

## Prof Brandon Hamber: Trump's 'Board of Peace' is really a Board of War

**A radical rethink of the international order is not only overdue but also offers new opportunities**

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Donald Trump inaugurated his Board of Peace at the World Economic Forum in Davos (AP/Marcus Schreiber) (Markus Schreiber/AP)

DONALD Trump [launched his 'Board of Peace'](#) at Davos 2026, with much fanfare, promising to "end decades of suffering, stop generations of hatred and bloodshed". Initially intended to rebuild Gaza, its mission now appears much broader, marking critical global shifts and raising serious questions about what peace means at the global level.

Through his 'Board of Peace', Trump aims to redefine peace by promoting a 'peace through strength' approach.

The idea of peace as positive social relationships built on equality and justice has been cast aside. Instead, it is viewed as a form of macro-security enforced by the most powerful through threats and coercion.

This version of peace resembles the international relations of decades past, where stability was thought to be maintained through balancing the power of nations. Security was guaranteed by fear rather than rules or ideas of mutually beneficial cooperation.

Arguably, the concept of a balance of power has eroded over the past few decades through multilateral institutions such as the UN, the IMF and the World Bank, which have gained increasing global power.

Additionally, grassroots movements such as those advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and climate-change activism have often emerged from the margins, cutting across traditional forms of political power. These changes Trump and his cronies despise.

In Trump's view, a return to power politics is necessary, with the US, as the biggest kid on the block, acting as the world's self-interested policeman.

Peace is transactional or even extractive, with secondary gains for the US, such as oil or rare-earth minerals, flowing from the guarantee of security.

The 'Board of Peace' no doubt has been established to further this warped understanding.

No-one really knows what it will ultimately do. But the trajectory of US foreign policy suggests it will operate more as a 'Board of War', legitimising global interventions mainly dictated by Trump, its executive chair.



Donald Trump was joined by officials from 19 countries during his Board of Peace inauguration (Markus Schreiber/AP)

It would not be surprising if Greenland is the first item on the agenda, with the board endorsing annexation to "promote" global peace. Iran and Cuba might be next. Only one African country, Morocco, has been invited to join. This reflects Trump's racist dismissal of African states as 'shithole' nations.

But from a more sinister perspective, Africa, rich in resources and riddled with conflict, also seems ripe for the 'peace through strength' approach. It could be awkward to be singled out for a Trump 'peace intervention' while sitting on the board.

The 'Board of Peace' also embodies Trump's belief that existing global institutions fail to serve US interests and alternative structures are needed.

Following his withdrawal from various international organisations, the proposed board aims to replace global bodies such as the UN. It will define its own agenda and legitimacy, centred around Trump, who is the chairman for life with veto power.

In Trump's words at the launch, the board will "do pretty much whatever we want to do".

All this reinforces the claim by Mark Carney, the prime minister of Canada, at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, that "the rules-based order is fading". The only way out of this, according to Carney, is that "middle powers must act together" in various forms of cooperation, underpinned by values such as respect for human rights, sustainable development and sovereignty.

This speech has been seen as a game-changer, particularly in liberal circles. Carney's approach, however, misses a fundamental point.

While global institutions have provided a framework for a rules-based world, they have primarily benefited Western nations.

The alarm among Western politicians over Trump's comments about Greenland reflects a delayed recognition of the power plays that developing nations have faced from the US and Europe for decades.

Western countries have often used the rules-based order to justify toppling governments in the name of democratic peace. They did little to stop the genocide in Gaza.

The International Criminal Court has primarily indicted African leaders, while the likes of Netanyahu remain largely protected. The UN Security Council frequently blocks resolutions that run counter to its interests.

If Carney and his coalition of 'middle powers' are serious about ushering in a new era, the normative aspect of their call for collective action requires serious scrutiny. A radical rethink of the international order is not only overdue but also offers new opportunities.

For example, if the US is no longer interested in cooperating globally, bodies such as the Security Council could be dismantled and replaced with more equitable structures and power in global governance distributed more evenly. Such actions would create a different set of global levers and international players.

The danger right now, however, is that countries such as Canada and the UK – and, of course, the European Union – may become overly focused on the drive to reforge Western alliances while missing the bigger picture.

Nations around the world, including Pakistan, Indonesia, Turkey, Mexico, South Africa, India, and Brazil, are expanding their regional influence alongside the ambitions of China and Russia.

Trump's national-interest-first approach could encourage other nations to waver in their commitments to the international order and even resort to force to resolve disputes.

It is no surprise that some countries often critiqued for their human rights records eagerly joined Trump's 'Board of Peace', despite the \$1 billion joining fee. They will be happy to be lackeys in the absence of anything else, or out of fear that their country might otherwise be next on Trump's dinner table.

In this context, Carney's ideas of 'middle power', Western-only alliances will do little to promote global stability.



Canadian prime minister Mark Carney (Sean Kilpatrick/AP)

Unless this new approach to partnerships is accompanied by genuine soul-searching about the biases, imbalances and gaps in international institutions, and is founded on renewed north-south cooperation, the world will merely replicate past mistakes. If discussions on power are now the new norm, real change will only occur when global power dynamics are truly disrupted.

So, the discussion of new alliances should embrace rapidly developing nations and the inclusion and empowerment of the weakest.

This approach recognises that sustainable peace is built on participation and embedded in equality and shared access to power – it is not based on threats. Such broader devolution of power is exactly what Trump, as global bully boy, fears most.

Then again, maybe the 'Board of Peace' is just a classic Trump billion-dollar grift, to create a new 'Board of Peace' Peace Prize –with only one potential winner.

**:: Professor Brandon Hamber** holds the John Hume and Thomas P O'Neill Chair in Peace at Ulster University's International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE).

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