

WORKING PAPER FOR THE UNIS-UN
STUDENT CONFERENCE
ON A
NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER



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Working Paper

The views expressed in this working paper and at the UNIS–UN conference are not necessarily those of UNIS, The UNITED NATIONS, or their affiliates.

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A LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Dear Participant,

Welcome, and thank you for joining us for the 50th Annual UNIS-UN Conference! It is our pleasure to introduce ourselves and the entire UNIS-UN Executive and Organizing Committees, and to share a bit about the legacy you are now a part of.

The UNIS-UN Conference was founded in 1976 by Ms. Sylvia Gordon, a visionary UNIS teacher. Ms. Gordon's dream was to create an event that would draw attention to the world's most pertinent issues while embodying the values of education and cross-cultural understanding shared by UNIS and the United Nations. Five decades later, her vision endures. UNIS-UN has grown into the largest student-run conference held in the United Nations General Assembly Hall, welcoming more than 600 students each year from six continents.

Behind the scenes, a dedicated team of UNIS students works year-round to bring this conference to life, from inviting speakers and participants to managing digital outreach and producing this very working paper. This student-led model ensures that diverse perspectives, meaningful dialogue, and genuine engagement remain at the heart of the conference. We are honored to say that UNIS-UN is the longest-running student club at UNIS, with nearly 100 dedicated members.

The inaugural UNIS-UN Conference explored how diplomacy, hegemonies, and technology would shape the New International Economic Order. In the fifty years since, the international institutions and economic frameworks discussed in that first conference have evolved dramatically, reshaped by globalization, technological innovation, and shifting geopolitical realities. As we enter a new era of global economics, it is necessary to understand how to balance growth and sustainability, collaboration and competition, and ethics and innovation. As the next generation of leaders, we must think critically and creatively about how to build an equitable economic system that expands opportunity and ensures stability for all.

Over the coming days, you will hear from leading economists who have helped shape the global transition toward more sustainable and inclusive growth. Yet this conference is not only about learning from experts, but also about contributing to the conversation ourselves. In that spirit, we are proud to not only present our annual Working Paper, Student Debates, and Workshops, but also to launch our *Making CENTS of Change: Student Impact Projects and Speeches*, highlighting innovative student initiatives that apply economic principles to create positive change in their home communities. To foster cross-cultural dialogue, we will also introduce our *Economic Council Simulation* and *Perspectives in Practice* activities, where participants will engage in the very diplomacy that takes place in this historic chamber. We hope these activities inspire and empower you to drive positive change far beyond the two conference days.

On that note, we are so excited to welcome you to this milestone 50th annual UNIS-UN Conference!

Here's to a wonderful event!

Sincerely,
Hannah Hochman and Ulysse Rombaux Pérez
Co-Chairs of UNIS-UN

IN APPRECIATION...

Sylvia Gordon

Mrs. Sylvia Gordon came to UNIS in 1965 to teach history. She quickly adapted her structured European approach to the more progressive pedagogy at UNIS and focused on “educating young people to lead generous and fulfilling lives in a complex world.”



In the early 1970's, Mrs. Gordon realized that “many of our students do not truly understand the workings of our parent organization, the UN, and that they have little confidence in its ability to resolve world issues.” She wanted our students to “experience some of the problems faced by the UN itself while familiarizing themselves with the opportunities and limitations of the decision-making process.” Finding a new and innovative way to bring the UN to UNIS and UNIS to the UN, the idea of creating a student-led conference to be held at the UN headquarters was born. The focus of the conference was “to find a problem of vital interest; to organize a conference around it; and then to show how central to its solution the UN really is.”

In 1976, from this small idea, Mrs. Gordon realized her seemingly “impossible dream” and created the UNIS-UN Conference. With the help of Mrs. Sylvia Howard Fuhrman, Mrs. Gordon was able to secure the United Nations General Assembly Hall to host the annual event.



Mrs. Gordon empowered students to connect with the world around them, choose a topic of global importance, find expert speakers, research and write articles, take on the details and logistics, experience debate, actively listen to one another, consider possibilities and dare to face the challenges to negotiate the solutions to bring about change.

Mrs. Gordon not only taught history at UNIS – she made history at UNIS.



Today, fifty years later, we continue the conversation. Over the years we have covered such topics that have ranged from the environment to gender to global health. Mrs. Sylvia Gordon has deeply influenced members of UNIS-UN, in the way we confront and deliver solutions to issues of current global significance. Without her positive efforts, we would not be here celebrating an accomplishment that not only affects the small community that stands before us today, but that of an entire world.

Sylvia Howard Fuhrman



One of the driving forces in the growth and development of the United Nations International School at 24-50 FDR Drive, Mrs. Fuhrman dedicated her life to the success of the world-renowned institution. Appointed to her position as Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the United Nations International School (UNIS) by Secretary-General U-Thant in 1967, a position she held for 45 years, Mrs. Fuhrman worked tirelessly to build, develop and advance the school.

In 1976, in collaboration with Sylvia Gordon. Fuhrman worked with UNIS students to create an annual student-led conference, UNIS-UN, focused on current global events held in the General Assembly Hall.

Mrs. Fuhrman was an integral part of the planning, allowing students the opportunity to learn the skill of conference organization, meeting several times throughout the planning process with the supporting departments at the UN, essential for the success of the event. She was instrumental in working with the students to identify high ranking UN officials, providing students with interview and research opportunities, and introducing the students to Ambassadors who participated throughout the years. She secured the participation of several Secretaries-General to open the student-led conference. She promoted the conference to the UN Community and ensured that it was broadcast on UNTV.

Mrs. Fuhrman was “uncompromising in her love of the school and the young people it educated.” (Stephane Dujarric) Well-known and respected throughout the UN Secretariat, she was truly a giant in the lives of so many people. We are indebted to the efforts of Mrs. Fuhrman to ensure that students were afforded the opportunity to hold their annual conference year after year in the GA Hall - thanks to Mrs. Fuhrman, a tradition which continues to this day.



We would like to acknowledge the work and support of all our UNIS-UN Faculty Advisors throughout the years:

Zakaria Baha, Jean Baptiste Bassene, Paco Barba Moran, Pat Burn, Rodolphe Casado, Lynda Crawford, Tony Doyle, David L. Evans, Marian Ferrara, Michelle Fredj-Bertrand, Luz Maria Garcelon, Sylvia Gordon, Elizabeth Kahn, Brian Kahn, Judith King-Calnek, Shirley Klein, Alcy Leyva, Joan Neil, Peggy O'Brien, Audra Robb, Thomas Sieftring Jr., Rosetta Springer, Margot Steinberg, Frederika Van Eyndhoven, Francis Wilson



Marius Meland

CEO of Fastinform, holds a master’s degree in International Affairs from Columbia University. Before launching Fastinform, Marius founded Law360, which grew to become the leading news source for attorneys in the U.S. Marius previously worked as a reporter and editor at Dow Jones and Forbes. Marius learned about UNIS-UN through UNIS Faculty member Kimxuan Brezinsky. Upon learning about the conference, Marius could clearly see our students gaining hands-on experience in international relations, communications, negotiation and leadership. He is a current M4 Parent.



The Rana Family

Manu S. Rana ‘88 is a senior managing director of Napier Park Capital, a First Eagle Investments Company, where he heads the firm’s real assets investments, and is a founder and senior advisor of Ten Coves Capital. Manu was among the founding partners of Napier Park when it separated from Citigroup in 2013. Manu has established and led two distinct investment strategies focused on financial services, in real assets at Napier Park and in growth equity at Ten Coves. Manu’s prior professional experience includes Old Lane and Lazard. Manu has previously served as Trustee of the United Nations International School and as a Governor of the International Baccalaureate Organisation; and Manu’s professional and educational experiences encompass six continents. Manu received a BA from Columbia University and lives in New York City with his wife and daughter.



Shantanu Rana ‘93 is the Managing Director, U.S. at Framna, where he leads the firm’s U.S. business. Previously, he served in executive roles at Valtech, kbs+, and R/GA. Earlier, Shantanu led the turnaround of Naked Communications’ U.S. operations. Shantanu focuses on enterprise digital transformation, operational leadership, and scalable growth strategies. Shantanu received a BS from Carnegie Mellon University, and lives in New York City with his wife and two sons.

The Bâli Family



Ahmet İhsan Bâli and Ayşe Neylân (Akra) Bâli were both born in Istanbul. Neylan joined the United Nations in 1966 and went on to serve for thirty-three years, ultimately becoming Director of the Security Council Affairs Division – the first woman to hold that post. She worked at the center of global diplomacy on decolonization, sanctions, migration, and conflict, while also advocating for gender equity within the UN. In addition, she became involved first in the United Nations committees that oversaw the organization’s relationship to UNIS–working for more than a decade to strengthen the partnership between the UN and the school–and eventually joining the UNIS Board from 1994-5.

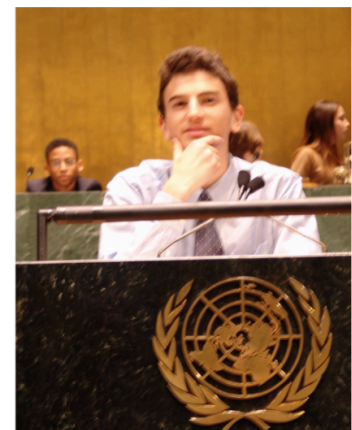
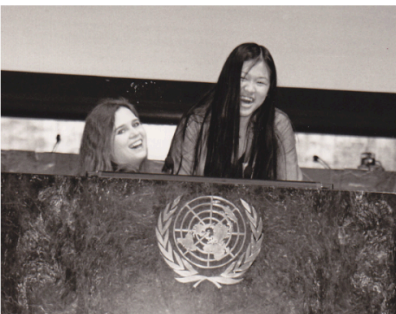
Ihsan trained as a civil and transportation engineer in Turkey and the United States and played a formative role in the modernization of Istanbul’s transportation infrastructure. He oversaw major transportation projects across the United States and the Middle East, earning a reputation for precision, judgment, and calm leadership. Ihsan was a meticulous organizer, a gifted storyteller, and later became a professionally trained chef .

Aslı Bâli ‘89 holds a JD from Yale University and a PhD in Politics from Princeton. She was very engaged with UNIS-UN during her years at UNIS and served as one of the Co-Chairs in her senior year. She practiced law for a number of years, including time working for the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, before she became an academic. She is a professor, teaching international law subjects at Yale Law School, and lives in New Haven, CT with her husband and daughter. She travels frequently to the Middle East for work. Her ongoing commitment to human rights–which first developed at UNIS–is reflected in her scholarship and her work as co-chair of the Advisory Committee for the MENA division of Human Rights Watch.



Elif Bâli ‘91 holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Cornell University, majoring in hotel administration. She was actively involved with the UNIS-UN conference while in high school and has carried her sense of global citizenship and commitment to human rights. She has worked in the hotel industry for thirty years, while maintaining an interest in philanthropic support for everything from the International Rescue Committee’s earthquake relief work to various humanitarian and development agencies in the UN system. She is based in Brooklyn, NY with her family.

A HISTORY OF UNIS UN







"The UNIS/UN Conference remains one of the true highlights of my UNIS experience. The conference committee felt like a family—we literally "adopted" older brothers and sisters across grade levels. As a freshman, the older students were inspiring role models; over time, we stepped into those leadership roles ourselves. The subject matter of the conference was almost secondary to the joy of organizing, planning, and bringing it all to life together. Standing at the podium in the General Assembly Hall, presenting alongside a fellow student, was a once-in-a-lifetime experience—one I still remember vividly today." - Yumi Ando '84

"Two decades on, it still blows my mind that we were given such a privilege to invite students from around the world into the General Assembly to discuss important issues. Those connections were so eye-opening. The late nights spent after school, huddled in a room down the hall surrounded by branded tote bags and unfinished programs. And I'll never forget when Kofi Annan joined us on stage at the end of the conference. What an amazing experience that I'm so happy to see continue on. All the best for this year, and congratulations."

- Jennifer Eng '06



"Being on the UNIS-UN Student Conference Committee with Sylvia Gordon as our mentor and guide was the experience of a lifetime. Sylvia combined her scholarly knowledge of global history with a radical belief in the ability of young people to understand current world events and to take on a project of major proportions. I remember being amazed by the brilliance of my fellow committee members; really, it was Sylvia who encouraged this level of discourse, enabled us to meet with experts in the field during the planning process, and helped us to appreciate the ideals represented by the UN even as we voiced our own opinions." - Susie Tanenbaum '83

"UNIS-UN was a formative experience for me--I loved working on such a big and important-feeling project with my peers, learning from speakers, and meeting students from all around the world. Years later, I love telling stories about hosting students from Sweden, Japan, Germany, and more."

- Janou Hooykas '12



"Legendary setting? Check. Timely and pressing topics? Plenty. Inspirational speakers? Undoubtedly. But what memories of UNIS-UN do I cherish more than anything else decades later? Opening our home for student participants coming from abroad and conversing deep into the night about the issues that mattered most to our generation. Like much in life, it is the unscripted moments that can turn out to be the most rewarding." - Philip Mirrer-Singer '98

FOREWORD

2026.

Fifty years have passed since UNIS UN first convened, and the world barely resembles the one we inhabit today. The New International and Economic order, the theme of the first conference, and a generation's hope for a fairer world set the stage for decades of ambition. Over the five decades, UNIS UN conferences have tracked the world's most urgent developments and fault lines, poverty, disarmament, human rights, the emergence of media, climate change, and artificial intelligence.

The topics have shifted with the times, but the issues beneath the surface have simply found new ways to present themselves. The food crisis of 2009 echoes the development debates of 1981. The gender equality debates of 2024 echo the women in society discussions of 1995. The communication revolution of 1984 foreshadowed the algorithmic world of 2025.

*This year, we invite you to reckon with the true price of progress.
How have these developments contributed to the present world we live in?*

The Global Economy is undergoing a profound transformation, as evolving economic systems dismantle long-standing structures and give rise to new forces and dynamics. The confluence of technological innovation, shifting labor markets, and the growing tension between economic growth and sustainability presents an opportunity for reflection on how the global economy can better adapt to serve future generations.

It is our hope that the perspectives distilled within this paper, emerging from a diverse constellation of student voices, deepen your engagement with the economic forces that will define the decades ahead.

We celebrate the Visiting Schools and UNIS contributions to the Working Paper, where students from around the world have shared their research. In honor of 50 years of UNIS UN, this working paper is specially dedicated to the very first, published in 1977, reflected in its typography and design. We would like to extend our gratitude to all the editors, writers, and graphic designers who made this paper possible. While we could not feature every submission in the final selection, we are pleased to share all contributions on our website to recognize your valuable work.

We hope that the following articles assist you in answering these ambitious questions and that they nurture compelling discussions. As you hear from debate panelists and speakers, this information is at your disposal for contribution to the discussion.

DEBATE MOTIONS

1. Digital currencies will reduce economic inequality between developing and developed nations.

In this debate motion, we invite you to consider the opportunity cost of digital currencies and how they impact wealth distribution. Digital currencies may curtail the exorbitant costs of cross-border remittances, decouple financial access from conventional institutional gatekeepers, and galvanize inclusion among unbanked populations. On the other hand, meaningful adoption remains contingent upon reliable infrastructure, digital literacy, and robust regulatory frameworks. These are conditions that remain difficult to satisfy across developing nations. The capricious nature of digital currency markets and the concentration of wealth among early adopters therefore may hinder positive outcomes.

Considering all of this, students should attempt to answer some of the following questions: Do digital currencies genuinely expand financial access or merely transpose existing inequalities to a new form? For whom is adoption most viable, and why? What infrastructural and regulatory conditions must be met for digital currencies to yield equitable outcomes? What role should international institutions play in governing digital currency systems?

2. Adopting green technologies will result in stronger economic growth than pursuing conventional industrialization.

In debating this, we are looking forward to students considering the impact of prioritizing green technologies over conventional industrialization in the pursuit of stronger, long-lasting, economic development. We encourage the evaluation of both the advantages and disadvantages of renewable technologies and the ways in which its integration into different economies can either bridge or exacerbate existing divides. Green technologies such as renewable energy and electric vehicles can create new industries and employment opportunities. Sustainability can reduce long-term environmental and health expenditure. On the other hand, green technologies may pose high initial investment costs and slower growth in the short-term. Certain technological and resource limitations could exist for installing and maintaining these technologies.

Considering all of this, students should attempt to answer some of these following questions: Do the long term benefits of green technologies outweigh short-term obstacles? For whom do these developments benefit the most and why? How can the limitations of green technologies be minimized? What role should international regulations and policies play in ensuring equitable green development? Is there an ideal balance between green technologies and conventional industrialization?

THE ECONOMY AND SPORTS

Aisha Madsbjerg - *UNIS*

Sports have long intersected with economics. However, since the widespread introduction of television in the 1950s and 60s, this relationship has become increasingly complex, as people began to see the lucrative nature of sports. Today, the sports economy has grown to a global revenue of \$2.65 trillion.¹ From personal and private equity investments reshaping team ownership to major sporting events influencing national economies, the financial aspect of sports offers a deeper understanding of larger economic trends. These developments raise important questions about regulation, morality, and accessibility.

