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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

South Africa’s double blow: Corruption and the coronavirus
Fred Muvunyi – Deutsche Welle: 3 August 2020
South Africa’s anti-corruption watchdog said it was investigating coronavirus-related contracts for possible corruption.

Zimbabwean government lashes out at anti-corruption protesters with an iron fist
Fazila Mahomed – Maverick Citizen: 2 August 2020
After using the military to quash planned nationwide protests against corruption, scores of people were arrested and detained across Zimbabwe.

For more on this theme:
Ex-Pemex boss asserts innocence on corruption charges, vows to denounce others
Combating corruption in Ukraine: Are the country's parliament and anti-corruption agency up to the task?
Former Chinese top banker pleads guilty to massive corruption
Vietnam Says It Will Step Up Fight Against Corruption
U.S. Sanctions Zimbabwe's 'Queen Bee' Over Corruption
Malaysia's former finance minister Lim Guan Eng arrested on corruption charges linked to Penang undersea tunnel project
It is way too early to celebrate Najib's historic corruption sentence
Anti-corruption body finds 'systemic insurance fraud' in PhilHealth
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Hezbollah operatives seen behind spike in drug trafficking, analysts say
After Italian officials recovered 84 million tablets of the amphetamine Captagon worth an estimated $1.1 billion, authorities began to suspect the drugs were linked to Syria, Iran and more specifically to Hezbollah.

Understaffed and under threat: Paraguay's park rangers pay the ultimate price
Aldo Benítez – Mongabay: 5 August 2020
Protected areas in eastern Paraguay are beset by illegal marijuana cultivation and logging. Government interventions have had limited success, with clearing resuming shortly after agents leave an area. Rangers say they need more resources and support to do their job safely and effectively.

For more on this theme:
Strait of Gibraltar: A gateway for drug smugglers

Murder, Drugs and Extortion in Tuscany’s Chinese Underworld

France extends police powers in crackdown on drugs trade

Chinese Networks Dominate Chemical, Cash Sectors of Drug Cartel Business

Germany’s ‘Chemical Revolution’ online drug dealers go on trial

Is COVID-19 driving up the price of illegal drugs?
https://www.winKenws.com/2020/08/05/is-covid-19-driving-up-the-price-of-illegal-drugs/

Guatemalan ex-economy minister charged with laundering drugs money
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Cultural values critical in illegal wildlife trade interventions of Chinese-influenced societies
Sam Wood – University of Kent: 5 August 2020

A new study by the University of Kent’s Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology suggests that using Confucianist, Daoist, and Buddhist messaging in targeted campaigns could effectively change the behavior of end consumers in the East Asia illegal wildlife trade chain.


Full report:
Targeted values: The relevance of classical Chinese philosophy for illegal wildlife demand reduction campaigns

For more on this theme:

- African Wildlife Traffickers Face Long Prison Sentences

- Sounding the alarm about illegal logging? There’s an app for that

- Kenya’s Indigenous Complain of Forceful Eviction From Forests

- DNA sequencing device could rapidly detect illegal wildlife products
  https://geographical.co.uk/nature/wildlife/item/3760-dna-sequencing-device-could-rapidly-detect-illegal-wildlife-products

- Can Vietnam Prevent the Next Pandemic?
  https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/can-vietnam-prevent-the-next-pandemic/

- Conservationists Hail Arrest of Notorious Wildlife Trafficker in Kenya

- Congo Basin's Endangered Wildlife Find Unlikely Guardians in Indigenous Hunters

- Rosewood Trafficking Worsens in the Gambia

- Widespread logging threatens the Congo Basin’s critical rainforest
  https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/widespread-logging-threatens-the-congo-basins-critical-rainforest

- Jaguar Poaching Driven by Chinese Demand for Teeth and Parts
  https://www.rfa.org/english/commentaries/china-jaguars-08032020074647.html

- Tracking illegal fishing? There’s (finally) an app for that.
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Anti-human trafficking organizations are struggling under COVID-19

Corinne Redfern – PBS: 3 August 2020

As predicted earlier this year by researchers and anti-trafficking advocacy groups, nongovernmental organizations from 102 countries, including the United States, are struggling to provide trafficking survivors with basic services and support during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new report.


