

POLICY FORUM

POD

Policy Forum Pod
Preventing and punishing genocide
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Our regular podcasts are written for a broad audience of public policy professionals, and those interested in public policy throughout the region.

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Hosts: Julia Ahrens and Luke Glanville

Guests: Dr Melanie O'Brien, Law School, University of Western Australia (Dr O'Brien), Professor Ben Goldsmith, School of Politics and International Relations, ANU (Prof Goldsmith), Professor Robert Cribb, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, ANU (Prof Cribb)

Julia Ahrens: Welcome to Policy Forum Pod – the podcast for those who want to dig a little deeper into the policy challenges facing Australia and its region. I'm Julia Ahrens. Policy Forum is produced at the Crawford School, the region's leading graduate policy school. You want to find a little bit more about us, just check us out at crawford.anu.edu.au.

And today, I have the great pleasure to introduce Dr Luke Glanville as my special guest and co-host. Luke a Fellow in the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs here, at the ANU, and he's got expertise in international theory, the responsibility to protect and the history of international thought. He's also the author of the multi-award-winning book *Sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect: A new history* and co-editor of the journal *Global Responsibility to Protect*. Welcome, Luke.

Luke Glanville: Thanks, Julia.

Julia Ahrens: Luke, you're a teacher and you teach the course, The Evolution of the International System, at the Coral Bell School. I've got a question for you: what is the one thing that you teach your students that they're constantly surprised by?

Luke Glanville: I suppose one thing that often surprises them is just how so many of the debates and dilemmas that we wrestle with today have such long and rich histories, so even the topic of today's podcast – genocide, international efforts to protect people from genocide and mass atrocities – is often cast as this post-Cold War phenomena, whereas we find out today that the Genocide Convention itself is 70 years old, and even 300 years earlier than that we have the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, where states and other international actors were negotiating and subsequently implementing principles of intervention to protect vulnerable people – particularly in that instance religious minorities – from persecution.

Julia Ahrens: So, yes, what you are actually saying is that these issues have been around for such a long time – for hundreds of years, and that relates very much to what we want to discuss today, because today on the Pod we are going to take a bit of a look at the United Nations convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide.

70 years ago, following the mass atrocities during the Second World War, global leaders came together, and they designed a contract that they hoped would help them achieve a common goal ending genocide once and for all. Today, 149 states have with ratified or exceeded to the UN Convention and they promised that they'll do whatever possible to prevent further genocides, and yet the world has seen so many more mass-killings in the past 70 years: in Rwanda, the Congo and Indonesia, to name only a few – some of which have never been recognised as genocides under the Convention.

Even as we speak right now, the Rohingya crisis is unfolding in Myanmar, and the international community is bearing witness to the killing of thousands of people and the displacement of

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millions of people across the border, to Bangladesh. These atrocities committed by Myanmar's military against the Rohingya people are adding fuel to this debate, which we are going to look at today about how such mass atrocities can be prevented and those who committed them can be brought to justice. Looking back at the past 70 years, how effective has the UN Convention been in preventing and punishing genocide and how can we prevent or even, indeed, predict genocides in the future?

Luke Glanville: To discuss these difficult and pressing questions, we've got a great line-up of guests with us today. Dr Melanie O'Brien has come all the way from Perth and this week she's spoken at the National Museum here, in Canberra, about the 70th anniversary of the Genocide Convention. Melanie is a Senior lecturer at the Law School at the University of Western Australia. She specialises in international criminal law, human rights law, peace keeping, and feminist legal theory. Melanie is also the Vice President of the International Association of Genocide Studies. Welcome, Melanie.

Dr O'Brien: Thanks, Luke. It's great to be back east again.

Luke Glanville: Professor Ben Goldsmith. He is a Professor of the School of Politics and International Relations here, at the ANU. His areas of research are international relations, comparative foreign policy and atrocity forecasting. Welcome, Ben.

Prof Goldsmith: Thanks, Luke.

Luke Glanville: And Professor Robert Cribb. He's Professor at the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, at the ANU. His research looks at Indonesia and Southeast Asia more broadly, with a focus on mass violence and crime, national identity, environmental politics, and historical geography. Welcome, Robert.

Prof Cribb: Thank you.

Julia Ahrens: And just a quick reminder to all of our listeners who want to get in touch with us. You can find us on Facebook, where we are [asiapacificpolicysociety](#), on Twitter, where we are [APPSPolicyForum](#), or you can do it the old-fashioned way and shoot us an email at podcast@policyforum.net. I'd also recommend to everyone to stick around after the main interview, because we'll be discussing some of your comments and questions.

