



Orion
Policy
Institute

September 2023



2022-2023

ANNUAL REPORT



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PREPARED BYMeryem Akcay
Ayse Ergene

AT A GLANCE

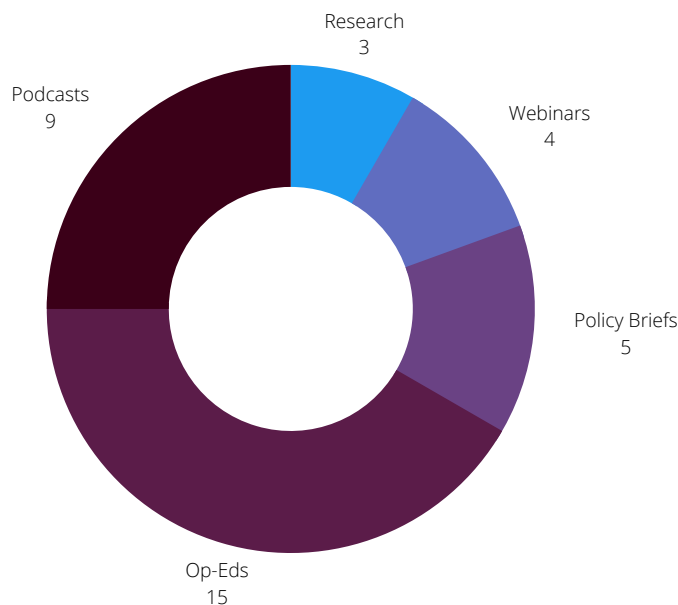
ABOUT US

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

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



In the 2022-2023 period, OPI has published 3 research reports, 15 op-eds, 5 policy briefs, and 2 expert panels. We hosted 4 webinars and 9 podcasts.





EXPERT --- PANEL

What Awaits Al-Qaeda And Jihadist Networks After Al-Zawahiri?

Suleyman Ozeren, Colin P. Clarke, Sara Harmouch, & Ismail Onat

Published November 22'

Today the Islamic State is flexible. It morphs and adapts to its environment. A new disruptive leader with operational and tactical goals could tilt the balance of power between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda.



The current regional and international dynamics are not convenient for al-Qaeda core to emerge as the leader of the jihadist groups. However, if a young and charismatic figure becomes the new leader, that might change the prospect of the al-Qaeda core.

Now that Zawahiri is dead, al-Qaeda is likely to grow even more decentralized. Affiliates like JNIM and al-Shabaab are more likely to pursue local agendas and focus on grievances in sub-Saharan Africa, thus downplaying the narrative of the global jihad.

[Read More](#)

Policy Responses To Prevent Drug Overdose Deaths

Susan Bissett, Larissa J. Maier, & Katharina Maier

Published February 23'

Providing comprehensive access to care and services is vital. This means ensuring people have access to safe and stable housing, food, employment opportunities, health care including mental health services, and social support systems that provide people with community, belonging, and a sense of security.



A response focused on education, prevention, and harm reduction is necessary and crucial if we are to combat this crisis at the ground level. While many still argue that this opioid epidemic is due to personal choice or moral failings, those arguments will not endure any longer.

People are more likely to seek help for themselves and others if they do not risk legal consequences for their actions. Good Samaritan drug overdose laws as introduced by some US states are well-intended but not sufficient.

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POLICY

BRIEF

The Evolution of the Iran-Houthis Partnership and Its Implications for Yemen and Regional Dynamics

Marta Furlan

Published August 23'



For the moment, the Saudis' priorities in Yemen are to reach an agreement with the Houthis, receive guarantees on security along the Saudi-Yemeni border, and definitively withdraw from the Yemeni quagmire. Determined to leave a conflict that has long become an unsustainable and infructuous expenditure of resources, Riyadh appears ready (or at least resigned) to accept the institutionalization of the Houthis' political and military power in the north of Yemen. As long as Iran can guarantee that the Houthis will refrain from attacking Saudi targets, that might be satisfactory enough for Riyadh.

[Read More](#)

What Does ISIS' Survival Tell Us About Countermeasures?

