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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Dubai Property: An Oasis for Nigeria's Corrupt Political Elites
Matthew Page – Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: 19 March 2020

Corrupt Nigerian political elites are taking advantages of Dubai’s luxuries to hide their embezzled funds and bribes. There will be major consequences in both countries if this doesn’t stop.
https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/03/19/dubai-property-oasis-for-nigeria-s-corrupt-politi-cal-elites-pub-81306

Corrupt Politicians, Shady 'Charitable' Entities And The Coronavirus Crisis In Iran

Using shell companies and fake charities, powerful politicians and leaders have taken advantage of the coronavirus pandemic to bilk citizens of their hard-earned cash.

For more on this theme:

Tunisia Prosecutes Former Businessmen, Ministers on Corruption Charges

Colombia considers blockchain to tackle transparency concerns

Iraqi Anti-terrorism Chief Turns Eyes Towards Combating Graft

Peru’s anti-corruption prosecutor calls for investigation of four Imarpe officials
https://www.undercurrentnews.com/2020/03/06/perus-anti-corruption-prosecutor-calls-for-investigati-on-of-four-imarpe-officials/

European Authorities Concerned About Graft in Czech Republic

Corruption and the Coronavirus
https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_and_the_coronavirus

Report: Corruption fuels Water Shortage in South Africa

Gulnara Karimova Sentenced Again For Corruption, Financial Crimes
https://www.rferl.org/a/gulnara-karimova-sentenced-again-for-corruption-financial-crimes/30495071.html

Cleaning up corruption along Lebanon’s longest river
https://voices.transparency.org/cleaning-up-corruption-along-lebanons-longest-river-285f16f5fd16
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Honduras Goes From Transit Nation to Cocaine Producer
Héctor Silva Ávalos – InSight Crime: 19 March 2020

Honduras has long been a transit hub for drug trafficking, but until recently it was unable to turn its coca leaf into cocaine. This recent change has put the country on the map as a producer instead of a transit point.


Coronavirus Is Leading to Shortages of Fentanyl And Meth
Deborah Bonello – VICE: 19 March 2020

With the lack of precursor chemicals coming in from China, Mexican drug operatives are experiencing shortages. “Now we are all struggling to get the chemicals to Sinaloa from China,” one drug trafficker told VICE. "We haven’t stopped producing, but the price of meth is getting pushed up because of the scarcity of chemicals from China. .... Transporting them this far is also getting much more expensive," the cartel operative said.


For more on this theme:

Rakhine is Myanmar’s drug export hub, military says

Drug Detection Using AI And ML On The Dark Web [Explained]

Glyphosate and cocaine: Colombia’s next drug war?

Report Recognizes Drug Trafficking Influence of Venezuela’s Cartel of the Suns
https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/venezuela-cartel-de-los-soles-drug-trafficking/

Why a Measly Five Tons of Cocaine Has Costa Rica Deeply Worried
https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/costa-rica-five-tons-cocaine/

In Colombia, Fleet Of Cartel Narco-subs Poses Challenge For Navy

Cambodia releases anti-drug plan

A snapshot of Mexico’s cartel landscape amid rising violence
https://apnews.com/1aea8224e3/6f949026f748663a62bcd

Inside massive DEA raid targeting drug cartel
https://apnews.com/edeb3323fb67878d6248df2d496dd6fe

Drug courts expanded in bid to break cycle of crime
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Vietnam considers wildlife trade ban in response to coronavirus pandemic
Michael Tatarski – Mongabay: 18 March 2020

Vietnam’s prime minister has asked the country’s Agriculture Ministry to draft a directive to stop illegal trading and consumption of wildlife over fears it spreads disease. Vietnam’s move to ban the wildlife trade follows similar moves by the Chinese government, after the new coronavirus pandemic appeared to have emerged from a market in Wuhan.


Conservationists set the record straight on COVID-19’s wildlife links
Liz Kimbrough – Mongabay: 13 March 2020

Misinformation about the coronavirus has spread even faster than the disease itself. We know with certainty that the disease was not created in a lab but was transmitted through animals at a wildlife market. Given the clear risks, global wildlife conservationists are calling for a permanent ban on wildlife trafficking and live-animal markets.


For more on this theme:
The Illicit Wildlife Trade in China and the State Response Following the Coronavirus Outbreak

Tech Companies Take Down 3 Million Online Listings for Trafficked Wildlife
https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/03/16/tech-companies-take-down-3-million-online-listings-for-trafficked-wildlife/

A Detective Pursued Rhino Poachers. Now He’s Dead.

