



Orion  
Policy  
Institute

August 2022



**2021-2022**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

# *Promoting policy through high-quality research*



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## **PREPARED BY**

Zach Pittman  
Ayse Ergene

# AT A GLANCE

## ABOUT US

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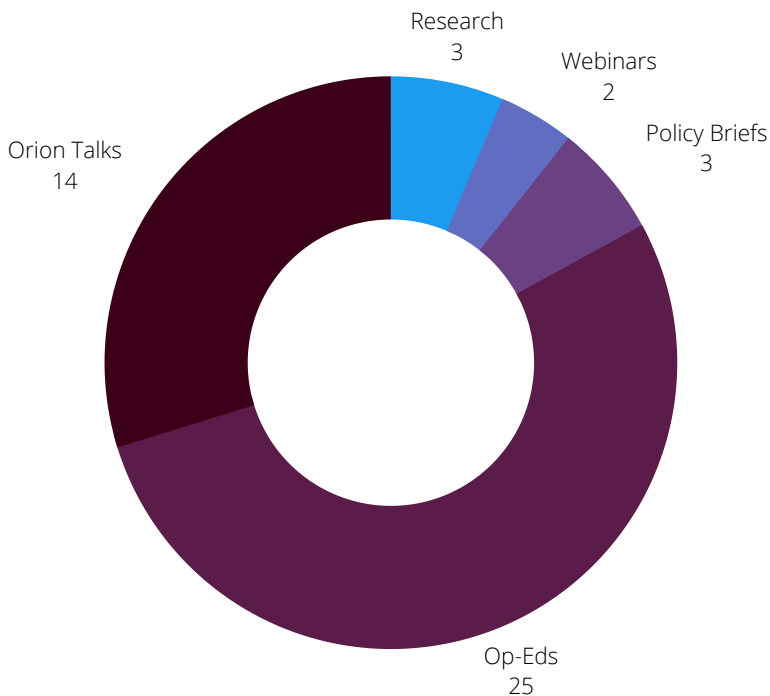
Orion Policy Institute (OPI) is an independent non-profit think tank based in Washington D.C. We address a broad range of issues including national and global security, democracy, human rights, political and economic development, peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and various other issues at the local, national, and global level. OPI is a 501(c)(3) organization, with an IRS ruling year of 2021, and donations are tax-deductible.

## OUR MISSION

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Our mission is to contribute to stability and good governance, advance human rights, and promote policy through high-quality research and analysis. OPI seeks to generate practical and sustainable solutions based on multi-disciplinary, diverse, and in-depth scientific research.

# HIGHLIGHTS



*Since its foundation, OPI has published 3 research reports, 25 op-eds, and 3 policy briefs. We hosted 2 webinars and 14 podcasts.*





# RESEARCH

## Political Astroturfing in Twitterscape: The Role of Troll Armies in Turkey's Democratic Backsliding

Davut Akca, Suleyman Ozeren, Ismail Onat,  
Suat Cubukcu

Published July 21'

Our analysis of the 6,252 Turkish state-sponsored accounts suspended by Twitter shows the extent and modus operandi of the AKP government's political astroturfing campaigns through social media during critical periods elaborated in a detailed fashion above. The main goals of these campaigns were to dominate public discourse, set the public agenda in accordance with the best interests of the AKP administration, and vilify and discredit political discontents.

“

*Social media has been left as the last stand against the ever-expanding political encroachment.*

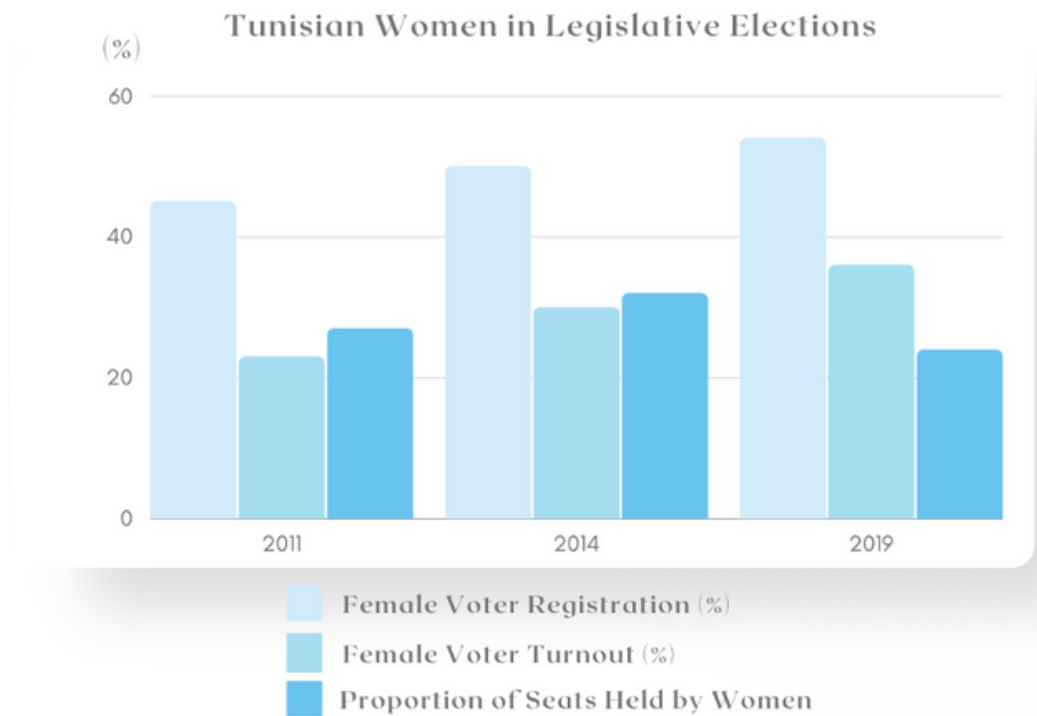
*The AKP attempted to shape the public agenda through political astroturfing campaigns during elections and after critical national events.*