Suleyman Ozeren

Published June 23'

It is imperative to assist local governments in building their counterterrorism capacities: by providing training, intelligence sharing, and resources to enable them to effectively combat terrorism within their borders. Counterterrorism strategies ought to also address socio-economic disparities, political grievances, and other key factors that ISIS exploits to recruit and radicalize.

[Read More](#)



The War in Sudan: As Ceasefires Collapse, the Risks of a Prolonged and Multi-Layered Conflict Rise

Marta Furlan

Published August 23'

The United States, which shares the same benefit of having access to both the SAF and the RSF, should also continue to participate actively in the diplomatic efforts, coordinating with Riyadh. It should use its leverage to exert pressure on the warring sides and guide them toward some sort of compromise.

[Read More](#)



Return to the Arab League: How Syria's Readmission Affects Regional Stability

Kristian Alexander & Gina Bou Serhal

Published May 23'

The Arab League's decision to reinstate Syria after a nearly 12½-year suspension signals regional willingness to facilitate a collective Arab-led resolve to reconcile their differences and promote regional stability and cooperation. Engagement with Al-Assad can be viewed as a pragmatic decision to help bring an end to a crisis with few solutions.

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Will Turkey's Meddling in Syria Solve the Kurdish Dilemma?

Suleyman Ozeren & Suat Cubukcu

Published January 23'

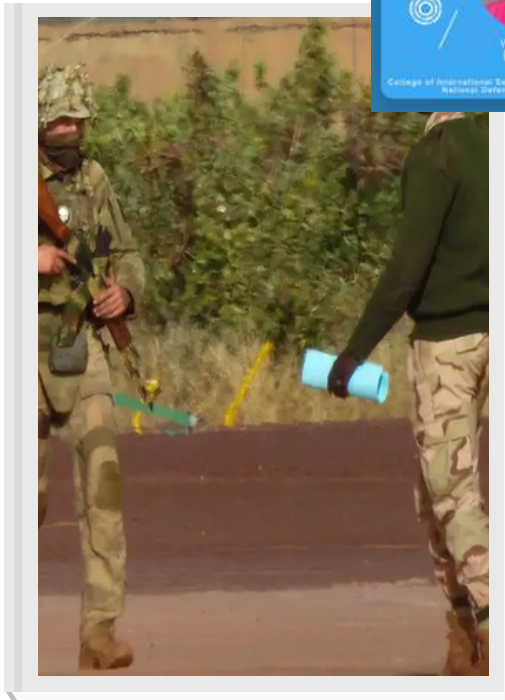
Any decision to carry out another military incursion in northeast Syria will continue having overreaching effects on the Kurds both in Syria and Turkey, eventually affecting Turkey's domestic politics. Without a clear roadmap, the AKP government will struggle to offer a feasible solution to the Kurdish issue at home and in Syria.

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PODCAST



“We see Wagner emerging as a shady organization that allows Kremlin to perform things while also allowing for plausible deniability.”


[Listen here](#)



“We do see some evidence of jihadist groups in the Sahel, also collaborating with drug traffickers and smugglers in bringing weapons and drugs from Southern areas up to the north and in some cases to the Mediterranean.”

[Listen here](#)





Orion Talks

Chiara Redaelli: Understanding The Sudan

May 10 · Orion Talks

with Chiara Redaelli
Research Fellow
Geneva Academy

15 28:56 ...

“
This conflict is here to stay for a while. Besides the intensifying violence, we have foreign actors like the Wagner Group who are fueling the conflict through funds and weapons.
”

[Listen here](#)

Orion Talks

Barbara Molas: Multiculturalism and the Tra

Mar 6 · Orion Talks


with Barbara Molas
Research Fellow
International Centre for
Gender Research (ICGR)

15 20:57 ...


