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This week, they consider Booker Prize winner Prophet Song, the influence of women in the upcoming US election and the race to map the Indian Ocean.  Disclaimer: The views expressed below by councillors and interns are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | **Global Crisis, Personal Dilemma: Thoughts on Reading "Prophet Song"**   Daily news of death and destruction in Gaza has made me reflect on what life is like for mothers whose lives have been upended and who now, without shelter, food or water, have to care for the old, the sick and the children.  Paul Lynch’s novel Prophet Song (OneWorld 2023) won last year’s Booker Prize. It [**imagines**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=735aff0dcf&e=84738c8dae) life in a civil war from the point of view of Eilish and her family, which includes her father with dementia, her school-age children and her infant son. It is set in Dublin in a not-too-distant future, but the location could easily be today’s Palestine. A right-wing government seizes control in response to a union protest about teachers’ wages. One by one, civil liberties are abolished. Eilish’s husband, a union leader, is arrested and disappears. Her son evades conscription and joins the rebel army. Eilish is urged to leave the country by her sister in Canada, but feels she must stay for the sake of her family. She suffers for this decision.  This is George Orwell’s 1984 updated for 2024. The book warns readers to beware of creeping threats to personal liberties and the rise of totalitarianism. Its message applies equally to Europe, the Middle East or any part of the world.  Image credit: [**Edgardo W. Olivera**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=71a7697033&e=84738c8dae) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Jocelyn Chey AM. Jocelyn is an Adjunct Professor at the Australia-China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney, Visiting Professor at the University of Sydney and an Adjunct Professor at the Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture at Western Sydney University. She was previously a senior officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Jocelyn is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of International Affairs. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | **Why women will swing the US election**   In his March 8 State of the Union address, Joe Biden appealed to the group of Americans that could make or break his success in November – women. This won’t be the year where Americans elect their first female president, [**writes**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=a2e61e8388&e=84738c8dae) Ava Kalinauskas for the Australian Financial Review, but women will play a crucial role in voting. Female Americans have voted at higher rates than men in every US election since 1980. Kalinauskas discusses the strategic choice of selecting Kamala Harris to reach groups with whom Biden may struggle to gain traction, particularly as the primary messenger on reproductive rights for women. She analyses key electoral issues driving female engagement in recent US elections. For example, in the month after the Dobbs decision that struck down Roe v Wade, the number of women who registered to vote in the 2022 midterms surged by 35% (four times the rate of men). But women’s votes aren't necessarily going Biden's way in the lead-up to the 2024 election. Trump grew his share of female voters from 39% in 2016 to 44% in 2020, and is reportedly considering a woman as his vice-presidential running mate. This may not be Trump's 'silver bullet', but it could tighten the race. Kalinauskas concludes that, while women's names may not be seen at the top of the ballot this year, their voices will be heard on November 5.   Image credit: [**M**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=a3b6948fc4&e=84738c8dae)[**att Hecht**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=6996d4784a&e=84738c8dae) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Isabel Freudenstein. Isabel is chair of the Australian Red Cross Rising Women Leaders and graduated from a Bachelor of Arts and Advanced Studies at the University of Sydney with First Class Honours in International Relations. Her thesis examined the changing nature of humanitarian intervention in a multipolar international system. Isabel is currently studying a Juris Doctor at the University of Sydney and working as a paralegal. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A ship sailing in the ocean  Description automatically generated | | **The Race to Map the Indian Ocean**  The Indian Ocean is a vast expanse with much of it incompletely explored, as has been highlighted by the continuing mystery of disappeared flight MH370. In an article for the Lowy Institute, David Brewster[**points ou**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=80ec388de8&e=84738c8dae)[**t**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=1bb15e72bc&e=84738c8dae) the increasing geopolitical significance of ocean floor knowledge to state sovereignty and resource exploitation matters. Great power rivalry only adds further importance to knowledge of the maritime domain. The recent attention on Sri Lanka and the Maldives illustrates this vividly. India has both the geographical centrality and the scientific capability to lead this work.  Image credit: [**Gunnar Ries**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=ad6d2d98a3&e=84738c8dae) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Chris Skinner. Chris served thirty years in the Royal Australian Navy in warships that participated in the South East Asian Treaty Organisation, the Vietnam War and surveillance of the North-West Indian Ocean. He joined the AIIA NSW Council in 2019. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **From the Interns** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | In addition to our Councillors' recommendations, we invited our interns to share with you what they have found insightful or interesting in the world of international affairs over this week. This week, Adam Scislowski considers the effectiveness of international shaming in the context of the United States and Israel and Jie Rui Lin investigates China's maritime aggression in the South China Sea.  Disclaimer: The views expressed by councillors and interns are their own. The Australian Institute of International Affairs New South Wales does not take policy positions. