

EVAP Ep. 10: Gareth Evans

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SPEAKERS

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall, Gareth Evans

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 00:12

Welcome to Expert Voices on Atrocity Prevention by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. I'm Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall, Research Director at the Global Centre. This podcast features one-on-one conversations with practitioners from the fields of human rights, conflict prevention and atrocity prevention. These conversations will give us a glimpse of the personal and professional side of how practitioners approach human rights protection and atrocity prevention, allowing us to explore challenges, identify best practices, and share lessons learned on how we can protect populations more effectively. In this episode I'm joined by the Honorable Gareth Evans. Gareth's illustrious career includes being a long-serving Cabinet Minister and Foreign Minister in the Australian Government, President and CEO of the International Crisis Group, and Chancellor of the Australian National University. Those of us in the atrocity prevention and R2P community know Gareth as one of the architects of R2P due to his role on the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, and I've had the absolute privilege of working with him for over a decade in his capacity as chair of the Global Centre's International Advisory Board. Thank you for joining us today, Gareth.

G Gareth Evans 01:27

Great pleasure to join you, Jackie, as always.

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 01:30

Many of our listeners are likely already familiar with your name and what role you played in shaping R2P, maybe not the depths of that role, but they certainly know your name alongside the term R2P. So, I wanted to start by taking a step a little further back in your personal history. In your memoir, 'Incorrigible Optimist,' you detail that the genocide in Cambodia spurred your

ambition to try to change the way the world thinks and acts in response to genocide and other major crimes against humanity. Can you tell us about how that shaped your worldview, and the steps you took towards the eventual creation of R2P?

G

Gareth Evans 02:12

Well, the genocide in Cambodia had a very direct, personal impact on me because, just a few years earlier, I had been backpacking my way across Asia, Middle East, Europe, to study in England, and spent a lot of time in all the South-east Asian countries, including Cambodia and met youth there, as I did everywhere, a number of vital, intelligent, engaged, sophisticated, young Cambodians, university students. I hung out with them, I ate noodles and drank beer and went up the dusty road to Siem Reap, and it was just a great experience. But then seven years later, I realized that every one of those kids that I'd met was no longer alive. I mean, they had either been murdered outright as intellectuals, they'd been starved or worked to death in the killing fields, and it was just that, sort of, that personal dimension. Of course I'd been familiar with Anne Frank and Babin Yar, which has now come back to haunt us in Kyiv. I was familiar with stories of the Holocaust, not least from many Jewish friends at school and university, but that immediate impact, recognizing that particular individuals had been the victims of this terrible, terrible, genocidal onslaught, really, really motivated me, and that passion has remained with me ever since. I tried, when I was Foreign Minister for nearly eight years, Australia's Foreign Minister, to generate a response to Rwanda and some of the other things that were occurring through the nineties, but felt a sense of real impotence about that because there just was no international consensus at all about how to respond to these atrocity crimes that broke out again on a massive scale in the nineties. We all remember the story of Rwanda, we remember Srebrenica, Kosovo, and I just, was therefore, really happy to be asked by the Canadian Government to co-chair this Commission which would wrestle with the issue of building an international consensus where none existed. The big problem was the Global North talked-the-talk about humanitarian intervention, military intervention, but didn't really walk-the-walk, and the Global South wouldn't even talk-the-talk because they hated the whole idea of imperialist metro military interventions, they were very conscious of their independence, their fragility in the past, and a long history of imperialist overreach. So, the world was just, a sort of, consensus-free zone, so, what we were able to do in that commission was confront, head-on, all these arguments about sovereignty trumping intervention and come up with a completely new approach, which I did, does seem to have been successful, at least, in building a normative consensus about that. So, that's how I got into this. That's how, I felt continually engaged and frustrated in my time in government that then after I left government and was asked to chair this Commission, or co-chair it, that then gave me the opportunity to translate all those very strong feelings into some practical blueprint for action.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 02:20

I think the Commission really had quite the task ahead of it, not only because of these very frustrations you've identified, but because the tools, that were available to the international community at the time, did have a lot of complications to piece through. And, in your book you mentioned that the Commission tackled numerous elements regarding the international community's response to atrocity crimes that are now becoming some of the most challenging aspects of R2Ps implementation including limitations to the protection of civilians agenda, which obviously was in its own developmental phase at the time, the need to emphasize

prevention, the connection to international law and the UN Charter, as well as Security Council dynamics which are constantly plaguing both response under R2P, and response more generally. So, can you reflect a little on how the Commission addressed these elements when drafting their report?

