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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

Uptick in crimes against Mexican politicians points toward violent midterm election. More than a hundred murders of Mexican [officials and candidates](#) in recent months point to the country's midterm elections becoming the most violent in decades.

Senegal protests over opposition leader charged with rape. A judge in Senegal has charged the popular [opposition leader](#) Ousmane Sonko with rape. The arrest triggered deadly protests. The President Macky Sall is being accused of using the judiciary for his political aims.

US 'alarmed' by frequency of attacks on Saudi after Houthis target oil heartland. The United States [expressed alarm](#) at "genuine security threats" to Saudi Arabia from Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis after attacks on the heart of the Saudi oil industry. The US will look at improving support for Saudi defences.

US has spent \$143 billion on relief in Afghanistan since 2002. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) [issued](#) the latest report analyzing \$7.8 billion of that number.

DEVELOPMENT

Scientists debut system to translate thoughts directly into text. Epilepsy patients had [electrode arrays](#) implanted into their brains. Neural information was collected to train an algorithm to interpret the signals with a 3% error rate.

The European Court of Justice points at British's air pollution. In a first post-Brexit ruling, the court pointed out the fact that the United Kingdom had breached the bloc's [air pollution limits](#) for years. It warned that the country could be fined even though it is not part of the EU anymore.

Honda to start selling world's 1st level-3 autonomous car. It is the world's first vehicle to hit the market that allows the driver to engage in different tasks such as reading and watching TV when the car is in [certain conditions](#) such as congested traffic on expressways.

Cash withdrawal using ATM fingerprint biometrics has been implemented in Nigeria. The fingerprint biometrics allows for [cash withdrawal](#) from any ATM in Nigeria without making use of the card.

ECONOMICS

US Senate approves \$1.9T COVID-19 relief bill. In an effort to stimulate the US economy the Biden administration has [issued a relief bill](#) which is equal to 10% of the US economy.

UK central bank's chief economist warns of rising inflation. The British central bank expects [prices to rise sharply](#) in the current year while the Euro Zone inflation rate has [stagnated](#) at 0.9% in February.

China sets conservative economic growth target of above 6%. China set a conservative economic growth target of above 6% for the year, well below [what economists forecast](#), and outlined ongoing fiscal support to keep the recovery going. The budget deficit will narrow to 3.2% of GDP.

Brazilian economy experiences worst plunge in decades. Brazil's GDP contracted 4.1% in 2020 while the number of new COVID-19 is still surging, [14 million are unemployed](#) and the welfare program has ended. The Economy Minister warned that Brazil's economy could resemble that of Argentina within six months and Venezuela within a year and a half if it doesn't limit spending.

EU extends COVID-19 economic safety net until 2023. The economic safety net to help save businesses and jobs from the [impact of restrictions](#) imposed to halt the spread of the COVID-19 will be extended to promote a resilient and sustainable recovery of the EU's 27-nations.

POLITICS

Germany to spy on far-right AfD political party. The nationalist party is [currently under surveillance](#) in some German states, but the decision means its activities will be monitored by Germany's intelligence services nationwide.

ICC opens 'war crimes' investigation in West Bank and Gaza. The probe will cover events in the [Israeli-occupied West Bank](#), East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip since June 2014. The US is [opposed](#) to the investigations.

Iran nuclear dispute: Tehran agrees to meet with IAEA experts. There have been tentative [signs of progress](#) toward salvaging the 2015 nuclear deal, as the UN's atomic energy watchdog reports that Iran has agreed to discuss "outstanding issues."

Prosecutor asks to drop case against Colombia's Uribe. Colombia's attorney general asked for a hearing to [drop an investigation](#) into former President Alvaro Uribe's involvement in alleged witness tampering, signalling the potential end of a landmark legal battle.

Canada takes steps to make 'feminist' budget addressing women's post-pandemic challenges. Canada unveiled an [all-woman task force](#) to ensure that its upcoming budget, set to include billions in post-pandemic stimulus spending, includes measures to get women working and address gender inequality.

SOCIAL

More than 1 billion tons of food was wasted in 2019. Approximately 17% of food produced for human consumption [goes to waste](#) each year. Individual households were responsible for most of the food waste, accounting for 61% of the total.

Poverty surge sets Latin America back over a decade, says UN. Extreme poverty jumped to levels last seen [20 years ago](#) while almost 60% of all children have missed an entire year of school.

Australian broadcaster suspends China's CGTN citing human rights complaint. Broadcaster SBS [suspended its broadcasts](#) of news bulletins from Chinese state television news services CGTN and CCTV after receiving complaints they were airing forced confessions.

Pope Francis denounces extremism on historic visit to Iraq. Hostility, extremism and violence are "betrayals of religion" he told an [inter-faith prayer service](#) with representatives of Iraq's religions, including Shia, Sunni, Christian and Yazidi clerics.

Taiwan encourages citizens to eat 'freedom pineapples' in response to China's ban. Chinese customs offices declared a [ban on the export](#) of Taiwanese pineapples. Taiwan rebranded them as 'freedom pineapples' and sold all of them within the country.

PEACEBUILDING

The [Alliance for Peacebuilding](#) published a policy statement urging the Biden Administration and US Congress to launch a Center to Secure American Democracy, a domestic equivalent of the National Endowment for Democracy. In the paper on [Securing Democracy at Home: What We Can Learn from the Cold War](#), AfP's acting CEO Liz Hume and Beyond Conflict CEO Tim Phillips argue that rebuilding American democracy is essential for confronting domestic challenges and signalling to the world that the US remains committed to democratic institutions and norms.

The [Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict](#) has issued a policy brief on addressing climate insecurities in the Pacific Island region. The document, entitled [Climate Security: Achieving Inclusive Peace, Development and Humanitarian Nexus](#), argues that addressing growing climate crisis insecurities at the local and national levels in this vulnerable region requires a conflict prevention and human security approach.

[InterAction](#) launched [*The Safeguarding Community Visual Toolkit*](#) to support communities in preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment by promoting a 'speak up' culture. The toolkit was developed by Habitat for Humanity International, Oxfam International, and WaterAid, with the help of funding from InterAction.

[Interpeace](#) moved its [cross-border peacebuilding project on the Mali-Burkina-Faso border](#) online in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Eight focus groups participated in a series of teleconferences in February. The project was started in 2020 to address rising tensions between communities across the border and the limited presence of national security forces in the region.