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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Saudi Arabia arrests senior officials involved in coronavirus corruption
The National: 19 April 2020
A number of senior Saudi officials have been arrested on corruption charges, accused of attempting to profit from the coronavirus pandemic. The offenses ranged from inflating the price of hotel rooms to counterfeiting roaming permits.

Corruption can have no place in our COVID-19 recovery
Lisa Ventura – World Economic Forum: 21 April 2020
COVID-19 has forced governments to be resilient and address the challenges of a global pandemic. But they cannot do so at the cost of transparency and accountability.

For more on this theme:

COVID-19 pandemic and corruption risks. How can government and society defend against them?

Brazil Central Bank Creates Anti-Corruption Blockchain Platform

Corruption mars Bangladesh’s Covid-19 relief efforts

What Has Corruption Got To Do With Human Rights Abuses?

Guatemala health officials fired, investigated for corruption

Containing corruption key to Iran’s economic recovery

Government database to track all public servants accused of fraud and corruption

Coronavirus chaos “increases corruption risk”, ICAC warns
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Ucayali, Peru’s Drug Trafficking Gateway to Bolivia and Brazil
Sergio Saffon – InSight Crime: 21 April 2020

The drug trade in Peru has greatly decreased, but traffickers are using unconventional routes along the border to transport drugs into Bolivia and Brazil.


‘Cartels are scrambling’: Virus snarls global drug trade
Jim Mustian and Jake Bleiberg – The Associated Press: 19 April 2020

The coronavirus is affecting the illegal drug trade, paralyzing economies, closing borders and cutting off supply chains in China that traffickers rely on for the chemicals to make drugs such as methamphetamine and fentanyl.

https://apnews.com/4f0a4ca93cc2fee94d386efb13db31a0

For more on this theme:

The troubling impact of America’s opioid epidemic on student learning

DEA: Price hike of meth and heroin during coronavirus

Gangs still forcing children into ‘county lines’ drug trafficking

Combatting Covert Chemistry Operations
https://www.theregreview.org/2020/04/16/morgan-combatting-covert-chemistry-operations/

What lockdown? It’s business as usual for drug traffickers
https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/what-lockdown-its-business-as-usual-for-drug-traffickers

How Has Coronavirus Shifted Argentina’s Drug Dynamics?

Highs and lows of drug trade and organised crime in the wake of pandemic

That COVID-19 Story Of Hope About Latin America’s Gangs? No Hope Of Happening

South Africa Gangs Call Truce as Lockdown Stifles Drug Trade

Italian mafia cements power through charity amid coronavirus crisis while trafficking drugs despite lockdown measures
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Mexican crime gangs branching into illegal logging, researchers warn
Christine Murray – Reuters: 22 April 2020

According to new research, young men from northern Mexico are being kidnapped and forced to work in the logging sector. “There are isolated communities that ... are the targets of these groups,” said Diana Siller, director of the nonprofit group Jade and a co-author of the report, which was based on about 70 interviews and financed by the U.S. State Department.


Coronavirus: Australia urges G20 action on wildlife wet markets
BBC: 23 April 2020

Australian officials have called for Group of 20 countries to “take action” on the wildlife markets where the coronavirus is believed to have originated, although they stopped short of calling for an outright ban.


For more on this theme:

Who Is Killing Latin America’s Environmentalists?
https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/who-killing-latin-americas-environmentalists

Criminals are taking advantage of the Covid-19 crisis to attack protected birds of prey in CEE

Coronavirus fuels calls to clamp down on EU wildlife trade

Time’s up: Wildlife trafficking through Tanzania’s ports

The wildlife trade caused coronavirus, and a vaccine can’t fix it

Asian Countries to Limit Wildlife Trade

Experts seek laws to combat illegal wildlife trade in Africa

Brazilian indigenous chiefs act to halt illegal logging in historical landmark area
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Human Traffickers Use Social Media to Target Children
Dr. Jarrod Sadulski – In Public Safety: 17 April 2020

With social media use at an all-time high due to the coronavirus pandemic lockdowns, human traffickers are exploiting these avenues to lure children into trafficking circles.

Libya’s people-smuggling militias return just in time for migrant season
Middle East Eye: 22 April 2020

According to locals, the takeover of western towns in Libya by the United Nations-backed Government of National Accord has caused a spike in human smuggling.