G

Gareth Evans 06:37

Yeah, I think what we recognized we needed to do was to reshape thinking about this issue in a number of ways, and the contribution that we made, I think, can be listed as four distinct things. First, we changed the language of the debate by introducing this concept of the Responsibility to Protect, rather than the right to intervene. And that had much more potential traction with the Global South than the language of the right to throw your weight around. Secondly, we very much focused on the need to embrace a much wider range of actors than just the military big guys. We said the Responsibility to Protect was that of the sovereign state itself, it was the responsibility of many other states in the international community who had the capacity to assist states to deal with these situations occurring within their own boundaries, and the responsibility lay in the wider international community to respond effectively when prevention had broken down, and when serious atrocity crimes were occurring. So, we did that, the third thing we did was to make it very clear that the range of responses that we were focusing on, were much, much broader than the traditional focus of humanitarian intervention, on just the military stuff. We focused on preventive strategies, a reactive toolbox which had many more elements in it than just the military one, I mean, sanctions, persuasion, diplomatic naming and shaming, and all the rest of it. And we focused on post-crisis peace building, which is, itself again, a preventive enterprise, I guess, to stop horrors recurring. So, we focused on a whole range of things of that kind which hadn't previously been part of the repertoire. We focused, finally, on the need to identify, with a lot more precision, what the criteria for military intervention should be in circumstances where it was obvious that only military intervention could possibly stop an atrocity that was occurring, and, whereas that had been completely left in a sort of a fuzzy zone, we tried to articulate the specifics. First of all, we said that there had to be legality, and that meant Security Council endorsement if you're going to involve yourself in the use of military force, but it also involved a set of prudential criteria which we articulated with some precision. The need for there to be a threshold degree of seriousness of the threat to human life, or whatever that was involved. There needed to be the right intent, the proper motivation, that the intervention was there not to serve some other economic purpose, but to genuinely protect people at risk. There had to be an element of last resort, making things sure that military option really was the only one. There had to be an element of proportionality, that the military response was appropriately geared to the scale of the action that was occurring, and finally, the notion of consequences. The military intervention had to do more good than harm, and not just trigger a larger confrontation. Now, all those contributions were distinctly different from what had been the debate before. Yes, the protection of civilians in conflict concept had taken hold just about the time, a year or two earlier, than we were coming up with our report, but that was very limited in scope to civilian atrocities occurring in the context of armed conflict, and of course, that wouldn't have dealt with the two really big ones, Cambodia and Rwanda, neither of which involves situations of armed conflict but, unquestionably, involved massive scale atrocity crimes. So, what we wanted to do was to come up with a universal set of concepts and criteria which would work, and be normatively attractive, in all the different contexts in which atrocity crimes erupted. And, I think, you know, basically, we'll come to how well we succeeded, how much the reality met the dream, in a moment, but, at least, in coming up with all that as we did, and then getting that embraced unanimously, extraordinarily, by the 2005 World Summit, the UN General Assembly sitting at Head of

Government and Head of State level, was really a pretty extraordinary diplomatic achievement, and, we can't rest on our laurels, but we should not, I think, looking back, fail to recognize the scale of the difference that that report made.