”

[Read More](#)

## Women in the Arab Spring Uprisings: Tunisia

The 2019 parliamentary elections highlight the need to implement further changes to increase women's representation in Parliament. Despite the high registration and turnout rates for women, the number of women elected to office has dropped to the level seen after the 2011 election –an alarming setback for Tunisian women.

[Read More](#)


“

*Gaps and deficits in women's socioeconomic status across the country remain challenges to the Tunisian women's movement moving forward.*

”

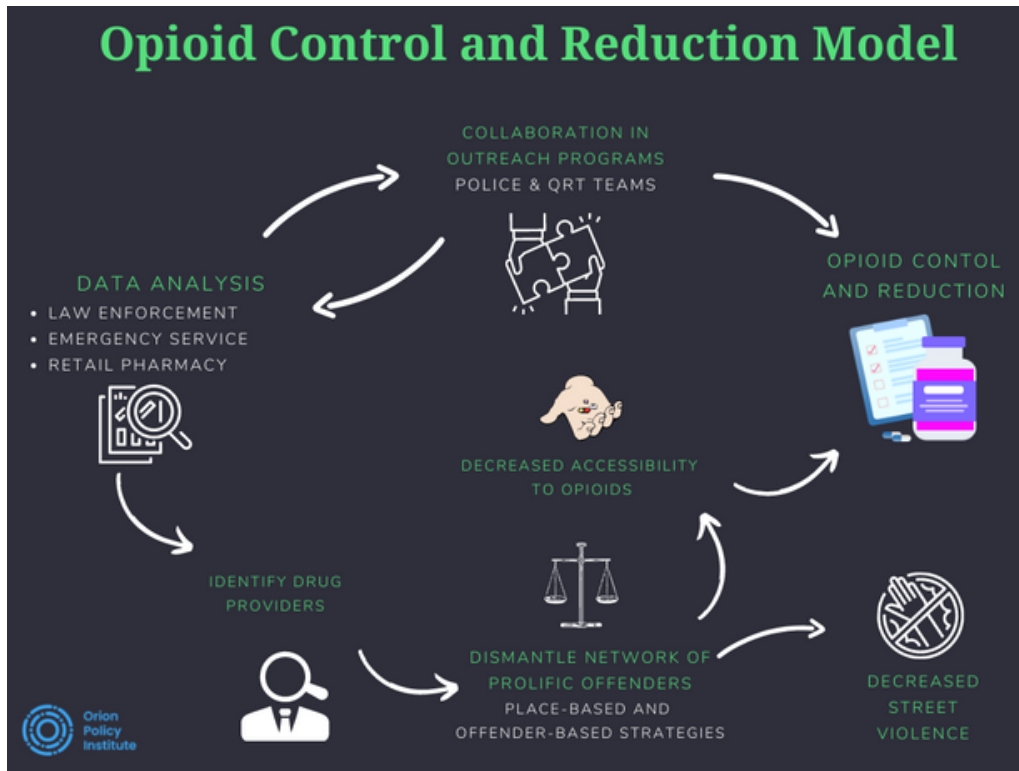
Published June 22'

Adele Carter, Aimee Hanstein, Ayse Ergene,  
Zach Pittman

## A Novel Approach to Mitigate the Opioid Overdose Epidemic: The OCRM Model

Murat Ozer, John Wright, Davut Akca

Published January 22'



The OCRM suggests that a comprehensive analysis of data from three sources (i.e., law enforcement, hospital emergency department, and pharmacies) can lead to successful collaborative outreach programs aimed at controlling the rise and ultimately reducing overdose deaths and increasing the ability of law enforcement officials to identify prolific drug offenders.