“
We need to learn to distinguish what can be flagged as far-right because there is an intersection of multiple ideologies. The narrative should push for discourses that are considered to be potentially violent.
”

[Listen here](#)






Orion Talks
Feb 4 · Orion Talks
with Federico Donelli
Assistant Professor
University of Illinois
18:49




“ We have a process of normalization among different Middle Eastern players. These create a radically new environment for Turkey also in Eastern Africa. ”

[Listen here](#)



Orion Talks
Jan 9 · Orion Talks
with Daisy Muibu
Assistant Professor
University of Arkansas
27:34



“ The new government has made conscious efforts to show unity in the fight against Al Shabaab. There's a third arm, an economic strategy, to the Somali government's efforts to target Al Shabaab's finances. ”

[Listen here](#)



“Now that Zawahiri is dead, al-Qaeda is likely to grow even more decentralized. Affiliates like JNIM and AlShabaab are more likely to pursue local agendas and focus on grievances in sub-Saharan Africa, thus downplaying the narrative of the global jihad.”

[Listen here](#)



“This debate is often around young people in the school systems where teachers can notice changes in their behavior. But are we seeing an increase in the radicalization of young people or are we simply more aware of the fact that they are being radicalized?”

[Listen here](#)





How the Politicization of the Turkish Armed Forces Undermined its Core Tasks

Cem Demirci

Published April 23'



The world is evolving from a unipolar order dominated by a single power to a multipolar political system in which more than one power fights for dominance. With Russia's annexation of the four provinces of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya, and Kherson in the south and east of Ukraine, a new era is beginning.

[Read More](#)

One Year Into the Russia - Ukraine War: An Assessment of Drone Deployment

Ivan Zaccagnini

Published April 23'

Empirical data once again demonstrates the limitations of current-generation drones and the importance of integrated air defense systems and highly-trained personnel in modern warfare even though the 'drone debate' is still very active.

[Read More](#)



What Awaits Turkey's Political Landscape in the Aftermath of Earthquakes?

Hasim Tekines

Published February 23'



The Turkish political agenda does not stay fixed on a single issue for too long. Erdogan can divert the attention with a foreign policy crisis within a few weeks and make the suffering forgotten. It's the opposition's duty to prevent this scenario from repeating itself.

[Read More](#)

Will Turkey-Syria Talks Reach a Real Rapprochement?

Alexander Langlois

Published January 23'

At a minimum, both sides benefit from simply talking. Erdogan displays a semblance of progress on the Syria file to his constituents, building support among the nationalist base by co-opting anti-refugee and anti-Syrian Kurd narratives ahead of elections.

[Read More](#)



Could China Occupy Taiwan Soon?

Cem Demirci

Published January 23'



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 will lead NATO to place more importance on the region.

[Read More](#)

The Growing Resistance of Women: Is Autocratic Façade Weakening in Iran?

Ayse Ergene

Published October 22'

The Islamic Republic has shown to be highly immune to change and meaningful reforms despite a lot of pressure from the Iranian people, especially women. On the other hand, women and men continue their fights for democracy despite live ammunition, arrests, torture, and executions.

[Read More](#)



The Main Difference Between NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept And Its Previous Strategic Concepts

Cem Demirci

Published October 22'



The 2022 Strategic Concept requires all NATO members to “encourage innovation and enhance our investments in emerging and disruptive technologies to maintain our interoperability and military edge” and calls such actions a key collective defense mission.



“Additionally, the most frequently used verbs and nouns in the Strategic Concept clearly indicate that the unipolar world order led by the United States has come to an end and that a multipolar world has emerged.”

[Read More](#)

What's Next For Damascus's Regional Re-Normalization?

Alexander Langlois

Published April 23'



Without unanimous support, it is unclear if the Saudis can force an embattled Assad invitation. If additional states truly stand with Qatar against this outcome, it becomes even more difficult for Riyadh to justify any unilateral move.

[Read More](#)

Syria's Return to the Arab League: Navigating the Captagon Dilemma

Adnan Nasser

Published June 23'

The Syrian regime is directly involved in the trade of a multi-billion-dollar drug empire with Captagon as its flagship. With the government's full acknowledgment and sanction, 80 percent of the world's supply of this highly addictive amphetamine is reported to be produced in Syria.



