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

CONFLICT

Talks start between Afghan officials and Taliban. Afghan negotiators and senior officials will fly to Doha for [peace talks with the Taliban](#) after the two sides reached a compromise over the release of prisoners. All but seven of the 5,000 prisoners whose release the Taliban had demanded have been granted.

Al-Shabaab replaces supreme leader. The Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) stated that Ahmed Diriye Abu Ubaidah's deputy has replaced the [gravely ill terrorist leader](#). It is rumoured that the Jihadist group is suffering internal conflict as well as the impact of COVID-19.

Niger's army accused of massacre by Human Rights Commission. Six mass graves have been discovered with over 70 victims during an [investigation into disappearances of citizens](#) earlier in the year. The army has been accused of abuses during counter insurgency operations.

Israel and Hamas reach de-escalation agreement in Gaza. Israel will reopen the border crossing and [let fishermen from Gaza return to sea](#); Hamas will stop firing rockets and sending incendiary and explosive-laden balloons across the border. Qatari mediation and a cash infusion from the emirate for Gaza helped seal the deal.

DEVELOPMENT

IEP announces The Ecological Threat Register (ETR). Due for release on September 9th, the ETR will show both [exposure to risk and the ability of nations and their resilience](#) as – measured by Positive Peace – to deal with major impacts. Ecological risks included in the analysis are water stress, food insecurity, droughts, floods, rising temperature, sea level rise, desertification, cyclones and population growth.

Uganda suspends the operations of refugee aid organizations. The government suspended agencies for non-compliance with operational guidelines and regulations in a [bid to gain control of their operations](#). Only 69 out of 277 organisations are now authorised to continue operations and remain in Uganda.

The EU announces 'Action Plan on Critical Raw Materials'. The goal of this new strategy is to diversify the EU's access to raw materials in order to [avoid over-dependence on any country](#). Currently, around 98% of the EU's supply of rare earth minerals comes from China.

Continued Blue Nile dam dispute leads to aid suspension in Ethiopia. Ethiopia has moved forward with plans to begin filling the reservoir behind the dam. [The US Department of State has decided to pause aid to Ethiopia](#) to express concern over Ethiopia's rushed action prior to a collective agreement.

Zimbabwe to return land seized from foreign farmers. The government last month promised \$3.5 billion in compensation to white farmers who had their land seized in the Mugabe era. On Monday it was said that [foreign citizens who had their land seized](#) could now apply to get it back.

ECONOMICS

World's longest continuous period of economic growth ends. Australia's 29-year growth streak ends and the [country has fallen into recession](#). The country recorded its [biggest economic slump on record](#) as the economy shrank 7% in the second quarter to the end of June.

India's economy contracted by 24% during COVID-19 lockdown. The Indian government adopted a strict lockdown, with businesses shut-down, and [approximately 140 million lost jobs](#). Despite the extensive measures, India is currently experiencing a higher rise in Covid-19 cases than any other country.

Countries with worst rates of COVID-19 also had largest economic contractions. Countries which suffered the most severe economic downturns – Peru, Spain and the UK – are generally among the [countries with the highest COVID-19 death rate](#). Countries where the economic impact has been modest – Taiwan, South Korea, and Lithuania – have also managed to keep the death rate low.

POLITICS

EU warns Turkey of sanctions as east Mediterranean crisis worsens. The European Union has threatened Turkey with fresh sanctions - [including tough economic measures](#) - unless progress is made in reducing soaring tensions with Greece and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean.

US troops to start extended exercises in Lithuania amid tensions over Belarus. U.S. troops and tanks have arrived in Lithuania for a [two-month deployment near the Belarus border](#). The troops are arriving earlier and staying longer than the government had indicated before the outbreak of protests.

US places International Criminal Court officials on sanctions list. The relationship between the US and ICC has been declining steadily, with the Secretary of State recently accusing the

body of [‘illegitimate attempts to subject Americans to its jurisdiction’](#). The UN issued a statement saying ‘We continue to closely follow developments on this matter.’

How might the West respond to Russia over Navalny poisoning? Angela Merkel is considering [cancelling the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline](#) from Russia, while other considerations are limiting western exposure to Russian sovereign debt, implementing economic sanctions, diplomatic explosions or targeted travel bans.

Qatar increases freedom and wages of migrant workers. Migrant workers will [no longer require the permission of their employers](#) to find new jobs and the law will also increase the minimum wage.

SOCIAL

Report finds 93% of Black Lives Matter protests in US were peaceful. Peaceful protests were reported in over 2,400 distinct locations around the country. Violent demonstrations, meanwhile, have been [limited to fewer than 220 locations](#) — under 10% of the areas that experienced peaceful protests.

No bounce in support for Trump as Americans see pandemic, not crime, as top issue. Most Americans do not see crime as the major problem confronting the nation and a [majority remain sympathetic to anti-racism protests](#), according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll.

Australian electricity companies sell data, allowing Amazon to see inside homes. Smart meters deliver [information about household power](#) use but also reveal things like the number of televisions you have, the age of your fridge and other appliances, and the number of people in your home. Amazon will use this for marketing.

Google embraces Taiwan as Asia hub with third data centre. Due to the island’s location which is strategically well suited for an [Asian data transfer hub](#), Google will build a third data centre in Taiwan.

It's raining cannabis packets over Tel Aviv. To promote the legalisation of cannabis, [activists dropped dozens of bags of marijuana](#) on Tel Aviv using a drone. Two men were then arrested.

PEACEBUILDING

Peace Direct has created a digital [Platform4Dialogue](#) that offers a space for organizations to facilitate extended asynchronous discussions. Peace Direct, [The Bail Project](#), [Activate Labs](#), [+Peace](#), and [The Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation](#) used the platform for a dialogue on Racial Justice and Building Peace in the US on August 18-20. The [Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom](#) is planning a discussion on Women, Peace and Security on September 15-17. Peace Direct will hold a consultation on September 29-30 on the impact of the COVID-19 on local peacebuilding, following up on a [discussion in April](#) convened by Peace Direct, Humanity United and Conducive Space for Peace.

Urban Rural Action, Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation, News Literacy Project, BridgeUSA, and BridgePeople are

launching **United for Action: America** nationwide on **September 9th**. The initiative aims to “build relationships and promote collaboration” across political, racial, geographic, generational, and other divides.

+Peace is planning a **Peacebuilding Action Week from September 14 to 21** and inviting organizations around the world to use **#PeaceHereNow** to share their events. The theme is “Peace Here Now” acknowledging the “need for peacebuilding to permeate in all aspects of our lives.”

Some peacebuilding organizations are advocating a more inclusive approach to US foreign policy. One Earth Future has published a policy brief entitled *Security for All: Applying the Women, Peace and Security Lens to the COVID-19 Pandemic Response in the US*, arguing that the US needs to “look past traditional security thinking and take into account differing experiences and needs among the population.” The International Center for Research on Women has published a report on *Feminist Foreign Policy*, drawing on the experience of Sweden, Canada, Luxembourg and Mexico, which have all announced a commitment to a feminist foreign policy, to consider how these examples might inform US foreign policy.