“

*Today, overdose death is a leading cause of injury-related death in the United States. To mitigate the opioid overdose epidemic, an evidence-based approach is needed.*

”

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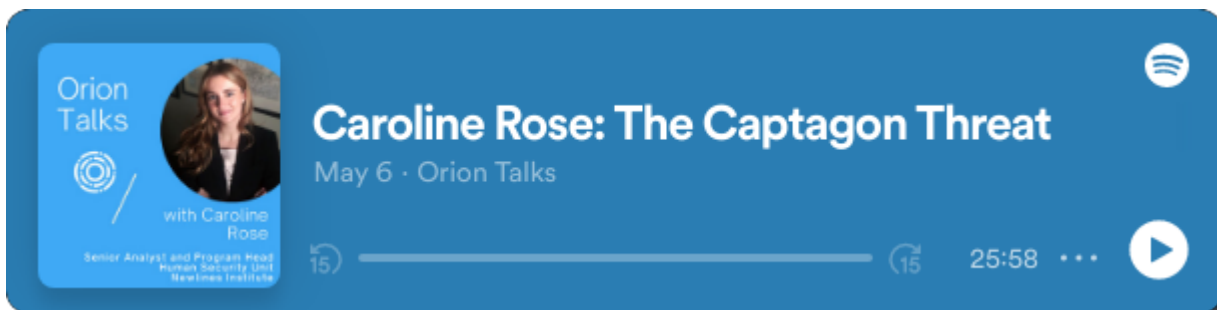
# PODCAST



“

*There is no single diplomatic channel that is working and the ones that are active are sometimes acting across purposes.*

”

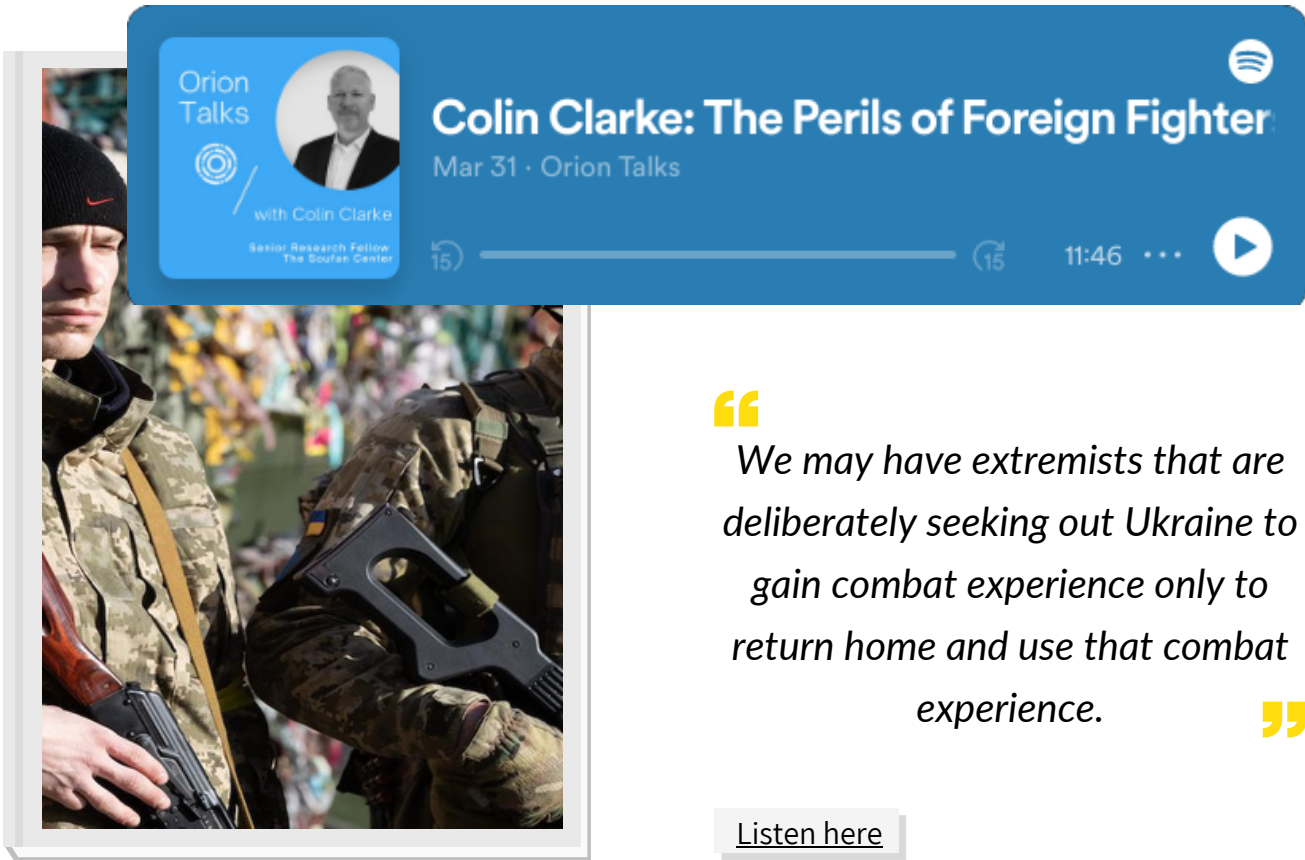
[Listen here](#)


“

*Captagon reinforced the power dynamic and exploited a lot of Syrian civilians' trauma by playing upon the food insecurity and economic crisis that many are experiencing.*

”

[Listen here](#)