[Read More](#)

Can Tinubu Tame Boko Haram? Nigerian Politics and Security After the 2023 Elections

Jacob Zenn

Published April 23'



It is no longer realistic to expect Boko Haram to be “defeated” simply because of a change in the Nigerian presidency. However, the country is seemingly coming together by rejecting election violence, and there are signs that the economy may improve under Tinubu.

[Read More](#)

Developments in Southern Yemen: Significance, Implications, and Prospects for Peace

Marta Furlan

Published May 23'

As the STC becomes more powerful and more cohesive, the EU and the US, as parties involved in the effort to help a Yemeni transition towards peace, need to pay more attention to the reality of the Southern issue and appreciate the relevance.

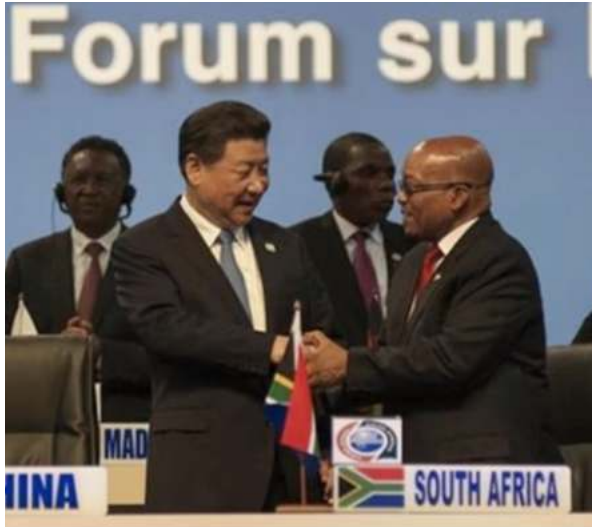


[Read More](#)

China's Security Challenges in Africa's Remote Regions

Jacob Zenn

Published June 23'



Chinese contractors in Africa could further enable Chinese companies to engage in illegal activities, whether related to mining, logging, or extracting other resources, with the “contractors” protecting, but also providing cover for, such operations and acting as intermediaries with corrupt local-level officials.

[Read More](#)

How American prison conditions can impact extradition requests

Jeffrey Ian Ross

Published May 23'

The reluctance of foreign governments to send individuals who are wanted back to the United States because of poor jail and prison conditions should serve as an additional reason why the American correctional system should reform and change sooner rather than later.



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WEBINAR



Orion Policy Institute

Transnational Repression: The Long Arm of Authoritarianism

LIVE WEBINAR

Moderator

Marcus Michaelsen
Independent Researcher

Dana Moss
Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame

Mathieu Deflem
Professor of Sociology at the University of South Carolina

Edward Lemon
Professor at The Bush School DC


Yana Gorokhovskaia
Researcher at Freedom House

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2022
11:00 AM – 12:30 PM (EST)

REGISTER NOW
www.orionpolicy.org

In this webinar, Orion Policy Institute brought together the experts working on this important issue. The experts presented their work and discussed the current trends and methods of transnational repression including digital repression, country-specific case studies impact on diaspora communities, the role of INTERPOL and policy recommendations for the host countries.

[Watch here](#)




Orion Policy Institute


**Transnational Repression Series II:
The Long Arm of Authoritarianism**

LIVE WEBINAR


Moderator




Noura Aljizawi
Research Officer
Citizen Lab,
University of
Toronto




Siena Anstis
Senior Legal Advisor
Citizen Lab,
University of
Toronto



Natalie Hall
Harriman
Institute
Columbia
University



Jing-Jie CHEN
Campaigner/
Researcher/
Safeguard
Defenders



Suat Cubukcu
Assistant Professor
Towson University

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2022
11:00 AM – 12:30 PM (EST)

REGISTER NOW
www.orionpolicy.org

Transnational repression is a phenomenon that refers to the efforts of governments to reach across their borders to silence dissent living in the diaspora. In this second series of this webinar, Orion Policy Institute brought together the experts working on this important issue. The experts discussed the current trends and methods of transnational repression including digital repression, country-specific case studies, and policy recommendations for the host countries.