The introduction of private equity into professional sports, particularly in the United States, has been swift and dramatic, fundamentally altering the culture behind many traditional sports ownership structures. Starting with the MLB in 2019, private equity firms expanded their involvement in U.S. sports investments. By 2024, every major U.S. league had allowed private equity ownership. Globally, private equity investments are now permitted in most major sporting leagues with few exceptions, including every major European football league, Major League Cricket (MLC), the Indian Premier League (IPL), and more. According to S&P Global, sports services deals reached \$31.64 billion in 2024, nearly quadrupling the \$8.81 billion recorded in 2023.² In 2023, private equity invested approximately €4.9 billion in Europe's five largest football leagues, a massive 7,246.33% increase compared with just €66.7 million in 2018.³ As of December 2024, private equity firms and executives were connected to 20 of 30 National Basketball Association (NBA) teams, 10 of 32 National Hockey League (NHL) teams, 18 of 30 Major League Baseball (MLB) teams, and 8 of 32 National Football League (NFL) teams, representing an average of 46.9% of teams across the USA's "Big Four" leagues and Major League Soccer (MLS).³



While these investments may prove highly profitable for private investors, many argue that their goal of profit maximization directly conflicts with the communal nature of sports and its roots in working-class groups. Although private capital can improve facilities, its primary goal remains financial

¹ Best, R., & Howard, D. (n.d.). *The \$2.65 trillion question: How big is the sports industry?*. Global Sports Insights. <https://globalsportsinsights.com/the-2-65-trillion-question-how-big-is-the-sports-industry/>

² Reyes, Alexander. "The Rise of Private Equity in Sports - Read More." *Citrin Cooperman*, 2 Oct. 2025, www.citrincooperman.com/In-Focus-Resource-Center/The-Rise-of-Private-Equity-in-Sports.

³ Meketa Investment Group. *Private Equity and the Evolution of Sports Assets*. By Will Parducci, Jacob Miller, and Balaj Singh, CFA, CAIA, Dec. 2024, https://meketa.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/MEKETA_Private-Equity-and-the-Evolution-of-Sports-Assets.pdf.

returns rather than sporting excellence or fan welfare. In English football, recent analysis has shown that Premier League ticket prices have risen over three times as steeply as inflation since 1991–92.⁴

The dramatic expansion of sports betting represents one of the other most significant recent economic developments in sports. The United States sports betting market generated \$10.92 billion in revenue in 2023, a 44.5% year-over-year increase after the Supreme Court removed the federal ban on sports betting.⁵ Americans legally wagered \$119.84 billion on sports in 2023 compared to \$93.2 billion in 2022.⁶ Globally, the annual revenues from sports on legal gambling sites totaled \$261 billion.⁷

While sports betting generates new revenue streams through taxation, it also introduces substantial risks, as all forms of gambling tend to do. The National Council on Problem Gambling estimates approximately 2.5 million U.S. adults meet criteria for severe gambling problems, with another 5–8 million having mild to moderate addictions. The integration of betting into sports viewing raises concerns about consumer protection and profits from a traditional consumer base of young men, the primary audience for many of these sites, who are reported to be 2–3 times more likely to develop gambling addictions than women.⁸

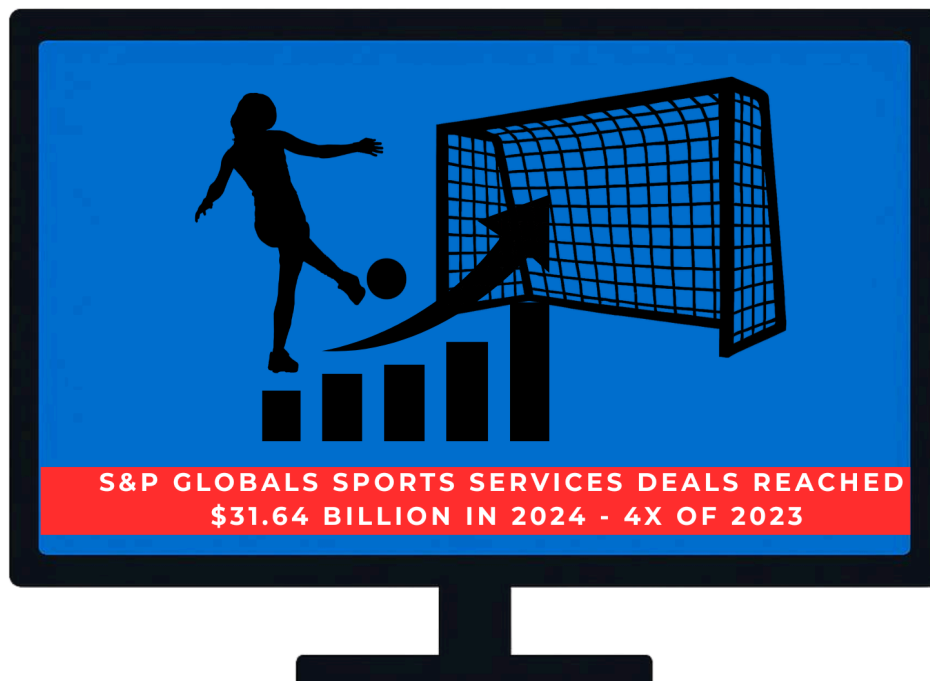


Major sporting events such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup are significant financial drivers that generate substantial economic activity and attract large numbers of tourists every four years. Even so, their economic and social benefits often produce complex and uneven outcomes. The 2022 Qatar World Cup is a particularly extreme example of the scale of these mega-events, with a record-breaking \$220 billion in investments having been poured into the tournament over a decade, a figure that totals Qatar's entire 2025 GDP.⁹ Host countries often justify these costs with projections of long-term benefits in infrastructure, employment, and tourism. However, evidence consistently identifies a gap between projected and realized outcomes. The International Monetary Fund estimated that Qatar's World Cup contributed only \$1.56 billion through visitor spending and broadcasting revenue, compared to the predicted \$17 billion.¹⁰

⁴ Hunter, Andy. "‘Prices Have Risen 800% since 1990’: The Premier League Fans’ Unions Campaigning for Affordable Tickets." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 6 Jan. 2025, www.theguardian.com/football/2025/jan/06/prices-have-risen-800-since-1992-the-premier-league-fans-unions-campaigning-for-affordable-tickets.
⁵ Rovell, Darren. "Sports Betting Industry Posts Record \$11B Revenue in 2023." *ESPN*, 13 Mar. 2024, https://www.espn.com/espn/betting/story/_/id/39563784/sports-betting-industry-posts-record-11b-2023-revenue.
⁶ Birches Health Research Team. "U.S. Gambling Statistics 2024." Birches Health, 2024, <https://bircheshealth.com/resources/us-gambling-stats>.
⁷ National Council on Problem Gambling. "What Is Problem Gambling?" NCPGambling.org, 2024, <https://www.ncpgambling.org/help-treatment/faqs-what-is-problem-gambling/>.
⁸ Birches Health Research Team. "U.S. Gambling Statistics 2024." Birches Health, 2024, <https://bircheshealth.com/resources/us-gambling-stats>.
⁹ Craig, Matt. "The Money behind the Most Expensive World Cup in History: Qatar 2022 by the Numbers." *Forbes*, 19 Nov. 2022.
¹⁰ Bae, David. "The Finances behind the 2022 World Cup." *Michigan Journal of Economics*, 10 Jan. 2023, <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/mje/2023/01/10/the-finances-behind-the-2022-world-cup/>.

Furthermore, when employment gains occur, they tend to be short-term, concentrated in construction and absorbed by existing workers rather than creating new job opportunities.¹¹ Research on tourism impacts also shows mixed results: The 2010 World Cup in South Africa, for example, attracted 300,000 tourists instead of the projected 450,000 at an estimated cost of \$13,000 per additional visitor.¹² After the event itself, challenges remain for host countries. The “white elephant” effect, a term popularized for sports by economist Andrew Zimbalist, refers to purpose-built venues that struggle to generate enough revenue post-event to offset continued maintenance costs, while also highlighting displacement patterns and the uneven distribution of costs and benefits among different socioeconomic groups surrounding host cities.¹³

As it continues to evolve, the financial landscape that has begun to encompass sports raises tensions between commercial interests and the social and traditional values behind professional athletics. While it is certain that these financial investments can greatly improve the quality of sports, there is growing concern that this involvement risks turning them into commercial products and tearing them away from their roots in community and tradition. As the relationship between sports and economics evolves, finding a balance between monetary interest and classical sporting values remains as pertinent as ever.



¹¹ European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. “Economic Impact of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.” EBRD, 18 Feb. 2014, <https://www.ebrd.com/news/2014/economic-impact-of-the-2014-sochi-winter-olympics.html>.

¹² Isidore, Chris. “World Cup: South Africa vs. Brazil.” *CNN Money*, 9 June 2014, <https://money.cnn.com/2014/06/09/investing/world-cup-south-africa-brazil/>.

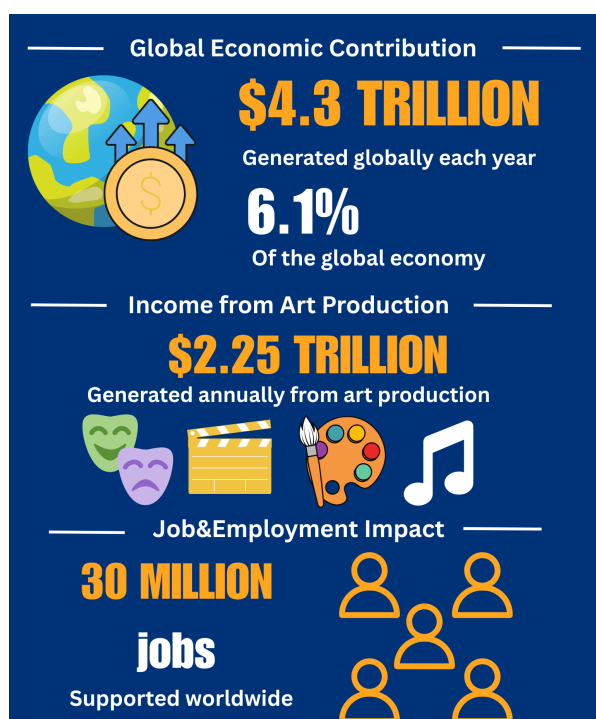
¹³ Worrall, Roy Tomizawa. “The Barcelona Model, Part 1: How the 1992 Summer Olympics Showed the Way to a Sustainable Olympics.” *The Olympians*, 4 May 2019, <https://theolympians.co/2019/05/04/the-barcelona-model-part-1-how-the-1992-summer-olympics-showed-the-way-to-a-sustainable-olympics/>.

THE ECONOMY AND THE ARTS

Suthida Cheerasarn – UNIS

The arts are a creative industry designed to enhance imagination and freedom of expression through paintings, music, photography, and other forms of media. In contrast, the economy is often defined by businesses, markets, and numerical growth. Yet, what people do not realize is that the creative industry does more than inspire individuals; it generates income and influences what society perceives as “success”. By examining how art contributes to the economy and comparing it to traditional developmental strategies, the arts can be understood not just as a form of creativity and culture but also as an industry that shapes societal growth.

The arts, which include fields of music, television, digital arts, fashion, design, film, and architecture, contribute to the economy through job creation and revenue generated by creativity and culture, acting as a vital strategy for regions seeking development and growth.¹⁴ According to UNESCO, creative industries generate approximately \$4.3 trillion globally each year and account for 6.1% of the global economy. These industries also produce income through art production, generating nearly \$2.25 trillion annually and supporting close to 30 million jobs worldwide, demonstrating their importance to economic development.¹⁵ Furthermore, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) reports that cultural industries peaked in 2022, accounting for 4.3% of GDP.¹⁶



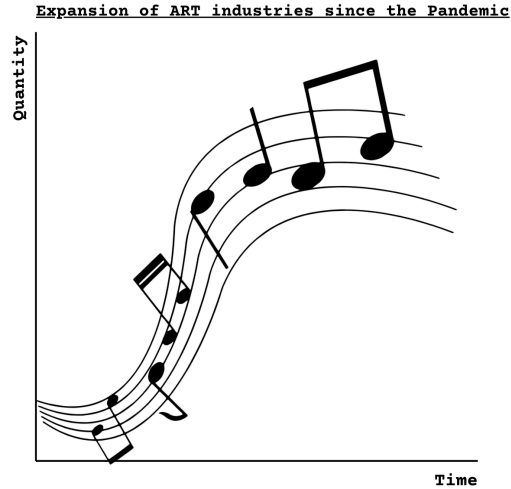
While UNESCO states that these industries can reduce income inequality, the University of Edinburgh suggests that access to high-profile positions within cultural fields remains unequal. Data underscores the persistent inequity of access within cultural and creative backgrounds. Among BAFTA nominated actors, (The British Academy Film Awards) 35% attended private educational institutions, a figure that is five times greater than the UK national average of 7%.¹⁷ This highlights that while the arts contribute significantly to the economy, inequalities in access and opportunity persist.

¹⁴ Mammadova, Elza, and Asif Abdullayev. "Cultural Industries and National Economic Competitiveness: A Global Perspective." *Research Gate*, May 2025, www.researchgate.net/publication/391983770_Cultural_Industries_and_National_Economic_Competitiveness_A_Global_Perspective. 2 Jan. 2026.

¹⁵ "Promoting the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and Creative Economy." *UNESCO*, 4 May 2023, www.unesco.org/en/articles/promoting-diversity-cultural-expressions-and-creative-economy. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

¹⁶ "Arts & Cultural Sector Hit All-Time High in 2022 Value Added to U.S. Economy." *National Endowment for the Arts*, 25 Mar. 2024, www.arts.gov/news/press-releases/2024/arts-cultural-sector-hit-all-time-high-2022post-industrial2-value-added-us-economy. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

¹⁷ "Research reveals stark class inequalities in access to the creative industries." *The University of Edinburgh*, 13 Nov. 2024, www.sps.ed.ac.uk/news-events/news/research-class-inequalities-access-creative-industries. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.



Compared to traditional economic development strategies, the arts often produce long-term economic benefits at a relatively low cost; however, they also have notable strengths and weaknesses. Although the arts are highly competitive, they often function as an economic tool rather than a direct source of growth. ScienceDirect identifies arts investment as an effective method for urban development, particularly in post-industrial cities. Cities such as Łódź, Poland, have invested in the arts to attract creative workers and rebrand the post-industrial regions. This rebranding emerged from recent marketing tactics, commonly including post-industrial Anglo-Saxon city branding tactics from the 1980s to the 1990s.¹⁸ While

arts and culture-led development can be valuable, research highlights several limitations and risks associated with using arts and culture as an economic strategy. For example, the New York City Council reported that the arts and entertainment sector saw a 61% drop in jobs during the pandemic, while healthcare and social assistance, and information industries rose by 12% and 11%, respectively.¹⁹ However, the NEA reveals how the majority of art industries have since restored or exceeded pre-pandemic economy levels, having 27 out of 35 art conglomerates as of 2023.²⁰

Government and public funding play a crucial role in ensuring that the arts remain accessible and economically productive. In 2023, Americans voiced their opinions about the arts, where many citizens expressed that the arts improved the quality of their lives, leading to widespread support for government funding. A majority of American adults (83%) revealed that they supported the government funding of arts education programs for students from pre-K through 12th grade.²¹ Furthermore, economic impact studies, such as research by Carl M. Colonna, further support the value of government investment for the arts. In Washington, D.C., 45 art organizations generated \$619 million, with each \$1 invested returning around \$5.90 to the economy. However, Colonna also questions the long-term economic development of public arts funding,²² even as the federal government support for cultural programs continues.²³

According to Americans for the Arts, shared beliefs towards the arts can influence the economy itself. Surveys show that 86% of Americans associate arts and culture with the improvement of their quality of life, while 79% report that arts and culture contribute to their community's revenues,

¹⁸ Cudny, Waldemar, et al. "Arts and Creativity: A Business and Branding Strategy for Lodz as a Neoliberal City." *Cities*, vol. 100, May 2020, p. 102659, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.102659>. Accessed 2 Jan 2026.

¹⁹ "COVID-19 Impact on NYC Artists: Closures and Cancellations." *New York City Council*, council.nyc.gov/data/artists-covid/. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

²⁰ "Arts and Cultural Industries Grew at Twice the Rate of the U.S. Economy, Adding \$1.2 Trillion." *National Endowment for the Arts*, 2 Apr. 2025, www.arts.gov/news/press-releases/2025/arts-and-cultural-industries-grew-twice-rate-us-economy-adding-12-trillion. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

²¹ "Americans Speak Out About The Arts in 2023." *Americans for the Arts*, www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/research-studies-publications/public-opinion-poll. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

²² "The Impact Of Public Funding On Cultural Urban Revitalization." *Journal of Business & Economics Research*, clutejournals.com/index.php/JBER/article/view/2984. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

²³ "Arts and Culture in Economic Development Policy." *Congress.gov*, www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12446. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

businesses, and overall economy. Additionally, 92% of Americans believed that students must receive high-quality arts education.²⁴ The arts also shape how people perceive their local economies. Surveys in China, Spain, Teruel, and Chengdu reveal that art contributes to cultural values, social inclusion, and economic development. Interviews with artists, community members, citizens, urban policy planners, etc., show that public art influences urban renovation and supports the Sustainable Development Agenda.²⁵ According to UNESCO, the creative industries are essential to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.²⁶

The value of the arts, through music, broadcasting services, film archives, and other cultural expressions, lies in their ability to preserve and promote artistic and cultural expression. Through economic data and research, it is evident that the arts, as part of the creative industries, contribute significantly to employment, revenue, and urban development. However, challenges relating to accessibility, inequality, and funding remain important concerns.