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 11:26

Absolutely, I think, you know, we often talk about even just an awareness of the atrocities language, I feel, has shifted dramatically over the past 20 years, and I'm glad that you brought up the prudential criteria aspect of your work because examining the list of atrocity situations since 2005, I think, many people conclude that R2P has, at best, a mixed record of success. And often those claiming R2P doesn't work, or who ring, you know, R2P's death knell, reach that conclusion based on a lack of UN Security Council authorized military action. They're exclusively focused on intervention and the military stuff. We've witnessed this over the past decade with Syria, but also most recently, with the coup in Myanmar where civilians actively called for an R2P intervention, and critics sort of said, well see there won't be an intervention, so R2P's failing, as well as with the invasion in Ukraine now. So, beyond the prudential criteria, are there clarifications you would provide in response to those criticisms?

G Gareth Evans 12:40

Well, I think we need to recognize that there's not just one benchmark by which you assess the credibility and utility of R2P, there are, in fact, four. And I would identify them, first of all, as the normative dimension, whether the worldview has, in fact, changed, whether people are at least paying lip-service, maybe it's only lip-service, but whether they're at least doing that in a way that they didn't before, to the need to respond to these cases. And in that respect, against that benchmark, I think you're right in saying that there's just a very different atmosphere in terms of what people at least acknowledge in principle and how they express this, and this is evidenced in General Assembly debates, it really has got a lot of traction. There are very, very few countries that say that atrocities are nobody's business, nobody else's business when they occur behind sovereign state borders. Nobody asserts that anymore. They find all sorts of other reasons for avoiding taking action, and ducking and weaving, but they don't challenge the normative thing, and that's important, and that's still there. The second dimension of the benchmark, I think, is changing the institutional structures and environment in which our capacity to respond effectively, whether it's through preventive mechanisms or reactive mechanisms, is greater, and we've done a lot there, and the Centre has been leading the way in a lot of that. There's much better military preparedness now to deal with the kind of interventions that are needed in these cases, which are not full scale warfighting but really, sort of, extended and gendarmerie-type peacekeeping operations. There's much more attention to the civilian dimension of preparedness that's needed, and the kind of strategies that are so important to deploy to deal with emerging situations. The third benchmark is how successful we've been as a preventive mechanism, and, of course, the thing with prevention, always, is that by definition when you succeed at prevention nothing very visible happens, therefore, many people just take no notice. But there are many, many cases, and still occurring to this day, where R2P is being invoked as the relevant concept, and the UN, African Union, other sub-regional organizations, other individual states, are all doing their best to apply preventive mechanisms to stop things happening. And I think there have been many successes in that area that have been well documented by the Centre. My favorite example, in that respect, I think, is Burundi, which is, sits next door to Rwanda, has exactly, really, almost identical

