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

CONFLICT

Afghan government and the Taliban reach first written agreement in 19 years of war. This agreement has set the stage for [negotiations and peace talks](#) to move forward, with the potential to discuss a ceasefire.

The epicenter of Islamic State violence has moved from the Middle East to Africa. There are [jihadist insurgencies](#) in several African nations in the Sahel region and in sub-Saharan Africa. These findings are supported by the 2020 Global Terrorism Index by IEP, where for the first time IS affiliates murdered more people through terrorism than IS itself.

Islamist violence escalates in Burkina Faso, making widespread hunger worse. Attacks by Islamist groups with links to al Qaeda and Islamic State have left over [7 million people facing acute hunger](#) in a vast area comprising landlocked Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, as armed groups cut off access to supplies and farmland, figures from the United Nations' World Food Programme show.

US to withdraw most troops from Somalia as part of global pullback. President Trump has ordered nearly all American troops to withdraw from Somalia, US officials said. This is part of a [global pullback](#) by the Republican president before he leaves office next month that will also see him drawdown forces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

DEVELOPMENT

China successfully lands on the moon. China's Chang'e-5 probe is the first mission to [collect lunar surface samples](#) in 40 years. China has now become the third country, following the US and Russia, to collect lunar material and the second to plant a flag.

14 countries sign the world's biggest ocean sustainability initiative. The countries representing [40% of the world's coastline](#) – Australia, Canada, Chile, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Namibia, Norway, Palau and Portugal – will end harmful subsidies that contribute to overfishing and reduce plastics by 2030.

UN warns 2021 shaping up to be a humanitarian catastrophe. World Food Programme chief said 2021 was likely to be “the [worst humanitarian crisis](#) year since the beginning of the United Nations” 75 years ago and “we’re not going to be able to fund everything so we have to prioritize”, adding that for a dozen countries famine is “knocking on the door”.

The Australian ‘game changer’ telescope has mapped vast areas of the universe in record-time. The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) telescope has revealed [a million new galaxies](#) in just 300 hours, potentially allowing astronomers to know more about how galaxies and black holes evolve.

China makes digital yuan transfers as easy as tapping phones. China will expand trials of its digital yuan with a feature letting individuals send money to each other by [touching their smartphones together](#), broadening the use of the new currency beyond physical stores.

ECONOMICS

As Lebanon subsidy crunch looms, UN agencies warn of social catastrophe. With Lebanon deep in financial crisis, the central bank has been [subsidising basic goods](#) by providing hard currency to importers at the old exchange rate of 1,500. Central bank governor, Riad Salameh, said last week the subsidies could be kept for only two more months.

The Arctic Refuge oil and gas lease sale has been set for early January 2021. The US has announced plans to hold a sale for [oil and gas leasing rights](#) for a section of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain in Alaska. This is being contested by wildlife and Indigenous activists as well as US legislators.

Recovery of world GDP will be gradual. Vaccination campaigns, concerted health policies and government financial support are expected to [lift global GDP by 4.2% in 2021](#) after a fall of 4.2% this year. The recovery would be stronger if vaccines are rolled out fast, boosting confidence and lowering uncertainty.

The pandemic has not dented Latin American remittances. Migrant workers are [sending more money home](#) this year. Many Latin American countries depend on remittances. In El Salvador remittances are equivalent to 21% of GDP.

POLITICS

Brexit: the UK and the EU are still trying to reach a Free trade agreement. The main [points of contention](#) remain:

- Fisheries: The EU wants to secure long term access to UK waters.
- Fair competition: The EU wants to ensure that the UK complies with similarly strict EU rules on labour and environmental laws as well as subsidies.
- Governance: The EU wants to stipulate that the partners can impose punitive tariffs on the other in event of violations of the free trade agreement – in all areas.

Brazil court ruling throws open race for congressional leadership. Six of the top court’s 11 justices ruled that the constitution [clearly prohibited the re-election](#) of Senate President Davi

Alcolumbre and lower house speaker Rodrigo Maia. The struggle to control congress will intensify between political parties backing President Jair Bolsonaro and centrist parties.

Macron says France will sell arms to Egypt irrespective of human rights. The French President said he would not put conditions on the [sale of weapons to Egypt](#) for human rights because he did not want to weaken Cairo's ability to counter terrorism in the region.

China tweet that enraged Australia propelled by 'unusual' accounts. A Chinese official's tweet of a disturbing fake image of an Australian soldier was [amplified across social media](#) by unusual accounts, of which half were likely fake, an Israeli cybersecurity firm and Australian experts said.

SOCIAL

Incredible cave paintings 8 miles-long discovered deep in Amazon forest. Described as the [Sistine Chapel of Ancients](#). There are tens of thousands of pristine cave paintings that were recently discovered along an eight-mile stretch of rock in a once-in-a-century discovery in Colombia's Amazon rainforest.

France unveils strict measures to combat religious extremism and separatism. Among the first actions included the [deportation of 66 undocumented migrants](#) on suspicion of radicalisation. Also, 76 mosques will be inspected and face closure if suspicions of inciting separatism are confirmed.

Honda taps buyouts for workers over 55 in shift to tech-savvy talent. Honda Motor will offer [early retirement packages](#) for the next few years, looking to make room for younger engineers skilled in electric cars and software as the automobile industry transforms rapidly.

PEACEBUILDING

The [Alliance for Peacebuilding](#) has presented Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) and Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) with the second annual [Peacebuilding Champion Award for 2020](#) in recognition of their **bipartisan championship of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Act of 2017 and the WPS agenda.**

[The US Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Movement \(USTRHT\) Leadership Group](#) has been formed to unite civic groups, faith leaders, academics, artists, celebrities and others to advocate for racial equity. In particular, the Group supports the establishment of a US Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Commission, as called for in H.Con.Res 100 introduced by Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) in June 2020 and S.Con.Res 50 introduced by Senator Cory Booker on December 3, 2020. The House bill has 169 co-sponsors while the Senate bill has 11 co-sponsors.

In a paper published as part of a [UN review of the Future of Peacekeeping](#) operations begun in September 2020, [Saferworld has advocated that the UN distance peace operations from counter-terrorism.](#) The document argues that the UN's embrace of counter-terror policies has not been squared with its long-standing role in support of negotiated solutions to conflict and

could put at risk its contribution to peace and stability, gender equality and human rights protections.