



The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices

Elazar Barkan

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The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices

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Exploring the global politics of restitution from 1945 Germany to present-day Bosnia.

How do nations and aggrieved parties, in the wake of heinous crimes and horrible injustices, make amends in a way that acknowledges wrongdoing and redefines future interactions? How does the growing practice of negotiating restitution restore a sense of morality and enhance prospects for world peace? Where has restitution worked and where has it not? *The Guilt of Nations* explores this increasingly important dynamic in world politics today. Beyond its moral implications, restitution reflects a critical shift in political and economic bargaining. While preserving individual rights, restitution also enables victimized groups to receive growing recognition *as groups*. Elazar Barkan traces instances of historical crimes, such as the incarceration of Japanese Americans in the United States during World War II, the sexual abuse of "comfort women" by Japanese soldiers, and the recent controversy over the financial dealings between Swiss banks and Nazi Germany. He argues that, as countries including the United States, Australia, and New Zealand come to recognize past injustices toward indigenous peoples within their borders, both governments and minority groups are compelled to redress the history of colonialism and redefine national identity. While restitution is not a panacea, this ever-spreading trend represents a new moral order in world politics.

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