demographic characteristics, has an equally sad and savage history of major atrocities occurring, and which has been sitting on the edge of a volcano, probably, for the last 20 years, but every time that volcano looks like its erupting, the UN Security Council, the African Union, or others, have thrown themselves into the diplomatic task of trying to dampen things down and stabilize the situation, and nobody's noticed, as a result, that it's been a success. Where the problem has arisen, as you identified, and as everybody identifies, is in effective reaction when situations really have careened out of control, and it's, frankly, been a pretty sad history, as you acknowledge with Sri Lanka, with Yemen, with Myanmar, and above all, of course, Syria. We started pretty well in this respect, and, I think, the turning point came in in 2011 with the intervention in Syria, which was the initial intervention in the face of the anticipated major massacre by Gaddafi, of descending for forces against him within that country, and the Security Council did agree on a military intervention, which was successful in stopping that massacre. This was R2P working militarily, exactly as those of us who generated the idea had hoped it would, but things went very pear-shaped, I'm afraid. It's a long and complicated story, and I'll only tell it in two sentences. I mean, what happened was that the NATO forces - the P3 on the Security Council: the Americans, the Brits, and the French - decided that only a regime change was the acceptable outcome for that intervention, and went about pursuing regime change without bringing the rest of the Security Council with them. It was a good argument that the only way you could protect civilians was through the regime change, not just from military intervention at 20,000 feet, but nonetheless, there was an arrogance about the way in which the P3 handled themselves, which generated a very, very strong negative reaction, and that fed immediately into the initial response to Syria, when Syria was at a very early stage and when Security Council condemnation, not necessarily military action, but a condemnation, even more sanctions would have made a difference. And it's been a sad and sorry tale since then, and of course, you know, the task of rebuilding consensus on the Security Council, in these hardest of cases, and to get authorization from military action, there are not many in that category, but in those hardest of cases, it's going to be very, very difficult, indeed. Russia and China have always been potential spoilers in this respect, and now with events in Ukraine, and Russia behaving as it is, and manifestly being as unwilling as it is to engage in any normatively decent behavior at all, the idea of Russia coming back and joining consensus to intervene militarily somewhere else is pretty far fetched. But let's keep all this in context. What matters is prevention. What matters is at least the normative belief that we need to do something in these cases. What matters is institutional preparedness. What matters is building further credibility for institutions like the International Criminal Court, and, you know, that's happening. The Americans, for all practical purposes, are now supportive of that court in a way that wasn't the case, you know, when they refused to formally join it, and bit by bit by bit, you know, that institutional framework is developing, and we're seeing that again in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine where the international response has been huge. It hasn't been generated until very recently by concern about atrocity crimes, that response has been generated by Russia's breach of that other big norm about not invading another country and perpetrating the crime of aggression, but now that atrocities are coming to light, and there's a very strong hunger visible out there, in all sorts of parts of the international community, not just the traditional Western ones, for some effective response through the International Criminal Court or other institutional mechanisms. So, putting all that, you know, together, I think the story is not been the one of unmitigated success that we all dreamed of, but the notion that R2P is dead is just, I think, completely misconceived. There's perhaps one other point to make in the context of the issue about prudential criteria, that you probably want me to pick up on, and that is that there's always been a limitation on the capacity to apply military action in certain situations, particularly involving great or major powers. The notion of being able to engage China in military action if they really went completely over the top in Xinjiang, the notion even of engaging Russia, you know, when, in some of the stuff that it was doing in Chechnya, for

example, earlier on, it's really just inconceivable that military action could be sensibly applied in these cases because what you would be doing is inevitably triggering a much wider, major war, and you would run headlong into that prudential criteria and of the balance of consequences that what you're doing is not doing more good than harm, but actually doing more harm than good, and that's the issue that has to be constantly borne in mind. It's not a matter of double standards, it's not a matter of hypocrisy, saying some states can and should be able to get away with atrocity behavior, it's a matter of just of recognizing the reality that, in these cases, military action is not going to work, and what you've got to do is use the other mechanisms in the toolbox which might be notionally less effective, but are ultimately pretty crucial, and the sort of tools that we're talking about, that are now being applied against Russia, they're all pretty important. The identification of potential war crimes and the potential subjection to the International Criminal Court of the Russian leadership, the kind of sanctions that are being applied, all of these are very useful mechanisms, and we shouldn't, we shouldn't downplay their significance.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 22:04

Absolutely. I think we've seen enormous response to the situation in Ukraine, obviously short of military action, but, kind of, almost the full range of the toolbox at work in recent weeks, at a speed that we have not seen on other atrocity situations in the past. I was going to ask you if the way that the world has evolved since Syria and Libya has has changed your worldview, or altered your optimism on whether the world can improve its capacity to respond to atrocities, but I think that what you've said, so far, has made it very clear that you are, as always, still an optimist on this.