Green Violence: ‘Eco-Guards’ Are Abusing Indigenous Groups in Africa
https://e360.yale.edu/features/green-violence-eco-guards-are-abusing-indigenous-groups-in-africa

China’s revised forest law could boost efforts to fight illegal logging

Romania’s virgin forests ravaged by ‘wood mafia’
https://www.euronews.com/2020/03/13/romania-s-virgin-forests-ravaged-by-wood-mafia

Qualified success: What’s next for Peru’s Operation Mercury?

Enough is Enough. African nations must unite against illegal fishing
https://www.theafricareport.com/24619/Enough-is-enough-african-nations-must-unite-against-illegal-fishing/
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

FBI warns of human traffickers luring victims on dating apps
Amer Owaida – WeLiveSecurity: 17 March 2020

Human traffickers continue to recruit fresh victims via social media and online dating platforms, according to a new warning issued by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In a public service announcement, the FBI warned that human traffickers use the lure of sex, romance, and increasingly of employment to ensnare online victims, setting up fake dates and making what appear to be legitimate jobs offers.


Migration: The bargaining power of transit states
Antje Missbach and Melissa Phillips – The Interpreter: 17 March 2020

Destination countries try to get transit countries in line with their migration policies. It doesn’t always work. Such a disconnect is especially dangerous in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/migration-bargaining-power-transit-states

For more on this theme:

D.C. start-up Collective Liberty uses technology and data to help police stop human trafficking

The Nigerian human trafficking mafia in Europe

Deal inked to combat human trafficking from Bangladesh
https://www.newagebd.net/article/102727/deal-inked-to-combat-human-trafficking-from-bangladesh

Dutch sex workers risk trafficking and abuse as coronavirus bites

We’ve Taken Measures To End Trafficking Of Youths – Okowa
https://leadership.ng/2020/03/19/weve-taken-measures-to-end-trafficking-of-youths-okowa/

Serbia Restricts Movement for Migrants, Asylum-Seekers

Surge in migrants crossing channel as French police divert to enforcing coronavirus lockdown, says union
https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2020/03/19/surge-migrants-crossing-channel-french-police-divert-enforcing/
INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Viewpoint: Geneva Conventions for Cyber Warriors Long Overdue

Without a “Geneva Convention” for cyber warfare, cyber warriors are fighting without the protections and restrictions kinetic operators have. It’s time to revisit the concept and draft rules for conduct.


For more on this theme:
(Greece) Greek Government issues ‘Ten Commandments’ for responsible internet use during pandemic

(Global) The uncertain fate of .org
https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/uncertain-fate-org

(Global) The answer to AI is intergovernmental Multilateralism
https://www.neweurope.eu/article/the-answer-to-ai-is-intergovernmental-multilateralism/

INTERNET FREEDOM

Reporters Without Borders is using Minecraft to sneak censored news to readers in restrictive countries
Tom Huddleston Jr. – CNBC: 15 March 2020

In an unconventional move, press-freedom nongovernmental organization Reporters Without Borders created “The Uncensored Library,” a virtual free library of uncensored documents within the successful computer game Minecraft.


For more on this theme:
(Global) How to Detect a Government’s Hand Behind Internet Shutdowns

(China) Has China learned its lesson from the coronavirus tragedy? Judging by its continued censorship, no
https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3075810/has-china-learned-its-lesson-coronavirus-tragedy-judging-its

(India) India unplugged
https://www.vantageasia.com/india-unplugged-internet-shutdowns/
PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Why cybersecurity matters more than ever during the coronavirus pandemic
Algirdė Pipikaite and Nicholas Davis – World Economic Forum and The European Sting:
18 March 2020

With more people, even those at the highest levels of government, forced to work from home due to the COVID-19 outbreaks, they are increasingly dependent on digital tools that are likely less secure than those in the workspace. It’s important to maintain good cyber hygiene in these times.


For more on this theme:

(U.S.) The Cybersecurity 202: Coronavirus pandemic makes U.S. more vulnerable to serious cyberattack, lawmakers warn

(Global) Will privacy regulation be good or bad for business?
https://www.information-age.com/will-privacy-regulation-be-good-or-bad-for-business-123488307/

(Global) Cyber security protects privacy needed in digital age

CYBER STATECRAFT DEVELOPMENT

UK ministers will no longer claim ‘no successful examples’ of Russian interference
Dan Sabbagh – The Guardian: 15 March 2020

Ministers in the United Kingdom have been told they can no longer declare that there have been “no successful examples” of Russian disinformation affecting U.K. elections. This likely signals a significant shift in how the U.K. will deal with the Russian cyber threat.

https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/mar/15/uk-ministers-will-no-longer-claim-no-successful-examples-of-russian-interference