For more on this theme:

In West Africa, trafficking brings human suffering. But removing it can set off instability.

Modern Slavery: The Kenyan Domestic Workers That Are Trafficked & Forced To Work In Hong Kong

Senegal: Stop Trafficking campaign launches new activities to provide access to education for poor youth at risk of migration
https://reliefweb.int/report/senegal/senegal-stop-trafficking-campaign-launches-new-activities-provide-access-education

Human Smugglers Undeterred by Pandemic

Inside the smuggler’s warehouse: Africa’s 21st-century slave trade

International Operation Nabs 180 Human Trafficking Suspects

African migration to China may never be the same again

COVID19 and displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh camps
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

ICANN delays .org sale again after scathing letter from California AG
Timothy B. Lee – Ars Technica: 17 April 2020

ICANN, which oversees the internet’s address system, postponed the decision on whether to stop or allow the transfer of the dot-org (.org) domain registry to a private equity firm until next month. The debate has taken on added significance during a global crisis that is relying heavily on charities and community organizers for relief.


For more on this theme:
(China, Global) RIPE opposes China’s internet protocols upgrade plan

(Nepal) Cyber Security and Internet Governance in Nepal
https://english.khabarhub.com/2020/22/90611/

(Global) Coronavirus, Security, and the Cyber-Order

INTERNET FREEDOM

OONI: An app for detecting Internet censorship
Fabian Schmidt – Deutsche Welle: 23 April 2020

Freedom of the internet is a myth in many countries. A new app, OONI, will help bring to light who is censoring the internet and where.


For more on this theme:

(Global) ‘Selling censorship’: proposed sale of .org web registry sparks fears for non-profits

(Vietnam) Exclusive: Facebook agreed to censor posts after Vietnam slowed traffic – sources

(China) Blasting COVID-19 response in China, McMaster advocates ‘bypass’ of foreign firewalls to spread truth
PRIVACY AND SECURITY

The Coronavirus Pandemic and the Cyber Landscape
Conrad Prince – Royal United Services Institute: 20 April 2020

The coronavirus pandemic has increased our reliance on the digital world and has highlighted five fundamental security challenges.


For more on this theme:
(U.S.) Appeals Court Rules Facebook Must Face Renewed Privacy Lawsuit

(Nigeria) How to protect Nigerians’ personal information while combating COVID-19
https://advox.globalvoices.org/2020/04/20/how-to-protect-nigerians-personal-information-while-combating-covid-19/

(U.S., Global) Children's privacy is at risk with rapid shifts to online schooling under coronavirus

CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

Latin America’s Coming Techlash
Robert Muggah – Project Syndicate: 23 April 2020

Latin America is poised to take advantage of the digital revolution, but there are plenty of things that could go wrong.


For more on this theme:
(U.S.) U.S. Cyber Command’s Malware Inoculation: Linking Offense and Defense in Cyberspace

(India) Why Facebook Is Betting Big on India

(China) Shanghai’s free-trade zone will accelerate digital infrastructure push with 5G, IoT and AI tech
CYBER ATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Apple investigating report of a new iOS exploit being used in the wild
Catalin Cimpanu – ZDNet: 22 April 2020

Cyber-security firm ZecOps said it has detected attacks against high-profile targets using a new iOS email exploit.


For more on this theme:

(Global) Spearphishing campaigns target oil, gas companies with spyware

(Global) Unpatchable ‘Starbleed’ Bug in FPGA Chips Exposes Critical Devices to Hackers

(Global) WHO reports fivefold increase in cyber attacks, urges vigilance

CYBER CRIME AND TERRORISM

FBI says cybercrime reports quadrupled during COVID-19 pandemic
Catalin Cimpanu – ZDNet: 18 April 2020

Instances of cyber crime appear to have jumped by as much as 300% since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, according to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation.


For more on this theme:

(India) Concerned about global spurt in cybercrimes, PMO’s cyber chief issues cyber-advisory for online users

(Malta) Cyber Crime Is On the Rise As More Maltese People Rely On Internet During COVID-19 Pandemic

(Global) COVID-19 Cyber Threat Intelligence League fights cybercrime amid pandemic

(Global) Cybercrime May Be the World's Third-Largest Economy by 2021
CYBER PROTECTION OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

**Cyber Criminals Don't ‘Brake’ for Pandemics**
Stephen Murphy, DC3 Public Affairs – U.S. Department of Defense: 20 April 2020

Cyber espionage is on the rise, especially as related to the health industry and COVID-19 research.


