

August 31, 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, EU warn of influx of Eritrean troops in Ethiopia's Tigray. The US and EU are [raising alarm](#) over the recent deployment of troops from Eritrea to Ethiopia's Tigray region, where nine months of war have killed thousands of people and sparked a worsening humanitarian crisis.

China will soon surpass Russia as a nuclear threat. China, in the midst of a rapid nuclear weapons build-up, will [soon surpass](#) Russia as the United States' top nuclear threat, a senior US military official said. The official has warned that the two countries have no mechanisms to avert miscommunication.

Who is Islamic State Khorasan? The [militant group](#) is an Islamic State's affiliate, and a declared enemy of the Taliban that seeks to establish a Caliphate. They may soon become the predominant insurgent group in Afghanistan.

Taiwan plans to spend \$1.4 billion on new fighter jets amid rising China military activity. Following increased pressure from China, Taiwan is [building up](#) its military air force while expanding its budget on the defence sector.

A military cooperation deal has been signed between Nigeria and Russia. The [agreement](#) between Nigeria and Russia provides a legal framework for Russia to supply Nigeria with military equipment and training, as Nigeria struggles with security issues including terrorism.

DEVELOPMENT

Taliban rule presents aid agencies with moral, fiscal dilemma. The situation [presents](#) a paradox for foreign aid agencies as 70% to 80% of Afghanistan's government budget is funded by international donors, including USAID. Without that aid, the country is facing economic collapse.

There are 10 catastrophic threats facing humans right now. Most of the [threats](#) are ecological and caused by over population, but others are nuclear weapons, pandemics, unintended consequences from new technologies and chemical pollution of the earth's systems.

Probiotics help lab corals survive deadly heat stress. [Dosing corals](#) with a mix of beneficial bacteria staved off death in a heat wave simulated in an aquarium. Corals are not singular entities, but coalitions of cooperative players.

Lebanon is on the verge of running out of water. According to the UN Children's Agency, [more than 70%](#) of Lebanon's population confront serious water shortages.

Air pollution has been related to more severe mental diseases. A [study reveals](#) that a little increase in air pollution exposure leads to an increased probability of needing treatment.

Electro-magnetic fields within a room can power devices without plugs or cables. Researchers from the University of Tokyo have [built a room](#) that is able to wirelessly and simultaneously power multiple devices, such as phones, fans and lights. The electromagnetic exposure did not exceed human safety guidelines.

SOCIAL

US intelligence community still divided on COVID-19's origin. The US intelligence community [failed](#) to resolve a sharp debate within the Biden administration over whether a Chinese laboratory incident was the source of COVID-19. Critical information about the origins of this pandemic exists in the People's Republic of China, but access to it has been withheld, the administration said.

Google self-driving spinoff Waymo begins testing with public in San Francisco. Waymo has [started](#) taking a few San Franciscans on rides in its self-driving sport utility vehicles and hopes to open the robo-taxis to anyone in the city in less than the three years.

Fossil of previously unknown four-legged whale found in Egypt. Scientists said they had [discovered](#) the 43 million-year-old fossil of a previously unknown amphibious four-legged whale species in Egypt that helps trace the transition of whales from land to sea.

The US holds the highest prison population. Statista recently [released](#) data showcasing countries' prison populations per 100,000 of the national population. The US holds the number one spot, followed by El Salvador, Turkmenistan, and Rwanda.

Chinese court says '996' work hours – 12 hours a day, six days a week is illegal.

Company policies expecting staff to work from 9am to 9pm, six days a week is a [serious violation](#) of China's labour law according to the country's top judicial authority and the government agency overseeing labour issues.

ECONOMICS

Banks in Kabul reopen, drawing crowds of cash-starved Afghans. After more than a week of closures, banks in Afghanistan are [starting to reopen](#), however with \$7b of reserves frozen in the US and the IMF freezing \$460M it will take careful management.

South Korea becomes the first major Asian economy to raise interest rates. South Korea's interest rates [increased](#) by 0.25% as the country is recovering from COVID and is trying to curb high inflation and the risks related to the debt.

IMF extends US\$961 million in Special Drawing Rights to Zimbabwe. The [new issue](#) by the IMF is to help Zimbabwe in dealing with setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The country has set aside part of the money for education, mining, health, agriculture and manufacturing.

Highest unemployment rate in the world recorded in South Africa. South Africa's unemployment rate has [increased](#) from 32.6% in the first quarter to 34.4% in the second quarter. This is mainly due to more than 500 days of national lockdown in the country.

Cuba to recognise, regulate cryptocurrency. Cuba has said it will recognise – and regulate – [cryptocurrencies](#) for payments on the island in a move that could help to circumvent American sanctions.

POLITICS

Brazilian Governors raise concerns about Bolsonaro's support among state police. 25 of the 27 governors have [expressed concern](#) about the high level of support for the president among the country's approximately 500,000 gendarmerie. Although prohibited, many gendarmerie are expected to march on September 7 in support of Bolsonaro.

Australian government makes it harder for minor parties to exist. [Changes to the voting rules](#) means that a party must have at least 1,500 members before being registered as a political party. The legislation was supported by both major parties and includes provisions to make pre-polling more difficult.

The Taliban wants to be recognised by the world, should the west recognise the Taliban? The only way to influence the Taliban may be to [recognise them](#), slowly free up frozen assets and provide developmental support, but the window may be short. The west could influence human rights and impinge on an Islamic State resurgence.

Tunisia banned 50 officials, politicians from travel in past month. President Saied said he was indefinitely extending [emergency measures](#) announced on July 25 that included removing the prime minister, freezing parliament and lifting immunity of its members.

DRC reviewing Chinese mining rights to assure fairness. The Foreign Minister said that the 2007 deal agreed with Chinese state-owned firms Sinohydro Corp and China Railway Group Limited was [being reviewed](#) to ensure it is fair and effective.

PEACEBUILDING

Airbnb and its charitable arm, [Airbnb.org](#), have [pledged](#) that the company will provide free temporary housing globally for 20,000 refugees fleeing the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan. Over the weekend of August 19-20, Airbnb said it had placed 165 refugees in housing across the US.

The [Carter Center](#) released its [preliminary report on Zambia's August 12 general elections](#), which were held successfully despite an unlevel playing field and the COVID-19 pandemic. The international election expert mission that wrote the report is accredited by the

Electoral Commission of Zambia and will continue working to assess the post electoral environment through the end of September.

IBM is [investing](#) \$65 million into earn-while-you-learn apprenticeship programs that usually develop into permanent jobs. Even before the pandemic, the company was having trouble filling some openings and discovered by not requiring a bachelor's degree, they brought in a whole new set of candidates, now filling positions such as lab technicians and project managers. The COVID pandemic has resulted in an even bigger shortage of skilled workers as well as federal money to subsidize training, allowing the company to expand its program.

[Search for Common Ground](#) launched a [short-term project](#) in Sri Lanka to create a digital space for young women to participate in online counter-hate speech campaigns. The project includes preparing training modules on the responsible use of social media and engaging the participants in structured, online capacity building. The project is supported by the [UN Development Programme](#).

The [Alliance for Peacebuilding](#) invites former US government leaders and implementing partners (current and former) to sign on, as individuals, to its [statement](#) calling on President Biden to launch a robust initiative to support civic engagement and democracy-strengthening efforts.