point of discussion since.

Exercise headaches commonly present as a throbbing pain on both sides of the head. They most often occur after strenuous exercise – although what is considered "strenuous" can differ between people, depending on their fitness levels. They can last anywhere from a few minutes to a couple of days.

Exercise headaches are thought to impact about 12% of adults, although this number varies from 1% all the way up to 26% across individual studies.

In most circumstances, these headaches are harmless and will resolve on their own, over time. Some research suggests you will stop getting them after a few months of starting a new type of workout.

But while they are usually harmless, they can sometimes signal an underlying condition that requires medical attention.

What causes exercise headaches?

Despite a good amount of research looking at exertional headaches, we don't know their exact cause, but we do think we know why they occur.

The leading theory suggests they are caused by changes in blood flow to the brain. During intense exercise, blood vessels in the brain dilate, increasing blood flow and pressure, leading to pain.

Because long-term exercise improves our cardiovascular health, including our ability to dilate and constrict our blood vessels, this theory makes sense when we consider that exercise headaches tend to resolve themselves over time. This might explain why research suggests fitter people are less likely to get exercise headaches.

People with migraines appear more likely to experience exercise headaches, which are thought to be caused by this same mechanism.

Does heat and dehydration cause exercise headaches?

There is evidence suggesting that exercise headaches are more likely to occur in the heat.

Your brain cannot dissipate heat by sweating like the rest of your body can. So when it's hot, your body has to increase blood flow to the brain to help bring down its temperature, which can increase pressure.

Similarly, exercise headaches also seem to get worse, and occur more often, when people are dehydrated.

However, we are not sure why this happens. Some research has shown that dehydration results in increased strain during exercise. As such, dehydration might not necessarily cause the headache, but make it more likely to occur.

Red flags: when to see a doctor

Most exercise headaches resolve themselves after a few hours and result in no lasting negative effects.

In some rare instances, they could be sign of something more serious occurring in

the brain, such as a subarachnoid haemorrhage (a bleed between the brain and the tissues that cover it), reversible cerebral vasoconstriction syndrome (a spasming of blood vessels), cervical artery dissection (or tear), intracranial hypertension (pressure in the brain), or an infection.

See a doctor to rule out anything serious if:

- it's your first exercise headache

- the headache is severe and sudden (also known as a thunderclap headache)

- it's accompanied by other symptoms such as vision changes, confusion, or sensations of weakness

- you experience a stiff neck, nausea, or vomiting with your headache

- it lasts for more than 24 hours and doesn't seem to be getting better.

Can you prevent exercise headaches?

There is no surefire way to prevent exercise headaches.

But a recent review suggests that ensuring you're adequately hydrated and gradually warm-up to your desired exercise intensity can make them less likely to occur.

Beyond this, you may wish to keep your exercise intensity in a light-to moderate range for a couple of months. This will give your cardiovascular system some time to adapt before trying more strenuous exercise, hopefully reducing the likelihood of getting exercise headaches at all.

Exercise headaches are annoying, but are generally harmless and should subside on their own over time

How Canada can turn tariff tensions into a global affordable housing alliance

Ehsan Noroozinejad Farsangi

Visiting Senior Researcher, Smart Structures Research Group, University of British Columbia

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Canada is facing a worsening housing crisis. Home prices have exploded, with 45 per cent of Canadians saying they are deeply worried about finding affordable housing.

The country needs to build an additional 3.5 million homes by 2030 to achieve housing affordability. However, housing supply is lagging well behind that target even as demand continues to rise, driven largely by population growth and immigration.

Into this crisis have come new costs. In March 2025, the United States imposed 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum imports. Canada immediately hit back with its own 25 per cent duties on U.S. steel and aluminum, affecting roughly $12.6 billion of steel and $3 billion of aluminum goods.

IBA PU Alumni Canada

In practical terms, that means higher costs for key building materials like steel beams, aluminum cladding, appliances and machinery.

Industry groups say these duties will drive up the price of new construction and further erode affordability. In a market already strained, adding tariff charges is like pouring salt on an open wound: it makes every new home more expensive to build and to buy.

Factory-built housing offers a way forward

Modern methods of construction, such as modular and prefabricated housing, are a promising answer to the housing shortage. These methods involve large components of houses being produced in factories and assembled at their final location.

Factory-built housing can be done about 50 per cent faster and up to 35 per cent cheaper than site-built homes.

Importantly, this speed and affordability do not come at the expense of quality or energy performance. Canadian-built modular homes achieve top efficiency ratings and reach net-zero energy while frequently delivering superior performance compared to site-built homes. They are also greener, as controlled factory processes produce far less waste.

