

The West's Long Struggle *Against* Genocide Prevention: Obliteration and Complicity

DG Team

Dr Steinbock's highly topical new book *The Obliteration Doctrine* is about the genocide in Gaza, the West's complicity and long struggle *against* genocide prevention. In this Q&A with Dr Steinbock, we will focus on just a few themes of the his highly topical new book.

In the Bosnian genocide, mass atrocities took place in just a few days in July 1995. In the Rwandan genocide, all hell broke loose in the course of just three months in 1994. Gaza is in a class of its own. Starting in October 2023, Israel's genocidal atrocities in Gaza – reliant on arms transfers by US-led West – have been perpetrated 22 months, day after day, night after night, and they have happened in real time while “the world is watching.”

How is such indifference possible?

Question (Q): That is the central question addressed by your new book.

Dr Dan Steinbock (DS): Yes. In my previous book, [The Fall of Israel](#) (2024), I examined Israel's economic, political, military and regional path to the Gaza catastrophe. In [The Obliteration Doctrine](#), I examine the military doctrine and the US-led West's complicity behind Gaza's devastation and the West's long failure of genocide prevention – and try to show the way out.

Question (Q): The book is your response to indifference?

DS: Yes. After Auschwitz and Hiroshima, indifference to genocide is not possible. It violates everything I revere in the Jewish legacy of social justice. With genocide, silence is not an option.

Deliberate embrace of obliteration

In his pained foreword for *The Obliteration Doctrine*, Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad, the longest-serving prime minister of Malaysia, cautions that the word genocide may not be adequate to describe “the deliberate mass killing of the Gaza Palestinians by Israel.”

According to Ahmet Davutoğlu, former Prime Minister of Türkiye and prominent scholar of international relations, “*The Obliteration Doctrine* is a timely theoretical framework that warns against the emerging destructive warfare in the 21st century.”

The notion that the decimation of Gaza is likely to be a harbinger of much worse to come runs through the book. “The West did not flounder into genocide complicity, it plunged into it willfully,” as former finance minister of Greece Yanis Varoufakis puts it.

Professor William Schabas, perhaps the leading scholar of genocide and international law believes that, with the term Obliteration Doctrine, the book “adds a new term to the lexicon on genocide.”

These endorsements are seconded by Richard A. Falk, the former UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine; Alfred de Zayas, former UN and international expert on human rights and ethnic expulsions; Alex de Waal, an internationally renowned authority of famine at Tufts University; Edgar Morin, the French philosopher who has fought fascism since the Spanish Civil War; Curtis F.J. Doebbler, the highly-regarded international human rights lawyer; Scott Horton, Director of the Libertarian Institute and the Antiwar.com; and Dr Feroze Sidhwa, the trauma surgeon who has volunteered extensively in Gaza and elsewhere.

Gazan genocide and weaponized starvation

Q: When did the weaponization of starvation start in Gaza?

DS: Israel first weaponized famine in Gaza almost two decades ago. When

Hamas won the Palestinian election, Israel blockaded the Strip with the support of the US-led West. After the Hamas offensive of October 7 and Israel's ground assault in that fall, starvation deaths were seen already in early spring 2024. However, those images were largely suppressed in the West. The current media coverage is a belated effort at an absolution – but only *after* the genocide in and decimation of Gaza.

Q: *The Obliteration Doctrine* shows that famines have often served as a prelude to genocide and that starvation has occasionally been purposely weaponized.

DS: As the pioneering genocide scholar Raphael Lemkin stressed in 1945, murder is the most direct technique of genocide, but not the only one. Genocide may also “be the slow and scientific murder by mass starvation or the swift but no less scientific murder by mass extermination in gas chambers.” In the case of Gaza, cumulative evidence of mass starvation is abundant, overwhelming and impossible to deny.

Q: Among other things, you use data on daily calorie intake in a comparative historical analysis.

DS: It's a rough measure, but better than nothing. The calorie level in certain parts of Gaza has been less than the daily intake needed for survival, but also lower than the level observed amid Imperial Britain's human experiments in the late 19th century India, which caused the deaths of millions. In certain areas of Gaza, it has also been lower than in the German concentration camps in 1940 and at the end of World War II.

