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

CONFLICT

India looks to enhance military capabilities in space. Driven by national security concerns and the [emergence of China as a significant threat](#), India will enhance its military capabilities in space.

US launches air strikes in Iraq. The strikes targeted Iranian backed militias who the US claimed had [made drone strikes against US forces](#). The Iraqi government strongly condemned the strikes as a breach of sovereign air space. This is one of the rare occasions where the government has been critical of the US.

Haiti gang leader launches 'revolution' as violence escalates. One of Haiti's most powerful gang leaders warned he was [launching a revolution](#) against the country's business and political elites, signalling a likely further escalation of violence in the impoverished Caribbean nation.

Palestinian Authority deploys forces during protest against critic's death. The Authority deployed security forces to [confront protesters](#) who took to the streets of Ramallah in the West Bank after one of President Mahmoud Abbas's biggest critics died in custody. He was hit repeatedly with a metal rod.

African nations to send troops to tackle Mozambique insurgency. Southern African nations approved the [deployment of troops](#) to Mozambique to help the country combat an escalating Islamic State-linked insurgency. The conflict has displaced 800,000 people.

DEVELOPMENT

AI controlled BioPods can grow food in space. The BioPods use an inflatable membrane and [require no supervision due to AI](#). Aeroponics use mist as a soil replacement. Atmospheric control technology is capable of maintaining precise climate conditions.

Little connection between measures of sustainable investing and actual reductions in emissions. A study of the relationship between [ESG metrics and emission growth](#) across 20 countries found little evidence to suggest that higher ESG metrics are associated with reduced emission growth. This occurred while [ESG bonds tripled](#) to \$257 billion this year.

Sudan to cut government spending, increase social spending. The country will cut costs of external official trips by 50%, reduce fuel quotas for government vehicles by 20%, sell all surplus government vehicles and cut embassies' budgets by 25% [among other measures](#). The government will expand the registration of a family support project to include three million families.

Belarus withdraws help with illegal migration to the EU. The EU's representative in Minsk has been told to [return to Brussels for consultations](#). Belarus has stopped helping the 27-nation bloc combat illegal migration as retaliation against EU sanctions over the forced grounding of the Ryanair flight.

SOCIAL

Intelligence communities raise alarm bells after seeing fake AI generated Tom Cruise video. AI can now generate videos of people where it is [impossible to tell the difference](#) from real people. Think of a fake video of Joe Biden declaring war on North Korea or a politician involved in a scandal a week before an election.

The last western scientist in the Wuhan lab says it was safe. An Australian scientist was the last westerner to work in the lab leaving in December 2019 and [felt the practices were safe](#) and that it worked like other high containment labs.

Where trust in the news is highest and lowest. The 2021 Digital News Report was released, polling a range of digital news topics including [trust and misinformation](#) across 46 countries.

Dubai's Princess Latifa is free to travel after years of home arrest. The announcement comes two days after a photo [appearing to show her abroad](#) surfaced on social media and four months after the BBC aired a video message in which Latifa said she was being held captive.

Japan proposes four-day working week to improve work-life balance. The Japanese government unveiled its annual economic policy guidelines, which include new recommendations that companies [permit their staff to opt to work four days a week](#) instead of the typical five.

ECONOMICS

FDI flows in 2020 were the lowest in at least 15 years. Last year flows of FDI [dropped by one-third](#) from \$1.5trn in 2019 to \$1trn, the lowest since 2005, according to an annual report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Yellen says US may economically decouple from China to protect security. "We are looking at a full range of tools that we have to push back and to redress practices that harm our

national security and our broader economic interests," [Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said](#). She also said it would not be a complete decoupling.

Malta listed as untrustworthy by financial crimes watchdog. The Paris-based inter-governmental Financial Action Task Force has put Malta on the list of untrustworthy jurisdictions [during a secret vote](#), meaning that the country now faces increased monitoring which is likely to affect the economy.

Interest payments consume one-third of Pakistan's budget. Political and economic analysts feel the country has an [over-reliance on loans](#) which bodes poorly for the country's fiscal sustainability and domestic needs.

US jobless claims down to 411,000 as economy heals. Weekly claims have [fallen steadily this year](#) from about 900,000 in January.

POLITICS

French far-right fails in regional elections ahead of presidential vote. The French far right again [failed to win a single region](#) in elections, depriving its leader Marine Le Pen of a chance to show her party is fit for power ahead of next year's presidential election.

Catalonian separatists go free after receiving pardon from Spain. Nine Catalan separatists have [walked out of prison](#) leaving behind their lengthy jail terms for organising a bid four years ago to make Catalonia an independent republic.

US and Israel only countries to vote against UN call to end Cuba embargo. The resolution was adopted for the 29th time with [184 votes in favour](#), three abstentions and two no votes. The UN vote can carry political weight, but only the US Congress can lift the more than 50-year-old embargo.

Peru's right wing Fujimori loses allies as bid to overturn election result falters. After losing a tight election, the country had been rattled by [large demonstrations and accusations of electoral fraud](#). The left-wing Castillo plans to rewrite the Constitution and keep a larger share of profits from mineral resources.

European leaders struggle to define a common agenda on the relationship with Russia. Germany and France aim to open a space for dialogue to [reestablish EU relations with Vladimir Putin](#), particularly on climate change, energy, health and the fight against terrorism and organised crime. However, Poland, Netherlands and Latvia would instead adopt a more robust line with Moscow.

PEACEBUILDING

The [Institute for Economics and Peace](#) released the [2021 Peace Index](#) along with a wall chart showing country rankings. This year's results show that the average level of global peacefulness deteriorated slightly (by 0.07 per cent), with 87 countries improving and 73 recording deteriorations. The full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on peacefulness is still

unfolding. Some forms of violence declined in the short term, but “growing unease with lockdowns and rising economic uncertainty resulted in civil unrest increasing in 2020.”

The Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth has publicized the [Global Report on Protecting Young People in Civic Space](#). This first-ever global report on the subject highlights the need for stronger global protection mechanisms and provides recommendations for how stakeholders should create youth-sensitive protection mechanisms.

[Build Up](#) is collaborating with [Global Communities](#) to [pilot](#) the innovative use of technology and creative approaches in peacebuilding projects across Yemeni communities.

The [Carter Center](#) released the [final report from its electoral expert team on Bolivia’s general elections](#) in October 2020, commending the work of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal for conducting a “complex election process with independence, impartiality, and transparency, paving the way to return to the constitutional framework.” The report also highlights the “record participation and intense competition,” which happened despite the “political tensions and challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

A new [Saferworld report](#) documents research from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on the successes and challenges of institutionalizing community policing. The article provides a range of recommendations to governments, civil society and international organizations who are undertaking efforts to improve community-police cooperation and strengthen community security.

[Generations For Peace](#) and the [Housing Bank](#) have announced a new partnership to support and empower Jordanian youth to become leaders of change and have a positive impact in their local communities.

[The Agricultural and Livelihoods Stabilization Partnerships \(ALSP\) program](#), implemented by Creative Associates International, provides grants and technical support to community-based organizations in communities and refugee camps in northeast Syria. ALSP partners with local organizations to offer agricultural services and vocational training in areas such as computer repairs, home repairs, car mechanics, house carpentry, and sewing.