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Future Trends

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Peacebuilding

Welcome to this week's Future Trends - the must-read weekly briefing covering the changing face of global politics, economics, development, and conflict.

Here's what you need to know this week:

- Russian raid off Turkey's coast tests Erdogan
- Thousands of Nigeriens respond to call to defend against ECOWAS
- Nicaragua seizes Catholic university accused of being 'centre of terrorism'
- Russian rouble declines 30% since start of Ukraine war
- Drought hits Panama canal shipping route
- China's fertility rate record low in 2022

SPECIAL EDITION: UKRAINE

Netherlands, Denmark commit to delivering F-16s to Ukraine. The Netherlands and Denmark will supply [F-16 fighter jets](#) to Ukraine on the proviso they do not cross into Russian airspace. First deliveries are due around New Year. Both countries have F-16s available to donate as their armed forces are transitioning to newer F-35 fighters.

Russian raid off Turkey's coast tests Erdogan's resolve. Russia's raid on a ship just off Turkey's coast brings the fallout from the Ukraine war to another [NATO frontier](#) and raises the stakes as Ankara seeks to coax Moscow back to a grain-export deal that would restore some calm to the Black Sea.

Zelenskiy asks Sweden for Saab Gripen jets. Zelenskiy made his [first visit to Sweden](#) since Russia's invasion in February 2022. They talked about obtaining Gripen jets following approval from the US for Denmark and the Netherlands to send F-16 fighters to Ukraine.

POLITICS

Thousands of Nigeriens respond to call to defend against ECOWAS. Supporters of [Niger's junta](#) were forced to halt people volunteering for non-military roles in defence against a possible intervention by West African powers, saying they had been overwhelmed by the numbers who turned up.

US sanctions 100 Nicaraguan municipal officials over rights abuses. The US State Department sanctioned 100 Nicaraguan municipal officials accused of participating in [human rights violations](#) for their roles in the closure of a popular university and jailing of a prominent bishop.

Thai ex-PM Thaksin to return from exile amid political deadlock. Thailand's self-exiled former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra plans to return to the country as the country is struggling to overcome a [political deadlock](#) after a national election in May.

Japan and South Korea to hold first summit since WWII. A standalone summit bringing together [Japanese and South Korean leaders](#) would have been almost unthinkable just over a year ago, when the North-east Asian neighbours were embroiled in disputes over their bitter wartime legacy.

Anti-corruption campaigner wins Guatemala presidential election. His victory comes as [violence and food insecurity triggers fresh waves of migration](#). Guatemalans represent the largest number of Central Americans seeking to enter the US.

CONFLICT

Nicaragua seizes Catholic university accused of being 'centre of terrorism'. The [Central American University](#) announced that all classes and administrative activities were suspended after a criminal court ruled its property and financial accounts were being transferred to the government. The government had accused the university of being "a centre of terrorism organised by criminal groups".

Pakistan arrests 146 as it launches probe into church attacks. More than 6,000 police and paramilitary troops have been deployed to control [mob violence against the Christian community](#). Houses, businesses, and graveyards were targeted as violence gripped the city of 230,000.

China deploys swarm of satellites to monitor military exercises in Australia. Hundreds of Chinese satellites passed over Australia [collecting intelligence on military training activities](#) involving the US and other regional partners. They are monitoring exercises involving Australia, India, Japan, and the US.

Death toll from Libya clashes reaches 55. The [casualty toll](#) from clashes in Libya's capital Tripoli reached 55 killed and 146 wounded before a truce was brokered by elders. The deal involved handing 444 Brigade commander Mahmoud Hamza over to a third faction after he was seized at the airport.

Taliban's ties with Pakistan fraying amid mounting security concerns. Ties between the two neighbours have deteriorated due to a [rise in armed attacks](#). The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been rocked by more than 300 attacks in 2023 alone, with the majority claimed by the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan.

ECONOMICS

China Evergrande seeks Chapter 15 protection in Manhattan bankruptcy court. China [Evergrande](#) is the world's most heavily indebted property developer and became the poster child for China's property crisis, filed for protection from creditors in a US bankruptcy court.

Russian rouble declines 30% since start of Ukraine war. The [Russian rouble](#) has hit a 17-month low with the Kremlin blaming loose monetary policy for the rouble's 30 per cent year-to-date slump to 101 per US dollar.

Australian state to pay \$243M for withdrawing as 2026 Commonwealth Games host. Australia's Victoria state will pay \$243 million to Commonwealth Games organisers, Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews said, after it withdrew as [2026 event host](#) citing a projected cost blowout.

