

DATA DIVE WITH NIK NANOS

POILIEVRE HERALDS NEW ERA FOR TORIES

Conservative Party version 2.0 is about building a new movement focused on Canadians and looking to regain government

OPINION

Nik Nanos is the chief data scientist at Nanos Research, a global fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington and the official pollster for The Globe and Mail and CTV News.

It was a crushing first ballot victory for Conservative leadership hopeful Pierre Poilievre. But this win does not mean what most people think. The first leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, Stephen Harper, presided over the unification of the Canadian Alliance (formerly known as the Reform Party of Canada) and the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. Mr. Harper was focused on making the merger work and building a coalition to challenge the Liberals.

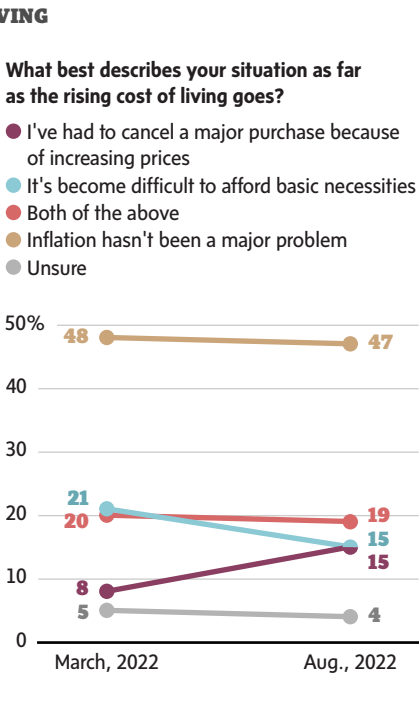
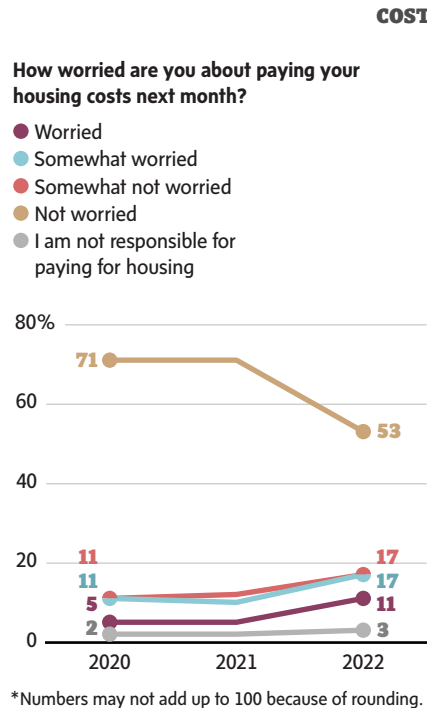
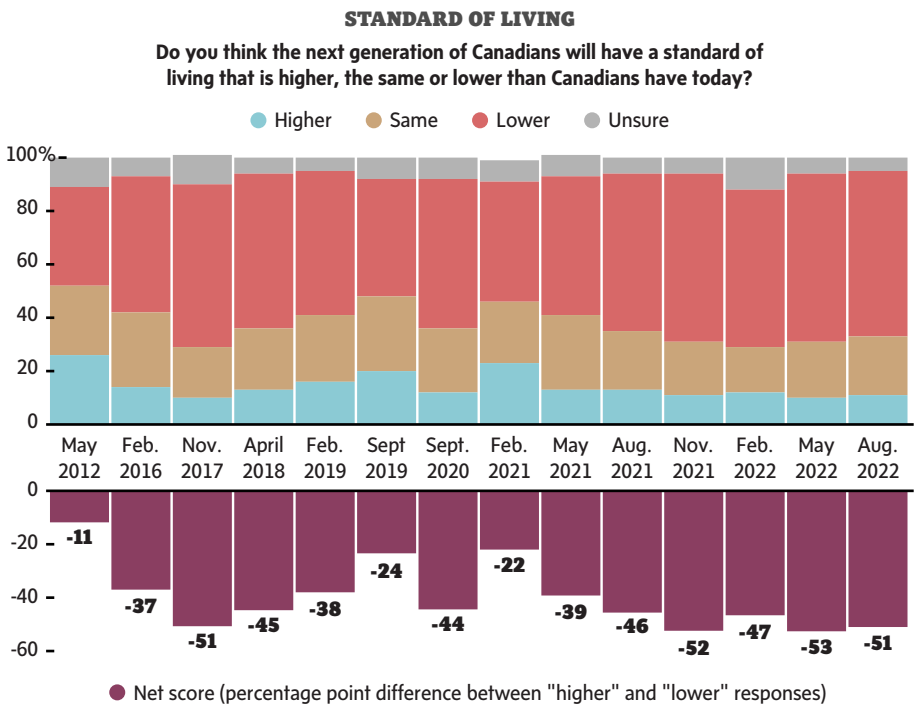
The election of Mr. Poilievre heralds a new era. Conservative Party version 2.0 is not about ensuring the old merger holds, it is about building a new movement focused on Canadians and looking to regain government.

