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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's stranded seafarers still in limbo, Mexicans turn out to protest electoral overhaul, Israel and Palestinians agree steps to curb violence, Philippines ratifies RCEP trade deal after shift by Marcos, US to limit asylum to migrants who pass through a third nation, thousands of tattooed inmates pictured in El Salvador mega-prison.

SPECIAL EDITION: UKRAINE

Ukraine's stranded seafarers still in limbo, one year on. More than 1,000 seafarers on some 140 ships found themselves [stranded in port](#) at the onset of Russia's war on Ukraine. One year on, these ships are still blocked from leaving Ukraine's ports with hundreds of people stuck in limbo.

Zelenskyy open to meeting Xi Jinping after China proposes peace plan. President Zelenskyy says he wants to meet with his Chinese counterpart to discuss Beijing's calls for a ceasefire and [peace talks](#) between Russia and Ukraine.

How will the war in Ukraine end? Russia currently controls about 18% of Ukraine. [Paths forward](#) include Russia breaking through, war dragging on for years at a low ebb, or a peace deal. The current outlook for a negotiated deal would likely involve Ukraine ceding some territory to Russia.

POLITICS

Mexicans turn out to protest electoral overhaul. Organisers said over 500,000 gathered in Mexico City, condemning government moves to shrink the electoral authority as a [threat to democracy](#). Mexico's Congress last week approved a major overhaul of the National Electoral Institute.

Mass trial begins in Chad over former ruler Deby's death. A [mass trial](#) has begun of hundreds of alleged rebels accused of killing long-time President Idriss Deby Into. The

454 alleged members of the Front For Change and Concord rebel group are also accused of terrorism and using child soldiers.

Algeria moves against dissident youth association and political party. An [Algerian judicial council](#) has ordered the dissolution of a youth association linked to a protest movement and suspended a leftist opposition party, the Council of State said.

Bangladesh shuts down main opposition newspaper. The only newspaper of Bangladesh's main opposition party has stopped publishing after a government suspension order was upheld, stoking fears about [media freedom](#) in the south Asian nation.

Egyptian foreign minister visits Syria for first time in 11 years. Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry arrived in Damascus in what is the [first visit by a top Egyptian envoy to Syria](#) since its civil war began in 2011. Shoukry will also visit Turkey, with both visits signaling warming ties between the countries.

CONFLICT

Israel and Palestinians agree steps to curb violence. Israeli and Palestinian officials have pledged to implement measures to [de-escalate surging violence](#), after talks in Jordan. One measure is Israel agreeing to stop the authorisation of illegal settlement outposts in the occupied West Bank for six months.

Nigeria's IPOB faction leader arrested in Finland. The controversial leader of a Nigerian secessionist movement has been arrested at his home in Finland. [Simon Ekpa](#) has been accused of using social media to incite violence in order to create a breakaway state in south-eastern Nigeria.

Russia suspends participation from new START nuclear treaty. Putin suspended Russia's participation in the [nuclear arms reduction treaty](#) with the US, although the Foreign Ministry later said the decision is reversible. The treaty mutually limits amounts of intercontinental-range nuclear weapons.

Thousands flee from Somaliland as in-fighting escalates. Over [60,000 refugees](#) have fled to neighbouring Ethiopia as fighting between local people and Somaliland authorities have heightened.

China's newly released plan calls for Russia-Ukraine ceasefire. China called for a ceasefire between Ukraine and Russia and a gradual de-escalation that will pave the way for peace talks, as part of a [12-point proposal](#) to end the conflict. The plan includes dropping Western sanctions on Russia.

ECONOMICS

Philippines ratifies RCEP trade deal after shift by Marcos. The Philippine Senate has ratified their participation in the [Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership](#), the world's biggest free trade agreement. Signatory countries cover about 30% of the world's gross domestic product.

Japan posts first trade deficit in electronics. Japan posted a [trade deficit](#) of \$605 million in electronic equipment in the second half of 2022, marking the first time on record that imports have exceeded exports for a half-year period.

IMF unveils crypto plan, advising against legal tender status. The IMF has laid out a nine-point action plan for how countries should treat [crypto assets](#), with point one a plea not to give cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin legal tender status.

