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COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (CTOC)

CORRUPTION

These four measures could curb the risk of corruption in Europe
Daniel Freund – The Parliament: 30 January 2023

There is a wide set of rules to make influence transparent in the European Parliament, but they could not prevent the Qatargate scandal.


For more on this theme:

Hungary Angry As EU Blocks Education Grants Over Corruption Fears
https://www.rferl.org/a/hungary-european-commission-corruption-education-grants/32220735.html

Persistent corruption in maritime sector hindering trade, development

Corruption as usual

Iraqi PM Discusses Anti-Corruption Measures with Judiciary
https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/4114191/iraqi-pm-discusses-anti-corruption-measures-judiciary

Malaysia’s Anti-Corruption Watchdog May be Too Far Gone to Fix
https://www.asiasentinel.com/p/malaysian-anti-corruption-commission-fix

Corruption, cash and confessions: Who are the key suspects in the Qatargate scandal?

No forbidden zones: Vietnam’s Communist Party continues corruption crackdown

Do Political Gender Quotas Reduce Corruption?

Nigeria Makes Case for International Anti-corruption Court

CPI 2022 for Eastern Europe & Central Asia: Growing security risks and authoritarianism threaten progress against corruption
DRUG TRAFFICKING

Opium Cultivation Jumps in Myanmar Amid Post-Coup Crisis, UN Says
Sebastian Strangio – The Diplomat: 27 January 2023
As the formal economy has atrophied, black markets and illicit trades have expanded their reach.

Colombia cocaine seizures break record in 2022
Reuters: 28 January 2023
Cocaine production and trafficking are considered the main drivers of an almost six-decade armed conflict that has left more than 450,000 dead and millions displaced in the South American country.

For more on this theme:
How the Taliban’s ‘War on Drugs’ Could Backfire
https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/02/01/taliban-afghanistan-drugs-war-ban-heroin-ephedra-economy/
Jamaica Seizing Ever-Larger Cocaine Shipments from Colombia
Ecuador’s Navy Grappling With Mounting Evidence of Criminal Collusion
‘Infuriating’: Super Cartel Drug Lords Freed After Just 2 Months
Myanmar opium cultivation surged 33% amid violence, UN finds
https://apnews.com/article/politics-myanmar-government-united-nations-aung-san-suu-kyi-9b78ee-0b925ae961a462d152c09e3f13
FBI Reportedly Investigates Fentanyl Distribution on Snapchat
Ecuador: The Most Dangerous Country in Latin America?
‘Afghanistan Is Disintegrating. It Can’t Afford to Give Up Opium’
https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/2023-01-20/ty-article-magazine/highlight/afghanistan-is-disintegrating-it-cant-afford-to-give-up-opium/00000185-d0f9-da66-a1bf-f9fbd3b70000
Captagon trade: How Syria became a narco-state
Drug debt intimidation: ‘There is nothing they won’t do, pipe bombs, fire bombs, homes are vandalised’
TRAFFICKING IN SCARCE OR PROTECTED RESOURCES

Sticks and Carrots: Lula’s Balancing Act in Brazil’s Crime-Wracked Amazon
Chris Dalby – InSight Crime: 1 February 2023
While new President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva had an admirable track record on the environment in his first term, replicating it is far from guaranteed.

How Asian appetites for abalone — ‘white gold’ — foster crime in South Africa that threatens diners’ safety
Linda Givetash – South China Morning Post: 28 January 2023
Criminal gangs in South Africa illegally harvest abalone and target legal farms raising the prized mollusk, putting consumers at risk. Education may help.

For more on this theme:
US, South Africa Launch Taskforce on Wildlife Trafficking

Peru Makes Headway in the Fight Against Wildlife Trafficking

How TRAFFIC’s five-year Programme catalysed impact on wildlife trade

Investigations of online trade in jaguar parts show threat is widespread

Rapid Economic Growth Has Driven Rare Species of Large Carnivores to Extinction

To restore large carnivore populations, make people wealthier, study finds
https://news.mongabay.com/2023/01/to-restore-large-carnivore-populations-make-people-wealthier-study/

At least half of Africa’s rhinos are now in private hands; New paths for rhino conservation are needed
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2023/01/230119112755.htm

Protecting Jordan’s forest cover requires stiffer penalties for illegal logging — JEU president
INTERNET GOVERNANCE

As Asian internet expands, maintaining democratic governance is key
John – Silicon India: 27 January 2023

While the wide expansion of digital infrastructure occurring in Asia, such as new subsea broadband cables and data centers, undoubtedly plays a crucial role in its digital transformation, the Internet Governance ecosystem’s contribution has gone largely overlooked.


