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**The Coronavirus
Crisis and Its Impact:
Update**



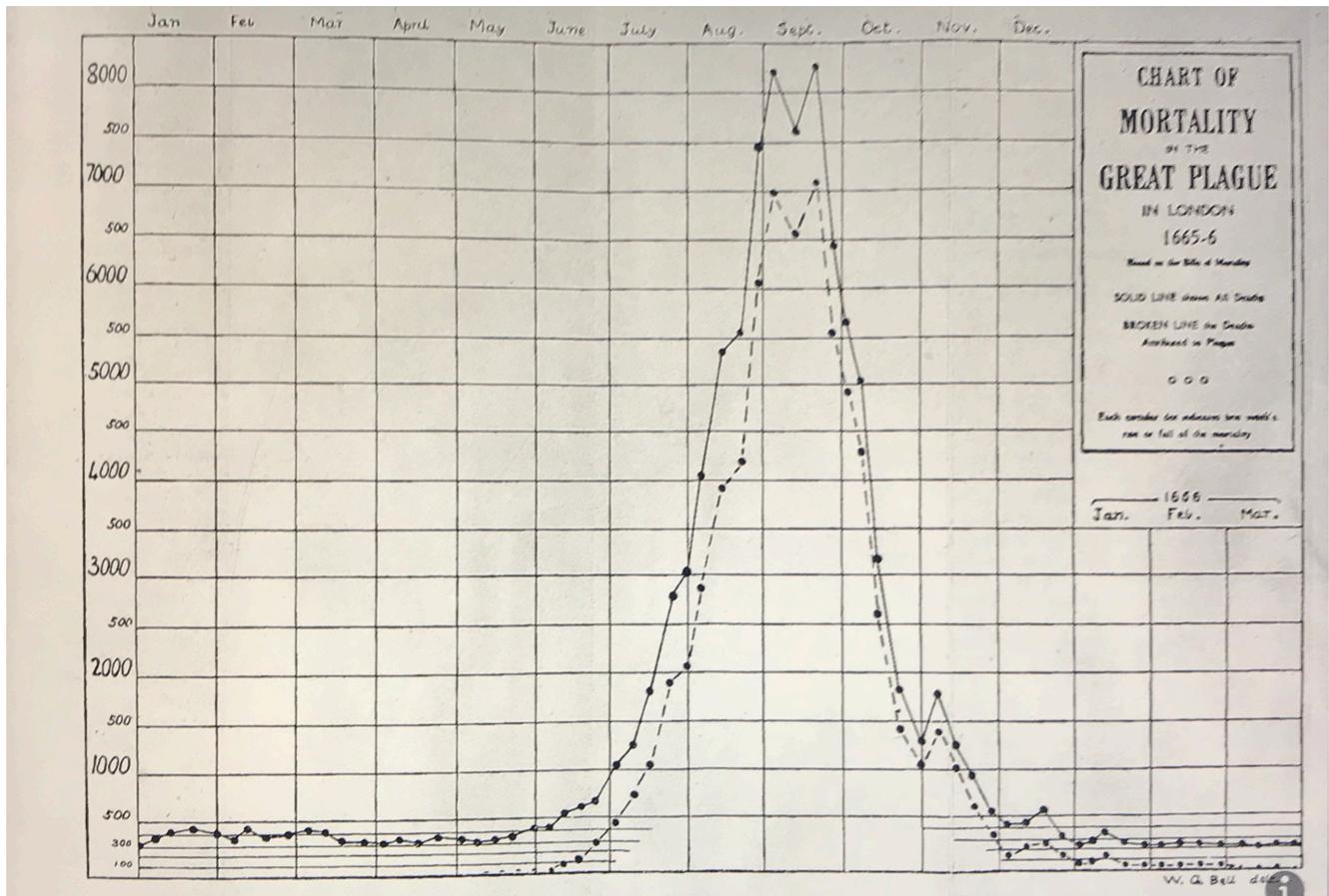
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| | |
|---|-----------|
| <u>NAVIGATING THE SPIKE: THE CASE OF THE LONDON PLAGUE, 1665-1666</u> | 3 |
| <u>THE WAR AGAINST CORONAVIRUS OR IS IT?</u> | 4 |
| WORLD AT WAR | 4 |
| ASPIRING TO TALK LIKE CHURCHILL | 5 |
| DOES THE WAR METAPHOR MISLEAD? | 5 |
| <u>AUTOCRACY, EUROPE AND DEALING WITH THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS</u> | 7 |
| <u>INFORMATION WAR AND CORONAVIRUS CONSPIRACY THEORIES</u> | 9 |
| <u>FRANCE AND GERMANY COOPERATE IN CORONAVIRUS CRISIS</u> | 12 |
| <u>MADE IN CHINA: THE LESSONS WHICH THE LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES SHOULD LEARN FROM THE CORONAVIRUS</u> | 14 |
| <u>THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE STRATEGIC STOCKPILING ISSUE: THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS EXPOSES A KEY CAPABILITY GAP</u> | 16 |
| <u>EUROPEAN STATES RESPOND TO THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY?</u> | 18 |
| <u>THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS AND INFORMATION WAR</u> | 19 |
| <u>THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS: THE CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRCRAFT CARRIER RETURNS TO PORT</u> | 21 |
| <u>LIVING THROUGH THE GLOBAL CORONAVIRUS CRISIS: THE CENTRALITY OF CONNECTIVITY</u> | 23 |
| <u>CORONAVIRUS IMPACT: FRANCE PULLS OUT FROM AFRICAN WEST COAST MARITIME SECURITY MISSION</u> | 24 |
| <u>US NAVY DESTROYER VISIT TO CAPE TOWN CURTAILED: A CORONAVIRUS CONCERN IMPACT</u> | 25 |
| <u>NATO HIGHLIGHTS ROLE OF 3D PRINTING AS PART OF COVID 19 RESPONSE</u> | 26 |
| <u>AN UPDATE ON FRENCH DEFENSE INDUSTRY IN THE LOCKDOWN: FURLoughS AND DIVIDENDS</u> | 27 |
| <u>AN UPDATE ON FRENCH DEFENSE INDUSTRY DURING THE LOCKDOWN: APRIL 1, 2020</u> | 29 |
| <u>RE-THINKING MILITARY SUPPLY CHAIN SECURITY IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD</u> | 30 |

Navigating the Spike: The Case of the London Plague, 1665-1666

04/09/2020

By Kenneth Maxwell



Managing, or navigating the spike(s) in the Coronavirus crisis is a focus of attention for the world's governments and their populations. But navigating pandemic spikes is nothing new.

The great plague of London killed and estimated 100,000 out of a total population of some 460,000 which was almost a quarter of the population. It was the last pandemic of the bubonic plague to occur in England.

The "Black Death" had originated in China in 1331. The plague was caused by the yersinia pestis bacterium which is usually transmitted through the bite of an infected rat. The 1665-66 plague in London and more broadly across England was last widespread outbreak of plague in England during the 400 year pandemic.

The poorer parts of the city suffered most. here hygiene was rudimentary and overcrowding common. It was not until 1894 that Alexandre Yersin identified the causal agent and the transmission of the bacterium by rat fleas was discovered and this was confirmed by DNA analysis in 2016. The reported figures of deaths were used to compile bills of mortality which listed the total deaths in each parish and whether caused by the plague.

As the plague spread a system of quarantine was introduced. This involved locking the house were anyone had died for 40 days. Travel was restricted. The rich left the city and King Charles II and his court moved first to Salisbury and then to Oxford. The population of London was required to obtain a certificate of good health to leave the city. Trade and business ceased. By February 1666 the King and his court returned to London.

The great fire of London occurred in September of 1666 which gutted the medieval city but did not reach Westminster or Charles II's Palace of Whitehall. The rebuilding took place largely on old street plan despite grand baroque plans for a redesigned city of piazzas and avenues. But new public building were created on the previous sites. The most famous of which was St Paul's Cathedral and Christopher Wren's 50 new churches.

The War Against Coronavirus or Is It?

04/08/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – Heads of state, politicians and the press have adopted war as the word to use in a struggle against coronavirus, prompting debate whether the metaphor is misleading.

The deadly impact of Covid-19 has sparked the second world war and military terms as key cultural and historical references, helping to grab headlines and soundbites.

There have variously been references to the Blitz, Dunkirk, Pearl Harbor and a war against coronavirus, which has taken more than 70,000 lives around the world by April 6.