Let's dive right into the issue. Given the tremendous scope of mass atrocities all around the globe, there are many questions raised about how we actually define genocide. Let's try and get everyone on the same page, Melanie. When we talk about genocide, what do we actually mean?

Dr O'Brien: The definition of genocide is found in Article 2 of the Genocide Convention and this has become the definitive definition of genocide, because it's also the definition that's been taken

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up by all the international criminal court and tribunal statutes since then, without any amendments made to that definition. It continues to be definitive as we consider what is genocide today.

And so, Article 2 looks at genocide as five enumerated acts that are committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part a group, and those groups are national, ethnical, racial or religious groups. The five enumerated acts are killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, imposing conditions of life designed to physically destroy the group, transferring children of one group to another, and imposing measures designed to prohibit births from that group.

That's the definition of genocide that we find today in not only the Genocide Convention but in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the statutes of other criminal courts, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda or for the former Yugoslavia. Now, that's the limited definition within the Convention and it certainly does have its limitations.

Julia Ahrens: Robert, why are governments and international bodies – or have they been – so hesitant in the past to label mass atrocities as genocide, maybe also referring to what Melanie just said?

Prof Cribb: Well, they've been hesitant especially because if something is labelled genocide then there is an obligation to take action, but there is also a problem that because the Genocide Convention was so strong, so imposing in its insistence that genocide should be ended, it's emerged as a crime of crimes and that, in turn, has exposed some of the definitional problems that arose from the Genocide Convention.

So, in the social sciences, we look at that definition and think it doesn't quite work because it could be extended in a number of different directions. For instance, many people – and I mean this particular group – would like to include the mass murder of political victims in the category of genocide, and the Genocide Convention refers to religious groups. Religious groups and political groups are not necessarily so different, and so that feels like an anomaly.

Then, there are other people who argue that the Genocide Convention should – or at least the definition of genocide – should be extended to include the extermination of indigenous peoples, which often happened over a long period of time, not necessarily primarily as a result of mass killing but, nonetheless, terribly destructive to those societies.

Then, there's also a group that argues that mass killing in war ought to be regarded as genocide, because large numbers of civilians are killed simply as bystander victims of military action, particularly strategic bombing.

Julia Ahrens: Ben, I'd like to throw this one at you: what role does understanding the hallmarks of what genocide is and how we define genocide actually play in prevention attempts?

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Prof Goldsmith: I think it's really important to be clear about what we mean by genocide, but the problem is, as has already been noted, that there is great disagreement from a practical perspective in the social sciences. In a sense, it may be useful to move beyond or not consider use of the term 'genocide' as the primary indicator of mass atrocities, because it can be quite distracting because, as it was just mentioned, it's portrayed as the crime of crimes that it compels states or others to act.

So, I think, in a sense the labelling event genocide can serve as somewhat of a distraction. It's really a sticky problem and it becomes a political problem, but in the social sciences, I think, it's useful to separate out the different kinds of mass atrocities. Separating children from their parents and moving them to another group is a completely different kind of action than killing large numbers of people violently in a short period of time, and so prevention of those two very different acts, I think, requires different definitions in the practical sense.

Luke Glanville: It might be good to explore the Genocide Convention in a little bit more detail. Mel, the United Nations adopted the Convention 70 years ago to send out a clear message of 'never again' after the Holocaust and other atrocities of the Second World War, so what exactly did states, such as Australia, actually sign up for? What did they undertake to do under the Convention?

Dr O'Brien: Well, it's great that Australia was actually one of the first countries to ratify the Genocide Convention and a lot of our neighbours actually haven't in the Asia Pacific, so I would like to see Australia take a leading role in encouraging our neighbours to ratify it, as well.

When a state ratifies the Genocide Convention, it obviously imposes obligations on those states and, first and foremost, we see – and it comes from the title of the Convention – states are obligated to prevent and punish the crime of genocide, but within the Convention itself it does provide a little bit more detail as to those obligations.

States are obligated to actually prosecute *génocidaire* – those people who commit genocide. In doing so, what they also include in the Genocide Convention is the obligation to adopt effective legislation. For example, if Australia doesn't actually have a law that prohibits genocide, then we cannot actually prosecute anyone for that.

This is, obviously, a really important step that states have to do – is make sure in their own domestic criminal law that they have a provision within that, that says it is illegal to commit genocide.

Now, they also have an obligation related to extradition for genocide so, for example, if another country asks Australia to extradite someone who is within Australian territory who is alleged to

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have committed genocide, then Australia must do that, provided that the legal parameters surrounding extradition are also met.