Orion Talks  
with Colin Clarke  
Senior Research Fellow  
The Soufan Center

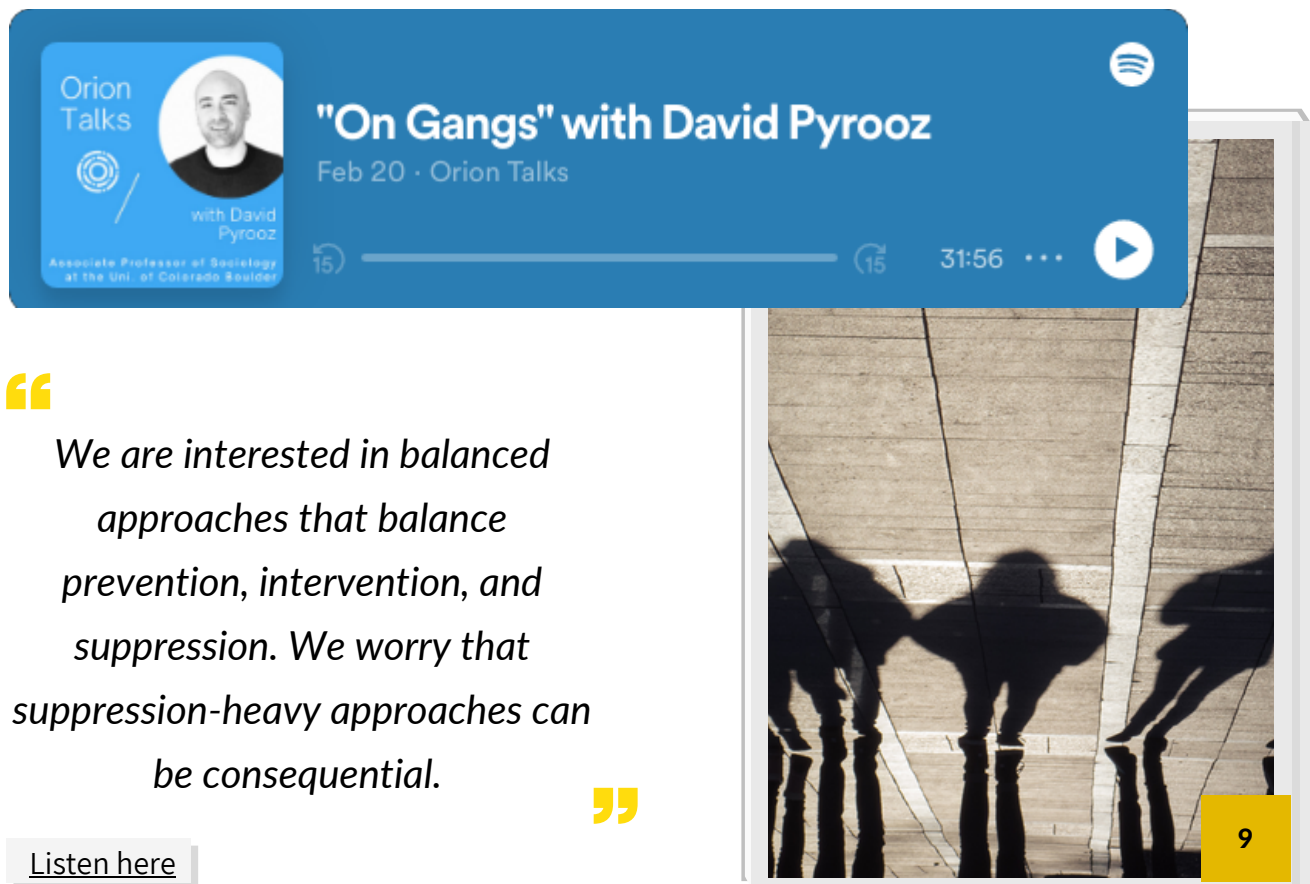
## Colin Clarke: The Perils of Foreign Fighter

Mar 31 · Orion Talks

15 11:46 ...

**“**  
We may have extremists that are deliberately seeking out Ukraine to gain combat experience only to return home and use that combat experience.  
**”**

[Listen here](#)



Orion Talks  
with David Pyrooz  
Associate Professor of Sociology  
at the Univ. of Colorado Boulder

## "On Gangs" with David Pyrooz

Feb 20 · Orion Talks

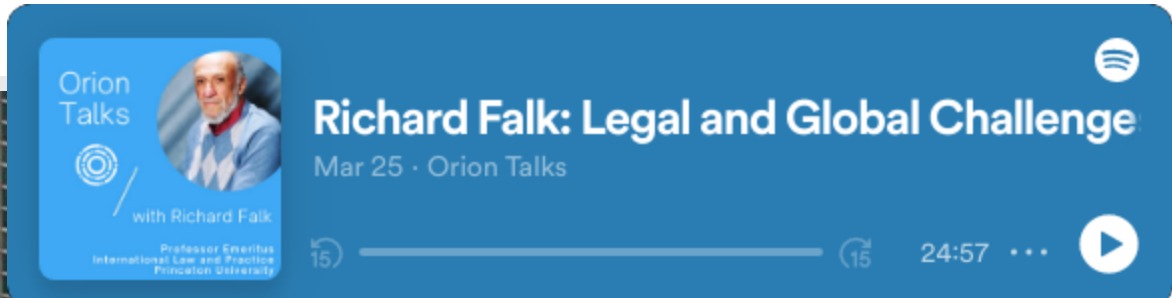
15 31:56 ...

