

## Selected articles (March 28, 2020)

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### 1a)

#### **ASSANGE EXTRADITION: An Extension of the US War on Terror**

By Nozomi Hayese

March 25, 2020

<https://consortiumnews.com/2020/03/25/assange-extradition-an-extension-of-the-us-war-on-terror/>

*"Nozomi Hayese looks back at the calamitous events and tyrannical forces that, since 9-11, have turned a whistleblower and her publisher into the enemies of empire."*

### 1b)

#### **ASSANGE EXTRADITION: Assange Denied Bail, Further Visits, Despite Virus Risk**

By Joe Lauria

March 25, 2020

<https://consortiumnews.com/2020/03/25/assange-extradition-assange-denied-bail-further-visits-despite-virus-risk/>

*"Despite fears by his lawyers and doctors that Julian Assange is at high risk of being infected in prison, his judge on Wednesday denied him bail, reports Joe Lauria."*

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### 2a)

#### **A few recent political developments which should not go unnoticed**

By The Saker

March 25, 2020

<https://thesaker.is/a-few-recent-political-developments-which-should-not-go-unnoticed/>

*"The COVID19/SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is, by any measure, an immense planetary crisis which will probably change the world we live in forever. Still, there are other issues which are maybe not quite as dramatic and important, but which deserve not to be forgotten. Here are some of those [...]"*

### 2b)

#### **America's Commandos Deployed to 141 Countries And "Criminal Misconduct" Followed**

By Nick Turse

March 19, 2020

[http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/176677/tomgram%3A\\_nick\\_turse%2C\\_america%27s\\_commandos%3A\\_A\\_what\\_did\\_they\\_do\\_and\\_where\\_did\\_they\\_do\\_it/](http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/176677/tomgram%3A_nick_turse%2C_america%27s_commandos%3A_A_what_did_they_do_and_where_did_they_do_it/)

*"[...] Special Operations Forces Deployed to 82 Countries Weekly*

*Since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the United States has leaned ever more heavily on its most elite troops. While U.S. Special Operations forces (USSOF or SOF) make up just 3 percent of American military personnel, they have absorbed more than 40 percent of the casualties of these years, mainly in America's conflicts across the Greater Middle East and parts of Africa.*

*During this period, Special Operations Command (SOCOM) has grown in every way imaginable — from its budget and size to the pace and the geographic sweep of its missions. For example, "Special Operations-specific funding," which stood at \$3.1 billion in 2001, has, according to SOCOM spokesman Ken McGraw, increased to approximately \$13 billion today. [...]"*

*"[...] Accounts of rampant drug use among SEALs also emerged in the court martial of SEAL Edward Gallagher who, in a circus-like case, was acquitted of charges that he had killed noncombatants in Iraq, but convicted of posing for photographs with the corpse of a teenager he was accused of murdering. (After Navy officials sought to discipline Gallagher, potentially stripping him of the Trident pin that signifies membership in the SEALs, President Donald Trump intervened to reverse the decision.)*

*And all of this followed a string of black eyes for elite troops in recent years, including allegations of massacres, unjustified killings, murder, prisoner abuse, child rape, child sexual abuse, mutilations, and other crimes, as well as drug trafficking and the theft of government property by Navy SEALs, Army Green Berets, Air Force special operators, and Marine Raiders. [...]"*

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3)

### **8 countries write to UN chief to demand lifting of unilateral sanctions amid pandemic**

Press TV

March 26, 2020

<https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2020/03/26/621641/www.presstv.ir>

*„Eight countries have called on the United Nations (UN) chief to ask for the lifting of unilateral sanctions on various countries that are hindering the global fight against the new coronavirus.*

*The diplomatic missions of Russia, China, Iran, Syria, North Korea, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Wednesday and warned about the negative impact of the sanctions on the international efforts aimed at containing the deadly virus. [...]"*

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4a)

### **Southeast Asian Responses to COVID-19: Diversity in the Face of Adversity**

By Amy Searight and Brian Harding

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

March 27, 2020

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/southeast-asian-responses-covid-19-diversity-face-adversity>

