

Gaza Will be the Grave of the Western-led World Order

By supporting Israel's atrocities in Gaza, the West has shredded what remains of its credibility and brought the 'rules-based' world order it purports to lead to the point of no return.

By [Prof. Saul J. Takahashi](#)

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No matter how it concludes, South Africa's lawsuit in the International Court of Justice arguing Israel has violated the Genocide Convention will go down in history. It will either be remembered as the first step towards finally holding a rogue state accountable for repeated, longstanding violations of international law; or as the last, dying breath of a dysfunctional, Western-led international system.

For the hypocrisy of Western governments (and the Western political elite as a whole) has finally brought the so-called "rules-based world order" they purport to lead to the point of no return. Full-throttled Western support for Israel's genocidal rampage in Gaza has truly exposed the double standards of the West with regard to human rights and international law. There is no turning back, and the West has only its own arrogance to blame.

The litany of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel in Gaza are clear as the light of day for anybody who has access to a smartphone. Social media feeds are overflowing with video clips of hospitals and schools being bombed, fathers pulling out the lifeless bodies of their children from under destroyed buildings, mothers crying over the corpses of their babies. And yet, the reaction of Western governments – besides seemingly limitless military and political support – has been to label any criticism of Israel as anti-Semitism and attempt to ban outright any expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Regardless of this oppression, tens of thousands of people are coming out on the streets day after day expressing their disgust at Israeli atrocities and Western complicity. Desperate

to regain some semblance of credibility, Western governments (including the US) have recently started to be marginally critical of Israeli attacks. However, it is too little, too late. Western credibility has been shredded irrevocably.

Of course, Western hypocrisy is nothing new. According to Western governments, the world should be up in arms about Russian aggression but should be perfectly happy with Israeli brutality and flouting of international norms. Ukrainians who throw Molotov cocktails at Russian occupation forces are heroes and freedom fighters, while Palestinians (and others) who dare to speak out against Israeli apartheid are terrorists. White-skinned refugees from Ukraine are more than welcome, while black and brown-skinned refugees from conflicts in the Middle East, Asia and Africa (most of which the West are behind) can sink to the bottom of the Mediterranean. The Western attitude has truly been: rules for thee, not for me.



Source: [Cartooning for Peace](#)

The Western position towards China exhibits the same insincerity. China is virtually encircled by American and allied military bases, armed to the hilt. Yet it is China that is guilty of... what? Unable to point to any concrete infraction, Western governments and media can only accuse China of “increased assertiveness”, ie, not knowing its assigned subjugate place in the Western hegemonic order.

International justice has become a sick joke. Were the International Criminal Court (ICC) functioning effectively, Israeli leaders would be on trial even as we speak, and there would have been no need for South Africa to approach the ICJ. As it stands, though, the ICC only indicted Africans until 2022, when it announced an investigation into the Russian invasion of Ukraine less than a week after its start. The ICC issued indictments, including for Russia’s President Vladimir Putin, in less than a year. Conversely, it took over six years for the ICC to open an investigation into the situation in Palestine, and even now, years later, meaningful action has yet to be taken. While Israel continued its orgy of violence against the people of Gaza, Karim Khan, the British Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, visited Israel and stressed the

need for Hamas's crimes to be prosecuted, while going soft on Israeli crimes. Little wonder many civil society organisations are calling for him to be fired.

Of course, Western hypocrisy is nothing new. From the get-go, international legal norms were intended to apply only to so-called "civilised" – read white – peoples. Savages did not count, and the powerful Western states could – and did – do to them what they pleased. Natives certainly did not "own" land or natural resources, and colonial powers were free to steal and exploit those as they wished. Zionism was also founded on such racist attitudes – attitudes that remain at the core of Israeli policies to this day.

These double standards are apparent with regard to the right to national self-determination – the fundamental right of all peoples to choose their own political system and control their own natural resources. After World War I, US President Woodrow Wilson insisted that self-determination be the guiding principle of the new world order – but, of course, only for Europeans. Palestinians and other Arab peoples found out the hard way that colonialism was alive and well: They were subject to League of Nations Mandates, which justified colonial rule for "peoples not yet able to stand by themselves". The Charter of the United Nations also included provisions for Trusteeship, essentially along similar lines as the Mandates of the League.

The wars of independence in Asia and Africa put a stop to this. The newly independent countries demanded successfully that self-determination be elevated to a right for all. The two international covenants on human rights, adopted in 1966, both stipulate the right of all peoples to self-determination in their common Article 1, making it clear that only with political and economic self-determination can any other human right be meaningful.

