

## Reasons for outrage. And why anger is not the answer.



Credit: iStock

Poverty can easily be eradicated; the world is terribly unjust rather than poor.

Just 22 men [own more wealth](#) than all the women in Africa combined.

The [wealthiest 1%](#) has amassed more than the **GDP of 169 countries combined**. Millionaires and up have gained *14,000 times more wealth* than the poorest 60%, while the bottom half [owns just 2%](#) of global wealth.

**3.3 billion people** live in nations that [spend more on interest](#) on serving their public debt than on health or education. Most is held by private lenders unwilling to offer debt relief.

The global system produces billionaires – and soon likely the [first trillionaire](#) – with ease, while eliminating poverty could take another **229 years** based on current trends.

Despite decades of development rhetoric, global poverty rates have seen only [marginal declines](#), with China accounting for the vast majority of progress.

If income was [shared more fairly](#) and invested in universal public goods, global poverty could be eradicated **many times over**.

Amoral worldviews thrive, with ‘might is right’ is disturbingly prominent.



Credit: hosnysalah, Pixabay

The crude philosophy of **‘might is right’** - power dominating justice or any other moral or ethical concern - continues to drive atrocities and conflicts, often wrapped in hypocritical statements about freedom, human rights or self-defense. Originating in ancient Greece (Thrasymachus), the best **modern examples** are the attacks on Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, (then) Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Lebanon and Gaza.

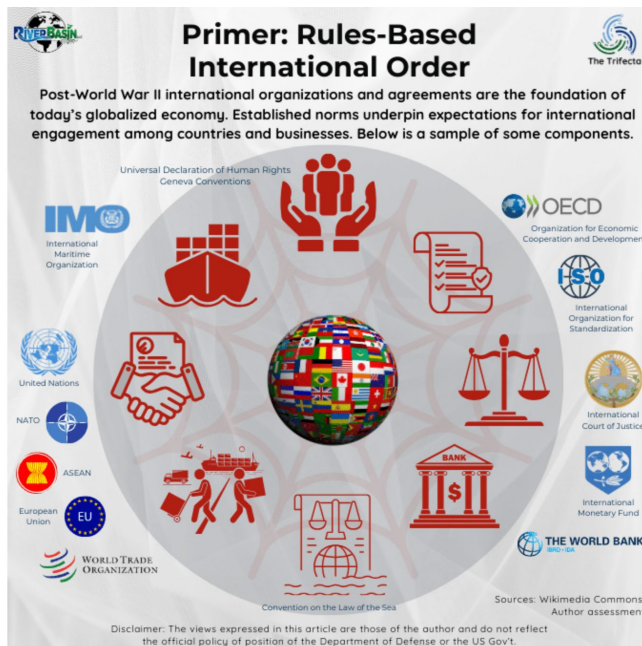
‘Might is right’ **marginalises traditional philosophies** and frameworks rooted in cooperation, harmony and shared humanity, such as Confucianism, Taoism, Ubuntu, African Communalism and Indigenous worldviews.

**Economic sanctions**, disproportionately applied by powerful nations, impoverish societies and seldom lead to the regime change that tends to be their real purpose.

From Pope Francis’ superb encyclical, [Laudato si’](#) (article 82): *“This vision of ‘might is right’ has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all.”*

The US imposes **3 times as many** sanctions as any other country, and often on the (resource-rich) poorest. At present **a third of all nations**, including 60% of low-income countries, are under [some form of US financial sanction](#). This has devastating consequences in countries such as Cuba, Syria, Iran, Venezuela and North Korea, some of which have been under sanctions for [5-7 decades](#).

**Real power remains concentrated in the hands of a few, embedded in global systems.**



There are complex reasons for the persistent inequality and [divide](#) between the Global South and Global North. A primary one is the so-called [rules-based international order](#) (see also [here](#) and [here](#)), an euphemism for a system designed to [actively constrain](#) the Global South while advancing the interests of a privileged minority.

For example, [inequality is embedded](#) in the **international financial architecture**. Africa pays 10 times more in interest on debt than Germany. Most of the debt is held by private entities in the Global North, and the system is [structured](#) to prevent countries from attending to real development priorities. The [bestseller](#) *(New) Confessions of an Economic Hitman* reveals how corporations and governments use economic manipulation to control the Global South. Among many other tools, [ISDS tribunals](#) allow multinationals to [secretly sue](#) governments – usually in the Global South - over unfavourable regulations.

