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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:

- US Supreme Court rules Trump can stay on the ballot
- ICC orders record \$56 million compensation for Uganda victims
- China's economy is unravelling at a pace previously thought unimaginable
- Toyota's soft robot, Punyo, to aid whole-body manipulation research
- Worldwide decline of freedom outweighs improvements.

POLITICS

US Supreme Court rules Trump can stay on the ballot. States have no authority to remove Donald Trump from the [2024 presidential ballot](#), the Supreme Court ruled unanimously, short-circuiting efforts to declare him disqualified over his role in the 2021 Capitol attack. The court ruled only Congress, not the states, can disqualify a presidential candidate under the Constitution's "insurrection clause".

Chad opposition leader Yaya Dillo killed in shooting. He was killed near his office in a clash with security forces as violence flared ahead of a [presidential election](#) set for May/June that could return the Central African state to constitutional rule three years after the military seized power.

ASIO revealed Australian politician worked as a spy. The head of Australian Security and Intelligence Office Mike Burgess said a then [member of parliament](#) tried to bring a relative of a prime minister into the "orbit" of foreign spies.

Organised crime attacks on candidates raise Mexico elections fears. [Two mayoral hopefuls](#) in the town of Maravatio were killed by gunmen within hours of each other. One was from the governing Morena party of President Obrador, the other from the conservative National Action Party. A third mayoral hopeful from that town was abducted and found dead in November.

Thai Supreme Court clears ex-PM Yingluck in negligence case. Self-exiled former Prime Minister [Yingluck Shinawatra](#) was cleared of negligence in a case dating back to her time in office in 2013. Yingluck, a prominent member of the influential Shinawatra family, has been living overseas for the past six years to avoid jail after her government's ousting in a 2014 military coup.

CONFLICT

ICC orders record \$56 million compensation for Uganda victims. An ex-LRA militia commander, Ongwen, was ordered to pay compensation to 50,000 victims. He was sentenced to 25 years prison for [crimes against humanity](#), including rape, murder and child abduction. He is currently serving his sentence in Norway.

Sudan's paramilitary ethnic killings and rapes may be war crimes. [Paramilitary forces and their allied militias](#) fighting to take power in Sudan carried out widespread ethnic killings and rapes while taking control of much of western Darfur that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, United Nations experts said.

Rubymar cargo ship sinks in Red Sea after Houthi attack. The ship was attacked last month and is the [first vessel lost](#) since Houthi militants began targeting commercial shipping in November. It was carrying approximately 21,000 tonnes of ammonium phosphate sulphate fertiliser, the US military's Central Command said.

Putin warns sending Western troops to Ukraine risks global nuclear conflict. Addressing the nation ahead of next month's election, Putin warned [Russia's nuclear forces](#) are in 'full readiness' if Western nations were to deepen their involvement in the conflict.

Biden cracks down on US data flows to China and Russia. President Biden's administration has issued an executive order to prevent the transfer of [American genomic data](#) to China, targeting online security concerns and restricting data sharing with countries deemed threats to national security.

ECONOMICS

China's economy is unravelling at a pace previously thought unimaginable. China's economy has turned deflationary, with consumer prices falling. What has surprised economic observers is the lack of response by authorities to soften the [economic blow](#).

Canadian travel requirements for Mexicans to curb flow of asylum seekers. [Mexican citizens](#) who do not hold a US visa or have not had a Canadian visa in the past decade will need to apply for a visitor visa. Canada's immigration officials said this was done to relieve pressure on its borders, immigration system and social services. The Mexican government warned it "reserves the right to act in reciprocity".

UK's Rwanda deportation plan could cost nearly 500 million pounds. The [National Audit Office report](#), requested by parliamentary committees that complained of being in the dark about costs of the plan, provided the most comprehensive cost estimate so far.

India Q3 GDP growth surges to 8.4%, exceeding expectations. Third quarter GDP was the highest in six quarters, driven by manufacturing and construction, said the government, which has now revised up its [GDP growth](#) forecast for the year ending March 2024.

Apple fined \$2 billion in EU antitrust case. The EU fined Apple \$2 billion for thwarting competition from music streaming rivals via [restrictions on its App Store](#), the iPhone maker's first ever penalty for breaching EU rules.