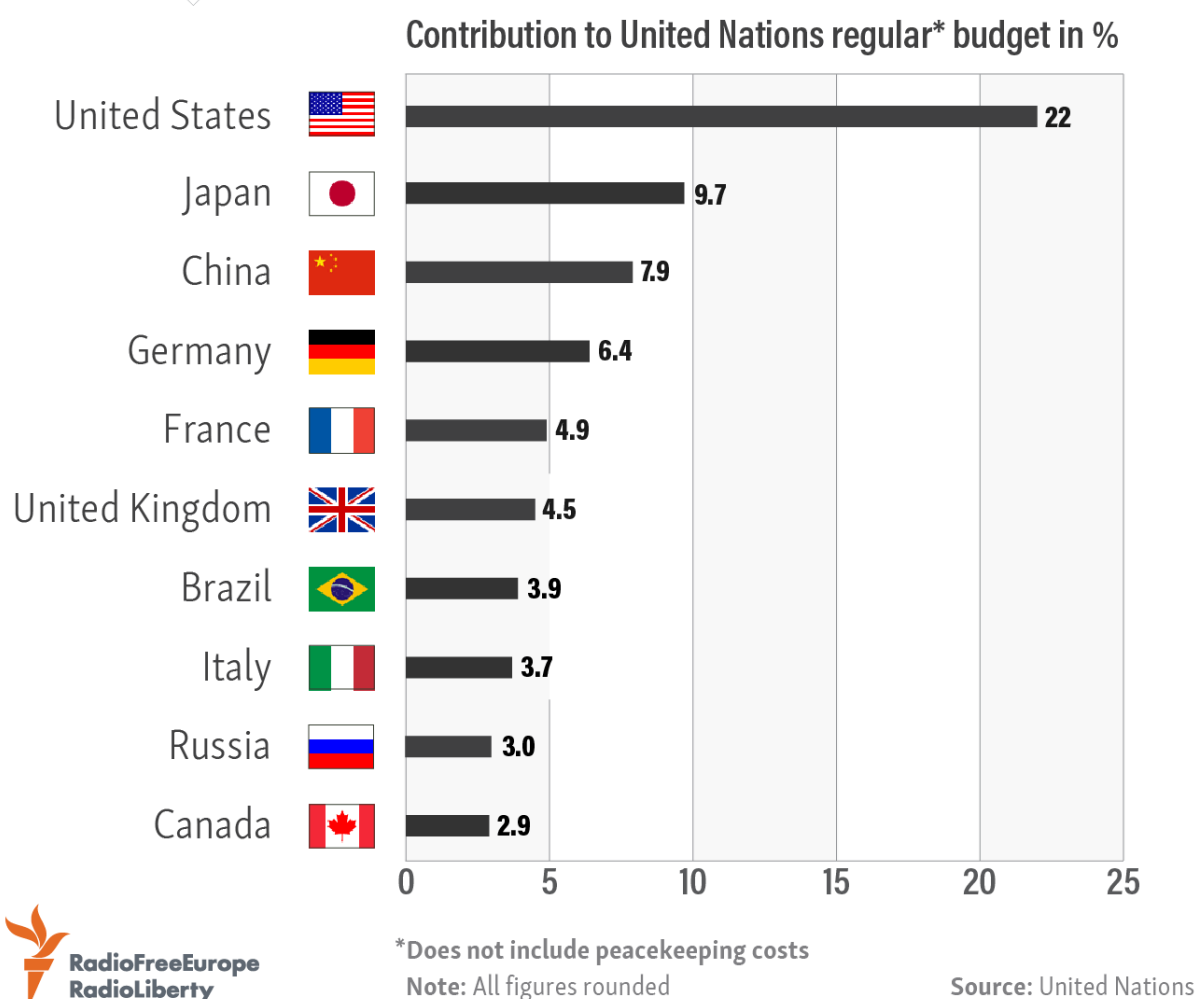
The discussion on the right of self-determination went further, to the chagrin of Western governments. The UN General Assembly has stated repeatedly that armed struggle (including that of the Palestinian people) against colonial rule is legitimate. And the 1977 Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, on the laws of war, also stated that struggles against colonial and racist regimes are valid. International law has definitely developed in the right direction.

Still, the systems to implement international law remain weak. This is by design, and it allows powerful countries to act with impunity, and to shield its proteges – as we see with the US and Israel. Even if the ICJ issues a provisional order for Israel to halt its violence, and even if, years later, it finds Israel guilty of genocide, without any enforcement, Israel can (and probably will) simply ignore those decisions. That would surely be the end of the current world order, as any facade of fairness would collapse.

Enforcement of international law is in the hands of the UN Security Council, but with its veto rights for the five countries that happened to be on the winning side in 1945, that body has time and time again proven itself incapable of fulfilling its mandate. The General Assembly lacks any enforcement power. And the UN, the ICC, and most other international organisations are perennially underfunded, meaning they rely heavily on voluntary contributions from states. This makes them vulnerable to undue influence by the rich and powerful: in other words, the wealthy Western countries.

WHO ARE THE BIGGEST CONTRIBUTORS TO THE UNITED NATIONS?

The United States is the largest contributor to the United Nations. It pays 22% of the UN's \$5.4-billion budget – more than twice as much as second-highest contributor Japan.



On a more fundamental level, these international institutions are not representative. Though civil society organisations can contribute to most of the debates, only governments have a say in the decision-making process – despite the fact that, as we see in the case of Gaza, even the governments of ostensible democracies do not necessarily represent the will of their people.

Israeli aggression and colonisation must stop, and abusers of human rights in Palestine must be held accountable – including Western leaders who are complicit in genocide. However, we must not stop there. We must demand a revolutionary reform of international institutions. They must be made truly democratic and egalitarian. They must reflect the voice of the people, through civil society organisations and other democratic modes of representation – not governments that are too often in the pocket of rich and powerful interests.

Creating a world order that will ensure justice and equal rights for all will not be easy. It will require sustained efforts on the part of global citizenry, through putting pressure for change on governments and international organisations. However, it is the only way to ensure that “never again” becomes a reality.

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Saul J Takahashi is Professor of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Osaka Jogakuin University in Osaka, Japan. An international human rights lawyer, he was Deputy Head of Office of the UN human rights agency in Occupied Palestine from 2009 to 2014.

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