**“**  
We are interested in balanced approaches that balance prevention, intervention, and suppression. We worry that suppression-heavy approaches can be consequential.  
**”**

[Listen here](#)

9

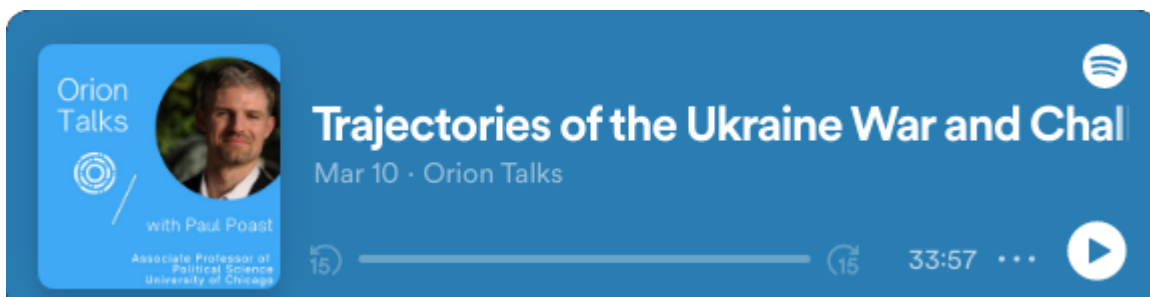




“

*The self-preservation of Ukraine and the rest of the world depends on acting rationally, what I call responsible geopolitics, and so far the West has not managed to pursue that.*

”

[Listen here](#)


“

*We are in a condition where the most likely scenario is the quagmire scenario; the objective was regime change, not so much annexation. But, it's proving to be extremely difficult if not outright unsuccessful.*

”

[Listen here](#)



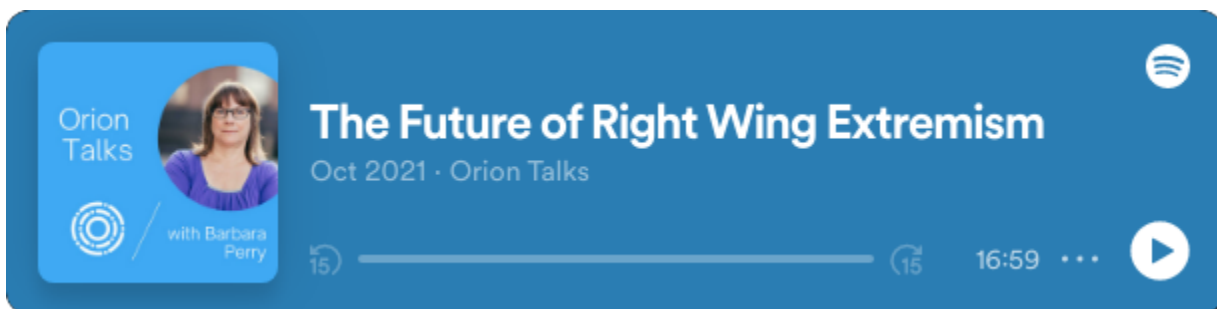



“

*Russia's long-term strategy is to use any possible tool to make Ukraine abandon its pro-European Union and NATO foreign policy.*

”

[Listen here](#)

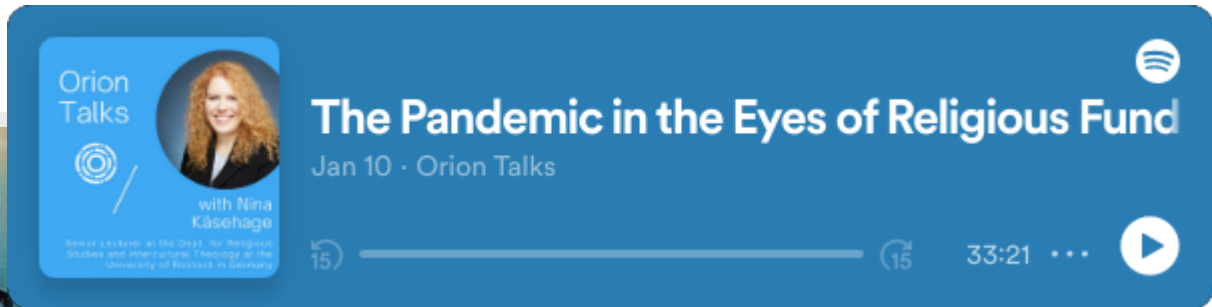


“

*Enhancing critical digital literacy so that people are able to unpack the conspiracy theories rather than buying them wholesale is crucial.*

”