Any talk about party division is now irrelevant. It's actually best to regard it as a new party altogether, comprised of former party members, Canadians who are disenchanted with the Liberals, and citizens who feel that the system is failing them. Mr. Poilievre is in sync with a growing group of citizens who feel the establishment is letting people down.

Canadians have witnessed a swing to the left under the Trudeau Liberals. If politics were a stock market, folks would be preparing for a technical correction – a swing away from the current government. Mr. Poilievre has the very real opportunity to be the technical correction. People support many of the progressive measures of the government but after seven years it might seem like too much for too long.

Even with the pandemic in the rear-view mirror, the mood is downright ugly according to Nanos Research tracking. Six of 10 Canadians believe that the next generation will have a lower (62 per cent) rather than a higher (11 per cent) standard of living. Compared with views when Mr. Harper was prime minister, the past seems quite cheerful where 26 (not 11) per cent thought the standard would be higher and 37

Canadians on living standards



MURAT YÜKSELİR / THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: NANOS RESEARCH

(not 62) per cent thought it would be lower. Almost three in 10 Canadians (28 per cent) are worried or somewhat worried about paying for housing costs in the next month. This is up a full 10 percentage points compared with

the beginning of the pandemic. The likelihood of cancelling a major purchase has doubled from 8 per cent to 15 per cent just since this past spring. If you are struggling to pay the rent or mortgage, or unable to make a necessary purchase – there is lit-

tle to lose by punishing the incumbent government and trying something different. Speculation of the Liberals triggering a surprise fall election is laughable. Tied with the Conservatives in popular support, with a recession looming and

Canadians worried about being crushed by the rising cost of living and climbing interest rates, the only folks likely to want an election would be the Conservatives hoping to capitalize on the leadership coronation.

If the Liberals think that they can run a smear campaign against the newly minted Conservative Leader, they are sadly mistaken. Mr. Poilievre has emerged from the leadership with a defined brand and a re-made Conservative movement in his political sails.

Centrist voters have been abandoned by the two governing parties. Canada has now fully joined other democracies like the United States, France and the United Kingdom where competing political options are not vying to build a big tent but are narrowcasting to pockets of voters to win government. Why spend the time appealing to moderate pragmatic voters when you can mathematically win the greatest number of seats by narrowly casting to one's base and highly motivated voters?

Today's political default for any prime minister is now the assumption that most Canadians will dislike or perhaps even despise you. People forget that much less than 50 per cent of voters elect governments, even majority governments. Parties are looking to game the first past the post system as opposed to governing for as many Canadians as possible. When governments are formed with support among a little more than 30 per cent of Canadians, it means the majority are yelling at their TV sets on election night.

If no one is in pursuit of the centre, leaders will denigrate and dismiss opponents and anyone who is not part of their political tribe. Why appeal to a broader coalition of moderate voters when it is easier to fire up and fundraise from the tribe?

Mr. Poilievre is capturing the mood of Canadians who are struggling to pay the bills and might think they have nothing to lose by opting for change. But change, when it comes, means Canadians who opt to move away from the progressive left might suddenly find themselves with a government they feel is too far on the right.

I think Canada is about to experience a period of political whiplash. It will be painful.

To avoid catastrophe, we must regain our respect for nature

KAREN ARMSTRONG

OPINION

Her most recent book is *Sacred Nature: Restoring our Ancient Bond with the Natural World*

We can no longer ignore the threat of climate change. Temperatures have reached unprecedented levels around the world, and the catastrophic floods in Pakistan are a warning to us all.

We know that we have to change the way we live. But we cannot do this wholeheartedly unless we also change the way we think. For the past 500 years in the West, we have treated nature as a mere resource and promoted a world view that is very different from that of our ancestors, who, recognizing their dependence upon the natural world, revered it as sacred. To avoid catastrophe, we have somehow to rediscover their profound respect for nature.

Some environmentalists believe that we should adopt the lifestyles of Indigenous peoples, but this may be too ambitious. Most of us simply do not have the time or the access to learn from them and imbibe their wisdom. Furthermore, their intimacy with nature is too advanced for us, and time is not on our side.

But I believe that we can learn much from the insights and practices of the Axial Age (circa 900 to 200 BCE). The great religious and philosophical traditions in four distinct regions of the world arose during this period, nourishing humanity ever since: Confucianism and Daoism in China, Hinduism and Buddhism in India, and philosophical rationalism in Greece.