For more on this theme:

(Russia, Global) Russia using coronavirus fears to spread misinformation in Western countries

(France, Global) France warns of new ransomware gang targeting local governments

(Africa) Technological innovations as new change-makers of democracy & governance in Africa
THREATS, ATTACKS AND VULNERABILITIES

A coronavirus-tracking app locked users’ phones and demanded $100
Jeff Stone – CyberScoop: 16 March 2020

Taking advantage of the coronavirus pandemic, an app that promised to keep customers up to date on the virus instead included a malicious software.
https://www.cyberscoop.com/coronavirus-app-locked-phones/

For more on this theme:

(Global) Convincing Google Impersonation Opens Door to MiTM, Phishing
https://threatpost.com/convincing-google-impersonation-opens-door-to-mitm-phishing/153745/

(U.S.) Barr: FBI probing if foreign gov’t behind HHS cyber incident

(Global) ‘Rare’ stalkerware emerges with targets around the world
https://www.cyberscoop.com/monitorminor-stalkerware-kaspersky-research/

COMBATING TERRORISM AND CYBER CRIME

Message to Cybercriminals: Hospitals Are Off-Limits

During this time of crisis, the author argues that the U.S. needs to do everything possible to counter any cyber attacks against the U.S. health-care system.
https://www.cfr.org/blog/message-cybercriminals-hospitals-are-limits

For more on this theme:

(U.S.) The DHS cyber agency has a key role in a new strategy
https://www.fifthdomain.com/congress/capitol-hill/2020/03/11/the-dhs-cyber-agency-has-a-key-role-in-a-new-strategy/

(U.K.) COVID-19 boosts remote work, security concerns

(Europe) Banks Told to Prepare for Cybercrime Jump in Coronavirus Fallout
NOTEWORTHY PODCASTS

A Healthy Respect for Ransomware
Monica Todros – Recorded Future: 16 March 2020

Ransomware continues to affect individuals and organizations of just about every shape and size. Lorne Hazlewood, a senior information security analyst at BKD accounting firm, shares his insights on ransomware, where he thinks it’s headed, and what we all can do to best protect ourselves against it.

https://www.recordedfuture.com/podcast-episode-150/

For more on this theme:
(Global) Disinformation vs. misinformation.
https://thecyberwire.com/podcasts/hacking-humans/90/notes

(Global) The CyberWire Daily Podcast: Ep 1045
https://thecyberwire.com/podcasts/daily-podcast/1045/notes

(U.S., Global) Classic and new ways of improving cybersecurity

(Global) Cyber Security Today – COVID-19 scams continue. Here’s how to avoid them

MASS SURVEILLANCE AND INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

How China built facial recognition for people wearing masks
Yuan Yang – Ars Technica: 18 March 2020

Hanwang, the facial-recognition company in China, says it has reached 95% accuracy on identifying people, even while they wear a mask.


For more on this theme:
(China) Coronavirus Outrage Spurs China’s Internet Police to Action

(India) India Mulls Aadhaar-Linked National Social Registry To Monitor Citizens
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

The vigilantes trying to take down Islamic State online
Andrei Popoviciu – Middle East Eye: 16 March 2020

As transnational agencies crack down on Islamic State networks, unofficial collectives are trying to take matters into their own hands

https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/hunters-vigilantes-trying-take-down-islamic-state-online

ISIS in Their Own Words: Recruitment, Motivations, Duties and Disillusionment
Anne Speckhard and Molly Ellenberg – Homeland Security Today: 16 March 2020

In a study running from 2015 to 2019, Dr. Anne Speckhard interviewed myriad ISIS defectors, returnees and imprisoned cadres across the Middle East, Europe and Central Asia. This article reflects the results of the study.


For more on this theme:

Afghanistan: 46 ISIS fighters surrender to ANDSF

Lying to Win: The Islamic State Media Department’s Role in Deception Efforts

The Emerging Triad of Islamic State Central Africa Province

Handling returning terrorist fighters is a big problem, monitoring their funds is another
https://menafn.com/1099822626/Handling-returning-terrorist-fighters-is-a-big-problem-monitoring-their-funds-is-another

US to Designate New Islamic State Leader as Global Terrorist

ISIS Coronavirus Directives: Do ‘Not Enter the Land of the Epidemic,’ Cover Your Sneezes

The Next Caliphate Would Emerge in West Africa, Warns U.S. General
https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/the-next-caliphate-would-emerge-in-west-africa-warns-u-s-general/

Alleged ISIS bride’s return causes Norway’s ruling coalition to collapse
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Masked men, murder and mass displacement: how terror came to Burkina Faso

Armed groups, many aligned with ISIS or al-Qaida, are waging a campaign of indiscriminate killing across Burkina Faso, throwing the once peaceful country into mass chaos.