China halts publication of youth unemployment report as numbers hit record high. China's [youth unemployment](#) hit a record high in April, with 20.4% of 16 to 24 years old unable to find jobs. National Bureau of Statistics said the release of unemployment reports will be suspended from August onwards.

Gabon finalises first debt-for-nature swap in Africa. Gabon marks the first shift towards [conservation-focused deals](#). The \$500m agreement reduces Gabon's interest rate and extends the repayment period in committing the nation to invest \$125m in expanding marine reserves and improving fishing regulations to protect endangered species.

DEVELOPMENT

Long delays at Panama Canal after drought hits global shipping

route. Commercial ships are facing long queues and delays to travel through the [Panama Canal](#) as a lengthy drought has led to a cut in the number of vessels able to pass through one of the world's most important trading routes.

Red Cross to back out of 25 Afghan hospitals. The \$500 million hospital program originally covered 33 hospitals, paying for the salaries of over 10,000 health workers and medical supplies. The hospitals covered 25 million people. Additionally the UN only has 25% of the \$2.1 billion needed for [humanitarian aid](#) in Afghanistan.

Indian doctors' rebel over prescribing cheaper drugs. New government guidelines demand a wider use of [generic drugs](#), which are 30%-80% cheaper, reducing the cost of medicines for millions. Doctors claim they have inferior quality; however, the law will result in lower prescription costs.

Researchers found carbon-based quantum technology. [Graphene nanoribbons](#), a specialised form of two-dimensional carbon material, offer controllable quantum effects that could revolutionise quantum technology applications.

More than a million people have fled Sudan's spiralling conflict, says UN. More than [1 million people have fled Sudan](#) to neighbouring states, as people inside the country are running out of food and dying due to a lack of healthcare after four months of war.

SOCIAL

Australia's oversupply of wine tops 2.8 bn bottles. Australia has an oversupply equivalent to more than 2.8bn bottles of wine, a little more than 100 bottles per person, after the [trade dispute with China slashed exports](#) to the biggest consumer of Australian wines.

China's fertility rate dropped to record low in 2022. China's [fertility rate](#) dropped to an estimated record low of 1.09 in 2022, the lowest of any country with a population over 100 million, according to government data.

Egypt releases prominent activist. Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi pardoned prominent [pro-democracy activist Ahmed Douma](#), along with other prisoners, he was serving a 15 year sentence for rioting. This follows the release of other prominent activists.

Pig kidney xenotransplantation performing optimally after 32 days. Surgeons have transplanted a [genetically engineered pig kidney](#) that continues to function well after 32 days in a man declared dead by neurologic criteria and maintained with a beating heart on ventilator support. Rejection has so far been avoided in all five xenotransplants.

China publishes official political doctrine in Swahili. Officials from Kenya and the Chinese government gathered in Nairobi to launch the first portion of the book "[Xi Jinping Thought](#)". The Chinese Embassy in Nairobi indicated the translation is a marker of China's 60 years of diplomatic relations.

PEACEBUILDING

[Convergence](#) has disseminated a [new working paper](#) outlining how National Service structures and practices can be modified to advance bridgebuilding across conflicting ideological, cultural, or political perspectives in the US. Specifically, it proposes that National Service organizations certify members in "civic CPR" efforts that connect across differences; increase viewpoint diversity among Corps members and programs; build strong two-way bridges between National Service and bridgebuilding communities; equip Americorps alumni to help build civic bridges; and accelerate research on bridgebuilding through service.

The **[Civic Health Project](#) aims to advance constructive engagement across political divides.** The organization awards "seed grants" to practitioners and academics engaged in healthier collaboration across divides; promotes successful projects; networks with "fellow travelers;" and supports efforts to measure the impact of different approaches to depolarization.

[George Mason University's Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution](#) has launched a new [Resolution Resource Hub for Teachers](#). Designed for high school teachers, the site provides free resources and activities to help teachers include non-partisan conflict analysis and resolution tools into lessons about historical and contemporary real-world problems.

[The Arms Trade Litigation Monitor](#) tracks and documents litigation and other legal interventions against arms exports. It includes detailed information about the background and progress of each case, related court documents, expert analysis, and common challenges across the cases. The site is a joint initiative of [SaferWorld](#) and the [Emergent Justice Collective](#), with the support of the [International Commission of Jurists](#). To date, the main focus has been on arms supplies linked with the armed conflict and humanitarian crisis in Yemen.