²⁴ "Americans Speak Out About The Arts in 2023." *Americans for the Arts*, www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/research-studies-publications/public-opinion-poll. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

²⁵ Zhou, Yun, et al. "Artistic Interventions in Urban Renewal: Exploring the Social Impact and Contribution of Public Art to Sustainable Urban Development Goals." *MDPI*, www.mdpi.com/2075-4698/14/10/204. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

²⁶ "Promoting the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and Creative Economy." *UNESCO*, 4 May 2023, www.unesco.org/en/articles/promoting-diversity-cultural-expressions-and-creative-economy. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

THE ECONOMY AND THE ARTS

Marta Cabases – *Escola Andorra de Batxillerat*

The creative economy, also known as the “orange economy”, has significantly grown during the last fifty years, resulting in new developments in the art market, and giving rise to a new way of seeing art. Art has ceased to be solely an aesthetic manifestation, and has evolved into a financial asset and an engine of global development.²⁷ While this integration of the creative market into the global market provides unprecedented opportunities for funding and visibility to artists from a wider range of regions around the world, it comes at a price in terms of inequality and the loss of cultural identity.

developed countries

export around

82%



**of the world's
creative goods**

This growth, according to UNESCO (2022), has manifested itself by becoming 3.1% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 6.2% of total employment.²⁸ This progress is considerably more noticeable in capitals like New York and London, but conversely, in the Global South, it can be observed that cultural raw materials are exported without receiving fair benefits, meaning that artists in these areas receive a smaller benefit for their work. This is noteworthy because studies show that developed countries export around 82% of the world's creative goods, while other countries in less favorable conditions export a much smaller amount.²⁹

Beyond the evident economic disparity, the “price of progress” is also paid in cultural currency. To achieve an adequate profit, many artists adapt to meet market demand, so that their work is commercially viable on an international scale. This phenomenon can be seen more clearly in how artists from the Global South fit their aesthetics into global standards, and blurring the personal identity behind their craft. When this happens, traditions risk being reduced to mere decorative commodities, stripped of their original meaning to satisfy the tastes of a globalized elite. Therefore, when art begins to be treated only as a financial asset, there is a risk of neglecting what it was originally created for.

Moreover, the economic progress of the arts often manifests through the gentrification of urban spaces, as is the case in many global metropolises. We can observe this in the creation of “Art Districts” that are marketed as a tool for urban renewal and modernization. However, this progress also carries a social cost that is often overlooked, the displacement of original artistic communities living in these areas. As property values increase due to an area's cultural prestige, artists are often forced to leave because they can no longer afford the rising cost of living.

In addition to the problems in cities, the “price of progress” is evident in

²⁷ UNESCO. *Reshaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good*, 2022.

²⁸ UNCTAD. *Creative Economy Outlook 2024: The International Trade of Creative Goods and Services*, 2024.

²⁹ UNESCO. *The Global Trade of Cultural Goods and Services*, 2023. 4. UNESCO. *The Status of the Artist: Worldwide Survey on the Implementation of the 1980 Recommendation*, 2023.

the poor working conditions of artists. Although art contributes significantly to the global economy, a 2023 UNESCO report states that most freelance artists lack social security, unemployment benefits, and a fixed salary. In this digital world, artists are forced to work only on a project-by-project basis.³⁰ This means they bear all the risks, while large digital platforms reap almost all the profits. This demonstrates that economic growth does not always translate into a better life for workers.

To address these problems, the creative economy must align itself with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 8 (Decent Work).³¹ The world should not measure success solely by financial activity, but rather by cultural sustainability. Regulations must be established to protect diverse art forms, preventing globalization from homogenizing all art worldwide.⁶ Another even more practical solution would be to enforce the "Right of Resale" on a larger scale.³² This is a law which allows artists to receive a share of the proceeds each time their work is resold at auction. In this way, the money earned by auction houses would finally reach the original creators. It is also important to support artists from poorer countries so they can sell their art worldwide without losing their own identity. In this way, the "price of progress" becomes an investment in ensuring the continued diversity of art.

In conclusion, art is at a point where its value as a business cannot be more important than its value to people. Progress plays a significant part in the search for new talent, but if it costs us our identity, culture, and leaves artists in poverty, it is a price too high to pay.

SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities



³⁰ International Labour Organization (ILO). *World Employment and Social Outlook: The Value of Essential Work*, 2023.

³¹ United Nations. *Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 8 and Goal 10 Guidelines*, 2024.

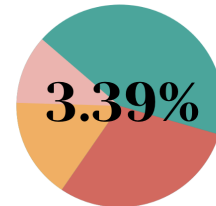
³² CISAC. *Global Collections Report: The Importance of the Resale Right for Visual Artists*, 2024.

THE ECONOMY AND THE ARTS

Gaeun Kim – *Geumcheon-gu School*

The relationship between the arts and the global economy has transcended its traditional perception as a secondary social benefit to establish itself as a fundamental pillar of modern macroeconomic stability and industrial growth. According to a 2025 UNESCO Global Report, the cultural and creative industries have become one of the most dynamic sectors of the world economy, contributing approximately 3.39% to global GDP and providing 3.55% of total global employment.³³ These industries facilitate the generation of economic value through the creation and distribution of goods and services, either cultural or artistic in nature, while growing at rates that exceed those of traditional manufacturing or agricultural sectors.

cultural/creative
industries contribute
around



TO GLOBAL GDP

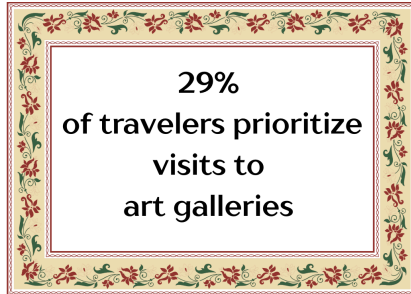
The labor-intensive character of the arts ensures a high employment multiplier effect compared to more automated sectors because every investment in artistic production directly correlates with the demand for human creativity and specialized labor. Specifically, the arts provide a robust professional environment for a wide demographic spectrum. For example, 28.9% of cultural workers in Europe are aged between 50 and 64, demonstrating that the sector offers sustainable career longevity and economic inclusivity for aging populations whilst remaining a primary entry point for younger creative talent. This diversification of the labor market leads to increased household income and higher tax revenues, therefore fostering a resilient national economy less vulnerable to the fluctuations of volatile commodity markets.

Beyond direct employment, the arts function as a strategic catalyst for local economic development by revitalizing commercial districts and supporting small business ecosystems through increased consumer foot traffic and spending. A primary example of this phenomenon is the world-renowned temporary public art installation in Chicago known as Cows on Parade, which successfully demonstrated the immense scale of art-driven economic stimulation. This exhibit brought an estimated additional 2 million visitors to the city within just a three-month period, during which these tourists spent approximately 500 million dollars on hotels and dining and sightseeing. The localized impact was so significant that a single retail store in Chicago reported a 40,000-dollar profit over its weekly projections due to the influx of thousands of additional customers generated specifically by the exhibit.³⁴ Furthermore, various retail shops and restaurants and hotels throughout the city reported a consistent 20% increase in sales, proving that public art installations can serve as powerful engines for urban commerce.

Research published by the Korean Research Institute for Local Cultural Policies further supports this by indicating that general cultural or artistic programs can stimulate local business activity by 20% to 30%,

³³ UNESCO, Culture: The Missing SDG—UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies (Paris: UNESCO, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.58337/REJU6051>
³⁴ Jeannette Kimmel, “Cow Parade,” National Geographic, January 9, 2008, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/cow_parade.

creating a spillover effect where the sales of nearby small business owners increase by more than 15%. This phenomenon is often referred to as cultural placemaking, transforming underutilized urban areas into vibrant economic hubs that attract further private investment and infrastructure development.



The arts also serve as a primary engine for the international tourism industry and the expansion of the service trade. According to the National Travel and Tourism Office's latest inbound survey, approximately 29% of international visitors prioritize visits to art galleries or museums during their stay, while 30% of global travelers report that their destination choice was influenced by the availability of specific cultural heritage events or artistic attractions.³⁵

This cultural motivation for travel results in longer stay durations and higher per capita spending, directly enhancing a nation's brand value in a competitive global market.

The economic footprint of the arts further extends into the digital economy, where creative content drives the growth of streaming platforms, social media, and software development. The synergy between artistic creativity and technological innovation creates a high-value ecosystem where intellectual property rights generate long-term residual income for creators and national economies alike. Governments that recognize the arts as a strategic asset often implement tax incentives and grants to attract creative professionals, knowing that a high concentration of artistic talent is a predictor of future innovation and regional competitiveness.

In the context of urban regeneration, the presence of arts districts reduces vacancy rates and increases property values, which leads to higher municipal tax yields that can be reinvested into public services. This cycle of investment illustrates that the arts are not a drain on public resources, but rather a high-yield investment with tangible returns. Furthermore, the arts contribute to social cohesion and human capital development, indirectly lowering public spending on social services by improving community well-being and mental health. When people engage with the arts, they develop critical thinking and communication skills that are highly sought after in our modern knowledge-based economy.

The development of a creative workforce ensures that a nation remains competitive in an era where automation is replacing routine tasks. Ultimately, the arts constitute a highly integrated economic infrastructure that is not merely an isolated sector of leisure, but a vital instrument for urban regeneration, job creation, and the long term sustainability of the global financial system. By fostering an environment where artistic expression can flourish, society secures a multifaceted economic future that balances commercial success with cultural enrichment and sustainable development.

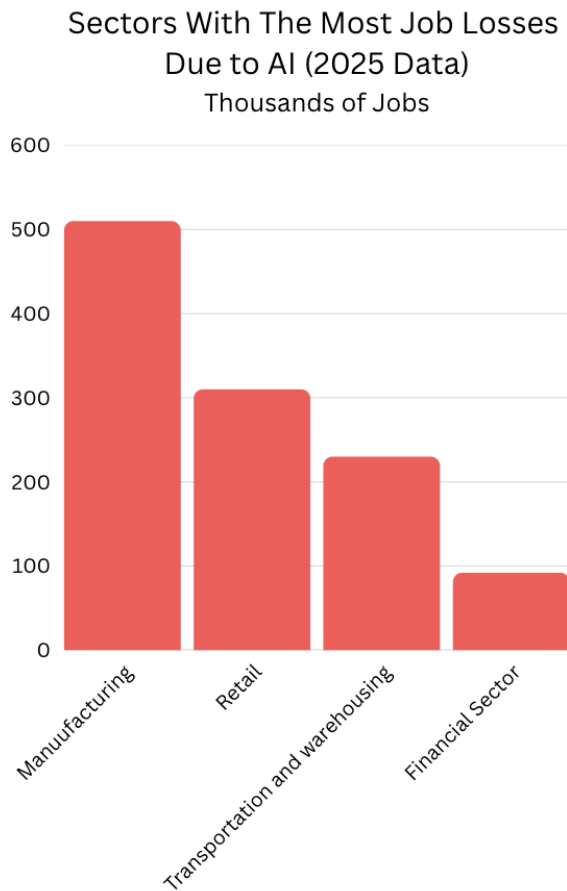
³⁵ National Travel and Tourism Office, "Survey of International Air Travelers (SIAT), First Quarter 2025 Results," *International Inbound Travel Association*, September 18, 2025.

THE ECONOMY AND AI/TECHNOLOGY

Aanya Sapra – UNIS

Technology has always been at the epicenter of the global economy. Technological innovations in the past have led to the establishment of new economic industries, a higher contribution to the worldwide GDP, and a myriad of new labor opportunities. While technological innovations make positive contributions to societies at large, they also often create disruptions for some.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is gathering an enormous amount of attention as one of the most significant technologies in this generation. GenAI emerged around the late 2010s following decades of research. GenAI relies on certain algorithms, such as *deep learning models*. Most models that GenAI follows aim to accurately replicate the learning and thinking process of the human brain.³⁶



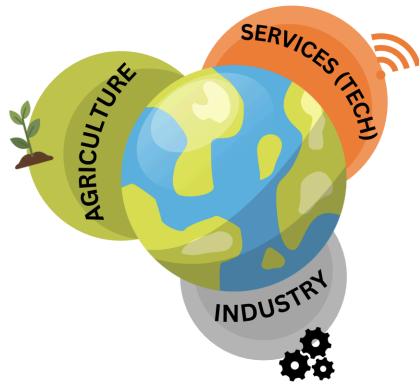
We can better understand the positive and potentially negative impacts of AI by placing it in context with other technological inventions of prior generations, like the internet. The internet, created in 1983, transformed the industry by establishing now-common sectors such as e-commerce, social media, and cybersecurity, constructing new job opportunities and areas for development and operation. The internet also led to the demise of retailers and jobs in the industry, transferring occupations surrounding technology towards a new era with modern scopes. Like the internet, AI is expected to affect the cost of labor, global GDP, mix of industries, the environment, and politics, but on an even faster timescale. Generative AI specifically reduces reliance on human labor, supports additional sectors within artificial intelligence, and is predicted to boost global GDP by trillions of dollars,³⁷ ultimately shifting the economic industrial mix with even more automation. These insights regarding GenAI and its future align with the prior results of the

internet and predict how AI's affiliations with technologies will consequently impact the forthcoming economy.

³⁶ Stryker, Cole, and Mark Scapicchio. "What is generative AI?" IBM, www.ibm.com/think/topics/generative-ai.

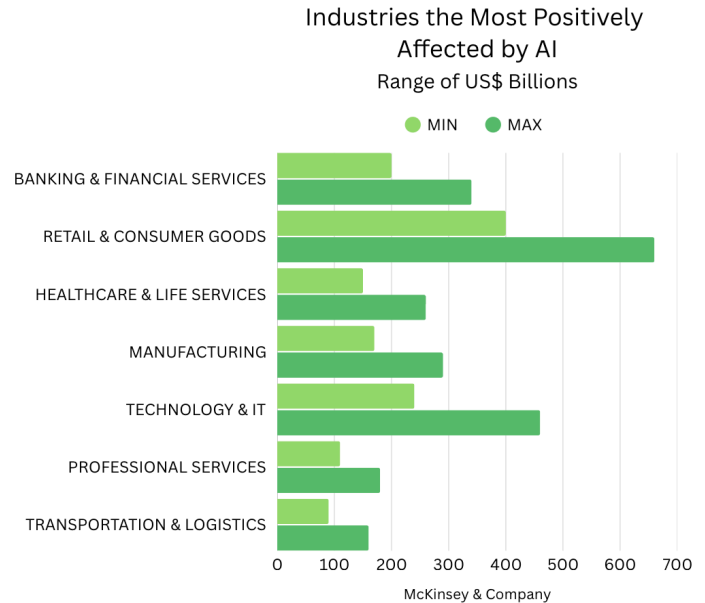
³⁷ World Economic Forum, Authors. "ChatWTO: An Analysis of Generative Artificial Intelligence and International Trade." *World Economic Forum*, 4 Sept. 2024, www.weforum.org/publications/chatwto-an-analysis-of-generative-artificial-intelligence-and-international-trade/

Stepping back from the future, GenAI is already making a significant impact on today's economy. Investments in data centers and servers under the demand of GenAI have driven the expansion of GDP and asset valuations of many companies. Some specialists predict that the overall future expansion will be minor, forecasting only around 1.1–1.6% GDP gain by 2034,³⁸ while in contrast, economists at Goldman Sachs foresee a ~7% GDP surge.³⁹



GenAI is also impacting the mix of industries, creating new sectors while also disrupting others. It has proven most impactful to knowledge and professional industries.⁴⁰ AI automation is becoming ubiquitous; the areas most often incorporating AI are around banking, technology, healthcare, retail, and life sciences.⁴¹ Economists already predict an additional \$200–\$340 billion in the banking industry, and around \$500 billion in a year in the retail industry.⁴² The World Economic Forum forecasts that GenAI will also reshape international trade, further disrupting the industries in many countries.

Another impact can be seen in occupations, as GenAI is transforming global labor, reshaping job growth and costs across sectors. Job displacement in the realm of generative AI has been apparent, primarily affecting mid-skill jobs. recent studies show a 13% employment decline for young and mid-skill workers due to AI.⁴³ Moreover, jobs specifically related to software engineering and computer services are experiencing roughly 20% declines in employment due to GenAI supplanting simple tasks. As for the environmental impacts, new data centers for GenAI require water, electricity, and fuel, increasing pollution and costs. The electricity demand is forecasted to grow by



³⁸ Dizikes, Peter. "What do we know about the economics of AI?" *MIT News*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 6 Dec. 2024, news.mit.edu/2024/what-do-we-know-about-economics-ai-1206

³⁹ Goldman Sachs, Authors. "Generative AI could raise global GDP by 7%." *Goldman Sachs*, 5 Apr. 2023, www.goldmansachs.com/insights/articles/generative-ai-could-raise-global-gdp-by-7-percent

⁴⁰ Lichtenberg, Nick. "Without data centers, GDP growth was 0.1% in the first half of 2025, Harvard economist says." *Fortune*, 7 Oct. 2025, fortune.com/2025/10/07/data-centers-gdp-growth-zero-first-half-2025-jason-furman-harvard-economist/

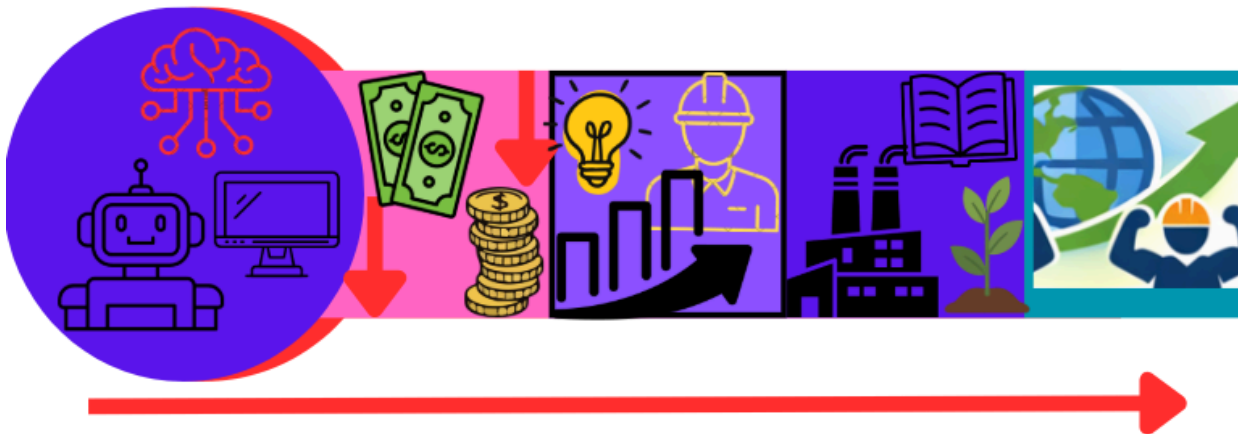
⁴¹ McKinsey, Authors. "The state of AI in 2025: Agents, innovation, and transformation." *McKinsey*, McKinsey & Company, 5 Nov. 2025, www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai.

