

July 6, 2021



Brought to you by



Institute for  
Economics  
& Peace



Alliance for  
Peacebuilding

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

---

## CONFLICT

**US alarmed over China's missile silos in the desert.** More than a hundred rocket silos for ballistic missiles, the primary means of delivering nuclear weapons, [are being built in western China](#). Experts suspect that this will result in an expansion of China's nuclear potential.

**Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: Rebels say, accept our rule or no ceasefire.** The rebels say they must be recognised as [the region's legitimate government](#) before they accept any ceasefire. The authorities in Addis Ababa earlier declared a unilateral ceasefire as the rebels retook much of the region and government officials fled.

**Myanmar government releases thousands of prisoners.** Myanmar freed more than 2,000 detainees, among them journalists and others who the ruling military said had been [held on incitement charges](#) for taking part in protests.

**Russians accused of Central African Republic abuses in UN report.** Russian military instructors and Central African Republic troops [targeted civilians](#) with excessive force, indiscriminate killings, occupation of schools and large-scale looting. Russia denies the allegations.

**Thousands protest in Burkina Faso over jihadist attacks.** Groups linked to al-Qaeda and Islamic State originally based in neighbouring Mali, [have embedded themselves](#) across the north and east of the country, launching regular attacks on civilians, including one in June that killed more than 130 people.

---

## DEVELOPMENT

**Nearly half of the world does not have access to safe sanitation.** In 2020, just over half (54%) of the world population [had access to safely managed sanitation](#). Around 6% do not have any sanitation facilities at all, and instead have to practice open defecation.

**UN States agree to \$6 billion peacekeeping budget, down 3% on prior year.** The most UN peacekeeping missions are in Africa and the Middle East. The US [is the largest contributor](#) to the peacekeeping budget, responsible for about 28%, followed by China with 15.2% and Japan with 8.5%.

**GM shakes up lithium industry with California geothermal project.** General Motors is [investing in a US lithium project](#) that could become the country's largest by 2024, making the automaker one of the first to develop its own source of a battery metal crucial for the electrification of cars and trucks.

**Gabon is the first African country to be paid for protecting its rainforests.** As part of a UN backed deal, Central African Forest Initiative has [paid the first tranche of funds](#). With commercial forests and a special economic zone specialising in timber processing, Gabon has one of the best High Forest Low Deforestation scores of all tropical countries.

**UN, African Union peacekeepers hand over 14 Darfur bases to Sudan.** At the height of the mission, there were [more than 97,000 peacekeepers](#) including military and police in Darfur, drawn from 110 countries. It will leave behind a small contingent estimated to be 1,000 to 1,500 individuals.

---

## SOCIAL

**Real champagne? Only from Russia.** In Russia, a new law will see [only Russian sparkling wines called Champagne](#). Real champagne will only be allowed to be called sparkling wine. Moët Hennessy has decided to stop exports to Russia.

**Abu Dhabi is using facial scanners to detect COVID-19 in public.** The technology works by measuring electromagnetic waves which are altered [when the RNA particles of the COVID-19 virus are present](#). More than 20,000 people were tested – the scanners work with 90.3% sensitivity when identifying infected individuals and 83% accuracy when identifying non-infected individuals.

**Cardinal among 10 indicted by Vatican for financial crimes.** A prominent Italian cardinal was among 10 people sent to trial, [charged with financial crimes](#) including embezzlement, money laundering, fraud, extortion and abuse of office. The trial underscores Pope Francis' determination to clean up Vatican finances, even if it involves messy public hearings.

**What experts know so far about the Delta variant:** It's far more contagious – 50% more, [vaccines are less effective](#) with Pfizer being 64-88% successful against getting the disease compared to 93% for other strains, but still 94% successful at keeping people out of hospital.

**Cuba is facing its worst shortage of food since the 1990s.** The government blames the shortage of food mostly [on sanctions imposed by the US](#). However, since 2001 the sanctions have in fact exempted food. Government bungling and a shortage of dollars due to the lack of tourism and remittances since the beginning of the pandemic have contributed.

---

## ECONOMICS

**Coal prices have risen 50% this year, posing a challenge to climate goals.** Coal prices across Asia are surging, [underscoring a challenge for governments](#) seeking a faster energy transition: the dirtiest of fuels they're racing to phase out is enjoying booming demand.

**US and Taiwan revive trade talks after 5-year freeze to counter China.** For the first time in five years, the US and Taiwan have held talks under a dormant trade and investment framework [as they pursue stronger trade ties](#) to ramp up pressure on China. However, the path to an agreement could be rocky.

**130 countries have agreed to a 15% global minimum corporate tax.** Officials from 130 countries have [agreed to overhaul the global tax system](#) and backed a proposed minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15%. The OECD, which led the talks, said that the plans could generate about \$150bn in annual tax revenues.

**A UN report estimates that global tourism losses could top \$4 trillion.** The UN World Tourism Organization and Conference on Trade and Development highlighted that economic damages [would be concentrated in developing countries](#) due to a slow pace of vaccination.

**Drought added to global inflation risks.** Central banks around the world are weighing [how much environmental events affect their stance on rates](#). In Brazil, the worst water crisis in nearly a century has helped drive inflation above 8%, the fastest in five years.

---

## POLITICS

**Brazil's Bolsonaro is paying dearly to fend off impeachment over Vaccine bribery scandal.** If he doesn't defend his congress colleagues accused of bribery, then they are [unlikely to support him against impeachment](#). However, the support of his congress partners is eroding his political base with the public.

**France opens an investigation into fashion retailers for concealing 'crimes against humanity' in Xinjiang.** The investigation is linked to [accusations against China](#) over its

treatment of minority Muslim Uyghurs, including the use of forced labour. A unit of Japan's Fast Retailing, Zara owner Inditex, France's SMCP and Skechers are targeted.

**Former South African president Jacob Zuma jailed for 15 months.** He was sentenced to 15 months in prison for [defying a court order](#) to appear before an inquiry probing wide-ranging allegations of corruption during his tenure.

**UN Secretary General urges US to drop Iranian sanctions.** In a report to the UN Security Council, Mr. Guterres [also urged the US](#) to "extend the waivers with regard to the trade in oil with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and fully renew waivers for nuclear non-proliferation projects."

**Bill curtailing indigenous land rights advances in Brazil's Congress.** A bill allowing commercial agriculture and mining [on protected tribal reservations](#) in Brazil advanced in Congress. Indigenous leaders see this as potentially the biggest setback since their land rights were guaranteed in the 1988 Constitution.

---

## PEACEBUILDING

Over 110 US-based and international NGO's have addressed a [letter to President Biden](#) demanding an end to the "unlawful US program of lethal strikes outside any recognized battlefield," including through the use of drones. The document calls the [Administration's current review](#) of this program an opportunity to change course from the "counterproductive strategies of the last twenty years" and invest in the alternatives of diplomacy, peacebuilding and development.

The PBS program Point of View has aired a documentary, [The Neutral Ground](#), on the controversy over the removal of monuments to the Confederacy and its leaders. The film starts with a focus on the removal of monuments in New Orleans and expands its scope to the "hard truths much of America has yet to face about slavery" and the Civil War.

[Leah Penniman](#) received a [James Beard Leadership](#) award "for her work facilitating powerful food sovereignty programs." Her work includes writing a book, *Farming While Black*, a guide to regenerative farming; establishing Soul Fire farm using those principles; creating Soul Fire's subsidized farm food program; and providing training in farming to people of color.