

WAR IS A RACKET

War Is a Racket is a speech and a 1935 short book by Smedley D. Butler.

Agreement Incapable

America did not become a nation of racketeers under Trump. It always was one — and Smedley Butler said so long before anyone in Washington had heard of him.

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Fri 08 May 2026

Back in February 2026, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov declared that, from the perspective of the Russian Federation, the United States was not ready to fulfill agreements that had been reached during the Trump-Putin Summit in Alaska in August 2025.

Simply put, the United States was “agreement incapable.”

While the administration of President Donald Trump has come to personify this notion, the fact is this phenomenon has been in place for some time now.

About 250 years, to be precise.

To be “agreement capable”, one must first understand and respect the concept of the rule of law.

There was a time when the United States aspired to be such a country.

After all, we are a nation founded on the principles enshrined in a declaration of independence from Great Britain which held that there existed certain self-evident “truths”, namely “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” These inspirational words helped fuel a revolution which manifested itself in a new nation, one eventually defined by a constitution which delineated the principles and values of the American collective.

This is not to say that the United States has always been a paragon of virtue.

Or that it ever was.

But there was a time when a man’s word meant something.

When a handshake was as good as a signature on a piece of paper.

Where a reputation mattered.

Those days, unfortunately, are long gone.

Arrogance and insolence have long been traits attributable to the United States of America and the American people.

But these normally repulsive character flaws were always wrapped in the cloak of well-meaning innocence, to be forgiven because those possessed of such traits carried themselves with a smile on their face and the perceived intent of wanting to do the right thing.

But even then, the perception of doing the “right thing” was always a scam.

A put on.

A racket.

The rule of law that defines the American foundation of principled beliefs has always been shrouded blunt concepts of “right” and “wrong” and crude notions of “justice” when it came to righting perceived wrongs.

Individual liberties and freedoms have always been subordinated to a monolithic enforcement mechanism disguised as “the rule of law”, where powers operating behind the scenes, void of public scrutiny and the accountability that comes with it, create nebulous notions of what constitutes a crime, and harsh realities of what is mete out as punishment.

Thomas Jefferson penned in the aforementioned “Declaration of Independence” that “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

This, however, is not necessarily true.

The relationship that would have to exist for such a statement to be true would be premised on a set of rules and understandings derived from such rules that were respected and adhered to by all parties.

But the government can alter the rules at will and then enforce these new rules with powers the people would never be able to match.

The government has always maintained the right to renegotiate the terms of coexistence between the governed and the government.

This is an American tradition that dates to the Whiskey Rebellion of 1791-1794.

And while some with a passing familiarity of American history will point to President George Washington’s mobilization of 13,000 militia to suppress the rebellious distillers of western Pennsylvania, this would obviate the real story behind the scenes.

Of how Alexander Hamilton weaponized debt to create a financial system ostensibly to promote American prosperity and national unity, but which in fact led to the imposition of what amounted to the first income tax and the creation of a systemic approach to creating a financial prison for an American people whose permanent mission was to fund a government that sold out principle in favor of profit.

The debt weaponized by Alexander Hamilton was derived from the very conflict which freed the American colonists from the tyranny of the British Crown.

And the United States has been in a near perpetual state of conflict ever since, sustaining and expanding the very debt used to justify crippling fiscal demands upon a public who, unknowingly, subordinated their collective freedom to the bottom lines of the monied interests who benefited from Hamilton's debt-based financial system.

War is in the very DNA of the American Constitutional Republic.

We simply cannot live without it.

This is a truth that has stared Americans in the face for some time.

A fellow Marine—Smedley Butler, twice awarded the nation's highest award for valor—has said it best:

“War is a racket. It always has been. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives. A racket is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the majority of the people. Only a small "inside" group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many. Out of war a few people make huge fortunes.”

Americans have been led to believe that their armed forces exists to defend the underlying principles of the nation.

This is true.

But the notion of what constitutes principles worth defending differ between the governed, who are lulled into a false sense of complacency by concepts such as “freedom” and “liberty”, and the governors, who only care about profit.

Again, Smedley Butler:

“I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefits of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909–1912 (where have I heard that name before?). I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped see to it that

Standard Oil went its way unmolested. Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents.”

There, in a nutshell, is the American reality.

The ultimate American truth.

We are a nation of racketeers.

Brute thugs who get what we want through intimidation and force.

Our word is our bond, but only when you submit to our will.

Otherwise, we will send in the Marines.

The post-war era (i.e., the years that followed the conclusion of the Second World War—this explanation being necessitated by the many wars that have transpired since then, most of which were instigated by the United States) have been, until recently, defined by two separate but inherently linked foundational legal precepts.

First is the supremacy of international law as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, which binds the so-called “civilized” nations of the world with those that aspire to be so.