Accessorial liability: The Israeli case

Q: When did you first conclude that Israel was engaged in genocide in Gaza?

DS: Toward the end of 2023. That's when I began to use the term "genocidal atrocities." In spring 2024, when I concluded in *The Fall of Israel*, these atrocities already fulfilled most conditions of legal genocide, as defined by the UN Genocide Convention...

Q: ... which highlights the issue of complicity. *The Obliteration Doctrine* asks how complicity should be defined: *Who* is responsible for Gaza?

DS: In 1945-46, the Nuremberg Tribunal sentenced 22 of the most important surviving Nazi leaders for their mass atrocities. In 1946-48, the Tokyo Tribunal tried 28 important leaders of Imperial Japan for their mass atrocities. In spring 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) targeted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defense minister Yoav Gallant.

Q: What about the others?

DS: For now, they have been ignored. Behind Netanyahu and Gallant, there have been at least half a dozen other Israeli cabinet members, including the far-right Itamar Ben-Gvir, the self-proclaimed fascist Bezazel Smotrich, defense minister Israel Katz with his key role in the devastation of Gaza and its infrastructure, the far-right Amihai Eliyahu endorsing “nuking Gaza” and so on. All of them contributed directly to crimes against humanity, with some insisting on more destructive measures. And many were supported by Isaac Herzog, the Israeli president, and Ron Demer, Netanyahu's US-born advisor.

There is also another set of cabinet members that's less known internationally but they have played a vital role in the protracted genocidal atrocities. These include Miri Regev, the self-proclaimed “happy fascist” supporting torture in the notorious Sde Teiman detention camp; Galit-Distel Atbaryan tweeting for the “erasure of Gaza”; May Golan pushing openly for “another Nakba” to cleanse Palestinians from Gaza; and so on.

Finally, the Netanyahu cabinet has featured military leaders – the not-so-moderate Benny Gantz; and Gadi Eisenkot, the architect of the Obliteration Doctrine whose role was also vital in the aftermath of October 7.

Q: Are you saying that the ICC should charge them all?

DS: If the ICC is to deliver its promise, it should proceed according to the Articles 2 and 3 of the Genocide Convention, which should be enforced equally in genocidal atrocities – where ever they occur.

US-led West's complicity

Q: Does the accessorial liability also apply to the Biden administration and certain European leaders, due to the arms transfers and financing?

DS: According to the Genocide Convention, yes. Article 2 of the Convention defines genocide. Article 3 defines the crimes that can be punished under the convention, including “complicity in genocide.”

DS: In the US, accessorial liability would seem to start at the highest level of decisionmakers, including President Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin and a long list of their subordinates who failed to raise the alarm on the use of arms transfers to Israel in blatant disregard of U.S. foreign policy. But the broader net is more extensive. It features Vice President Kamala Harris touting continued military aid to Israel amid the atrocities; Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen enabling the ceaseless flow of arms in both Gaza and Ukraine at the same time; and so on.

Q: What about the Trump administration?

DS: With its open support for ethnic cleansing and direct participation in regional escalation, the Trump administration has managed to take the horrors of complicity to an entirely different, far more destructive level.

The Obliteration Doctrine examines these widening nets of accessorial liability and the efforts to have such leaders prosecuted in cases against the Israeli and US administrations, and certain European leaders.

Given free rein, the Obliteration Doctrine that subjected Gaza to devastation and genocide may serve as a prelude to new and far more destructive “final solutions” – conventional or nuclear holocausts of entire nations.

Gaza catastrophe as a policy choice

Q: In the second part of *The Obliteration Doctrine*, you examine the pioneering activities of Raphael Lemkin, the founder of the Genocide Convention, and genocide politics amid the Cold War. In particular, he highlights the inadequate enforcement of the Convention, the failure of genocide prevention and the long path to the Obliteration Doctrine. Was this catastrophe inevitable?

DS: Absolutely not.

Q: *Could* the Gaza catastrophe have been stopped?

DS: Of course. It could have been stopped in the past 22 months; and it could be halted today; overnight.

Q: How?