In Japan, [modular factories produce over 15 per cent of all new housing](#). Sweden's construction industry heavily relies on prefabricated construction as well; it is present in [approximately 84 per cent](#) of detached houses.

Other countries are rapidly scaling up modern construction methods. Singapore mandates every public housing project to use [modular techniques because this enables mass apartment production with efficiency](#).

The combination of expensive labour costs and immediate housing needs makes [Australia](#), [the United Kingdom](#) and [parts of the United States](#) optimal markets for modular construction expansion.

Canada can lead in modular housing

Canada has key advantages that make it well suited to expand modular and prefabricated housing. In particular, it has [a strong forest products sector](#) for supplying wood panels and engineered timber, a skilled [construction](#) and [technology](#) workforce and a growing [policy drive for lower-carbon building](#).

Canadian builders have already shown they can deliver modular housing at scale. Launched in 2020, [Canada's Rapid Housing Initiative](#) committed $1 billion to modular projects, followed by another $1.5 billion in 2021 to quickly house vulnerable populations.

The Rapid Housing Initiative exceeded its target, creating nearly 4,700 new homes in short order. It proved that factory-built housing can be both fast and high-quality in Canada.

Canada has the opportunity to build on that success. [The 2024 federal budget created a Homebuilding Technology and Innovation Fund](#) aimed at expanding prefabricated housing. It set aside $50 million through Next Generation Manufacturing Canada (to be matched by industry) and up to $500 million in low-cost loans from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for prefabricated apartment projects.

[Prime Minister Mark Carney has also shown interest](#) in modular and prefabricated housing technologies to create sustained demand.

[Provinces like Ontario](#) and [British Columbia](#) are focusing on modular

construction to cut red tape and better understand how to expand it. [Canada's National Research Council](#) is also consulting on aligning building codes and inspections for factory-built homes with the help of Canadian universities.

A global alliance on modular housing

As Canada faces a deepening housing crisis, it has the opportunity to turn today's tariff tensions into deeper international partnerships.

By forming an international affordable housing consortium, Canada could collaborate with countries that have succeeded in modern construction methods, like Sweden, Japan, Australia and Germany, to share knowledge. Together, these nations could harmonize building standards and invest in research.

Here are five practical moves Canada can take to build this global modular housing alliance:
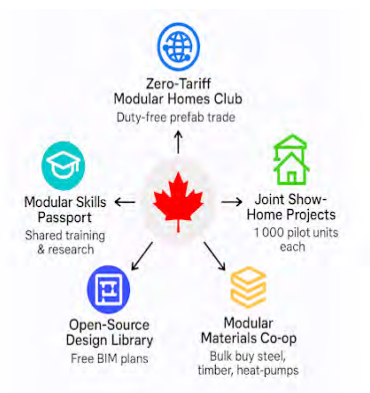
1. Create a zero-tariff modular homes club.

Canada should use the [trade tools it already has](#), like the [Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement](#) and the [Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership](#), to eliminate most tariffs with the European Union and Asian countries. Canada should negotiate an add-on protocol that lets modular components, such as panels and factory equipment, cross borders without tariffs.

2. Launch a joint show-home projects in partner countries.

We propose a "FastBuild 1000 initiative" initiative that would see each member nation commit to building a minimum of 1,000 modular homes. Pilot sites could include Vancouver, Sydney, Hamburg and Osaka — urban centres in countries already familiar with modern construction techniques. Engineers could travel across countries to test how modules fit different climates and design codes, while giving factories steady orders.

3. Pool global buying power for materials and appliances.

Canada and its partners could form a modular materials co-operative that bundles steel, engineered timber, heat pumps and windows. The proposed system should leverage economies of scale in factory production to make the final product much cheaper.

4. Open-source designs and one-click certifications.

[Ottawa's catalogue of pre-approved housing designs](#) could be expanded into a global online catalogue where partner countries can download and adapt pre-existing designs while keeping the structure safe and secure. Simplified,

one-click certification would help speed up approvals across borders.

5. Create a 'modular skills passport' and research and development hub.

Canadian universities and colleges could train workers through micro-credentials in areas like offsite manufacturing, digital construction, robotics, penalization and on-site assembly. Some countries like Japan have a huge prefabrication industry valued at over $24 billion. Linking research and development would give Canada access to the latest technologies while offering partner countries entry into the Canadian construction sector.

By investing in this kind of international collaboration, Canada can address its domestic housing crisis while leading a fast, green housing revolution that makes homes affordable worldwide.

When is workplace chat 'just gossip' and when is it 'sharing information'? It depends on who's doing it

When two junior employees bump into each other in the corridor and start chatting about their manager's overbearing manner, it's typically considered gossip. But what about when two managers have an off-record catch-up to discuss an under-performing employee?

