CONTENTS

COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)
- Corruption
- Drug Trafficking
- Trafficking in Scarce or Protected Resources
- Organized Crime and Money Laundering

PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)
- Internet Governance
- Internet Freedom
- Cyber Capacity Building
- Cyberattacks, Threats and Vulnerabilities
- Cybercrime
- Protection of Critical Infrastructure

PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)
- ISIS and Foreign Fighters
- Terrorism Around the World
- Radicalization and Messaging
- Irregular Warfare: Information Operations and Malign Influence

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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

Global Corruption Barometer Pacific 2021: Citizens' Views and Experiences of Corruption
Roberto Martinez B. Kukutschka – Transparency International: November 2021

A detailed Transparency International survey of more than 6,000 citizens from 10 Pacific countries finds that 61% of respondents consider government corruption a serious problem in their countries. For the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, the numbers were 97% and 96%, respectively.


Why Russian Corruption in Post-Soviet States Matters to the West
Dan Goure – The National Interest: 25 November 2021

Reprinted column from 2019: Endemic corruption in countries of the former Soviet Union has allowed foreign powers, particularly Russia, to undermine fragile institutions and influence political processes. Because political power and Communist Party politics always trumped the law in the Soviet Union and its satellites, this corruption was almost inevitable.


For more on this theme:

Combating corruption to drive democratic renewal: A kickoff event for the Summit for Democracy
https://www.brookings.edu/events/combating-corruption-to-drive-democratic-renewal/

A Revitalization of Global Anti-Corruption Enforcement: The OECD Issues New Recommendations Likely to Increase Multijurisdictional Enforcement and Spur Additional Investments in Compliance

Top 10 International Anti-Corruption Developments for October 2021
https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/top-10-international-anti-corruption-3860094/

Soon After Taking Over Belarus’ Tobacco Industry, Oligarch Donated Luxury Cars to Lukashenko Regime

Is there a Universal Definition of Corruption?

Indonesia creating corruption-prevention database of aid recipients

‘How corruption impedes access to health, water, education’
https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/11/how-corruption-impedes-access-to-health-water-education/

Former Brazil Olympic boss sentenced to jail for corruption

Congo Investigation a Chance to Fight Corruption
https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/02/congo-investigation-chance-fight-corruption#
**DRUG TRAFFICKING**

**How I trafficked over $6.6 million worth of Cocaine internationally**  
*Nazar Risafi – Insider: 29 November 2021*

International drug smuggler Pieter Tritton explains how cocaine is produced, transported and marketed. Tritton was a small-time university drug dealer in the United Kingdom who became a major cocaine importer before being caught and spending time in an Ecuadorian prison.  
https://www.insider.com/how-international-cocaine-trafficking-actually-works-2021-11

**Captagon: How amphetamines fuelled Saudi Arabia’s anger against Lebanon**  
*Andrei Popoviciu – Middle East Eye: 23 November 2021*

Saudi Arabia has expelled Lebanese diplomats and banned fruit imports after illicit amphetamines were smuggled inside Lebanese fruit. However, Syria, the source of more smuggled amphetamines than Lebanon, has not faced similar sanctions.  

For more on this theme:

**Afghan Humanitarian Crisis, Drug Trafficking Worry Regional Powers**  

**El Chapo’s wife sentenced to 3 years for her role in helping drug cartel**  

**Increased Trafficking In Counterfeit Medicines : Countries Urged To Ratify MEDICRIME Convention**  
https://www.publicnow.com/view/A72CF1FFB0DF4FC198A56EC982B78B5F3A93ECCA

**Ecuador’s president extends state of emergency for prisons**  

**‘Business as usual’: Afghan drug trade continues under Taliban**  

**Synthetic Drugs Flood California Crossing of US-Mexico Border**  

**Honduras presidential election: a referendum on the nation’s corruption and drugs**  
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Illegal mining threatens Indigenous land at foot of Philippines’ tallest peak
Bong S. Sarmiento – Mongabay: 30 November 2021

Illegal small-scale gold mining on the slopes of the Philippines’ Mount Apo threatens the ecosystem of this protected area.

Global arrests and seizures: WCO-INTERPOL Operation Thunder 2021 strikes wildlife and timber trafficking networks
CITES: 30 November 2021

Numerous crime networks were disrupted and hundreds of arrests were made worldwide during the monthlong Operation Thunder 2021, which involved law enforcement agencies from 118 countries. It was coordinated by the World Customs Organization and Interpol.