DS: Right after October 7, 2023, President Biden, during his visit in Israel, warned the Netanyahu cabinet about US “mistakes” following September 11, 2001. If the Biden administration had ceased the arms flow to Israel soon after the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) first initiated the massive bombardment of Gaza, the Strip would still be habitable. More than 65,000 Palestinians would still be alive. Up to 155,000 would not have been injured or maimed. And hundreds of thousands of *indirect* deaths could have been avoided – these deaths and debilitating health conditions will ensure that the nightmares of Gaza will prevail for decades to come.

Q: So, it all takes us back to the question why this all happened ...

DS: Or why it *was allowed* to happen... Passive tense blurs complicity and hides responsibility. There is nothing automatic about Gaza's obliteration. Every step has been a result of a choice. Every day the carnage prevails is another vote for genocide.

Q: Will the Netanyahu cabinet's looming "new Gaza war" change the equation?

DS: Yes, for the worse. It is set to compound the devastation, multiply deaths and accelerate the involuntary transfer of surviving Palestinians.

Compromise and complicity

Q: The Prologue of *The Obliteration Doctrine* outlines South Africa's genocide case against Israel and shows how the case was thoroughly diluted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) even before the onset of the judicial process. Was it censorship?

DS: It was exclusion, dilution and erosion of South Africa's original genocide case. A prelude for things to come.

Q: South Africa's case focuses on Israel, but you analyze others, too.

DS: Yes, starting with the *Palestine et al. v. Biden et al.* in the U.S. District Court. Eventually, it was rejected on the basis of the "political question doctrine," which goes back to a Supreme Court case in 1803. According to the doctrine, legal questions are deemed justiciable, while political questions are nonjusticiable.

Q: One could say that it is a convenient doctrine to courts that seek to insulate themselves from the real world.

DS: In general, yes. Except that, in the *Palestine* case, the judge did *not* reject the genocide argument, which opened the Pandora's Box for new legal initiatives in the future. Moreover, there have been other cases challenging political leaderships whose action or inaction led to the Gaza catastrophe, including *DAWN v. Biden et al.* in the ICC, *GIPRI v. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen*, *Nicaragua v. Germany*, and so on.

Q: Against the Biden cabinet and European political leaders?

DS: From the standpoint of international law, perpetrators are perpetrators, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Follow the money

Q: Who are the beneficiaries of the genocide in Gaza?

DS: The US accounts for two thirds for arms transfers to Israel, but Europe – Germany and Italy, the UK and many smaller players – supply the rest. Israel depends on US for arms and Europe for trade. In Gaza, Israel pulls the trigger, but the supply of bullets and arms, financing and intelligence comes from US-led West.

Q: Has war profiteering overridden the humanitarian catastrophe?

DS: In the post-9/11 wars world, the stock prices of the major US defense contractors have soared. With the Ukraine War and the Gaza catastrophe, these prices have multiplied. Worse, revolving doors prevail between the US administration, the Pentagon and the Big Defense, and their preferred think-tanks, such as the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) in the Biden era. These generate huge moral hazards and conflicts of interests. With the Trump cabinet and its oligarchic base, these linkages are even more prominent.

Q: You also look at the money chains.

DS: In the long view, ex-President Biden has a special place in the fund flows of the Israel lobby to U.S. senators since the early '90s. Coupling Biden's Senate data from 1990 and his presidential campaigns since 1988, his total amounts to \$11.2 million. He is followed by ex-Democrat Robert Menendez, convicted for corruption, and ex-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Q: ... based on data by?

DS: Reputable NGOs, OpenSecrets and bipartisan research organizations. Different messengers, but the same message.

Obliteration first tested *two decades ago*

Q: The Obliteration Doctrine has a long history, yet it differs from precedent military doctrines. How?

DS: In historical view, the Obliteration Doctrine combines lethal forms of warfare — particularly scorched earth destruction, collective punishment and civilian victimization — with massive and indiscriminate area bombing and counterinsurgency operations. What's new is the chilling mix of artificial intelligence (AI) in genocidal atrocities violating all humanitarian principles related to the conduct of war. What happened in Gaza won't stay in Gaza.

Q: You show that the Obliteration Doctrine was known well before it was deployed in Gaza, starting in late fall 2023.

