

March 7, 2023



Brought to you by



Institute for
Economics
& Peace



Alliance for
Peacebuilding

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

Here's what you need to know: Ukraine says its forces may pull out of Bakhmut; Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia send additional troops to Somalia to fight al-Shabaab; Bola Tinubu declared Nigeria's president by electoral commission; China's lowest growth target in decades signals new era of caution; Bangladesh investigates huge fire at world's largest refugee camp; UN agrees once-in-a-generation treaty to protect biodiversity in oceans.

SPECIAL EDITION: UKRAINE

Ukraine says its forces may pull out of Bakhmut. Bakhmut, a symbol of Ukrainian resistance, is strategically important to [Russia's goal of taking control of the Donetsk province](#). Bakhmut is the only approach to larger, Ukrainian-held cities since Ukrainian troops took back Izium.

NATO says Ukraine will join in the long term. NATO's Chief Jens Stoltenberg says Ukraine will become a [member of the alliance](#) in the "long-term", but for now it needs to remain independent in the face of Russia's invasion. Ukraine has sought to join the US-led military alliance for years.

Soils of war: The toxic legacy for Ukraine's breadbasket. Before the war, Ukraine was the world's fourth-largest corn exporter and fifth-biggest wheat seller. War damage could cut Ukraine's potential [grain harvest](#) by 10 to 20 million tonnes a year, or up to a third based on its pre-war output.

POLITICS

Bola Tinubu declared Nigeria's president by electoral commission. Tinubu, from the All Progressives Congress, [won with 37% of the vote](#). Turnout was the lowest on record, with fewer than three out of ten people who registered and collected voting cards casting their ballots.

Cambodian opposition leader found guilty of treason. A court sentenced [Kem Sokha](#) to 27 years in prison for treason. The court also stripped him of his right to vote and barred him from running for political office. Critics say the trial was designed to keep him out of upcoming elections in July.

Belarus court sentences Nobel Peace Prize laureate to ten years. [Belarusian human rights activist Ales Bialiatski](#), who won the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize while in prison, was sentenced to ten years in a penal colony as his country's government continues a crackdown on opponents.

Estonian PM's center-right party wins general election. Prime Minister Kaja Kallas's centre-right Reform Party won the [general election](#) by a large margin, scoring 31.6% of the vote against 16% for far-right party EKRE.

Xi rallies China to overcome 'containment' in direct shot at US. President Xi Jinping sought to rally China's private sector to help overcome "[containment](#)" by the US and other countries, in a rare direct criticism of the nation's biggest trading partner.

CONFLICT

Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia send additional troops to Somalia to fight al-Shabaab. The countries are initiating the second phase of an offensive against [al-Shabaab](#). Insurgents have plagued Somalia for years making a joint effort to stop the spread of violent extremism necessary.

IS claims responsibility for suicide bombing in Pakistan. Islamic State have claimed responsibility for a [suicide bombing attack](#) in southwestern Pakistan that killed nine policemen. The suicide bomber rammed a motorcycle into a police truck, the latest in a series of attacks targeting police.

Denmark scraps public holiday to boost defence budget. Denmark's parliament has voted to abolish a springtime public holiday, observed since the 17th century, to [boost spending on the military](#). The cancellation will provide an additional \$427 million for the defence budget.

Iran makes pledge of cooperation to IAEA. Iran has given assurances to the UN nuclear watchdog that it will finally assist a long-stalled [investigation into uranium particles](#) found at undeclared sites and re-install removed monitoring equipment.

China's defence spending to rise 7%, fastest pace in four years. China said its [defense spending](#) will grow by 7.2% this year, the fastest pace since 2019, amid increasing tensions with the US. Military expenditure is expected to rise to \$225 billion in 2023.

ECONOMICS

Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia send additional troops to Somalia to fight al-Shabaab. The countries are initiating the second phase of an offensive against [al-Shabaab](#). Insurgents have plagued Somalia for years making a joint effort to stop the spread of violent extremism necessary.

IS claims responsibility for suicide bombing in Pakistan. Islamic State have claimed responsibility for a [suicide bombing attack](#) in southwestern Pakistan that killed nine policemen. The suicide bomber rammed a motorcycle into a police truck, the latest in a series of attacks targeting police.

Denmark scraps public holiday to boost defence budget. Denmark's parliament has voted to abolish a springtime public holiday, observed since the 17th century, to [boost spending on the military](#). The cancellation will provide an additional \$427 million for the defence budget.

Iran makes pledge of cooperation to IAEA. Iran has given assurances to the UN nuclear watchdog that it will finally assist a long-stalled [investigation into uranium particles](#) found at undeclared sites and re-install removed monitoring equipment.

