

208
DECEMBER
2018

THE WORLD IN 2019: ten issues that will shape the global agenda*

*Text finalised on December 19th, 2018. This Nota Internacional is the result of collection reflection by CIDOB's research team in collaboration with ESADEGEO. Coordinated and edited by Eduard Soler i Lecha, it has benefitted from the contributions of Hannah Abdullah, Dídac Amat, Anna Ayuso, Jordi Bacaria, Pol Bargués, Moussa Bourekba, Victor Campdelacreu, Ignasi Camí, Carmen Claudín, Carme Colomina, Anna Estrada, Francesc Fàbregues, Oriol Farrés, Agustí Fernández de Losada, Blanca Garcés, Eva Garcia, Francis Ghilès, Sean Golden, Josep Maria Lloveras, Óscar Mateos, Sergio Maydeu, Pol Morillas, Yolanda Onghena, Francesco Pasetti, Enrique Rueda, Olatz Ribera, Jordi Quero, Cristina Sala, Elena Sánchez, Héctor Sánchez, Ángel Saz, Antoni Segura, Cristina Serrano, Marie Vandendriessche, Lorenzo Vidal and Eckart Woertz.

CIDOB
BARCELONA
CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS

ESADE
Ramon Llull University
ESADEgeo- CENTER
FOR GLOBAL ECONOMY
AND GEOPOLITICS

In 2019 the cards will be laid on the table. A great deal is at stake: the future of the international order's institutions, and the democracy, dignity and social and labour rights many societies considered secure or took for granted. We will learn how powerful is the offensive to erode these principles, and how agile and creative is the capacity to resist. But opportunities will arise amid the fray. These are old battles but they have new protagonists and new ideas. The game will be played at various levels: between the major powers, between different conceptions of the international order, and between distinct ideas about society. The third of these contests will take on greater importance if forms of positive resistance to the advocates of withdrawal, hard-line approaches and self-interest are consolidated: principal among them are feminism – a major transformative force – digital activism, and the pride certain urban spaces take in their open, diverse and connected societies. The game will not end in 2019, but it will be a time to take positions and to define alliances and strate-

gies. The importance of this year will not be determined by the end result of this confrontation but by the confirmation that basic elements of global progress are at stake. In 2019 it's back to basics.

In 2019 a great deal is at stake: the future of international order's institutions, and the democracy, and social and labour rights many societies considered secure. Ten issues will shape the global agenda:

- 1. The rules of the game: multilateralism and polarity**
- 2. Preparing (or not) for the next economic crisis**
- 3. Between the platform economy and the digital oligopoly**
- 4. Democracy, global regression and resistance**
- 5. Parallel realities, the crisis of trust and digital combat**
- 6. Normalisation of conflict (and violences)**
- 7. Border desires: physical and symbolic walls**
- 8. A protracted Brexit**
- 9. Brazil: division with global reverberations**
- 10. Iran: scope and consequences of the sanctions**

1. The rules of the game: multilateralism and polarity

The United States set about undermining multilateralism as soon as Donald Trump took office. In 2018, the US cut its funding for the UNRWA (the UN agency responsible for Palestinian refugees), abandoned the negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, withdrew from the nuclear agreement with Iran (known as the JCPOA), from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) signed in 1987 with the Soviet Union, and from the UN's Human Rights Council. Nothing suggests this trend will be reversed in 2019. Other countries may follow the same

path, either out of affinity with Trump's foreign policy, or because they consider an appropriate time has come to question multilateral frameworks in which they are poorly represented. The announcements at the end of 2018 of Brazil rejecting the presidency of the COP25 and various countries withdrawing from the Global Compact on Migration suggest the presence of this trend.

The tension between China and the United States, with the trade war as its backdrop, will keep the other international actors on tenterhooks. The G20 summit in Buenos Aires managed to delay the imposition of new trade tariffs by a few months, but the truce does not mean a change of direction that will avert a potential collision between the two economic superpowers. In 2019 three scenarios may result: a clash, a new extension, or a surprise turn in the form of a bilateral agreement from which both players proclaim themselves victors. In any of these three cases, the decisive characteristic is the strength and strategy of the opponents and not respect for the rules of the game or the other players. In one form or another, to a greater or lesser degree, multilateralism will emerge weakened. 2019 is a year in which trust will be eroded, leaving us in a worse condition to react jointly to any challenges of global dimensions.

In 2019 two paradoxes will arise: with the zeal of the convert China will emerge as the champion of multilateralism and this means institutions and frameworks that were already

The importance of this year will not be determined by the end result of the confrontations but by the confirmation that basic elements of global progress are at stake

dysfunctional such as the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Security Council will be idealised. This will also be a year in which we will have a sense of whether the problem is the rules of the game – and if this is the case, new rules will have to be proposed – or whether we are witnessing a deeper crisis of values and the alternative is therefore to play without rules or without institutions that ensure compliance with them.