In reply, there are those who argue the use of a war analogy sets up misconceptions of a health crisis, which calls for debate and consensus on medical treatment.

World at War

“We are at war, surely in a war for health: we are fighting not an army, or another country,” president Emmanuel Macron said March 16 in an address to the nation.

“But the enemy is there, invisible, elusive, but spreading. And that calls for a general mobilization.”

Macron used the phrase “We are war” six times in that speech.

Queen Elizabeth, in a rare April 5 address in Windsor castle, recalled her first radio broadcast to the British public in 1940, when she, aged 14, and her sister Princess Margaret reached out to children evacuated from cities hit by Nazi night bombers.

In closing her April 5 broadcast, the British head of state referred to Vera Lynn's "We'll Meet Again," a song which helped prop up morale in the dark days of the second world war.

That four-minute royal broadcast thanked the "frontline" of the National Health Service, a government-backed medical system struggling to cope with the viral infection.

Aspiring to Talk Like Churchill

A March 23 speech by Boris Johnson was seen as carrying the prime minister's hope of evoking Winston Churchill, the British leader who came to power in 1940 and stood up to Hitler. Johnson's biography of Churchill was published in 2014.

Johnson was admitted April 5 into hospital, after going into self isolation for coronavirus some 10 days previously.

On BBC Radio 4, Paul Nurse, Nobel laureate and head of the Francis Crick Institute, said, "A metaphor here is Dunkirk – we are a lot of little boats, we can be effective. The government has put in bigger boats – destroyers..."

Nurse, who also worked at Sussex university, was referring to testing for the viral infection.

The Telegraph, a daily paper, refers to the Blitz bombing of Britain in its virus coverage.

In the US, on April 5, Surgeon general Jerome Adams drew on events of combat and mass attack as he predicted a tough week ahead for America.

"The next week is going to be our Pearl Harbor moment," he said on NBC News' Meet the Press.

"It's going to be our 9/11 moment.

"It's going to be the hardest moment for many Americans in their entire lives."

"This is war time," New York governor Andrew Cuomo said April 5, referring to Covid-19, the Guardian daily reported.

Does the War Metaphor Mislead?

Macron's speech grabbed the public attention.

"The use of 'war' was striking," said Michael Heurtevant, an architect.

"He made a pretty good speech."

To some, those references to war may not have been the best way to tackle the disease.

“To my mind, this is not about war, because there is not an enemy,” Claire Marin, writer and associate member of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, an élite academic institution, said March 14 in afternoon daily Le Monde.

“To think of illnesses in terms of war, which is commonplace, is to misunderstand the essence of life,” she said. “I am not sure that helps present the situation or understand the way it works.”

What was important was not how to hit but to duck like an agile boxer, dodging punches, she said.

There was, for now, no way of destroying the virus, nor treating with vaccine, merely trying to contain the spread of the infection.

“That is very different,” she said.

Mélanie Challe, a photographer, said there has been debate over use of the war term.

“We are not at war,” she said. There is no bombing, no invasion force. We have food.”

An emergency room doctor, Sophie Mainguy, wrote a March 19 article titled, “We Are Not at War.”

The measures Macron unveiled made sense, she said, but his presentation was less than satisfactory: viewing events through the “lens of defense and domination.”

Life forms which do not serve our interest are not our enemies, she said. People are not the only life on earth and sometimes people have to make room for others.

A more effective way would be to look at the illness for what it is and compare it with previous infections.

“Why can’t we compare a pandemic to other, historical, pandemics? said Laura Spinney, a science reporter.

“Why always reach for the war analogy?”

“Yes, there are some similarities with war – the need to mobilize the population and the need to ensure supplies – but why is it that, in order to convey seriousness, we feel obliged to stop comparing a pandemic to other pandemics, and start comparing it to a war?”

Spinney is author of *Pale Rider*, an account of the Spanish Flu in 1918.

That pandemic killed an estimated 50 million people, and perhaps as many as twice that.

A war is troops in uniforms, armed with weapons, fighting an enemy, while a virus is something else, said Stephen Heiner, writer and blogger, and former U.S. marine.

“In a war, there isn’t really public debate about how to respond.

“There is a clear enemy, with a fairly clear marker of what victory means to everyone,” he said.

“What’s happening here?” he said. “People do not know. What is victory? Fewer sick? Vaccines for everybody?”

“Medical crisis is more apt,” he said.

One difference with a war is that such a conflict comes to an end, whereas the virus may change and come back in another form.

Some struggles go on.

There was the war on terror, he said. “It’s an unwinnable conflict.”

President Donald Trump said April 5 there was light at the end of the tunnel.

In the Vietnam war in the 1960s, that optimistic phrase prompted the rejoinder that the light was an oncoming train.

Autocracy, Europe and Dealing with the Coronavirus Crisis

04/02/2020

In a side comment included in his assessment of the implications of the Coronavirus crisis for Australia, [Stephen Kuper](#) characterized the European Union response to the crisis in this way:

“Many nations throughout the ‘developed’ world have found themselves similarly isolated and exposed, despite the promise of cheap, ‘reliable’ access to trade as a result of the post-Cold War global supply chains, which have seen industries and economies hollowed out and sensitive, nationally critical manufacturing sent offshore.

“Nowhere is this more evident than in the cannibalism emerging among the European Union member states, as larger nations like [Germany](#) and [France](#) ‘requisition’ resources and key supplies including masks, respirators and medical supplies, while also providing limited, hands-off approach to providing direct support to the likes of pandemic ravaged Italy and Spain.”

Disaggregation is one concern, but the way the crises is handled will clearly have a significant impact on the evolution of European democracies.

In an article by Eszter Zalan of the EUObserver published on [March 26, 2020](#), the author posed the question: How much will coronavirus hurt European democracy?

“As public life is pushed back all over Europe to slow the spread of the virus, worries are on the rise over what extent the measures, if not proportionate and time-limited, can infringe fundamental rights and the rule of law.

“Michal Simecka, a Slovak MEP from the liberal Renew group told EUobserver it is “legitimate, proportionate and understandable that governments are invoking emergency measures, when every hour counts”.

“But Simecka warned of two possible threats in the longer term.

“It is a perfect pretext for a politicians to centralise power,” he said.”

And right on cue the leader of Hungary did not waste the crisis to make his move.

“Hungary passed on Monday (30 March) a law that gives sweeping new powers to prime minister Viktor Orbán to rule by decree – for an unlimited period of time.

“This makes Hungary the first EU country to be put under the exclusive command of the government for as long as the prime minister sees it fit....

“Orbán, who came to power 10 years ago, has had several run-ins with the EU over breaking the bloc’s rules, and his government is currently under scrutiny in the Article 7 sanctions procedure for breaching EU rules and values.

“Orbán has already shrugged off criticism of the new law, claiming that those who criticise it are endangering Hungary’s battle against the pandemic.”

And adding the process, the Russians have inserted their ongoing interpretations of reality to shape European judgements as well.

Andrew Rettman of EUobserver noted in an article published on April 1, 2020 that Russian disinformation efforts were ramping up in the crisis.

The EU has urged media not to publish April Fool’s ‘fake news’ this year to help combat Russian propaganda.

“Protecting our democratic processes and institutions from Russian disinformation has become a major challenge in the modern era,” the European Commission said on Tuesday (31 March).

“To help tackle this, the commission proposes to suspend, for the time being, the common tradition of April Fool’s ‘fake news’ in European media,” it said.

The move came after the EU recently accused Russia of “polluting” Europe’s media ecosystem with deceptions which had “real-world consequences”.

Russian news agencies have falsely claimed the US was using ants as biological weapons, for instance, that Western countries practiced gay cannibalism, and that Swedish feminists advocated mass-castration of white men.

But the Russians have added to their information dissemination effort by deploying forces to Italy to “help” in the crisis as well. We have been reassured by the Russian commander that this deployment will not undercut the troops combat capacity, which is very reassuring for the West as well.

“The fact that Russia has sent to Italy its nuclear, biological and chemical protection troops to assist the fight against the coronavirus will not affect the combat capacities, the Russian Armed Forces’ Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Protection Troops chief, Lt. Gen. Igor Klimov, said.”

In addition to its own information war efforts in the West, the Chinese have played an aid card, of providing masks to the West. The only small problem is that there is no evident Western quality control with regard to these masks, so that Europe has Chinese masks which might or might not work, and this has to be worked out on the ground as they are to be used.