G

Gareth Evans 22:54

Well, I described myself in my memoir's title as an "incorrigible optimist." I have to say that optimism has been tested by the events in Syria, and Myanmar, and Yemen, and Sri Lanka, in particular, over the years, but I think it is absolutely crucial for all of us, in this business, to maintain our optimism. I often make the point that, sort of, optimism is self reinforcing in exactly the same way as pessimism is self defeating. If you're going to get out of bed in the morning, you've got to believe that what you're doing can possibly make a difference in the longer run because if you don't even try to make a difference, then manifestly nothing will happen. And all of us can make a difference, NGOs can make a difference, individuals through their engagement in political action and support for effective responses in these situations, they can get messages through to political leaders and things can change over time. I mean, I do think the Russian thing is going to be going to be a watershed. It's not going to help us get unanimous resolutions on the Security Council, because, I think, Russia is going to be such a pariah for so many more years that the notion of it being, maybe things will be different post-Putin, but right now, it's difficult to see Russia being a constructive player. And China is playing this game of, sort of, sitting on the fence, and not being a particularly constructive help either in these cases. So, probably the notion of getting, you know, Security Council focused behavior is a bit of a pipe dream for the foreseeable future, but there's so much else we can be doing, and continuing to work on these other institutional mechanisms to get support for them. For states to apply their universal jurisdiction - this concept that, which is available in international customary law, that states can in fact prosecute people who perpetrated crimes against humanity, if they come within their jurisdiction, or if there's some other opportunity to do so.

There's all sorts of ways in which you can make life hideously difficult for the perpetrators of these crimes, and that's what we should be, I think, focusing our attention on. The big shift that occurred with R2P was away from the single-minded focus on military intervention as the be-all-and-end-all. Remember what people were talking about right through the nineties, it was humanitarian intervention, it was the right to intervene, and that has always been just a, you know, a limiting approach, which was never going to win the kind of consensus that was necessary for there to be effective international action. Responsibility to Protect has changed the way people think and talk and act in these cases, and we should be, I think, all of us - the Centre, in particular, the work you're doing - you know, we should be pretty proud of what's been achieved, and not feel deterred or not feel depressed by the difficult cases that continue to arise.

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 26:09

Exactly, and certainly, I think, we have reached a point where military response, typically, is not the first option that the mind goes to in these situations. There are a lot of other things in the toolbox that we typically want to exhaust first before we even consider what a military option would look like. I want to turn now to the book you just published, which is called "Good International Citizenship: The Case for Decency," which, I think, overlaps very much with a lot of these R2P relevant topics. You mention in the book that there's both a moral imperative and a national interest imperative to be a good international citizen. I was wondering if you could elaborate on that idea a little bit?

G Gareth Evans 27:00

Yeah, the traditional conduct of foreign policy focuses on just two kinds of national interest: security-geopolitical interests and economic prosperity interests. And everything else for many, many foreign policy players in national governments is a kind of optional extra. Whether you're generous in your aid; whether you're active in your promotion, internationally, universal human rights standards; whether you are responsive to peace and security issues in faraway places where you don't have an immediate security benefit to flow from getting involved in those countries; your response to atrocity crimes, again, in faraway countries where there's nothing much to be gained in terms of your own country's national security, and certainly not your economic prosperity but which are, nonetheless, sort of, crying out for some sort of moral response. Nonetheless, these things are seen, far too often, as optional extras, and sort of the kind of boyscout good deeds you do if your budget is up to it or if there's some internal pressure group pushing you to respond, which makes it politically necessary to be seen to be doing something, my point is that all this bundle of issues, what I call the decency issues, being and being seen to be a good international citizen on all these fronts, my point is that this is not only a moral imperative, but it's a national interest in its own right, and countries that do act, and are seen to be acting, for purposes beyond themselves, not just focused on immediate security returns or economic returns, are countries that have a really high standing in the international community. There are reputational returns for being a good international citizen, exercising what's also being often called 'soft power' in this respect - being the kind of country that people warm to, trust, want to emulate, there are reputational returns. There are reciprocity returns, if I'm seen to be acting in response to your national disaster or other internal problem, helping you resolve atrocity crimes being perpetrated by some non-state actor, that country will be that much more inclined to help you with your refugee outflows, or