DS: There's wide consensus on these matters among military analysts. Though building on ancient military tactics and modern bombardment canons, the Obliteration Doctrine was largely perfected nearly *two decades before October 7, 2023*. It was first piloted by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) in Dahiya, a predominantly Shia Muslim neighborhood in Beirut.

Q: No proactive intervention by the international community, despite the looming nightmare?

DS: There was no effective intervention in the subsequent time period by the international community. There was no major effort to preempt the impending execution of the lethal doctrine, even as its Israeli proponents pledged that they'd deploy it in their "next war."

Instead of prevention, recording genocides

Q: One of the most intriguing aspects of your book is the argument that, in contrast to Raphael Lemkin's wishes, the Genocide Convention has been deployed in a way that *enables* rather than *preempts* genocides.

DS: The Genocide Convention was shrewdly diluted and tailored by the Western powers to erode measures of genocide prevention. It is what broke Lemkin's heart as it undermined his quest for a comprehensive Genocide Convention.

Q: So, this all goes back to the early days of the Cold War...

DS: ... when Truman buried the Rooseveltian legacy of an effective United Nations. Instead, Lemkin's quest for genocide prevention was initially supported mainly by the developing countries of the Global South, not by the Western countries whose delegates sought to undermine it.

Q: Why?

DS: Motives differed, but colonial legacies were the common denominator. London had little interest in genocide investigations in the British Empire. Washington was concerned about international attention being directed to its racial segregation, the many lynchings of African Americans, and the genocidal massacres of Native Americans. Such concerns were also typical to other former colonial states, including France, the Netherlands, Canada and Sweden, and the defeated Germany, Italy and Japan.

Q: What about Lemkin's goal of preemption?

DS: Lemkin was originally focused on "preparatory attacks" and early warning signals, to *preempt* mass atrocities before they could take place. Yet, today instead of preempting new mass atrocities, the goal is to name, condemn and record genocides but only *after* they have taken place. So, it follows that a genocide is required to trigger a mechanism to prevent, belatedly.

Toward new "final solutions"

Q: You are uncomfortable with the term "Gaza war."

DS: Usually, war is a battle of armies or various non-state actors. In Gaza, up to

70 percent of the killed and wounded - more than 100,000 - are women and children who have nothing to do with hostilities. Many have been targeted by Israeli snipers. That's not war. That is mass butchery.

Q: What's the way out?

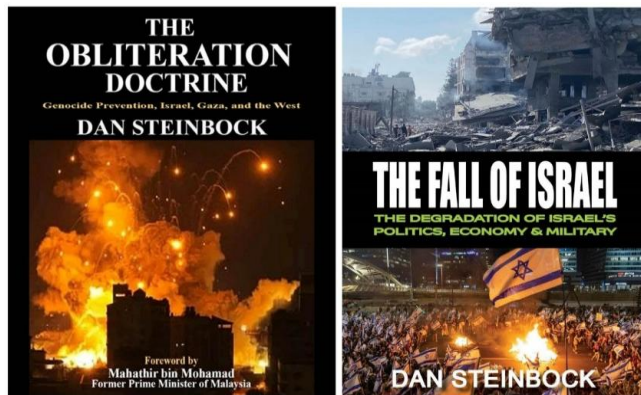
DS: Effective genocide prosecution will ensue only when Genocide Convention can deliver its ultimate purpose: To *prevent* and *punish* the *crime* of genocide.

Q: You call this the shift from “victors’ justice” to “victims’ justice.”

DS: Yes. But it won't be viable until and unless the countries of the Global South will have an adequate voice and representation in genocide prevention in particular and in global governance in general.

Q: ... and without such effective countervailing forces?

DS: ... the Obliteration Doctrine is setting an atrocious precedent and provides a brutal blueprint for far, far worse to come.



Dr Steinbock's new book, [*The Obliteration Doctrine: Genocide Prevention, Israel, Gaza and the West*](#) (Clarity Press) builds on his previous [*The Fall of Israel*](#). Dr. Dan Steinbock is an internationally recognized visionary of the multipolar world and the founder of Difference Group. He has served at the India, China and America Institute (US), Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (China) and the EU Center (Singapore). For more, see <https://www.differencegroup.net>