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An American Pope Emerges as a Potential Contrast to Trump on the World Stage

Pope Leo XIV’s focus on refugees and his pluralistic background may offer a different view of U.S. values from the president’s America First approach.

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Reporting from Washington

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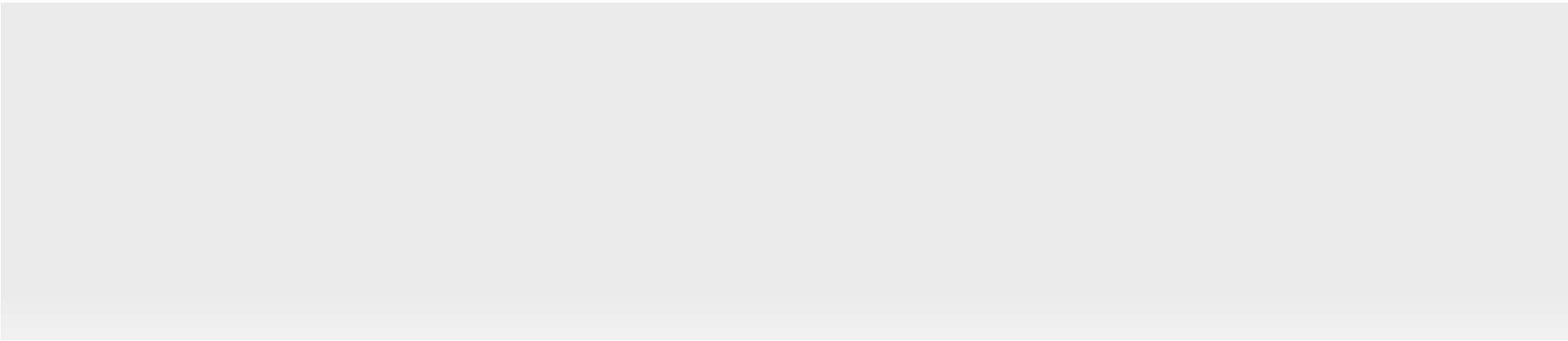
Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost’s ascension to the papacy marks an extraordinary moment for American leadership on the world stage at a time when President Trump has transformed the country’s reputation abroad and fueled distrust among longtime allies.

But while two Americans now sit in positions of enormous global influence, Pope Leo XIV may offer the world a different view of U.S. values from Mr. Trump’s America First approach, which he has executed through stiff tariffs, imperialist musings and vast cuts to foreign aid.

When he was introduced to the world, the new pope — who speaks five languages and is a naturalized citizen of Peru — emphasized his pluralistic background, making a point of speaking in Italian (representing his new constituency) and Spanish (his old one). He spoke no English and made no reference to the United States, even as some Catholics in St. Peter’s Square excitedly waved U.S. flags. (On Friday, he spoke briefly in English when he [delivered his first homily](#).)

[There are indications](#) that the first American pontiff disapproves of some of the Trump administration’s hard-line stances. A social media account under his name has reposted messages critical of the president’s positions on issues including immigration, gun control and climate change. In February, the account shared a link to an article in The National Catholic Reporter titled “[JD Vance Is Wrong: Jesus Doesn’t Ask Us to Rank Our Love for Others](#).”

“We have this powerful moral voice that is going to be able to potentially confront the other most powerful American voice,” said Charlie Sykes, an anti-Trump conservative who is Catholic. “Donald Trump bestrides the world as the ugly American, and now we have another prominent American who is able to confront him.”



Celebrating the selection of the new pope in Chiclayo, Peru, where he served as bishop for almost a decade. Marco Garro for The New York Times



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