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# Future Trends

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

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

Here's what you need to know this week:

- Ex-French President Sarkozy sentenced to one year in prison
- Central African Republic says 10,000 children fighting with armed groups
- Britain in recession with worst GDP performance in years
- China's first home-grown airliner makes international debut
- Thousands homeless after DR Congo's biggest floods in 60 years

## POLITICS

**Ex-French President Sarkozy sentenced to one year in prison for illegal campaign financing.** Sarkozy was accused of overspending on his [2012 presidential campaign](#) and hiring a PR firm to cover it up. He was accused of spending 46 million, almost double the imposed limit.

**Pakistan coalition nominates Shehbaz Sharif as next PM.** Pakistan's former Prime Minister [Shehbaz Sharif](#) has been nominated to lead the country again, after several parties banded together to form a coalition. The coalition is under pressure from allies of imprisoned former PM Imran Khan, who won the most seats.

**Prabowo set to become Indonesia's new president as voters choose continuity.** Defence Minister [Prabowo Subianto](#) won a resounding victory with nearly 60% of the vote in the February 14 polls. He'll be joined by outgoing President Joko Widodo's son, Gibran Rakanuming Raka, who ran alongside Prabowo for vice-president.

**Delay of Senegal's presidential election is ruled illegal.** Senegal's Constitutional Council, the country's highest court, cancelled the decree signed by President Macky Sall that [postponed the election](#).

**China offers to back Hungary in security matters.** After having long-standing trade and investment relations, China and Hungary will now collaborate on matters related to [terrorism and transnational crimes](#). Such rapprochement represents a diplomatic win for China in the EU.

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## CONFLICT

**Central African Republic says 10,000 children are fighting with armed groups.** About [10,000 children are still fighting alongside armed groups in CAR](#), more than a decade after civil war broke out, the government said. The fighting is mainly between Christian militias and the Muslim government.

**Widow, ex-PM and former police chief indicted in assassination of Haiti's president.** An investigation of the [2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse](#) has indicted his widow, Martine Moïse, ex-PM Claude Joseph and former police chief, Léon Charles, among others.

**Egypt appears to be building a wall next to Rafah in Gaza.** Egypt is levelling land and building a wall near its [border with Gaza](#) ahead of a planned Israeli offensive on Rafah, satellite images have shown. The aim would be to keep one million refugees out of Egypt.

**Spending on defense increased to record \$2.2 trillion in 2023.** British Military Think Tank expects [expenditure to rise](#) even more in 2024 with Israel's war on Gaza, Russia-Ukraine conflict and tensions in Indo-Pacific. It is also being incited by the growing demand for modern technologies such as unmanned aerial vehicles and Global Position Systems.

**Russia claims full control of coke plant in Ukraine's Avdiivka.** The claiming of the vast [Soviet-era coke plant](#) in the ruined Ukrainian town cements the biggest battlefield gain in nine months. It holds particular symbolism for Russia as it was briefly taken in 2014 by Moscow-backed separatists but was then recaptured by Ukrainian troops

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## ECONOMICS

**Britain in recession with worst GDP performance in years.** Gross domestic product contracted by a further 0.3% in the three months to December as Britain joined Japan among the [Group of Seven advanced economies in a recession](#), although it is likely to be short-lived by historical standards.

**Cambodia spends \$1.4 bln supporting poor, vulnerable people since 2019.** The UN agency said the [poverty rate in Cambodia](#) had declined to 16.6% in 2022 from 36.7% in 2014, and that the number of poor people was halved from 5.6 million to 2.8 million.

**German tyre firm Continental to cut 7,150 jobs.** The world's third largest automotive supplier is the latest German manufacturer to announce [job cuts](#) amid weak growth and a shift in consumer demand to electric vehicles.

**'Dangerous decade' ahead as instability and military spending rise.** The world has entered an [era of increasing instability](#) as countries around the globe boost military spending in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Hamas attack on Israel and China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea.

**US plans to build military bases for Somali army.** The new bases are meant to bolster capacity to [fight terrorist insurgencies](#) and will be used to train members of the Somali infantry. The MoU, signed last week, comes at a time when the African Union is downsizing its peacekeeping mission in the country.

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## DEVELOPMENT

**China's first home-grown airliner makes international debut.** China's challenger to Airbus and Boeing's passenger jets, [the C919](#) manufactured by the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (Comac), has made its first trip outside Chinese territory, staging a fly-by at the Singapore Airshow.

