



OXFORD PROGRAMME ON
INTERNATIONAL PEACE
AND SECURITY

CONNECTING ATROCITY PREVENTION RESEARCH AND POLICY

Overview

The Oxford Programme on International Peace and Security, along with our partners at McGill University Center for International Peace and Security Studies (led by Prof. Jennifer Welsh), and the Simon Skjodt Center for Genocide Prevention at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, is in the process of developing a new platform aimed at fostering and supporting **knowledge exchange on atrocity prevention and related frameworks between academics, expert practitioners, and policymakers**. The platform is aimed to address an existing gap, which is widely recognized among those working in this field. It will aim to channel high-level research to policymakers, while facilitating greater cross-sectoral cooperation and exchange on atrocity prevention and related protection agendas.

Background

Following a series of strategic consultations and a mapping exercise conducted in early 2020, we have identified a **high level of interest from both thought leaders and policymakers** in such a platform. Specifically, our consultations indicated the **often-siloed nature** of actors in the atrocity prevention space, and expressed interest in the utility of a **policy-oriented, research-backed platform**, which would engage in multidisciplinary methods to tailor its work to the needs of policymakers with demonstrated interest and capacity in this area.

Structure

Our recently published Briefing Paper, *Atrocity Prevention in a Transatlantic Setting*, summarizes the findings from our preliminary consultations, and proposes a **two-pronged structure** for the platform: a **Research Council** and an **Inter-Governmental Network**, which would exist in a *symbiotic, iterative relationship*, whereby structured briefings are delivered to policymakers in a short, digestible format, and through which policymakers can, in turn, inform the Research Council as to their needs and priorities. Alongside structured briefings, the Research Council will also convene strategic thinking and research to take prevention and protection into their next chapters. Our conceptualization of the platform continues. At this stage, however, we submit that the Research Council should offer a *tiered and concentric approach* to membership, with (i) **steering membership**, for those willing to commit to the leadership and governance of the platform and to periodically hosting its Secretariat; (ii) **institutional membership**, for leading organizations and research institutions; (iii) **individual membership**, for individual experts and former senior government officials not presently affiliated to a participating institution; and (iv) **rising leaders membership**, to further the inter-generational aspect of the platform. Members of all forms will convene at the working-level once per year in a meeting on issues of thematic, contextual, and macro-level interest, and these convenings will be supplemented throughout the year with bilateral discussions around events such as the Munich Security Conference or Paris Peace Forum, enabling

the Council to gather input on policymakers' specific needs and priorities for the next briefing, while maintaining minimal demands on policymakers' time. Linking the Council and Network will be a Secretariat, which will serve as a point of contact for policymakers, and play a central role in receiving and directing inquiries for research and convening technical working groups amongst members to address policymakers' needs. In addition, the platform will envision mechanisms for **structured engagement with key constituencies**, including legislators; military actors; existing domestic and international networks; advocacy groups; and the technology and humanitarian sectors.

Status

We are continuing to engage in consultations to further develop our conceptualization of the platform and our preliminary research agenda. With existing partners, we have identified a three-pronged approach to research, through (i) **macro-level and geo-strategic analysis**; (ii) **thematic research** on the synergies and tensions arising between atrocity prevention and a range of other frameworks (including new technologies, conflict prevention and fragility (including **peace operations and emergency relief, and counterterrorism and the prevention of violent extremism**); and, finally, (iii) **contextual (regional or country-specific) analysis**. We are continuing to work to develop, in consultation with policymakers, a plan for the preliminary outputs of the Research Council on these areas, as well as candidates for contextual study, in view of both the needs and priorities of policymakers, and available research capacity and expertise. We welcome intellectual input and discussion, as well as insights as to how to optimize the operation and structure of this new platform.

ABOUT US

The **Oxford Institute for Ethics Law and Armed Conflict (ELAC)** is an interdisciplinary research institute based at Oxford University's Blavatnik School of Government. It looks at different aspects of armed conflict from the perspective of law, international relations, and philosophy. Our aim is to **strengthen law, norms and institutions to restrain, regulate, and prevent armed conflict**.

As part of its mission, in 2018, ELAC established the **Oxford Programme on International Peace and Security (IPS)**, to look *beyond the threshold of armed conflict* and contribute to our collective understanding of other forms of organized violence that threaten our international peace and stability. IPS aims to provide a **space for research on the critical challenges facing the law, norms, and institutions affecting the maintenance and enforcement of international peace and global security**. It focuses equally on normative and strategic questions, as well as operational and tactical issues, with an eye to balancing individual rights and collective security needs.

IPS work focuses on atrocity prevention and the protection of civilian populations from forms of widespread or organised violence; multilateralism and international diplomacy; civil-military relations; and global governance more generally. We engage equally with regional and international bodies, as well as domestic institutions with competence in foreign relations, defence, intelligence, and other relevant fields. We also constitute a hub for the study of public policy leadership.