For more on this theme:

Thousands suffer extreme rights abuses journeying to Africa’s Mediterranean coast, say humanitarians

Covid-19: Activists warn of sharp rise in human trafficking in near future

Human trafficking in Kenya

ORGANIZED CRIME

Researchers investigate effect of COVID-19 on UK organized crime

University of Nottingham – Phys.org: 3 August 2020

The Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom, is investigating the effects of COVID-19 on Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). The Rights Lab hopes to shed light on COVID-19’s effect on the distribution and sale of illegal drugs and CCE through “county lines,” where drugs are transported, often across police and local authority boundaries, usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced and controlled by gangs.


For more on this theme:

Coronavirus Lockdown Boosts Demand for Contraband Cigarettes in Chile

The pandemic has changed how criminals hide their cash — and AI tools are trying to sniff it out

Cross-border links between terrorists, organized crime, underscore need for coherent global response

Mexico’s criminal brazenness matters
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/08/03/mexicos-criminal-brazenness-matters/
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

**OPINION: What should the public take away from the U.S. tech hearing?**
David Segal – Thomson Reuters Foundation: 31 July 2020

Many governments have subscribed to the notion that the internet should be controlled by multiple stakeholders. But the author argues that a handful of companies actually rule the internet and that they should be reined in by the government.

https://news.trust.org/item/20200731134757-1kfi5

*For more on this theme:*

(U.S., Global) IGF-USA Teaser. Laura DeNardis: The Internet in Everything

(Global) Internet Governance Calendar During the COVID-19 Pandemic

(Global) Oxford University Introduces New Commission to Address AI Governance in Public Policy

INTERNET FREEDOM

**Exporting digital authoritarianism: The Russian and Chinese models**
Alina Polyakova and Chris Meserole – Brookings: August 2020

Digital authoritarianism is reshaping the power balance between democracies and autocracies. This policy brief examines the development and export of the Chinese and Russian models of such digital authoritarianism.


*For more on this theme:*

(Chad) Chad slows down internet to curb ‘hate speech’ on social media

(Brazil) Brazil Wants To Curb Fake News: Can It Do It Without Stifling Free Speech?
https://www.forbes.com/sites/federicoguerrini/2020/08/05/brazil-wants-to-regulate-whatsapp-could-it-do-it-without-stifling-free-speech/#22c7ae93420b

(South Africa) Serious concern over South Africa’s Internet censorship bill
PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Internet search services: Europe’s quest for online privacy
Nils Zimmermann – Deutsche Welle: 4 August 2020

Europeans are concerned about using dominant platforms Google and Bing for web searches. So other companies have found ways to use the results from the two search engines but block the tracking mechanisms that raise privacy concerns.


For more on this theme:

(India) India must avoid Nationalisation of Data

(Global) How hackers could spy on satellite internet traffic with just $300 of home TV equipment

(U.S., Europe, Global) Demise of Privacy Shield may be the end of U.S.-Europe data transfers

CYBER STATECRAFT

DOD, FBI, DHS release info on malware used in Chinese government-led hacking campaigns
Shannon Vavra – Cyberscoop: 3 August 2020

The U.S. government publicly announced that the Chinese government has been using malware, referred to as Taidoor, to hack government agencies, think tanks and the private sector since 2008.


For more on this theme:

(China, Australia) China’s cyber espionage surge in Australia: opportunism not punishment

(Australia) Small businesses on the front line as Australia’s cybersecurity strategy released

(U.S., China) Announcing the Expansion of the Clean Network to Safeguard America’s Assets
https://www.state.gov/announcing-the-expansion-of-the-clean-network-to-safeguard-americas-assets/#.XyskRGeXXOE.twitter
CYBER ATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Ransomware: The tricks used by WastedLocker to make it one of the most dangerous cyber threats
Danny Palmer – ZDNet: 4 August 2020

Security researchers highlighted why WastedLocker ransomware is so dangerous. Using intricate knowledge of how Windows functions, it is built to avoid anti-ransomware tools and other cyber security software.