Both scenarios meet traditional definitions of gossip – the information being shared is about other people, the people it's about are absent, the information is shared in a way that casts judgement on those people, and it's informal. Yet the two situations are viewed very differently.

What counts as gossip is much more slippery than we might think. I reviewed 184 academic articles to understand what really constitutes workplace gossip.

The key, I found, is not any set of objective criteria, but rather people's shared agreement that a situation counts as gossip.

This understanding of gossip helps us make sense of the "workplace gossip paradox" – the idea that gossip can be considered both a reliable source of social information ("the inside word") and

an unreliable information source ("just gossip").

My work also provides insights into how businesses can manage gossip before it becomes a scandal.

Knowledge is power – but power controls knowledge

How does recognising the slipperiness of gossip help us understand the workplace gossip paradox? The answer has to do with the role of power in legitimising information.

Leaders and managers need information to justify action. If a manager is going to investigate a sexual harassment claim, they can't do so based solely on a hunch. They need to hear about it from someone.

If the victim of sexual harassment complains directly to their manager, an investigation is automatically justified. But what if the manager hears about harassment indirectly and unofficially (for example, through "gossip"), with the added complication that the alleged perpetrator is another manager?

If the manager does something about what they've heard and the source turns out to be unreliable, they could face negative consequences for acting on what was essentially "just gossip." But if they don't act, and the information turns out to be credible, they could face repercussions for ignoring the "inside word."

There is evidence that such paradoxical situations play out quite frequently in real-world workplaces. For example,

inside information about negligence towards patient safety in healthcare settings has, in the past, been dismissed as "just gossip" until it provoked a public scandal.

The same thing happened in a university where gossip shared through a "whisper network" was eventually corroborated by an independent inquiry. In this case, the inquiry also found official complaints had been ignored.

One case study from the United States found managers tended to keep an ear out for information passing through the grapevine and selectively use it to further their own interests.

If gossip threatened their power, they repressed it as "just gossip". But if gossip provided "useful" information – ammunition against a subversive employee, for example – management legitimised gossip as "official information".

How to manage the workplace gossip paradox

To avoid scandals stemming from when gossip is ignored, managers might consider "co-opting" gossip, bringing it into official communication channels.

But there's a problem with this approach. Gossip gains its credibility as the inside word *because* it takes place outside official communication channels. Therefore, if managers try to co-opt gossip into formal management processes, it's likely to have the unintended consequence of discrediting the shared information.

Instead, "managing gossip" requires a better understanding of its functions and motivations.

One function is to reduce uncertainty. Research suggests gossip often arises to fill information gaps. For example, people might speculate about a manager's salary by gossiping about their expensive car or holiday.

Such gossip is likely to be exaggerated and counterproductive. However, it could be managed simply by being transparent about staff salaries, filling the information gap before gossip does.

Another key function of gossip is to warn against antisocial behaviours like bullying. But if employees feel comfortable speaking up about such behaviour — even when it's perpetrated by those with official power – managers will not face the dilemma of whether to act on information that could turn out to be "just gossip."

Gossip is a slippery and paradoxical form of communication. Some would say it's unmanageable. But what *can* be managed are the workplace behaviours

and hierarchical relationships that gossip
loves to sink its teeth into.

Dr. James Greensdale-Yeats is a Research Fellow in Management at Auckland University of Technology, specializing in workforce sustainability in healthcare professions. With a PhD in Organisational Behaviour from Auckland University of Technology (2022), his research explores workplace dynamics, systems, and cultures, focusing on the factors that impact workforce resilience and sustainability. His professional interests lie in understanding how people, organizations, and structures interact to shape the world of work.

Dr. Tony Volk- Brock University

Could bullying be an evolutionary trait?

Bullying is a serious problem that impacts hundreds of millions of young people across the world each year. Defined as the goal-directed, harmful abuse of a power imbalance, bullying can cause serious, long-term physical and mental health outcomes for victims.

As a result, countries around the world have mobilized anti-bullying efforts. Unfortunately, these efforts have had relatively little impact on bullying worldwide.

Why? One reason might be that bullying is, at least in part, an evolutionary adaptation that offers adolescent perpetrators benefits, like popularity, resources and even dates and sex.

But do these benefits extend beyond adolescence? This is what we set out to test at Brock University's Research on Aggression and Victimization Experiences group. In particular, we wanted to know if the earlier and more frequent dating and sex that adolescent bullies experienced translated into having more children in later life.

An evolutionary trait?

There is very little data on whether bullying benefits like popularity or sex extend beyond adolescence, but early data suggested that might be the case. We sought to replicate that research using two studies.