These asymmetries in power allow **exploitation of resources and labour** from the Global South through unequal exchange, [draining](#) up to **US\$10 trillion per year** while [official ODA](#) was only US\$223 billion – a mere 0.03% of what is being drained away.

For every [hour of labour](#) the Global South gets from the Global North it sends back 11 hours – in total 826 billion hours, more than the total labour force in the US and Europe combined. If this was paid at Northern wages, it would be worth €16.9 trillion.

The exploitation is also starkly visible in supply chains such as in the **US\$130 billion cocoa industry**. Farmers get less than [US\\$1 dollar per day](#), accounting for just **6.6% of the value of the final sale** of a tonne of cocoa.

[Disaster capitalism](#) and the [aid industry](#) are therefore simply Band-Aids, helping to keep a very unfair system in place (see also [here](#)).



Naked racism is on full display. Staggering hypocrisy reveals how some lives are valued over others.



Credit: Freepik

Will we ever forget the [racist](#) and [dehumanising reporting](#) by Western journalists at the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict? And the **staggering difference** in media reporting on this conflict with the many atrocities committed in [Sudan](#)?

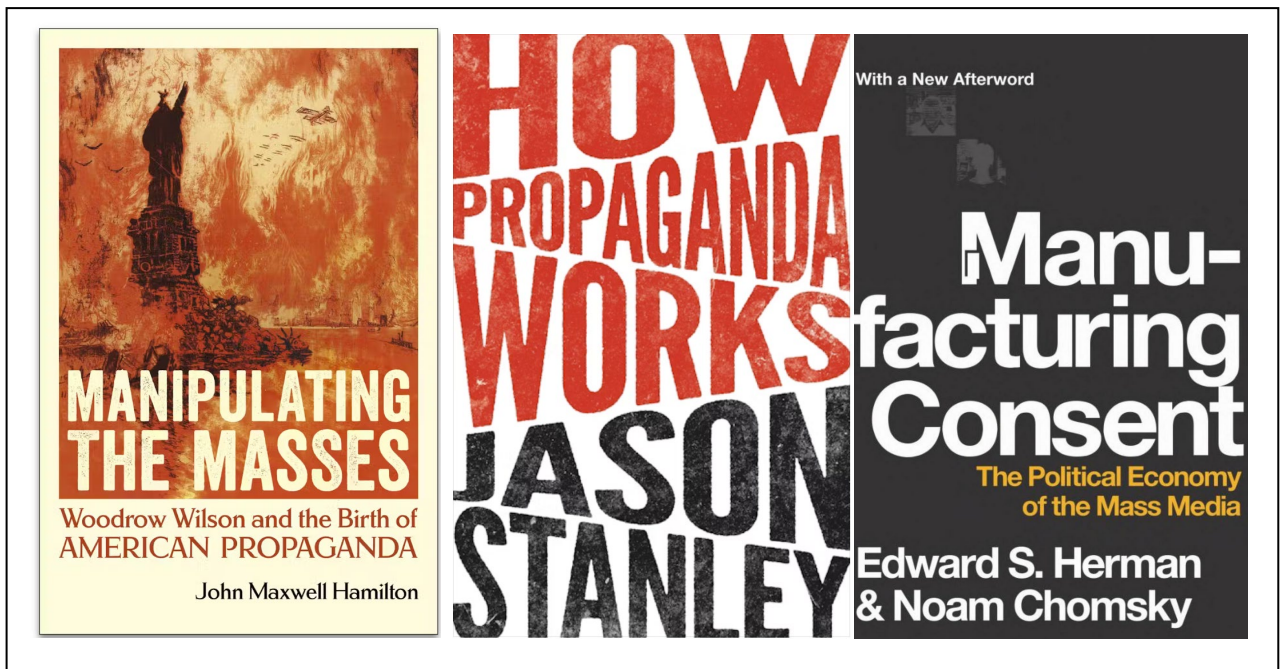
Powerful Western leaders see the **war in [Ukraine](#)** as genocide, but not the **conflict in [Gaza](#)**. The killing of [six white \(of seven\) aid workers](#) provoke outrage among politicians, but not the slaughter of [tens of thousands](#) of women and children – one of many reasons for the [clear rifts](#) between the Global South and Global North.

More than **100 Israeli hostages** still in Gaza are constantly in the headlines, while more than **10,000 [Palestinians](#)** in Israeli jails, many without trial and often [subject to torture](#), are ignored.