[Watch here](#)

LIVE WEBINAR

DRUG OVERDOSE CRISIS AND POLICY RESPONSES

WEDNESDAY, 5 APRIL 2023 **1-2 PM (EST)**

REGISTER NOW
www.orionpolicy.org

Orion Policy Institute

MODERATOR

Dr. Susan Bissett
President, Drug Intervention Institute

Dr. Sandra Bucerius
Director, University of Alberta Prison Project

Dr. Larissa J. Maier
International Drug Policy Expert

Carina Havenstrite
Program Manager, Lackawanna County District Attorney's Office

In this webinar, Orion Policy Institute brought together experts on the global drug overdose crisis and drug policies. The conversation covered the impact of prison dynamics on the opioid epidemic, NGO works on education, collaboration, and prevention of DODs, and policy responses to the overdose crisis and policy recommendations.

[Watch here](#)

LIVE WEBINAR
www.orionpolicy.org

8 JUNE 2023

GLOBAL PRISON CRISIS

9:00AM-10:00AM EST

Moderator



Nawal Ammar
Dean, College of Humanities
and Social Sciences,
Rowan University



Jeffrey Ian Ross
Professor,
University of Baltimore



Matt Maycock
Senior Lecturer,
Monash University



Sergio Grossi
Researcher,
Complutense University of
Madrid

 Orion Policy Institute

Orion Policy Institute hosted a live Webinar on the global prison crisis. The conversation covered the response to the Covid-19 crisis within prison settings, education, and reintegration in prison in crisis with responses from the Global South, and correction systems crisis around the world.

[Watch here](#)



RESEARCH

Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Adele Carter, Aimee Hanstein, & Ayse Ergene

Published December 22'

“

Amini's death brought thousands of people into the streets to voice their decades-long grievances with the government's oppression of women.

”



From the government's perspective, the protests are unlikely to trigger reforms; the past will repeat itself, and the protests will be quashed once again. From the people's perspective, a repeat of history will only fuel the rage of the masses. Iranians, especially women, will no longer accept the status quo and are determined to end the government's oppressive rule. Whether the latest protest movement leads to a better future or not, Iranian women will continue their long struggle for freedom and democracy in Iran.

[Read More](#)

Women in the Arab Spring Uprisings: Egypt

Adele Carter, Aimee Hanstein, Ayse Ergene, & Zach Pittman

Published March 23'

“

The future of the Egyptian women's movement is not all rosy, but it is not entirely gloomy either. Defiant female voices are definitely in the air, and they are much louder than they were prior to the 2011 uprisings.

”



Figure: Women's representation in the Egyptian Parliament throughout the years (2010-2020). Source: The World Bank.

Currently, parliament does not have a specific committee dedicated to gender equality, but establishing one could enable oversight of initiatives and legislation addressing gender issues in order to contribute to the empowerment of women. Political parties have also yet to fully commit to the promotion of equal representation. Gender-focused and gender-sensitive institutions, therefore, are needed to achieve social justice and gender equality.

[Read More](#)

Women In The Arab Spring Uprisings: Iraq

Adele Carter, Aimee Hanstein, Ayse Ergene, & Zach Pittman

Published September 22'

“

Women-led civil society groups are particularly critical partners for mitigating violence at both the local and national levels. The underrepresentation of women in security positions, however, creates a vulnerability that terrorist groups continue to exploit.

”



Iraqi women face an ongoing struggle for equal rights and status with their male counterparts. It likely will be a difficult path forward, Iraqi women have proved again and again that they will resist, assume leadership roles, and fight for their rightful place in society whenever and wherever patriarchal oppression is found. They will, therefore, remain vital actors in bringing peace, justice, and strong institutions to Iraq.