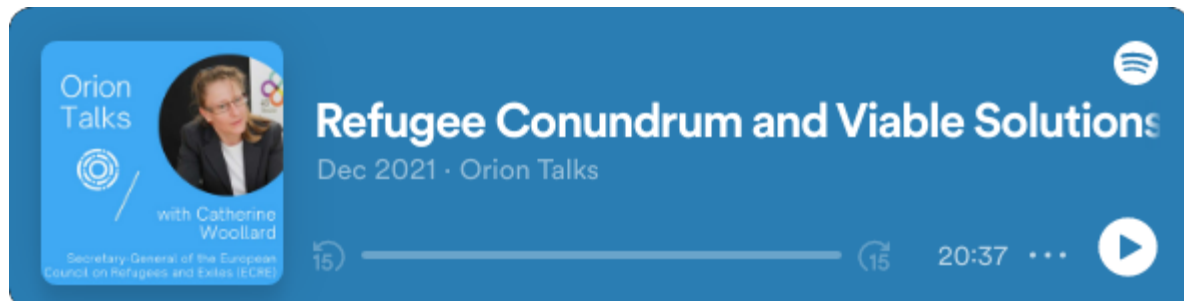
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“

*The basic principle in any program should be to treat all actors equally and to build mutual respect and trust. Only this way, we can build bridges.*

”

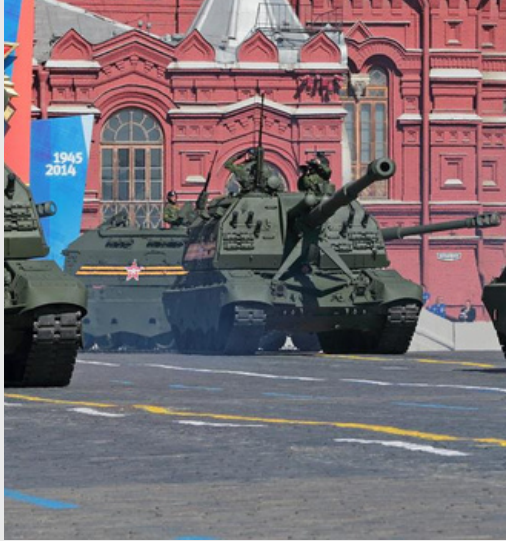
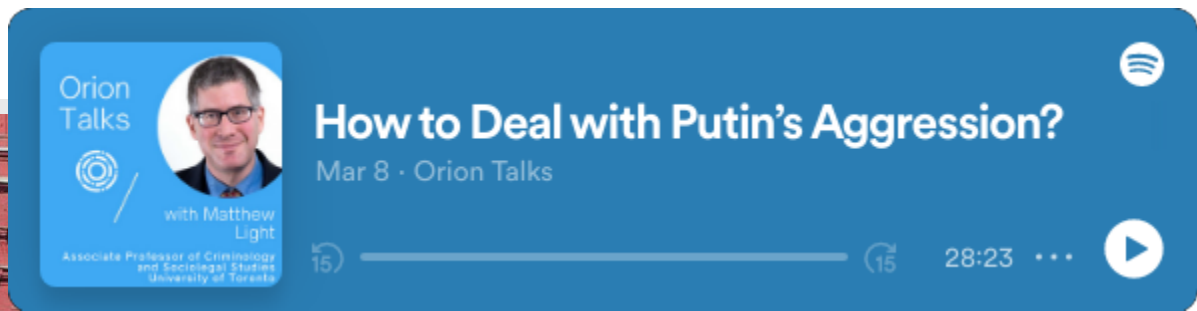
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“

*There is a form of what we might call 'enlightened self-interest' that would lead the big and richer countries to respect legal obligations in this area and host a fair share of people, even if that's politically controversial sometimes.*

”

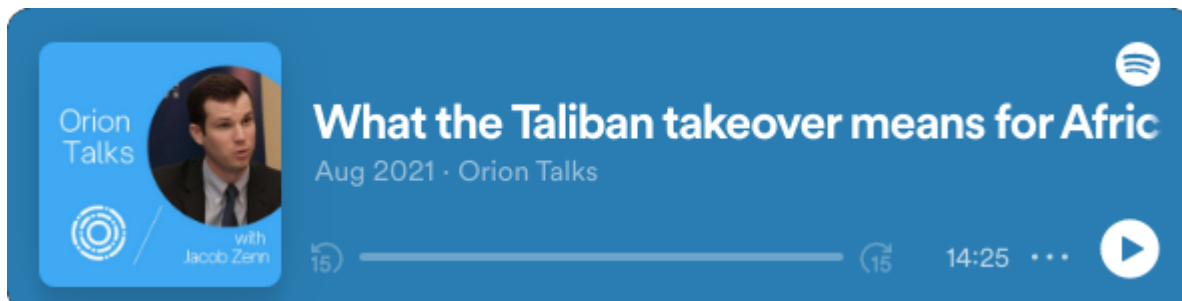
[Listen here](#)

“

*An obvious goal for the US, NATO, the EU, and their allies is to deny access to the West to all individuals who are closely linked to the Russian Government.*

