

August 16th, 2023



Brought to you by



Institute for  
Economics  
& Peace



Alliance for  
Peacebuilding

**Welcome to this week's Future Trends** - the must-read weekly briefing covering the changing face of global politics, economics, development, social, and conflict.

**Here's what you need to know this week:**

- Ukraine orders 12,000 civilians to leave eastern Kharkiv
- Argentine far-right outsider Javier Milei posts shock win in primary election
- Grounded WWII warship raises tensions between China & Philippines
- Italy approves 40% windfall tax on banks
- Amazon nations fail to agree on deforestation goal at summit
- US record highest number of suicides in 2022

## **SPECIAL EDITION: UKRAINE**

**Ukraine orders 12,000 civilians to leave eastern Kharkiv region.** Ukrainian authorities have ordered a mandatory evacuation of nearly [12,000 civilians](#) from 37 towns and villages in the eastern Kharkiv region, where Russian forces are reportedly making a concerted effort to punch through the front line.

**Ukrainian forces cross Dnipro River in bid to breach southern frontline.** Ukrainian forces have made an attempt to cross the Dnipro River dividing liberated and occupied Kherson, in a [potential breach](#) of what has for months served as the frontline in the south of Ukraine.

**Russian warship fires warning shots at cargo ship in Black Sea.** A Russian warship fired warning shots at a cargo ship in the southwestern Black Sea, the first time [Russia has fired on merchant shipping](#) beyond Ukraine since exiting a landmark UN-brokered grain deal last month.

## **POLITICS**

**Argentine far-right outsider Javier Milei posts shock win in primary election.** With some 90% of ballots counted, far-right libertarian economist [Javier Milei](#) had 30.5% of the vote, far higher than predicted, with the main conservative opposition bloc behind on 28% and the ruling Peronist coalition in third place on 27%.

**Brazil police raid Bolsonaro aides over sale of jewellery gifts.** Brazilian police raided the addresses of a lawyer to former [President Jair Bolsonaro](#) and the family of his jailed personal aide to investigate the alleged sale of jewellery and other presents from Arab governments.

**Defiant leaders of Niger coup confident of holding on to power.** The leaders remained confident that disarray among regional opponents, support from other military regimes in neighbouring countries and a wave of popular mobilisation at home will allow them to [keep power](#) for the indefinite future.

**Indian opposition walks out as Modi refuses to discuss Manipur conflict.** The opposition had tabled a [no-confidence vote in Modi](#), largely to force him to appear and speak about the three-month-long crisis, about which he had refused to say more than a few words.

**Former South African President Jacob Zuma released from prison.** [Jacob Zuma](#) was released from prison due to a remission process attributed to overcrowding in the prison, relieving him from completing his 15-month sentence of which he only served 2 months prior to being released on medical parole.

## CONFLICT

**Grounded WWII warship raises China-Philippines tensions.** China has asked the Philippines to tow away a grounded [World War II warship](#) used as a military outpost by the Philippines, from a disputed shoal after Manila rejected Beijing's earlier demand.

**Ecuador - party of slain presidential candidate picks replacement.** The political party of Ecuador's assassinated presidential hopeful, [Fernando Villavicencio](#), picked his vice presidential candidate to replace him as the party leader, just a week before the election.

**North Korean hacker breached top Russian missile maker.** An elite group of [North Korean hackers](#) secretly broke through computer networks at a major Russian missile developer for at least five months last year. Russia is seen as an ally of North Korea.

**Poland plans to deploy 10,000 troops to Belarusian border.** Poland intends to put 10,000 soldiers along its border with Belarus due to concern regarding the presence of [Russian-linked mercenaries in Belarus](#) and migrants attempting to cross the border without authorisation.

**Burkina Faso's ruling military junta suspends radio channel over Niger coup denunciation.** The ruling military junta has [suspended a radio station](#) in the country after they aired an interview which was classified as 'inappropriate', as it criticized the current coup in Niger.

## ECONOMICS

**Italy approves 40% windfall tax on banks as profits soar.** The Italian government plans to use the proceeds to [support mortgage holders and cut taxes](#) at a time when rising rates have put extra pressure on households.

**China's economy is struggling but fears of sustained deflation are premature.** Trade with rest of world is shrinking and youth unemployment is at 20%, but state interventions are expected. [Deflation](#), even if temporary, will prompt the authorities to stimulate demand through lower interest rates and higher government spending.

**White House: There will be restrictions on any Iranian funds which are unfrozen.** The White House stressed that there would be [restrictions on what Iran could do with any funds unfrozen](#) under an emerging agreement that has led to the release of five Americans from prison to house arrest in Tehran.