Now, something really interesting, though, is that the Convention obligates states to prevent and punish genocide, but there is no obligation not to commit genocide in the Convention, and this wasn't actually addressed until quite recently, in the International Court of Justice, in the cases that Bosnia and Croatia brought against Serbia.

In that, the Court actually looked at this issue and what the Court decided was that this obligation to prevent also includes an obligation not to commit genocide because, essentially, the Court said, "Well, it defeats the entire purpose of this Convention if we say that you have to prevent it and you have to punish it, but you're still allowed to commit it," so even though that's not in the Convention, it has still been interpreted as being part of the Convention by the International Court of Justice.

Luke Glanville: Could I ask a follow-up question to that? It seems to me, when you're talking about, say, Australia's obligations as primarily Australia's obligations with respect to genocide that occurs within Australia, does Australia have any obligations under the Convention to respond to genocides occurring elsewhere?

Dr O'Brien: They absolutely do and, again, I'm going to refer to the International Court of Justice cases. What they found in these cases was that genocide was committed in Srebrenica in Bosnia, but they found that the government in Belgrade at the time was not responsible for it. However, they did find that the government was responsible for not preventing that genocide, because they said it was foreseeable that there could be genocide committed in Srebrenica, and so therefore they should have done something to prevent it. This was the crystallisation of this duty to take action to prevent a genocide outside your own territory.

Now, that's not an absolute obligation. Obviously, you need to have the means to do it and you need to actually be able to make a difference. So, if a state is not going to make any difference, then there really is no obligation. Obviously, there is no need to be able to predict with certainty that the state's actions will prevent genocide, because nobody can really do that. We cannot say with certainty, "If you do X, genocide will be stopped," but they just have to, if they have the means, they do have to take action.

Luke Glanville: Could I ask one more follow-up question, just building off what both Robert and Ben were saying about the significance of the label 'genocide'? There is obligation to prevent genocide. Is there a comparable obligation to prevent, say, crimes against humanity, as a matter of law, or even is there a political significance perhaps to label genocide that doesn't obtain when it comes to matters of crimes against humanity?

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Dr O'Brien: It's a great question, and the answer is 'no', because we have a Genocide Convention and, while it has its failures, this is a success of it: that it does obligate states to act when genocide is taking place, but we do not have a crimes-against-humanity convention. There are people who are working towards drafting one and, eventually, putting it forward in the United Nations, but at the moment we do not have one. And so, therefore, there is no obligation when it comes to preventing crimes against humanity.

There has also been no general agreement in law whether or not the prohibition of crimes against humanity is what we call customary law, meaning that it would apply to all countries in the world, regardless of whether they are party to a convention or not. This is quite problematic.

The other area of international crimes is, obviously, war crimes, and those are regulated under the Geneva conventions and the additional protocols to the Geneva conventions, so there are some obligations under that to take action with regards to war crimes within the international humanitarian law system.

Luke Glanville: Ben, I wondered if I could ask you: has the Convention made a tangible difference in state behaviour, and how would we know, and what might evidence for that look like?

Prof Goldsmith: That's a great question and, unfortunately, I don't have a great answer for it. I would suspect that it has made a difference in curbing state behaviour to some extent, but of course these events continue to happen, whether they meet a particular threshold for genocide or just below it. Large numbers of people continue to be killed by their governments or by non-state actors.

The difficulty that we face in my project, which tries to build quantitative models to understand and predict genocide, it's very hard to identify cases where genocide would have happened, but it was prevented. The dog that didn't bark is a huge problem with these sorts of overall very rare event. They continue to happen, but they are exceeding the rare, if you think that in every country and every year something might happen, and it happens less than once a year, on average, over the course of the--; since the end of the World War II.

Julia Ahrens: Now that we've gained a bit of an insight into the UN Convention, you've mentioned some really, really interesting points, I'd like to discuss a few notable case studies with you and would like to start with Indonesia.

In 1965, the Indonesian military under Major General Suharto office propaganda campaign against the Indonesia Communist Party, and they link them with the killing of six military generals by a militant group, called The Thirtieth of September Movement. The military successfully constructed this whole, you could say, conspiracy, which caused a wave of mass

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violence against alleged leftists, members of the Indonesia Communist Party and also ethnic Chinese, killing millions.

Robert, I'd like to know: do you think it was fair that these massacres in Indonesia were never recognised as a genocide under the UN Convention?