They all developed – quite in-

dependently – a similar understanding of the Sacred, which was not a “god” but rather a ubiquitous force that was organic, holistic and dynamic. It seems to have been an archetypal idea. The Chinese called it *qi* or *dao*: “the vital essence of all things.” In India it was *rta* or *Brahman*, and Buddhists described it as *Buddhata*, the “Buddha nature” that was present in everything in the natural world and in each human being.

In ancient Israel, however, the divine was experienced not in nature but in historical events such as the exodus from Egypt and – later – the life of Jesus. Yet initially, they also retained the idea of the Sacred – or God – as an omnipresent reality. The 13th-century Dominican theologian, Thomas Aquinas, explained that God was “present everywhere in everything.” God, he insisted, was not a being but rather “Being Itself” (*esse seipsum*), a divine essence at the heart of all things.

But 16th-century Europe saw a major change. God became a distant, heavenly being and the English philosopher, Francis Bacon, urged Christians to break with what he called the “pagan” habit of revering nature. God had commanded Adam to “take the earth and subdue it.” Nature was a commodity that must be exploited. And that, alas, is exactly what we have done.

We have now retreated from nature in a way that is quite dangerous. We don't even look directly at the natural world these days. Instead, we take myriad photographs of a beautiful view, preferring a virtual reality to nature itself. If we want to save the planet, we must learn to approach nature with reverence, as our forebears did, instead of seeing it as distant or a mere commodity.

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bral exercise. Neurologists tell us that, although we think we rely entirely on our brains, we actually acquire a great deal of emotive information from our bodies. We must somehow recover the love and reverence for nature that was achieved in the past not purely intellectually but also by the gestures and disciplines of ritual.

We can, for example, begin to reacquaint ourselves with nature in a daily practice that the Chinese called *jing zuo* (“quiet sitting”). This is quite different from yoga. Turn off your phone and sit comfortably in a garden or park for about 15 minutes to

start with, opening your eyes, ears, heart and mind to the natural world and thus begin to re-familiarize yourself with its myriad sights and sounds – its life and soul – so that the birds, insects, flowers and leaves become in some sense your companions.

We are all familiar with the golden rule – “treat all others as you wish to be treated yourself” – but the Chinese insisted that this also applied to what they called the *wanwu*, the “things” of nature as well as to human beings. Today, we regard a “thing” as an inanimate object, a being without life or consciousness. But Confucians insisted that every blade of grass and every tree had a sacred essence and must be treated with the same respect.

This does not, of course, mean that we endow them with human qualities but rather that we learn to revere their otherness, because every “thing” – however insignificant – has a hidden nature different from our own but precious in itself. “All people,” the Confucians claimed, “are my brothers and sisters and all the things [of nature] are my companions.”

Today we loudly deplore the ancient ritual of sacrificing animals – though we rarely give a thought to the millions of beasts slaughtered daily in our abattoirs. But the word “sacrifice” comes from the Latin *sacrum facere*: “To make holy.”

In ancient India, for example, the animal was rarely killed and instead was sanctified by the complex rites and afterward given to one of the priests. Everyone was urged to perform “five great sacrifices” (*pancamahayajna*) every day to cultivate attitudes to sanctify everyone and everything they met, placing a small bowl of food outside for hungry or sick animals, for example, and honouring all guests,

invited or uninvited, as if they were gods.

We too can make a point of respecting, in our minds and hearts, the dignity and sanctity of everything and every person we encounter each day, with kindness and courtesy.

Contemporary Western yoga enthusiasts would probably be astonished to hear that in ancient India, before you could even sit in the yogic position, you had to master a rigorous moral program. The most important requirement was *ahimsa* (“no harm”): You could not perform a single yogic exercise if you inadvertently swatted an insect or addressed someone impatiently. *Ahimsa* demands us to realize how carelessly we inflict pain, not only upon our own species, all day and every day.

The texts tell us that the Buddha achieved nirvana not just by disciplined introspection but by reaching out in compassion to everything and everybody, even those to whom one felt instinctive dislike – not omitting even an insect from this radius of concern. In our perilously damaged and antagonistic world today, we need this ancient Buddhist prayer that reaches out to all beings, not merely human beings:

Let all beings be happy! Weak or strong, of high, middle, or low estate,

small or great, visible, or invisible, near or far away,

May they all be perfectly happy! Let nobody despise any single being anywhere.

May nobody wish harm to any single creature, out of anger or hatred!

Let us cherish all creatures, as a mother her only child!

May our loving thoughts fill the whole world,

Unrestricted, free of hatred or enmity!