For more on this theme:

(EU) The EU’s AI Act Is Barreling Toward AI Standards That Do Not Exist

(Global) Mythbusting: Cybercrime versus Cybersecurity
https://techpolicy.press/mythbusting-cybercrime-versus-cybersecurity/

(Global) The world needs tighter IoT governance. But reforms are on the way.
https://techmonitor.ai/the-age-of-ambient/the-world-needs-tighter-iot-governance-but-reforms-are-on-the-way

INTERNET FREEDOM

Apple Brings Mainland Chinese Web Censorship to Hong Kong
Sam Biddle – The Intercept: 26 January 2023

Apple quietly expanded the use of Chinese company Tencent’s website blacklist to users in Hong Kong — and no one will answer questions about it.


For more on this theme:

(Global) ‘Over half of world’s population hit by Net censorship in 2022’

(Iran) Mahsa Amini and the future of internet repression in Iran

(Mongolia) Mongolian government pushes for power to shut down the Internet

(Africa) About 300 million Africans affected by internet restrictions in 2022 – report
CYBER STRATEGY AND STATECRAFT

How Can a ‘Digital Emblem’ Help Protect Medical Facilities Against Cyber Operations?
Tilman Rodenhäuser and Mauro Vignati – Lawfare: 27 January 2023

Cyber operations have become a reality of war. In this digitized environment, medical facilities enjoy specific protections under the law of armed conflict: Medical facilities and their staff must be respected and protected.


For more on this theme:
(U.K.) The UK’s National Cyber Strategy 2022 – An evolution

(China) China’s cornered the IoT market. That could be a cybersecurity nightmare.
https://techmonitor.ai/the-age-of-ambient/chinas-cornered-the-iot-market-that-could-be-a-cybersecurity-nightmare

(Romania) Only Connect: How Community Networks Put Romania Online
https://balkaninsight.com/2023/01/31/only-connect-how-community-networks-put-romania-online/

CYBER ATTACKS, THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

Pro-Russian Killnet targets US hospitals
Stefanie Schappert – Cybernews: 1 February 2023

Russian hacktivist group Killnet, protesting support for Ukraine, launched multiple attacks on the U.S. health care system.

https://cybernews.com/cyber-war/russian-killnet-targets-us-hospitals/

For more on this theme:
(U.K.) Britain’s JD Sports says customer data accessed by cyber attack

(Global) FIA assessing impact of cyber attack on financial data firm ION

(Ukraine, Russia) Ukraine Hit with New Golang-based ‘SwiftSlicer’ Wiper Malware in Latest Cyber Attack

(Germany, Russia) Russian hackers launch cyberattack on Germany in Leopard retaliation
The U.N. Cybercrime Convention Should Not Become a Tool for Political Control or the Watering Down of Human Rights

Negotiations for a U.N. cybercrime convention have entered a critical stage. The negotiations were marked by attempts by authoritarian states to water down certain human rights and due-process safeguards introduced in the draft.

For more on this theme:

 Threat actors are using remote monitoring software to launch phishing attacks

 Cyber Insights 2023 | Criminal Gangs
https://www.securityweek.com/cyber-insights-2023-criminal-gangs/

 Parental awareness, stiff laws vital in combating cybercrime, say experts

CISA's public-private cyber collaborative to focus on energy, water

The Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative is turning its attention to a 2023 agenda that will address risks to vulnerable industries and sensitive elements of civil society.

For more on this theme:

 GAO: Comprehensive Cybersecurity Strategy Needed to Protect Assets, Critical Infrastructure

 EU introduces raft of cyber legislation amid ‘red tape’ warnings

 Strengthening Cyber Resilience in the Oil and Gas Industry
PROGRAM ON TERRORISM AND SECURITY STUDIES (PTSS)

ISIS AND FOREIGN FIGHTERS

Terror under lockdown: Pandemic restrictions reduce ISIS violence
Mike Cummings – Yale News: 30 January 2023
A Yale study shows that public health measures in Egypt, Iraq and Syria to slow the spread of COVID-19 reduced attacks by the Islamic State group.
https://news.yale.edu/2023/01/30/terror-under-lockdown-pandemic-restrictions-reduce-isis-violence

ISIS-K steps up threats and attacks on Chinese projects in Afghanistan
ANI: 29 January 2023
The major investments of China in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan have been targeted by the Islamic State group’s Afghanistan affiliate and other terrorist organizations. Nikkei Asia reported that attacks on Chinese projects are also a kind of retaliation for the inhuman treatment of the Muslim Uyghur population in China.