⁴² McKinsey, Authors. "The economic potential of generative AI: The next productivity frontier." *McKinsey*, McKinsey & Company, 14 June 2023, www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/tech-and-ai/our-insights/the-economic-potential-of-generative-ai-the-next-productivity-frontier.

⁴³ Cerullo, Megan. "New study sheds light on what kinds of workers are losing jobs to AI." *CBS News*, 28 Aug. 2025, www.cbsnews.com/news/ai-artificial-intelligence-jobs-workers/.

2030.⁴⁴ The supply of electricity cannot expand fast enough to keep up with demand, which implies higher prices for society. While GenAI may contribute to future efficiency in sectors like transportation (e.g., flights rerouted with the help of GenAI cut ~35% of aviation's climate impact),⁴⁵ the negative consequences can be felt sooner.

While the comparison to the benefits of historical technological innovations suggests GenAI holds much promise, worldwide economic impacts remain uncertain. Awareness of the possibilities that AI can impact us in ways we can't predict, both positive and negative, is vital. AI is far from its full potential and continues to be adapted in multiple ways across different sectors globally.⁴⁶ Characteristics to monitor include labor demand, electricity prices, climate impact, economic disruptions, and productivity growth rates across industries. Some specialists believe the roles of young leaders are necessary to make sure that GenAI has a balanced and sustainable positive impact on society as a whole.⁴⁷ By proactively monitoring negative factors and introducing ideas, policies, and individual choices, young leaders can limit negative consequences, make progress in social stability, and altogether avoid most inimical outcomes.⁴⁸ With proactive involvement, GenAI can therefore have a positive net impact on our future, as technological innovations have in the past.



⁴⁴ Payton, Ben. "Power mad: AI's massive energy demand risks causing major environmental headaches." *Reuters*, 4 Dec. 2023, www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/power-mad-ais-massive-energy-demand-risks-causing-major-environmental-headaches-2023-12-04/

⁴⁵ Hillsdon, Mark. "How travel is getting smart, and more sustainable, with AI." *Reuters*, 4 June 2025, www.reuters.com/sustainability/land-use-biodiversity/how-travel-is-getting-smart-more-sustainable-with-ai-2025-06-04/

⁴⁶ Zewe, Adam. "Explained: Generative AI." *MIT News*, 9 Nov. 2023, news.mit.edu/2023/explained-generative-ai-1109.

⁴⁷ Bonnici, Francis. "These Young Global Leaders are driving impact in the age of AI." *World Economic Forum*, 8 Jan. 2024, www.weforum.org/stories/2024/01/young-global-leaders-leadership-ai/.

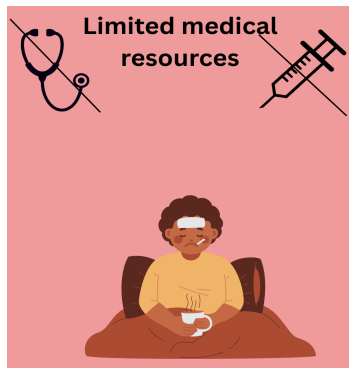
⁴⁸ Stanford Report, Authors. "Experts cut through the noise to clarify AI's actual economic impact." *Stanford Report*, Stanford University, 4 Dec. 2025, news.stanford.edu/stories/2025/12/ai-facts-siepr-policy-forum-fei-fei-ling-mark-kelly

THE ECONOMY AND GLOBAL HEALTH

Ella Meilands – UNIS

Around the world, countries with strong economies often benefit from advanced healthcare systems, longer life expectancies, and access to modern medical technology. In contrast, many low-income countries continue to face preventable diseases, limited medical resources, and higher mortality rates. These differences are not coincidental. Health and economic development are closely interconnected, with economic inequality shaping health outcomes and poor health, in turn, constraining economic growth. Understanding this relationship is essential in an increasingly globalized world.⁴⁹

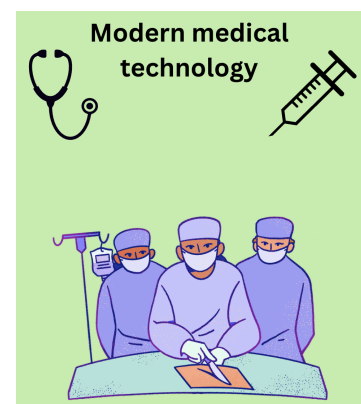
Economic inequality plays a significant role in determining health outcomes both across and within countries. Individuals living in low-income nations often lack access to basic healthcare services, clean water, nutritious food, and essential vaccinations. Even in wealthier countries, income inequality contributes to disparities in life expectancy and the prevalence of chronic illnesses.⁵⁰



For example, maternal mortality rates remain significantly higher in low-income regions, particularly in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, compared to high-income countries. Factors such as limited education, unsafe living conditions, and lack of employment opportunities—closely linked to economic status—contribute to these outcomes. Preventable infectious diseases, including malaria and tuberculosis, continue to cause widespread mortality in regions where healthcare infrastructure is weak and underfunded.⁵¹

This relationship also operates in reverse. Poor health can deepen economic inequality by increasing medical expenses and reducing individuals' ability to work or attend school. Children affected by malnutrition or chronic illness often face educational disadvantages, limiting their future employment opportunities. As a result, health disparities and economic inequality reinforce each other over time.⁵²

Additionally, health is not only a social concern but also a critical economic factor. Widespread illness reduces labor productivity, decreases school and work attendance, and places pressure on healthcare systems. Chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease



⁴⁹"Health inequities are shortening lives by decades." *World Health Organization*, 6 May 2025, www.who.int/news/item/06-05-2025-health-inequities-are-shortening-lives-by-decades. Accessed 3 Mar. 2026.

⁵⁰"Health inequities are shortening lives by decades." *Pan American Health Organization*, 6 May 2025, www.paho.org/en/news/6-5-2025-health-inequities-are-shortening-lives-decades. Accessed 3 Mar. 2026.

⁵¹United Nations Statistics Division. "Good health and well-being." *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, 2024, unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/goal-03. Accessed 3 Mar. 2026.

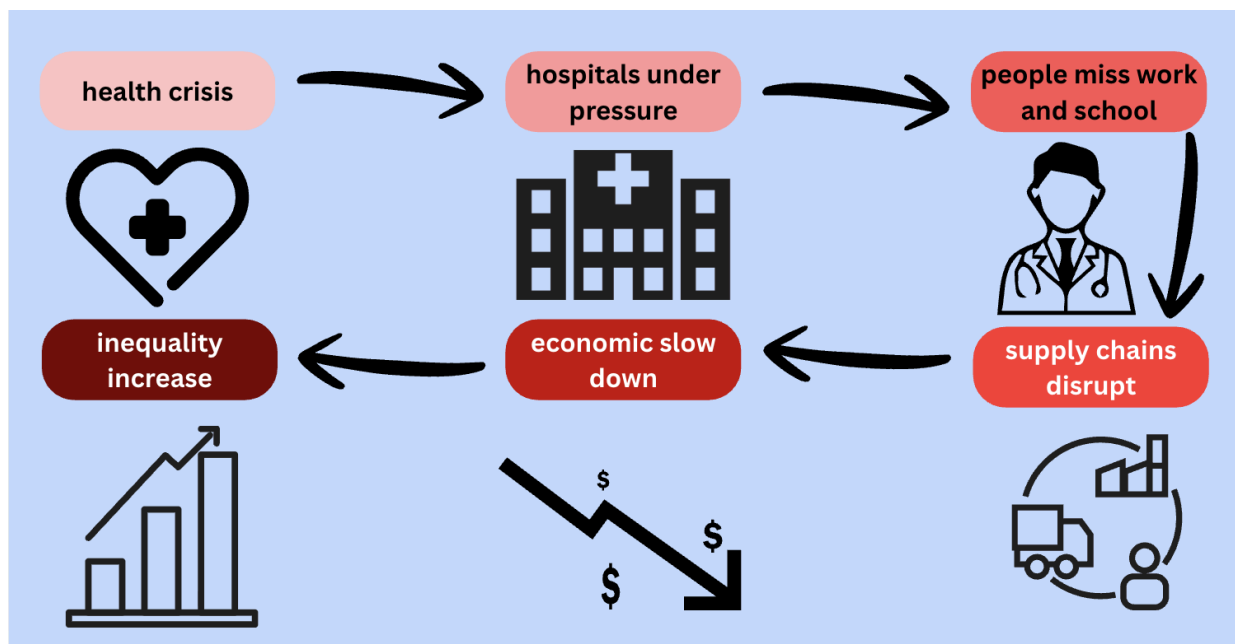
⁵²Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "COVID-19 could reverse decades of progress toward eliminating preventable child deaths, agencies warn." *United Nations*, 9 Sept. 2020, www.un.org/en/desa/covid-19-could-reverse-decades-progress-toward-eliminating-preventable-child. Accessed 3 Mar. 2026.

can limit long-term productivity and increase public spending on healthcare.⁵³

High child mortality rates and the prevalence of preventable diseases also affect economic development by reducing the size and skill level of the future workforce. In many low-income countries, families must pay for healthcare out of pocket, often forcing them to sell assets or incur debt. These financial pressures extend beyond individual households, weakening national economies and slowing long-term development.⁵⁴

Investing in public health is therefore an investment in economic growth. Healthy populations are more productive, more innovative, and better equipped to contribute to economic stability. Countries that fail to prioritize healthcare often face long-term consequences, including reduced competitiveness and social instability.⁵⁵

The importance of resilient healthcare systems became especially clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. What began as a public health crisis quickly led to economic disruption, including job losses, supply chain breakdowns, and increased inequality. Countries with stronger healthcare systems were better prepared to respond, while others struggled to protect both public health and economic stability.⁵⁶ The pandemic also demonstrated how connected the world has become. Health crises in one region can quickly affect global markets and economies, demonstrating that public health is a global concern rather than a national one. Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of



⁵³Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "COVID-19 could reverse decades of progress toward eliminating preventable child deaths, agencies warn." *United Nations*, 9 Sept. 2020, www.un.org/en/desa/covid-19-could-reverse-decades-progress-toward-eliminating-preventable-child. Accessed 3 Mar. 2026.

⁵⁴World Bank. "Health, Economic Growth and Jobs." *World Bank Group*, 17 Apr. 2025, www.worldbank.org/en/topic/health/brief/health-economic-growth-and-jobs. Accessed 3 Mar. 2026.

⁵⁵"Investing in Health is Key to Job Creation and Economic Growth." *World Bank Group*, 7 Apr. 2025, www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2025/04/07/investing-in-health-is-key-to-job-creation-and-economic-growth. Accessed 3 Mar. 2026.

⁵⁶World Health Organization. "WHO warns of slowing global health gains in new statistics report." *World Health Organization*, 15 May 2025, www.who.int/news/item/15-05-2025-who-warns-of-slowing-global-health-gains-in-new-statistics-report. Accessed 3 Mar. 2026.

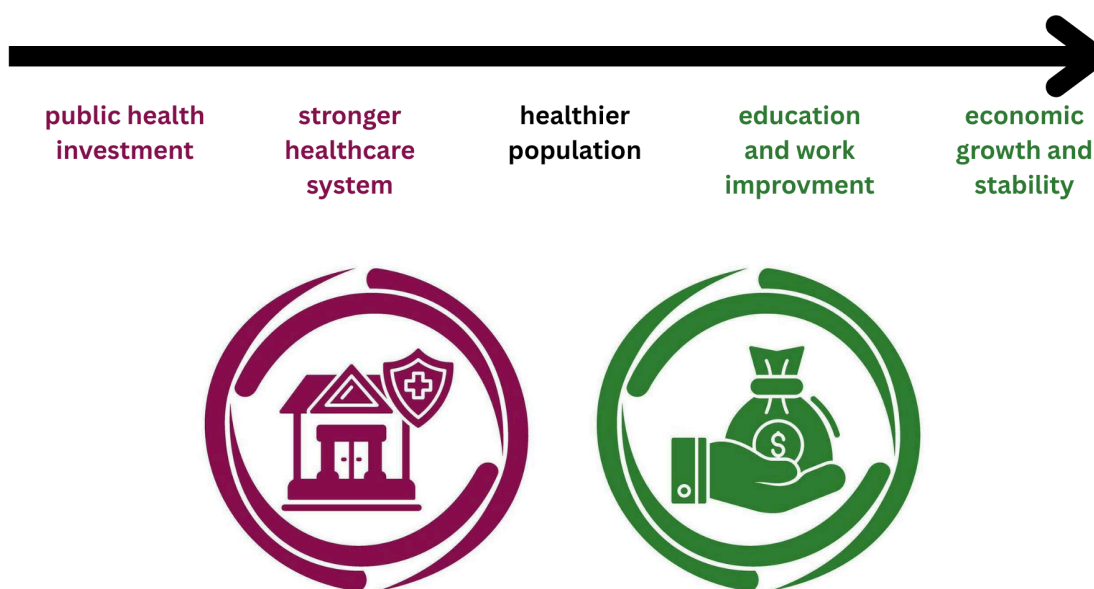
international cooperation, early investment in healthcare infrastructure, data sharing, and equitable vaccine distribution – not only to protect lives but also to maintain economic resilience.⁵⁷

In recognizing these challenges, global health initiatives have played an important role in improving health outcomes in many regions, particularly through vaccination programs and international aid. However, many initiatives struggle with sustainability and equity. Short-term funding can limit long-lasting impact, and some programs fail to address broader social factors such as education, housing, and sanitation.⁵⁸

More effective solutions focus on prevention and long-term capacity building. Strengthening local healthcare systems, training medical professionals, and improving access to affordable medicines help ensure lasting progress. Equity is equally important; initiatives must reach marginalized populations rather than benefiting only wealthier groups. Addressing such inequalities, allows global health programs to support entire communities.

Overall, global health and economic development are deeply intertwined. Economic inequality contributes to health disparities, while poor health limits productivity and growth. Pandemics further reveal the risks of underinvesting in healthcare systems. By prioritizing equitable access to healthcare, preventive measures, and sustainable global health initiatives, countries can promote both economic stability and human well-being.

In a world where health crises can rapidly disrupt global economies, investing in healthcare is not optional, it is essential. Strengthening healthcare systems and addressing inequality can help create a more resilient, fair, and prosperous future for generations to come.



⁵⁷Santos, Raisa. "COVID-19 Vaccine Inequity Undermines Global Economic Recovery." *Health Policy Watch*, 22 July 2021, healthpolicy-watch.news/covid-19-vaccine-inequity-global-economic. Accessed 3 Mar. 2026.

⁵⁸"COVAX." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 5 Jan. 2026, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVAX. Accessed 3 Mar. 2026.

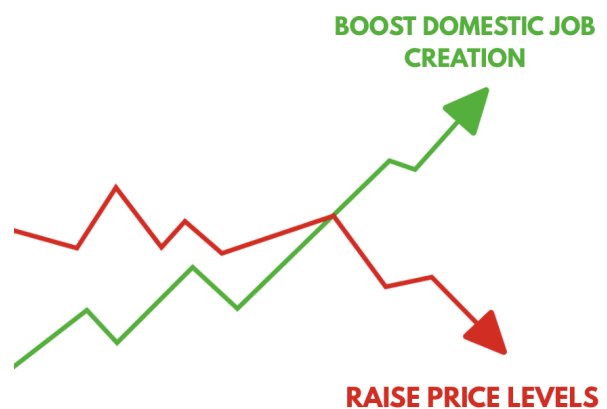
THE ECONOMY AND GLOBAL TRADE

Takafumi Mashiko - *UNIS*

The importance of international trade in the 21st century has become nearly impossible to ignore, as the increasingly vast network of global exchanges of goods and services allows for the availability of a limitless range of products to be accessible. In recent years, however, governments all over the world have worked to pass laws that regulate the number of imports and exports of their country, formerly known as Protectionism. Protectionism is fundamentally defined as political and economic government measures that limit imports into a country to protect the profits of its own domestic industries against foreign competition, resulting in the restriction of international trade.⁵⁹ This often prompts other countries to adopt their own protectionist policies, leading to a protectionist arms race. While critics claim protectionism fosters domestic job creation and boosts GDP by shielding homegrown businesses, protectionism can impede economic growth and raise price levels.