“The Netherlands recently discovered that 600,000 face masks imported from China were defective, Belgian media reported on Tuesday that 100,000 masks coming from Colombia were useless and even contain “animal faeces”.

Thus, in addition to exporting the virus and blocking any information about the breakout of the virus and certainly not providing information transparency, the Chinese are exporting defective masks.

But this did not stop the head of the European Commission from providing a thanks for the memories moment.

Perhaps she might learn from an Indian colleague who highlighted lessons which the West needs to learn about China.

“The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the costs of Xi’s increasing authoritarianism. It should be a wake-up call for political and business leaders who have accepted China’s lengthening shadow over global supply chains for far too long. Only by loosening China’s grip on global supply networks—beginning with the pharmaceutical sector—can the world be kept safe from the country’s political pathologies

Information War and Coronavirus Conspiracy Theories

04/01/2020

By Elise Thoma

Against the backdrop of an escalating war of words between Washington and Beijing, and the Chinese Communist Party’s broader campaign to rewrite the history of the Covid-19 outbreak, the attempts by multiple Chinese diplomats to promote conspiracy theories that the virus originated in the US, not China have received widespread attention.

What has been less discussed, however, is how Western fringe and conspiracy media have been supporting these efforts and what the growing nexus between pro-CCP propaganda and conspiracy narratives may tell us about the role China is coming to play in the Western information ecosystem.

There has long been a symbiotic relationship between Russian state propaganda outlets like Sputnik and RT and certain elements of the fringe and conspiracy media in the West.

They frequently echo, borrow or seed narratives from one another. In most cases, it's probably not deliberate collusion (at least, not on a large scale), but rather the result of opportunism and mutual benefits in singing from the same hymn sheet. And now, it appears, China may be joining the chorus.

In perhaps the most notable example of this, on 13 March a spokesperson for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zhao Lijian, used his Twitter account to promote an article from the website globalresearch.ca, titled 'COVID-19: Further evidence that the virus originated in the US'. The article outlines a conspiracy which claims that the novel coronavirus originated in the US, and that 'it may therefore be true that the original source of the COVID-19 virus was the US military bio-warfare lab at Fort Detrick'.

To be clear: there is no evidence to support this claim, or to suggest that the virus originated anywhere outside China. Nonetheless, Zhao's tweets have not only remained up but have been re-tweeted by numerous other Chinese diplomatic accounts. At the time of writing, Zhao's tweet had received over 20,000 likes and been shared 12,700 times.

Among the many interesting issues this raises, one is the choice to promote that particular article from that particular site. There's no shortage of conspiracy theories on the internet—so why that one?

The Centre for Research on Globalization, also known as Global Research, is a website run by Canadian economist and conspiracy theorist Michel Chossudovsky that has repeatedly been accused of being a pro-Kremlin mouthpiece. It's not clear how deep the links between the site and Russian state-linked media run, but according to the independent Russian newspaper Meduza:

What makes GlobalResearch.ca different from other similar websites is the disproportional weight it enjoys in news coverage by the Russian state media.

Global Research is prominently featured as the only source in numerous stories by Russia's leading newswire RIA Novosti, where it's referred to as a 'think tank' or 'publication' whose 'experts' or 'journalists' regularly reveal or uncover some fact that fits into the Kremlin's current foreign policy agenda ...

[I]t is less a news outlet and more an amateur conspiracy website whose founder has subscribed to the Kremlin's narrative simply because it opposes the one promoted by the 'deep state' and its subservient 'mainstream media'.

Sites like Global Research are valuable to state-linked actors because they put a Western, pseudo-academic face on conspiracy theories and disinformation narratives. They are useful tinder to spark entire narrative cycles, as this example clearly highlights.

In the early days of the Covid-19 crisis, Global Research seems to have sensed an opportunity to reach out to new audiences. Indeed, the pivot to a Chinese audience appears to have been so hasty that no one has yet fixed the typo in 'Chinese' on the site's About page (figure 1).

Figure 1: Screenshot of Global Research’s ‘About’ page, 24 March 2020

In 2007, we launched Spanish (Español), Portuguese (Português), and German (Deutsch) language pages, which contain translations of Global Research articles. Arabic (العربية), Italian, (Italiano) and Serbian (srpski) language pages were launched in 2008. A Chinese language page was launched in 2020.

Figure 1: Screenshot of Global Research’s ‘About’ page, 24 March 2020

Only two articles had actually been translated into Chinese before Zhao picked up Global Research’s English-language piece promoting the US-origin conspiracy theory.

Zhao’s tweet was used as the basis for news stories in Chinese state media, including the Global Times and People’s Daily Online.

It also appears to have driven a huge surge in searches for ‘globalresearch.ca’ on 13 March, the day Zhao’s tweet went out (figure 2).

What this demonstrates is that the quid pro quo—the benefit (or at least one of the benefits)—for sites like Global Research in aligning themselves with state-linked conspiracies is the enormous amplification which state-linked voices can give to pieces like this that would otherwise receive very little traffic.

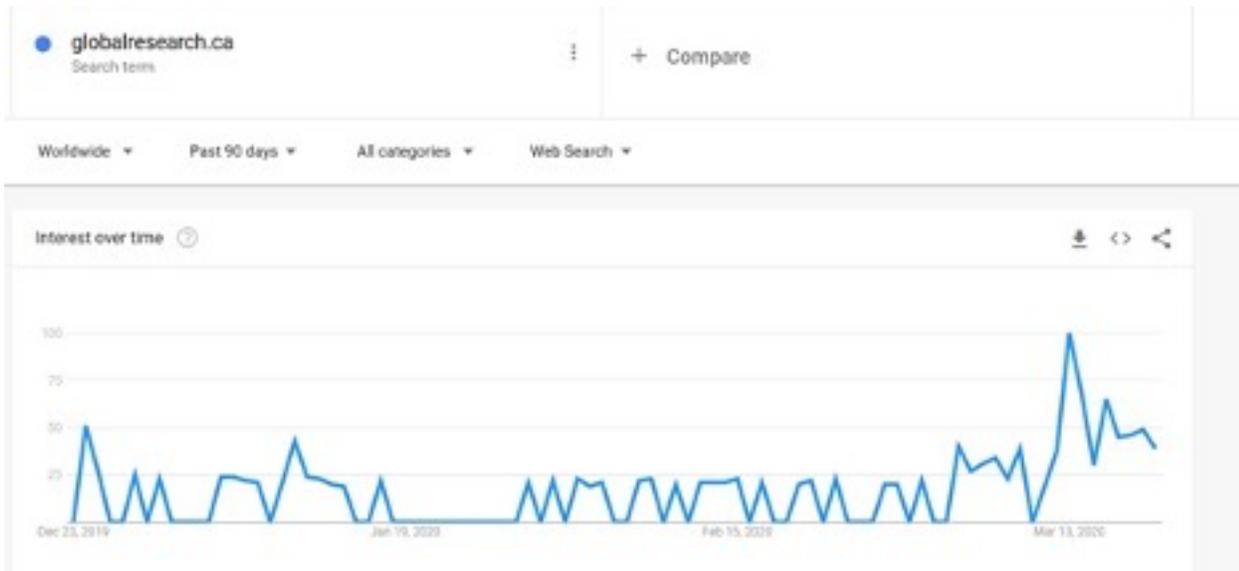


Figure 2: Google search trends for ‘globalresearch.ca’

Zhao’s amplification is likely to have been multiplied many times over by the widespread media coverage of his tweets, which in turn will have driven still more traffic to the Global Research site.

Not only does this help to propagate the conspiracy theory, it also provides Global Research with an incentive to lean in to the narrative.

In the 10 days since Zhao's tweet, the site has published multiple additional articles (including republishing one from CGTN) on the US-origin conspiracy theory, some citing Zhao's tweets.

This mutually beneficial ouroboros of conspiracy narratives passing back and forth between state-linked and fringe media already exists in the context of Kremlin-backed outlets.

If this example is anything to go by, we may well see Beijing's state-linked information efforts follow a similar path, as China becomes a more active and aggressive player in the Western information ecosystem.

Elise Thomas is a researcher at ASPI's International Cyber Policy Centre.

This article was published by ASPI on March 24, 2020.

France And Germany Cooperate in Coronavirus Crisis

03/29/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – The French army has flown coronavirus patients to Germany in an NH90 Caïman helicopter, while a German A400M military transport plane flew patients out of France, signalling close bilateral ties, the armed forces ministry said March 29.