*„[...] Southeast Asian countries were hard hit by the SARS epidemic in 2003, and regional leaders vowed to build up national capabilities and regional coordination to respond rapidly and effectively to future pandemics. Subsequent outbreaks of H5N1 and H1N1 avian influenza reinforced this focus on pandemic preparedness, and the issue remained high on the agenda of national political leaders and on the regional agenda of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Yet Southeast Asia remains a highly diverse region, from levels of economic development to demographics to systems of government. In the face of COVID-19, these differences have driven markedly different national responses, with Singapore and Vietnam emerging as global models for early action and aggressive containment, the Philippines standing out for its belated and chaotic response, and the poorest countries in the region mounting virtually no response at all to the looming pandemic. As is so often the case in Southeast Asia, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis is being defined by the diversity of the region, with stark variation in the speed, tactics, and efficacy in each nation's response. [...]"*

4b)

### **COVID-19: We Won't Go Back to Normal, Because Normal Was the Problem**

By Vijay Prashad

March 27, 2020

<https://consortiumnews.com/2020/03/27/covid-19-we-wont-go-back-to-normal-because-normal-was-the-problem/>

*„[...] Certainly, the coronavirus is a serious matter and certainly its spread is a consequence of its own danger to the human body; but there are social issues here that bear serious thought. Key to any discussion has to be the sheer collapse of state institutions in most of the capitalist world, where these institutions have been privatized, and where private institutions have operated to minimize costs and maximize profit. [...]"*

4c)

**In Light of the Global Pandemic, Focus Attention on the People.**

International Assembly of the Peoples and Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research.

March 21, 2020

[https://www.thetricontinental.org/declaration-covid19/?utm\\_source=Tricontinental+subscribers+single+list&utm\\_campaign=010fd54daf-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_03\\_25\\_01\\_10&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_bb06a786c7-010fd54daf-](https://www.thetricontinental.org/declaration-covid19/?utm_source=Tricontinental+subscribers+single+list&utm_campaign=010fd54daf-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_03_25_01_10&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bb06a786c7-010fd54daf-)

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## 5a)

### **2020: The State of Affairs**

By Andreas Schlüter

March 21, 2020

<https://wipokuli.wordpress.com/2020/03/21/2020-the-state-of-affairs-2020-der-stand-der-dinge/>

*„[...] Let's look at the effects of the crisis up to now and let's ask what of them could be in the interest of the US Power Elite. The Chinese economy is heavily affected by the crisis, likewise are the economic relations of China with Europe and the EU, thus the Chinese-Russian efforts for the Eurasian Cooperation. Also Iran is struck hard by the pandemic. The EU – since long being targeted by the US Power Elite – is in turmoil. People in most Western countries are in panic, just looking at their own individual health, being driven into social isolation and no more looking at the things the US Empire to doing to the world as far as the danger of war, the ecologic disaster and growing social divisions are concerned. People are more and more obedient and ready to accept authoritarian solutions. Moreover many companies are in heavy crisis, getting ready to be overtaken by large Hedgefonds like “Blackrock” etc.. Everyone who has looked into the nature of the US Power Elite will know, a whole number of its members must be jubilating.[...]“*

*„[...] Anyway, people are right to take care of their health, follow sound advises to protect themselves and others, care for others by “keeping distance” and be diciplined on that. But likewise it is highly important to understand how such disasters are probaly orchestrated and who is benefitting from it! If we, “the people”, do not organize ourselves and build true resistance we will fall victim to the self appointed “Masters of the Universe” and their weird concepts, which include ideas of exterminating those ones being “of no use” for the super rich!“*

## 5b)

### **Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century**

A Report of The Project for the New American Century

September 2000

<https://archive.org/details/RebuildingAmericasDefenses/mode/2up>

Page 60:

*„[...] Although it may take several decades for the process of transformation to unfold, in time, the art of warfare on air, land, and sea will be vastly different than it is today, and “combat” likely will take place in new dimensions: in space, “cyber-space,” and perhaps the world of microbes. Air warfare may no longer be fought by pilots manning tactical fighter aircraft sweeping the skies of opposing fighters, but a regime dominated by long-range, stealthy unmanned craft. On land, the clash of massive, combined-arms armored forces may be replaced by the dashes of much lighter, stealthier and information-intensive forces, augmented by fleets of robots, some small enough to fit in soldiers' pockets. Control of the sea could be largely determined not by fleets of surface combatants and aircraft carriers, but from land- and space-based systems, forcing navies to maneuver and fight underwater. Space itself will become a theater of war, as nations gain access to space capabilities and come to rely on them; further, the distinction between military and commercial space systems – combatants and noncombatants – will become blurred. Information systems will become an important focus of attack, particularly for U.S. enemies seeking to short-circuit sophisticated American forces. And advanced forms of biological warfare that can “target” specific genotypes may transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool.[...]“*