”

[Listen here](#)


“

*There's going to be less US international counterterrorism engagement and perhaps more geopolitical engagement with countries like China and Russia, but that's a whole different ballgame of Afghanistan's ramifications.*

”

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# OP-ED



## Assessing Drone Operations in Ukraine: Trends and Implications



Federico Borsari

Published July 22'

[Read More](#)

“ So far, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has confirmed that drones alone are not game changers. ”

Compared with Ukraine's, Russia's use of UCAVs has been much more limited in scale. When it comes to smaller tactical UAVs, the story is quite different. Here, Russia is playing a much more active role, deploying a vast assortment of systems, including the Eleron-3 and the omnipresent Orlan-10 (among others) for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions and artillery fire adjustment. The figure shows a Russian Inokhodets UCAV striking a Ukrainian truck.





### Who Decides When to Fire? A Legal Debate over “Killer Robots”

Op-Ed | The combatants of war are humans and, for decades, humans assumed sole responsibility for making decisions about the use of lethal force in combat situations. Not anymore.

[orionpolicy.org](https://orionpolicy.org)

Emirhan Darcan

Published February 22'

[Read More](#)

According to international law, life-and-death decisions should be made by humans, not algorithms. The central role of the human, which is to serve as the connection between a serious decision and the consequences of that decision, must be maintained. If this link is broken, then the situation becomes risky in terms of both ethics and human rights.

“

*Europe and other Western countries must maintain a unified defensive and economic front. A coordinated strategy that relies on a modern network of nimble supply-and-demand solutions is central to breaking Europe's dependence on Russian oil and gas.*

”

[Read More](#)



### Russia's Weaponization of Europe's Energy Dependency and the Global Risks It Brings

Op-Ed | Ever since Vladimir Putin assumed leadership, the world and especially Europe have been watching nervously how Russia may act given its position as a dominant energy supplier.

[orionpolicy.org](https://orionpolicy.org)

Yerzhan Karymsak

Published May 22'



### How Will Sweden's and Finland's Membership in NATO Impact Arctic Geopolitics?

Op-Ed | NATO membership for Sweden and Finland undoubtedly has the power to change the security architecture in Europe.

Cem Demirci

Published June 22'

[Read More](#)

“

*The inclusion of Finland and Sweden as NATO members will facilitate NATO's development of a comprehensive military strategy for the Arctic region.*

*The increasing geopolitical importance of the region and the applications of Finland and Sweden to join NATO will lead NATO to place more importance on the region.*

”

“

*We should respond to Putin's conquest of Ukraine -whether he takes part or all, with a simple strategy- build up the economic capacity of the population of Ukraine. In short, let the people of Ukraine find 40 million ways to tie the Russians in knots -and for years.*

”



### The Flaw in Putin's Strategy and How the West Can Exploit It

Op-Ed | Putin made clear that his goal is to absorb all of Ukraine, effectively re-unifying a key part of the old Soviet Union.

orionpolicy.org

[Read More](#)

Robert Pape

Published February 22'



## NATO's New Strategic Concept Is Facing The Ukraine Crisis



Russia continues to advocate for implementing the Minsk Protocols, while the Kyiv government wants to change or abrogate the protocols. U.N. Security Council Resolution 2202, however, has made it difficult for Ukraine to move forward on this issue.

Cem Demirci

Published February 22'

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*International bodies—such as INTERPOL and EUROPOL—that are responsible for fighting transnational organized crime need to work with similar regional organizations to coordinate operations, promote collaboration on the ground, and establish safe channels of intelligence sharing.*



[Read More](#)



### What Impact Can the War in Ukraine Have on Organized Crime?

Op-Ed | Chaos and instability have always been fertile ground for organized crime and criminal networks typically operating in Eastern Europe.

[orionpolicy.org](#)

Ruggero Scaturro

Published May 22'



## The Future of Interpol: Policing International Crime in a Political World



Minimally, action must be taken to not allow the organization to be tainted by leaders with problematic human-rights records and, conversely, to allow police from democratic states to participate fully. The organization's investigative activities also need to be monitored.

Mathieu Deflem

Published December 21'

[Read More](#)

“

*While the authoritarian regimes might see the INTERPOL General Assembly as an opportunity to steer the organization in a repressive direction, democratic countries should take advantage of the meeting and create awareness against the misuse of INTERPOL.*

”

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### Holding Its General Assembly in Turkey Could Imperil INTERPOL's Legitimacy

Op-Ed | INTERPOL General Assembly convenes on Nov 23-25, 2021, in Istanbul, Turkey. Several risks and challenges await INTERPOL's new governing body.

Suat Cubukcu, Suleyman Ozeren

Published November 21'



### Why Ransomware is Rational and Why That is Good

Op-Ed | Ransomware attacks have made headlines for years, but understanding the true impact requires significant resources and access to the confidential, inner workings of their victims.