“The French and German armed forces are working together to fight against Covid-19,” the ministry said in a statement. “This cooperation shows the solidarity of the Franco-German friendship.”

Armed forces minister Florence Parly spoke March 27 to her German counterpart, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, on the virus crisis and the two ministers agreed on measures to help hospitals in northeastern France, the ministry said.

The French army flew March 28 an NH90 military transport helicopter carrying two patients out of Metz, northeastern France, to a hospital in Essen, western Germany, the ministry said. French civil emergency services helped that flight.

That flight was part of Operation Resilience, a broad military mission seeking to lighten the load on civil authorities across France, heavily hit by the pandemic.

The army light air wing rapidly adapted the NH90 for the medical mission, which allowed evacuation of patients under intensive care, the ministry said. The NH90 also flew March 28 patients to Geneva, as Switzerland has offered assistance.

The army has adapted the NH90 to carry virus patients under intensive care. The helicopter will carry two patients under oxygen, and a crew of seven or eight. There will be a pilot and a flight commander, a flight engineer, a flight specialist in the hold, one or two doctors, and two nurses.

The army 1st combat helicopter regiment, based in Phalsbourg, northeast France, flies the NH90.

The German air force sent an A400M airlifter to Strasbourg, northeast France, to fly French patients to a German hospital, Parly said over social media.

“Just one word: thanks,” she said.

That was the first German military flight of French patients, regional paper L’Alsace reported. The operation took just under two hours to embark the patients before flying to Stuttgart. The patients were then taken to the military hospital in Ulm, southwest Germany, AFP news agency reported, the paper said.

The German A400M flying hospital also took virus patients from Bergamo, northern Italy, to help medical staff in the Lombardy region, suffering heavily from the virus. The patients were flown to Cologne, western Germany.

Germany made its A400M airlifter available through European Air Transport Command, which comprises seven member nations: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain and the Netherlands.

“France thanks Germany and Switzerland and expresses its deepest gratitude,” the

ministry said. “As our countries are confronted by a major crisis, these medical evacuations embody European solidarity.”

Meanwhile, the Dixmude helicopter carrier returned March 27 to Toulon naval base, southern France, and was fitted out and crew prepared for sailing to the French Caribbean, to help civil authorities against the virus.

The warship had been in the western Mediterranean, but allied nations had cancelled cooperative exercises due to the medical crisis. The navy, however, managed to conduct a joint exercise with the Lebanese forces in a beach operation.

The latest figures show there were 35,575 virus cases in France, with 2,314 who had died in hospital, daily Le Figaro reported March 29. Those figures exclude deaths in retirement homes.

France has extended the national lock down to April 15, after the initial 15 days ordered March 17.

Germany has a relatively low mortality rate compared to other European nations, daily The Guardian has reported. That may be related to its methodology for gathering data, or may reflect high testing rates which give a more accurate assessment of the virus threat.

There were 22,364 virus cases in Germany, with only 84 reported to have died, according to John Hopkins University, The Guardian reported March 22. That gave Germany the lowest mortality rate of the 10 countries most badly hit by the pandemic.

Made In China: The Lessons Which the Liberal Democracies Should Learn from the Coronavirus

03/29/2020

By Brahma Chellaney

The new coronavirus, Covid-19, has spread to more than 130 countries—bringing social disruption, economic damage, sickness and death—largely because authorities in China, where it emerged, initially suppressed information about it. And yet China is now acting as if its decision not to limit exports of active pharmaceutical ingredients and medical supplies—of which it is the dominant global supplier—was a principled and generous act worthy of the world’s gratitude.

When the first clinical evidence of a deadly new virus emerged in Wuhan, Chinese authorities failed to warn the public for weeks and harassed, reprimanded and detained those who did. This approach is no surprise: China has a long history of shooting the messenger. Its leaders covered up severe acute respiratory syndrome, another coronavirus, for over a month after it emerged in 2002, and held the doctor who blew the whistle in military custody for 45 days. SARS ultimately affected more than 8,000 people in 26 countries.

This time around, the Chinese Communist Party’s proclivity for secrecy was reinforced by President Xi Jinping’s eagerness to be perceived as an in-control strongman, backed by a fortified CCP. But, as with the SARS epidemic, China’s leaders could keep it under wraps for only so long. Once Wuhan-linked Covid-19 cases were detected in Thailand and South Korea, they had little choice but to acknowledge the epidemic.

About two weeks after Xi rejected scientists’ recommendation to declare a state of emergency, the government announced heavy-handed containment measures, including putting millions in lockdown. But it was too late. Many thousands of Chinese were already infected with Covid-19, and the virus was rapidly spreading internationally. US National Security Adviser Robert O’Brien has said that China’s initial cover-up ‘probably cost the world community two months to respond’, exacerbating the global outbreak.

Beyond the escalating global health emergency, which has already killed thousands, the pandemic has disrupted normal trade and travel, forced many school closures, roiled the international financial system and sunk global stock markets. With oil prices plunging, a global recession appears imminent.

None of this would have happened China had responded quickly to evidence of the deadly new virus by warning the public and implementing containment measures. Indeed, Taiwan and Vietnam have shown the difference a proactive response can make.

Taiwan, learning from its experience with SARS, instituted preventive measures, including flight inspections, before China’s leaders had even acknowledged the outbreak. Likewise, Vietnam quickly halted flights from China and closed all schools. Both responses recognised the need for transparency,

including updates on the number and location of infections, and public advisories on how to guard against Covid-19.

Thanks to their governments' policies, both Taiwan and Vietnam—which normally receive huge numbers of travellers from China daily—have kept total cases to fewer than 60. Neighbours that were slower to implement similar measures, such as Japan and South Korea, have been hit much harder.

If any other country had triggered such a far-reaching, deadly, and above all preventable crisis, it would now be a global pariah. But China, with its tremendous economic clout, has largely escaped censure. Nonetheless, it will take considerable effort for Xi's regime to restore its standing at home and abroad.

Perhaps that's why China's leaders are publicly congratulating themselves for not limiting exports of medical supplies and active ingredients used to make medicines, vitamins and vaccines. If China decided to ban such exports to the United States, the state-run news agency Xinhua recently noted, the US would be 'plunged into a mighty sea of coronavirus'. China, the article implies, would be justified in taking such a step. It would simply be retaliating against 'unkind' US measures taken after Covid-19's emergence, such as restricting entry to the US by Chinese and foreigners who had visited China. Isn't the world lucky that China is not that petty?

Maybe so. But that is no reason to trust that China won't be petty in the future. After all, China's leaders have a record of halting other strategic exports (such as rare-earth minerals) to punish countries that have defied them.

Moreover, this is not the first time China has considered weaponising its dominance in global medical supplies and ingredients. Last year, Li Daokui, a prominent Chinese economist, suggested curtailing Chinese exports of active pharmaceutical ingredients to the US as a countermeasure in the trade war. 'Once the export is reduced', Li noted, 'the medical systems of some developed countries will not work'.

That is no exaggeration. A US Department of Commerce study found that 97% of all antibiotics sold in the US come from China. 'If you're the Chinese and you want to really just destroy us', Gary Cohn, former chief economic adviser to US President Donald Trump, observed last year, 'just stop sending us antibiotics'.

If the spectre of China exploiting its pharmaceutical clout for strategic ends were not enough to make the world rethink its cost-cutting outsourcing decisions, the unintended disruption of global supply chains by Covid-19 should be. In fact, China has had no choice but to fall behind in producing and exporting pharmaceutical ingredients since the outbreak—a development that has constrained global supply and driven up the prices of vital medicines.

That has already forced India, the world's leading supplier of generic drugs, to restrict its own exports of some commonly used medicines. Almost 70% of the active ingredients for medicines made in India come from China. If China's pharmaceutical plants don't return to full capacity soon, severe global medicine shortages will become likely.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the costs of Xi's increasing authoritarianism. It should be a wake-up call for political and business leaders who have accepted China's lengthening shadow over global supply chains for far too long. Only by loosening China's grip on global supply networks—

beginning with the pharmaceutical sector—can the world be kept safe from the country’s political pathologies.

Brahma Chellaney, professor of strategic studies at the New Delhi–based Centre for Policy Research and fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin, is the author of nine books, including Asian juggernaut, Water: Asia’s new battleground and Water, peace, and war: confronting the global water crisis.