For more on this theme:

(Global) Microsoft Security Advisory Highlights ‘BootHole’ Vulnerability in Systems with Secure Boot

(U.S., Global) Malware Author Admits Role in $568m Cyber-Fraud

(Global) Robots Running the Industrial World Are Open to Cyber Attacks

CYBER PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Researchers uncover vulnerabilities in devices used at industrial facilities
Sean Lyngaas – Cyberscoop: 5 August 2020

The way the Russian hackers blinded Ukrainian power firms to their own operations is still studied by utilities around the world. Recently, important data was discovered. Researchers at cyber security company Trend Micro revealed multiple vulnerabilities in the same types of devices exploited by the Russians five years ago.


For more on this theme:

(U.S.) Rewards for Justice — Reward Offer for Information on Foreign Interference in U.S. Elections
https://www.state.gov/rewards-for-justice-reward-offer-for-information-on-foreign-interference-in-u-s-elections/

(U.S.) Ransomware feared as possible saboteur for November election
https://apnews.com/b39a09fc9a1334e9ef78bd46a40db253

(U.S.) DHS Warns of a Persistent Cyber Threat Targeting Critical Infrastructure in the U.S.
MASS SURVEILLANCE AND INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

Technological surveillance of religion in China
Chris Meserole – Brookings: 22 July 2020

“The rise in digital authoritarianism and corresponding decline in human rights, including the right to worship freely, are two of the most pressing issues the world faces today. Nowhere do those issues enjoy greater urgency than in modern China, where the Xi regime and Chinese Communist Party have relied on digital technologies to carry out human rights abuses and curtail religious freedom with unprecedented efficiency and scale,” Brookings fellow Chris Meserole tells the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/technological-surveillance-of-religion-in-china/

For more on this theme:

(Rwanda) The chilling tale of mass surveillance and spying in Rwanda

(Togo) Religious, political leaders in Togo allegedly targeted with NSO Group spyware
https://www.cyberscoop.com/religious-politicians-togo-surveillance-nso-group/

PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

US Action Against IS Financier Shows Jihadists’ Cash Flow Continues from Turkey
Namo Abdulla – Voice of America: 5 August 2020
The U.S. has designated a member of the Turkey-based Rawi Network of financing terrorist activities, accusing Adnan Muhammad Amin al-Rawi of using a still-existing informal payment system to transfer cash to ISIS via Turkey.

Islamic State Sees a Bloody Opportunity in the US-Taliban Deal
Ahmad Shah Katawazai – The Diplomat: 4 August 2020
The ISIS group in Afghanistan hopes to recruit disenfranchised Taliban fighters and become the preeminent violent extremist group as the Taliban moves closer to peace talks with Afghanistan.

For more on this theme:
Al Mawla: new ISIS leader has a reputation for brutality
https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/al-mawla-new-isis-leader-has-a-reputation-for-brutality-1.1052241
Terror reports issue urgent warnings to European governments over repatriation of ISIS fighters
Islamic State remains ‘most significant’ threat to UK
Documenting ISIS’ crimes is daunting. Coronavirus makes it even harder.
UN Warns Too Few Islamic State Women Are Facing Justice
https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/un-warns-too-few-islamic-state-women-are-facing-justice
Why the Islamic State is Against the Coronavirus Vaccine
IS working in Maldives with “network of supporters”: UNSC
https://raajje.mv/83170
Turkey still a major hub for ISIS militants, IG report says
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

Lebanese Hezbollah Select Worldwide Activities Interactive Map and Timeline

A new interactive map of Hezbollah’s activities has shown all the attacks, financing operations and plots by the terror group, revealing for the first time its vast global reach. Researchers, the police and the public will be able to view the group’s activities across the world in a resource that includes information taken from declassified CIA and FBI files.


