Dr Deborah Mayersen, Australian Defence Force Academy, The Case for Incorporating Atrocity Prevention Education into Military Education: In Australia and Internationally.

Almost all major Australian military deployments in the past thirty years have been to places at very high risk of genocide and mass atrocities. In 1999, the Australian-led INTERFET (International Force East Timor) was hastily deployed to respond to the crisis in East Timor – a situation many feared was on the cusp of genocide. From 2003-2017, Australia led the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), in response to a deteriorating cycle of violence and growing risk of atrocities there. Major deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, as part of coalition forces, also saw Australian troops in places deemed at extremely high risk of atrocity crimes. Yet Australian military personnel, like those in most Western countries, do not receive specific training in atrocity prevention prior to deployment to such high risk zones. Even UN peacekeepers, routinely deployed to places where mass atrocities are considered imminent or even underway, are not given specific training focused on how to recognise and respond to these risks of atrocity crimes. This paper considers how such training could aid military personnel on deployment in at-risk countries. Equipping soldiers with essential knowledge and skills to recognise warning signs of imminent violence, to explore approaches for managing such risk, and to examine pathways to fostering longer-term stability and conflict de-escalation can contribute to more effective risk management, ultimately protecting civilians from harm. This paper will examine what such training might look like and how it could be delivered to those who need it most. It concludes by reflecting on the value of incorporating atrocity prevention training for all military personnel likely to deploy to at-risk countries.