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The European Union and the Strategic Stockpiling Issue: The Coronavirus Crisis Exposes a Key Capability Gap

03/28/2020

We have focused for some time on the importance for liberal democracies being much more cognizant of their supply chain dependencies and their need to have a smart resilience strategy.

The coronavirus crisis has certainly exposed the absence of such a strategy but at the same time highlights the need for such a strategy.

As we argue in our forthcoming book on the return of direct defense in Europe, there is a clear need for the European Union to focus its attention and resources in its role for the defense and security of the member states on infrastructure defense and supply chain resilience.

To date, the European Union has clearly failed to do this.

Perhaps in this crisis, it will leverage what it has been FORCED to do as the beginning of a policy process to, in fact, deal with this as a key task which the European states both individually and collectively can focus upon.

Certainly, the Finns have led and continue to lead the way in thinking about resilience and crisis management.

Perhaps one of the smallest states in Europe can be looked to for the intellectual leadership which larger states have abrogated.

An article by Eszter Zalan of the EUObserver published on March 20, 2020 highlighted EU actions during the current crisis.

The EU commission on Thursday (19 March) said it will set up a stockpile of face masks, intensive care equipment and other essential medical gear to tackle shortages in member states.

The move comes after EU countries at the centre of the coronavirus outbreak have faced shortages of crucial medical equipment.

“The world was very much caught by surprise by the force and speed of this virus,” EU commissioner for crisis management Janez Lenarcic told reporters.

From the new reserve the commission would direct supplies where they are most needed based on an “objective criteria”.

It is complimentary to another tool, the civil protection mechanism, where a member states in trouble can ask for help from other member states. Italy and recently Spain have called for help within this mechanism.

“We are all in this together, we have to work constructively and work on solutions,” Lenarcic said.

Under the new reserve plans, a member state has to volunteer to undertake a procurement, and purchase specific equipment.

That will be financed almost entirely by the EU (up to 90 percent), and then the member states are expected to host that bit of equipment, which will likely end up going to another member state.

The planned stockpile will include intensive care medical equipment such as ventilators, personal protective equipment such as reusable masks, vaccines and therapeutics, and laboratory supplies.

Lenarcic said “half a dozen” member states have expressed interest in participating in the scheme.

An EU official said the reserve could be operational already next week.

The initial EU budget of the stockpile is €50m, of which €40m will have to be approved by EU governments.

The commissioner said that there is “objective situation” globally, that there is a “prevailing scarcity of personal protection gear in EU and all over the world”.

The biggest producers are in China and Asia.....

To help Europe cope, China has offered to send 2.2 million masks and 50,000 testing kits to the EU, commission president Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday....

It will be interesting to see whether the European states can see beyond this Chinese manipulation of a crisis which it indeed launched and get on with European production or shape a supply chain with other liberal democracies to shape a trusted supply chain.

As we noted recently:

Divergent responses to the crisis across the board in the global liberal democracies will challenge the ability to shape common solutions going forward.

The underlying conflict between the 21st century authoritarian powers and the liberal democracies has been accentuated and highlighted as well. With Putin having tossed out most NGOs from Russia as part of his consolidation of power, the absence of credible information within Russia makes trust in Russia's ability to contribute to a global management of a pandemic virtually non-existent.

The Chinese government has elevated information obfuscation an art form during the current crisis. This situation raises fundamental questions about trust with regard to China which are rooted in their domestic system going forward. And certainly, the over reliance on Chinese supply chains, a subject to which we have dedicated many articles in the past few years, is highlighted as well.

But will the liberal democracies shape lessons learned and establish more reliable supply chains?

Will the liberal democracies shape more realistic working relationships with one another to have more resilient national capabilities shared across a shared sovereign space?

European States Respond to the Coronavirus Crisis: Implications for the Future of Liberal Democracy?

03/28/2020

By Eszter Zalan

Democracy has also been infected by the coronavirus.

All normal, everyday features of a healthy democracy are suffering from the pandemic, as checks on governments weaken due to the all-out fightback.....

As public life is pushed back all over Europe to slow the spread of the virus, worries are on the rise over what extent the measures, if not proportionate and time-limited, can infringe fundamental rights and the rule of law.

Michal Simecka, a Slovak MEP from the liberal Renew group told EUobserver it is “legitimate, proportionate and understandable that governments are invoking emergency measures, when every hour counts”.

But Simecka warned of two possible threats in the longer term.

“It is a perfect pretext for a politicians to centralise power,” he said.

The other threat is whether the measures will be rolled back in time as the outbreak lets up.

“These kind of extraordinary powers tend to be sticky. When politicians have these powers they might be reluctant to go back to the messy, longer democratic processes. We must be vigilant,” Simecka said – in a call from Bratislava.....

But the nervousness about the potential of the new measures is rife.

“We are seeing a number of measures dismantling the checks and balances that guarantee the continuity of democracy,” Sergio Carrera of the Centre for European Policy Studies told EUobserver.

Carrera said the current crisis touches upon so many aspects of citizens’ rights – freedom of assembly, privacy, right to move within the country and the EU, a right to family life – that the policy responses’ effects on democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights need to be closely followed, so that they don’t go too far.

Crises, whether regarding terrorism, migration or health, don’t mean that “everything goes,” he warned.

“One can agree that it is a very difficult issue for governments to deal with, but I believe it is also a question of legitimacy not to panic, and just work with what we have and the checks and balances we have,” he said.....

For the rest of the article, see EUObserver:

https://euobserver.com/coronavirus/147884?utm_source=euobs&utm_medium=email

The Coronavirus Crisis and Information War

03/27/2020

Clearly, the liberal democracies are being tested not just in terms of dealing with the physical aspects of the Coronavirus crisis but in terms of shaping an effective way ahead for the liberal democracies.

And part of that challenge is the information war which the 21st century authoritarian states are engaging in while the liberal democracies shape a way ahead.

As Jim Carafano has put it in a recent piece: “Beijing has launched a PR blitz to deflect attention from its fatally flawed handling of the COVID-19 outbreak.

“But no amount of spin can alter the reality that the Chinese Communist Party’s brand—as well as the Chinese economy—has taken another body blow. The latest round of propaganda is so ludicrous, it smacks of desperation born of weakness.”

Guy Taylor in a recent Washington Times piece highlighted how the authoritarian powers are working the information war in the current crisis.

[China](#), [Russia](#) and Iran are flooding the global information space with false claims about the new coronavirus, according to U.S. officials, who say one of the biggest lies — that the virus that causes COVID-19 is a U.S. bioweapon and was brought to [China by U.S. Army](#) personnel — is just the latest in a “surge of propaganda” aimed at undermining America’s image on the world stage.

[Beijing](#), Moscow and Tehran are using a vast web of social media accounts, fake news outlets and state-controlled global satellite media to promote false claims by academics and, at times, government officials to blame Washington for the crisis now gripping most of humanity.

The head of a key [State Department](#) counterdisinformation office said U.S. officials are ramping up their own efforts to counter lies about the new coronavirus that were first seeded by [Russia](#) in January and that [China](#) is now pushing in a bid to make [Beijing](#) appear as a superior global power to the United States.

With regard to Russia, Putin's clearing NGOs out of Russia during his rule has prepared him well for information war for there is no credible information coming out from Russia on the real state of its own crisis.

With a country the size of Russia having cases on the scale of Luxembourg does challenge credibility.

And the lock down of Chinese society with both new and old means used by the Chinese Communist Party and claiming the superiority of their system underscores that reliable information is not a major Chinese export but viruses clearly are.

Taylor quoted a U.S. State Department official with regard to what the Administration seeks to do in response.

“We are going to make a concerted and public effort to counter disinformation by any regime on this because there are lasting consequences.

“The Chinese and Russians and Iranians are putting out these conspiracy theories and false narratives.

“It is deeply irresponsible, not just for America, but for the world. We're in the middle of a global pandemic that is unprecedented. The fact that these regimes are taking the time to deflect blame from their own actions is deeply irresponsible.”

Our recent story of how the disinformation campaign is proceeding in [Africa](#) suggests that the conflict is global, not simply directed at the liberal democracies themselves.

Taylor quoted an Administration official with regard to a way ahead.

Exposing previous examples of disinformation by questionable sources, she said, is part of the effort to “flood the space” with accurate information. That, she said, can involve “engaging third-party credible voices, for example, non-U.S. government voices to be able to get the truth out there.”

