

US foreign policy

## Who wants to join Donald Trump's 'Board of Peace'?

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A fledgling club of autocrats, strongmen and monarchs is taking shape as the US president tries to recast the global order

**Mehul Srivastava and Max de Haldevang** in London and **James Politi** in Davos

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Six monarchs, three ex-Soviet apparatchiks, two military-backed regimes and a leader sought by the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes.

Those are among the inaugural members of Donald Trump's "Board of Peace", a nascent and idiosyncratic rival to the UN that has rattled Europe and delighted the autocracies seeking to ingratiate themselves in the US president's new world order.

"It's going to be the most prestigious board ever formed," Trump promised before the official unveiling. "I have some controversial people on it but these are people that get the job done, these are people that have tremendous influence."

That was even before Russian President Vladimir Putin had finished "studying all the details" of his personal invitation to join, and decided if he would pay \$1bn for lifetime membership of an institution with one lifetime chair: Trump himself. The US president said on Wednesday evening that Putin was aboard.

The board began as the brainchild of Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, as a means to end the war in [Gaza](#). But it has grown, within just a few weeks, into a cure-all for all the world's conflicts.

By Tuesday night, hours before Trump was to unveil the board at Davos, roughly two dozen countries had publicly accepted his invitation. A senior White House official said earlier on Wednesday that they expected about 35 countries to participate but there was no further update later in the day.

Those countries' leaders will sit above an executive board — whose appointees include Kushner, former British prime minister Tony Blair and secretary of state Marco Rubio — which will oversee its operations in more detail.

## Which countries have agreed to join Trump's Board of Peace?

| Country              | Accepted | Rejected |
|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Israel               | ✓        |          |
| Azerbaijan           | ✓        |          |
| United Arab Emirates | ✓        |          |
| Morocco              | ✓        |          |
| Vietnam              | ✓        |          |
| Kazakhstan           | ✓        |          |
| Hungary              | ✓        |          |
| Argentina            | ✓        |          |
| Armenia              | ✓        |          |

Countries who have formally accepted or rejected an invitation to join Trump's Board of Peace as member states; latest available information as of January 21 7pm GMT

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Just two EU countries have accepted: Bulgaria and Viktor Orbán's Hungary.

Dozens of other leaders have set aside the invite for now, including the pope. China has yet to reject the invitation, but has shown no sign of enthusiasm.

By comparison, the UN — born in the embers of the second world war — has 193 members.

But the numbers are largely beside the point. As Trump's aides have made clear, they arrived at Davos to smash norms and wield American power as never before.

That has left the US's allies treading a careful path.

Outright rejection, or even veiled criticism, could bring down Trump's most frequently wielded cudgel: punishing tariffs. (He threatened 200 per cent tariffs on French wine after President Emmanuel Macron politely declined.)

But joining runs the risk not just of looking subservient, as California Governor Gavin Newsom warned, suggesting "knee pads" for foreign leaders. It also flirts with violating international law, or in Italy's case, its own constitution.



# Executive appointments to Trump's Board of Peace

Individuals appointed to one of the executive boards

## **Nickolay**

## **Mladenov**

Appointed director-general of Gaza Board of Peace

BULGARIA

The UK's foreign secretary, Yvette Cooper, said on Thursday that Britain did not take part in the signing ceremony because of "concerns about President Putin being part of something which is talking about peace".

Speaking from Davos, Cooper warned the ceremony was "about a legal treaty that raises much broader issues".

The Board of Peace was unveiled against the backdrop of Trump's territorial lust for Greenland, a threat the US's Nato allies interpret as anything but peaceful.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a harsh UN critic, was quick to join. He did so a day after bulldozing the emptied East Jerusalem headquarters of a UN agency set up in 1949 to feed, house and educate Palestinian refugees.

But he has had to sign up from afar — wanted by the International Criminal Court on allegations of war crimes, Netanyahu risked arrest by attending the Davos summit in Switzerland.

The board is rounded out by three leaders of former Soviet republics who started their career as mandarins in the USSR: Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus, Kazakhstan's Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Uzbekistan's Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Trump unveiled the Board of Peace as the centrepiece of his second day of talks in the Davos resort on Thursday, along with a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"There's tremendous potential with the United Nations, and I think the combination of the Board of Peace, with the kind of people we have here, coupled with the United Nations can be something very, very unique for the world," the US president said.

Leaked drafts of the Charter suggest that he will serve as chair for as long as he chooses, with considerable powers.

The chair has the sole right to approve the board's "official seal", is the "final authority" on all disputes and can banish members — including, in theory, his successor as US president — as long as it is not opposed by a two-thirds majority of the board.

The next chair would be chosen by one man: Trump.

*Design by Carolina Vargas. Additional reporting by Lucy Fisher*

*This story has been amended to specify that two EU countries have agreed to join the board*

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