One example of modern protectionism is the US-China Trade War, initiated in 2018 by the Trump Administration's implementation of key protectionist policies in response to the loss of American jobs due to import competition fueled by China's lower labor costs. In response, the United States Congress passed the Export Control Reform Act, granting the president the authority to control and restrict U.S. exports of technologies that may be used for both civilian and military purposes, thereby strengthening a country's military power. As stated by recent studies, U.S. companies primarily bore the cost of the tariffs, and American companies earn hundreds of billions of dollars annually from sales in China, money they can then, in turn, invest in their United States operations (Henley & Partners).⁶⁰

PROTECTIONISM MAY



Tech companies such as Apple, which had its sourced components from around the world assembled mostly in China, experienced increased tariffs that threatened to raise prices for consumers. Likewise, every global company reliant on Chinese manufacturing or that had American consumers faced higher production costs and declining profitability. These downsides are further depicted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which noted that the

⁵⁹ The Investopedia Team. "Understanding Protectionism: Tools and Examples for Trade Policies." *Investopedia*, Dotdash Meredith, 8 Aug. 2025, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/protectionism.asp>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2025.

⁶⁰ Siripurapu, Anshu, and Noah Berman. "The U.S.-China Trade Relationship." Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, n.d., <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/contentious-us-china-trade-relationship>. Accessed 20 Dec. 2025.

global economic growth rate in 2025 would be 3.2 percent, up 0.4 percent if it weren't for international trade tensions.⁶¹ Although some sectors, such as the U.S. steel industries, faced increased production, benefits, and investment due to the tariffs, it is evident that these protectionist policies have threatened international trade, raising the question of whether countries should prioritize their national interests or global welfare and how nations should balance such options in the future.



CONDUCT 70%+ OF TRADE WITHIN RCEP

While international commerce and protectionist policies have a profound effect on the movement of goods across the globe, geopolitical shifts, such as changes in global alliances and regional conflicts, are playing a larger role than ever in the modern and interconnected world. One factor that influences geopolitical trade dynamics is the formation and strengthening of regional trade blocs. Countries with similar political and economic national interests have begun to collaborate to create a more secure and predictable trading environment, while also reducing dependency on politically unstable partners. One example of these allied groups is the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the world's largest regional market agreement, comprising 15 Asia-Pacific nations and covering approximately 30% of the world's population and GDP. This establishment, like any other regional institution, aims to reduce trade barriers, promote economic integration, and create a unified market for goods, services, and investments. However, in doing so, countries begin to favor imports from bloc members over potentially more efficient global producers, leading to greater territorial monopolies and overall barriers to free trade. Furthermore, Non-member countries often face tariffs, quotas, and other trade barriers, which disincentivize transactions on a global scale and hinder political interdependence. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), RCEP-member countries such as Brunei, Myanmar, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic had more than 70% of their total transactions with members of the RCEP, far higher than their exchanges with countries outside the bloc (UNCTAD).⁶² By regional trade blocs such as the RCEP encouraging their countries to prioritize business within their region, their share of marketing and dealing with global non-bloc countries is reduced. This illustrates forms of trade concentration, a form of trading where countries engage with only a select few partners, an action that contrasts with the ideas of a fully open global market environment.

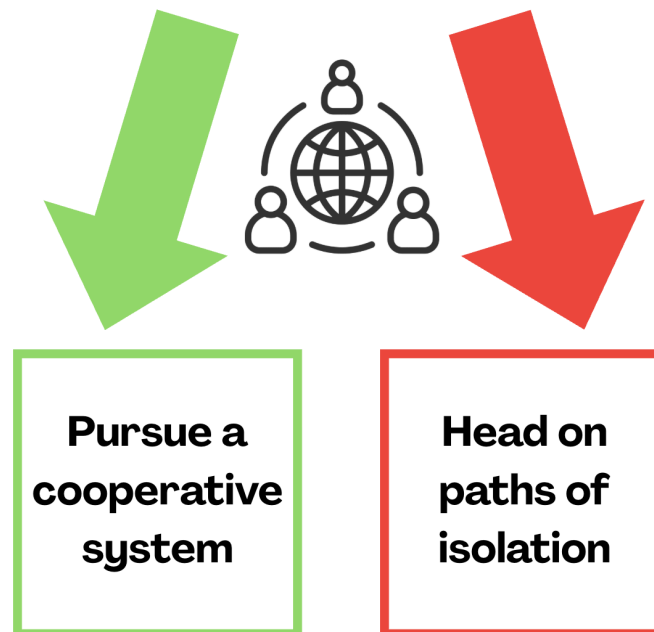
⁶¹ Klatte, Tim. "US-China Trade War Impacts Global Economy." *Global Mobility Report 2025 January*, Henley & Partners, Jan. 2025, <https://www.henleyglobal.com/publications/global-mobility-report/2025-january/uschina-trade-war-applying-lessons-10-address-reality-20>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2025.

⁶² "Press Briefing Transcript: World Economic Outlook, Spring Meetings 2025." *IMF*, International Monetary Fund, 22 Apr. 2025, <https://www.imf.org/en/news/articles/2025/04/22/tr-04222025-weo-press-briefing>. Accessed 20 Dec. 2025.

Recent shifts towards these protectionists and regional trade bloc initiatives highlight how governments are increasingly centered on their national goals over global economic partnership. Policies such as the Export Control Reform Act (ECRA), which aims to disrupt and restrict the free market flow of goods, prioritize national safety and domestic profit, raising the question of whether a country's interests should be the main focus over international interdependence. In addition, regional trade blocs such as the RCEP incentivize member-states to undertake local transactions over global-level exchanges.

Ultimately, the protectionist policies enacted by governments worldwide, along with the establishment of multiple trade organizations, reflect a growing shift away from multilateral cooperation towards nationally driven economic strategies. While these measures may provide short-term security for domestic industries, society can also risk long-term consequences, including an increase in consumer prices, a shortage of goods due to reduced production from tariffs, and an overall slower global economic development. As international trade becomes increasingly active and influential for determining a country's success, the future of global trade is dependent on whether governments choose to pursue a cooperative system that preserves the free market with possible risks or continue towards a path of isolation that sacrifices global economic welfare.

The future of global trade is dependent on whether governments



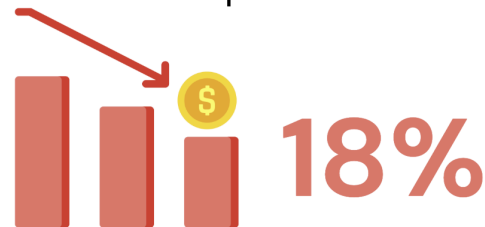
THE ECONOMY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Mia Kalra – UNIS

The economy is under threat due to climate change. Climate change has escalated rapidly, transforming industries, policies, and GDP correspondingly. As a result of climate change, jobs, especially in the fossil fuel sectors, have been displaced, energy prices have fluctuated, and new policies have been introduced. As climate change is ignored, GDP declines. Furthermore, economic growth can also increase environmental degradation or play a positive role in sustainability efforts, depending on the policies. Industries such as recycling, clean energy, and the automotive sector are adopting practices that aim to reduce the effects of climate change.

Climate change is dangerous for the economy. As climate change worsens, the GDP also deteriorates. Global GDP is expected to fall by about 4% if global temperatures increase by less than 2°C. However, if global temperatures rise by approximately 3%, global GDP may decline by up to 18%. Countries in Asia, especially Southeast Asia, are projected to experience some of the largest GDP losses, up to 34%.⁶³ This suggests that economic inequality will increase as parts of Asia get left behind as a result of climate change. All these estimates align with the climate-economic models summarized by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which emphasize the economic risks of rising global temperatures.⁶⁴

Global GDP may decline by
up to



if temperatures rise

In terms of policy, climate policies will have a long-lasting impact on the economy. Policies include raising the prices of fossil fuels, investing in green energy, prioritizing low carbon emissions, and making net-zero decisions. In the short term, consequences include higher energy costs, compliance costs, and the loss of jobs in the fossil fuel industry. There are positive impacts as well, including the development of clean technologies, new industries and job opportunities, better resource efficiency, and a reduction of the economic damages caused by climate change.⁶⁵

Economic growth can improve or worsen climate mitigation. It allows for investment in clean energy and technology, carbon emissions regulation, and conservation efforts. Wealthier societies can shift towards greener practices when paired with strong policies and innovation that prioritize environmental

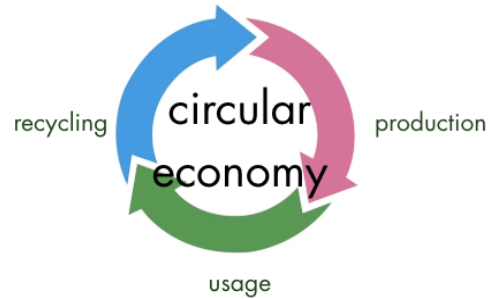
⁶³ Marchant, Natalie. "This Is How Climate Change Could Impact the Global Economy." *World Economic Forum*, 28 June 2021, www.weforum.org/stories/2021/06/impact-climate-change-global-gdp/. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

⁶⁴ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report – Summary for Policymakers*. Edited by Hoesung Lee and José Romero, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2023, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf

⁶⁵ "How Do Climate Policies Affect Economy?" *Sustainability Directory*, 20 Apr. 2025, climate.sustainability-directory.com/question/how-do-climate-policies-affect-economy/. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

health.⁶⁶ Still, some argue that economic growth is directly linked to environmental degradation.⁶⁷ A case study conducted in China shows that, in general, SO₂ emissions increased as the economy grew. However, this is dependent on the growth policies.⁶⁸ This demonstrates that economic growth alone is not responsible for environmental outcomes, but it is the policies and regulations that have the largest impact.

Poverty, a loss of job opportunity, and political resistance make environmental protection difficult. In many low income countries, food production priorities can limit the adoption of green initiatives. Agriculture in these countries struggle with green practices due to a lack of funding and technology.⁶⁹ However, there are models that help the economy and the environment. For example, a circular economy, which focuses on reducing waste, is an effective strategy. The model utilizes biological cycles where organic materials are recycled through processes like composting. This allows for living systems like soil and water to generate renewable sources.⁷⁰ A circular economy helps the economy as it reduces costs from raw materials and waste disposal. Furthermore, the cycle of reusing materials decreases the risk of resource shortage. Another challenge is the loss of jobs in the fossil fuel industry. However, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency, renewable energy sectors such as solar and wind are among the fastest growing sources of employment.⁷¹ Green sectors are predicted to create up to three times more jobs than fossil fuel production. A “just transition” would ensure the workers are retrained and have the necessary skills for the renewable energy industries.⁷²



Green sectors are predicted to create



MORE JOBS THAN FOSSIL FUEL PRODUCTION

Furthermore, several industries are leading the shift towards a sustainable economy, such as the renewable energy sector. Renewable energy technologies including solar and wind energy have experienced rapid growth. They increase employment, economic output, and can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Countries like China, Germany, and the United States are global leaders in

⁶⁶ "How Can Economic Growth Bring Environmental Benefits?" *tutor2u*, 15 Oct. 2024, www.tutor2u.net/economics/reference/how-can-economic-growth-bring-environmental-benefits?srltid=AfmB0oqJK7Aty0zk22CL0C66zzjdYAt8K4NWoMEGeVctwKoiZzgwpBLp. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.
⁶⁷ Paulson, Susan. "Economic Growth Will Continue to Provoke Climate Change." *Economist Impact*, 13 Sept. 2022, <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/circular-economies/economic-growth-will-continue-to-provoke-climate-change>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.
⁶⁸ Yan, Chao, et al. "Environmental Pollution and Economic Growth: Evidence of SO₂ Emissions and GDP in China." *Frontiers in Public Health*, vol. 10, 10 Nov. 2022. *PubMed*, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.930780>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.
⁶⁹ Özjas, Emma. "A Win-Win for a Sustainable Future, but Is It Possible?" *European Youth Portal*, European Union, youth.europa.eu/news/win-win-sustainable-future-it-possible_en. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.
⁷⁰ Khodadadi, Amir H. "Green Vs. Global: Can Sustainability and Econom, fastest-growingstruggleslow-income Growth Go Hand in Hand?" *Earth.Org*, 16 Jan. 2025, earth.org/green-vs-global-juggling-sustainability-and-the-economy/. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.
⁷¹ "Renewable Energy and Jobs: Annual Review 2023." *International Renewable Energy Agency*, www.irena.org/Digital-Report/Renewable-energy-and-jobs-Annual-review-2023. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.
⁷² Serin, Esin. "Can We Have Economic Growth and Tackle Climate Change at the Same Time?" *The London School of Economics and Political Science*, 7 June 2022, www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/can-we-have-economic-growth-and-tackle-climate-change-at-the-same-time/. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

renewable energy production.⁷³ Companies such as Vestas, NextEra Energy, and First Solar are helping promote clean energy.⁷⁴ These companies show how early investment in renewable energy can reduce emissions, strengthen energy stability, and lead to long-term economic returns. The recycling industry also reduces waste and improves resource efficiency. Japan and Germany are known for their advanced recycling systems,⁷⁵ while companies like Waste Management and Veolia lead global efforts in recovering waste.⁷⁶ Advanced recycling systems can help economies while lowering environmental costs.

Lastly, traditional industries are also adapting. For example, construction practices have started to implement green techniques. Additionally, the automotive sector is starting to promote electric and low emission vehicles. This includes brands like Tesla, BYD, and Volkswagen.⁷⁷ Moreover, manufacturing is investing in low carbon materials. The food and agriculture industries are implementing recycling practices and plant-based products, as well.⁷⁸

Green services are also creating new economic opportunities.⁷⁹ Financial institutions like the World Bank are increasing investments in sustainable finance. The World Economic Forum states that sustainable industries are major drivers of economic growth.⁸⁰ Reports estimate that the global green economy could reach trillions of dollars by 2040 if investment in these sectors increases, showing the potential for economic growth while protecting the environment.⁸¹

Climate change is increasingly shaping global economic systems. It affects how growth occurs, what policies prioritize, and investment decisions. While traditional economic growth has had negative effects on the environment, growth can also support environmental improvement when guided by the right policies. As climate risks grow, it is more important to balance sustainability and economic goals. A growing number of industries are already succeeding in their shift to sustainability. The relationship between the economy and the environment is complex and evolving, though it is possible to succeed in both aspects. Continued efforts to balance economic growth and environmental sustainability will play a significant role in shaping future global development.

⁷³ "Top Countries Leading the Green Energy Transition (Renewable Power Stats)." *Patent PC*, 19 Dec. 2025. patentpc.com/blog/top-countries-leading-the-green-energy-transition-renewable-power-stats. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

⁷⁴ Moriarty, Tom. "5 Biggest Renewable Energy Companies in the World." *The Global Talent Experts*, 23 Aug. 2023. www.csghalent.com/insights/blog/5-biggest-renewable-energy-companies-in-the-world/.

⁷⁵ Abukhalaf, Amer Hamad Issa. "How Can the U.S Learn from the German and Japanese Experiences in Waste Management?" *Science X*, 12 Aug. 2021. [sciencex.com/news/2021-08-german-japanese.html#:~:text=While%20Germany%20has%20the%20highest,China%20to%20be%20cycled%20there](https://www.sciencex.com/news/2021-08-german-japanese.html#:~:text=While%20Germany%20has%20the%20highest,China%20to%20be%20cycled%20there). Accessed 6 Jan. 2021.

⁷⁶ "Top 10 Waste Management Companies in 2026." *Spherical Insights*, July 2025. www.sphericalinsights.com/blogs/top-25-industries-in-circular-economy-market-2025-2035-expert-view-by-spherical-insights. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

⁷⁷ "More than 10 Million Electric Cars Were on the World's Roads in 2020 with Battery Electric Models Driving the Expansion." *International Energy Agency*, 2021. www.iea.org/reports/global-ev-outlook-2021/trends-and-developments-in-electric-vehicle-markets. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

⁷⁸ "7 Industries That Are Going Green in 2024." *Green City Times*, www.greencitytimes.com/7-industries-that-are-going-green-in-2024/. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

⁷⁹ Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE). *Transitioning to a Green Economy in Key Sectors: Module 4*. UN PAGE, Apr. 2023. admin.un-page.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/00-module-4-transitioning-to-a-green-economy-in-key-sectors.pdf.

⁸⁰ "Five Takeaways from the 2025 World Economic Forum." *United Nations Global Impact*, United Nations, 29 Jan. 2025. unglobalcompact.org/compactjournal/five-takeaways-2025-world-economic-forum#:~:text=Considering%20sustainability%20is%20not%20optional,and%20opportunities%20for%20sustainable%20development. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

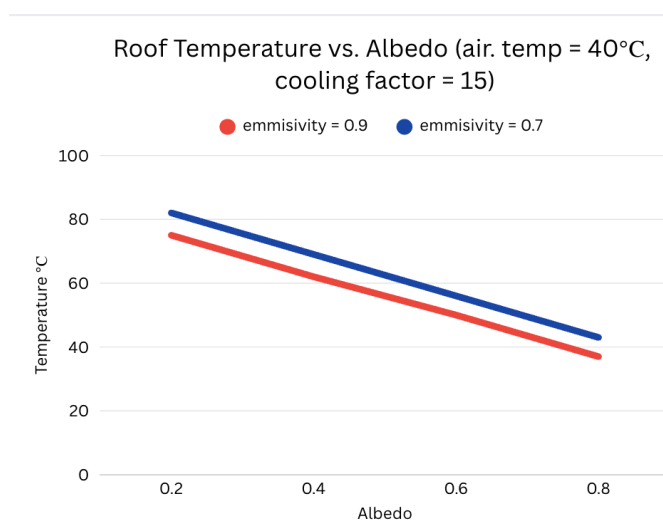
⁸¹ Tan, Sek-loong, et al. "Economic Growth Opportunities in a Greening World." *Boston Consulting Group*, 16 Jan. 2025. www.bcg.com/publications/2025/economic-growth-opportunities-greening-world. Accessed 2 Jan. 2026.