Third-party voices can include fact-checking organizations, nongovernment organizations, investigative journalists, other governments, local community leaders or social media influencers, she said. “We work with organizations worldwide to do that long-term approach of increasing resiliency, decreasing vulnerability and then inoculating audiences to disinformation.”

And an article written by Chuck Ross and published on [March 25, 2020](#) highlights another aspect of the challenge – the use by Western media of Chinese “information” inputs.

The Daily Mail, the popular British tabloid widely read in the United States, has published dozens of articles in recent months about coronavirus that were based on stories originating from People's Daily, the communist party's official newspaper, and other Chinese propaganda mills.

A Daily Caller News Foundation investigation found that the Daily Mail has published thousands of articles in recent years as part of a content-sharing agreement with People's Daily.

Whether that agreement is explicitly in place now is unclear, but the tabloid has nonetheless cited Chinese government news outlets extensively in its coverage of coronavirus. The Daily Mail did not return multiple requests for comment

On Monday, the Daily Mail published [a story](#) with the headline: "Beijing's leading doctor warns of a NEW coronavirus outbreak in China after the country reported its first case of someone 'catching the illness from a person returning from abroad.'"

The story, which had a massive 1.1 million shares on social media, cited comments that Li Lanjuan, a top Chinese government doctor, gave to People's Daily and China News, another government-controlled outlet. ([RELATED: Media Rhetoric On 'Wuhan Virus' Echoes Chinese Propaganda](#))

"One of China's top coronavirus experts has warned that the nation is facing a second outbreak due to the increasing number of infections detected among new arrivals from abroad," reads the Daily Mail piece, written by Tracy You.

In short the Coronavirus crisis is clearly not just about dealing with a virus; but an information war being conducted to try to position the 21st century authoritarian powers in a more favorable position after the crisis and to protect China's position in the global economy.

The Coronavirus Crisis: The Charles de Gaulle Aircraft Carrier Returns to Port

04/09/2020

Paris – Some 40 sailors on board the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier show signs resembling the coronavirus infection, prompting an early return of the capital ship to Toulon naval base, the armed forces ministry said April 8.

"On board the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier presently deployed in the Atlantic in the Foch mission, around 40 sailors are today under close medical observation," the ministry said in a statement.

"They show symptoms compatible with a possible infection by Covid-19. These first symptoms recently appeared," the ministry said. The aircraft carrier had been to arrive April 23 at the naval base in southern France.

The carrier is the nuclear-powered flagship of a task force capable of projecting force around the world.

In the US, acting navy secretary Thomas Modly resigned on Tuesday, following controversy over his criticism of the commander of the Theodore Roosevelt carrier. The former commander, captain Brett Crozier, had sought closer attention for his crew, some of whom were ill with the virus.

“It is not just missiles that can take us down, words can do it too, if we aren’t careful with how and when we use them,” said Modly, Reuters reported.

“It’s my fault. I own it.”

In France, a team was being sent today to the Charles de Gaulle carrier to test the suspected cases and limit the spread of the virus on board, the ministry said. The patients were in isolation confinement and under increased medical supervision. Steps have been taken to protect the rest of the crew.

There is a medical team of some 20 on board the carrier, equipped with facilities including a confinement unit of some 100 beds, ventilators, and scanner. Helicopters could fly patients to a higher level hospital in case the complaint worsened, the ministry said.

Steps had been taken to to protect the crew, seeking to allow the carrier’s operations to continue. Sailors clean the common work areas twice a day, disinfect rails, door handles and taps. Workstations, telephones and shared computers are also disinfected after use.

Crews are reminded on a daily basis of the need for care and preventive measures. The number of meetings has been cut down and gathering in the mess has been limited.

Face masks have been distributed on a preventive basis to crew members showing possible symptoms, such as coughs. These sailors are checked twice a day by medical staff.

The warship sailed out April 21 on the three month Foch mission, which included support for operations in Iraq and Syria. The capital ship was already on its way back to Toulon.

In France, armed forces minister Florence Parly signalled the need for the military and industry to deliver maintenance service to the forces, while observing strict measures in the coronavirus crisis.

Parly visited April 6 the head office of Nexter, a land systems company, and the SIMMT joint maintenance unit for ground weapons, the ministry said. Those visits followed a March 31 visit to the headquarters of Naval Group, a builder of warships and submarines.

“In the Covid-19 crisis, the armed forces minister kept up visits to these organizations to highlight the absolute necessity to maintain industrial activity, both state-backed and private sector, as it is indispensable to allow our armed forces conduct their most essential missions and activities,” the ministry said.

“Overseas and domestic deployments, nuclear deterrent, defense of national airspace and maritime approaches are at the heart of national sovereignty, and the armed forces ministry and industry must not miss the mark,” the ministry said.

In addition to equipment service, Parly also expressed her “gratitude” to work on programs for new equipment.

Arquus, builder of light and medium vehicles, said April 6 work was gradually restarting in four factories, including production for the Griffon multi-role troop carrier in the army’s Scorpion modernization program.

MBDA, a missile maker, gradually reopened April 6 its three French sites, a company spokesman said. Some 300 research and development staff went back to work at the Plessy Robinson head office, just outside the capital, some 50 production workers and R&D staff at Bourges, and 40 workers at Selles-Saint Denis, central France, he said. A further 100 administrative staff were now working in offices of the three sites, while the rest of the workforce was working from home.

For the French arms manufacturers, there will be talks with clients on the contracts, with attention to the force majeure clause covering events which release the supplier from penalties, an industrial source said.

On the Foch naval mission, France sought to show its military presence in regions seen to be strategically important, namely the North Sea, eastern Mediterranean, and the European side of the Atlantic.

The Charles de Gaulle carried 18 Rafale fighter jets, two Hawkeye spy aircraft, one Caïman anti-submarine and anti-surface helicopter, and two Dauphin Pedro search and recovery helicopters. There was a crew of 1,200, and an 80-strong command of the task force 473.

The carrier sailed out of Toulon January 21, escorted by the Auvergne multi-mission frigate, Chevalier Paul air defense frigate, Var fleet auxiliary ship, and a nuclear-powered attack submarine.

The task force sailed at various times with warships from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain in a bid to boost interoperability.

Living through the Global Coronavirus Crisis: The Centrality of Connectivity

04/05/2020

Certainly, one key impact of the Coronavirus crisis has highlighted in the crucial role of connectivity to allow 21st century societies to function even under duress.

Stay at home orders would not even be feasible without those “at home” being able to connect over their phone lines and internet connections, which are frequently the same thing.

But high demand and uneven ability to deliver the connections required have highlighted the importance of enhancing those connections going forward.

And with an upsurge in demand, cybercriminals are thriving as well.

The classic case of the challenge has been highlighted by Zoom. Here a niche product has gone mainstream due to the demand side generated by the crisis.

Yet that heavy demand has exposed the dark side of communications in the digital age.

According to a *Wall Street Journal* article published on [April 4, 2020](#):

But the platform's surging popularity has attracted trolls and hackers, as well as scrutiny from privacy advocates. The practice of "Zoom bombing"—where people gain unauthorized access to a meeting and share hate-speech or pornographic images—entered the popular vernacular almost overnight. Security experts found publicly highlighted problems with Zoom's technology could leave user data vulnerable to outsiders' exploitation.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation issued a warning Monday about videoconference hijacking, spurred in part by Zoom bombing incidents. In the U.S., 27 attorney general's offices have raised questions about privacy issues, Zoom said, adding it is cooperating with authorities.

And, of course, the skill sets using distance services can change forever how medicine and education or the balance between working out of the office are enhanced,

All of this underscores the importance of the coming of 5G and getting it right from a security point of view, and ensuring that it serves the interests of the liberal democracies and is not simply a trojan horse for the 21st century authoritarian powers.,

Last month, the Trump Administration published its overview to 5G strategy in which they highlighted its importance.

Post pandemic, this is a key policy area which is about redoing the economy as well as defense and security.

Coronavirus Impact: France Pulls Out from African West Coast Maritime Security Mission

04/03/2020

by defenceWeb

The French Navy has suspended its Mission Corymbe off West Africa due to the COVID-19 coronavirus, and withdrawn a vessel from the area.

The patrol vessel Lieutenant de Vaisseau Le Henaff, which departed Brest on 3 March for West Africa, returned to France at the end of the month. During its return voyage it stopped in Conakry and Dakar.

France established Mission Cormybe in 1990 to protect French economic interests in the Gulf of Guinea and coast of West Africa, particularly with regard to oil exploration. It has had a naval vessel on station ever since.