For more on this theme:
US Military Kills Senior Islamic State Official in Somalia
ISWAP Terrorists Distribute Old Naira Notes Worth N100,000 To Passengers On Borno State Highway As Deadline Nears
Gravitas: ISIS versus the Taliban: A new battle for survival
The Islamic State Sahel Province
https://acleddata.com/2023/01/13/actor-profile-the-islamic-state-sahel-province/
The Islamic State in a Fractured Libya
https://greydynamics.com/the-islamic-state-in-a-fractured-libya/
Canada Agrees to Repatriate Nearly Two Dozen Citizens From ISIS Detainment Camp
EER Podcast: The Prospects of the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda in Africa
https://eeradicalization.com/podcast-episode-3-jacob-zenn-jihadism-africa/
France: More women, children returned from IS camps in Syria
https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-politics-france-syria-children-a1a85e1a4bc7650e53bc-d84a55573990
TERRORISM AROUND THE WORLD

THE MANY FACES OF AL-SHABAAB

Benjamin Jebb and Matthew Moellering – Modern War Institute: 27 January 2023

Episode 71 of the Irregular Warfare Podcast examines the often misunderstood security dynamics of Somalia and al-Shabaab.

https://mwi.usma.edu/the-many-faces-of-al-shabaab/

For more on this theme:

Africa’s approach to countering terrorism still misses the mark
https://issafrica.org/iss-today/africas-approach-to-countering-terrorism-still-misses-the-mark

Risks of Burkina Faso’s new military approach to terrorism
https://issafrica.org/iss-today/risks-of-burkina-fasos-new-military-approach-to-terrorism

US and Russia clash over violent extremism in Africa

“Boulders of Strength and Pillars of Hope”: Exploring Gender and Violent Extremism in Southeast Asia

Why the U.S. Shouldn’t Take Its Eye off Jihadi Terrorism in 2023
https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2023/01/13/why_the_us_shouldnt_take_its_eye_off_jihadi_terrorism_in_2023_875595.html

Can Somalia finally defeat Al-Shabab extremists? — analysis
https://www.jpost.com/international/article-728759

Boko Haram: The Relations between the two factions of the organization

Terrorism Spreading From Burkina Faso to Northern Benin

Raising the stakes against the Wagner Group: From mercenaries to a designated terrorist group?
https://icct.nl/publication/wagner-group-mercenaries-or-terrorist-group/

Seeds Of Islamic Radicalism In Pakistan Sown In State School Textbooks: Study

The Case for Designating Wagner Group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization Is Still Compelling
CRIME AND CONFLICT

Russia has committed more than 65,000 war crimes in Ukraine, prosecutor general says
Amanda Macias – CNBC: 1 February 2023

Andriy Kostin said authorities have registered more than 65,000 Russian war crimes since Russia invaded the country nearly a year ago.

https://www.cnbc.com/2023/02/01/ukraine-russia-war-65000-war-crimes-committed-prosecutor-general-says.html

For more on this theme:

Special tribunal should prosecute Russia’s crimes in Ukraine, says Swiss lawmaker

Environmental Accountability, Justice And Reconstruction From Russian War On Ukraine – Analysis

UN: 2023 could see spike in human trafficking cases from Ukraine

In Evaluating Immunities before a Special Tribunal for Aggression Against Ukraine, the Type of Tribunal Matters

Two Years of Myanmar’s Junta: Regional Instability, Surging Organized Crime

Ending Selective Justice for the International Crime of Aggression
https://www.justsecurity.org/84949/ending-selective-justice-for-the-international-crime-of-aggression/

In Kosovo, Proposal to Research Post-War Crimes Sparks Controversy
https://balkaninsight.com/2023/02/01/in-kosovo-proposal-to-research-post-war-crimes-sparks-controversy/

Two Years of Myanmar’s Junta: Regional Instability, Surging Organized Crime

Colombia’s war crimes tribunal hears notorious former warlord
https://colombiareports.com/colombias-war-crimes-tribunal-hears-notorious-former-war-lord/

The Long — Yet Still Uneven — Arc of International Justice
CRIME AND CONFLICT

For more on this theme:

**Probe needed into possible Wagner war crimes in Mali: UN experts**

**Haiti Gangs Embrace Political and Police Chaos**
https://insightcrime.org/news/haiti-gangs-de-facto-authority-state-institutions-struggle-respond/

**Southern Mexico Extortion Suggests Migration of Central American Gangs**

**Russian cyber soldiers should stand trial in Hague, says Ukraine official**

**Africans are less safe than they were a decade ago**

RUSSIA/UKRAINE

**Brutality of Russia’s Wagner gives it lead in Ukraine war**
*The Associated Press:* 27 January 2023
Fierce battles in eastern Ukraine have thrown a new spotlight on Russia’s Wagner Group, a private military company led by a rogue millionaire with longtime links to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

