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

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

Here's what you need to know this week:

- Russia forces Ukrainians in occupied territories to fight in its army
- Corporate defaults at fastest pace since financial crisis
- UN: one in three children (under the age of 2) in Gaza acutely malnourished
- Uganda's refugees are 3.6% of its population
- Italy, EU deal with Egypt on cooperation and development

## POLITICS

**India to implement citizenship law for refugees that excludes Muslims.** The Citizenship Amendment Act provides a fast track to naturalisation for individuals who fled to India from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan before December 31, 2014. However, [the law](#) excludes Muslims.

**Thailand's largest political party set to be banned.** Thailand's Election Commission asked the Constitutional Court to [dissolve the political party](#). Move Forward, which won the most seats at last year's general election, because it wanted to modify laws banning negative comments on the monarchy.

**Geert Wilders says he lacks support to become Dutch Prime Minister.** Wilders, whose anti-Islam, anti-immigration platform swept him to a stunning victory in the November election, said he [doesn't have the support](#) of his prospective coalition partners to become the next PM of the Netherlands.

**Haiti's PM Henry resigns as country descends into chaos.** Henry has led Haiti unelected since the 2021 assassination of its last president. As violence worsens, many Haitians are calling for his [resignation](#). \$100m in UN aid and \$30m in humanitarian assistance has been pledged to stabilise the country.

**Venezuela closes airspace to Argentina as reprisal for plane seizure.** Foreign Minister Gil said that his nation would continue to [block its airspace](#) until Caracas had been duly compensated for the “theft” of a Venezuelan plane that was seized in 2022 in Buenos Aires.

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## CONFLICT

**Colombia partly suspends truce with EMC armed rebels.** Colombia suspended a truce with the armed rebel faction the Central General Staff (EMC) in three different parts of the country, citing [violence including an attack on an Indigenous group](#).

**Russia forces Ukrainians in occupied territories to fight in its army.** Russia has successfully imposed its passports on nearly the entire population of occupied Ukraine by making it impossible to survive without the documents, [coercing hundreds of thousands of people into citizenship](#).

**Violence in Syria is on the rise.** As the conflict entered its 14th year, observers say [violence has been on the rise again](#) while the world's attention is mostly focused on other crises, such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

**Niger revokes military accord with US.** Niger's ruling junta [cancelled a military accord](#) that allows military personnel and civilian staff from the US Department of Defense on its soil following a visit by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.

**EU agrees \$5.5bn boost for military aid to Ukraine.** Following negotiations, all the EU's member states agreed to the [European Peace Facility fund](#) which will operate as a giant cashback scheme, giving EU members refunds for sending munitions to other countries.

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## ECONOMICS

**Corporate defaults at fastest pace since financial crisis.** Companies worldwide are [defaulting on their debt at the fastest pace since the 2009 global financial](#)

[crisis](#). While most defaults occurred in the US, an uptick in European bankruptcies is alarming analysts.

**Industries to be most and least disrupted by AI.** Around 65% of information, technology and media jobs are [expected to be disrupted by AI](#), followed by financial and professional services at 60% or more. The least affected will be health care at 20% and construction at 29%.

**Italy, EU deal with Egypt on cooperation and development.** The agreement covers [agricultural and training programs](#) plus collaboration agreements across health, small and medium enterprises, and investments. However, there may be a trade-off where Egypt needs to be tougher on immigrant flows to Europe.

**BOJ raises rates for first time in 17 years.** [The Bank of Japan increased its key interest rate](#) from -0.1% to a range of 0%-0.1%, meaning there are no longer any countries with negative interest rates. This comes after consumer prices rose, and corporations and labour unions agreed on wage rises.

**Biden opposes plan to sell US Steel to Japanese firm.** US President said it was [vital](#) for the American steel company to remain domestically owned and operated as he made the restoration of American manufacturing a cornerstone of his agenda.