*For more on this theme:*

(Global) How to Protect Your Business From Nation State Cyberattacks

(China, U.S.) Questioning China’s Politicization of Cyber Intelligence During Pandemic

(Europe, Global) One year of EU copyright reform: Is the Internet still working?

MASS SURVEILLANCE AND INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

**Freedom and privacy in the time of coronavirus**
Robert E. Litan and Martin Lowy – Brookings: 23 April 2020

The authors argue that the social benefits of an anonymized contact-tracing system are well worth the temporary privacy costs, but also that tracing must be mandatory to have the greatest likelihood of success in achieving the goal of opening up our economy and society.


*For more on this theme:*

(Global) How to create a trustworthy COVID-19 tracking technology

(ISrael) Surveillance in Israel: Tool to fight Covid-19 or to infringe on privacy rights?

(Global) Coronavirus surveillance: How much is too much?

(Global) Carnegie Mellon research suggests our view of COVID-19 is going to change with ‘digital surveillance’
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Arrests in Germany highlight reach of Islamic State's Central Asian network
Thomas Joscelyn – FDD’s Long War Journal: 20 April 2020
On April 15, German authorities reported the arrest of four suspected Islamic State militants, all of them of Tajik nationality. These arrests highlight the Central Asian dimension of ISIS.

Islamic State Terror in the Maldives as COVID-19 Arrives
Azim Zahir – The Diplomat: 18 April 2020
ISIS is exploiting the COVID–19 pandemic, particularly in the Maldives.

For more on this theme:

Coronavirus: Indonesia sees uptick of anti-Chinese speech by militants on social media

Islamic State claims first attack in island nation of Maldives

Virtual 'caliphate'? ISIS takes advantage of coronavirus crisis to make comeback on social media

Islamic State will exploit coronavirus, don’t give them chance
https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2020/4/15/dont-let-islamic-state-exploit-coronavirus

Spain catches rapper who became Islamic State fighter

Islamic State steps up attacks in Iraq during coronavirus lockdown

Why terrorism needs hate to thrive: A case of the Kabul attacks

Islamic State In Somalia
https://theowp.org/islamic-state-in-somalia/
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Al Qaeda, Islamic State strike across the Sahel
Caleb Weiss – FDD’s Long War Journal: 19 April 2020

Both al-Qaida and ISIS have claimed several attacks across the Sahel since the beginning of the month. These attacks are occurring while the two groups are also clashing with each other.


Why Boko Haram in Nigeria fights western education
Madiha Afzal and Michael E. O’Hanlon – Brookings: 17 April 2020

In this podcast, the author of a new paper on Boko Haram talks about her research and findings. Madiha Afzal, a David M. Rubenstein fellow in foreign policy at Brookings, is the author of “From ‘Western Education is Forbidden’ to the world’s deadliest terrorist group: Education and Boko Haram in Nigeria.”


For more on this theme:

DHS warns of increase in violent extremism amid coronavirus lockdowns

Generation Jihad: Ep. 6 – Hezbollah’s Main Man in Iraq

The changing approach of the Afghan Taliban

On the Taliban, Pakistan, and Islamic State: An Interview With the Former TTP Spokesman

Salafi-jihadi ecosystem in the Sahel
https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/salafi-jihadi-ecosystem-in-the-sahel

As conflict intensifies in Nigeria’s North East, so too does a reliance on troubled militias

Afghanistan: The detention centre for teenage Taliban members

Al-Qaeda’s South Asian Branch Gravitating Toward Kashmir

How coronavirus could escalate Europe’s far-right terror threat

Boko Haram’s Shekau Labels Anti-COVID-19 Measures an Attack on Islam in Nigeria
RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

Abdullah al-Faisal's Global Jihad
Raffaello Pantucci – Lawfare: 19 April 2020
The author traces the path to infamy of Abdullah al-Faisal, a preacher who has inspired extremists around the globe.
https://www.lawfareblog.com/abdullah-al-faisals-global-jihad

Fears of rise in radicalisation as UK Prevent scheme has 50% drop in referrals
Nicky Harley – The National: 23 April 2020
The Prevent program, which was launched to monitor terrorist activity in the United Kingdom, has had a 50% drop in referrals as far-right and Islamist groups exploit vulnerable people in lockdown.

