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## Stopping the authoritarian rot in Europe

*April 23, 2020* euobserver.com reported: “A few weeks ago, the European Union underwent a fundamental change: it ceased being a bloc of exclusively democratic states. Worse, leaders across Europe barely flinched.

Prime minister Viktor Orbán's seizure of absolute power in Hungary at the beginning of April – under the cover of the coronavirus pandemic – culminates a decade of authoritarian moves.

Step by step, Orbán and his ruling Fidesz party have politicized the courts, decimated independent media, destroyed academic freedom, hobbled civil society, and promoted xenophobia.

Even after the European Parliament launched an "Article 7" process, which allows sanctions against states that breach EU values, the EU commission and member states did almost nothing to stop Orbán. Foot-dragging prevailed.

Even to the most blinkered of European eyes, Orbán's latest maneuver – assuming the power to rule by decree for an unlimited time – should have registered more than pro forma mutterings of concern.

Under president Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission's initial response to Orbán's power grab was so mealy-mouthed that it didn't even name "Hungary."

That travesty was surpassed only by a joint statement from 16 EU countries that, while also omitting mention of Hungary, was so bland and generic that Hungary seemingly mocked its EU peers for their timidity and announced it would sign it.” ...”

## U.S. ‘Strongly Opposes China’s Bullying’ in the South China Sea

*April 23, 2020* voanews.com reported: “The United States is accusing China of taking advantage of the COVID-19 outbreak and increasing its military activities near Taiwan and in the South China Sea.

‘The United States strongly opposes China’s bullying,’ U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Wednesday, ahead of a virtual meeting between the U.S. and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) foreign ministers later in the day.

‘We’ve also seen that the Chinese Communist Party is exerting military pressure on Taiwan and coercing its neighbors in the South China Sea, even going so far as to sink a Vietnamese fishing vessel. We hope other nations will hold them to account,’ added Pompeo during a press briefing, hours before his videoconference with ASEAN ministers.

The U.S. and ASEAN had been eyeing a summit to boost ties, at a time when China continues to expand its influence in Southeast Asia. The dialogue was scheduled for March but later postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak...”

## “Multiple famines of biblical proportions within a short few months”

*April 22, 2020* Arutz Sheva 7 reported: “David Beasley, UN World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director, spoke yesterday (Tuesday) in a virtual session of the UN Security Council which was titled ‘Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Protecting Civilians Affected by Conflict-Induced Hunger’.

‘At the same time while dealing with a COVID-19 pandemic’, Beasley said, ‘we are also on the brink of a hunger pandemic’. Beasley emphasized that speaking with world leaders way before the coronavirus, he said that 2020 would be facing the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II.

‘So today, with COVID-19’, he stressed, ‘we are not only facing a global health pandemic but also a global humanitarian catastrophe. Millions of civilians living in conflict-scarred nations, including many women and children, face being pushed to the brink of starvation, with the spectre of famine a very real and dangerous possibility’.

According to the UN World Food Programme 821 million people go to bed hungry every night all over the world, ‘chronically hungry’ Beasley noted.

According to the new Global Report on Food Crisis published yesterday (Tuesday) 135 million people on earth are marching towards the brink of starvation...”

## Seoul plays down report on North Korean leader’s health

*April 22, 2020* spacewar.com reported: “South Korea played down a report Tuesday that the North’s leader Kim Jong Un was being treated after surgery, as speculation mounted over his absence from a key anniversary.

Pyeongyang marked the birthday of its late founder, Kim’s grandfather Kim Il Sung, on April 15 — by far the most important date in its annual political calendar — but Kim was not seen in attendance.

*Daily NK*, an online media outlet run mostly by North Korean defectors, said Kim had undergone a cardiovascular procedure earlier this month and was recovering at a villa in North Phyongan province.