For more on this theme:

US Returns Nearly 1,000 Looted Artifacts to Mali
https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/15563-us-returns-nearly-1-000-looted-artifacts-to-mali

Snow leopards hit by lack of joint database on poaching and trafficking
https://www.thethirdpole.net/en/nature/snow-leopard-poaching-trafficking/

Costa Rica Sabotaging Own Efforts to Protect Vulnerable Sharks

Crime gangs make Vietnam the top destination for smuggled African wildlife-report

Heathrow partners with Microsoft to trial AI tool to detect wildlife trafficking

Attempts to curb illegal fishing are hurting small-scale fishers in Africa most

A Crackdown on Illegal Gold Dredging in Brazil

These are all the endangered species criminals tried to smuggle in just one month
https://www.euronews.com/green/2021/12/01/these-are-all-the-endangered-species-criminals-tried-to-smuggle-in-just-one-month
ORGANIZED CRIME AND MONEY LAUNDERING

How AI improves AML efforts across the financial services industry
Clark Frogley – Banking Exchange: 29 November 2021

Financial institutions have struggled historically to keep up with money laundering innovations, but new artificial intelligence technology is making effective enforcement a reality.
https://www.bankingexchange.com/news-feed/item/9024-how-ai-improves-aml-efforts-across-the-financial-services-industry%3FItemid%3D257

Murder, Drugs, God and Crypto - The Downfall of Brazil’s Pharaoh of Bitcoins
Kai Bernier-Chen – InSight Crime: 22 November 2021

The rags-to-riches story of a Brazilian former waiter and pastor crumbled when he was arrested for building a vast pyramid scheme, money laundering, murder for hire and other crimes.

For more on this theme:

Lithuania: some improvement in fighting money laundering and terrorist financing

Anti-money laundering agency warns vs funding support for communist network
https://www.bworldonline.com/anti-money-laundering-agency-warns-vs-funding-support-for-communist-network/

Europol: 18k money mules caught laundering money from online fraud

Rapid Money Laundering Response Helps Intercept $27m

Mexico Criminals Target Kindergarten After Huge Lottery Earnings

Hong Kong Seizes 27 Million Suspected Illicit Cigarettes

Massive money-laundering probe heartens anti-corruption activists but fails to lift Pandora Papers’ pall over Seychelles

Police, prison guards among those who have fled tentacles of organized crime
PROGRAM ON CYBER SECURITY STUDIES (PCSS)

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

National Security Podcast: Minister Paul Fletcher on governing in the Internet age
Paul Fletcher and Rory Medcalf – Asia & The Pacific Policy Society: 29 November 2021
Paul Fletcher, an Australian member of Parliament and minister for communications, urban infrastructure, cities and the arts, discusses the role of government in internet regulation, challenges and threats posed by the internet to citizens, and how the government is legislating ever-evolving cyberspace.

Is China Stacking the Technology Deck by Setting International Standards?
Danny Russel and Blake Berger – The Diplomat: 2 December 2021
Though often overshadowed by China’s advances in technology, Beijing’s state-directed strategy to set technological standards will have a lasting impact.
https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/is-china-stacking-the-technology-deck-by-setting-international-standards/

For more on this theme:
(U.S., Global) Technology Diplomacy Changes Are the Right Start
https://www.lawfareblog.com/technology-diplomacy-changes-are-right-start
(U.S., Global) ‘Future of the internet’ requires willingness to change here in the US
(India) Crucial to define norms of internet governance, says Ashwini Vaishnaw

INTERNET FREEDOM

‘Like the Stasi’: India’s cyber volunteers silence critical voices
Rina Chandran – The Sydney Morning Herald: 30 November 2021
India’s Ministry of Home Affairs has recruited a force of cybercrime volunteers to report illegal online content. However, critics claim that the volunteers are increasingly becoming online vigilantes who stalk opposition groups and sites critical of the government and the ruling party to get them suspended.

For more on this theme:
(U.S., Global) Podcast Episode: Who Should Control Online Speech?
https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2021/11/podcast-episode-putting-people-control-online-speech
(U.K., Australia, Canada, Global) Internet Safety Is the New Internet Freedom
(Russia) Russian internet watchdog announces ban of six more VPN products

(China) China Puts the Squeeze on Celebrities With Blacklist Governing Morals
https://www.newsweek.com/china-puts-squeeze-celebrities-blacklist-governing-morals-1652412

CYBER CAPACITY BUILDING

Web3: A fundamentally different kind of internet?
GlobalData Thematic Research – Verdict: 29 November 2021

New technologies and trends, such as blockchain, will lead to a more decentralized internet where large gatekeepers will no longer control content. This trend, called Web3, could allow individual users to maintain control not only over content they produce, but over their own data, and to profit from selling it.
https://www.verdict.co.uk/web2-web3-blockchain/

For more on this theme:

(Global) What is the metaverse? A deep dive into the ‘future of the internet’

(U.S.) Navigating Cybersecurity Risks in International Trade

(U.K., Singapore) UK and Singapore align closer on digital trade
https://www.itpro.co.uk/business/policy-legislation/361704/uk-and-singapore-align-closer-on-digital-trade

(U.S.) Robot workers are being hired at record rates in US companies - here's why
https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/12/robots-jobs-staff-shortage-automation/

CYBERATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Hospital Cyberattack Is The New Pandemic; Here’s The Cure
Abigail Klein Leichman – Vida Newspaper: 30 November 2021

Cyberattacks on hospitals and health care institutions have increased 200% since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. While cyberattacks are almost always expensive, a ransomware attack that took an Alabama hospital offline for eight days is being blamed for the death of a newborn.

