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Introducing another week of Future Trends — *tracking current global news stories that provide insight into the future.*

CONFLICT

Moscow has ‘red line’ about NATO involvement in Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sternly [warned NATO against deploying its troops](#) and weapons to Ukraine, saying it represents a red line for Russia and would trigger a strong response.

Uganda says troops to stay in Congo to defeat the Islamic State affiliate. At least [1,700 Ugandan soldiers](#) have so far crossed into eastern Congo to join Congolese forces battling the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an armed group aligned with Islamic State.

Azerbaijan hands over captured soldiers to Armenia. Azerbaijan handed over [10 captured Armenian soldiers](#) to Armenia in return for maps detailing the location of landmines in the Karabakh region as part of an exchange mediated by Russia.

Russia, Southeast Asia conclude first joint naval exercise. The three-day exercise off the coast of Indonesia’s Sumatra island aimed at [increasing interoperability between the ASEAN member states and the Russian navy](#) in the strategic maritime area amid rising Chinese tensions.

Burkina Faso’s 1.3m displaced people increasingly fall victim to terrorists.

As security in Burkina Faso has deteriorated in recent months. Increasingly, people displaced by conflict are [falling victim to terrorists in areas they had once fled to for safety](#).

DEVELOPMENT

Hunger increased by 30 percent in Latin America since 2019. Latin America and the Caribbean is facing a [critical situation in terms of food security](#), UN official says.

EU launches €300bn bid to challenge Chinese influence.

The EU has revealed details of a €300bn global investment plan, described as a ["true alternative" to China's Belt and Road](#) strategy.

A new salt grain-sized camera rivals others that are 500,000 times larger.

Researchers have created an ultra-compact camera that is the [size of a coarse salt grain](#). The new micro camera has a new optical system featuring a technology called a metasurface that can be produced like a computer chip.

Solar wind likely created Earth's water. New research suggests [hydrogen ions from the sun formed water](#) on tiny dust particles, which later crashed into our planet.

Satellite imagery finds Australia may be under reporting methane emissions. Emissions from mines in the Bowen basin added up to about [1.5 million tonnes](#). Only a third of that amount was reported by the Federal government.

ECONOMICS

Car sales in Europe hit record low due to global microchip shortage.

New passenger car registrations in the [EU dropped by 30%](#) in October, the weakest result in volume terms for a month of October since records began.

Inflation in Eurozone hits record high of 4.9%.

Consumer prices across the 19 countries that use the euro currency are rising at a record rate [as a result of a huge spike in energy costs](#) this year, official figures showed.

Group of 67 nations in WTO agree to cut red tape in services trade. The World Trade Organisation members agreed to pare back regulations such as licensing requirements placed on service providers operating in foreign countries, a move that [could save \\$150 billion in annual trade costs](#).

Mexican President announces a minimum wage increase of 22%. It is the largest "nominal" increase since 1987. The [government, business groups and unions supported this decision](#).

Turkish Lira sets a record low. The Turkish Lira has been during 2021 the [most depreciated currency in the world](#). President Erdogan decided to replace his Finance Minister amid new economic turbulence.

POLITICS

Maldives' top court annuls prison term for ex-president.

The highest court in the Maldives [overturned the prison sentence of the country's former president](#), who had been convicted of money laundering. A three-member Supreme Court bench unanimously annulled the five-year jail term and \$5 million fine.

Libya court reinstates Gaddafi presidential bid amid election chaos. His appeal against disqualification for the Dec. 24 vote was delayed for days as fighters blocked off the court, one of several incidents that [may foreshadow wider election unrest](#).

US and EU hail 'convergent' stances toward China. The EU and United States [expressed concern over China's actions](#) in the South and East China Seas and the Taiwan Strait, which they said had a "direct impact" on their respective security and prosperity.

China threatens 'firm countermeasures' after US announces diplomatic boycott of Winter Olympics. A diplomatic boycott will see athletes attend the Games but not officials. The White House says the move is driven by [concerns about human rights practices](#).

India and Russia strike trade, arms deals during Putin visit. Russia and India signed a flurry of trade and arms deals during President Putin's visit to New Delhi for talks with Prime Minister Modi, including one that will see India produce [more than 600,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles](#).

Austria's third leader in two months takes office mid-lockdown. Karl Nehammer, took office seeking to bring the coalition government out of months of [scandal-tainted turmoil](#) and guide the country out of lockdown.

SOCIAL

China surveillance of journalists to use 'traffic-light' system.

The Chinese province of Henan is building a surveillance system with face-scanning technology that can [detect journalists and other "people of concern"](#), classifying them into a "traffic-light" system - green, amber and red.

Laos gives Buddhist blessings to its new high-speed rail line. Laos held a Buddhist ceremony to bless its new [\\$6 billion high-speed rail line](#), a Chinese-led initiative that marks one of the biggest leaps towards modernization by one of Asia's least-developed nations.

Putin accuses management of falsifying data at Russian mine where 51 died. "The management of the mine had systematically taken measures to [hide the facts of excessive methane gas levels](#) in the mine," Putin told a televised meeting with officials, citing a preliminary report given to him by investigators.

Researcher questions China's population data, says it may be 100m lower. [China may be downplaying how fast its population is shrinking](#), and a recent policy to promote three-child families has poor chances to improve birth rates.

Advanced air mobility sector is expected to increase its value to \$17 billion by 2025. This market includes [jetpacks, drones and flying cars](#). These innovations could be used for police and health operations, infrastructure, transportation, among other areas.

PEACEBUILDING

The [Carter Center](#) has [released its expert mission's preliminary report on Venezuela's regional and municipal elections in November](#). The [report](#) took note of "three major positive changes": a reshuffling of the National Electoral Council increasing the opposition's representation, the presence of international observers, and talks between the government and opposition that began in Mexico City in August. At the same time, the report raised concerns about curbs on freedom of expression, the barring of opposition candidates, the detention of some 250 political prisoners, a general atmosphere of political repression, a widespread humanitarian crisis, the government's overt use of its incumbent political advantage, and an uneven playing field.

Maryland is the first US state to initiate a [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) (TRC) to address its history of racial violence. Charles Chavis, Vice-chair of Maryland's TRC and George Mason University professor, told [PBS](#) that the commission plans to hold public hearings to publicize public and official involvement in lynchings in the state. A TRC task force has placed a memorial marking the site of the lynching of 15-year-old African-American Howard Cooper in 1885.

[Mercy Corps' MicroMentor program](#) connects young entrepreneurs with experienced mentors through an online platform. The program has helped over 40,000 young entrepreneurs gain access to social capital and global business information through pro-bono mentorship with experienced business owners. Using this help, one young woman opened a property advertising platform in Indonesia while another started an online education platform in Nepal.

[A Mellon Foundation Grant will enable the expansion of the mural, *The History of California*](#). Artist Judy Baca and the arts nonprofit she cofounded, the Social and Public Resource Center (SPARC), painted the mural – known as [The Great Wall of Los Angeles](#) -- presents American history from the perspective of those left out of most history books -- people of color, women, indigenous people, and others. Some 400 people contributed stories and helped paint the original mural, which was started in the 1970's. The new funding will double the size of the half-mile mural to include events over the past 70 years - through 2021.