Prof Cribb: Well, I think it's a problem of the definition in the UN Convention. I don't think that the problem singles out Indonesia. There are several cases of mass political killings in Asia in the 20th century: in Indonesia, in Cambodia, in China, in the Soviet Union – in the Asia part of the Soviet Union. It's a problem of definition and it's a problem that arises because political groups were not recognised as being one of the categories against which genocide could be committed.

The killings in Indonesia were conducted partly by the military, partly by civilian militias that were encouraged, and trained, and authorised by the military. There were also some cases of independent militias going out and conducting their own killings. It's actually not the case that the Chinese were significantly targeted. In fact, the proportion of the Chinese population that died in those killings was smaller than the proportion of non-Chinese Indonesians who died, so there is a bit of a myth that Chinese were targeted.

This was really a political genocide and the people who were targeted were those who were connected with the Indonesia Communist Party. It was actually done really rather efficiently, except we have to say that the army's definition of who is a communist was very, very broad. You could be rather soft-left and still caught up in the net, but we don't have very much reliable evidence of people being targeted for reasons other than the presumption that they were communist.

Luke Glanville: How did the international community respond to these atrocities, and is there any evidence that they looked at these atrocities through the lens of the Genocide Convention?

Prof Cribb: No one looked at those killings through the lens of the Genocide Convention, partly because of the definition, but also because this was the height of the Cold War and the West were sometimes being accused of conniving with the Indonesian military and carrying out the killings. My own view is that that goes a bit far, but they were indifferent. We look at official reports, we look at public comments by leaders in the West, and they're supremely indifferent to the fact that hundreds of thousands of people are being killed. It's dismissed as something that happens in Asia, life is cheap there, who cares.

Julia Ahrens: Perhaps a question to all of you. One notable exclusion from the UN Convention are political groups – how could they be included? Perhaps starting with you, Robert?

Prof Cribb: The UN definition includes the mass killing of national groups and, in the case of many mass-political killings, the groups that are targeted in fact represent a national idea. In the

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case of Indonesia, Indonesia's national identity was torn between an Islamic identity, a communist identity and a kind of liberal, developmentalist identity.

When communists were killed, they weren't just being killed as political opponents, but they were being killed as the representatives of an idea of Indonesia and, on those grounds, it might actually be reasonable to say that those killings were covered by the Genocide Convention, but that's an argument that we are having at the moment – some people will agree, some people don't.

Prof Goldsmith: The distinction between ethnic or identity groups and political groups, I think, is a really important one and one that comes out of the Convention and the legal definition of genocide, and it's one that in the social scientific study of these kinds of atrocities has caused a lot of consternation. I think the general consensus – at least in my field in political science, building on a work of a woman, Barbara Harff – is that what's called 'politicide' is a type of crime that is very similar to, if not often inseparable from, the type of crime that we call genocide.

If you think of the Cambodian genocide, it was the killing of political opponents and if you think of mass-killings in general, it's hard to argue that they are not political in some way, even if the group that's targeted is ethnic, so it's often a minority group and a majority group fighting for political control, as in Rwanda, for example.

From my perspective of doing empirical studies and trying to forecast these events, the distinction is a distinction without a difference and one that is not very meaningful empirically, but obviously legally and in terms of how you may characterise the groups can be important. I think that there is this distinction that has come from international law and the originally conception of the idea that hasn't been so helpful in prevention, for example.

Dr O'Brien: Absolutely, and Ben is right. When we're talking about the law, there does have to be a distinction, but I think that lawyers could get a little bit more creative in the way they perceive it. I refer back to what Robert was just talking about, about this categorisation of what happened in Indonesia, and it is the same in Cambodia, where there was a perception that they were targeting political opponents, but my belief is that it wasn't truly political, because they weren't just targeting people who were against Communism.

They even ended up killing people who were in their closest circle, who were part of the top echelon of the Khmer Rouge. It was really just about power. It wasn't truly about getting rid of people who were against Communism, so my belief is that, ultimately, it's not actually political. It is an intent to destroy, at least in part, that national group, and in Cambodia the Khmer people.

Prof Cribb: When the Genocide Convention was signed, most people thought if ethnic groups as something eternal. They imagined that ethnic groups had their roots going back for hundreds or

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thousands of years and that they were largely unchangeable, so if you exterminate an ethnic group it was like a species going extinct, being made extinct. It was destruction of something that was really precious to human kind.

What we understand now is that ethnic identity is much more malleable and fluid, so that ethnic identities can develop quite quickly, they can disappear, and they can often have quite a strong political connotation. One of the strongest examples of that is in the United States, where the term un-American is very much a political term, so there is an ethnic national term, which is used in a purely political way.