For more on this theme:

‘We’re talking about a war’: tech competition between the U.S. and China is in a dangerous new phase, says former Google disinformation chief
https://fortune.com/2021/12/01/us-china-tech-cybersecurity-gray-war-wires-of-war-jacob-helberg/

(Israel, U.S.) Apple Sues NSO Group for its Role in State-Sponsored Spyware

(U.S.) Cyberattack Simulation to Prepare for Real Cyberthreats in Illinois, USA
https://opengovasia.com/cyberattack-simulation-to-prepare-for-real-cyberthreats-in-illinois-usa/
(U.S., Global) To Prevent Cyberattacks, Make Reconnaissance Harder
https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2021/12/02/to-prevent-cyberattacks-make-reconnaissance-harder/?sh=293d2af19b2

CYBERCRIME

The UK is The Most Dangerous Country in Europe for Cybercrime
Polly Jean Harrison – The Fintech Times: 30 November 2021

Though Europe is considered one of the safest continents, that may not be the case with cybercrime. The United Kingdom is the most dangerous country on the continent in this regard, with cybercriminals becoming more aggressive and confrontational.
https://thefintechtimes.com/the-uk-is-the-most-dangerous-country-in-europe-for-cybercrime/

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) IRS Seized $3.5 Billion in Crypto in 2020, According to New Crime Report

(U.S., Global) Cyber crime down as hackers go after bigger fish

(South Africa) Some sections of Cyber crimes Act now in force
https://www.itweb.co.za/content/DZQ58vVP56nMzXy2

(U.S.) Bulletproof hosting founder imprisoned for helping cybercrime gangs

PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Countering cyber criminals’ assault on financial services by improving your cyber hygiene
Renee Tarun – Banking Exchange: 1 December 2021

The sophistication and number of attacks targeting critical infrastructure increased significantly in the first half of 2021. Vulnerabilities can be reduced with good cyber hygiene, including employee training, practicing zero trust and implementing state-of-the-art firewalls.

For more on this theme:
(U.S.) World’s largest wind turbine maker bounces back from cyberattack

(U.S., Global) Protecting Critical Public Infrastructure: The Role of Threat Intelligence

(U.S., Global) US, UK, and Australian Agencies Issue Joint Cybersecurity Advisory on Iranian APT Groups Targeting Critical Infrastructure
ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

On the Kurdish Front Lines, It's an Endless Struggle
David Patrikarakos – New/Lines Magazine: 29 November 2021

An estimated 8,000 to 16,000 Islamic State fighters remain in Iraq and Syria and are engaged in a low-level insurgency in rural areas. This firsthand account describes the ongoing battle in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/on-the-kurdish-front-lines-its-an-endless-struggle/

ISIS tightens grip on Mozambique by training new generation of suicide attackers
Thomas Harding – The National News: 30 November 2021

The Islamic State group’s expansion into northern Mozambique includes training a new generation of recruits for a terror offensive using suicide bombers, according to one of Africa’s leading intelligence analysts.


For more on this theme:

Syria: Repatriate at least 27,000 children held in dire conditions in north-east Syria

Finland’s secret school for children of IS fighters
https://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-10253289/Finlands-secret-school-children-IS-fighters.html

Mosul, Destroyed by War, Waits to be Rebuilt While the Hunt for Hidden ISIS Treasure Goes On

ISIS attack kills five Peshmerga soldiers as authorities call for wider co-operation

Yazidi survivor Nadia Murad urges nations to copy Germany’s prosecution of genocide

Terror suspect, 19, appears in court accused of sharing extremist material on Instagram including 'Isis training' videos

Advise. Assist. Enable. How the Coalition’s Mission is Changing in IRAQ

Daesh attacks Iran-backed militias in Syria
https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20211202-daesh-attacks-iran-backed-militias-in-syria/
Nigeria designates gunmen in troubled north as terrorists


Nigeria has designated armed groups blamed for hundreds of abductions and killings in northern areas as terrorist organizations, a major swing in response to a key security challenge facing Africa’s most populous country. This will allow authorities to charge suspected members of the groups with terrorism-related offenses, which some think will lead to a more effective crackdown on their activities.