**World Bank withholds new loans to Uganda.** The World Bank has stated that it will not release additional funds to Uganda until their [laws and policies](#) align with the bank's environmental and social standards. This is a result of recent legislation in the country related to LGBTQ rights.

**Africa's GDP growth rate in 2022 recorded at 3.8%.** According to the recent [Annual Development Effectiveness Review](#), Africa's GDP grew by 3.8% in 2022, 1% lower than the expected 4.8%. The decline has been attributed to the impact of COVID-19, global financial volatility, and climate change.

## DEVELOPMENT

**Amazon nations fail to agree on deforestation goal at summit.** Eight Amazon nations agreed to a list of unified environmental policies but [failed to](#)

[agree on a common goal for ending deforestation](#). Amazon countries also rebuffed Colombia's President's ongoing campaign to end new oil development in the Amazon.

**US, Japan to develop hypersonic missile interceptor.** Japan and the U.S. will agree this week to jointly develop an [interceptor missile](#) to counter hypersonic warheads being developed by China, Russia and North Korea. Hypersonic projectiles can change course, making them more difficult to target.

**UN aid deliveries to rebel-held area of Syria poised to resume.** The [Bab al-Hawa crossing from Turkey will reopen to the UN](#) for six months after negotiations with Assad's government. The north-west is the last major bastion of rebels fighting President Assad in the 12-year-long Syrian war, and millions of people there depend on UN aid.

**Huge coral bleaching unfolding across the Americas prompts fears of global tragedy.** Corals across several countries are bleaching and dying en masse from [unprecedented levels of heat stress](#), prompting fears that an unfolding tragedy in Central America, North America and the Caribbean could become a global event.

**Russia launches lunar lander in race to find water on moon.** The Russian lunar mission, the first since 1976, is [racing against India](#), which launched its Chandrayaan-3 lunar lander last month. The lander is expected to touch down on the moon on August 21.

## SOCIAL

### CHART: [2023 is on track for record heat](#)

**Italy repatriates looted ancient artefacts from the U.S.** Italy said it repatriated 266 [ancient artefacts](#) worth tens of millions of euros from the US, where they had been brought and sold during the late 1990s by an international network of artefact smugglers.

**US record highest number of suicides in 2022.** About [49,500 people took their own lives last year in the US](#), the highest number ever. Suicides are more common in the U.S. than at any time since the dawn of World War II. The rate of suicide is highest in middle aged white men, nearly four times more than women.

**African penguins at risk of being extinct by 2035.** [Penguins in Africa](#) could become extinct by 2035 due to overfishing and environmental changes in the Indian Ocean. There are only fewer than 11,000 breeding pairs left and the number continues to steadily decline.

## PEACEBUILDING

Renewable wind and solar power are now [expected to overtake coal by 2025](#) as the world's largest source of electricity, according to the [International Energy Agency](#). The cost of generating electricity from the sun and wind is now cheaper than gas, oil, or coal in many areas, and 12 percent of global electricity now comes from renewable sources. China, which leads the world in the amount of electricity produced by wind and solar power, is [expected to double its capacity by 2025](#). In the EU, wind and solar power [generated more electricity](#) than fossil fuels in May for the first time. In the US, 23 percent of electricity is expected to come from renewable sources this year, despite delays in permitting, establishing connections to the grid, finding and training workers, and securing access to supply chains.

[Looty](#), a collective of London-based designers, is [“digitally repatriating” artifacts in Western museums](#) that were plundered during colonial times. As one example, visitors will soon be able to point their smartphones at a QR code in Rashid, Egypt and watch the Rosetta Stone pop out of their screens in an augmented-reality installation where the stone is thought to have been found. The installation will provide a high-definition image of the stone with detailed descriptions in Arabic and English, a translation of the stone's inscriptions, and a more complete account of the circumstances of the artifact's removal from Egypt.

The [Western States Center](#) has released a revised toolkit, [Confronting White Nationalism in Schools](#). The document provides strategies to counter white nationalist organizing using sample scenarios that schools frequently encounter – including students passing out white nationalist flyers or buttons on school property or more actively advocating for a “white pride” student group. The toolkit offers advice for parents, students, teachers, school administrators, and the wider community.

Registration is now open for NAFCM's inaugural [North American Assembly](#) on **October 3<sup>rd</sup> at George Mason University's Arlington campus**. The Assembly will include large group activities and some face-to-face workshops. Plenary events will be streamed.