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Institute for
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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

Military coup in Myanmar as elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi is detained. Myanmar's military [seized power](#) in a coup against the democratically elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who received 84% of the votes. The army said the elections were fraudulent.

Navalny: Large protests continue in Russia. More than 5,000 people have been detained in the latest crackdown on [pro-Navalny demonstrations](#). In Moscow police closed metro stations and blocked off the city centre.

More than 200,000 flee 'apocalyptic' conflict in Central African Republic. More than 200,000 people have [fled fighting](#) in the Central African Republic since violence erupted over a December election result, the UNHCR said, with nearly half crossing into the Democratic Republic of Congo.

FARC former fighters and commanders to be charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity. If the commanders accept the accusations, they will face [restrictions on their freedoms](#) for five to eight years. However, if they reject them, they could face up to 20 years in jail per the terms of the peace deal.

DEVELOPMENT

Global timeline for vaccine roll out. In some countries, coverage will not be widespread [until 2023](#), if ever as they may struggle with the cost and logistics of immunizing their citizens.

China builds digital silk road in Pakistan to Africa and Europe. The final stretch of optic cable in Pakistan will reduce Pakistani internet traffic [going through India](#). It will connect to a submarine cable in the Arabian Sea to service countries in China's Belt and Road initiative and Europe.

Refugees are seeking asylum even farther from home. Refugees are travelling [twice as far](#) as in the 80's and to more diverse locations.

US President Biden stops new gas and oil leases on federal land. In an attempt to counter the climate crisis, President Biden signed [multiple orders](#) involving environmental protections such as limiting the extraction of fossil fuels on federal land. One of the goals is to encourage more reliance on renewable energy.

ECONOMICS

Pandemic spending boosts global government debt to 98% of GDP. The IMF says governments should [keep spending](#) to fight the pandemic and its economic fallout. The debt-to-GDP ratio among developed nations rose to 123% by December from 105% in 2019, well above the global average.

IMF forecasts 5.5% global economic growth in 2021. After sinking 3.5% in 2020, the worst year [since World War II](#), the global economy is forecast to grow 5.5% this year.

UK wants to join Pacific trade partnership. After Brexit the UK is seeking [new options](#) and partners for trade. The agreement is expected to liberalise digital trade, eliminate tariffs more quickly on products such as whisky and cars, and facilitate faster and simpler visa procedures for business people travelling to CPTPP countries.

POLITICS

China toughens stance on Taiwan, declaring any attempt at independence will lead to war. China is using tough language towards Taiwan, saying "independence means war" after [recent military confrontations](#) near the island. China believes that Taiwan is moving the island towards a declaration of formal independence, though the President has repeatedly said they are already an independent country.

US must be prepared to impose costs on China - Biden security adviser. He said it needed to be "[prepared to act](#), as well to impose costs, for what China is doing in Xinjiang, what it's doing in Hong Kong, for the bellicosity and threats it is projecting towards Taiwan."

The US and Russia have extended the START nuclear pact. The START pact limits the [number of nuclear arms](#) for both countries. The treaty was set to expire in February, but it has been extended by five years following talks between Biden and Putin.

DR Congo's parliament ousts prime minister amid growing political turmoil. President Felix Tshisekedi is seeking to oust supporters of former President Joseph Kabila in an [attempt to consolidate power](#). Prime Minister Illunkamba denounced the vote; an ally said that he would not resign.

Refugees: Hungary pushes back against the EU. The EU ruled that Hungary's 'pushback' policy towards asylum seekers was going [against EU law](#). This event is historic as it's the first time the EU will not have its border force in a member state.

US rebuilds relations with Palestinians. The Biden administration is trying to rebuild relations with Palestinians by increasing [local assistance programs](#), with the objective to foster a cooperative environment between Israel and Palestine and to reach a two-state solution.

SOCIAL

South Africa's top court orders Zuma to appear before enquiry commission on corruption. South Africa's highest court ordered former President Jacob Zuma to appear before a commission investigating [corruption allegations](#) against him after he walked out of proceedings in November. The court can compel witnesses to testify.

Poland puts into effect new restrictions on abortion. Poland's government put into effect a constitutional court decision [banning terminations](#) of pregnancies with foetal defects, as conservative policies increasingly take root in one of Europe's most devout Catholic countries.

Brazil: Unexpected side-effects from the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to complications from the virus almost 340,000 oxygen cylinders are [needed every day](#). Mexico and Colombia each need more than 100,000 cylinders daily

The pandemic has caused a 'baby bust' instead of the predicted baby boom. With couples being locked up in quarantine this past spring, there was a [predicted baby boom](#). However, the US has reported declining birth rates.

Environmentalists, farmers win Dutch court case over Shell Nigeria spills. A Dutch appeals court held Royal Dutch Shell's Nigerian subsidiary responsible for multiple oil pipeline leaks in the Niger Delta and ordered it to pay [unspecified damages](#) to farmers, in a victory for environmentalists.

PEACEBUILDING

[Yemeni tribal leaders convene talks to de-escalate conflict](#). The leaders met in Istanbul on January 21-22 to discuss the role of tribes in local and national efforts to bring an end to the war in Yemen. The workshop was facilitated by [CMI](#) and [Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies](#) and is part of an EU-funded project that aims to support an inclusive peace process to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict in Yemen.

[The Institute for Economics and Peace has released The Economic Value of Peace 2021.](#) The annual report uses indicators of the direct and indirect costs of violence as well as measures of positive peace. Based on data from 2019, the impact of violence decreased by \$64 billion from the previous year. The ten countries with the largest improvements in Positive Peace averaged 2.6 percent higher GDP growth.

[Search for Common Ground \(SFCG\) has released a report on Building Social Cohesion in the Midst of Conflict: Identifying Challenges, Measuring Progress and Maximizing Results.](#) SFCG undertook this project in partnership with Facebook in an effort to "build on existing knowledge of the relationship between building social cohesion and outcomes in peace and conflict."

[The Peace Accords Matrix Program \(PAM\)](#), (University of [Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies](#)) released its first report **on monitoring the implementation of 80**

stipulations in the 2016 Colombian Peace Agreement related to ethnic communities. The report, [Recognition and Guarantees for the Protection and Participation of Ethnic Communities in Peacebuilding](#), notes that some progress has been made but that implementation of provisions related to ethnicity lags behind overall implementation of the agreement.