The second is the so-called “rules based international order” comprised of agreements and charters which have created a network of global institutions linked by the rules set forth in these agreements and charters.

The United States was the principal drafter of both the UN Charter and the various agreements which, collectively, constitute the “rules based international order.”

We promoted adherence to both of these bodies of laws and corresponding rules and regulations, allowing us to proclaim loud and clear that we were a nation of laws, and that our purpose was to defend the rule of law.

That we were “agreement capable.”

But this posturing was a scam.

A racket.

A literal Ponzi scheme.

America has always been built on the notion of endless prosperity that could only be obtained and sustained through the constant expansion of the monied interests of the empowered elites, who rolled over the European nations that sought to establish competitive footholds in the new lands of the Western Hemisphere, and the indigenous peoples who owned and occupied the lands which comprised the future sources of wealth for the young Republic.

When we consolidated our hold on the American continent, we moved off shore, becoming that which we had ostensibly liberated ourselves from—an imperial colonial power. Our ambition soon put us in direct conflict with other expansive tyrannical powers—Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany—and we found ourselves in a global conflict which solidified the concept of debt-based prosperity while redefining global power structures in a manner which enabled the United States—through the United Nations—to lay claim to de facto suzerainty over the entire world.

By hijacking the rule of law to create “agreements” which existed for our sole benefit.

Mark Carney, the Prime Minister of Canada, recently offered a take on the “rules based international order” which best captures its reality:

“For decades,” Carney proclaimed in a speech delivered to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on January 20, “countries like Canada prospered under what we called the rules-based international order. We joined its institutions, praised its principles, and benefited from its predictability. We could pursue values-based foreign policies under its protection. We knew the story of the international rules-based order was partially false. That the strongest would exempt themselves when convenient. That trade rules were enforced asymmetrically. And that international law applied with varying rigor depending on the identity of the accused or the victim.”

The rules based international order was a racket.

So, too, the UN Charter. Ostensibly crafted to create a world where the victors of the global conflagration got to define the terms of coexistence with the vanquished and victims alike, this notion quickly fell apart when one of these victors—the Soviet Union—failed to adhere to the small print of the UN Charter, namely that all nations must subordinate themselves to the economic dominance of the US dollar and the new global institutions founded on the basis of the notion of dollar dominance.

The world was America's oyster, and the agreements we helped draft, institute and enforce were designed to allow America to exploit this oyster at will.

But the reality is that the UN Charter and the rules based international order derived thereof was little more than a giant Ponzi scheme, which required others to subordinate their economic viability to the whim of American capital over time. The United States would, of course, play the role of assiduous defender of the laws and rules that underpinned the various agreements produced.

Helping create the fiction of an "agreement capable" nation.

But the moment the agreement stopped producing the one-sided results demanded of the American elites, these agreements were cast aside as if they never mattered or even existed.

Compare and contrast the role played by the UN in legitimizing military action against Iraq in 1991, and the way the US ignored the UN in making the case for war against Iraq in 2003.

It is almost as if the UN Charter did not exist.

Look at the legacy of arms control treaties negotiated with the Soviet Union and Russia over time.

They have all been abandoned by the United States.

And now look at the Granddaddy of all treaty relationships, that between the US and its trans-Atlantic allies—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO.

It is as if it never existed.

Under the Trump administration, the US has foregone all pretense of binding treaties or agreements.

These are no longer convenient in a world where the global Ponzi scheme that was the "rules based international order" no longer is viable.

The US needs a new racket.

We have become a nation of snake oil salesmen, offering cures for problems we ourselves created.

Except the cures cure nothing.

They exist to simply transfer wealth away from the victim to the United States.

And as soon as the victim recognizes the racket, we move to destroy them.

We no longer seek the inconvenient entanglements of treaties or agreements.

We seek “deals”, using the language of used car salesmen and other charlatans.

Our existence has become defined by an endless series of scams designed to produce short-term profits with little or no regard for long-term consequences.

We are a nation defined by lies and deception, where negotiations are used as a vehicle to lull ostensible diplomatic partners into a false sense of complacency, during which time we plot and execute the mechanisms of their demise.

And while the Trump administration has come to personify these odious characteristics, we, the people of the United States, fail to understand that we, too, are tainted by this stench of moral and intellectual deception and perfidy.

Sergei Lavrov got it wrong when he said that the United States is “agreement incapable.”

What he should have said is that the American people are collectively “agreement incapable.”

This status will remain even after Trump is removed from office.

Because the underlying causes for this condition pre-date Trump.

They were manifested at the birth of our nation.

And until we recognize this original sin and do something to purge it from the defining characteristics of our nation, we will always be nothing more than a failed Ponzi scheme, incapable of projecting the kind of integrity and honor necessary for producing agreements, and seeing them through.

ARTICLE TAGS:

Analysis USA Trump, Donald United Nations (UN)