

# What Is the Rules-Based Order?

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*In fits of, what might well be termed, masochism, some of us now-and-then tune in to the legacy media. When doing so, one is likely to hear western-aligned politicians rhetorize ad nauseam about the linguistically vogue rules-based order. Now and then, the word "international" is also inserted: the rules-based international order.*

## But what exactly is this rules-based order?

The way that the wording rules-based order is bandied about makes it sound like it has worldwide acceptance and that it has been around for a long time. Yet it comes across as a word-of-the-moment, both idealistic and disingenuous.

Didn't people just use to say *international law* or refer to the *International Court of Justice*, *Nuremberg Law*, the *UN Security Council*, or the newer institution — the *International Criminal Court*? Moreover, the word *rules* is contentious.

Some will skirt the rules, perhaps chortling the aphorism that rules are meant to be broken. Rules can be unjust, and shouldn't these unjust rules be broken, or better yet, disposed of? Wouldn't a more preferable wording refer to *justice*? And yes, granted that justice can be upset by miscarriages. Or how about a *morality*-based order?

Nonetheless, it seems this wording of a rules-based order has jumped to the fore. And the word *order* makes it sound a lot like there is a ranking involved. Since China and Russia are advocating multipolarity, it has become clearer that the rules-based order, which is commonspeak among US and US-aligned politicians, is pointing at unipolarity, wherein the US rules a unipolar, US-dominated world.

An Australian thinktank, the Lowy Institute, has [pointed to a need](#) "to work towards a definition" for a *rules-based order*. It asks, "... what does America think the rules-based order is for?"

Among the reasons cited are

“... to entrench and even sanctify an American-led international system,” or “that the rules-based order is a fig leaf, a polite fiction that masks the harsh realities of power,” and that “... the rules-based order can protect US interests as its power wanes relative to China...”

China is aware of this, and this is expressed in the *Asia Times* headline: “[US ‘rules-based order’ is a myth and China knows it.](#)”

*The Hill* [wrote](#), “The much-vaunted liberal international order – recently re-branded as the rules-based international order or RBIO – is disintegrating before our very eyes.”

As to what would replace the disintegrated order, *The Hill* posited, “The new order, reflecting a more multipolar and multicivilizational distribution of power, will not be built by Washington for Washington.”

The *Asia Times* [acknowledged](#) that it has been a “West-led rules-based order” and argued that a “collective change is needed to keep the peace.”

It is a given that the rules-based order is an American linguistic instrument designed to preserve it as a global hegemon.

To rule is America’s self-admitted intention.

It has variously declared itself to be the leader of the free world, the beacon on the hill, exceptional, the indispensable nation (in making this latter distinction, a logical corollary is drawn that there must be dispensable nations — or in the ineloquent parlance of former president Donald Trump: “shithole” nations).

Thus, the US has placed itself at the apex of the international order. It seeks ultimate control through full-spectrum dominance.

It situates its military throughout the world; it surrounds countries with bases and weapons that it is inimically disposed toward — for example, China and Russia.

It refuses to reject the first use of nuclear weapons.

It does not reject the use of landmines.

It still has a [chemical-weapons inventory](#), and it allegedly carries out bioweapons research, as [alluded to by Russia](#), which uncovered several clandestine biowarfare labs in Ukraine.

This news flummoxed [Fox News’ Tucker Carlson](#). Dominance is not about following rules, it is about imposing rules. That is the nature of dominating. Ergo, the US rejects the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and went so far as to [sanction the ICC](#) and declare ICC officials *persona non grata* when its interests were threatened.

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Having placed itself at the forefront, the US empire needs to keep its aligned nations in line.

Thus it was that Joe Biden, already back in 2016, was urging Canada’s prime minister Trudeau to be a [leader for rules-based world order](#).

When Trudeau got together with his Spanish counterpart, Pedro Sánchez, they [reaffirmed their defence of the rule-based international order](#).

It is a commonly heard truism that actions speak louder than words. But an examination of Trudeau's words compared to his actions speaks to a contradiction when it comes to [Canada and the rule of law](#).

So how does Trudeau [apply rules based law](#)? [1]

Clearly, in Canada it points to a set of laws having been written to coerce compliance. This is [especially evident in the case of Indigenous people](#). [2]

It seems Canada is just a lackey for the leader of the so-called free world.

One of the freedoms the US abuses is the freedom not to sign or ratify treaties. Even the [right-wing thinktank](#), the Council on Foreign Relations [lamented](#), "In lists of state parties to globally significant treaties, the United States is often notably absent. Ratification hesitancy is a chronic impairment to international U.S. credibility and influence."

The CFR added,

"In fact, the United States has one of the worst records of any country in ratifying human rights and environmental treaties."

It is a matter of record that the US places itself above the law. As stated, the US does not recognize the ICC; as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the [US has serially abused its veto power](#) to protect the racist, scofflaw nation of Israel; it ignored a World Court ruling that found the US guilty of de facto terrorism for [mining the waters around Nicaragua](#).

The historical record reveals that the US, and its Anglo-European-Japanese-South Korean acolytes, are guilty of numerous violations of international law (i.e., the rules-based, international order).

When it comes to the US, the contraventions of the rules-based order are myriad. To mention a few:

1. Currently, the US is occupying Syria and stealing the oil of the Syrian people;
2. It attacked, occupied, and [plundered Afghanistan](#);
3. It has been carrying out an embargo, [condemned by the international community](#), against Cuba and its people for six decades;
4. The US has been in [illegal occupation of Cuba's Guantanamo Bay](#) since 1903; even if deemed to be legal, it is clearly unethical;
5. American empire has a history of blatant, wanton [disregard for democracy and sovereignty](#);
6. The US funded the [Maidan coup](#) that overthrew the elected president of Ukraine, leading to today's special military operation devastating Ukraine, which continues to fight a US-NATO proxy war.
7. Then, there is the undeniable fact that [the US exists because of a genocide](#) wreaked by its colonizers, which has been perpetuated ever since.
8. Even the accommodations that the US imposed on the peoples it dispossessed are ignored, revealed by a slew of broken treaties. [3]

The history of US *actions* (as opposed to its *words*) and its complicit tributaries needs to be kept firmly in mind when the legacy media unquestioningly reports the pabulum about adhering to a rules-based order.

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## Notes

1. See also Yves Engler, "[Ten ways Liberals undermined international rules-based order](#)," [rabble.ca](http://rabble.ca), 17 September 2021.
2. Read Bob Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality*, 2018.
3. Vine Deloria, Jr., *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence*, 1985. This governmental infidelity to treaties is also true in [the Canadian context](#).

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