The first was a longitudinal study of adolescents: approximately 600 Canadian boys and girls from age 14 until their mid-20s. The second was a retrospective study of more than 500 North American adults ages 18-35. We found that adolescents who bullied others reported having children earlier and having more children in total, compared to adolescents who did not engage in bullying.

While we note that a complete study should entail following adults into their mid-40s (the very end of most child births), we wanted to compile data now rather than waiting another 15-20 years for our longitudinal sample to mature. That means that while we can't rule out that non-bullies might catch up with later reproduction, the data clearly shows that

onset of reproduction is tied closely to total reproduction.

Is having children early, and more often, a good thing? Given that bullying does appear to be partly due to evolved genetics (with the environment still playing a pivotal role in its expression), reproduction is the ultimate currency of evolution. Passing on genes is, quite literally, the biological meaning of life. So this is strong evidence for the theory that bullying is, at least in part, an evolutionarily successful strategy in some contexts.

Socially, bullies are also more likely to be in the romantic relationship that is typically required to have children. We believe this is because bully's power is related to potentially positive attributes, like attractiveness, strength and even social skills.

Our yet-to-be published data also indicates that former bullies end up investing more energy into their children than average parents. Think of the hockey or soccer parents yelling on the sidelines, bullying their child's coach, referees or other players in order to benefit their own child. Bullying's links with parenting go beyond purely quantitative considerations and impact both mating success and parental effort.

Why does this matter?

It matters because it helps explain why bullying is so ubiquitous and hard to prevent. Bullying appears to offer meaningful benefits to those who use it and that's critical information if parents, teachers, schools and governments want to come up with strategies for preventing it.

What might some of those strategies look like? If bullying offers benefits, we want to reduce, replace and redirect those benefits. We can do so by getting peers to not reward bullies with the attention and popularity that they desire. We can replace benefits with costs by pointing out that while bullies gain popularity, they lose likeability. People might fear the bully's power, but they generally don't like them.

Finally, we can try to teach adolescents to replace bullying with more prosocial behaviour that might have equal or better outcomes with respect to peer support.

This also matters because our data shows bullying as a potentially intergenerational problem. We know that violence can be transmitted from parents to their children.

It is possible that children of bullies will learn how to be bullies themselves, through directly experiencing bullying from their parents or through indirectly watching their parents bully others.

This generational transmission might very well be another reason why bullying is so hard to prevent — because it starts in the home. Given the seriousness of the consequences of bullying for its victims, we must all to take a good, hard look at why so many people continue to bully, or support bullies, so that we can understand how we to best stop this toxic and damaging pattern of behaviour.

Prof. Volk is a developmental scientist interested in the separate, but related, areas of bullying, parenting, personality, psychopathy, and the evolution of childhood. These broad areas of research lend themselves to a broad scope of theoretical and methodological approaches. A strong believer in multidisciplinary studies, Prof. Volk's overall interest is to gain an evolutionary, psychological, biological, neurological, health-based, Indigenous, cross-cultural, social, historical, and (if possible) transdisciplinary understanding of why individuals do what they do. Prof. Volk's degrees in biology, neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, and developmental psychology reflect an effort to gain that comprehensive understanding.

Dr.Lisa Harrison-Flinders University (Aus)

When news is stressful, how do you balance staying informed with 'doomscrolling'?

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It all begins innocently – a late-night peek at your favourite social media site before bed. You catch a headline that grabs your attention with "breaking news" you can't afford to miss.

Like following digital breadcrumbs, one click leads to another. Before you know it, you're tumbling down a rabbit hole of endless updates and emotionally charged social media posts. Two hours later, your shoulders are tense, your stomach is in knots, but you can't put your phone down.

This endless scrolling through bad news – known as "doomscrolling" – sneaks up on us.

It's important to stay in touch with what's happening in the world. Being informed helps us make better decisions, engage meaningfully in our communities, and respond effectively to changes that affect our lives and those around us.

But just like a healthy diet, we must be smart about our news consumption to avoid it taking a toll on our health.

The good news is there are proven ways to stay informed without letting it take over your life. Research shows setting clear boundaries around your news

consumption can make a huge difference. So, how can you strike the right balance?

How to set boundaries with news consumption

It's worth considering why you feel compelled to stay constantly informed. Ask yourself: "will this information change what I can do about it?".

Often, we scroll not because the information is actionable, but because we are trying to gain a sense of control in an uncertain world.

Research shows scrolling through negative news can disrupt your sleep and increase anxiety. To make sure your media consumption is intentional, there are a few steps you can take.

Be picky with the news sources you read. Choose a few trusted outlets instead of letting social media algorithms decide what you see. It's like sticking to a balanced meal plan, but for your mind.

