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## **POLICY COMPASS**

# **A New Architecture of Peace?** *Trump, the UN, and Competing Orders*

**By**

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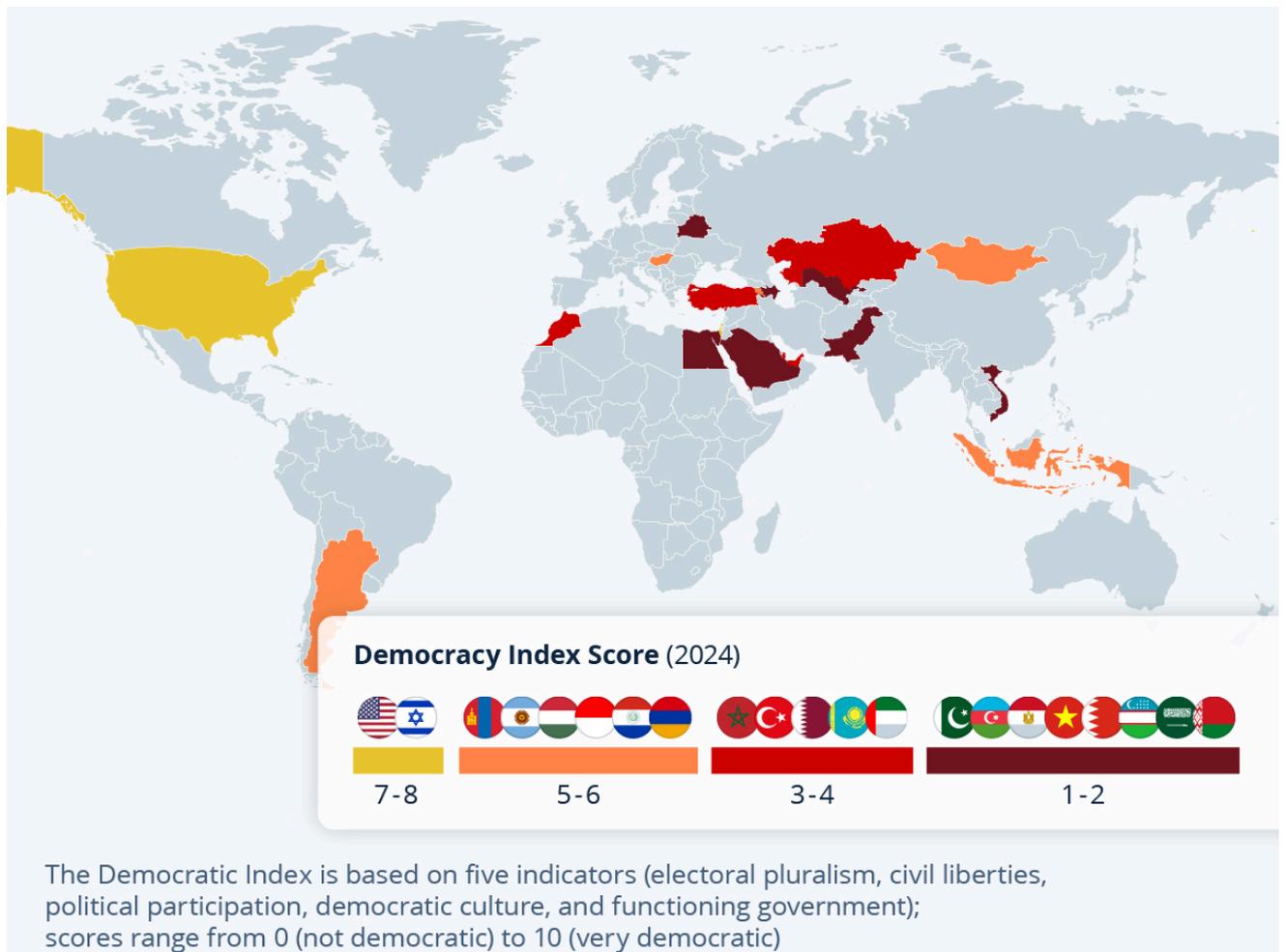
*A New Architecture of Peace? Trump, the UN, and Competing Orders*

25 February 2026

**Executive Summary**

- ✦ The United Nations faces a serious financial and political crisis amid declining support from major powers.
- ✦ The proposed Board of Peace represents a selective, centralised alternative to traditional multilateral diplomacy.
- ✦ Many US allies and democracies oppose the initiative, citing legitimacy and institutional concerns.
- ✦ The debate reflects a wider shift toward more transactional, coalition-based approaches to global governance.