DEVELOPMENT

Toyota's soft robot, Punyo, to aid whole-body manipulation research. Unlike traditional robots, Punyo primarily employs its arms and chest. This holistic approach revolutionises [whole-body manipulation research](#) and allows for a simpler holistic approach to handling large, heavy, and unwieldy objects.

New Zealand lobbied French on Solomon Island-China pact. NZ hopes French Polynesia and New Caledonia will respond to the controversial [security pact](#) between China and the Solomon Islands, which set off alarms in Western capitals.

Meta won't renew commercial deals with Australian news media. Three years ago, the company signed deals with Australian news outlets following the introduction of the [News Media Bargaining Code](#), laws which required tech giants to pay for displaying news on their platforms. Now that the agreements have expired, it will not renew them.

South Korea's fertility rate sinks to record low despite \$270 billion in incentives. Even with government investment in babysitting services and infertility treatment, [South Korea's birth rate is the lowest in the world](#) and fell to 0.72 in 2023, as its population declined for the fourth year in a row.

Singapore to have world's largest ocean-based carbon dioxide removal plant. Equatic-1, which is being developed by UCLA and a start up called [Equatic](#), is set to be built soon. This \$20 million project will commence with Phase 1 in March and will remove one metric ton of carbon dioxide daily by the end of 2024.

SOCIAL

Global malnourishment: 1 in 8 people are obese. Although fewer people are starving across the world, another type of malnourishment is exploding as the [global rate of obesity has quadrupled in children and doubled in adults since 1990](#) according to the medical journal The Lancet.

EU asylum applications hit 7-year high in 2023. European Union Agency for Asylum revealed the Union received [more than 1.14 million applications for asylum](#). It is the highest number since 2016. Far-right parties could capitalise on the influx in June's EU elections.

Peru declares health emergency as dengue outbreak 'imminent'. Total cases rose to 31,300 in the first eight weeks of the year, Health Minister Vasquez said. The increase in [dengue fever](#) infections was brought on by a heat wave and persistent rains. In 2023, 428 people died from dengue in Peru.

X estimated worth is 71% less than when Musk bought it. X, formerly known as Twitter, has seen its [value fall by 71%](#) since Elon Musk's acquisition in late 2022, according to a write-down by investment group Fidelity, which took part in Musk's original deal to acquire the social media giant for \$44 billion.

PEACEBUILDING

A consortium led by [Urban Rural Action](#) is organizing to launch [Uniting to Prevent Targeted Violence in Southeast Wisconsin](#), a 15-month non-partisan program that will work across divides to reduce risks of targeted violence. The participants will intentionally include people with different political views, racial identities, and age ranges. The cohort in each county will design and implement a project with a local community partner that addresses risk factors for targeted violence and advances a goal of the partner organization. The local organizations are [Kenosha Human Development Services](#), [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) Southeast Wisconsin](#), [Near West Side Partners](#), and [New Beginnings Crisis Center](#). Other partners include the University of Wisconsin's [Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies](#) and [Common Agency](#). A budget of \$10,000 will support each project.

[The Friends of Anacostia Park](#) in Washington, DC aim to improve the park and the lives of those who live in the community. The park is mainly a recreational space with a skating pavilion, a pool, and a bike trail, but no monuments. Akiima Price, founder of the Friends of Anacostia, envisions expanding the park's purpose to become a trauma-informed space that functions like a clinic -- with a safe, calming environment and people to talk with. Members could donate time instead of money and help to keep the park clean and monitor the playground to make sure kids are safe. A million people already use the park over the course of a year.

In a seminar at Harvard's Program on Negotiation, [Beyond Conflict's](#) founder, Tim Phillips, led a [seminar outlining his organization's Shared Experience approach to conflict resolution](#), which is based on brain and behavioural science. He draws three lessons from this approach: that emotions shape how we approach conflict and reconciliation, that in order for meaningful conflict transformation to occur, we must feel our identities are valued and we must create an environment where people can change. The whole seminar is available on [YouTube](#).

In New Mexico's desert climate, [communal irrigation canals called acequias](#) have long distributed water and supported traditional, sustainable growing practices. The system is democratically controlled by community-elected commissions made up of "irrigators" who own land along the acequias and thus have the right to use them. The traditional acequia system ensures that everyone shares both abundance and scarcity. The [American Friends Service Committee's](#) New Mexico program provides training, technical and legal advice and publicity to help local communities and organizations maintain their traditional practices.