[orionpolicy.org](https://orionpolicy.org)

Kall Loper, Mike Lefebvre

Published November 21'

[Read More](#)

One of the more recent developments is a franchise model allowing affiliates to select victims and direct attacks using a Ransomware as a Service (RaaS) model. The threat groups defend their brand in an effort to build the victim's confidence that paying money will reverse the attack. Without some level of confidence, no one would pay the ransom.



*By being more open to cooperation and collaboration, public and private sectors can complement and support each other's efforts in dealing with cyber threats.*



[Read More](#)



### Rethinking Cybersecurity after Colonial Pipeline Hack

Op-Ed | The debate over the nation's preparedness for cyberattacks is still raging two months after the Colonial Pipeline hack which gave a heads up about the vulnerabilities of the critical infrastructure to malicious cyber actors.

[orionpolicy.org](https://orionpolicy.org)

Mehmet Bastug

Published July 21'



# WEBINAR

## Far-Right Online Ecosystems

The banner for the webinar "Far-Right Online Ecosystems" features the Orion Policy Institute logo in the top left. The title "Far-Right Online Ecosystems" is prominently displayed in the center. Below the title, four circular portraits of the participants are arranged: Stuart Macdonald (Director of Cyber Threats Research Centre, Swansea University), Maura Conway (Professor Cyber Threats, Law Swansea University), J.M. Berger (Author), and Suat Cubukcu (Professorial Lecturer American University). A red YouTube play button icon is centered over the portraits. The word "MODERATOR" is placed below the portraits. In the top right corner, there is a "WEBINAR" badge and a "Share" button. At the bottom left, it says "Watch on YouTube" with the YouTube logo. At the bottom right, there is a "REGISTER NOW" button and the website "www.orionpolicy.org". The date "MONDAY, JULY 11, 2022" is also visible.

Panelists Stuart Macdonald and Maura Conway from Swansea University and author J. M. Berger discussed their recent research on European far-right online ecosystems published by The RESOLVE Network. "The research report examines the outlinking activity of identified pro-far-right users among the followers of the official Twitter accounts of two prominent far-right European political parties, Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and France's Rassemblement National (RN)."

[Watch here](#)



## Changing Threat Environment and Challenges in Cybersecurity



Orion Policy Institute

Changing Threat Environment and Challenges in Cybersec... [Share](#)  
LIVE WEBINAR

### CHANGING THREAT ENVIRONMENT & CHALLENGES IN CYBER SECURITY

**D. Kall Loper**  
Vice President of Digital Forensics and Incident Response at Hejosed Group / Ektash Group

**Lennart Maschmeyer**  
Senior Researcher at Center for Security Studies (CSS) of ETH Zurich

**Mehmet F. Bastug**  
Assistant Professor, University of Scranton

**MODERATOR**  
**Reza Montasari**  
Senior Lecturer in Cyber Threats Swansea University

Watch on  YouTube

In this event, we discussed the concept of identity in modern network investigations, and cyberspace including the tools and services on the dark web, the types of cyber attacks, cyberterrorism, and countering cyberterrorist attacks. Our panelists also touched upon the need for new regulations and potential solutions such as improving the capabilities of domestic law enforcement agencies and addressing individual susceptibilities.

[Watch here](#)



# POLICY

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# BRIEF



## Blocking NATO Expansion Could Mean Far-Reaching Implications for Turkey

Policy Brief | Turkey's blocking of Sweden and Finland's bid North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for membership led to confusion and frustration in the alliance.

 [orionpolicy.org](https://orionpolicy.org)

Suleyman Ozeren

Published May 22'

When dealing with Turkey, the United States and other NATO members should emphasize NATO's value system, its operational goals, and the high-profile cooperation among allies as necessary preconditions for a positive relationship. Turkey must realize that constructive dialogue—not threats or disruptive diplomacy—governs the intra-alliance relations among NATO members.

[Read More](#)



## Reality or Misperception: The US Withdrawal from the Middle East

Hasim Tekines

The economic crisis stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic led to the de-escalation of tensions in the region and gave Biden a chance to pursue a pragmatist strategy in the Middle East. Just how long such an approach can be sustained is an open question. If the positive trend of de-escalation were to reverse itself, every new shock or crisis will be a test to see whether the United States responds with restraint or activism.

Published March 22'

[Read More](#)

## Withdrawal of US Military from Afghanistan: Risks and Responses

Suat Cubukcu

The Afghan people do not need a guardian to help them find the right path forward or tell them how to deal with the issues they face. What they do need is genuine support from the United States and other countries for building a legitimate and sustainable government. It is time for the Biden administration to show that the United States cares about the future of Afghanistan and the Afghan people.

Published July 21'

[Read More](#)



# CONCLUDING REMARKS

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As we reached the first anniversary of the launch of Orion Policy Institute (OPI), we are honored for the quality and quantity of timely research and analysis that OPI has produced in a short time frame. OPI will continue contributing to our mission to promote policies to advance stability, good governance, and human rights.

The OPI is open to collaboration and strategic partnerships with independent scholars, think tanks, and research centers to conduct policy research, produce publications, and organize events in the areas of national and global security, disinformation, democracy, human rights, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies.



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