REAL WORLD REPORT: ALBEDO MODIFICATION TO MITIGATE THE URBAN HEAT ISLAND EFFECT

Irina Boronina - *UNIS*

Urban surfaces with low albedo absorb far more solar energy than light-colored ones. This drives local warming and higher cooling bills during the summer. Using New York City as a case study, this paper presents an analysis of the summer energy balance of a white, high-albedo roof versus a conventional dark roof. It shows that boosting roof reflectivity can be a practical, cost-effective way to lower indoor temperatures, reduce summer energy use for cooling, and ease public health burdens during heat waves.

The albedo of a surface is the fraction of incoming sunlight that it reflects. Dark materials have low albedo and convert most solar radiation to heat, whereas light materials reflect more of the incoming energy and absorb less. In dense urban areas, the abundance of low-albedo roofs, pavements, and roads creates the urban heat island (UHI) effect, which increases ambient temperatures and demand for air conditioning. On the other hand, raising roof

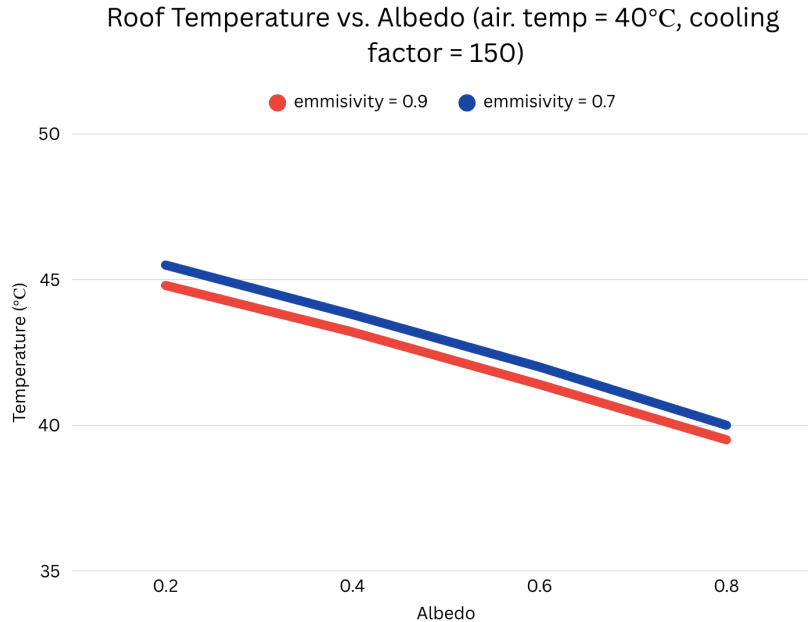


albedo directly reduces roof surface temperatures and can lead to a decrease in heat transfer into buildings, which would lower cooling energy needs.

By using an energy-balance approach, which equates incoming solar energy (reduced by albedo) to outgoing radiative and convective heat losses, we model the equilibrium roof temperature on a typical summer day in New York City as a function of albedo, wind-driven convective cooling, emissivity (an object's ability to radiate heat), and ambient air temperature.⁸² Using a solar constant of 1400 W/m², which is typical for New York City, and solving numerically for the equilibrium roof temperature, we get the following

⁸² Climate and Earth's Energy Budget." Earth Observatory, NASA, <https://science.nasa.gov/earth/earth-observatory/climate-and-earths-energy-budget/>. Accessed 15 Aug. 2025.

results. Changing the roof albedo from 0.15, which is typical for a black asphalt roof, to 0.85, which can be achieved with a white reflective coating, can drastically lower roof temperatures on a hot, calm day. For example, in one modeled scenario (ambient temperature of 40°C with low wind), a roof with an albedo of 0.1 reaches 80–85°C, whereas a reflective PVC-coated roof with an albedo of 0.9 only reaches a temperature of 30–35°C.



Albedo is the dominant factor with a roughly linear drop in roof temperature across the modeled albedo range. Convective cooling, which is determined by wind, is a major secondary factor. Higher wind, corresponding to a larger convective heat transfer coefficient, reduces roof temperatures for a given albedo, which can be seen by comparing the two graphs above. On the other hand, emissivity and ambient temperature are relatively minor contributors in the modeled ranges, as evident from the closeness of the 0.7 and 0.9 emissivity curves in the graphs above.

Lowering roof surface temperatures is significant because it translates to a lower rate of heat transfer into top-floor spaces. The Department of Energy has estimated that each 1°C reduction in indoor summer temperatures can cut energy use for air conditioning by about 5% or more.⁸³ Thus, reducing heat transfer from hot roofs can produce substantial electricity savings during peak summer months. This would ease grid stress during heat waves and reduce greenhouse gas emissions where electricity is derived from fossil fuels.

Lowering roof albedo can be achieved in several ways. Reflective coatings are relatively inexpensive compared to full roof replacement, with typical costs

⁸³ How Much is 1° Worth? Energy Hub. <https://www.energyhub.com/news/how-much-is-one-degree-worth>. Accessed 31 Aug. 2025.

ranging from \$0.75 to \$3.00 per square foot. Switching to reflective single-ply membranes (TPO or PVC) costs more but remains competitive.⁸⁴ In New York City, various analyses suggest that cool roof retrofits can reduce cooling bills by up to 20% for some buildings with typical payback periods ranging from under two years to several years, depending on building type, occupancy, and installation cost.⁸⁵ When factoring in public health benefits during extreme heat, the financial calculations improve even more in favor of more reflective roofs.

Other mitigation efforts to ease the UHI effect have also been proposed, including green roofs and urban vegetation, which provide cooling via shade and evapotranspiration. These methods also improve air quality and are among the most effective UHI mitigation measures, but require space, structural capacity, and maintenance.⁸⁶ Solar panels reduce net energy demand by converting absorbed radiation to electricity rather than heat, but high upfront costs in NYC can limit near-term adoption. In practice, combining strategies, such as white or reflective roofing, targeted green infrastructure, and solar deployment, yields the best balance of cooling, energy savings, and other benefits.

A common concern is the “winter penalty”, meaning that higher albedo roofs will reflect more sunlight and increase heating costs in the winter. However, in northern cities like NYC, winter daylight hours are far shorter, and the sun is at a lower angle, so the loss of heat due to additional reflection of solar energy would make less of a difference. In fact, studies and energy-balance reasoning indicate that summer cooling savings typically outweigh any modest winter heating penalties, yielding net annual energy and cost benefits for most buildings.

There are a number of complexities that this analysis does not take into account, including building geometry, roof thermal mass, insulation, and window area, which all introduce uncertainties into the calculations. Local microclimates and extreme events also warrant further study, as heat waves can reduce evapotranspiration from vegetation, for example. Future work should also be done to refine cost-benefit estimates using detailed building energy models across diverse NYC building types and climate scenarios. The environmental impacts of coating production versus operational savings should also be studied.

Overall, raising roof albedo by applying reflective coatings or choosing light-colored roofing materials offers a straightforward, cost-effective way to lower summer roof temperatures and indoor cooling energy use. For many buildings, payback periods are short, and combined economic, health, and environmental benefits justify wider adoption. Implemented at scale, cool roofs can be a practical tool for cities to reduce heat exposure and energy demand in a warming climate.

⁸⁴ “Roof Albedo.” EPA. https://19january2021snapshot.epa.gov/sites/static/files/2014-08/documents/roof_albedo.pdf. 19 Jan. 2021.

⁸⁵ NYC CoolRoofs.” NYC Business, New York City, <https://nyc-business.nyc.gov/nycbusiness/business-services/incentives/nyc-coolroofs>. Accessed 3 Aug. 2025.

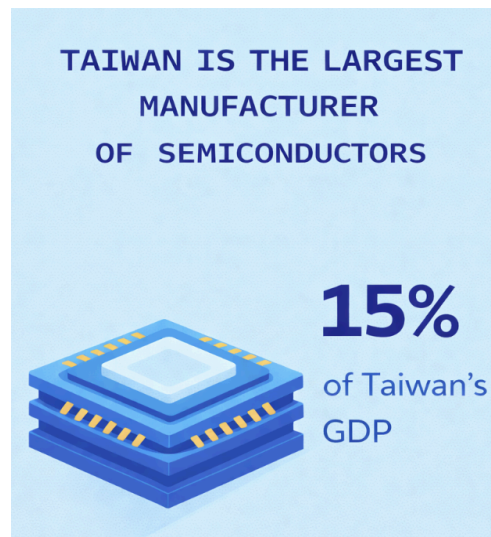
⁸⁶ Bahadori, Elham, et al. “Evaluating Urban Heat Island Mitigation Strategies through Coupled UHI and Building Energy Modeling.” *Building and Environment*, vol. 280, 15 July 2025, article no. 113111, doi:10.1016/j.buildenv.2025.113111.

THE ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT

Amaya Ramanan – *UNIS*

In the twenty-first century, global economic development has been shaped by innovation and continuous change. While the world has experienced uncanny economic growth, it has been unevenly distributed, reinforcing the division between wealthy and poorer nations. Conventionally described as the “Global North-South” divide, this economic theory distinguishes industrialized, highly developed nations from developing ones. Now and over the next fifty years, emerging markets are redefining the global distribution of wealth through advances in technology and through implementing reforms addressing income disparity and social inequality. These changes are necessary in order to combat the stereotypical worldview that less powerful and privileged nations are not able to achieve growth.⁸⁷

Technology has and continues to fuel economic development in emerging markets. Digitalization has given more people in less privileged areas access to information, created new employment opportunities, and kick-started the rise of artificial intelligence. In particular, Taiwan’s semiconductor industry has fueled its own economic expansion. The global demand for semiconductors, used every minute of every day by almost the entire population, continues to grow as we make more advances in the technology industry. Taiwan is the largest manufacturer of these semiconductors, with semiconductors contributing to 15% of Taiwan’s GDP.⁸⁸ Although Taiwan might not be considered a wealthy or powerful nation, with the rise of technology in everyday life, Taiwan has a chance of becoming a superpower.



Technology also allows small businesses and entrepreneurs in emerging economies to access global markets. Mobile banking platforms like M-Pesa in Kenya are great examples of how technology can help with economic circulation. The platform enables users to store and transfer money using their mobile phones, without needing a traditional bank account. It serves to include the underbanked population, with currently 60 million users over eight African countries.⁸⁹ The common perception of banks consists of elite banks in Western Europe with billions of dollars in holdings, yet M-Pesa actively redistributes power to the underserved communities in Africa.

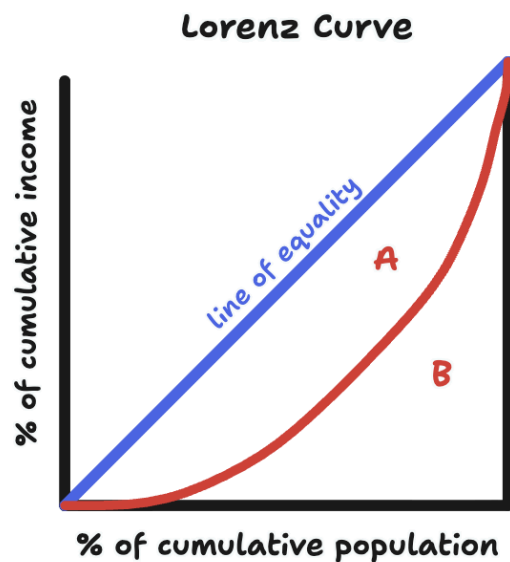
In addition, income disparity remains one of the largest obstacles in achieving long-term economic prosperity. Within nations, wealth is concentrated among the upper class, leaving large portions of the population

⁸⁷ Malpass, David Robert. *Migrants, Refugees, and Societies*. Washington DC: World Bank Group, 2023. file:///Users/28aramanan/Downloads/WDR_FullReport.pdf.

⁸⁸ International Trade Administration. "Semiconductors including Chip Design for AI." International Trade Administration. Last modified December 1, 2025. Accessed January 1, 2026. <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/taiwan-semiconductors-including-chip-design-ai>.

⁸⁹ M-Pesa Africa. "M-Pesa for You." M-Pesa Africa. Accessed January 1, re2026. <https://www.m-pesa.africa/>.

with restricted access to financial opportunities. Emerging markets that continue to address income disparities are able to achieve broader economic growth. Brazil has implemented programs to reduce income inequality, such as Bolsa Familia, which provides cash transfers to low-income families, conditioned on children's school attendance and medical check-ups.⁹⁰ This program has reduced poverty rates, helping improve health, education, and employment outcomes for the impoverished. Since the implementation of Bolsa Familia around twenty years ago, every \$1 of Brazil's GDP invested in the program has generated approximately \$1.78 in overall GDP growth, indicating a return of more than 1.5%.⁹¹ Governmental policy has continued to help Brazil in multiple ways, not just by reducing income disparity and poverty rates, but also by making itself into an industrialized economy.



Long-term prosperity also depends on reforms targeting social inequality at a macro level. These reforms can help broaden the opportunities and distribute wealth to a larger population. After the Korean War, South Korea implemented land reforms to redistribute the land that was owned entirely by the South Korean elite. During the land reform acts, property holdings were limited to 7.5 acres. Farmers who received redistributed land had to pay 150% of the annual value of the land received over ten years.⁹² Initially, it left the farmers with large debts; however, the high rate of inflation made it easy to pay off. After these reforms, land tenancy had virtually disappeared and land ownership was not concentrated in the hands of the elite, thus making them more able to compete in an ever-growing global economy.

As the global economy evolves over the next fifty years, emerging markets will be central in distributing newly generated wealth and will create new systems of circulation. Rapid growth will challenge the stereotypical "Global North-South divide" and will help reduce global inequalities. Long-term prosperity will depend on how these nations address and redefine the spread of wealth. If the emerging markets continue to be successful in balancing consistent growth and combating the issues of social inequality and income disparities, they may not only be able to transform their own societies but also reshape the global economic systems over the next fifty years.

⁹⁰ World Without Poverty. "Impacts of the Bolsa Familia Program." *Brazil Learning Initiative*, 1-5. Research Article.
⁹¹ Feler, Leo, Arthur Mendes, Wataru Miyamoto, Thuy Lan Nyugen, and Steven Pennings. "The Macroeconomic Impact of Cash Transfers in Brazil." Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. Last modified September 23, 2024. Accessed January 1, 2026. <https://www.frbsf.org/research-and-insights/publications/economic-letter/2024/09/macroeconomic-impact-of-cash-transfers-in-brazil/>.
⁹² Seth, Michael J. "An Unpromising Recovery: South Korea's Post-Korean War Economic Development: 1953-1961." Association for Asian Studies. Last modified 2013. Accessed January 1, 2026. <https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/eaa/archives/an-unpromising-recovery-south-koreas-post-korean-war-economic-development-1953-1961/>.

THE ECONOMY AND EDUCATION

Keira Sibomana – UNIS

Investing in education is one of the most effective ways to promote economic growth and reduce inequality, especially in the era of digital transformation and artificial intelligence. Education is not only a core societal institution but also a key driver of long-term productivity, innovation, and labor market readiness.



There is a rising trend among economists to view education from the perspective of human capital rather than merely as an expense.⁹³ Educated populations contribute directly to innovation and sustained economic growth.⁹⁴ UNESCO has highlighted the direct relationship between access to education and levels of economic inequality. However, despite global progress, approximately 251 million children and youth are still out of school worldwide. In low-income countries, as many as 33% of school-aged children remain excluded from education, compared with the 3% in high-income countries.⁹⁵ Understanding the link between the economy and education is therefore crucial for effective policy formulation and for ensuring that all countries can enhance the economic benefits of education.

Economic inequality further restricts access to quality education across the globe.⁹⁶ Children from low-income households often have limited access to early childhood care and education,⁹⁷ which significantly affects learning outcomes later on in life. Schools located in higher-income communities benefit from greater financial resources, causing disparities in learning between and within communities. Although adult literacy rates are improving globally, reaching 88% in 2024, substantial gaps remain. 731 million people still lack basic literacy skills, two-thirds of whom are women.⁹⁸ Children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds experience higher dropout rates and unequal access to early education, while limited access to computer literacy and modern learning tools remains a challenge, further causing inequality in learning institutions. Digital inequality further restricts access to modern learning and related economic activities.⁹⁹

⁹³ Samadkulov, Mukhammad. "Education as Human Capital: Economic Returns and Inequality". *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, vol.11, no. 2, 2024.

⁹⁴ International Monetary Fund. *The Power of Education Policy*. IMF, 2025.

⁹⁵ UNESCO. "What We Stand to Lose: The Costs of Children and Youth Not Learning by 2030." UNESCO, 2025.

⁹⁶ Whye, Y. "Economic Inequality Further Restricts Access to Quality Education across the Globe." Whye, 2025.

⁹⁷ UNICEF and UNESCO. *Global Report on Early Childhood Care and Education: The Right to a Strong Foundation*. UNICEF and UNESCO, June 2024.