Vessels taking part in the mission have also carried out anti-piracy patrols and combated other maritime crimes such as illicit trafficking.

The French Navy has meanwhile sent two of its Mistral class landing helicopter docks to Reunion and Mayotte to provide medical assistance as well as the Antilles/Guyana area. It also has a carrier strike group operating in northern Europe.

Published by defenceWeb [March 31, 2020](#).

US Navy Destroyer Visit to Cape Town Curtailed: A Coronavirus Concern Impact

03/17/2020

by Dean Wingrin

The US Navy's Arleigh Burke class destroyer USS Carney (DDG64) arrived in Cape Town for a planned port visit on Sunday 15 March, but all activities have been curtailed to minimize the spread of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus).

Planned as the US Naval Forces Africa's effort to build global maritime partnerships with African nations in order to improve maritime safety and security in the region, its arrival was ahead of the ship's participation in Exercise Obangame Express off Africa's West coast later this week.

However, as a result of global efforts to minimize the spread of COVID-19, Spokesperson for US Navy Sixth Fleet, Commander Kyle Raines, told defenceWeb that all public tours and crew outreach events that were previously planned for the port call had been cancelled.

"The health and safety of our crew and host nation is our top priority," he explained. "No one on the ship has visited any high-risk areas or has shown any symptoms to indicate that they should be tested for COVID-19.

"Medical personnel aboard the ship are monitoring all crew members and visitors daily for any COVID-19 symptoms and are prepared to take appropriate actions as necessary."

Before leaving port on Tuesday 17 March, the ship was still able to refuel and replenish ship stores. Whilst most planned activities whilst in port were halted, the crew did experience “the local culture in vicinity of the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront.” The ship also had the opportunity to host US Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa, Lana Marks.

Whilst USS Carney was in port, the US military’s Africa Command (Africom) announced that Exercise Obangame Express 2020 had been cancelled in response to the global effort to contain the spread of the COVID-19.

Obangame Express is designed to improve regional cooperation, maritime domain awareness, information-sharing practices, and tactical interdiction expertise to enhance the collective capabilities of participating nations to counter sea-based illicit activity.

With no further requirement to participate in Obangame Express, USS Carney will continue on its seventh patrol in the European and African theatre in support of US national security interests.

The USS Carney, operating in the US 5th Fleet Area of Operations, recently supported maritime security operations and ensured freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce while assigned to the USS Harry S Truman Carrier Strike Group and the USS Bataan Amphibious Ready Group before conducting a port visit in Port Victoria, Seychelles.

Following Carney’s patrol, the ship will return to its homeport in Rota, Spain where it will make preparations to homeport shift back to Mayport, Florida later this year.

Published by *defenceWeb* on [March 17, 2020](#).

NATO Highlights Role of 3D Printing as Part of COVID 19 Response

04/06/2020

NATO Allies have joined efforts with private companies and academic institutions in the fight against the global pandemic of the Coronavirus. These efforts include making 3D printing available to produce ventilator masks, which represent a crucial component of the medical equipment required to treat patients hit by the Coronavirus.

In Italy, a team of the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) located in Taranto has established a cooperation with an Italian start-up called ISINNOVA that will result in the production of 25 3D-printed connectors – on a weekly basis – converting snorkelling masks into emergency ventilator masks. These will be donated to the Italian Civil Protection Department for further distribution in the most needed hospitals.

The Czech Republic has also distributed samples of newly developed hi-tech respirators printable on 3D printers to Italy, together with 10,000 pieces of protective suits. This has been made possible by the cooperation amongst different entities, including the Polytechnic Institutes of Milan and Prague.

This article was published by NATO on [April 2, 2020](#).

An Update on French Defense Industry in the Lockdown: Furloughs and Dividends

04/03/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – Dassault Aviation has suspended its €212 million (\$232 million) dividend on financial year 2019, withdrawn its business forecast for 2020, and placed some staff on furlough in response to disruption caused by coronavirus.

“To support Dassault Aviation in this unprecedented crisis, the board decided today that no dividend should be paid to shareholders for financial year 2019,” the company said April 1 in a note to staff posted on its website.

That cancellation of dividend is the latest in a drive by French companies to conserve cash to fund wage bills, maintain idle factories and finance a gradual industrial restart.

Dassault follows airliner builder Airbus and engine maker Safran, which have respectively suspended dividends of some €1.4 billion and around €1 billion.

Electronics company Thales declined comment.

The economy minister, Bruno Le Maire, called March 30 on companies to suspend dividends if those firms benefited from the state-backed furlough system.

“Set an example,” Le Maire said on BFM TV. “If you are using the furlough, do not pay dividends...”

France holds some 11 percent of Safran and 25.68 percent of Thales.

Under the French furlough, the government partly funds the reduced salary paid to staff temporarily laid off in the lock down against Covid-19. Companies pay part of the salary.

“Companies need to hold on to the maximum amount of cash to finance the recovery,” said Hervé Guillou, chairman of Gican, a trade association for naval companies and former executive chairman of Naval Group. Companies also need to pay executives, who are not covered by the furlough system.

Talks are under way to decide payment while on furlough and a new work schedule, Dassault said in the staff note. Staff who are not working from home or not returning to the factory from April 3 will be on furlough.

Work on the production line will gradually start April 3, with work teams assigned to high priority programs.

Dassault withdrew its business forecast for this year, which had already expected lower sales compared to a buoyant 2019. The company had planned to pay a dividend of €25.4 per share.

The company had expected to deliver 13 Rafale and 40 Falcon business jets this year, down from 26 fighter jets shipped last year. The forecast sale of Falcon jets for 2020 had been unchanged at 40 units.

Safran withdrew March 26 its 2020 forecast and cancelled a dividend of €2.38 per share.

“In a spirit of responsibility vis-à-vis Safran’s stakeholders, this decision preserves the group’s resources in order to protect employees, maintain continuity of its operations, notably for its suppliers, support its customers and ensure liquidity in uncertain times,” the company said in a statement.

Safran also set up a new €3 billion credit line with banks.

Airbus cancelled its dividend of €1.8 per share and set up a new credit line of €15 billion, giving access to €30 billion of liquidity. The company also suspended voluntary top up payments to pension.

The Dassault family, which receives significant income from the dividends, thanked the top managers, executive chairman Eric Trappier and chief operating officer Loic Segalen, for the steps taken in the lock down.

The family gave “full and complete support,” the April 1 staff note said.

The family holds 62.3 percent of Dassault Aviation, and voting rights of 76.9 percent.

Payment of dividends, furloughs and high pay have sparked controversy in the UK. The founder of easyJet, Stelios Haji-Ioannou, last month received £60 million in dividends, as the low-cost airline placed 4,000 staff on furlough and grounded the entire aircraft fleet.

In the Premier football league, Newcastle United stopped paying its non-playing staff, leaving them to apply for the government-backed furlough scheme. Meanwhile, while soccer players stayed on full pay, reported to be an average £40,120 per week, the BBC reported.

The furlough scheme meant taxpayers would fund 80 percent of wages of the non-playing staff, who would remain on the Newcastle’s payroll.

In France, almost 400,000 companies and four million workers have registered for furlough, which pays 70 percent of salary, afternoon daily Le Monde reported.

Some 4,032 people have died in hospital from the virus, with more than 9,600 patients in the Ile de France region around the capital, straining the medical facilities, the report said.

An Update on French Defense Industry During the Lockdown: April 1, 2020

04/01/2020

By Pierre Tran

Paris – Arquus last week delivered 13 VAB armored troop carriers to support the French army in the African Barkhane operation, and an initial batch of 100 VT4 light vehicles for national security, the vehicle manufacturer said March 31.

Meanwhile, Nexter partially restarted production March 30 after a week’s shut down, the company said on its LinkedIn website.

Arquus shipped its vehicles in the second week of the national lock down, which has been extended to April 15 in a bid to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Arquus was able to deliver the vehicles which were already built and fitted out under an accelerated program. Production has been closed since the quarantine came into effect, while service and spares have been provided under a reduced workforce.

“Arquus last week conducted a complete inventory of the assets which could be quickly made available to the services,” the company said in a statement.

That review led to identification of a park of almost 300 vehicles, both armored and unarmored, with some new units and some reconditioned, the company said.

Talks with the Direction Générale de l’Armement procurement office and army’s SIMMT maintenance arm led to DGA inspection and certification of 13 VAB troop carriers at the Garchizy plant, central France.