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **The Shame Game: When is it Effective?**  In January 2024, South Africa requested that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rule on whether Israel’s continuing assault on Gaza amounts to genocide. In an article for Foreign Affairs, Rochelle Terman [**argues**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=e10ec1bba1&e=84738c8dae) that these instances of shaming may reinforce international values, but are ineffective in creating real change. In fact, international shaming often simply serves to establish the condemning state’s moral superiority for political gain. In some instances, shaming can even be counterproductive, increasing populism, paranoia and non-compliance, as in the case with many Israelis perceiving the ICJ as an antisemitic organisation.  Like shaming a person, shaming a state works most effectively when coming from an ally. Terman argues that in this case, the responsibility falls squarely on the United States. Just like with apartheid South Africa, the US must leverage their immense political and economic ties - which for so long have enabled and protected Israeli acts - to curtail suffering in Gaza. Condemnations from other states may further their respective political agendas, but are unlikely to result in any real change or relief.   Image credit: [**Marco Verch**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=b07745b406&e=84738c8dae) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Adam Scislowski. Adam is in his final year studying International Studies and Media at the University of New South Wales. He completed a year abroad at the University of Pennsylvania, where he completed a thesis exploring the potential effects of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems on the nature of warfare. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | A military ship in the ocean  Description automatically generated | | **Maritime Harassment in the South China Sea**  Tensions have surged in the South China Sea in recent months, notably marked by China's heightened maritime aggression near the Philippines. In an article for Foreign Policy, Elisabeth Braw [**dissects**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=c021e50ae6&e=84738c8dae) the impact of China's aggressive manoeuvres. From firing water cannons at Philippines supply ships to bumping vessels near disputes shoals, China's actions have no doubt escalated regional unrest. Despite the ruling of the South China Sea Arbitration in 2016 that favoured the Philippines, China continues to assert its dominance in these contested waters, exacerbating economic uncertainties for local fisherfolk.  The article highlights the necessity for international intervention to address China's behaviours and safeguard economic initiatives in the region and ensure sustained stability and prosperity for all stakeholders involved. Tensions in the South China Sea have not only impeded shipping activities but have also cast doubt on the reliability of the Philippines as a destination for manufacturing relocation for global companies. It appears that maritime harassment, despite the demarcations of the Exclusive Economic Zones prescribed by the United Nations, will persist in the region.  Image credit: [**U.S. Navy**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=2f8880a985&e=84738c8dae) | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This article was selected by Jie Rui Lin. Jie Rui is a third-year Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Advanced Studies student majoring in Business Analytics and International Relations at the University of Sydney. He is the Chief of Partnerships at Educating the Future, an education not-for-profit operating in Timor-Leste. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **What else we're reading** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | * Bronwen Maddox [**hosts**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=ef52effc36&e=84738c8dae) Independent Thinking for Chatham House. This week's episode discusses whether Germany can continue leading the EU amidst its response to war in Gaza and Ukraine. * Writing for the Lowy Institute, Alexandre Dayant and Grace Stanhope [**investigate**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=f1cab8ef97&e=84738c8dae) the gap between ambitions and delivery in China's BRI megaprojects throughout Southeast Asia. * In Vice, Rachel Cheung [**discusses**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=b831b1772b&e=84738c8dae) the disruption caused in Taiwan's Matsu Islands by the severing of submarine internet cables, allegedly by Chinese ships. * Produced for Vox, Rajaa Elidrissi's video [**explores**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=ae50580067&e=84738c8dae) the ulterior motives behind the Houthis - a Yemeni rebel group - attacking ships in the Red Sea that engage in business with Israel. * Natali Pearson [**interviews**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=3c1d4331b0&e=84738c8dae) Tanvir Uddin in a Sydney Southeast Asia Centre Stories podcast on the disparities of financial exclusion in Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia. * In Foreign Policy, Jon Hoffman [**argues**](https://internationalaffairs.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0e9feb1606f1b4129a8b65828&id=e9b9654060&e=84738c8dae) that the special US relationship with Israel endangers US interests regionally and globally. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **Letters to the Editor** | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **Get involved!**  We're committed to keeping conversations about international affairs going, so get involved in our Letters to the Editor section!  Each week, we publish letters from our subscribers about what they think of the issues we’re discussing.  You can take part in the conversation by emailing us with your comments on each edition's articles. There are just a few simple guidelines: letters should be no more than 100 words in length, and should only be about the previous edition's articles. Please include your name and affiliation, and a mobile number (which won't be published). If you are a university student, please include your university and current degree.  Send all letters to the editors at [**aiianswletters@gmail.com**](mailto:aiianswletters@gmail.com) by Wednesday at 5pm Sydney time for the chance to be published in the following fortnight's newsletter. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | | | |
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