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

Here’s what you need to know this week:

- Saudi Arabia to host Peace Summit organized by Kyiv
- Israel tensions mount as army reservists threaten to refuse duty
- Ecuador declares prison emergency as 18 inmates killed and 100 guards taken hostage
- Bolivia is the latest South American nation to use China’s yuan for trade in challenge to the dollar
- Japan’s population drops by nearly 800,000 for the first time
- China, US agree to continue close communications on climate issue
SPECIAL EDITION: UKRAINE

Saudi Arabia to host Peace Summit organized by Kyiv. The talks will take place in Jeddah, August 5-6. The meetings are to include Western officials and representatives from up to 30 countries, including Brazil, India, and South Africa, and a high-level US official will participate.

Drone attack on Moscow injures one and temporarily closes an airport. It was the fourth such attempt at a strike on the capital this month and the third in a week, fuelling concerns about Moscow's vulnerability to attacks.

African leaders urge Putin to end the war with Ukraine during the Russian-African Summit. During the Russian-Africa summit, African leaders advocated for an end to the war and an extension of the grain deal.

POLITICS

Israel tensions mount as army reservists threaten to refuse duty. This month, more than 10,000 reservists signed a public letter saying they would ask to be released from service if the coalition went ahead with the first major element of the legislation – which passed 64-0 in the Knesset.
West Africa threatens force on Niger coup leaders and French embassy attacked. The fifteen-nation ECOWAS imposed sanctions and threatened force if Niger’s coup leaders fail to reinstate the ousted President, while supporters of the junta attacked the French embassy in Niamey.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen announces handover of power to son. Long time Cambodian leader Hun Sen will step down as prime minister and hand the position to his eldest son, who won a seat in parliament for the first time in the recent election. He is also head of the army.

US-Saudi discussions on far-reaching diplomatic plan for Middle East. The deal would entail a US-Saudi security pact, a recognition of Israel in exchange for improvements in the plight of Palestinians, including a halt to a Jewish settlement building and a promise never to annex the West Bank.

Colombian President’s son arrested in money-laundering inquiry. The son of the Colombian president has been arrested as part of a high-profile money-laundering investigation into funds he allegedly collected from convicted drug traffickers during last year’s presidential campaign.
**Ecuador declares prison emergency as 18 inmates killed and 100 guards taken hostage.** Ecuador's president, Guillermo Lasso, has declared a 60-day state of emergency throughout the country's prisons and authorized the armed forces to retake control of jails after criminal gangs had seized control of them.

**US orders government personnel, family members to leave Haiti.** The US State Department ordered non-emergency government personnel and family members to leave Haiti, citing "kidnapping, crime, civil unrest, and poor health care infrastructure."

**Mexican security forces were complicit in kidnapping of 43 student teachers.** The Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) tasked with investigating the case said in their findings that the Army, Navy, police and intelligence agencies knew, minute by minute, where the students were.

**Bomb at a political rally in northwest Pakistan kills at least 40 people.** A powerful bomb claimed by Islamic State ripped through a rally of supporters for a hard-line cleric and political leader in Pakistan's north-western Bajur district that borders Afghanistan.

**West Africa records 1800 terrorist attacks in the first half of 2023.** According to an ECOWAS official, West Africa has recorded about 1800 terrorist attacks in the first half of the year and nearly 4,600 deaths. The reasons for this spike have been identified as fake news, organised crimes, unconstitutional changes and illegal maritime activities.
ECONOMICS

Bolivia is the latest South American nation to use China’s yuan for trade in challenge to the dollar. Bolivia is now using the yuan to pay for imports and exports, becoming the latest country in South America to regularly use the Chinese currency in a small but growing challenge to the hegemony of the US dollar.

Bank of England set to incur £150bn loss from bond sales after interest rate rise. Higher interest rates will force the Bank of England to make a loss of £150bn from the sale of bonds bought to shore up the UK’s financial system over the last 14 years.

Banks vote to limit accounting of emissions in bond and stock sales. Banks working to develop global standards on accounting for carbon emissions in bond or stock sale underwriting have voted to exclude most of these emissions from their own carbon footprint.