So, the distinction between an ethnic group and a political group is nowhere near as sharp in terms of our analysis now as it used to be in 1948.

Luke Glanville: I'd like now to discuss a more recent example of genocide. In 2016, the Burmese military and state began to crack down on the Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state, raping and killing thousands, forcing more than half a million to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. A UN report has since labelled the crimes against the Rohingya as genocide and stated that military leaders should face charges.

Ben, drawing on your genocide forecasting expertise, should the world have seen this coming and could it have been prevented?

Prof Goldsmith: The answer to both those questions is, yes. We certainly could have seen it coming and not to spruik our forecasting project too much, but in our forecasting project we had Myanmar on the list for the period up to 2015 as a place, one of the countries where genocide was most likely to occur. It was in the top 20 of our list for the current period, when it actually did happen, so this is a country at risk, with a lot of well-known risks factors and the attitudes towards the Rohingya minority are long-standing in Myanmar, and the activism of the Buddhist monks against the group was also well-known and well-reported.

Prevention is difficult, but certainly there are a lot of levers of pressure that can be brought on countries: the standard levers of economic sanctions, threats of military action and intervention, and all the things that might go along with the responsibility to protect. It would be nice if these things could be prevented without threats of force, but I think given the nature of genocide areas and the nature of the crimes, force is sometimes the only language, or the threat of force the only language that's actually understood.

Luke Glanville: Mel, you're nodding along. Tell us a little bit about whether you think there is any chance of Myanmar's military leaders being prosecuted for the crime of genocide here.

Dr O'Brien: Yes, great question. I just want to follow on from Ben, whom I absolutely agreed with a hundred percent. In the genocide scholar community, we talk about genocide as a process.

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It's not an event. It's a process, and there are many steps that take place before a killing actually occurs that are part of it.

With regard to Rohingya in Myanmar, this has been going on for decades, so it was definitely foreseeable. The first violence against the Rohingya, which caused 200,000 of them to flee Myanmar, was back in 1978. There was another round in 1991, where a quarter of a million of them fled, so this is nothing new. We cannot say that this took us by surprise.

For all these decades the Rohingya have been restricted in their movement. They've been denied citizenship. They've been denied access to education. They've been denied access to health care. They've had their crops burned, their villages burned. This has been going on for a very long time and it was very obvious what was coming.

In terms of accountability, this is a really tough issue and it's something that I've been thinking a lot about recently. In thinking about, we're talking about the 70s anniversary of the Genocide Convention. Myanmar is a state party. They've become a state party in the 1950s, and so they can be held accountable under the Genocide Convention.

However, it's not that easy. Because the Genocide Convention is a treaty, that means that countries can take action against other countries through the International Court of Justice, and that is specifically provided for in the Genocide Convention. However, even though going to the International Court of Justice is a legal proceeding, it's not that straightforward, because we're talking about states – we're talking about state-level decisions. There are political considerations that states have to make before they take another state to court before the ICJ.

In this case, we're looking at a small country that has a very big and powerful neighbour, China, that has very significant interest in Myanmar through its Belt and Road Initiative, through pipelines going through Myanmar, through a desire for access to water.

Any country that may be thinking about taking Myanmar as a state to court at the ICJ, will be thinking about the political ramifications - maybe their trade ramifications, but generally ramifications on their relationship with China, so it's not an easy decision for any state to make in this regard. Particularly thinking about Australia, we're a party but we're also very close to China and we have big ties with China, so that would be a consideration.

In thinking about individual criminal responsibility, this is obviously a really difficult challenge. First and foremost, we would want them to be tried in Myanmar, under Myanmar law, but of course the government are the ones who are perpetrating these atrocities, so that's not going to happen.

The next point you look at is, well, what can we do with the International Criminal Court, however, unsurprisingly, Myanmar is not a state party to the Rome Statute of International

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Criminal Court, so therefore the International Criminal Court does not have jurisdiction over any crimes committed within the territory of Myanmar.

What the ICC has done is actually really creative and really amazing, and the Office of the Prosecutor has said, "We are going to have a look a crime that starts in Myanmar but finishes in Bangladesh," because Bangladesh is a state party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

And so, this is where we're at with the ICC. It's looking at one crime – it's not genocide, it's a crime against humanity, however it's still the first step, and it's really quite amazing. The Court has agreed that the Prosecutor can go forward and investigate this crime that was completed by crossing the border into Bangladesh.