5c)

**About the Event 201 exercise**

<http://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/event201/about>

*„Event 201 was a 3.5-hour pandemic tabletop exercise that simulated a series of dramatic, scenario-based facilitated discussions, confronting difficult, true-to-life dilemmas associated with response to a hypothetical, but scientifically plausible, pandemic. 15 global business, government, and public health leaders were players in the simulation exercise that highlighted unresolved real-world policy and economic issues that could be solved with sufficient political will, financial investment, and attention now and in the future.*

*The exercise consisted of pre-recorded news broadcasts, live “staff” briefings, and moderated discussions on specific topics. These issues were carefully designed in a compelling narrative that educated the participants and the audience.*

*The Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, World Economic Forum, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation jointly propose these recommendations.[...]“*

5d)

**Statement about nCoV and our pandemic exercise**

John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

<http://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/newsroom/center-news/2020-01-24-Statement-of-Clarification-Event201.html>

*„In October 2019, the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security hosted a pandemic tabletop exercise called Event 201 with partners, the World Economic Forum and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Recently, the Center for Health Security has received questions about whether that pandemic exercise predicted the current novel coronavirus outbreak in China. To be clear, the Center for Health Security and partners did not make a prediction during our tabletop exercise. For the scenario, we modeled a fictional coronavirus pandemic, but we explicitly stated that it was not a prediction. Instead, the exercise served to highlight preparedness and response challenges that would likely arise in a very severe pandemic. We are not now predicting that the nCoV-2019 outbreak will kill 65 million people. Although our tabletop exercise included a mock novel coronavirus, the inputs we used for modeling the potential impact of that fictional virus are not similar to nCoV-2019.“*

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6a)

**Statement of condemnation of the decision of USA against Venezuela**

World Peace Council

March 26, 2020

<https://www.wpc-in.org/statements/statement-condemnation-decision-usa-against-venezuela>

6b)

**As the World tackles the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. raises the pressure on Venezuela**

By Vijay Prashad, Paola Estrada, Ana Maldonado, and Zoe PC

March 26, 2020

<https://mronline.org/2020/03/26/as-the-world-tackles-the-covid-19-pandemic-the-u-s-raises-the-pressure-on-venezuela/>

*„In a press conference on March 26, it was almost comical how little evidence the U.S. Department of Justice provided when it accused Venezuela’s President Nicolás Maduro and several of the leaders of his government of narco-trafficking. The U.S. offered \$15 million for the arrest of Maduro and \$10 million for the others. Maduro, U.S. Attorney Geoffrey Berman said dramatically, “very deliberately deployed cocaine as a weapon.” Evidence for this? Not presented at all. [...]“*

6c)

## **Trump admin's \$15 million bounty on Maduro triggers explosive confession of violent Guaidó plot**

By Leonardo Flores

March 27, 2020

<https://thegrayzone.com/2020/03/27/trump-bounty-maduro-guaido-plot/>

*„The Trump administration's deception-laden indictment of President Nicolas Maduro and members of his inner circle has badly backfired, resulting in the exposure of a violent assassination plan that could lead to the arrest of coup leader Juan Guaidó. [...]“*

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### **7a)**

#### **Academics and NGO Leaders: End Iran Sanctions**

The Institute for Peace and Diplomacy

March 27, 2020

<https://peacediplomacy.org/2020/03/27/end-iran-sanctions/>

*“A diverse group of academics, researchers and NGO leaders have signed the following open letter addressed to the leaders of the P4+1 countries (United Kingdom, France, Germany, China, and Russia) and US lawmakers. [...]”*

### **7b)**

#### **This Coronavirus Crisis Is the Time to Ease Sanctions on Iran**

Letting up on “maximum pressure” would also be a wise diplomatic move.