While engaging with the news, pay close attention to how you're feeling. When you notice physical signs of anxiety or emotional distress, that is your cue to take a break.

Set aside time earlier in the day with clear boundaries around your news consumption: maybe with your morning coffee or during your lunch break, whatever works for your schedule. Consider implementing a "digital sunset", too. This is a cut-off time for news and social media, ideally an hour or two before bedtime, to give your mind time to

process what you have learned without disrupting your sleep.

The world will always be there, but you will be in a better head space to process what is happening.

You don't have to feel helpless

Taking breaks from consuming news is not burying your head in the sand – it's practising self care. Studies have shown that people who set healthy boundaries around news consumption are often better equipped to engage meaningfully on important issues and take constructive action when needed.

When you check the news, be an active consumer. Instead of endless scrolling:

- choose one or two in-depth articles to read thoroughly

- discuss the news with colleagues, friends and family to process your feelings

- look for solution-focused news stories that highlight positive change

- take meaningful action on issues you care about.

There are also various apps and tools that can help you form healthier digital habits. Productivity apps use various approaches to help you stay focused, providing ways to snap you out of mindless scrolling.

News curation apps and apps that allow you to save articles to read later can help you establish a balanced news diet, and

remove the urgent need to read everything immediately.

Many smartphones now come equipped with screen time management features, such as Apple's Screen Time or Android's Digital Wellbeing. You can use these to monitor your scrolling habits and to manage how much time you spend on social media or news apps.

One useful feature is to block apps from use during certain times of day or after you've used them for a set amount of time.

Screen time management features allow you to pause or block apps from use.

Stay mindful, stay engaged

Staying informed doesn't mean staying constantly connected. By mindfully setting boundaries and using supportive tools, you can keep up with important events while protecting your wellbeing.

If you're trying productivity apps and other tools, start small. Choose one tool that resonates with you rather than trying everything at once. Set realistic goals that

fit your life, and use these apps' insights to understand your habits better.

Pay attention to what triggers your doomscrolling and adjust your settings accordingly. Remember, these tools work best when combined with offline activities you enjoy.

The goal isn't to disconnect completely, but to find a sustainable balance between staying informed and maintaining peace of mind. With thoughtful boundaries and

the right support tools, you can stay engaged with the world while keeping your mental health intact

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HER RESEARCH FOCUSES ON DECODING THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE AND EXAMINING THE ROLE OF MICRO-INFLUENCERS IN SHAPING CONTEMPORARY CULTURE.

The Trump administration's move to ban international students at Harvard escalates attacks on universities

Petra Molnar

Associate Director, Refugee Law Lab, York University

Harvard University has become the epicentre of a growing row between Donald Trump's administration and academia, with concerning implications for migration and human rights, academic freedom and research.

A federal judge has temporarily blocked the Trump administration from revoking the university's Student and Exchange Visitor Program certification.

This happened after Harvard filed a lawsuit in federal court on May 23 in response to a letter from the homeland security secretary that said revoking the certification prohibits the university from sponsoring F- and J- visas for the 2025-26 academic year. Both international students and visiting international scholars rely on these visas.

As a Canadian academic, I was on a J-visa until recently, in a faculty associate role I have held for the past three years.

Luckily, I have my main job in Canada and years of experience to fall back on. More than 7,000 students on similar visas are not so lucky.

IBA PU Alumni Canada

Harvard is where, after six years of work across some of the world's most difficult borders, I finished writing my book, *The Walls Have Eyes: Surviving Migration in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*.

In my work, I study the impacts of immigration laws and policies on people's lives, particularly how new technologies are being used to make determinations about who is allowed to stay and who is detained and deported.

Visa revocations are becoming an increasingly weaponized part of the U.S. immigration system, a new social sorting coupled with innovations like the surveillance of social media to make determinations about who is allowed to stay.

Student futures, research in jeopardy

With this directive, on the heels of other interventions, the futures of thousands of scholars and students are in jeopardy, as is the academic freedom of universities to conduct research.

International students in particular are being singled out by the Trump

administration in a short-sighted attempt to sanction the university after it refused to capitulate to the demands to gut its diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) office, even facing cuts to its funding.

In April 2025, Trump spoke about cutting off all federal funding to Harvard: "Wouldn't that be cool?" the president said in a private interaction at the White House, according to *the New York Times*.

International students pay exorbitant tuition rates for a chance at a prestigious degree and prospects for longer-term employment and building a new life. They are already vulnerable to changing immigration regimes, exploitation and uncertain futures.

Will students be forced to return to their home countries or risk becoming swallowed up by the increasingly draconian immigration regime of the United States? It is unclear what, if any, measures exist to safeguard the continuity of their education and their immigration status that is inherently tied to their student visa.

