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

CONFLICT

Asia's Muslims still simmer with anger at France. Indonesian president Joko Widodo says French president Emmanuel Macron “insulted Islam” while [40,000 joined protests](#) in Bangladesh’s capital, Dhaka. Other protests took place in Pakistan, Palestine, Iran, and Afghanistan.

IAEA confirms Iran has started construction of underground nuclear facilities. UN’s atomic energy watchdog confirms that Iran has begun building an [underground centrifuge assembly plant](#) and stockpiling greater amounts of low-enriched uranium.

US far-right terrorist plots have outnumbered far-left ones in 2020. This has been so in most years for the past quarter-century. The CSIS found that [far-right groups](#) — including white supremacists, anti-government extremists and involuntary celibates, or “incels”— were behind 67% (41) of the terrorist attacks and foiled plots this year.

Homicide rates around the world continue to fall to record-low levels year after year. Between 1990 and 2015, the number of homicides per 100,000 people [fell by 46% globally](#). Asia and Western Europe historically had the lowest homicide rates and recorded the most significant decreases over the period.

DEVELOPMENT

Canada aims to bring in over 1.2 million immigrants over 3 years to fill workforce shortages and boost the economy. It aims to welcome 232,500 newcomers from the [economic class of immigrants](#) in 2021, as well as 103,500 family members of people already in Canada, 59,500 refugees and other protected persons. Another 5,500 people will be accepted on humanitarian grounds. Canada only had 128,000 immigrants in the first eight months of 2020.

New Zealand voters approve euthanasia but reject recreational marijuana. It will join a small number of countries that have [legalized euthanasia](#) after its citizens voted overwhelmingly in favour of it in a referendum this month but rejected the recreational use of Marijuana.

Solar is now the cheapest electricity in history and just met 100% of demand in South Australia for the first time. A combination of cloudless skies, low energy demand, and mild temperatures helped create conditions for one day for [76% of circulating power](#) to be generated by rooftop solar, with utility-scale solar farms making up the rest.

Shortest measurement ever. Scientists recorded the [fastest thing to ever happen](#) - the time it takes for a photon to cross a single hydrogen molecule - and it lasted 247 zeptoseconds, representing a trillionth of a billionth of a second. This is equivalent to the number 1 written behind a decimal point and 20 zeroes.

ECONOMICS

Global foreign direct investment falls 49%, outlook remains negative. FDI flows to North America [fell by 56%](#) to \$68 billion. The trend was also exacerbated by sharply negative inflows in European economies, mainly in the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The overseas activities of Chinese banks shift up a gear. In many emerging economies, they are the chief source of cross-border loans. Chinese banks provide [26% of all cross-border loans](#) to developing countries today, most of it in US dollars.

Arab states are loading up on debt. By next year public-debt ratios in many Arab countries will be at their [highest in two decades](#). The region's 11 oil-and-gas-exporting countries owed an average of 25% of GDP from 2000 to 2016. Next year the IMF projects that ratio will hit 47%.

Pakistani PM says he will upgrade status of part of Kashmir, angering India. Strategically located Gilgit-Baltistan, with an estimated population of 1.2 million, [borders Afghanistan and China](#), and is at the heart of the \$65 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor infrastructure development plan and is the only land bridge between China and Pakistan.

POLITICS

Thousands of Brazilian politicians are changing racial identities. More than 42,000 candidates in local elections scheduled for November 15th are running as [members of a different race](#) from the one they declared in 2016. Like chameleons, some change the colour of their skin.

Tanzania opposition rejects presidential election result, wants new vote. Tanzania's two leading opposition parties said they [would not recognise the results](#) of a presidential election that handed incumbent John Magufuli a second five-year term.

UK's Labour Party suspends former leader Corbyn after anti-Semitism report. Britain's opposition Labour Party suspended former leader Jeremy Corbyn in light of comments he made

after a report said the party was responsible for [unlawful harassment and discrimination](#) in its handling of allegations of anti-Semitism.

Belarus closes borders with Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Ukraine. The Belarusian ruler Lukashenko has [closed the borders](#) with all neighboring countries except Russia without warning.

Thailand is divided over its monarchy. After months of protests calling for reforms of the nation's monarchy, thousands of Thais marched [in support of the royal family](#). Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn sounded conciliatory in a rare interview, calling Thailand the "land of compromises."

SOCIAL

Pakistan's Islamic council approves the construction of Islamabad's first Hindu temple. The Council of Islamic Ideology, serving as advisors to the government on religious matters, gave its [approval for the construction](#) of Islamabad's first Hindu temple, stressing the constitutional rights of the Hindu minority to perform their rites.

YouTube numbers show our need to escape from reality. The visualization of [guided meditation videos](#) has increased 40% since March. This is only one of the many increases that online streaming services have experienced.

China plans to phase out conventional petrol-burning cars by 2035. China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology has called for [all new vehicles](#) to be either 'new-energy' or hybrid. The goal promises to give tailwind to automakers like Toyota Motor that specialises in hybrid engines.

How one of the world's largest salt water lakes in Iran is disappearing. Rising temperatures, triggered by climate change, poor water management and the construction of dams that prevent fresh water from flowing into Lake Urmia led to the disaster. Heat and drought [caused the water to evaporate](#) in many places and huge areas to disappear under a thick layer of salt.

PEACEBUILDING

The [Trust Network](#) coalition is working to avert potential election-related violence in the US. It aims to develop a network of trusted, local monitors, responders, and messengers who can help deter potential violence and amplify voices for peace. Some members are providing information about the election process. Others are tracking election-related incidents of violence. Still others are offering online training in election monitoring and violence de-escalation. The Network continues to actively recruit people to join the effort during and beyond the election.

The Alliance for Peacebuilding issued [a statement on the U.S. elections](#) and how to prevent violence before, during, and after elections. The statement reads, "Americans must, now

more than ever, work together to prevent violence and address the accelerating conflict dynamics at the community, city, state, and national levels before, during, and, especially, after U.S. elections to build sustainable peace.”

[In a recent commentary](#), Erol Yayboke of the Center for Strategic and International Studies and Elizabeth Hume of the Alliance for Peacebuilding argue that “**ending violent conflicts requires preventing them in the first place.**” They conclude that the Global Fragility Act, passed in December 2019, offers an opportunity to overhaul the US approach to conflict prevention by addressing bureaucratic and political challenges, redressing the funding imbalance between diplomacy, development and military efforts, and changing the public narrative to prioritize peacebuilding.