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

CONFLICT

Bangkok anti-government protests see riot police use water cannon and shields. Police had earlier closed roads and [put up barricades](#) around a major Bangkok intersection where some 10,000 protesters defied a strict new state of emergency. The government has banned the Telegram messaging App used by protestors to coordinate demonstrations.

Chinese President Xi Jinping calls on his troops to “prepare for war”. Chinese President Xi Jinping has [called on troops](#) to "put all (their) minds and energy on preparing for war". This comes after Beijing sternly responded to the US' plans to sell offensive weapons to Taiwan.

Hundreds of prisoners are being freed between the warring sides in Yemen. 600 Houthi rebels and 400 pro-government prisoners are expected to be exchanged in the [biggest mass prisoner exchange](#) since the conflict began in 2015.

Australia will join naval drills involving India, US, Japan. Australia will join four-way naval exercises involving the United States, Japan and India, the countries announced on Monday, in a move that could [raise concerns in China](#), which has criticised similar joint drills as destabilising.

DEVELOPMENT

Climate change spurs doubling of disasters since 2000, UN says. The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction said [7,348 major disaster events](#) had occurred between 2000 and 2019, claiming 1.23 million lives, affecting 4.2 billion people and costing the global economy some \$2.97 trillion.

Eight nations sign US-led Artemis moon mining agreement. The United States, Australia, Canada, Japan, Luxembourg, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates signed

the [bilateral agreements](#) during an annual space conference. The US plans to return astronauts to the moon by 2024.

Half of Great Barrier Reef's corals have died over past 25 years. A study published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society Journal found an [alarming rate of decline](#) across all sizes of corals since the mid-1990s on the vast World Heritage-listed reef off Australia's northeastern coast.

Evolution in action: More and more people have three instead of two forearm arteries. The proportion of people with this third artery has [risen from 10% to 30%](#) since the end of the 19th century, according to a study. The researchers see this as a symptom of ongoing human evolution - in 100 years almost everyone could have this artery.

ECONOMICS

China's central bank to cut FX risk reserve ratio to zero. In an effort to expand derivative trading and allow the price of the Yuan to be set independently, [the central bank has slashed](#) company's FX exposure reserve from 20% to zero.

Latin America suffers the biggest economic downturn in 120 years. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Cepal), the gross domestic product will [fall by an average of 9.1 percent this year](#), the sharpest fall since data was recorded in 1900.

Turkey's lira hits an all-time low – again. Geopolitical concerns see lira depreciate to yet [another record low against the US dollar](#). The country's government bonds are priced at 6.4%, compared with 4.25% for similar-maturity notes issued in February.

ECOWAS and AU lift post-coup sanctions on Mali. The organisations have decided to lift the suspension they had imposed against Mali. The suspension of financial flows, cross-border movement, and commercial trade was ended [in response to 'significant advances'](#) towards a return to civilian rule.

POLITICS

China, Cuba and Russia win seats on UN Human Rights Council. In [secret-ballot voting](#) in the 193-member UN General Assembly, Pakistan received 169 votes, Uzbekistan 164, Nepal 150, China 139 and Saudi Arabia received just 90 votes and missed getting a seat. In 2016, the Saudis won a seat with 152 votes.

China passes export control law with potential for rare-earths ban. Legislation empowers the Chinese government to cast a wide net on foreign companies and to [ban the export of strategic materials](#) and advanced technology to specific foreign companies.

Mexico's Former Defense Minister Is Arrested in Los Angeles. Gen. Salvador Cienfuegos Zepeda, who was Mexico's defense minister from 2012 to 2018 under President Pena Nieto, was [arrested by American officials](#) at the request of the Drug Enforcement Administration and will face drug and money-laundering charges in the United States.

Duterte reopens South China Sea oil exploration amid Beijing talks. Philippines takes step toward joint projects with China despite maritime dispute. President Rodrigo Duterte has allowed the [resumption of oil and gas exploration](#) in the South China Sea amid talks with Beijing on possible joint exploratory efforts.

Arms embargo on Iran expires despite US opposition. A 13-year conventional arms embargo on Iran has ended, but the [implications for Iran](#) and the region remain uncertain. Iran can now legally buy and sell conventional arms, including missiles, helicopters and tanks.

SOCIAL

New Zealand's next parliament set to be the most diverse ever. Labour won 64 of the 120 parliamentary seats, with [more than half](#) of those female candidates and 10% being LGBT. It also has 16 indigenous Maori MPs, the first leader of African origin, Ibrahim Omar, and Vanushi Walters of Sri Lankan origin.

Police record 57% rise in suicide rates in Malawi. The dramatic rise has been attributed to the [sharp contraction in economic activity](#) and incomes brought on by the ongoing pandemic. The trend has also shone a light on glaring gaps in mental health support services.

Man denied German citizenship for refusing to shake woman's hand. The man aced the German naturalization test, but [refused to shake hands](#) with the female official handing over his citizenship. Despite claims he will not shake hands with men either, his citizenship has been rejected.

Long-term health problems seen in low-risk COVID-19 patients. The study covered 201 recovering UK patients with an average age of 44, more than 90% of whom did not have risk factors. At an average of [140 days after their symptoms began](#), 98% were still fatigued, 92% had heart and lung symptoms, 88% had muscle aches, 87% had breathlessness, 83% headaches, and 73% gastrointestinal symptoms.

PEACEBUILDING

Peacebuilders and mediators in the US have formed the [Trust Network](#), a broad non-partisan network aiming “to prevent violent conflict before, during and after the U.S. 2020 elections.” The network’s 21 organizational partners are building an “Early Warning, Early Response mechanism.” [Mediators Beyond Borders International](#) (MBBI) is serving as a convener and organizational host. [Election Incident Reporting](#) (EIRUSA) and the [National Association for Community Mediation](#) (NAFCM) are serving as co-conveners and key process facilitators.

Twenty-four International Non-Governmental Organizations have presented a [joint statement on Yemen to the 75th session of the UN General Assembly](#). The statement urges the UN to call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, provide resources to address humanitarian needs, intensify humanitarian diplomacy, pressure warring parties to stop weaponizing the country and restricting access to vital goods and services, suspend transfers of all arms and military weapons, and implement the recommendations of the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen.

The Galapagos Islands have in recent years have adopted a “[self-sustaining, scalable conservation model](#)” that has allowed them to lessen the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. When the pandemic effectively halted tourism, the islands’ main source of income, farms and fisheries provided a critical source of income and food security without coming at the expense of nature. The Galápagos Governing Council, including the mayors and key community and business representatives reached agreement on most issues relating to emergency measures for economic reactivation — without relaxing environmental safeguards.

The [Peace News Network](#) is publishing a series of articles on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding in conflict zones. Fighters in [Afghanistan](#), [Burkina Faso](#), and [Cameroon](#) -- the first three in the series—have taken some limited steps toward a ceasefire or talks during the pandemic. The level of violence has declined in Cameroon and Afghanistan but has increased in Burkina Faso. Food security has declined and the number of people requiring assistance has climbed in all three countries. The pandemic has had a less dramatic impact on [Iraq](#), the fourth country in the series; a ceasefire is largely holding and the level of violence has declined while food security and dependence on assistance has remained steady.