I actually think that they can take that further. I think that they can argue, because genocide is a process, not an event, that it's not only taking place in Rakhine state where people are being killed, but part of the process is that the Burmese perpetrators know that the Rohingya are going to flee into Bangladesh to the camps in Cox's Bazar, where there are now approximately 1.2 million people. They know the conditions in those camps are horrific. There isn't enough health care for everyone. There isn't enough food for everyone, so people are going to be dying in those camps. People are not going to be able to reproduce, because they are simply too ill to do so.

This is part of the process. Those authorities know that the process continues once they cross the border. I think there is room for the ICC Prosecutor to get even more creative here.

Prof Cribb: A couple of quick points to follow on from Mel's comments. I completely agree that there is a huge political element here, in prosecution. One of the things that I think is really important is the ability to collect evidence, which can play a very big role in the political process.

It's one thing to argue that something didn't happen or to pick another ally of China and North Korea when the evidence is very hard to put together that the crimes have been committed, but in the case of Myanmar, there is an abundance of evidence, because experts have been studying this since, as Mel has noted, it was well known but also because it was instigated or mobilised partly in social media on Facebook.

There were posts from the military that were very clear about what was going on, so one of our arguments in our creating a risk list that actually makes predictions into the future is that those countries can be monitored and evidence can be collected with special vigilance for the countries most at risk, which could then sway the political process for punishment, for prevention, for prosecution afterwards.

Also, I want to jump in on Mel's point about China. I think that, with China's rising power, countries and leader that would choose genocide or crimes against humanity see that they have

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a potential new protector. I mean, these are policies that are part of China's history – this kind of behaviour towards their population [?? 0:33:06] things that China does not want to have raised about its own behaviour.

I mean, its treatment of the weaker minority currently is bumping up against its crimes against humanity behaviour and I think they will be increasingly willing to protect and provide trading partners and alliance to countries that choose this kind of behaviour. I think the rise of China is bad news for the prevention of genocide.

Julia Ahrens: Ben, can I actually draw a bit on your research that you have done on predicting genocides. When, do you think, genocide is most likely to happen next?

Prof Goldsmith: Well, our list has a country on the top of the risk-list South Sudan. We have a list of 15 countries that are most at risk: Sudan, South Sudan, and a number of others are high on the list. One thing I would notice, prediction is a difficult game and we assess our accuracy and I know that our accuracy can be improved, so I don't want to talk too much about particular countries because there is a probability that it will happen.

What I will say: from the data we've collected – we've actually collected a new dataset on genocide going from 1946 to 2017, and other related crimes that we call target mass-killing, and one pattern that we've noticed over time, which I think is a bit hopeful actually, is that the number of events that we would call a targeted mass-killing event that begin has not greatly declined over the period from the end of World War II, but the percentage of those that escalate to the highest levels of mass-killing has dropped significantly.

Going back to Luke's earlier question about has the Genocide Convention or other efforts for responsibility to protect, have those been effective, I think there is some empirical evidence that something is preventing these cases from escalating to the highest levels of killing that we've seen in the past. There is some moderate good news.

Luke Glanville: Maybe just a final question for all of you, perhaps beginning with Robert. If you could give one recommendation to the international community on how to prevent future genocides, what would it be?

Prof Cribb: I think many genocides are actually unexpected, that they are at least triggered by unexpected events, and that they result from sudden outbursts of indignation and anger, so there is actually a lot of intervention that could be done to defuse crisis right at the moment that they happen.

We live in a world where there is *[sic.]* all sorts of social conflict. We can find social conflict everywhere, so we can find the raw materials for genocide in many, many countries, but if we

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can work out the immediate triggers and then work out ways of not pulling those triggers, then we have some chance of diminishing the scale of genocide.

Luke Glanville: How about you, Ben?

Prof Goldsmith: I guess my main recommendation for how to prevent future genocides is to more closely monitor the countries that we think are at greatest risk today, and that's something that can be done by non-governmental groups – it can be done with satellites, it can be done through open-source news reporting, but I think it's crucial that the governments that are really concerned about prevention of genocide declare they are. Even the US Government still formally says that the prevention of genocide is a national security interest of the United States.

Governments, including Australia, with their intelligence tools can do a lot of monitoring and collection of evidence and prevention through diplomacy, as well, informing potential genocide areas of the potential consequences if they go ahead with their policies they're contemplating and signalling that it's a real interest of countries that are concerned.

I think there is a lot more that can be done based on what we know and what is obvious but doesn't often rise to the top of the diplomatic or political priorities.

Luke Glanville: And Mel?

