Historical Legacies of Violence: Seeking Justice for Past Crimes Against Humanity in Cambodia, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Beyond

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Trials for the most serious international crimes such as genocide and crimes against humanity necessarily deal with past wrongs. But trials now underway or proposed in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Germany, Italy, and other venues deal with wrongs committed many decades before. Even trials that deal with more recent crimes often find that the shadow of history looms over the proceedings. How far in the past should the search for accountability go? Are such trials the best way of addressing historical wrongs? What problems and challenges does the passage of time create for prosecuting mass atrocity? What is the role of the historian in such trials? These are some of the issues that this talk will address, drawing upon the experience of prosecutions in Germany, Japan, Rwanda, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and East Timor.