For more on this theme:

**When did the Ukraine war start? Timeline of the conflict so far as Russia invasion anniversary approaches**

**Wagner Group Redefined: Threats and Responses**
https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/01/wagner-group-redefined-threats-and-responses/

**Does the West’s decision to arm Ukraine with tanks bring it closer to war with Russia?**

**Podcast: What Next in Russia’s War Against Ukraine?**
https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88919

**Countering the Wagner Group and Degrading Russia’s War Efforts in Ukraine**
https://www.state.gov/countering-the-wagner-group-and-degrading-russias-war-efforts-in-ukraine/

**Russia Compares Ukraine War to Battle of Stalingrad on 80th Anniversary**
https://www.newsweek.com/stalingrad-ukraine-war-putin-stalin-compare-1777909
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Russia not complying with last remaining nuclear treaty amid Ukraine war, US says

Experts: Arming Ukraine Via US Could Worsen South Korea's Ties with Russia

US Sanctions Russian Arms Dealer, Proxy Companies Linked to War in Ukraine

EU: Russia Taking Ukraine War to 'Different Stage'
https://www.voanews.com/a/eu-russia-taking-ukraine-war-to-different-stage-/6936883.html

Russia was making big plans for Ukraine's nuclear power plants before its invasion fell apart
https://www.businessinsider.com/russia-big-plans-for-ukraines-nuclear-power-plants-before-invasion-2023-1

Russia's War in Ukraine is Accelerating the Shift Away From Oil and Gas, BP Says

How Ukraine and Russia's Air Forces Compare

Russia in the Caucasus and Central Asia After the Invasion of Ukraine

Europe's last empire: Putin's Ukraine war exposes Russia's imperial identity

Russia is losing the energy war as Putin's winter gas attack backfires
https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russia-is-losing-the-energy-war-as-putins-winter-gas-attack-backfires/

Russia's cyberwar against Ukraine offers vital lessons for the West

Military tech is racing towards a dangerous AI future, and Russia's war in Ukraine is paving the way, drone experts say
https://www.businessinsider.com/drone-ai-russia-ukraine-war-experts-concerned-for-future-2023-1

Interview: For Putin, The War In Ukraine Is Hard To Win And Even Harder To End
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Iran and Russia’s Relationship Since Start of Ukraine War: Full Timeline

China ‘learning lessons’ from Ukraine invasion, NATO chief says in Tokyo

Beware the Hype: What Ukraine Really Needs to Win
https://cepa.org/article/beware-the-hype-what-ukraine-really-needs-to-win/

Putin’s Russia and the Hall of Mirrors

Crimea — Removing the Dagger at Ukraine’s Throat
https://cepa.org/article/crimea-removing-the-dagger-at-ukraines-throat/

Russia’s Return to Gulag Economics
https://cepa.org/article/russias-return-to-gulag-economics/

Russo-Indian Economic Ties During Wartime: Oil, Currency and the Arctic

Russia Seeks to Circumvent the Advancing Western Alliance in Africa

Why Russia Went to War: A Three-Dimensional Perspective

Just In: How Russia Is Using U.S. Electronics to Attack Ukraine
https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2023/1/26/how-russia-is-using-us-electronics-to-at-tack-ukraine

Amid Worries Over Russian Forces In Belarus, Former Security Officer Says Belarusian Conscripts Won’t Fight
https://www.rferl.org/a/belarus-russia-ukraine-war-conscripts-analysis/32244649.html

Gauging The Efficacy Of Western Sanctions Against Russia – Analysis

Russia ‘Acquiring Features Of Dictatorship’ After Ukraine Invasion: Study

Peace by exhaustion in Ukraine

How Russia loses allies amid the war in Ukraine
RUSSIA/UKRAINE

For more on this theme:

Ukraine: A Real Peace Will Require Change from Russia

Outgoing Czech President Says Serbia Can Be Mediator In Ukraine Conflict
https://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-zeman-mediator-war-ukraine/32246511.html

The Ukraine Conflict: Pathways to Peace
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The Concerning Link Between Russian Military Collapse and Nuclear War

Mass-market military drones have changed the way wars are fought
https://www.technologyreview.com/2023/01/30/1067348/mass-market-military-drones-have-changed-the-way-wars-are-fought/

Finding a Way Out of the Societal War Over Ukraine
https://nationalinterest.org/feature/finding-way-out-societal-war-over-ukraine-206162

What the Wagner Mercenaries’ Row Reveals About Serbia’s Relations with Russia
https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/88885

Russia's Losing a Constant as Its Ukraine War Settles into Predictable Alternating Phases
https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/russias-losing-constant-its-ukraine-war-settles-predictable-alternating-phases