

America's Global Vigilantism

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John Glaser [comments](#) on our government's habit of breaking the rules of the so-called international "rules-based order":

It's hard for America to act as the guarantor of a rules-based order that it consistently violates.

Whenever any state arrogates to itself the right to serve as both judge and executioner of other governments, it is certain to run afoul of international law and undermine international peace and security. Our policymakers have taken this right for granted for at least the last thirty years, and with the end of the Cold War they have had the freedom of action to exercise it with impunity. While most interventionists will usually claim to be acting on behalf of the "international community" in punishing this or that "rogue" government, they have no problem with trampling on international law when it gets in their way. Sometimes they will twist U.N. resolutions beyond all recognition to provide a fig leaf for what they do, and sometimes they will do as they like and dare someone to do something about it. If the targets of "enforcement" are often themselves rule-breakers, the U.S. has made a habit of acting as little more than a heavily-armed vigilante, and the vigilante doesn't penalize the governments that happen to be on "our" side. That not only makes a mockery of the idea that the rules apply to everyone, but it sets up a two-tier system where our government's actions and those of our allies and clients are effectively beyond reproach or accountability.

The [announcement](#) this morning that the U.S. is threatening a visa ban on anyone from the International Criminal Court (ICC) involved in investigating or prosecuting Americans suspected of war crimes is the latest example of how the U.S. holds itself to a different and lower standard than it expects from many other governments:

The United States will impose visa restrictions on people responsible for any International Criminal Court probe, a move aimed at preventing the court from pursuing the United States and its allies on Afghanistan, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Friday.

Pompeo also suggested that the visa restrictions could be used to shield other states aligned with the U.S.:

These visa restrictions may also be used to deter ICC efforts to pursue allied personnel, including Israelis, without allies' consent.

The administration is not only refusing to recognize the ICC's authority, but it is threatening to undermine it in any case involving "allied" governments as well. That goes beyond ignoring international law and actively working to subvert the institutions responsible for upholding it.