**Migrants [dying](#)** in large numbers in the Mediterranean receive [scant interest](#) from EU organs and nations, yet they are [quick to lecture](#) the Global South on ‘human rights’.

**[Compensation](#) disparities** are stark: 9/11 victims received \$2 million each, while the Union Carbide Bhopal disaster victims received US\$2,200 each. The [US military compensates](#) civilians with around US\$4,200 per life. In Iraq, US payments were at most US\$2,500 for death and US\$1,000 for serious injury. Similar injustices exist in the [UK system](#).

Propaganda is everywhere, especially in democracies, making all more clueless and subservient.



Those of us who make the effort to go to original sources, explore different viewpoints, and sift through mainstream and social media for patterns, quickly realize the **widespread efforts to mislead us all**. Democracies, often seen as beacons of free thought, are rife with propaganda. Media echo chambers ensure only one perspective is amplified, suppressing alternative views, while the replication of narratives across platforms creates an illusion of consensus.

There are several sets of [basic principles of propaganda](#) (see also [here](#)). All these principles are [playing out](#) in Western media and dominant narratives, most visibly in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, in efforts to weaken China's soft power, and in the [Gaza conflict](#), with Western [media treatment](#) of events stunningly one-sided (see also [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

**Words have weight.** Linguistic manipulation is everywhere: [regime](#)" rather than "government"; "[terrorists](#)" rather than freedom, guerilla or resistance fighters (remember Che Guevara, Nelson Mandela?); the patronizing "[developed](#)" and "developing" countries.

**Dominant narratives** are often **just carefully curated propaganda**: Is there really a [decline in poverty and inequality](#) as a result of neoliberal policies? Are [Western media](#) really independent and unbiased? Is the concept of the '[Global South](#)' really a myth? Is China really the [aggressor](#), or the purveyor of a [debt trap](#) in [Africa](#)? Was the [Ukraine-Russia war](#) really '[unprovoked](#)' (see also [this 2019 RAND report](#) or [this brief](#) including the editor's 'propaganda' objection).

Perhaps the **most destructive dominant narrative** over past centuries have been the assumption of our [fundamental separateness](#). Most [non-Western](#) or [Indigenous philosophies](#) have been rooted in the notion of holism, relationality, a [systems view of life](#). If whole continents' populations were not slaughtered or made to believe that their cultures and philosophies were 'primitive', **blending of all our wisdoms** could have helped the world to flourish instead of being at great risk today.



Might is right' is also devastating our beautiful planet.



Credit: Alexander Schimmeck, Unsplash

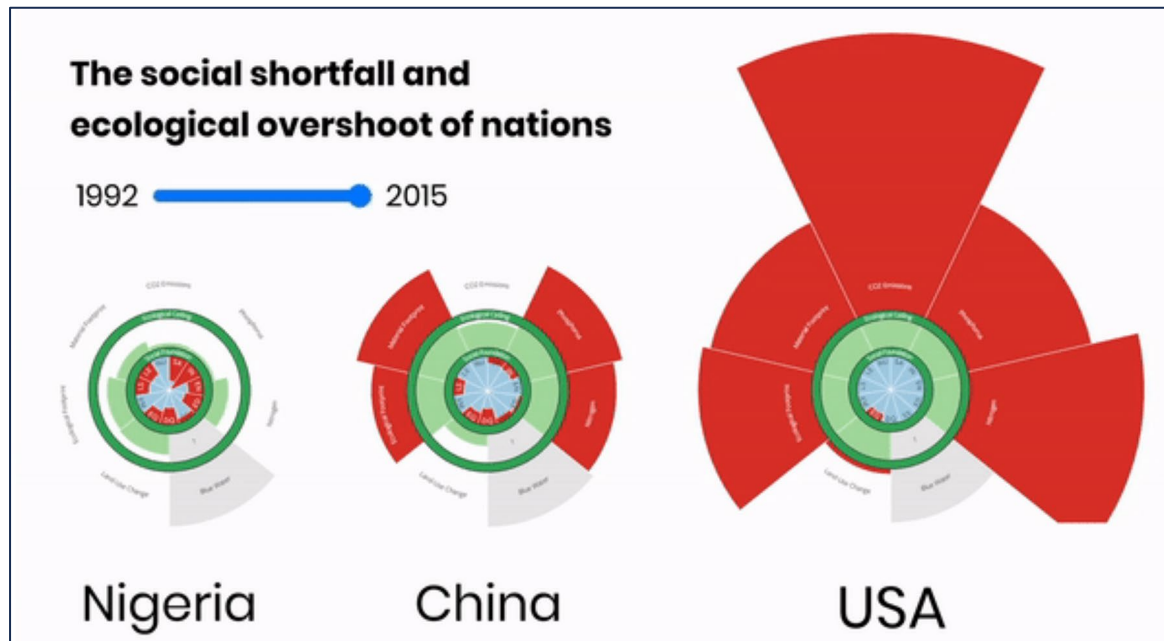
More than [1 million species](#) faces extinction due to human activities, at a rate estimated to be **10,000 times higher** than the natural extinction levels, with [associated annual costs](#) of **US\$10-25 trillion (US\$10-25,000,000,000,000!)** per year.