other, maybe even just support for some vote in an international body. There's a reciprocity return, **there's a hard-headed return of that kind**, and my point is simply that, you know, we too often neglect, in our foreign policy discourse - Australia is no exception, I don't think any country is an exception - these things we see them as, sort of, value issues, which are not the same as interest issues, and my argument is they're very much interest issues, as well as value issues, and we ought to see them in those terms. So, you know, the kind of response that we ought to be mounting to atrocity crimes in Myanmar, or Yemen, or Sri Lanka, whether it's, whatever the toolbox you're talking about - this, to me, is quintessential good international citizenship. This is this is quintessential behavior of the kind that countries ought to behave, ought to engage in, not just because there's a self-evident moral imperative to do so. In every culture in the world, I think there's, you know, the moral reasoning points the same way, however you get there, through religious or humanistically derived ethical systems, the moral imperative is obvious, but my argument, in this little book I've just written, is one that's addressed to the hard heads, the political realists, the cynics in government, that say this is really just optional stuff, the community is not really very interested in this stuff, and we're only going to do it if we are in really exceptional cases, not just mainstream cases. I think that's nonsense. I think there's plenty of evidence that the community will go with you when you're seen to be generous and responsive, and just simpatico on these sorts of issues, and that's been my story in an Australian context. I think its very relevant in many other country contexts as well.

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 31:32

Do you have any recent examples of states, I guess, in the atrocity prevention world, who have been fulfilling this good international citizenship?

G Gareth Evans 31:46

Not many have been doing it very systematically, I mean, we, the quintessential good international citizen players, I suppose, traditionally being the Scandinavians, who've been very generous with their aid, they've been very actively engaged on human rights issues, have contributed enormous resources to peacekeeping, and who have, generally, had their voices heard when these situations erupt. Scandinavians, for the most part, fill that bill. Canadians, with a spectacular exception during the Harper administration period, have always traditionally been self-consciously good international citizens, and I think, highly respected around the world as a result. New Zealand is another western country, our neighbor, that's got a very good reputation in that respect. Australia has periodically behaved in this way, but not nearly enough to my satisfaction, which is one of the reasons that I wrote this little book. Other countries have come in and out of the game, and I'm not just talking about the Western countries, I mean, there's a number of the Africans - I mean, Kenya, South Africa, periodically, have been quite prominent in advocating and articulating these sorts of approaches to international behavior. I wish it were a bit more widespread in Asia. Asian countries do tend to be a bit more inward looking, and less instinctively engaged in these sorts of outreach issues when their own security or prosperity is not immediately involved. So, there's a lot of work to be done to generate this, but, I think, there's enough examples around the world of countries that have acted in this way consistently, and whose reputation has been enhanced as a result, to make it an attractive cause for every country to follow.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 33:38

Certainly, and, I mean, I know from the Global Centre's own work that, for example, the Gambia taking the Myanmar case to the ICJ has certainly given them a great deal of credibility, in this regard.

G

Gareth Evans 33:53

Yeah, I should have mentioned that. I think that Gambia initiative, going to the Court, is just absolutely terrific, and exactly the kind of thing that small countries can do, which make the rest of the world, you know, sit up and take notice, and I think the role of the Center in helping that little exercise along is one that you guys can very much pat yourselves on the back for.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 34:16

So, I guess, turning to the, to current events, and the situation in Ukraine, you know, we touched on this briefly already, but I think that Ukraine, and the international response over the past month, has really shown the volume of items in the toolbox and different things that states around the world can try to do to respond to an atrocity situation from the kind of more traditional ones that we're all familiar with, like sanctions and political pressure to, you know, even more subtle things such as this movement to have Russia removed from the Human Rights Council. So, is this the sort of response you were hoping for when you developed R2P?