China's defence spending to rise 7%, fastest pace in four years. China said its [defense spending](#) will grow by 7.2% this year, the fastest pace since 2019, amid increasing tensions with the US. Military expenditure is expected to rise to \$225 billion in 2023.

DEVELOPMENT

Bangladesh investigates huge fire at world's largest refugee camp. Bangladesh authorities are investigating the cause of a [massive fire in a Rohingya refugee camp](#) which has left 12,000 people without shelter. Police are investigating if the fire was an act of sabotage.

Niger joins the crucial UN transboundary water-sharing accord. Niger is to join a key [UN water-sharing agreement](#) with its Lake Chad neighbours in the increasingly drought-prone Sahel region. Chad and Cameroon are already parties and Nigeria is in the process of becoming a signatory.

Greeks protest over deadly train crash, station master jailed. Clashes erupted between police and demonstrators, after thousands rallied to protest over the crash. A railway employee was jailed pending trial over the incident that killed at least 57 people, making it the country's [worst rail disaster](#).

Avian flu reappears in Cambodia. These are the first cases of [avian influenza](#), known as H5N1, reported in Cambodia since a widespread outbreak in 2014, according to the WHO. The infection, which largely affects animals, has a 50% mortality rate in humans.

Antarctic sea ice reaches lowest levels ever recorded. The melting ice reached a new [record low](#) of 1.79m sq km on 25 February, beating the previous record by 136,000 sq km.

SOCIAL

UN agrees once-in-a-generation treaty to protect biodiversity in oceans. UN members have agreed on a treaty aimed at countering [threats to marine biodiversity](#). The treaty aims to protect the high seas, which begin at a maximum of 370 kilometres from the coastline and are not under state jurisdiction.

US TikTok ban shifts to Senate bill. The US is moving closer to restricting access to [TikTok](#), with the Senate Intelligence Committee set to unveil a bill that the Biden administration is likely to support. This would give the US power to ban or prohibit foreign technologies or companies.

France's longest river dries up amid winter drought. Normally, the Loire River would be teeming with water as winter snow melts, but drone footage has shown otherwise. France is facing one of its worst [winter droughts](#) in history.

Scientists want to create AI using real human brain cells. [Organoid intelligence](#) is an emerging field where researchers are developing biological computing using 3D cultures of human brain cells (brain organoids) and brain-machine interface technologies.

Oldest bow and arrow unearthed in Europe. Archaeologists in France have unearthed evidence of the [earliest bow-and-arrow](#) use in Europe. Roughly 54,000 years ago, Homo sapiens living in a cave in the Rhône Valley likely used archery to hunt horses, bison or deer.

PEACEBUILDING

The [2022 EU Community of Practice on Peace Mediation](#) has published a [report with concrete recommendations on how to further build partnerships for sustainable peace](#). Their recommendations cover partnerships, inclusivity, support for local actors, an integrated approach, and new tools. The event engaged with a wide range of civil society actors and policymakers. It was organized by the [EEAS Mediation Support Team](#), [Particip](#) and [CMI](#). The meeting was supported by a Steering Committee including CMI, [Conciliation Resources](#), the [European Peacebuilding Liaison Office](#), [European Institute of Peace](#), [European Resources for Mediation Support](#), and [Particip](#).

Cities around the world are adopting “[15-minute planning](#)” goals to reduce greenhouse gases. For its “quarter-hour city” approach, Paris has closed roads to

vehicles, invested in public transportation, and improved bike lanes and bike-sharing programs. Portland, Oregon's [Climate Action Plan](#) set a target for 90 percent of residents to be able to walk or cycle to meet nonwork needs by 2030. [Plan Melbourne](#) aims for residents to be able to reach what they need in a 20-minute round trip. Shanghai has pitched a similar concept called "[15-minute community living circles](#)."

[The US Government is changing its approach to managing public lands by inviting tribes to be co-stewards of lands their ancestors formerly inhabited.](#)

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack launched this effort in November 2021 with [a joint secretarial order](#) directing agencies to ensure their decisions on public lands fulfilled trust obligations with tribes. Since then, they have signed off on nearly two dozen co-stewardship agreements, and another 60 are in various stages of review. The Commerce Department, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Indian Affairs have also produced co-stewardship guidance.

[The House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress adopted 202 bipartisan recommendations during the four years it existed \(2019-2023\).](#) About two-thirds of their proposals have been executed or made significant progress toward passage. From the start, committee members set out to create a more cooperative relationship, beginning with a bipartisan planning retreat. They hired one bipartisan team of staffers, met for dinner every few months, integrated the hearing-room seating so that Democrats sat next to Republicans, sat in a round table format at the same level as those who testified, and allowed members to speak at will.