⁹⁸ UNESCO. *Global Education Monitoring Report 2025: Literacy and Education for All*. UNESCO, 2025.

⁹⁹ Martini, Elvira, and Maria Carmina Sgambato. "Digital Inequalities and Access to Technology: Analyzing How Digital Tools Exacerbate or Mitigate Social Inequalities." *Societies*, vol. 15, no. 11, 2025, Article 318, MDPI.

Human capital theory views education as an investment that increases individual productivity and lifetime earnings.¹⁰⁰ A study conducted by the IMF found that the gross domestic product (GDP) growth increases by 0.37% per additional year of education. This finding highlights the importance of governments in making budgetary provisions for education to achieve long-term economic benefits. Investment in early childhood education yields the highest returns, as it improves lifetime earnings, social behavior, and overall productivity.¹⁰¹ Inequality decreases as a result of government spending on education by ensuring everyone can access it, irrespective of income-level.



The digital revolution is reshaping the way in which education is provided and utilized across the global economy.¹⁰² Educational technology (EdTech) is emerging as a multi-billion-dollar industry that is transforming education systems worldwide. E-learning platforms reduce geographical barriers and provide flexibility for both students and institutions through asynchronous learning models. Technology also allows curricula to be more closely aligned with labor market skill demands, giving countries with digitally skilled workforces a competitive economic advantage.¹⁰³ During the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning accelerated the usage of education technologies and demonstrated their benefits. Despite inequalities caused by the usage of technology in education, it increases the power of lifelong learning, as people can continually improve their skills.

The growing use of artificial intelligence and technology in the current economic reality has made education even more significant for workforce readiness and global competitiveness.¹⁰⁴ AI systems promote personalized learning with tutoring and adaptive platforms tailored to students' pace and preferences, increasing engagement and retention. They can also automate administrative tasks, allowing educators to focus on higher-level instructional activities. However, the issue of unequal access to AI educational tools also persists, and needs to be addressed by policymakers to ensure equitable outcomes. According to Stanford's 2025 AI index report, two thirds of countries now offer or plan to offer K-12 computer science, twice as many as in 2019.¹⁰⁵ This trend demonstrates that countries that adopt AI through education gain a major advantage in the labor market, as AI-based learning promotes productivity, innovation, and human capital development, which defines the value of education in the modern age of AI.

¹⁰⁰ Samadkulov, Muhammad. "Investments, Returns, and Inequality in the Economics of Education." *International Multidisciplinary Journal for Research & Development*, voll. 11, no. 05, 2024.

¹⁰¹ Brookings Institution. *The Effects of Investing in Early Education on Economic Growth*. Brookings, 2024.

¹⁰² World Economic Forum. *The Future of Jobs Report 2024*. World Economic Forum, 2024.

¹⁰³ MDPI. "Digital Inequalities and Education: How Technology Transforms Learning and Labor Market Outcomes." *MDPI Education Sciences*, vol. 15, no. 11, 2025, article 318.

¹⁰⁴ ScienceDirect. "Artificial Intelligence in Education: Implications for Workforce Readiness and Global Competitiveness." *Computers & Education*, vol. 192, 2025, article 104652.

¹⁰⁵ Stanford University. *AI Index Report 2025*. Stanford Institute for Human-Centered AI, 2025.

Education is a fundamental driver of economic development. The imbalances that exist in education are limiting the potential of economic development on both a national and global scale. Technological advancement is revolutionizing how education is delivered and strengthening its role in productivity and innovation. The central challenge lies in ensuring that technological advancements do not elevate inequality, but instead, education is used as a tool to enhance human capital development. The critical task for government and civil society is investing in learning and education to support a stable and prosperous future economy and society.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

IS TAUGHT IN



AS MANY COUNTRIES

AS IN 2019

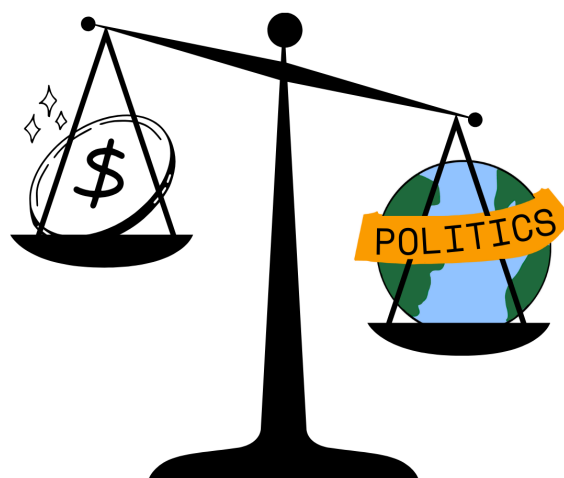
THE ECONOMY AND POLITICS

Brendan Gieseke - *UNIS*

The economy is often placed at the forefront of politics and is an essential part of running coherent government systems. In fact, just in 2024, U.S. politicians generated nearly 15 billion dollars for running elections, a portion of what makes up American politics and politics in general.¹⁰⁶ With the economy voted by 90% of the American voter population as an 'extremely' or 'very' important issue (for the 2024 presidential election),¹⁰⁷ it is safe to say that the economy and politics are inseparable.

The importance of the economy in politics persists throughout the world's many corners, though, ranging from the election campaigns of nations in Europe to those in Africa. Just last year in Germany, for instance, the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition, which triggered a snap reelection last year, illustrates how political instability can depend on economic anxiety, with the share of Germans fearing a downturn surging from 48% to 68% in its wake.¹⁰⁸ Or, take Ghana's heated 2024 elections between Mahamudu Bawumia and John Dramani Mahama. With Ghana's currency falling 3.95% in value within just two months before the election and citizen dissatisfaction reaching 74% with economic management,¹⁰⁹ Mahamudu drove his promise to turn Ghana into a '24-hour economy' to an overwhelming electoral win, showing the impact of the economy in influencing Ghanaian politics.¹¹⁰

So, in understanding how economic failure can transform political decisions, it becomes crucial to understand how direct government intervention in the economy can curate both positive and negative outcomes. For instance, in Venezuela, government decisions to introduce price ceilings (a maximum price of certain food goods) in 2003 have caused detrimental food shortages where, even today, up to 40 percent of the population is experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity, according to the World Food Programme.¹¹¹ Despite the government's attempts to make food affordable for its citizens by implementing the regulation, ironically, food shortages were created. The problem can be explained by the decreasing incentives for producers to supply food products, contrasted with



¹⁰⁶ "Total Cost of Election (1998-2024)." Open Secrets, www.opensecrets.org/elections-overview/cost-of-election?cycle=2020&display=T&infl=N.

¹⁰⁷ Brenan, Megan. "Economy Most Important Issue to 2024 Presidential Vote." GALLUP, 9 Oct. 2024, news.gallup.com/poll/651719/economy-important-issue-2024-presidential-vote.aspx.

¹⁰⁸ Martinez, Maria. "Germans Worried about Economic Malaise Ahead of Election, Survey Finds." Reuters, www.reuters.com/world/europe/germans-worried-about-economic-malaise-ahead-election-survey-2025-02-10/.

¹⁰⁹ Mensah, Kent. "Ghana Elections: What Are the Five Key Issues?" The Africa Report, 11 Nov. 2024, www.theafricareport.com/367808/ghana-elections-what-are-the-five-key-issues/.

¹¹⁰ Nunoo, Favour, et al. "Ghana Election Results: Victorious John Mahama Promises New Beginning." BBC, British Broadcasting Corporation, 9 Dec. 2024, www.bbc.com/news/articles/cqjzv9k8zjjo.

¹¹¹ "Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela." World Food Programme, www.wfp.org/countries/venezuela-bolivarian-republic#:~:text=The%20food%20security%20situation%20in,moderate%20to%20severe%20food%20insecurity.

increased demand for food (due to affordability, creating a situation where not enough food is produced for Venezuelans. In other words, even if one could afford the food, too many other people could also afford it, creating a situation where two people could want the same food item, but one would have to leave empty-handed. This situation is just one of many examples where politics can negatively affect the economy and citizens' ability to prosper from it.



However, government politics can also come with its benefits for the economy. After World War II, Japan was left in a catastrophe. While in the nation's peak, the economy rose to be the third largest economy in the world, war-torn Japan suffered unemployment for over 13 million people, high inflation, and faced large amounts of food shortages.¹¹² To combat this, Japan used economic policies such as the income doubling plan, which created an average annual growth rate higher than 10%, or Land Reform policies, which required landowners with surplus land to sell the land to the Japanese government, to utilize the land for more economically efficient processes. As a result, Japan's economic policies worked and have created an economy that has not only benefited the nation itself, but also the entire world's global trade and economy (see, over 900 billion USD per year in Japanese exports in 2021, 2022, and 2023.)¹¹³ While Japan provides one example, many regions, such as South Korea or European countries, can also

show similar trajectories and prove the benefits of politics in shaping the economy for good.

Alternatively, it is notable to touch upon the benefits of international relations in profiting national and international economies. The European Union (EU) is a good example to show the fruits of diplomacy and global trade deals. Made up of 27 countries, the EU allows for member states to function under trade systems among other member nations with limited tariffs. Imposed alongside tariffs on 15% tariffs on imports from nations like the U.S. (currently, as a result of the Tariff War), the union creates greater appeal for trade amongst member states, as a result of the economic benefits.¹¹⁴ As a result, the entire union benefits from higher amounts of trade money staying within the boundaries, highlighting how political alliances and diplomatic relations are able to influence where a nation's trade efforts are focused, creating the benefit of increased economies. Yet, one might question what happens to nations that cannot secure strong relations to foster trade. While in short, the answer would simply be a lower amount of economic circulation

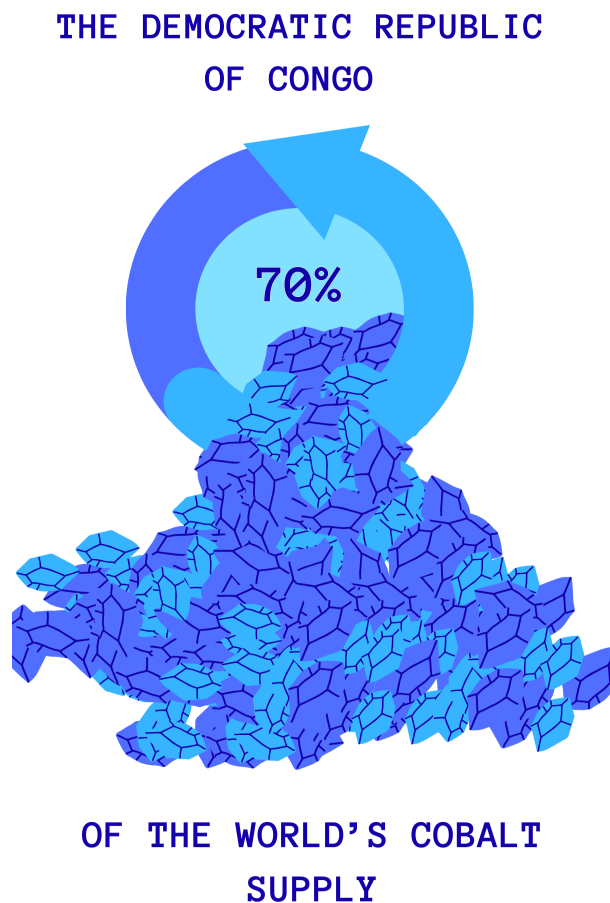
¹¹² Haroon, Arsalan. "How Japan Became the Third Largest Economy in the World." *Trader*, Aug. 2022, vocal.media/trader/how-japan-become-the-third-largest-economy-in-the-world.

¹¹³ "Japan Exports." *Macrotrends*, www.macrotrends.net/datasets/global-metrics/countries/jpn/japan/exports. Chart.

¹¹⁴ European Union. "EU-US Trade Deal Explained." *European Commission*, 28 July 2025, ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_25_1930.

to those countries, a more alarming trade relationship is that it benefits developing countries in the short-term while failing to buttress them in the long run. When more developed nations purchase goods from less-developed nations, sometimes the trade relations can appear mutual, but can actually lead to the vulnerability of exporting nations, once they use up large amounts of their exportable resources.

A firm example of a trade monopoly can be found in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which produces over 70% of the world's cobalt supply. While the nation has large capacity for international economic leverage and price controlling (see Colognese mining expert, Geraud Neema's fear: "[China] being a producer country...means that you don't control the price of the market," symbolizing the effect of primary good volatility), an overall weak governance and policy structure prevent Congo from hiking up cobalt prices, for their national benefit.¹¹⁵ From a point of economic analysis—considering that no good is infinite—, if cobalt were to ever run extremely low on supply, not only would have the DRC's inability to better control cobalt decreased wasted potential economic benefit, but the nation would be left with sky-high cobalt prices and foreign investors more than likely unwilling to invest in or purchase cobalt. Cobalt is just one of many Congolese minerals that are highly sought after, though. Making up around 41.3% of Congo's 2024 revenue,¹¹⁶ the mining sector of Congo has a heavy reliance on foreign interest, and in that, shows the cruciality of evaluating how much a nation's policy should be reinforced by international economies; countries must think in the long term.



In such a way, it is important to consider government systems and politics with an economic perspective, which is uniquely calibrated to a nation's specific demands. The case studies above provide a mere speck of the influence and interconnectedness of the economy and politics. Whether political choices help or jeopardize an economy should therefore be a crucial factor in a nation's overall decisions.

¹¹⁵ Khan, Zahra. "Congo's Cobalt Conundrum." Chemistry World, 19 June 2025, <https://www.chemistryworld.com/news/congos-cobalt-conundrum/4021696.article>

¹¹⁶ "Democratic Republic of Congo: Economic and Political Overview." Lloyds Bank, www.lloydsbanktrade.com/en/market-potential/democratic-republic-of-congo/economical-context.

THE ECONOMY AND BLACK MARKETS

Annabelle Hussian – UNIS

When considering economic performance, indicators such as gross domestic product and employment rates often come to mind. However, the economy can be captured beyond these measures, as a significant portion of activity occurs beyond formal regulation and official reporting. This segment of unrecorded economic activity is referred to as the informal sector, where black markets can operate. While the informal economy often involves legal activities operating outside official regulations, black markets specifically deal with the exchange of illegal goods and services. The value of the black market is impossible to track due to its inherent hidden nature, but it's estimated that the total illicit trade value in the United States alone is \$625.63 billion.¹¹⁷



The significance of the informal economy varies among nations, as it's typically greater in developing countries. For example, it is estimated to account for only 5.1% of Switzerland's GDP, but as much as 64.5% for that of Sierra Leone.¹¹⁸ Similarly, the informal economy accounts for about 0.6% of total employment in Switzerland, but 93.1% in Sierra Leone.¹¹⁹ These disparities are often defined by the strictness of laws and regulations, the way labor markets function, and how effectively governments enforce rules. Over the past decades, some regions have experienced gradual declines in informal activity due to economic development, and others have seen growth linked to population expansion and

urbanization. However, according to Statistical Picture, "Informal employment continues to be the major source of employment worldwide, comprising nearly 2 billion workers." This figure represents 58% of the world's workers.¹²⁰

Black markets tend to emerge when the costs of participating in the formal economy outweigh the benefits. High tax rates and complex regulations often discourage businesses and workers from formal registration. According to ResearchGate, tax and social security burdens account for 45–52% of the

¹¹⁷ "Informal employment rate." ILOSTAT, ilostat ilo.org/data/snapshots/informal-employment-rate/. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

¹¹⁸ Neufeld, Dorothy. "Mapped: The Size of Each Country's Shadow Economy." Visual Capitalist, 13 May 2025, www.visualcapitalist.com/size-of-the-shadow-economy-by-country/. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

¹¹⁹ "Informal employment rate." ILOSTAT, ilostat ilo.org/data/snapshots/informal-employment-rate/. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

¹²⁰ "Counting the World's Informal Workers: Key Facts." WIEGO, www.wiego.org/informal-economy/statistical-picture/. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

observed differences in how large the global informal economy is.¹²¹ In addition, limited employment opportunities increase incentives to participate in the informal economy. Many individuals face discrimination or lack the education and skills necessary to secure formal employment, leading them to rely on unregulated economic activity for income generation. In Tunisia, 45% of employees in the informal sector only completed primary education.¹²²

Informal markets encompass a wide range of activities, each having its own distinct economic characteristics. These include unregistered labor, unreported financial transactions, and the trade and markets of goods. The informal labor market mostly consists of legal activities simply not recorded, including licensed street vending and gig work. According to the Enterprising and Informal Work Activities survey, more than one-third of adults in the United States had worked informally in 2015.¹²³ In terms of trading goods, the practice is classified as informal when operating outside of government regulation, but is only characterized as part of the black market when dealing with counterfeit, smuggled, or prohibited items. A notable example is the illegal wildlife trade, which is 51% for the exchange of mammals and elephant ivory, and is valued at over \$20 billion annually.¹²⁴ These markets function independently from formal institutions while remaining economically interconnected with the formal sectors.



The presence of the informal sector has measurable effects on both national and global economies. Unreported transactions result in lost tax revenue for governments, as the activities evade the official banking systems used to collect revenue. The IRS notes that when third-party reporting is not required in less-formal sectors, there is less compliance, and the lack of enforcement significantly contributes to the tax gap.¹²⁵ Additionally, black markets can reduce economic productivity by allowing informal businesses to avoid costs that formal businesses must pay. The uneven competition can lead resources to shift towards the less-regulated, which may cause a reduction in the economy's ability to produce goods and services efficiently.