Kim Jong Un

'Excessive smoking, obesity, and fatigue were the direct causes of Kim's urgent cardiovascular treatment,' it cited an unidentified source inside the country as saying. No confirmation of the report was immediately available. But it triggered widespread speculation, with CNN citing a US official saying that Washington was 'monitoring intelligence' that Kim was in 'grave danger' after undergoing surgery.

In a statement, a spokesman for the South's presidential Blue House said: 'We have nothing to confirm and no special movement has been detected inside North Korea as of now.'

The South's *Yonhap* news agency, meanwhile, cited an unnamed government official saying that reports Kim was seriously ill were 'not true'...

### **CDC chief warns 2nd COVID-19 wave may be worse, arriving with flu season**

*April 21, 2020 reuters.com* reported: "A second wave of the coronavirus is expected to hit the United States next winter and could strike much harder than the first because it would likely arrive at the start of influenza season, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned on Tuesday.

"There's a possibility that the assault of the virus on our nation next winter will actually be even more difficult than the one we just went through," CDC Director Robert Redfield told the Washington Post in an interview.

As the current outbreak continues to taper off, as shown by a recent decline in hospitalization rates and other indicators, authorities need to prepare for a probable resurgence in the months ahead.

"We're going to have the flu epidemic and the coronavirus epidemic at the same time," he said, and the combination would put even greater strain on the nation's healthcare system than the first outbreak." ..."

### **Jihadis call coronavirus the 'small soldier of Allah'**

*April 20, 2020 World Net Daily* reported: "Muslim jihadists in Africa and the Middle East have begun calling the coronavirus the 'small soldier of Allah,' saying that those infected with it are receiving just punishment. If the victim is a Muslim, it's because he wasn't devout enough.

*The Washington Times* reported groups such as ISIS and al-Qaida have celebrated the coronavirus. Islamic militants see the virus as a divine punishment against Western countries and Muslims who are not sufficiently devout for the purpose of facilitating jihad against them. The ISIS online magazine highlights the fact that the coronavirus has killed more Americans than 9/11..."

### **Iran shows off drones that can reach Israel, threat increases**

*April 20, 2020 jpost.com* reported: "Iran's Defense Ministry unveiled a mass of new drones over the weekend for the Islamic Republic's army and air force. According to Tehran the drones have new capabilities, and can fly more than 1,000 km., which means they could reach Israel from Iran.



Iran has been producing drones since the 1980s and is an innovator in drone warfare. It used 25 drones and cruise missiles to attack Saudi Arabia last September, and has flown drones into Israeli airspace.

Iran's Defense Minister Brig.-Gen. Amir Hatami showed off the drones on Saturday. He said that one jet-powered UAV could fly at speeds of 900 km. per hour at an altitude of 12,000 meters. This would rival the best drones that the US and other countries are now using. These drones have a range of up to 1,500 km., he said, and can fly for several hours. It is a message to Israel, the US and their allies: We can reach you..."

### **China falsely telling Arab world U.S. behind coronavirus**

*April 18, 2020 washingtontimes.com* reported: "A media research group has released the transcript of a China-produced Arabic-language news report to show how Beijing's propaganda machine is blaming the coronavirus on America.

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), which monitors TV and social media in the Arab world, focused on a March 17 broadcast of "China View" on Beijing's Global Television Network Arabic (CGTN), which overall has 14 million viewers.

The Middle East is an increasingly ripe target for China's trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative to build ports, highways and even cities to gain inroads into the oil-rich region and to compete with the U.S."..."

### **Palestinian journalist: COVID starts the countdown to the end of America**

*April 17, 2020 jpost.com* reported: "The COVID-19 pandemic 'starts the countdown of the end of the American empire,' a British Palestinian journalist has said, as he called for the rise of China in America's stead.

Abdel Bari Atwan made the comments in Arabic a video uploaded to his YouTube channel at the end of March, where they were seen and translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI).

In it, the former editor-in-chief of *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, told viewers that he believes America is the source of the virus and will be destroyed by it..."