**Key Picture: Who Will Sit on Trump’s “Board of Peace”?** (as of January 22 2026)



Sources: [CNN](#), [Economist Intelligence Unit](#), [Statista](#)

## The UN at a Financial and Political Crossroads

The United Nations is facing one of the most serious crises in its history. In early 2026, Secretary-General António Guterres warned member states that the organisation risks “imminent financial collapse” because of unpaid contributions and structural funding problems that could leave it unable to operate fully by mid-year. Guterres has on multiple occasions raised concerns about the United Nations’ worsening financial situation, but this constituted his most emphatic warning to date, issued at a time when the US, its principal contributor and also a debtor, is withdrawing from multilateral engagement across a range of fronts.<sup>1</sup>

The US has withheld billions in dues and reduced engagement with several international bodies. This shift has intensified the liquidity crisis and raised deeper questions about the future of multilateralism. President Donald Trump has stated that the United Nations has fallen short of its potential. His administration made no financial contributions to the organisation in 2025 and has withdrawn from UN bodies, including the World Health Organisation and UNESCO, while also cutting funding to dozens of other organisations.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Emergence of the Board of Peace*

Against this backdrop, Trump’s push to create a new international structure, sometimes described as a “Board of Peace,” has taken on added significance. The Board of Peace was formally established in January, following a November vote by the UN Security Council adopting Resolution 2803, which endorsed a US-brokered 20-point framework aimed at ending the war in Gaza. The initiative gained significant momentum on January 22, when President Trump signed the Board’s charter at the 57th World Economic Forum in Davos.<sup>3</sup> The initiative is framed by supporters as a pragmatic response to what they see as a dysfunctional UN system, particularly given warnings from UN leadership that funding shortfalls and geopolitical divisions are undermining its ability to operate effectively.<sup>4</sup>

The Board of Peace is a selective coalition of states operating outside the UN system, created as a stand-alone body intended to act quickly among a limited group of aligned participants rather than through universal multilateral consensus. Although the UN Security Council endorsed its establishment as a transitional mechanism linked to Gaza reconstruction, that approval does not cover its governance or future operations. The Board is highly centralised, with its charter giving Chairman President Trump broad authority over membership and decision-making, including the power to invite or exclude states and approve resolutions. Membership is invitation-only and funded through voluntary contributions, reportedly requiring substantial financial commitments, highlighting its design as an exclusive, opt-in forum.<sup>5</sup>

Although the charter characterises funding as voluntary, Trump’s prior approach indicates he is likely to exert pressure on members to increase their contributions, with the largest financial contributors expected to wield the greatest influence. States providing \$1 billion are to be granted permanent membership. The charter also allows the Chairman to remove Board members, subject to a veto by a two-thirds majority of member states. In practice, assembling such a majority to oppose Trump on such issues would present a significant procedural obstacle for any coalition seeking to block such action.<sup>6</sup>

Board members serve three-year terms that may be renewed at the Chairman’s discretion. Of the 50–60 countries invited, 21 have joined to date. Many are likely attracted by the prospect of a closer and more transactional relationship with the US, while others share Trump’s scepticism toward the UN-backed liberal international order. Collectively, members vote on the Board’s budget, international agreements, and “peace-building initiatives,” which require only a simple majority alongside the Chairman’s approval.<sup>7</sup>

While, as mentioned, the Board of Peace was initially associated with the Gaza ceasefire framework, the charter allows the Board to expand to other conflicts where it judges stability or governance to be at risk.<sup>8</sup> Trump has suggested the body could address wider global conflicts, and early membership discussions have included states from the Middle East, Asia and beyond.<sup>9</sup>

### *International Resistance to the Board of Peace*

Despite Trump's ambitions, many of the world's leading Western nations are expected to skip the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace later this month, with major US allies such as France, Germany, the UK and Canada likely to stay away.<sup>10</sup> Criticism of Trump's proposed Board of Peace has focused on its potential to bypass or weaken existing multilateral institutions, particularly the United Nations, with some governments expressing concern that it risks duplicating or sidelining established peacekeeping and diplomatic mechanisms. Many democracies have already refused to participate in the Board. Trump also "uninvited" Canada after Prime Minister Mark Carney urged middle powers to coordinate against "great power rivalry" and "coercion."<sup>11</sup>

Since then, governments have rejected the initiative more openly. Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva accused Trump of seeking "a new UN where only he is the owner" and warned the UN Charter was being undermined. Germany's foreign minister said, "we already have a peace council - the United Nations," and Chancellor Friedrich Merz argued Germany could not join for constitutional reasons; Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni likewise called participation unconstitutional.<sup>12</sup>