Dr O'Brien: I'm going to go a bit grass-roots and my answer is education. I don't just mean at tertiary level. I mean for young people, at primary and high school level, and not just teaching about key genocides that the Holocaust in high school, but also teaching more fundamental concepts about inclusion and tolerance, and teaching young people about hate speech and what it does, because these kind of things started at grass-roots level, where you have leadership who encourages the majority to hate a minority group. That's what fosters genocide.

And so, if we start at educational level, then maybe we get these young people coming through and saying, "Hang on, that's really not okay what you're saying about that minority group," and that we also get young people who aren't bothered by someone who is a little bit different in some way, who maybe has a different religion or a different skin colour, that they're just humans like we all are. And so, I think starting with that is a really good way to help us prevent genocide.

Luke Glanville: Thanks. A very sobering topic, but very hopeful thoughts there. This has given us so much to think about. Robert, thanks particularly for your wonderful insights on the Indonesian atrocities in the '60s. Mel, thanks for you very useful thoughts on Myanmar and the Rohingya today. Ben, it's great to hear about your research on genocide forecasting and prediction. Thank you all for speaking to us today.

Prof Cribb: Thank you.

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Prof Goldsmith: Thank you.

Dr O'Brien: Thank you for having us.

Julia Ahrens: And to our listeners, don't go anywhere, because Luke and I will be back after this and we'll discuss some comments and questions.

[0:38:56-0:38:58]

Thank you so much, again, Melanie O'Brien, Robert Cribb and Ben Goldsmith. I have to say I'm quite mind-blown by this absolutely deep and thoughtful conversation that we just had.

We had some really passionate comments here and I have to say I'm really a big fan of what Melanie said in the end that this grass-root approach to actually start where we educate our children about hate speech particularly in a time of social media where everyone can just say whatever they think and they often don't think what that actually does to the person they are directing it at, so I think she made a very good point on how that also plays into the prevention of genocide.

Luke, what's your view? What is your main takeaway?

Luke Glanville: Those were wonderful thoughts from all of them, I thought. I completely agree with you. I thought Melanie's conclusion was quite inspiring and alerts us to some of the possibilities for overcoming this hideous problem, this scourge of genocide, but also, as they talked to the legal aspects and also the political aspects right now with respect to Myanmar, you really get a horrific sense of the limits of what is possible in this particular political climate that we have.

Julia Ahrens: You've heard what Luke and I think about this very heart-hitting discussion tonight, but we would love to hear your thoughts – our listeners' thoughts – on this topic. Please, give us your feedback and your comments, because each week at the end of the podcast we answer some of these questions and respond to what you, guys, have sent to us.

I'd like to dive straight into our first comment that is on the article *Saudi Arabia's Growing Sporting Influence* by Simon Chadwick and Paul Widdop. Simon and Paul take a look at Saudi Arabia's increasing investment in corporate sports and whether it's just a case of playing catch-up with Qatari neighbours or an attempt to spot [?? 0:40:53] reputation.

We've got a comment here from Andrei on Twitter. He writes "Excellent article. Having discussed the matter with sports experts in the region last week, I can say this is pretty much in with what's going on in Saudi." Thank you, Andrei, for that comment. What do you think, Luke?

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Luke Glanville: Yes, I think it's very interesting to think through and see what happens with this question of Saudi Arabia's reputation. It would be interesting to see if Saudi reputation survives the murder of the US based journalist, Khashoggi, and whether it survives the horrific crimes against humanity that the Saudi-led coalition is committing in the bombing campaign in Yemen.

I also think it's quite noteworthy to think about how much attention this murder of Khashoggi is getting and how much of a cost Saudi Arabia is paying in terms of its reputation, in contrast to the relative pulsative attention being given to Yemen and the crimes being committed by the Saudi and at least partial responsibility for the crisis there that the UN called the world's worst humanitarian crisis: 14 million people, UNHCR see an eminent risk of starvation. Most of those are children, so it will be interesting and important to see how this plays out.

Julia Ahrens: Yes, and I think, next to what you just said, and I'm really inclined to agree with you that there is some kind of attempt to brush over certain political issues, that there is also the sports aspect to it. With the World Cup coming up in 2020 in Qatar, and Qatar really ramping up its sports game for Saudi Arabia, it's also important to follow suit and also demonstrate that they can be a strong sports nation.

I'd like to move on to the next comment, which is on quite a controversial article. It's got a very strong response on social media. We actually got multiple comments on this one. It's the *Russia and Ukraine's Australian Proxy War* by Elizabeth Buchanan. In this piece, she writes that "Russia is a rising power in the Asia-Pacific region, but a lack of country specific expertise in Australia's universities is making it hard to hear counter-narratives."

