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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Rocket-Powered Corruption: Why the Missile Industry Became the Target of Xi’s Purge
Elliot Ji – War on the Rocks: 23 January 2024
The People's Liberation Army is experiencing yet another wave of expulsions by Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Russian bombs failed to destroy Ukraine's energy grid. Corruption could break its own
Eva Hartog – Politico: 19 January 2024
Just as Vladimir Putin seeks to project an image of a mighty Russia before elections, some two dozen regions are experiencing heating outages.

For more on this theme:
Editorial: The vicious circle of corruption
https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/editorial-the-vicious-circle-corruption.1077420

Breathe easier, Taiwan: China’s corrupt Rocket Forces are fuelling missiles with water
https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/01/12/china-taiwan-invasion-rockets-rockets-rocket-forces-missiles-plarf-corrupt/

Why Ghana is not winning corruption war despite investments in the fight

Slovakians Protest Weakening of Anti-Corruption Measures
https://www.oneindia.com/international/slovakians-protest-anti-corruption-measures-gen-3724845.html

China’s war on corruption turns into high wire act

The Corruption Trap
https://www.politico.eu/article/corruption-trap-europe-makes-far-right-great-again/

A rare Singapore corruption scandal has ensnared Formula 1’s Grand Prix
https://qz.com/formula-1-grand-prix-singapore-corruption-scandal-1851176473

UN staff on £1.5bn Iraq aid project ‘demanding bribes’

Water, Corruption, and Security in Iran

Nigeria has a democracy deficit — corruption and a lack of welfare policies are to blame
DRUG TRAFFICKING

EU launches alliance to tackle drug trafficking through European ports
Euronews Digital: 24 January 2024

In 2023 there was a huge increase in drug seizures in several ports, with gangs exploiting security weaknesses.

https://www.euronews.com/2024/01/24/eu-launches-alliance-to-tackle-drug-trafficking-through-european-ports

For more on this theme:

Vietnam Sentences Nine To Death For Drug Trafficking

South America's Largest Drug Organization Expands to Europe and Africa

Fighting drug trafficking should be Syria’s top priority
https://www.arabnews.com/node/2441546

Where Cocaine Is Produced and Where It's Consumed

Marlory Chacón, alias ‘Queen of the South’
https://insightcrime.org/guatemala-organized-crime-news/marllory-chacon/

Belgian customs seized record amount of cocaine as EU faces rise in drug-related violence
https://apnews.com/article/antwerp-cocaine-record-seizure-cartels-4d71e80bf98a4b2618e44c50ca-d276a7

Griselda Blanco and the female drug barons of Latin America

UN criticises Sri Lanka police for arresting thousands in war on drugs

The Guayas Estuary: Ecuador’s Economic Lifeline and Drug Trafficking Hotspot

Drug trafficking scandal: How cocaine made it from Uruguay to Belgium undetected?

How did Bosnian manage a Million-Dollar Drug Business in Croatia from Prison?

How the EU Makes Drug Policies
https://www.talkingdrugs.org/how-the-eu-makes-drug-policy/
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Illegal Gold Mining Continues Threatening Yanomami Land in Brazil
Juan Diego Cárdenas – InSight Crime: 24 January 2024

Authorities have discovered more illegal mining operations on Indigenous lands, casting doubt on efforts made in 2023 to eradicate this environmental crime.


Global wildlife trade risks altering evolutionary history and ecosystem function, study suggests
University of Sheffield: 26 July 2024

Some of the world’s most distinct and ancient animal species are being exploited, according to new research from England’s University of Sheffield.


For more on this theme:

Tackling illegal mining in Ghana

Lack of Political Will in Ghana Fuels Illegal Rosewood Logging, Smuggling to China

Spain sanctions fishing vessels for illegally ‘going dark’ near Argentine waters

FTC: Forced labor and fisher abuse is prevalent in European and Chinese fishing operations, fueled by a lack of transparency
https://www.globalseafood.org/advocate/how-can-the-fishing-industry-address-forced-labor-now-that-the-scope-is-more-in-focus/

The problematic relationship between Brazil’s military and illegal miners
https://brazilian.report/society/2024/01/20/yanomami-tragedy-continues/

QR codes to stop timber smuggling

Indonesia Struggles to Implement Illegal-Fishing Rules

US federal agencies launch USD 1 million challenge for forecasting IUU fishing

Will 2024 be a turning point for IUU fishing?
https://www.brookings.edu/articles/will-2024-be-a-turning-point-for-iuu-fishing/
ORGANIZED CRIME

Time for a global strategy against organized crime
Walter Kemp – Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime: 23 January 2024
Organized crime is moving up in the international agenda. People and governments are becoming increasingly concerned about the violence and instability it creates.
https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/global-strategy-against-organized-crime/

Corruption, Crypto Test LatAm Money Laundering Laws
Gavin Voss and Vera Sistermans – InSight Crime: 18 January 2024
Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean face obstacles to anti-money laundering enforcement, even though the region ranks above the world average in its adoption of legal frameworks, according to a report.