IMF edges 2023 global economic growth forecast higher. The IMF, in its latest World Economic Outlook, said inflation was coming down and acute stress in the banking sector had receded. However, the balance of risks facing the global economy remained tilted to the downside, and credit was tight.
Investors are dumping China and choosing other emerging markets. Investor aversion to China has intensified this year following a post-COVID economic rebound and renewed Sino-US tensions over trade, tech and geopolitics. Investors diverted into markets directly benefiting from China’s economic pain, such as Mexico, India, and Vietnam.

DEVELOPMENT

Japan’s population drops by nearly 800,000 for the first time. The total population, including foreign nationals, fell to 125 million. The aging Japanese society is posing a significant challenge, and the government is considering various measures to address the population decline.

China’s property meltdown is gathering pace. China is on the cusp of tipping into deflation. Its most recent reading for June, inflation came in at zero, dashing hopes that it might be able to avoid a crushing recession.

Kenya ready to lead multinational force to Haiti. Kenya is ready to lead a multinational force into Haiti, which is experiencing a surge in violence between police and gangs. An escalation of violence by Haiti’s armed gangs is driving a humanitarian crisis that has displaced tens of thousands of people.
NASA awards Blue Origin contract to develop lunar solar panels. Jeff Bezos' private space company announced it had developed an autonomous method for making unlimited solar panels for space missions using only lunar materials. The company expects to demonstrate the technology by 2026.

Denmark considers banning burning of holy texts including Qur'an at protests. The Danish government say such demonstrations play into the hands of extremists and can have 'significant negative consequences for Denmark' with regard to security.

SOCIAL

China, US agree to continue close communications on climate issue. The two sides exchanged views on topics such as strengthening and promoting cooperation in the global climate multilateral process. The talks were between climate envoy Xie Zhenhua and his U.S. counterpart John Kerry.

Congressional hearing hears that Aliens exist. Grusch, who led the analysis of unexplained anomalous phenomena within the US Department of Defence until 2023,
appeared before a US congressional committee and claimed that the US government is harbouring “intact and partially intact” and “non-human” pilots.

UNESCO calls for global ban on smartphones in schools. UNESCO said there was evidence that disproportionate mobile phone use was linked to reduced educational performance and that high levels of screen time had a negative effect on children’s emotional stability.

3D bioprinting reveals a new approach for killing solid cancer tumours. Embedding natural killer cells inside 3D bio-printed hydrogel can help them retain their viability and target solid cancer tumours more effectively.

PEACEBUILDING

The UN has awarded its Human Rights Prize for 2023 to three groups and two individuals. The groups include a Global Coalition that has been instrumental in the UN General Assembly’s backing for "the universal recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment." The Coalition consists of over 1350 civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples, social movements, and local communities from 75 countries across the world. The UN Human Rights Prize is awarded once every five years to several recipients at a time. This year is the first time that it has been granted to a global coalition.

The Tanenbaum Center has released its Education program’s newest curriculum. Its Transforming Conflict: Tools for Building Respect in Our Diverse World! is designed to teach students in grades 6-12 skills for positive communication and inclusion, especially in times of conflict. This curriculum is an addition to Religions in My Neighborhood and World Olympics. These resources can be downloaded for free from the Tanenbaum website.

According to a new study of more than 4,100 young people (aged 14 to 30), four out of five say gun violence is a problem in the US and a majority support stricter gun laws. On average, youth know at least one person who has been injured or killed by a gun; 25 percent of them have been in an active shooter lockdown; and they have
concerns about their own safety in schools. More than 40 percent of those surveyed have at least somewhat easy access to a gun. The report was published by Everytown for Gun Safety, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and American University's Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab.

Several recent publications have called for additional funding for US election security and administration ahead of the 2024 election. A Local Election Officials Survey conducted by the Brennan Center for Justice highlighted the high rate of turnover among election officials prompted by concerns about their personal safety and political interference in election administration. In Their Own Words: Threats and Harassment Facing Local Officials, a publication by the Bridging Divides Initiative based on conversations with 30 diverse elected officials, identified gaps in support for election officials. Democracy Under Threat: A Spotlight on 204 Officials Who Could Undermine Our Elections, which was published by Informing Democracy, identifies elected officials in six states who continue to challenge and spread misinformation about legitimate election results.