We've got so many brilliant comments on this and we're just giving you snapshot of what we have. This one is also a snapshot of a much longer comment on Policy Forum by Jon Richardson, so I'd recommend to everyone to actually jump in and have a look at what he's writing, because he is making arguments both in favour and against what Elizabeth is arguing.

He says, "Otherwise I would agree with the num of your argument that Australia isn't as well equipped with Russia-expertise as it was in the Cold War and it would be nice if it could be strengthened again as Russian influence becomes more salient globally. But also worth being aware that our expertise was never that great at a time when Russia's importance was much higher than today."

We've got another comment, by Olga [0:43:38], on Twitter, and she writes, "Good insight. Expanding opportunities for Russia specialists in Australian universities – maybe?" and one more comment that said that it was time for ANU to have a new Russia centre. Thank you so much for your comments, Jon and Olga.

Luke, I'd like to know from you: do we really not have enough Russia expertise in Australia?

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Luke Glanville: Well, yes, Russia is certainly flexing its muscles at the moment. Just this week we've seen Russia's captured three Ukrainian navy vessels and their crew. Certainly, Russia is increasing aggressiveness, demands attention. ANU has a small number of great Russian analysts. I personally don't think Russia's renewed assertiveness demands a new Russia-focus centre at ANU. We don't have a US Centre or an India Centre, and they would see to me to be more central to Australia's concerns, but yes, certainly, Russian expertise across a range of disciplines and a range of themes is always a good thing.

Julia Ahrens: Now, I'd like to take a look at the last comment for today and hear your thoughts on that, of course, Luke. *Australia can't forget Micronesia* is a piece by Anthony Bergin, and he writes that "Australia's decision to open new diplomatic posts in Palau and the Marshall Islands should be the first of many steps in an increased diplomatic footprint in Micronesia." He also argues that "it will always make good strategic sense for Australia to focus our South Pacific efforts on Melanesia. But Micronesia's strategic significance is rising" and Australia should be working with its North Pacific neighbours.

We've got a brilliant comment here from Andrew, on Twitter, and he writes, "The people of Palau are much happier, I can assure you, now that they don't have seven charter flights a week landing." Thank you for that comment, Andrew.

Luke, at the Coral Bell School here, at the ANU, there is a lot of expertise focused on the Pacific, and I'm quite sure your colleagues will be interested in this. What do you think, is Australia paying enough attention to the Pacific Islands?

Luke Glanville: Yes, certainly Australia is paying some attention. I suppose reflecting on Bergin's piece – and this is no reflection on the merit of his argument, but I worry that tendency to couch Australia's relations with its neighbours in the Pacific in terms of our strategic interests, in terms of what we can get from it in terms of security or economics.

We always have this habit, perhaps even an obsession, of thinking about our relations and our engagement with our neighbours in terms of our national interests. In many cases, these are vulnerable neighbours who really need and value our assistance and aid and, to be honest, I find it a little bit revolting sometimes how we just have this felt need to always think of how we should engage with them in terms of what we can get out of it.

Julia Ahrens: To bring a bit of a devil's advocate question in here, is it realistic to argue that good will should always trump strategic interests?

Luke Glanville: Yes, I think it's realistic. I don't think it's realistic to think that Australia is going to change how it approaches its foreign policy in this region any time soon, but I don't think there is anything stopping us. It's human – it's only human to create these foreign policies and we

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have choices. We have choices whether to approach these issues selfishly, which is how we tend to do it, or to exercise a bit more compassion, a bit more generosity, a bit more selflessness in how we engage with, as I say, often vulnerable neighbours.

Julia Ahrens: Thank you, Andrei, Jon, Olga, and Andrew for your comments. This has given us a great base to have a discussion on. Luke – this is for him very first podcast today, how did it feel?

Luke Glanville: Oh, it was great fun. We had such a great bunch of experts here, didn't we?

Julia Ahrens: I absolutely enjoyed myself. A big thank you to everyone who commented and a reminder to keep sending them in. That also includes suggestions for future episodes of Policy Forum Pod. You can reach us at [APPSPolicyForum](#) on Twitter, [asiapacificpolicysociety](#) on Facebook, or just drop us a line at podcast@policyforum.net.

And, if you enjoyed today's episode, as we surely did, then perhaps you might want to leave us a quick review on iTunes. It only takes 30 seconds, and just find that fifth star. It will be a big help to us getting the word out about this podcast, and we'll be back next week with another Policy Forum Pod, but until then from us, "Cheerio."

Luke Glanville: Thanks very much for having me, Julia.

[audio ends 0:47:55]