For more on this theme:
Ecuador is copying El Salvador’s war on gangs — but it will only add to the spiral of violence
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/jan/15/ecuador-el-salvador-war-gangs-spiral-violence-latin-america-organised-crime

Illicit financial flows in the Western Balkans
https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/illicit-financial-flows-western-balkans/

Self-defence groups as a response to crime and conflict in West Africa

Climate change, illicit economies and community resilience:

Ecuador Faces a Tangled Web in Its War on Gangs
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Organized Crime Ranked Top Political Risk in Critical LatAm Election Year

Canada a ‘safe haven’ for ‘transnational crime networks and their dirty money’:
U.S. report

Money launderers using online gambling sites, Canada’s Fintrac warns
https://globalnews.ca/news/10234531/money-laundering-online-gambling-fintrac/

Cash Limits in Mexico: Restrictions and Fines for 2024 under the Anti-Money Laundering Law
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Building trust in artificial intelligence: lessons from the EU AI Act
Roberto Viola – The Strategist: 15 January 2024
Artificial intelligence will radically transform our societies and economies. The world’s democracies have a duty to minimize the risks this technology poses without standing in the way of its many benefits.

For more on this theme:
(Global) Predictions 2024: Deciphering gen AI’s effect on data, governance and skill gaps

(Global) Ethical AI in Healthcare: A Focus on Responsibility, Trust, and Safety

(Global) Artificial Intelligence and the Threat to Cybersecurity

INTERNET FREEDOM

Regulating Online Content Is…Challenging
Clara Riedenstein and Bill Echikson – CEPA: 17 January 2024
Tech platforms are over- and under-moderating content, underlining the difficulty of navigating fundamental and legitimate disagreements about free speech.
https://cepa.org/article/regulating-online-content-is-challenging/

For more on this theme:
(Russia) Russia’s ban on social media cost its economy £3.1bn last year

(Pakistan) Pakistan Opposition, Critics Decry Internet Shutdown During Virtual Campaign Event

(Sri Lanka) Sri Lanka passes bill allowing government to remove online posts and legally pursue internet users
CYBER STRATEGY AND RISKS

South Africa's Cyber Strategy Under Ramaphosa: Limited Progress, Low Priority
Joe Devanny and Russell Buchan – Carnegie: 12 January 2024
South Africa has adopted a national cybersecurity strategy and established a military Cyber Command. But for years, other issues have ranked above cybersecurity, such as corruption, poverty and racial injustice.

For more on this theme:
(Global) Beyond Borders: The Urgent Case For Global Cooperation In Cyber Defence
(South Africa) Experts Urge Clearer Direction in South Africa's Cyber Strategy

CYBERATTACKS

Russian Hackers Suspected of Sweden Cyberattack
Agence France-Presse: 23 January 2024
Government agencies and shops were disrupted by a ransomware attack thought to have been carried out by Russian hackers.

For more on this theme:
(Russia) Microsoft corporate emails hacked by Russian-backed group, company says
(UK) British cosmetics firm Lush confirms cyberattack
https://therecord.media/british-cosmetics-lush-cyberattack
(Global) AI rise will lead to increase in cyberattacks, GCHQ warns
(Ukraine, Russia) Cyberattack on Ukraine’s Kyivstar will cost parent Veon almost $100 mn in sales
CYBERCRIME

Endgame: The final phase of the UN cybercrime negotiations?
Ian Tennant – Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime: 19 January 2024

U.N. delegates will meet in New York to conclude discussions on a cybercrime convention. Different countries have varying ideas about what the treaty should cover and how it should protect human rights and freedom of speech.
https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/united-nations-cybercrime-negotiations-final-phase/

For more on this theme:
(Global) AI's Efficacy is Limitless in Cybercrime
https://www.msspalert.com/native/ais-efficacy-is-limitless-in-cybercrime

(Global) Cybercrime's Silent Operator: The Unraveling of VexTrio's Malicious Network Empire

(Global) Deepfake Phishing: The Dangerous New Face Of Cybercrime

PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Defend critical infrastructure from cyber threats like the US Navy protects ships
Tracy Gregorio – CSO: 25 January 2024

Smart cities, power grids and other distributed critical infrastructure could learn from how the U.S. Navy protects the mission-readiness of its deployed fleet.