[Read More](#)



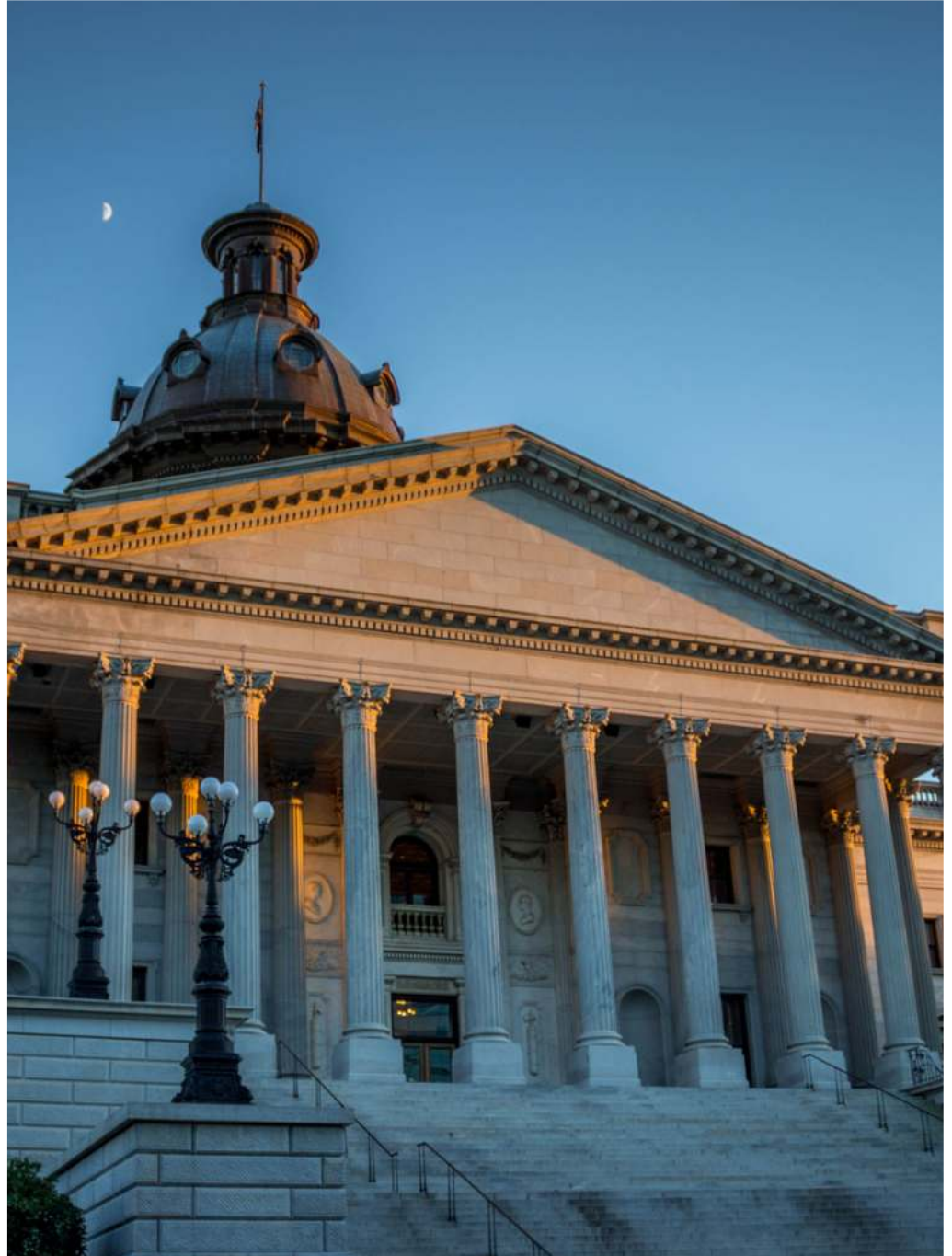
CONCLUDING REMARKS

As we reflect upon the second year of the Orion Policy Institute, it is with immense pride that we note the remarkable growth and accomplishments achieved this year. Our commitment to advancing the frontiers of knowledge, coupled with a relentless pursuit of excellence, has allowed us to elevate both the quality and quantity of our research and analysis for better policy decisions.

Throughout our second year, we have expanded our research team and portfolio and delved deep into topics such as increasing security threats in Africa, transnational repression, and the overdose crisis in our homeland. These endeavors underscore our unwavering commitment to providing timely, insightful, and actionable policy recommendations that resonate with decision-makers worldwide. We extend our gratitude to our supporters, collaborators, and the audience for their continued trust in the Orion Policy Institute.



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