Bellwether for what may happen elsewhere

Harvard is a powerful academic institution, supporting research with global significance, and a bellwether for what may happen at other universities. This type of escalation heralds a deeply concerning broader attack on academic freedom, scientific research and teaching

and learning. Such attacks are a hallmark of fascism.

As some high-profile U.S. faculty move to Canada, it's likely Canada may see an uptick of international students as well in the years to come.

The Economist warns that the U.S. is in danger of a brain drain, citing a marked decrease in the numbers of professors and PhD candidates seeking opportunities in the U.S. in April 2025.

While universities are far from perfect places, full of their own blind spots and power dynamics, they can be spaces that allow us the opportunity to exchange ideas, debate one another and dream together of building a different world.

Harvard, with its massive endowment and decades' long reputation, has proven to be a worthy adversary to Trump, with the university's administration vowing to continue fighting to protect its student body and academic freedom in this latest onslaught.

Importance of global collaboration and exchange

International students and faculty are vital to the richness and rigour of university life and research, bringing diverse perspectives, experiences and methodologies that deepen scholarly inquiry and expand the boundaries of knowledge.
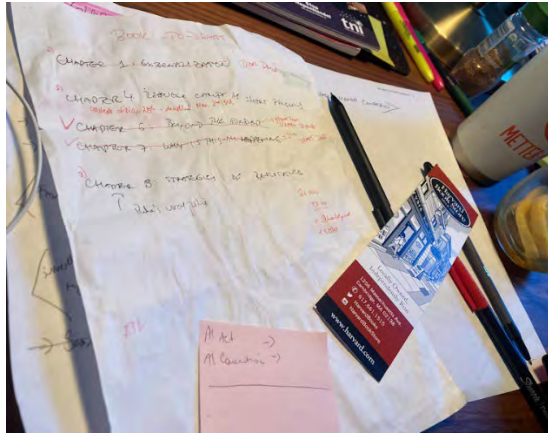
Our presence fosters cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

We enhance the global relevance and impact of research and teaching where people can thrive, innovate and help address the complex challenges facing our interconnected world — precisely the type of environment [more and more governments are threatened by and trying to stifle](#).

What is modern monetary theory? An economist explains how it could help Canada

Mohsen Javdani

Associate Professor of Economics, School of Public Policy and Urban Studies Program, Simon Fraser University

Few words spark more anxiety in public debate than "national debt" and "government deficit." National debt is the total amount of money the government owes, accumulated over years of running deficits. Government deficit is when the government spends more money than it collects in taxes and other revenues.

Dating back at least to the 1930s, the idea that government budgets should mimic household finances continues to dominate public discourse.

Politicians, pundits and even some economists routinely warn that deficits are inherently dangerous and must be minimized — arguing that, like households, governments must ensure their spending does not exceed their income, or else bankruptcy looms.

But what if this analogy is completely wrong? According to a dissenting school of economic thought known as modern monetary theory (MMT), governments that issue their own currency aren't like households at all.

MMT argues that a government with full monetary sovereignty — meaning it issues its own currency, does not peg it to another currency or commodity and does not borrow in foreign currency — faces no hard financial limits on its spending.

Unlike individuals, who must earn or borrow money before they can spend, a government with currency sovereignty creates money as it spends, meaning it can always meet its financial obligations. This theory has significant implications for how Canadians understand public debt and deficit spending.

The rise of MMT in recent years

MMT draws on a diverse range of intellectual traditions, including Chartalism, functional finance and the post-Keynesian school.

Its foundational ideas were first articulated by figures such as Warren Mosler, a financial practitioner whose writings sparked early debates, and later developed by academic economists including L. Randall Wray, Stephanie Kelton and Bill Mitchell.

L. Randall Wray, professor of economics at Bard College, discusses 'Modern Money Theory for Beginners' in April 2018 at St. Francis College.

Once dismissed as "voodoo economics," MMT has in recent years moved from the margins of economic thought into the public arena, gaining increasing attention.

As Kelton has noted, ideas that challenge conventional wisdom follow a predictable

trajectory: they are first ignored, then ridiculed and eventually met with fierce opposition. MMT is now firmly in the "resistance" phase.

The question of how governments finance public spending is not just an academic dispute, but also one that shapes the future of economic policy, democratic governance and social priorities.

Economic frameworks are debated and contested in the public arena. The way they are framed [determines public understanding, political support](#) and ultimately, [real-world policy directions](#).

MMT rethinks government spending

Canada's federal government, through its partnership with the the Bank of Canada, has the authority to issue Canadian dollars "[as needed](#)."