For more on this theme:
(Denmark) Sandworm probably wasn't behind Danish critical infrastructure cyberattack, report says

(GLOBAL) Move Over, APTs: Cybercriminals Now Target Critical Infrastructure Too

(U.S., China) FBI, DHS Warn U.S. Firms of Cyber Threats from Chinese Drones
Militant Jihadist Groups Revitalize their Crowdfunding Campaigns through Crypto Donations amid the Israeli-Hamas Conflict

Mona Thakkar and Anne Speckhard – Homeland Security Today: 24 January 2024

Jihadist groups and their sympathizers are tapping into the heightened hostility and anger of Muslims over Israel’s bombardment of Gaza to bolster their financial resources through crowdfunding campaigns.


For more on this theme:

How Reliable is ISIS’s Claiming Responsibility for Deadly Attacks in Iran?
https://www.hstoday.us/featured/how-reliable-is-isis-claiming-responsibility-for-deadly-attacks-in-iran/

Iran terror blast highlights success — and growing risk — of ISIS-K regional strategy

American intel officials warn of risk of Hezbollah attacking U.S.

Misogyny Is a Precursor to Terrorism
https://time.com/6553509/misogyny-precursor-terrorism-essay/

Hamas and the Houthis have emboldened Isis
https://unherd.com/2024/01/hamas-and-the-houthis-have-emboldened-isis/

ICCT Snapshot: Islamic State – Khorasan Province
https://www.icct.nl/publication/icct-snapshot-islamic-state-khorasan-province

Why the Islamic State threat to Iran is growing
https://www.newarab.com/analysis/why-islamic-state-threat-iran-growing

Countering Online Terrorist Propaganda

Brief: Is Boko Haram Bracing for Another ‘Quiet’ Year in 2024?

Hizb ut-Tahrir: the Islamist group set to be banned by home secretary

Kenya’s Twin Burden: Balancing the Security of Tech Infrastructure Against its Role in Online Extremism
ISRAEL/HAMAS

The Gaza War and the Danger of Extremism
Sherine Fahmy – Carnegie: 25 January 2024

The war in Gaza and its potential spillover into Lebanon and Syria threatens to revive extremist organizations after years of regional decline.
https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/91464

For more on this theme:

Israel-Gaza war behind surge in Islamist activity, says UK counter-terror head

Iranian Hackers Masquerade as Journalists to Spy on Israel-Hamas War Experts
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Can Historical Cases of Negotiated Settlements Inform the Debate on Post-Conflict Gaza?
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Armed group in the Sinai declares it will fight Israel

Israel Called Off Preemptive Strike on Hezbollah Early in War

Iranian and Hezbollah commanders help direct Houthi attacks in Yemen

Attacks on Lebanon-Israel Border Prompt Warnings of Escalation

How much influence does Iran have over its proxy ‘Axis of Resistance’ – Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis?

Hezbollah's Syrian chessboard: Navigating retaliation against Israel without war
https://www.newarab.com/analysis/hezbollahs-syrian-chessboard-amid-israels-war-gaza

Hezbollah rejects latest Israeli ceasefire proposals
https://www.arabnews.com/node/2446291/middle-east
ISRAEL/HAMAS

For more on this theme:

**Why Iran Is the Common Link in Conflicts From Gaza to Pakistan**

**The Hamas numbers game: Recruiting new terrorists – analysis**
https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-783159

**How economics can shed light on the motivations of extremist groups like Hamas**

**Rifts within Israel resurface as war in Gaza drags on. Some want elections now**
https://apnews.com/article/israel-war-netanyahu-gaza-elections-2cf0f1325dafbd07e7bf075b373a6358

**Palestinian death toll in Gaza surpasses 25,000 while Israel announces the death of another hostage**
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**The West Bank economy has been hammered by war**
https://www.npr.org/2024/01/24/1226335064/west-bank-economy-decline-war-israel-hamas

**Mexico, Chile refer Israel-Hamas conflict to ICC over potential crimes**

**Why an End to the War in Gaza Is Still Far Off**
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**EU Parliament adopts resolution calling for permanent cease-fire in Gaza but Hamas must go**
https://apnews.com/article/eu-israel-gaza-hamas-ceasefire-7a353c48c3f9ba82709db0d3e08e0269

**UN: Palestinians are dying in hospitals as estimated 60,000 wounded overwhelm remaining doctors**
https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinians-un-gaza-hospitals-overwhelmed-7c6c549b4bb52f0917957b-b7c4143b2d

**Who is in charge of Gaza and the West Bank?**

**Virtual Media Briefing: Israel’s Military Strategy in Gaza**
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**Where do Israel and Hamas get their weapons?**
ISRAEL/HAMAS

For more on this theme:

Israel-Hamas 2024 Symposium – Algorithms of War: Military AI and the War in Gaza
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Israel-Hamas 2024 Symposium – A Gaza Ceasefire: The Intersection of War, Law, and Politics
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Saudi Arabia presses for Palestinian state, Netanyahu rejects ceasefire, Israeli hostage protest