For more on this theme:

Al-Shabaab recruiting behind the Covid-19 ‘Iron Curtain’

Sahel: The new theatre of conflict between Al-Qaeda and Islamic State

Terrorism and COVID-19: Actual and Potential Impacts

Covid-19 has not changed terror threats in East Africa, Africom says

Inside Boko Haram’s control of smoked fish and red pepper trade

Thousands flee Islamist insurgents in northern Mozambique

Pakistani terror groups have symbiotic relation with Al Qaeda, IS: Afghanistan

ISIS, Al Qaeda Penetrating Northwest, Seek to Expand into South, US Warns Nigeria

Borno Governor Survives Boko Haram Attack in Nigeria
https://www.cfr.org/blog/borno-governor-survives-boko-haram-attack-nigeria

Child Gold Miners in Africa Have to Deal With Floods, Collapse, and Now, Al Qaeda

Nigeria’s growing insecurity offers expansion opportunities for Boko Haram
https://issafrica.org/iss-today/nigerias-growing-insecurity-offers-expansion-opportunities-for-boko-haram
IRREGULAR WARFARE: DISINFORMATION AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

Exclusive: Papers leaked before UK election in suspected Russian operation were hacked from ex-trade minister – sources
Jack Stubbs and Guy Faulconbridge – Reuters: 3 August 2020

Russians are suspected of hacking into a former British trade minister’s e-mail and leaking classified U.S.-U.K. trade documents ahead of Britain’s 2019 elections, according to Reuters.

For more on this theme:

China’s Assertiveness Is Becoming a Problem for Its Friends, Too

Russia’s “Passportisation” of the Donbas

How a Chinese agent used LinkedIn to hunt for targets

Hezbollah’s fake news training camps revealed
https://www.arabnews.com/node/1713611/middle-east

US Exposes Russian Tactics to Sway American Elections

China Changes Diplomatic Styles in Central Asia Over COVID-19
CONSEQUENCE MANAGEMENT

CURRENT STATE OF THE CORONAVIRUS

Trained dogs can correctly sniff out coronavirus patients about 80 percent of the time: study
Anagha Srikanth – The Hill: 29 July 2020

After just a few days of training, dogs in Germany proved capable of identifying people infected with COVID-19, according to researchers. The dogs, part of a study by a veterinary university in Germany, were able to sniff out the virus with stunning accuracy.


For more on this theme:

Russian Vaccine Developer Further Tempers Official’s Claim Of October Rollout

Exclusive: China-backed hackers ‘targeted COVID-19 vaccine firm Moderna’

Harvard Researchers Now Know How Coronavirus Causes Loss of Smell
https://nationalinterest.org/blog/coronavirus/harvard-researchers-now-know-how-coronavirus-causes-loss-smell-165879

Americans Fault China for Its Role in the Spread of COVID-19

North Korea Steps up Its War on COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS, NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Can the Turkish Military’s Fight Against the Pandemic Set an Example for NATO?
Can Kasapoglu – The Jamestown Foundation: 4 August 2020

Despite the pandemic and growing bio-security threat, the Turkish Armed Forces actually stepped up their combat operations.

https://jamestown.org/program/can-the-turkish-militarys-fight-against-the-pandemic-set-an-example-for-nato/

For more on this theme:

Pentagon Aims to Support More Sensitive Telework By Year’s End
https://www.defenseone.com/technology/2020/07/pentagon-aims-support-more-sensitive-telework-years-end/167352/

UK and allies expose Russian attacks on coronavirus vaccine development

Herd Immunity Can’t Save Afghanistan From COVID -19

The pandemic’s geopolitical aftershocks

Researchers investigate the impact of COVID-19 on terrorism

Post Covid-19 world: How AI can ensure a more inclusive digital economy

Second wave of Covid-19 cyber attacks locked in