By The Editorial Board

The New York Times

March 25, 2020

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/25/opinion/iran-sanctions-covid.html>

*„[...] Demonstrating compassion in times of crisis is good foreign policy, and in this case it may actually help achieve the goals the Trump administration is pursuing.*

*Yet last week the Trump administration tightened its sanctions, blacklisting several companies around the world for “significant transactions” in petrochemical products with Iran. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin issued a statement stressing that the United States would continue to target those who support the Iranian regime, even as it “remains committed to facilitating humanitarian trade and assistance in support of the Iranian people.” He has insisted all along that sanctions do not prohibit humanitarian contributions.[...]“*

### **7c)**

#### **In times of pandemic, Trump offends humanity by stepping up sanctions against Iran**

By Socorro Gomes

President of the World Peace Council

March 20, 2020

<https://www.wpc-in.org/statements/socorro-gomes-times-pandemic-trump-offends-humanity-stepping-sanctions-against-iran>

### **7d)**

#### **The Coronavirus Is Killing Iranians. So Are Trump's Brutal Sanctions.**

By Mehdi Hasan

March 18, 2020

<https://theintercept.com/2020/03/17/coronavirus-iran-sanctions/>

*„THE U.S. GOVERNMENT is run by sociopaths. How else to explain the Trump administration's callous disregard for the lives of ordinary Iranians in the midst of this global coronavirus crisis? How else to make sense of U.S. officials doubling down in their support for crippling economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic, despite the sheer scale of the suffering? [...]“*



7e)

### **Khamenei Securitized the Pandemic as the IRGC Mulls Regional Action**

By Farzin Nadimi

The Washington Institute

March 26, 2020

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/khamenei-securitizes-the-pandemic-as-the-irgc-mulls-regional-action>

„[...] CONCLUSION

*Given the increasing securitization of Iran's anti-virus measures, information pertaining to the spread and containment of the pandemic will likely be classified going forward, even if this approach hampers the wider international effort. Moreover, in light of the Supreme Leader's hateful tone and the IRGC's propensity to follow his lead, the United States needs to consider the possibility of retaliatory attacks by the IRGC and prepare proper deterrent measures. Potential acts of Iranian terrorism could include conventional attacks on biological facilities that result in the release of pathogens, or even direct bioterrorism in the worst-case scenario.*

*Finally, the pandemic's serious effects inside Iran should not be regarded as evidence that the Iranian military threat has decreased. Washington should continue taking the IRGC threat to its regional military presence seriously, deploying a viable air and missile defense capability in Iraq and perhaps even Afghanistan in order to deter any attacks. And while it cannot maintain a two-carrier force posture in the region indefinitely, it still needs to maintain a demonstrated qualitative and quantitative advantage in Iran's neighborhood—and, perhaps more important, credibility that it will respond at the right time and place.“*

7f)

### **Coronavirus Strikes Iran**

By Alex Yacoubian

United States Institute of Peace

Updated: March 27, 2020

Original: February 24, 2020

<https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2020/feb/24/coronavirus-strikes-iran>

7g)

### **Iran Allocates 20% of Annual Budget to Coronavirus Battle**

March 28, 2020

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2020/03/28/2232142/iran-allocates-20-of-annual-budget-to-coronavirus-battle>

*„TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said 20% of the country's annual budget has been allocated for the fight against the coronavirus, adding that the health system is strong and well-equipped despite the country being under the foreign sanctions. [...]“*

7h)

### **What the European maritime initiative in the Strait of Hormuz tells us about Brussel's security ambitions**

By Dr Eva Pejsova

The European Leadership Network (ELN)

March 27, 2020

<https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/what-the-european-maritime-initiative-in-the-strait-of-hormuz-tells-us-about-brussels-ambition-and-capacity-as-a-security-actor/>

*„Ever since the outbreak of the current crisis in the Persian Gulf in June 2019, starting with a series of attacks on commercial shipping and culminating in the detention of the British oil tanker Stena Impero by Iran in July, Europe has been under pressure to take a stance.*

*Although most EU member states (with the exception of the UK) opposed joining the US-led naval coalition in the Gulf, there has been general agreement in Brussels on the need to ensure some sort of military presence in the regional waters.*

*The idea to deploy a European Maritime Situation Awareness mission in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH) was put forward by France in November 2019, after initial discussions between the UK, France and Germany. It finally took shape in January 2020 with the political support of eight other member states: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal. [...]“*