### *Is the Rules-Based Order Giving Way to Power Politics?*

Some observers see the proposed Board of Peace as signalling a shift from the post-war rules-based international order toward a more transactional, leader-driven system built around bargaining power, potentially allowing it to mediate wider conflicts and even rival existing institutions.<sup>13</sup> Critics and diplomats have warned that the initiative appears designed to bypass established multilateral structures, with concerns that it could sideline or weaken the United Nations' role in global governance.<sup>14</sup>

Commentators also argue that a system in which peace processes are convened by whichever power can mobilise funding or influence would mark a move away from institutional rule-setting toward deal-driven diplomacy.<sup>15</sup> In such an environment, legitimacy would rest less on universally agreed procedures and more on the ability of individual states to assemble coalitions, security guarantees or reconstruction finance. That could make negotiations more flexible and faster to organise, but it also risks concentrating agenda-setting power in the hands of a few governments while reducing predictability for smaller states that rely on established international forums. Over time, this could replace standing diplomatic frameworks with a patchwork of selective arrangements shaped by shifting political interests rather than stable multilateral norms.

However, placing authority in the hands of one unpredictable leader indicates that the Board of Peace is unlikely to be widely inclusive or achieve the legitimacy and credibility required of an effective multilateral body.<sup>16</sup> Whether the Board of Peace proves viable or not, the debate around it highlights a wider uncertainty about how conflicts will be managed if existing institutions weaken. If ad-hoc coalitions begin to take precedence over standing multilateral bodies, diplomacy may become more flexible but also less predictable. The question, ultimately, is not just who brokers peace, but what kind of international order those efforts begin to produce.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Emma Farge and David Brunnstrom, “Explainer: Why is UN warning of ‘imminent financial collapse’?”, Reuters, accessed 16 February 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/why-is-un-warning-imminent-financial-collapse-2026-02-04/>.

<sup>2</sup> Edith M.Lederer, “UN is waiting to see how much the US intends to pay of the nearly \$4 billion it owes”, AP News, accessed 15 February 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/un-us-financial-crisis-billions-trump-04ce06cd9c1744e6a2ae907427251583>.

<sup>3</sup> “The Latest on the Board of Peace: What We Know About Its Role, Reach and Limits”, Better World Campaign, accessed 16 February 2026, <https://betterworldcampaign.org/blog/the-latest-on-the-board-of-peace-what-we-know>.

<sup>4</sup> Emma Farge and David Brunnstrom, “Explainer: Why is UN warning of ‘imminent financial collapse’?”, Reuters.

<sup>5</sup> “The Latest on the Board of Peace: What We Know About Its Role, Reach and Limits”, Better World Campaign.

<sup>6</sup> Hugh Lovatt, “Welcome to the jungle: Trump’s Board of Peace goes global”, European Council of Foreign Relations, accessed 16 February 2026, <https://ecfr.eu/article/welcome-to-the-jungle-trumps-board-of-peace-goes-global/>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> “The Latest on the Board of Peace: What We Know About Its Role, Reach and Limits”, Better World Campaign.

<sup>9</sup> Steve Holland, “Trump launches Board of Peace that some fear rivals UN”, Reuters, accessed 16 February 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/trump-launch-board-peace-that-some-fear-rivals-un-2026-01-22/>.

<sup>10</sup> Adam Gabbatt, “Why most democracies won’t touch Trump’s Board of Peace”, *The Guardian*, accessed 16 February 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/11/the-board-of-peace-most-democracies-wont-touch>.

<sup>11</sup> “Trump’s Board of Peace draws criticism, “not a viable model”, Democracy Without Borders, accessed 16 February 2026, <https://www.democracywithoutborders.org/40334/trumps-board-of-peace-draws-criticism-not-a-viable-model/>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> “Broad mandate of Trump’s Board of Peace sets it up for rivalry with UN”, *The Financial Times*, accessed 16 February 2026, <https://www.ft.com/content/0ee79faa-86d3-4c01-a180-add6e164ac28>.

<sup>14</sup> Alexandra Topping, “UK not ready to sign up to Donald Trump’s ‘board of peace’, says Yvette Cooper”, *The Guardian*, accessed 16 February 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2026/jan/22/uk-not-ready-sign-trump-board-of-peace-treaty-yvette-cooper>.

<sup>15</sup> Chris Kremidas-Courtney, “Trump’s ‘Board of Peace’ isn’t about Gaza: It’s about replacing the UN”, accessed 16 February 2026, <https://www.epc.eu/publication/trumps-board-of-peace-isnt-about-gaza-its-about-replacing-the-un>.

<sup>16</sup> Glenn C. Altschuler and David Wippman, “Don’t underestimate the UN — Trump’s ‘Board of Peace’ is no substitute”, *The Hill*, accessed 16 February 2026, <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/5737540-un-vs-board-of-peace/>.