Hamas Uses Psychological Warfare as a Weapon To Survive and Enhance Its Position

Analysis – Netanyahu faces doubts over goals, strategy and post-war plans
https://news.yahoo.com/analysis-netanyahu-faces-doubts-over-114027295.html

Looking For Fig Leaves: Israel And Hamas Negotiate Terms Of A Ceasefire – Analysis

Gaza And After: A Transatlantic Security Perspective – Analysis

RUSSIA/UKRAINE

Ukraine War Predictions Are Usually Wrong. So Here Are Mine For 2024
Michael Peck – CEPA: 24 January 2024

Here’s a guaranteed way to lose money — bet on the future of the war in Ukraine. Those who have made that bet have lost big time.
https://cepa.org/article/ukraine-war-predictions-are-usually-wrong-so-here-are-mine-for-2024/

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UK-EU Security Cooperation After Ukraine
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We’re Going on a (Russian) Spy Hunt
https://cepa.org/article/were-going-on-a-russian-spy-hunt/

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Russians Discover a Backdoor to Europe
https://cepa.org/article/russians-discover-a-backdoor-to-europe/
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

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Our Enemies Will Vanish: If Only
https://cepa.org/article/our-enemies-will-vanish-if-only/

Russia Reinforces Bloody Failure in Ukraine’s East
https://cepa.org/article/russia-reinforces-bloody-failure-in-ukraines-east/

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Kyiv Raises Stakes by Expanding Appeals to Ukrainian ‘Wedges’ Inside Russia

Russia Held Hostage to Putin’s Crime of Aggression
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Kremlin Creates Illusion of Imaginary Victories While Unable to Solve Real Problems (Part One)
https://jamestown.org/program/kremlin-creates-illusion-of-imaginary-victories-while-unable-to-solve-real-problems-part-one/

Kremlin Creates Illusion of Imaginary Victories While Unable to Solve Real Problems (Part Two)

Returning Veterans of War in Ukraine Greater Threat to Russia Than Afgantsy Ever Were
https://jamestown.org/program/returning-veterans-of-war-in-ukraine-greater-threat-to-russia-than-afgantsy-ever-were/

IntelBrief: Violence Amplifies in Ukraine and Russia, Even as Battle Lines Remain Static
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Back in the USSR: New high school textbooks in Russia whitewash Stalin’s terror as Putin wages war on historical memory
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Pro-Kremlin groups twist EU lawmakers' words to 'pollute' politics, memo warns

Joint Statement Condemning Russia's War of Aggression Against Ukraine

Russia's relentless 'meat assaults' are wearing down outmanned and outgunned Ukrainian forces

Russia clashes with US and Ukraine supporters, ruling out any peace plan backed by Kyiv and the West
https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-united-states-clash-peace-gaza-united-nations-aebfd51edbc6b82550ebe3b4712ac

Ukraine war 'a battle of ammo' says NATO as it agrees huge arms deal

Ukraine war drives shift in Russian nuclear thinking – study

Russia on Alert After Spate of Ukrainian Attacks

Retired general explains 'fascinating' development in Russia's war against Ukraine

UN Security Council to Discuss Russian Military Plane Crash Near Ukraine Border

A New Concern on the Ukrainian Battlefield: North Korea's Latest Missiles

Why the war in Ukraine is bad for climate science
https://www.npr.org/2024/01/22/1225018573/why-the-war-in-ukraine-is-bad-for-climate-science

Russia rejects US arms control talks for now, citing Ukraine

Putin's Achilles Heel: Ukraine targets Russia's vital but vulnerable energy industry
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putins-achilles-heel-ukraine-targets-russias-vital-but-vulnerable-energy-industry/

No European security without Ukrainian victory
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/no-european-security-without-ukrainian-victory/
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Ukraine seeks future role as EU's eastern customs hub

China won't soon mediate on Ukraine war, Australian envoy warns

UN panel to grill Russia on fate of thousands of 'evacuated' Ukrainian children

‘Send back our husbands’ – Russian women in rare protest

Critics of Ukraine war could have property seized under new Russian law

How Russia and Ukraine's Tangled Histories Led to War
https://now.tufts.edu/2024/01/22/how-russia-and-ukraines-tangled-histories-led-war

Russia may attack Baltic nations after Ukraine, says Lithuania
https://euobserver.com/ukraine/157958

Ukraine war: talk of Russian spring offensive raises fears that Kyiv is ill-prepared to face it

Ukrainian hackers claim attack on Russian scientific research center
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Ukraine is piling pressure on China to help bring an end to the war. But Beijing’s peace plans are focused on Gaza

Putin could attack NATO in ‘5 to 8 years,’ German defense minister warns

Beyond the counter-offensive: Attrition, stalemate, and the future of the war in Ukraine

Japan’s experience shows why Ukraine won’t get Russia out with talk

Ukraine Military Situation: Few Frontline Changes – Analysis