For more on this theme:

Somalia's Foreign Policy, Al Shabaab, ISIS: Implications for Somalia, the Horn of Africa, and Beyond

Why Is Terrorism Rising in West Africa?
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/why-terrorism-rising-west-africa-132612

Al-Qaeda's bastions of power: Somalia and Yemen

RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

Nigeria Considers National DRR Agency Amid Boko Haram Setbacks
Alvin Young – Council on Foreign Relations: 18 March 2020

Nigeria is considering adding a new agency to its programs for deradicalization — the National Agency for Deradicalization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Repentant Insurgents.


The Nexus between Human Security and Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism
The Soufan Center: March 2020

Programs to prevent and counter violent extremism are unlikely to succeed as currently structured. A wide variety of factors must be considered to improve the effectiveness of these approaches.


For more on this theme:

Refugees on Syrian-Turkish border vulnerable to radicalization
https://www.arabnews.com/node/1640091

Countering Violent Extremism in Nordics: A Question of Collaboration

We must do more to combat right-wing extremism
https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/we-must-do-more-to-combat-right-wing-extremism/
WHITE NATIONALIST TERRORISM

**Germany Places Part of Far-Right Party Under Surveillance**


The intelligence agency labeled a wing of the Alternative for Germany extremist, warning of a “danger for democracy.”

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/12/world/europe/germany-afd.html

*For more on this theme:*

**Does YouTube want you to move to the right?**

https://theaggio.org/2020/03/10/does-youtube-want-you-to-move-to-the-right/

**Confronting the Mainstream Context of Germany's Far-Right Extremism**

https://theglobeandmail.com/2020/03/11/germany-extremism/

**The Right-Wing Extremist Threat in Context: Internal Extremist Actors**


**State pushes to list white supremacist group as terrorist org**


IRREGULAR WARFARE: SOFT POWER

**How China solidified its foothold in Latin America through a space centre**

*Ignacio Conese – TRT World: 18 March 2020*

In an Argentine desert in Patagonia, China has invested $50 billion in developing a space center to send a rocket to the dark side of the moon. Most locals view it, and China, in a positive light.


*For more on this theme:*

**Swift Olympic cancellation will boost Japan’s soft power**


**China sends doctors and masks overseas as domestic coronavirus infections drop**


**Jack Ma is the coronavirus ambassador that China needs**

https://qz.com/1820430/jack-ma-is-the-coronavirus-ambassador-that-china-needs/

**Chinese Propagandists Used ‘Wuhan Virus’ Before Condemning It as Racist**

https://freebeacon.com/media/chinese-propagandists-used-wuhan-virus-before-condemning-it-as-racist/
IRREGULAR WARFARE: PROXY FORCES

Top general: Iran threat ‘remains very high’ after US strikes on proxy militia in Iraq
Rebecca Kheel – The Hill: 13 March 2020

The top U.S. commander for the Middle East said the threat from Iran remains high even as he touted the success of retaliatory U.S. airstrikes on an Iran-backed militia in Iraq that officials blamed for killing two U.S. troops.
https://thehill.com/policy/defense/487417-top-general-iran-threat-remains-very-high-after-us-strikes-on-proxy-militia-in

Russia’s Strategy for the Middle East: Stabilize, Revitalize, Create Chaos

Russia is attempting to have a say in the geopolitical realignment of the Middle East, provoked by instability, sectarianism and Iran-Saudi rivalry. It has been able to simultaneously support conflicted parties and project itself as a force of stability.
https://nationalinterest.org/feature/russias-strategy-middle-east-stabilize-revitalize-create-chaos-133177

For more on this theme:
Proxy Warfare on the Roof of the World: Great Power Competition Lessons from Tibet

US Keeping Two Carriers in Gulf to Deter Iran Proxy Attacks

US Fears Iran Facilitating Spread of Coronavirus

Russian Electronic Warfare in Donbas: Training or Preparation for a Wider Attack?

Iran, Its Partners, and the Balance of Effective Force

IDF indicates Iran scaling back terror activity in light of coronavirus

America’s Opportunity to Quell Russian Meddling in Libya

The Surkov Leaks The Inner Workings of Russia’s Hybrid War in Ukraine
https://www.academia.edu/39838740/The_Surkov_Leaks_The_Inner_Workings_of_Russias_Hybrid_War_in_Ukraine?email_work_card=title

Russian election meddling is back -- via Ghana and Nigeria -- and in your feeds