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

CONFLICT

Russia calls for a meeting between Arctic states. Tensions are rising due to the Arctic ice melt caused by rising temperatures. A number of countries are now trying to assert authority over the new shipping lanes.

The Israel-Palestine conflict has claimed 14,000 lives since 1987. The fighting is reminiscent of three previous rounds of war. However, this time the violence has spread to Arabs and Jews in Israel's mixed cities.

Guatemala detains ex-tax chief who took on the country's oligarchs. Guatemala arrested a former tax chief for falsifying official documents after deciding to run for president. The government has also dropped a graft charge against a former president.

US and South Korea scrap bilateral missile guidelines. US restrictions on South Korea's ability to develop missiles have been lifted under an agreement reached by the leaders of the two countries.

US investigates second suspected case of mystery syndrome near White House. The cases are consistent with an inexplicable constellation of sensory experiences and physical symptoms that have sickened more than 100 US diplomats, spies and troops around the globe and is now known as Havana Syndrome.

DEVELOPMENT

Scientists identify gut bacteria linked to neurodegenerative conditions such as Parkinson's. [Researchers have identified gut bacteria species that appear to play a role](#) in the development of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Motor Neurone Disease.

The Mekong River Ecosystem is in crisis. [The Mekong River ecosystem is on the verge of irreversible collapse](#) due to the increased numbers of upstream dams, as well as other human-

made activities such as deforestation, sand mining, extensive irrigation for agriculture and wetland conversion.

Stem cells build mini beating heart. [In a new study that recreated heart muscles](#), scientists relied on self-organisation, in which stem cells that usually precede the creation of heart muscle were coaxed into becoming heart cells.

A UN report finds that improved internet access in rural areas can do more than urban migration. This [better connectivity can provide better jobs and living conditions](#) for approximately 3.4 billion people, which represent half of the world's population, and advantage that could help reduce inequality.

Large oil discovery in Namibia's Okavango Delta sparks environmental impact and sustainability questions. [ReconAfrica claims its find could yield up to 31 million barrels of crude oil](#) and has already sunk three test wells. The area is world-renowned for its tourist and conservation activities.

SOCIAL

Ex-navy lieutenant says US pilots have seen UFOs every single day for years. UFOs should be considered not as an outlandish conspiracy theory, but as a very real national-security risk. [According to the ex-lieutenant, he first saw a UFO in restricted airspace near Virginia Beach in 2014.](#)

EU wants firm pledges from tech giants in fake news fight. Facebook, Google and other tech giants [will have to pledge to do more to curb the monetisation of false information](#) through advertisement placements.

Singapore approves COVID-19 breath test that gives immediate result. [The test works much like a standard breathalyser test](#) and gives the result in less than one minute.

France's Constitutional Council rejects controversial law that forbids sharing images of police officers with malicious intent. [Article 24 of the security law had given rise to many protests](#) in the country.

ECONOMICS

China braces for \$1.3 Trillion maturity of debt. China's corporate bonds have \$1.3 trillion of domestic debt payable in the next 12 months. While corporate bond maturities have increased in the US, Europe and Japan, [they're getting shorter in China as defaults prompt investors to reduce risk.](#)

European Parliament votes to freeze controversial EU-China investment deal. The European Parliament has [overwhelmingly voted 599 to 30 to freeze the ratification of the EU-China investment deal](#) due to the sanctions that Beijing has imposed on five members.

US proposes 15% global minimum tax. The [US called for a global minimum corporate tax](#) of at least 15%, less than the 21% rate it previously proposed.

[Banks have put more money into green finance than fossil fuel this year for the first time.](#)

Nigeria's economy grows in first quarter on oil price rise. [Africa's largest economy exited its second recession since 2016.](#) GDP grew 0.5% for the first quarter of 2021, despite a full-year contraction in 2020.

POLITICS

US clears Germany to continue works on Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. [The controversial natural gas pipeline from Russia through the Baltic Sea to Germany](#) has been one of the main points of contention in German-American relations for years.

Brazil Environment Minister targeted in Amazon illegal wood-smuggling probe. Brazilian police searched properties connected to the Environment Minister and other officials [following allegations they allowed illegal exports of timber from the Amazon region to the US and Europe.](#)

Madrid says Western Sahara independence leader must answer legal case in Spain. The leader at the centre of a diplomatic dispute between Rabat and Madrid must answer legal charges in Spain. [Morocco is upset that Spain accepted him on humanitarian grounds because he was ill.](#)

Mexican election campaign results in political assassinations. [Eighty-three politicians have been assassinated since September.](#) The latest was Abel Murrieta, the ex-attorney general of Sonora.

Paris Summit: a 'New deal' for Africa. European leaders agreed on a new plan to help Africa to recover from the pandemic. [The plan aims to reallocate \\$100 billion in IMF reserves to African states by October.](#)

World powers condemn Malian army's arrest of president and prime minister. Months after a military coup deposed the president [the new leaders have been overthrown by another faction in the military.](#)

PEACEBUILDING

[The annual Mexico Peace Index report](#) produced by the [Institute of Economics and Peace](#), has found that Mexico's peacefulness improved by 3.5% in 2020. From July 2018, homicide and firearm crime rates peaked and have since been showing a gradual decline. Other types of crime began to fall in mid-2019, preceding the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Build up](#) has launched a [new online course on "Rehumanizing Relationships: An Action-Oriented Course on How to Use Social Media for Depolarization around Race & Politics."](#) The course aims to explore and actively engage in digital peacebuilding on social media with the central goal of strengthening and healing our relationships with one another.

[WIISGlobal](#) has issued a policy brief that offers the adoption of [A Gender Framework for Arms Control and Disarmament](#). The paper provides suggestions for policymakers and practitioners to integrate gender perspectives and participation in their work on arms control.