**Ethiopia deal for data mining to capitalise on rising crypto.** A government investment body has signed a preliminary deal with a Hong Kong firm that also involves a [training centre for Artificial Intelligence](#). Low operating costs make the African country a favourable site for the intensive data mining practice.

**African Union's second phase of flagship development plan, Agenda 2063.** The 10-year implementation roadmap is being called 'a [decade of acceleration](#)' and focuses

on several high-impact projects such as the African Continental Free-trade Area, Africa Outer Space Agency, and Single African Air Transport Market.

**SpaceX launches 'Odysseus' moon lander for historic lunar mission.** The vehicle is expected to try to make history by pulling off the [first-ever commercial lunar landing](#). It is not carrying crew, but ferrying scientific and commercial payloads.

**Tens of thousands of Indian farmers protest in New Delhi.** Indian farmers clashed with police, who used drones to drop tear gas canisters on the protesters. [The farmers](#) are demanding guaranteed prices for their produce.

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## SOCIAL

**Thousands homeless after DR Congo's worst floods in 60 years.** The Congo river swelled to its highest level in over 60 years due to torrential rains, which [forced 500,000 people to flee](#) the rising waters since December and led calls for improvement of flood management with 83 million people at risk.

**Trump set to be first US president criminally tried.** Trump's hush-money [trial](#) will go ahead as scheduled with jury selection starting on March 25. The case centres on payoffs to two women, porn actor Stormy Daniels and former Playboy model Karen McDougal.

**Australian redback spider catches and kills venomous snake.** Eastern brown snakes may be one of the world's most venomous reptiles but small snakes are no match for the [redback spiders](#).

**OpenAI to introduce model that turns text into video.** Microsoft-backed OpenAI is in the final stages of testing its new [Sora software](#), which creates 60 second videos based on text prompts.

**Egypt ends plan to restore cladding on great pyramids of Giza.** The [controversial plan](#) was to reinstall ancient granite cladding on the pyramid of Menkaure, the smallest of the three great pyramids of Giza. But news that the ancient monument could be altered quickly drew an international outcry.

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## PEACEBUILDING

[Arizona's crisis response network has become a model for crisis care](#), providing 24-hour access to a 988 hotline, mobile crisis teams and stabilization centers. In 80 percent of cases, the provider is able to stabilize patients over the phone, but if a caller

needs more help, a mobile team is available 24/7 and can transfer patients to a short-term crisis stabilization center if necessary. The national 988 suicide and crisis hotline has received more than eight million calls, texts, and chats since it came online a year and a half ago. However, every state operates its own response system and only 20 states have 24/7 mobile crisis teams.

**[Search for Common Ground USA has provided a list of resources to help universities address increased polarization on campuses.](#)** The [BRICK Toolkit](#) developed by American University's Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab focuses on preventing and responding to threats of violence. SFCG's [Quick Tips for Dialogue Facilitators](#) and *Introductory Experience with Dialogue* offers concise advice for discussing controversial subjects. The University of Michigan has published tools specifically designed for classroom discussion, [Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or High Risk Topics](#) and [Strategies for Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom](#). Some universities have integrated dialogue and facilitation training, such as the programs developed by [Soliya](#), into classrooms and extra-curricular activities.

**[Colombia's Venezuela Response and Integration program](#)** has established **11 Integrate centers where Venezuelan immigrants can register for a range of services in one day at a single place.** In addition to providing access to services, the centers house play areas for children and conference rooms for community meetings. The centers are located in nine regions with the largest communities of migrants and reach out to potential clients via social media, referrals, and community events. The program is funded by USAID and has been implemented by [Chemonics](#) and local partners [Integra](#) and [Opportunities without Borders](#). Colombia's population of about 52 million includes 3 million immigrants from Venezuela and 7 million remain internally displaced after Colombia's civil war.

**[The municipality of Sena in northwestern Bolivia has adopted a law to protect about a million acres of Amazon rainforest.](#)** The Gran Manupare Integrated Management Natural Area is the most recent piece in an interconnected "conservation mosaic" created largely by local municipalities and Indigenous communities that have protected 25 million acres of Bolivia's Amazon, helping the country reach its goal to protect **30 percent** of its land years ahead of schedule. The effort is supported by [Conservation International](#).