Financial crime watchdog adds South Africa and Nigeria to 'grey list'. [International financial crime watchdog](#) FATF has added South Africa and Nigeria to its "grey list" of countries under special scrutiny to implement standards to prevent money laundering and terrorism financing.

EU carbon price tops €100 a tonne for first time. The price of permits on the [EU's carbon market](#) hit €100 per tonne for the first time, reflecting the increasing cost companies must pay for pollution.

DEVELOPMENT

US to limit asylum to migrants who pass through a third nation. The US will deny asylum to migrants who arrive at its southern border without first seeking protection in a country they passed through. The measure imposes [severe limitations on asylum](#) for any nationality except Mexicans, who don't have to travel through a third country to reach the US.

Tunisia's president calls for a cessation of irregular migrants into the country. President Kais Saied wants to deny all undocumented sub-Saharan citizens entrance into the country, citing this migration as a plot to change [Tunisia's demographic make-up](#). The AU has criticised these comments.

Brazil suspends beef exports to China after mad cow case. The case of [bovine spongiform encephalopathy](#) was confirmed by Brazil's Agriculture Ministry, and shipments to China were halted as part of a trade protocol between the two nations. Brazil is the world's biggest beef exporter.

Uganda endorses National Blue Economy Strategy in collaboration with IGAD. The strategy is key to Uganda's [sustainable development](#) as it outlines interventions for conservation and sustainability of fisheries, aquaculture and aquatic ecosystems.

US energy department says Covid-19 likely emerged from laboratory leak. The virus most likely emerged from a laboratory leak but not as part of a [weapons program](#),

according to an updated and classified 2021 US energy department report. However, the report's conclusion runs counter to several scientific studies as well as reports by other US intelligence agencies.

SOCIAL

Thousands of tattooed inmates pictured in El Salvador mega-prison. Tens of thousands of suspects have been rounded up under a [state of emergency](#) following a spike in murders and other violent crime. The first group of 2,000 suspected gang members have been moved to a new prison, the centrepiece of President Nayib Bukele's self-declared war on crime.

Brazilian favela shack wins house of the year award. The modest dwelling of 66 square metres has won an [international architecture competition](#). The design was judged as representing a constructive model using common materials in the slums, resulting in a space with great environmental quality.

Top EU bodies, citing security, ban TikTok on staff phones. The EU's two biggest policy-making institutions have banned TikTok from staff phones for [cybersecurity reasons](#), marking growing concerns about the Chinese short video-sharing app and its users' data.

Mexico's ex-public security chief convicted in US drug case. A former Mexican presidential cabinet member was convicted in the US of taking massive [bribes](#) to protect the violent drug cartels he was tasked with combating.

South Korea breaks own record for world's lowest fertility rate. The fertility rate, or the average number of children expected per woman, fell to 0.78 in 2022 – down from 0.81 the previous year. More than \$200 billion has been spent trying to boost the [population](#) over the past 16 years.

PEACEBUILDING

Ahead of Finland's parliamentary elections, Finnish newspaper *Ilta-Sanomat* and CMI-Matti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation turned the concept of an election debate upside down by hosting a "Peace Debate," where candidates were measured by their ability to show empathy, build trust and find win-win outcomes.

The Resilience for Peace (R4P) project recently held its Annual Learning Summit in Côte d'Ivoire. Participants at the event presented their research on violent extremism, community resilience, natural resources management, governance, and online threats, and engaged stakeholders in discussing solutions. R4P is funded by USAID and was designed by [Equal Access International](#), the [National Opinion Research Center](#) and [Indigo-Côte d'Ivoire](#).

As part of Fort Wayne Indiana's Downtown Improvement District, the nonprofit, *Art this Way*, facilitates public art projects on private property and the development of pedestrian-friendly spaces. Over the past few years, the founder of the organization, artist Alexandra Hall, has also consulted on more than three dozen projects in rural towns in Indiana, New York, and Pennsylvania, according to [PBS](#).

Conflict Managed has produced a podcast by the President of the National Association for Community Mediation D. G. Mawn who emphasized that **individuals involved in conflict should be the ones to resolve their conflict, rather than outside parties. If we really want to address issues at work, we need to not only listen to those in conflict but see them. Conflict Managed is hosted by Merry Brown and produced by [Third Party Workplace Conflict Restoration Services](#).**