G

Gareth Evans 35:10

Yeah, I mean, I think we have to be honest with ourselves and recognize that it was not R2P, and not atrocity crimes that was really driving this international response in the first instance, it was the breach of another huge norm against non-intervention, against intervention in, or aggressive intervention in other countries. I mean, Russia has just torn up an absolutely central element of the international rulebook that's been in place and, pretty much universally observed since 1945, and that more than anything else drove this intense international reaction that we've seen. But as atrocities are increasingly coming to light, and this is now a daily occurrence, the two issues, the two normative imperatives that, I think, come together, the imperative to respond to a cross border aggression, and the imperative to respond to atrocity crimes, and what we're seeing is a huge array of toolbox issues are being applied, as you say, obviously all the naming and shaming, and diplomatic stuff that's going on, obviously the sanctions that are going on, the military support that's being given, not in the form of direct troops and taking military action, but supporting Ukraine's capacity to defend itself and address these issues itself, and of course the mobilization of the various international institutions from the International Court of Justice through the International Criminal Court, through the Human Rights Council in Geneva. I've got some reservations about banning Russia from participation in multilateral forums. That's potentially sort of counterproductive, in the longer run, my own instinct is that it's better to keep them there, and give them a barrage of negative attention when they turn up at these meetings, and make it clear that they're persona non grata, but that's an argument, I think, we're going to have for some time yet, and then it's arisen in the context of the G20, it's arisen in the context, as you said, of the participation of the Human Rights Council. There is a sense in which it's intolerable that people, countries that don't accept

these norms, should be in some decision-making position of authority in relation to their pursuit. I, obviously, understand that, but if you're going to, sort of, get people back into the international fold, I think you have to be sensitive to the need to not overdo the exclusionary stuff, but to find other ways of getting the story across and getting effective action. But no, it has been heartening, obviously, the international response to Russia's appallingly, legally, and morally indefensible behavior, and, I think, it's given all of us some new hope that the age of cynicism, and fake news, and double standards and untruths is not necessarily going to be dominant for the future, that there are other currents still running in the international community, and it's those that we have to seize and harness.

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 38:30

Absolutely, and how would you compare, sort of, the response now to the situations that maybe receive a little less attention from international communities such as Ethiopia, or even Myanmar, you know, pre-2016 and 2017 at the start of the genocide?

G Gareth Evans 38:51

Yeah, well, I mean, obviously, the international community's response to those cases has been very much less than ideal. In Myanmar, in my own region, even my own country's response has been cautious, in the extreme, in terms of being unwilling to apply sanctions, and generally to put Myanmar, you know, in the dock where it deserves to be, under the generals. And, I think, it is a little troubling that you get a big response when it's, essentially, a European country, and European culture, and European citizens that are in strife from atrocity crimes, as compared with people in faraway countries in which the, you know, the mainstream international players are not directly, with which they're not directly involved. So, there is this element of blindness, I would say, not so much indifference, but just blindness to the scale of what's going on in some of these other smaller countries. There's always, you know, countervailing issues. In Yemen it's the desire of the big European guys, and the Americans not to, sort of, offend unduly the Saudis and the Gulf States, who are doing battle with the Iranian dimension of it, which has complicated matters. In Myanmar there's all sorts of other issues which are, sort of, inhibiting an effective response, I mean, China is a crucial player, but China's own commitment has been less than stellar to this, and how you mobilize that, how you mobilize effective performance by the southeast asian countries in ASEAN of which Myanmar is a member. It's been a very frustrating enterprise and there are many, many fingers you can point at many, many different players for their lack of attention to this. So, we do have a task ahead of us to translate this wonderful aspiration of R2P, you know, from just a rhetorical principle to an operationally effective one, but you know, I think bit by bit by bit we are getting there, and we just have to, you know, maintain the rage and maintain the action, and the engagement, and the pressure. And again, the kind of work the Centre is doing, you know, through operating as effectively as Secretariat for the Focal Points, those people in sixty or more countries that are now identified as office holders within countries as people to, whose job it is, whose day job it is, to keep track of these situations and to energize an internal response that's appropriate when they arise. This is incredibly important development and we just have to keep norring and nagging away.

J Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 41:46

Thank you for joining us for this episode of Expert Voices on Atrocity Prevention. If you'd like

more information about the Global Centre's work on R2P, mass atrocity prevention, or populations at risk of mass atrocities, visit our website at globalr2p.org and connect with us on Twitter and Facebook at GCR2P.