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International expert panel reveals the 2026 Lionel Gelber Prize Shortlist

February 24, 2026 (Toronto) – An international panel of practitioners, journalists and scholars has announced the shortlist for the 2026 Lionel Gelber Prize. The Prize honours the world’s best book on international affairs published in English and will be chosen from the following five titles:

- ***King of Kings: The Iranian Revolution: A Story of Hubris, Delusion, and Catastrophic Miscalculation*** by Scott Anderson (Signal/McClelland & Stewart)
- ***Capitalism: A Global History*** by Sven Beckert (Penguin Press)
- ***House of Huawei: The Secret History of China's Most Powerful Company*** by Eva Dou (Portfolio)
- ***How Progress Ends: Technology, Innovation and the Fate of Nations*** by Carl Benedikt Frey (Princeton University Press)
- ***Thinking Historically: A Guide to Statecraft and Strategy*** by Francis J. Gavin (Yale University Press)

"The jury’s selections explore the wide range of forces that influence human progress," said Judith Gelber, Chair of the Lionel Gelber Prize Board. "These books show the importance of examining the past to inform possibilities for the future."

This year's shortlist was selected by the 2026 Lionel Gelber Prize Jury: Prof. Janice Gross Stein (Jury Chair), Prof. John Bew (London), Prof. Sergey Radchenko (Cardiff), James Steinberg (Washington) and Prof. Nina Srinivasan Rathbun (Toronto).

Winner Announcement:

The winner will be announced on March 30, 2026. The winning author will take part in a hybrid event hosted by the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy on April 15, 2026.

About The Lionel Gelber Prize:

The Lionel Gelber Prize, a literary award for the world's best non-fiction book on international affairs published in English, was founded in 1989 by Canadian diplomat Lionel Gelber. A cash prize of \$50,000 CAD is awarded to the winner. The award is presented annually by University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy. For further information, please visit: <https://gelber.munkschool.utoronto.ca/> or follow @gelberprize on X and Facebook.

The 2026 Lionel Gelber Prize – Shortlisted Books and Authors

King of Kings: The Iranian Revolution: A Story of Hubris, Delusion, and Catastrophic Miscalculation
by Scott Anderson (Signal/McClelland & Stewart)

Jury Comment: The attack by the United States and Israel on Iran and the assassination of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei are rooted in the failure to predict and understand the revolution of 1979. Scott Anderson tells a gripping story of how leaders in Washington and Tehran misunderstood, misjudged, and failed to communicate with each other in the foundational period of the revolution. That failure continues to haunt leaders in both societies to this day. A must read for anyone who wants to understand a rivalry that continues to shape the modern Middle East and the world.

Scott Anderson is a veteran war correspondent who has reported from Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Northern Ireland, Chechnya, Sudan, Bosnia, El Salvador and many other strife-torn countries. A frequent contributor to the New York Times Magazine, his work has also appeared in Vanity Fair, Esquire, Harper's and Outside. He is the author of novels *Moonlight Hotel* and *Triage* and of non-fiction books *The Man Who Tried to Save the World* and *The 4 O'Clock Murders*, and co-author of *War Zones* and *Inside the League* with his brother Jon Lee Anderson.

Capitalism: A Global History by Sven Beckert (Penguin Press)

Jury Comment: Sven Beckert paints a sweeping picture of global capitalism which, he argues, begins much earlier than is conventionally assumed. Capitalism, from its earliest origins, he argues, was global in its origins and its structures. Beckert traces its path through history as it evolves and transforms its processes to the present day. A gripping read through the pages of economic history.

Sven Beckert is the Laird Bell Professor of History at Harvard University. Holding a PhD from Columbia University, he has written widely on the economic, social, and political history of capitalism. His book *Empire of Cotton* won the Bancroft Prize, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, and was named one of the ten best books of the year by The New York Times. An elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

House of Huawei: The Secret History of China's Most Powerful Company by Eva Dou (Portfolio)

Jury Comment: *The House of Huawei* is a history of a company, at times a biography of its founder, Ren Zhengfei, and, at the same time, the story of contemporary China. Eva Dou deftly weaves together the history of telecommunications technology with domestic and global politics, taking readers inside decision-making in Beijing, Washington, London, and beyond. Global in scope, the book traces Huawei's operations across the Middle East and Africa and shows how the firm has often functioned as an extension of the Chinese state. Drawing on remarkable sources, which include internal Huawei records, this is a rare, revealing, and utterly compelling page-turner.

Eva Dou covers technology policy for The Washington Post. A Detroit native, she previously spent around a decade covering international politics and technology for the Post and the Wall Street Journal in Beijing, Seoul and Taipei. She is currently based in Washington D.C.

How Progress Ends: Technology, Innovation and the Fate of Nations by Carl Benedikt Frey (Princeton University Press)

Jury Comment: In a grand sweep of history, Carl Benedikt Frey explores both the rise and fall of innovation and progress over the last 1000 years. Frey focuses on how rapid growth and innovation frequently stall when societies fail to adapt to technological change. He identifies the key tension between the freedom and decentralization necessary to ignite innovation and the rational, centralized bureaucracy necessary to scale technology. The highly concentrated technological environment in both China and the United States today could well be an obstacle to innovation in the future.

Carl Benedikt Frey is the Dieter Schwarz Associate Professor of AI and Work at the Oxford Internet Institute and Oxford Martin Citi Fellow at the Oxford Martin School, both at the University of Oxford. He is also a fellow at Mansfield College, the Institute for New Economic Thinking at Oxford, and Lund University's Department of Economic History. His books include *The Technology Trap: Capital, Labor, and Power in the Age of Automation* (Princeton).

Thinking Historically: A Guide to Statecraft and Strategy by Francis J. Gavin (Yale University Press)

Jury Comment: Francis Gavin has written a profound work of philosophy of history that is at the same time eminently readable. He writes not about history but rather about historical sensibility, a way of understanding and thinking about the world with all its complexities and uncertainties. Historical sensibility creates discomfort with linear reasoning and single causes. It embraces complexity, multiple chains that intersect and connect, and a story that changes with the perspective of time. In one elegant chapter after another, Gavin walks the reader through these complexities and leaves us less sure, more empathic, and wiser. *Thinking Historically* is a more important book than E.H. Carr's *Twenty Years Crisis* in helping us understand the crises of our times.

Francis J. Gavin is the Giovanni Agnelli Distinguished Professor and the director of the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. His previous books include *Gold, Dollars, and Power*; *Nuclear Weapons and American Grand Strategy*; and *The Taming of Scarcity and the Problems of Plenty*.

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