Governments have adopted a range of approaches to address black markets, using law enforcement and other efforts to encourage formalization. In the

¹²¹ Mashiri, Eukeria, and Favourate Y. Sebele-Mpofu. "Illicit Trade, Economic Growth and the Role of Customs: A Literature Review." *World Customs Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2, 30 Sept. 2015. ResearchGate, <https://doi.org/10.55596/001c.93995>.

¹²² Dridi, Manel. "Tunisia's Informal Employment Crisis." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 14 Feb. 2023, [carnegieendowment.org/sada/2023/02/tunisia-informal-employment-crisis?lang=en](https://www.carnegieendowment.org/sada/2023/02/tunisia-informal-employment-crisis?lang=en). Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

¹²³ Restrepo-Echavarría, Pauline, and Maria A. Arias. "What Is the Informal Labor Market?" Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 18 Apr. 2017, www.stlouisfed.org/on-the-economy/2017/april/informal-labor-market?print=true. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

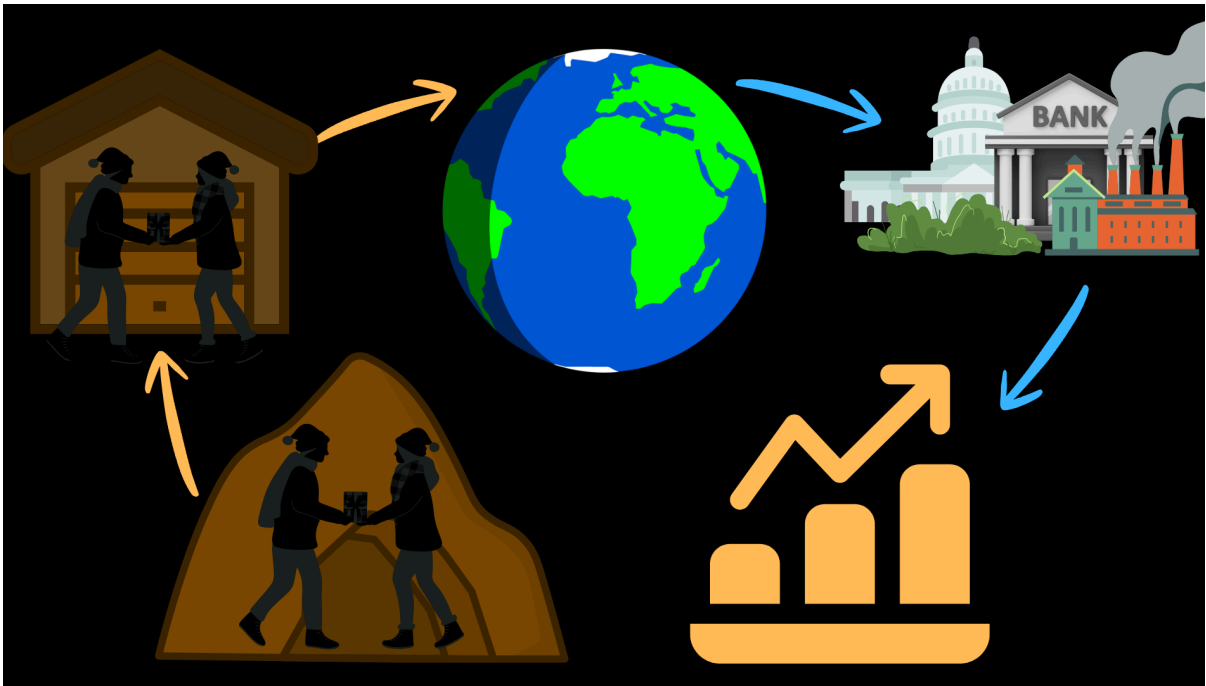
¹²⁴ Sosnowski, Monique. "Black Markets: A Comparison of the Illegal Ivory and Narcotic Trades." *Deviant Behavior*, vol. 41, no. 4, 24 Jan. 2019, pp. 434-43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2019.1568360>.

¹²⁵ Anderson, Melissa, VP Marketing. "Diving into the U.S. Tax Gap." IVIX, 31 Oct.

2024, www.ivix.ai/post/diving-into-the-u-s-tax-gap#:~:text=Many%20individual%20businesses%2C%20especially%20small,no%20information%20reporting%20is%20misreported. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

United States, Congress passed the Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2020 (AMLA), a comprehensive effort to detect financial crime activity. Implementations like the Whistleblower Program reward those who report money laundering, incentivizing insider tips.¹²⁶ In Brazil, the enactment of the Simples Nacional program simplifies the payment of taxes for micro and small businesses, which led to a slight decrease in informal employment.¹²⁷ Internationally, governments are encouraging formalization with key strategies such as simplifying registration processes and offering job training.

Although their scale has decreased in recent years, black markets and informal sectors continue to represent a significant component of the global economy. Shaped by institutional conditions, their role will continue to be important as policies evolve and economic planning becomes increasingly globally coordinated.



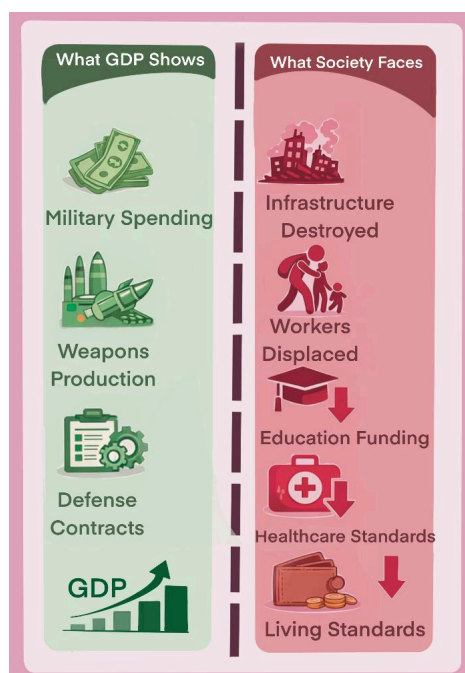
¹²⁶ Miller, Rena S., and Liana W. Rosen. The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN): Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2020 Implementation and Beyond. Report no. R47255, 27 Sept. 2022. Congress.gov, Please select from the options below: Report or Document (U.S.):Legislative report or document issued by U.S. Congress (House or Senate). Report or Document (State):Legislative report or document issued by state legislature (Assembly, House of Delegates, House of Representatives, or Senate). Or, if this is a publication authored by a government agency, office or committee: Report:A freestanding document or report (e.g., a CRS or GAO research report, a report from the U.S. Dept. of Labor, etc.), not issued by U.S. Congress or state legislature. Online Reference Source:A reference site authored by a government agency (e.g., the CIA World Factbook or the Occupational Outlook Handbook). Website:A Web page or project. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

¹²⁷ "Everything you must know about the taxation regime for legal entities in Brazil." EUROPARTNER, 29 7 2022, www.europartner.com.br/everything-you-must-know-about-the-taxation-regime-for-legal-entities-in-brazil/ #:~:text=Established%20by%20the%20Complementary%20Law,taxation%20regime%20for%20your%20business. Accessed 6 Jan. 2026.

THE ECONOMY AND CONFLICT

Maya Kapur – UNIS

War is not only the disruptor of peaceful lives and flourishing or developing societies – it is also a major source of economic imbalance. While conflict can be seen as a collision on a battlefield, its lasting effects extend far beyond physical violence, tearing apart capitals, labor markets, and forcing mass migration that can alter demographics for decades. Understanding how economic consequences are shaped by wars and raging conflicts helps explain persistent patterns of injustice, political instability, and threats to global security. In a world built on economic systems yet still facing widespread conflicts, these impacts not just important to recognize – they are crucial to understand.



Economical scars left by war run deep, impacting the global system as a whole, not only of one country. One of the most visible outcomes of war is a long-term GDP, or Gross Domestic Product. GDP represents the total value of all the goods and services a country produces. In brief terms, rising GDP rises signifies economic strength and stability, while a decline indicates economic contraction.

War destroys infrastructure such as factories, roads, and businesses. It also complicates labor markets, as individuals are unable to work normally under the circumstances of violent and disruptive wars, leading to reduced output. The government's priorities shift to military spending, diverting away from education, healthcare, and social services. Trade is similarly affected as countries struggle to import and export goods, resulting in declining income. Ultimately, the economic losses incurred during war are substantial. It

is natural to assume that governments would attempt to salvage national income as GDP declines during wartime, leading to questions about why conflicts are not resolved more quickly through surrender or negotiation. However, economic outcomes during war are rarely straightforward. In fact, GDP figures can give the illusion of increasing in early stages of conflict. This short-term increase occurs as governments pour large sums of money into weapons, military supplies, and defense production, all of which count as economic activity. While daily life for citizens deteriorates, this surge in wartime spending temporarily inflates GDP figures. Clearly, these short term increases reflect expenditure, not genuine economic growth.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ *Cato.Org*, www.cato.org/cato-journal/winter-2020/effect-war-economic-growth. Accessed 1 Jan. 2026.

It is also important to note that developing countries often experience much more devastating consequences due to a combination of widespread destruction, mass displacement, and the loss in labor. Additionally, the losing side of a conflict is frequently pitted with the expenses of said war, raising controversial ethical questions about profiting from conflicts. Such practices risk incentivizing future wars, rewarding destruction in place of peace, and exacerbating human suffering. These concerns have been considered and discussed repeatedly throughout history, including in the contexts of World War I, World War II and the Iraq War (2003).

GDP, however, is not the sole economic consequence of global conflict. Mass migration has re-shaped human societies since early human history, beginning with migration out of Africa approximately 70,000 years ago. While it has historically changed and built up countries, societies, and culture, in modern economic contexts, mass migration takes on a new meaning. Large numbers of individuals flee war-torn regions, leaving such regions struggling with sudden demographic shifts. This results in significant labor shortages, as factories, farms, and businesses lose workers. Such losses severely affect production, trade, GDP, and overall economic stability.

The phenomenon of “brain drain” also becomes apparent. Brain drain refers to the loss of skilled and educated individuals from a country. Without innovative thinking and strong ideas, innovation slows and recovery becomes increasingly difficult.¹²⁹ Countries can become trapped in prolonged states of instability, making economic recovery a long and challenging process.

Host countries receiving large numbers of migrants may experience more mixed economic outcomes. On the positive side, population growth can increase the labor supply, helping fill up labor shortages and supporting GDP growth. Migrants also contribute to demand by purchasing goods and services, further stimulating the economy. However, these benefits are often accompanied by challenges. Host countries are not always prepared for a surplus of residents. Additionally, labor markets may become oversaturated, leading to increased competition driving down wages, particularly in low-skill sectors. Growing populations also place additional strain on public services such as education, healthcare, and housing. Hence, while GDP may rise in the short-term, these pressures can contribute to other significant issues such as inflation and unemployment.¹³⁰

Overall, wars have long-term and devastating economic effects, both at the national and global levels. Shifts in labor markets, GDP, and political stability often produce large ramifications that shape the global economic landscape for decades. While certain groups may temporarily profit, ordinary people are frequently left in worse conditions – effects which linger throughout homes, countries, and societies even decades later. In spite of certain wars being deemed necessary, understanding their economic impacts highlights the importance of careful decision-making and restraint in the face of conflict.

¹²⁹ Murat Ospanov, et al. “The Impact of Armed Conflicts and Forced Migration on Labour Markets: Systematic Literature Review and Future Research Agenda.” *Defence and Peace Economics*, 2







¹³⁰ “How Wars Affect Immigration: A Human and Global Perspective – Rebecca Black Immigration Law.” *Rebecca Black Immigration Law | Jacksonville, FL Immigration Law Firm*, 8 May 2025, www.rebeccablacklaw.com/how-wars-affect-immigration-a-human-and-global-perspective/.

THE ECONOMY AND CONFLICT

Daniel Oh – *Geumcheon-gu School*

Conflicts and wars are not just military conflicts, but have deep and long-term effects on the nation and the global economy as a whole. Wars not only threaten people's lives and safety, but also collapse key elements of the economic system, such as production and trade, labor markets, and government finances.¹³¹ In the era of globalization, where economic connectivity between countries is high, disputes in one region have a domino effect on the economies of other countries and regions. This article examines how conflict affects economic activity, population movement, long-term economic stability, and considers the post-war reconstruction process.

The most direct impact of conflict on the economy is the destruction of infrastructure. In the event of war, key facilities such as factories, roads, ports, and houses are destroyed or become dysfunctional. This collapse of infrastructure leads to interruptions in production and trade cuts, reducing the size of the economy of the country as a whole. In addition, the government will spend more on military funding and emergency responses in times of war. As a result, investment in education, welfare, and long-term development is given significantly less importance. During conflict, the quality of life for citizens is weakened, thus weakening the ability for the economy to fully recover.¹³²

Origin Country	Receiving Country
Young workers leave 	Surge in population 
Aging population 	Housing, education, healthcare strain 
Productivity drops 	Skilled refugees in low-wage jobs 

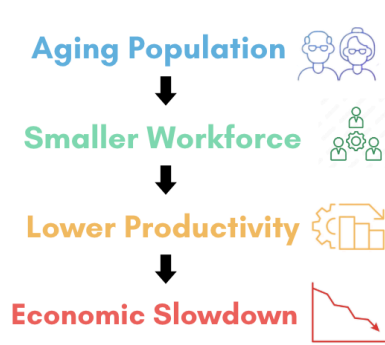
Conflicts also have a significant impact on the economy as they are accompanied by large-scale population movements. Many civilians, fleeing war and violence, become refugees or migrants and cross borders. In this process, conflicting countries lose labor, especially as young and skilled populations exit, greatly reducing productivity and growth potential. Conversely, countries that accept refugees feel a burden on public services such as housing, jobs, education, and healthcare, as

their population increases in a short period of time. The Russia-Ukraine war is a great example of this phenomenon. In Ukraine, labor shortages have become serious in various industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, and construction, and some companies have faced difficulty in operating normally due to the deficit in skilled workers. Meanwhile, in recipient countries such as Poland and Germany, highly educated refugees are often employed in low-wage jobs that do not match their skills due to language barriers and certification problems.¹³³ This creates a problem in the labor market and increases social and economic tensions, leading to long-term demographic changes.

¹³¹"Fragility, Conflict and Violence." *World Bank Group*, www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview. Accessed 6 Mar. 2026.

¹³²"Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCS)." *International Monetary Fund*, www.imf.org/en/topics/fragile-and-conflict-affected-states. Accessed 6 Mar. 2026.

¹³³"Human Development Report 2021-22." *Human Development Reports*, 8 Sept. 2022, hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22. Accessed 6 Mar. 2026.



In conflict areas, the outflow of young people accelerates the aging population, leading to slowed economic growth as the younger working population decreases. At the same time, the proportion of the elderly population increases, meaning that medical and welfare expenditures increase, putting a burden on government finances. This loss of skilled workers makes innovation and the development of new industries significantly more challenging, which is why economic recovery is slow even after the conflict ends.

Economic instability can again be a factor that intensifies political and social conflict. High unemployment and low income levels cause frustration and anger among people, and income gaps intensify conflicts between social groups. Under these circumstances, weakening trust in government and institutions increases the risk of political instability and violence. In addition, in an unstable environment, domestic and foreign investors become reluctant to invest, leading to a vicious cycle that further weakens the economy. In order to reduce these problems, international regulation and a transparent monitoring system are needed.

The Syrian civil war is a prime example of the long-term impact of conflict on the economy. With millions of refugees, the national economy shrank and infrastructure was destroyed. Neighboring countries have undergone changes in the labor market and social structure due to the influx of refugees, and Syria's reconstruction is expected to require decades of effort.¹³⁴

After physical conflict ends, post-war reconstruction becomes key to economic recovery. Successful reconstruction requires going beyond simply rebuilding destroyed buildings. It should strive to include the process of restoring the overall functions of society and the economy, such as schools, hospitals, and administrative systems. If fairness and inclusion are not secured in this process, the benefits of reconstruction will be concentrated only on specific groups, usually the upper class elite, which will only intensify inequality and risk new conflicts. Therefore, a reconstruction policy that considers job creation and social integration is necessary for long-term peace, but also for economic growth.

In conclusion, conflict fundamentally changes the structure of the national and global economy through infrastructure destruction, population movement, and economic instability. It is very important to understand the economic impact of conflict in that it not only causes short-term damage, but also risks long-term slowdown in growth and re-dispute. A sustainable peace and stable future can be taken one step closer when fair and inclusive economic recovery and reconstruction are achieved.

¹³⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2023). *Global trends: Forced displacement in 2022*. United Nations. <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/global-trends-2022>

AFTERWORD

The global economy is a defining force shaping every dimension of our lives. As economic systems continue to evolve, it is imperative that we critically engage with their implications: both the opportunities they create and the costs they impose.

From private equity reshaping the culture of sports, to generative AI disrupting labor markets, the invisible weight of black markets on national revenues, to the long shadow that conflict casts over development...

The interdependent economy is inseparable from the world we inhabit.

The UNIS UN Executive Committee has invited experts to explore these intersections, fostering dialogue on the transformative pressures facing the global economic order and the responsibilities that come with understanding them. This conference examines how economic forces flow through different fields, encouraging attendees to consider how these systems function, but more importantly who they serve and who they leave behind.

It is our hope that this working paper has deepened your engagement with the economic forces shaping our world and that, drawing on this knowledge, you feel equipped to question, debate, and contribute to the ongoing conversation about what a fair and sustainable international economic order might look like.

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