https://apnews.com/article/africa-nigeria-terrorism-578a2f5b2a5ada04e80776327f6a01df

For more on this theme:

Somali Investigators: Intelligence Agency Not Responsible for Female Spy Disappearance

Al-Shabab claims responsibility for latest blast in Somalia

Pressure mounts on Somalias Govt to probe killing of Radio director

Decrease in Number of Terrorist Incidents in J&K After Abrogation of Article 370: Govt

UN rights chief: Burkina Faso is facing a security crisis
https://apnews.com/article/africa-united-nations-west-africa-islamic-state-group-burkina-faso-c299908a91a96699b587708a93c86cf1

Indonesia Detains 24 People Over Links to Terror Financing
https://www.ntd.com/indonesia-detains-24-people-over-links-to-terror-financing_707036.html

Israel Charges Two Arabs With Shooting at Jews in May Riots, Terrorism

RADICALIZATION AND MESSAGING

The Expanding Use of Administrative Measures in a Counter-Terrorism Context — Part 2: In Need of a Gender and Age-Sensitive Approach
Bibi van Ginkel, Matthew Wentworth and Tanya Mehra – International Center for Counter-Terrorism: November 2021

Gender- and age-sensitive considerations need to be considered when assessing the use of counterterrorism measures. This policy brief elaborates on the importance of monitoring the effectiveness of these measures.


Related report:
For more on this theme:

**McCaul, Meeks, Wilson, Deutch Introduce Legislation to Sanction Iran’s Drones and Suppliers**

**Germany, the UK and EUROPOL Target Violent Jihadist Websites**

**Counter terrorism police jobs on offer with salaries up to £38,000**

**Pakistan, Russia discuss counterterrorism, cybersecurity cooperation**
https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/pakistan-russia-discuss-counterterrorism-cybersecurity-cooperation-1.84119969

**Shura Council approves decree amending Combatting Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Law**

**How the world can stop the radicalization of innocents in Syria**
https://thehill.com/opinion/international/579829-how-the-world-can-stop-the-radicalization-of-innocents-in-syria

**OSCE supports national seminar on a whole-of-society approach to prevention of violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism in Serbia**
https://www.osce.org/secretariat/505771

**Police warn more young people aged as little as 15 are being drawn into terrorism during lockdown**

**Kateregga calls for new ways of teaching Islam to fight terrorism**

**OSCE Mobile Training Team on the detection of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) at the borders, conducts national training course for officers of Border Police and Service for Foreigners’ Affairs in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina**
https://www.osce.org/mission-to-bosnia-and-herzegovina/506077

**Bennett declares police unit as national counterterrorism unit**

**Twitch psychiatrist Dr. K invited to UN counter-terrorism panel**
IRREGULAR WARFARE: INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND MALIGN INFLUENCE

From debunking to prebunking: How to get ahead of disinformation on migration in the EU
Paul Butcher and Alberto-Horst Neidhardt – European Policy Centre: 29 November 2021

This paper argues that disinformation should be preempted before it begins to circulate, a practice known as “prebunking.” Identify false stories as early as possible or even anticipate future narratives. In the long term, provide citizens with skills to distinguish facts from falsehoods.
https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2021/Disinformation___Migration_2021_final_single.pdf

Understanding the Pro-China Propaganda and Disinformation Tool Set in Xinjiang
Darren Linvill and Patrick Warren – Lawfare: 1 December 2021

China’s social-media disinformation campaigns illustrate the steps Beijing is willing to take not only to propagate its own version of reality but also to undermine others’ attempts to engage with the truth. China’s troll army reinforces its narrative and limits the ability of journalists, activists and victims to organize and use social media as a tool of free speech.

Managing Violence: Lessons in Irregular Warfare from India
Alex Waterman – Modern War Institute at West Point: 18 November 2021

While cease-fires are valuable opportunities to reduce violence in civil wars, not all cease-fires are equal in depth and scope; they can have a range of military and political consequences on the ground. In these situations, security forces can find themselves engaged in modified, low-level or rule-governed forms of counterinsurgency in which operations continue below the threshold of all-out conflict.

For more on this theme:
Facebook removes 500 accounts linked to Chinese online disinformation network

Greasing the Wheels with Disinformation: Migration and NATO in the Focus of the Pro-Kremlin Media
https://euvsdisinfo.eu/greasing-the-wheels-with-disinformation/

Tackling disinformation in the current age

The Center for Countering Disinformation at the NSDC of Ukraine informs about the risks of information manipulations in covering the “migrant crisis”

Why Russia is using Facebook to launch disinformation campaigns in Sudan
https://restofworld.org/2021/russia-sudan-facebook-disinformation/

Kremlin downplays renewed threat from Belarus’ Lukashenko on gas transit block

New Greek law against disinformation endangers press freedom