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## DEVELOPMENT

**UN agency in Gaza says one in three children under 2 acutely malnourished.** More than five months into Israel's air and ground campaign in Gaza, triggered by Hamas' attack on Oct. 7, much of the enclave is in ruins with most of its population displaced and facing a [major humanitarian crisis](#).

**Batteries and green energies combine for major US climate solutions.** The US is rapidly adding batteries, mostly lithium-ion type, to [store energy at large scale](#). Increasingly, these are getting paired with solar and wind projects to provide 24-hour green energy.

**To save the Amazon Rainforest, improve development.** In a region with some of the highest poverty levels in Brazil, people have abandoned fields, hastening the cycle of deforestation. But [with agricultural improvements](#), poverty and degradation of the forest can be alleviated.

**Methane emissions from energy sector near record high in 2023.** Despite a raft of commitments from the oil and gas industry, [emissions continue to grow to record](#)

[highs](#). IEA said new satellites could help improve monitoring and transparency around leaks of methane.

**EU approves supply chain human rights law.** EU member countries have [agreed to a law](#) that will force companies to uphold environmental and human rights standards in their supply chains.

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## SOCIAL

**Uganda's refugees are 3.6% of its population.** [Most of the refugees come from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), both experiencing high levels of violence. 81% of them are women and children, often fleeing after their villages were assaulted, and their husbands and fathers killed.

**Hunger soars and aid dwindles as gangs in Haiti suffocate country.** About 1.4 million Haitians are [on the verge of famine](#), and more than 4 million require food aid, sometimes eating only once a day or nothing at all, according to aid groups.

**Kenya's biggest Rhino relocation to boost breeding.** Decades after poachers wiped them out, [21 eastern black rhinos move to a new home](#) that will have space to breed and could help increase the population of the critically endangered animals. It was Kenya's biggest rhino relocation ever.

**Roman skeleton helps trace deadly malaria's ancient roots.** Current understanding suggests [malaria parasites reached Europe approximately 2,000 years ago](#), during the Roman Empire. By using a well-preserved Roman skeleton, researchers hope to gain insight into the disease's complex history.

**Germany on track to reach 2030 targets, environment agency says.** Germany aims to cut its greenhouse emissions by 65% by 2030 compared with 1990 and is [currently at 46%](#). Officials said the country's greenhouse emissions fell to 673 million tons, the biggest drop since reunification.

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## PEACEBUILDING

The [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#) has released an evidence-informed guide to major proposals for countering disinformation. [Countering Disinformation Effectively](#) offers insights from empirical research and real-world data on ten case studies using different kinds of policy interventions, including fact-checking, foreign sanctions, algorithmic adjustments, and counter-messaging campaigns. For each case study, the report aims to provide a sense of the prospects for success,

addressing three questions: How much is known about an intervention? How effective is it? And how easy is it to implement at scale?

The [Institute for Multipartisan Education](#) offers support to schools and universities for facilitating constructive disagreement in and out of the classroom. They can provide consulting services and resource development as well as toolkits and initiatives to help professors, teachers, and students engage with polarizing topics while maintaining a commitment to inclusion and justice.

The NGO [Healing Justice](#) works to [reconcile victims of crime with exonerees who were unjustly convicted of those crimes](#). The organization holds retreats using a program designed by psychologists to safely bring together victims of crime and exonerees. Healing Justice also advises prosecutors' offices around the US on dealing more effectively and empathetically with crime victims in exoneration cases, and they've recently gotten a grant from the US Justice Department to expand those efforts. The organization was founded by a rape victim who was devastated to learn years later that she and the police had identified an innocent man who was convicted and sent to prison, while the actual rapist had gone on to attack several more women.

Some US organizations are developing [resources to help people eligible for state benefits get and keep them](#). A Brooklyn company [Propel](#) has created an app that food stamp recipients can use to access the balance on their benefit card. The nonprofit [Code for America](#) has simplified a Minnesota form for a nine-benefit program. The old form took 100 minutes to complete on average; the new one takes 12 minutes, is available in multiple languages, and is at a third-grade reading level. Up to \$80 billion is left on the table each year because of how hard it is to navigate logistical hurdles.