For more on this theme:
Counties Should Lead in Countering Violent Extremism

Is Internet Recruitment Enough to Seduce a Vulnerable Individual into Terrorism?
https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/is-internet-recruitment-enough-to-seduce-a-vulnerable-individual-into-terrorism/

Anti-Radical
https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/philanthropy-magazine/article/anti-radical

PERSPECTIVE: Delegitimizing ISIS and Militant Jihadist Ideologies May Also Require Addressing Anti-Western Biases
https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/perspective-delegitimizing-isis-and-militant-jihadist-ideologies-may-also-require-addressing-anti-western-biases/

How dystopian narratives can incite real-world radicalism
https://aeon.co/ideas/how-dystopian-narratives-can-incite-real-world-radicalism

How Brighton's gangs became increasingly radicalized
https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/how-brightons-gangs-became-increasingly-radicalised

France in uproar over release 130 radicalised prisoners amid coronavirus pandemic

Coronavirus lockdown could be good news for terrorist recruiters, police warn

White supremacist web searches grow in pandemic, but groups try to counter the message
IRREGULAR WARFARE: SOFT POWER

China’s COVID-19 relief diplomacy in West Asia
Kabir Taneja – Observer Research Foundation: 22 April 2020

Unlike in other instances, the Gulf states reached out to China for help. What they got was COVID-19 mask diplomacy from China.

https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/china-covid19-relief-diplomacy-west-asia-65023/

For more on this theme:

Russia Looks for Inroads Into Central Africa (Part One)
https://jamestown.org/program/russia-looks-for-inroads-into-central-africa-part-one/

COVID-19 and China’s soft power ambitions

Romania’s place on the global soft power stage
https://business-review.eu/international/romanias-place-on-the-global-soft-power-stage-209782

Ali Baba’s Jack Ma generates soft power diplomacy in Africa

Turkey extensively uses its soft power through COVID-19 aids

In shadow of coronavirus, China steps up manoeuvres near Taiwan

China’s coronavirus aid to Pacific islands is part of geopolitical game

U.S. Aid To Greenland Looks To Counter Russian, Chinese Influence In Arctic

China’s COVID-19 Diplomacy is Backfiring in Europe

Masked China plays with soft power in Southern Eastern Europe
https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/04/19/masked-china-plays-with-soft-power-in-southern-eastern-europe/
CONSEQUENCE MANAGEMENT

CURRENT STATE OF THE CORONAVIRUS

‘Liquid gold’: New York’s convalescent plasma donor 0001 gives us a patient’s view into US COVID19 response
Nikhila Natarajan – Observer Research Foundation: 19 April 2020

Doctors are calling Diana Berrent’s plasma “liquid gold” because she didn’t just clear the virus, she’s also a universal donor.

For more on this theme:
COVID-19 Vaccine Update
https://www.cfr.org/conference-calls/covid-19-vaccine-update

Navigating the COVID-19 Pandemic With Public-Private Partnerships

Too early to tell if BCG vaccine is our saviour in fight against COVID-19

EU Emerges as Leading Donor for Partnership Countries in Fighting COVID-19 Pandemic and its Economic Consequences

What You Need to Know About the Coronavirus Pandemic

Coronavirus ‘passed its peak’ in 20 European countries

Coronavirus Dark Web Scams: From infected blood to ventilators

CDC chief says there could be second, possibly worse coronavirus outbreak this winter

Coronavirus Outbreak Amplifying Threats To Press Freedom, Media Watchdog Finds
CORONAVIRUS, NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

After the Coronavirus, Terrorism Won’t Be the Same
Raffaello Pantucci – Foreign Policy: 22 April 2020

Terrorist groups have reacted differently to the coronavirus pandemic, but one thing is certain: The outbreak will change how terrorists operate in the future.


For more on this theme:
COVID-19 Contract Tracing: Lessons For Jihad In Africa

Covid-19 and the crime–terror nexus in the cyber domain

Can the global economy survive COVID19 shocks?

