

Letter

Letter: Protectionism or military adventurism – the US deserves better

From Ryan Nabil, Director of Technology Policy and Senior Fellow, National Taxpayers Union Foundation, Washington, DC, US



Former US President Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally at the Atkinson Country Club in Atkinson, New Hampshire on January 16 2024 © Brandon Bell/Getty Images

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James Politi and Lauren Fedor correctly identify that Donald Trump and Nikki Haley represent two opposing visions of America’s international role, but therein lies a fundamental challenge for the Grand Old Party’s post-Covid approach to global affairs (“Candidates offer clashing foreign policy visions”, [Report](#), January 23).

For all their differences, both Republican “isolationists” and “internationalists” view global engagement primarily through a security lens instead of through economic and trade relations.

Trump has been rightly criticised for his unilateralist approach and weakening multilateralism. Yet, while many internationalists might profess support for multilateral institutions, such support often extends only to how far such policies promote narrowly defined national interests.

A more authentic spirit of multilateralism requires a sense of fair play and respect for international law and organisations, even when individual decisions by institutions like the World Trade Organization might go against the US. Unfortunately, genuine commitment to international law and multilateralism — as one more readily finds in other advanced economies like France, Germany and Japan — appears increasingly rare among US internationalists and isolationists alike.

A more multilateralist, cautious approach prioritising America's economic and trade relations would allow the US to benefit from economic growth in newer markets without becoming entangled in unnecessary conflicts.

While global economic and geopolitical circumstances might ultimately inform what precise foreign policies to pursue at a given point, American voters deserve better than the simple binary choice of protectionism and military adventurism overseas.

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