Those vehicles, delivered early in the week of March 23, had been adapted to give greater protection, based on lessons learnt in the field. That shipment completed a batch of 40 units and will “strengthen the capability made available to services deployed in Barkhane,” the company said.

The Barkhane mission is the French army's operation in sub-Saharan Africa against Islamist fundamentalist fighters. President Emmanuel Macron has committed to send 600 more French troops to reinforce the 4,500 already deployed.

In addition to the troop carriers, Arquus is also delivering 200 light vehicles under the lock down.

Arquus delivered late last week an initial batch of 100 VT4 vehicles from its Saint Nazaire plant, northern France. A second batch of 100 VT4 will be delivered next week, to boost the services's operations on national territory, the company said.

A further batch of 73 VT4 vehicles is due to be shipped.

The army deploys up to 10,000 troops in the Sentinel operation, with armed foot patrols and light vehicles deployed nationwide.

Some 35 percent of staff at the Garchizy plant were working under tight health rules, handling the dispatch of spares to the forces.

The VT4, based on the Ford Explorer, replaces an aging fleet of P4 jeeps. Arquus is the subsidiary of Volvo, a Swedish truck maker.

Nexter, builder of medium and heavy armored vehicles, partially returned to work March 30 after closing down for a week, the company said on its LinkedIn website.

The company cleaned equipment in factories and made sanitizing gel available to workers. Managers have been drawing up plans for gradually restarting production for those designated as priority programs. That return to production required talks with the large supply chain.

Workers on maintenance service continued to work, the company said.

Nexter is prime contractor on the Griffon multirole troop carrier and Jaguar combat and reconnaissance vehicle, two key elements in the army's Scorpion modernization program. The company handles design of the Jaguar.

Thales, an electronics company, is industrial partner on these Scorpion programs.

Texelis, a supplier of drivelines and axles, is partner with Nexter for a light armored vehicle for intelligence and reconnaissance missions.

Re-Thinking Military Supply Chain Security in the Post-Pandemic World

03/30/2020

By David Beaumont

Supply chain security is the concept which encompasses the programs, systems, procedures, technologies and solutions applied to address threats to the supply chain and the consequent threats to economic, social and physical well-being of citizens and organised society. – [World Bank](#), 2009

Deborah Cowen's book, *The deadly life of logistics*, describes the intertwined relationship between commercial logistics and security.

“With logistics comes new kinds of crises, new paradigms of security,” Cowen opines, describing how the global logistics enterprise developed from Second World War experience has been employed by government and business to define the modern world.¹

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to end the fragile order of international supply and industrial production for the short term at least.

This event has direct existential and strategic consequences for Western militaries, but also requires them to be part of national economic responses.

This article is an attempt to consider a few aspects of this ‘new world’.

What are its implications for national security as it pertains to supply and industry?

Supply chain security came upon us in the last decades of the twentieth century.

A confluence of factors started the way the new world did its business. Globalisation was well in train, but economies adjusted to the opening of borders.

During the 1980's, a wave of deregulation washed over the Western world and national economies were exposed to global forces.

Production shifted to those regions of the world where costs were low, and global supply chains became the veins of a system of wealth generation that stretched across the planet.

A ‘revolution in logistics’, one shared by business [but also the military](#) as deployments moved rapidly across the global commons, was accelerated by ‘just in time’ view of supply. More stuff was moving, more quickly and to more destinations.

It was a time of tremendous economic opportunity for those countries that could take advantage.

Supply chain security was not an idea developed by militaries to chart threats; it was an economic concept conceived to describe emerging vulnerabilities to normal patterns of human (Western human, mind you) existence.

It has become militarised over time, a consequence of expeditionary wars in the Middle-east, the blurring of civil and military industry in a number of critical industries resident in certain countries, and in consideration of new challenges to the existing global order. There were numerous ways in which militaries have experienced this problem and concept, two of which I will describe here.

Firstly, like everyone else, governments and their militaries became wedded to lower-cost procurement options which became possible with componentry sourced and products manufactured where labour costs were low.

In classical military parlance, the supply lines of most Western militaries moved from the 'interior' to the 'exterior'; where parts were moved directly through geographic regions that had only years before (and now) been considered potential 'battlezones' versus the depots and production facilities within the national support base.

Secondly, and maybe even unwittingly, internationalised production and logistics caused national strategic interests to expand outwards. This was not just a concern for military logisticians who were interested in where sources of ammunition and parts may originate, but for those interested in protecting domestic prosperity.

It is now naïve to think that geoeconomics and commerce is not a national security issue.

It probably is the national security issue of our time, the driving force behind a veneer of 'hard power' concerns and other military-strategic problems.

Prosperity is what nations ultimately strive to protect.

While military strategists haven't been particularly fixed on global economics, the problem of supply chain security has certainly been fixed on them.

Problems crept up on a new generation of Western national security and military planners slowly.

Operations off the 'horn' of Africa to protect traffic from Somali pirates gave way to concerns about 'anti-access, area-denial' weaponry on significant maritime choke-points, which in turn gave way to the implications of man-made island building in the South China Sea, and cyber-attacks on defence industry. People understood the strategic implications of trade, but now its importance was re-emerging, almost subliminally, in often unrelated discussions.

Sources of production were also becoming a critical part of the conversation. Volcanic eruptions in Iceland in 2010 and the Fukushima nuclear accident created shudders throughout the global economy, and all soon learned how vulnerable the connective tissue of the World truly was. Localised disruption to manufacturing now had global effects.

The economic cataclysm wrought by purposeful government decisions to slow the COVID-19 pandemic has created a new blend of the economic and military.

An alarming lack of resilience in the commercial systems society has created for itself has been revealed.

Military logisticians were already becoming increasingly concerned with the implications of limited sources of supply for the purposes of the armies, navies and air forces they belonged to.

Now this problem has moved beyond a challenge to military supply and into challenges to ‘normal’ human patterns of existence. Although admittedly a guess, it seems a certainty to me that the strategic calculus about supply-chains, along with concerns for national resilience, will change.

This will have considerable implications for what militaries must do for their nations, if not how they create capability in the first place.

Furthermore, the nature of military and industrial / economic relationships in Western countries will necessarily evolve. Militaries receive sizable budgets for the purpose of preparedness for war, and it is evident that governments will turn to the military to deliver some return during a time of national crisis.

Militaries around the world are performing tasks they were patently not expecting to be performing; from supplementing hospitals to producing medical supplies. However, militaries are being seen to offer governments a point of leverage into the national economy. Defence activities such as procurement and capability development can be rushed ahead – albeit inefficiently and with excessive costs – of timelines to stimulate some form of local economic activity.

At one end of the spectrum planned expenses will simply be brought forward. At the other end, it is possible that future capability decisions will be seen to renew, even re-establish, national industries that have withered since globalisation accelerated.

As we are seeing with the recent declaration of the US President Trump to invoke the Defence Production Act (DPA), governments are willing to co-opt existing military systems and processes to deliver economic outcomes.

This is an opportunity that must be taken if the situation demands it.

In the [case of the DPA](#), an Act conceived to support mobilisation, industry is being directed to produce commercial products for national security purposes.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, and as nations recover, it will be critical that defence planners consider ways in which seemingly natural links between the military and national support base can be appropriately leveraged for highly unusual crisis as is being witnessed right now.

Defence industry policy and other Acts of government can be the bedrock upon which national security responses can be formed.

It may be that at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, and after the economic recovery erases our memory of the cost of seizing international trade, behaviours and the interests of military and other national security organisations will return to normal.

Now, amid a pandemic, it seems incredulous to suggest life will be so kind. National security is fundamentally about the preservation of normality, and militaries will have an important role in assisting their society assure it.

It is an unwritten rule of military logistics start preparing for the time in which forces will return home just as they arrive on a military operation.

Perhaps it is time to start planning now for ‘what comes next’, and to reconsider the national security implications of the globalised international economy.

Speaking of Western military forces, they will look out on a world that faces great uncertainty as nations strive to quickly regenerate their wealth and ensure prosperity.

They will be viewed as institutions of order and support, and their people as a symbol of assurance.

But they must also start thinking about the next threats to prosperity.

In this environment we shouldn’t forget commerce and military practice in war has always been entangled.

Alternatively, and as this article has sought to do, we shouldn’t forget that this rule applies outside of the fighting as well.

This article was first published March 12, 2020 by David Beaumont on [his website](#).