China issues ‘clear threat’ to Taiwan after loss of face

The WHO has failed the world in its pandemic response

Global solutions to global ‘bads’: 2 practical proposals to help developing countries deal with the COVID-19 pandemic

China Confronts Major Risk of Debt Crisis on the Belt and Road Due To Pandemic

Same as It Ever Was: China’s Pandemic Opportunism on Its Periphery
https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/same-as-it-ever-was-chinas-pandemic-opportunism-on-its-periphery/

The Pandemic Could Bring Power to Latin America’s Criminal Gangs

Iran’s grim fight against coronavirus
https://www.orfonline.org/research/irans-grim-fight-against-coronavirus-64970/

What Happens After the Coronavirus Peak?
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/politics/what-happens-after-coronavirus-peak-144387

Moscow Using Pandemic to Shore Up Alliance With Serbia Against NATO and China
CORONAVIRUS, NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS — CONTINUED

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Russian Armed Forces
Jörgen Elfving – The Jamestown Foundation: 21 April 2020

While Russia downplays the effect of COVID-19 in the country, the virus is bound to have some effect on its military. How much will be determined by how many and how high-ranking the personnel are who are infected by the virus.


For more on this theme:


Coronavirus is also a threat to democratic constitutions
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/04/15/coronavirus-is-also-a-threat-to-democratic-constitutions/

Will COVID-19 Sink Globalization?

What happens when the laws of war meet a pandemic?

The Pandemic Could Tighten China’s Grip on Eurasia

Afghanistan: COVID-19 exposes weaknesses in health infrastructure

The importance of Australia’s Pacific step-up in the post-virus environment

Coronavirus and the Danger of Traditional and Cyber Threats

What world post-COVID-19? Three scenarios

COVID-19 and debt standstill for Africa: The G-20’s action is an important first step that must be complemented, scaled up, and broadened

The economic costs of reopening too soon
CORONAVIRUS, NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS — CONTINUED

COVID-19 and military readiness: Preparing for the long game
Thomas Burke, Chesley Dycus, Michael E. O’Hanlon, Eric Reid and Jessica Worst – Brookings: 22 April 2020

The authors ask: “How will we keep our military combat ready, and thus fully capable of deterrence globally, until a vaccine is available to our troops?”


For more on this theme:

How US support for North Korea’s dire medical system could help build trust
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/04/20/how-us-support-for-north-koreas-dire-medical-system-could-help-build-trust/

COVID in the Maghreb: Responses and Impacts

Preparing for the crisis after the crisis

COVID-19 and the Russian Military: Internal Cases and Role in the State’s Response

What the virus pandemic means for violent extremists
https://www.arabnews.com/node/1661016

Is It a Crime to Mishandle a Public Health Response?


Covid-19 crisis has big geopolitical implications for Australia

COVIDcast Episode 8: COVID-19 and the World Health Organization

Reconnected: How the EU can assert its sovereignty after the pandemic
https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_reconnected_how_the_eu_can_assert_its_sovereignty_after_the_pand

COVID-19’s Negative Effect on Democratization in Central Asia
CORONAVIRUS AND DISINFORMATION

Russia Accepts and Emulates China’s Coronavirus Propaganda
Pavel K. Baev – The Jamestown Foundation: 20 April 2020

Russia and China are both spouting the same propaganda and disinformation about the coronavirus pandemic.

For more on this theme:

Moscow's coronavirus offensive

State report: Russian, Chinese and Iranian disinformation narratives echo one another

Coronavirus Misinformation Spreads on Facebook, Watchdog Says

Chinese Agents Helped Spread Messages That Sowed Virus Panic in U.S., Officials Say

Coronavirus misinformation is widespread, according to new report that calls it an ‘infodemic’

Twitter updates misinformation rules again to fight 5G coronavirus truthers
https://mashable.com/article/coronavirus-5g-misinformation-twitter-guidelines/

Beware of China’s coronavirus disinformation, RSF says

The Lawfare Podcast: Charlie Warzel on the Pandemic Internet

Facing COVID-19 Misinformation and Censorship in Brazil, Russia, and China

State Department says China is promoting Russian disinformation claiming U.S. was the source of coronavirus

Russians Troll Government COVID-19 App With 1-Star Ratings, Harsh Reviews