MMT emphasizes that a country like Canada doesn't need to collect dollars before it can spend them. Instead, it creates money by effectively "marking up" or crediting bank accounts — essentially through keystrokes — when making payments.

This process underpins government spending for procurement of goods and services, public transfers (pensions and employment insurance), interest payments on government debt, Bank of Canada asset purchases ([quantitative easing](#)) and emergency responses.
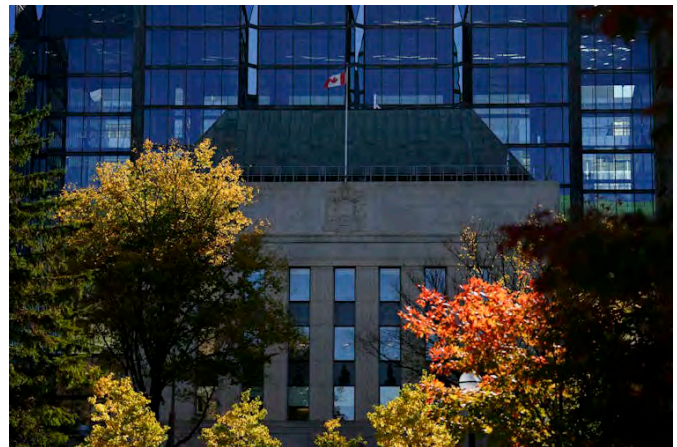
However, this does not mean governments can spend without limits or consequences. Nor does it eliminate the need for taxes.

Instead, MMT shifts the focus from arbitrary fiscal rules to real economic constraints. The key limitation on government spending is not whether it has enough money — [because it can always create more](#) — but whether the economy has the capacity to absorb that spending without causing inflation.

While the government does not need tax revenue to "pay for" spending, taxes play a crucial role in [controlling inflation by removing money from circulation](#), [managing inequality](#) and [affecting how people work, invest, spend money and innovate](#).

Inflation is the real constraint, not deficits

Critics of MMT often argue that expansionary fiscal policies — such as large-scale government spending or stimulus packages — inevitably lead to inflation. A common explanation for the recent inflationary surge in Canada and

elsewhere is that government programs injected excess purchasing power into the economy.

However, MMT argues that inflation only becomes a problem when government spending pushes the economy beyond its capacity — when there are not enough workers, materials or resources to meet rising demand.

Stephanie Kelton's TED Talk 'The big myth of government deficits.'

Until that point, government spending can be used to invest in public goods, create jobs and ensure economic stability.

From an MMT viewpoint, the main constraint is not where to get money but whether those newly created dollars can be absorbed by unused capacity without creating unsustainable price pressures. Government spending can work if it's well-timed and directed toward productivity-enhancing projects.

By targeting idle resources and improving the supply side, government spending can increase output, boost employment and promote stable economic growth.

MMT and the politics of money

One of MMT's key contributions is democratizing money itself by demystifying the idea that money is inherently scarce. It emphasizes that government spending is constrained by the availability of real resources, not finances.

If more people understood this, it could shift the terms of public debate from

questions like, "How will we pay for it?" to more practical and meaningful ones like: "Do we have the people, materials and technology to make this happen without sparking inflation?" and "Is this socially beneficial?"

For example, when large-scale investments in green energy, health care, child care or affordable housing are dismissed as "too expensive," MMT reframes the issue around real-world capacity and social benefit.

Do we have the people, skills and infrastructure to carry them out effectively and sustainably?

By shifting the focus from financial constraints and the government's bank account to real economic potential and democratic priorities, MMT opens new pathways for policy discussions that are grounded in material reality rather than outdated fiscal dogma.

What MMT means for Canada

Canada is well-positioned to benefit from an MMT-informed approach to fiscal policy, which offers a valuable lens for rethinking and prioritizing economic policy.

As a country with currency sovereignty and substantial natural and human resources, Canada has the ability to use targeted public spending to address pressing challenges such as housing affordability, health-care and child-care expansion, and climate change mitigation.

MMT encourages us to shift the conversation from artificial fiscal constraints to real-world economic possibilities. Instead of asking, "Can we afford it?" we should be asking, "What do we need, and how can we mobilize our resources to achieve it?"

As economic challenges from [climate change](#) to [growing inequality](#) mount, [Canada cannot afford to be held back](#) by outdated myths about government finances.

By embracing a more flexible and realistic approach to fiscal policy, Canada can create an economy that works for everyone, not just the wealthiest few.

MMT is not a one-size-fits-all policy directive, but a framework that emphasizes how governments with currency sovereignty operate. It highlights that real constraints lie in available resources, not in arbitrary budget limits, offering the government new way to think about economic possibilities.