[Plastic pollution](#) now impacts all nine planetary boundaries, affecting the environment, health and human wellbeing. **19-23 million tonnes of plastic waste** are dumped into oceans, rivers and lakes **every year**. Plastics mimic hormones, and the resulting [feminisation of nature](#) disrupts reproductive systems and population dynamics.

Over [100 billion animals](#) are killed annually for meat and other products. **More than 90%** are estimated to live in factory farms which are known to cause unimaginable suffering and environmental degradation.

The practice of **animal testing** affects [47 million animals](#) annually. A recent example in the news: a study by the NIH on [motion sickness](#) involved researchers removing parts of kittens' brains, strapping them to hydraulic tables and rocking them 360 degrees.

Political leaders are failing us spectacularly. Those who are causing humanity and our planet's destruction are not fixing it – and most are not interested in doing so.



Credit: A Fanning, Sustainability, 2021

We live in an era of **ecological overshoot**. Humanity has already exceeded six of nine planetary boundaries, and not a single nation has achieved equitable development within these limits. Out of [195 countries](#), not one offers its people a “safe and just space” to live.

The [world's richest](#) has used up their fair share of the 2025 carbon budget in just 10 days.

**Large-scale transformations** are needed to [prevent a collapse](#) of civilisation. Yet Instead of working together to shape solutions, many leaders today, especially in the so-called ‘free world’ are corrupt, weak, divide societies, break promises and instigate conflicts. Citizens and subnational structures like [cities](#) are left to tackle such transformations on their own.

Some countries are preparing for a **nuclear war** in [ridiculous ways](#) rather than seeking diplomacy and peace, which are well within reach despite the overwhelming propaganda to the contrary. There is little understanding of what nuclear war will do to [people](#) and to the [planet](#).

The Global North, responsible for [around 92%](#) of excess cumulative CO<sub>2</sub> emissions beyond the planetary boundary of 350 ppm, climate change, owes the Global South approximately **US\$ 170 trillion (US\$170,000,000,000,000)**! However, contributions to initiatives like the UN Loss and Damage Fund has been negligible, exposing a profound lack of political will.

In 2024, the world spent [US\\$2.443 trillion](#) on **military forces**. US spending alone is a cool US\$811.6 billion, followed by China at US\$298 billion and India at US\$81 billion. Imagine what could have been achieved if this amount was allocated to doing good – addressing poverty, climate change and systemic inequality?

**Why it is important NOT to be angry**

These issues reflect simply what I personally find most troubling in our world today. My list is extensive because I refuse to live in ignorance, indifferent to the broader context that shapes our lives and the lives of all around us.

I am no longer angry as I once was, long ago, when I started to understand the world below the layers of lies and manipulation. Across global philosophies, anger is seen as a destructive, counterproductive emotion, undermining personal and collective wellbeing. African and Indigenous philosophies advocate for community and harmony, while Eastern philosophies like Buddhism and Confucianism emphasise individual mindfulness and self-control. Western traditions, from Aristotle's 'golden mean' to Stoicism, stress rational management and self-discipline. All these philosophies encourage controlling anger to foster harmony within oneself and in society.

Periods of instability and uncertainty, according to systems and complexity sciences, are moments of opportunity. They expose fault lines in current systems and create conditions for transformation.

**Therefore, now is the perfect time to care passionately and act boldly.** Each of us can make a difference, right where we are, firm in conviction, without anger. I am privileged to be working among professionals and others around the world, from both the Global South and North, who do exactly that.