Book Review- Muhammad Sajid Khan (1972-74)

## Navigating the Future:

The Modernization of Education

Muhammad Sajid Khan's book "The Modernization of Education: Navigating the Future" is an ambitious and comprehensive blueprint for transforming Pakistan's education system from a fractured, underperforming legacy structure into a unified, modernized force for national development. The book offers an extensive diagnosis of systemic failings, rooted both in historical missteps and present-day policy inertia, and proposes a meticulously phased solution that spans early childhood to postgraduate education.

Sajid Khan's work is strongest in its structural clarity and depth of analysis. The tiered and phased model he introduces, culminating in a merit-based post-graduate stage—is both visionary and pragmatic. By linking educational outcomes to employability, ethical development, and nation-building, Khan effectively situates education as the cornerstone of Pakistan's socio-economic renewal. His emphasis on universal access, vocational training, and digital literacy reflects an understanding of contemporary global demands, while his integration of cultural, religious, and ethical education grounds the model in local realities.

However, while the book succeeds in laying out what should be done, it is less convincing in detailing how such transformation will be practically implemented—particularly in a country with entrenched political instability, fiscal limitations, and institutional resistance to change. For example, the discussion of funding models, policy enforcement mechanisms, or strategies for overcoming bureaucratic inertia is underdeveloped. Additionally, although Sajid Khan criticizes impulsive decision-making and poor governance, the book could benefit from a more robust engagement with case studies, international comparisons, or data-driven evaluations to support its proposals.
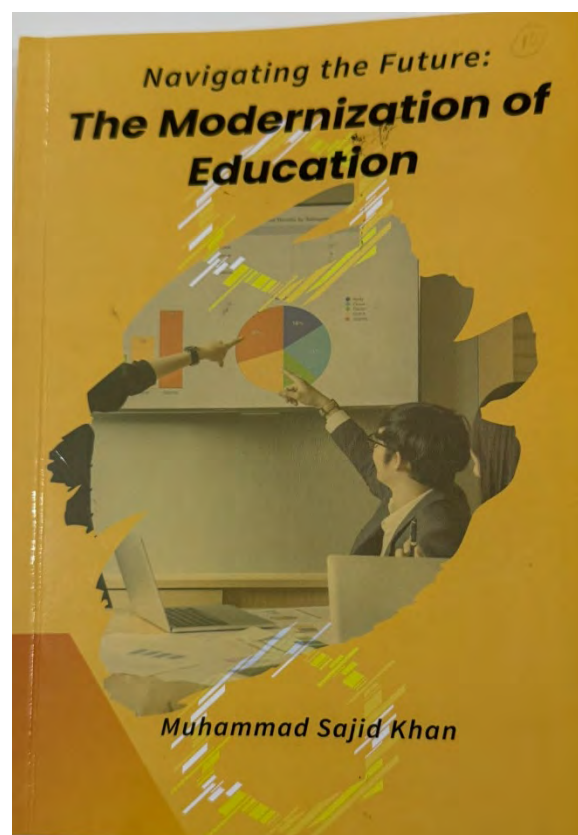
Another area that calls for scrutiny is the implementation feasibility of the meritocratic vision. While promoting elite academic excellence through international scholarships and high-level

R&D initiatives is commendable, this assumes a level of administrative efficiency and long-term political will that has historically been lacking. The top-down, state-led approach also raises concerns about inclusivity—particularly regarding regional disparities, marginalized communities, and linguistic minorities.

Despite these limitations, Sajid Khan's work makes a significant intellectual contribution to the discourse on education reform in Pakistan. Its holistic view, spanning from childhood development to national policy and international competitiveness, provides a compelling call to action. The book is not merely academic—it is a policy manifesto, a roadmap, and in many ways, a national plea for educational justice and strategic foresight.

The book is an important and timely work that dares to rethink the educational future of Pakistan. While its ambitions at times outpace its implementation strategies, it successfully elevates the conversation and lays a foundation upon which meaningful reforms can be built—if its insights are matched by political courage and practical follow-through.

Muhammad Sajid Khan is a seasoned public policy expert, financial strategist, and education reform advocate with over 40 years of experience. He holds multiple degrees, including an MBA in Finance (USA), an MBA in Marketing, an LLB from Punjab University, and an MSc in Defence and Strategic Studies from NDU Islamabad.

Sajid Khan has served in top government roles such as Deputy Secretary to the Prime Minister and Deputy Auditor General, contributing to major privatization, governance reforms, and development projects with international organizations like the EU and USAID.

A strong advocate for transparency, digital transformation, and fiscal responsibility, he is currently a Director at a US IT and AI company's Islamabad subsidiary, continuing his commitment to public service and institutional development.