It will also be a year in which we will know whether this is a game in which there are only two important players – thereby advancing towards a new bipolar dynamic but with obsolete rules – or whether the other players decide to turn away and play from their own hands. 2019 should be a year for taking matters in hand, especially for actors like the European Union, who have been defending multilateralism with greater vigour and who will have to decide whether to choose to take a step forward in defending already existing institutions and frameworks or, on the other hand, to accept that a new phase has begun in which the best form of defending it is to accept its fragmentation. In other words, whether they accept that simultaneous games will be played or – and which comes to the same thing – that the absence of global consensus could give precedence to regional and inter-regional agreements. If it is the latter, they will face an added

problem: the rivalry between regional powers – often ideological in nature – which is already taken many organisations hostage.

2. Preparing (or not) for the next economic crisis

In 2019 speculation will grow about the trigger of the next global economic crisis and whether we are better or worse prepared to face it than in 2008. Three possible causes will be given: the disruptive effects to the global economy of the possible trade war between the United States and China; a global crisis with its origin, this time, in emerging countries; or some of the European Union's weak flanks sowing uncertainty at global level.

The gradual ending of the monetary expansion cycle, the fluctuations in the energy markets and the fear of contagion between and from emerging economies could deepen the financial difficulties already felt in 2018. The more debt an economy has in dollars, the more it will suffer from interest rate rises in Washington in the form of currency devaluation, unchecked inflation and difficulty accessing credit. Governments that introduced austerity measures in 2018 such as Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Turkey, Algeria, Egypt, South Africa, Sudan and Pakistan may suffer even more from a perception of economic deterioration that translates into increased social unrest. In some of these countries the economic turbulence may be increased by coinciding with

electoral processes, above all after elections have been held and the time comes to implement new cuts. In chronological order, Turks elect their mayors in March, Algerians their president in May, South Africans have general elections some time between May and August, and Argentineans do the same on October 27th.

If, on the other hand, we turn our attention to Europe, the main headaches will be Italy and Brexit, an issue we develop further on. Italy has experienced low growth for over two decades but managed to dodge the ghost of bailouts during the previous crisis. The main fear this time will be that, in the case of severe economic difficulties, the eurozone will have neither the political will nor the resources to keep the third largest economy in the euro afloat and protect it from speculative shocks. The premise that Italy is "too big to fail" will increase the Italian government's defiant attitude towards the European institutions. If the excessive deficit procedure to Italy comes into effect with the obligatory vote and decision of the Council of the European Union, the options for defending the euro from the debt crisis will come up against defending members states' budgetary sovereignty. In the year of the twentieth anniversary of the euro's creation, the European Union may find itself obliged to choose between bad and worse, and handling this turbulence will keep the markets (pre)occupied.

In contrast to what would be reasonable, the acknowledgement that sooner or later an economic crisis will arrive and the identification of weak points will not result in an acceleration or intensification of the measures for facing them

with better guarantees and lower costs. The optimists (and we must hope they are right) will hope fear of the cliff edge tempers the temptation to return to protectionism. Another crisis cannot be avoided – they are cyclical – but its intensity can be reduced. While we await a new shock 2019 will continue to show the ravages of the previous crisis in the form of growing inequalities with increasingly visible territorial and generational derivations. In other words, as only some of the causes of the 2008 crisis have been partially addressed, handling its consequences will remain a pending issue. Hence, when a new crisis arises the doubt will surface of whether this is really something new or proof that the previous crisis was never really overcome.

3. Between the platform economy and digital oligopoly

2018 has been a year in which discussion of the effects of the business model of many digital platforms has been generalised and terms such as “uberisation” have begun to form part of everyday language. In 2019 this phenomenon will be consolidated and extended, and the relative weight of digital companies – including platforms – in the global economy will continue to grow and with that growth the perception of this phenomenon will quickly change. These companies will no longer be seen as friendly initiatives launched by young entrepreneurs but as an overwhelming reality that is able to sweep traditional operators aside and change the rules of the game in the labour market. They will no longer be seen as exponents of the collaborative economy but as intermediaries between economic actors with large profit margins.

Public administrations at all levels, along with certain sectors of society, will consider more robustly how to tackle this phenomenon and, above all, the negative externalities it may provoke. The technological, innovative and often deterritorialisated nature of this business model will present additional challenges in fiscal and regulatory terms. But the oligopolistic tendencies and lack of protection for labour and privacy rights will also cause concern. Housing and everything related to it will be particularly prominent, especially in large cities. The cause will lie less in the platform economy than in how it combines with other trends such as the rent-seeking in the property market that is increasing the problems of access to housing for an increasingly large number of workers.

The perception and effects of the platform economy phenomenon will differ according to social context. Suspicion will rise in many post-industrial societies, particularly where high-quality services and high levels of social and labour protection were in already place. On the other hand, in many developing countries, and especially where services are poor and labour or consumer rights fictional, the explosion of these new platforms will be seen as an opportunity that has positive effect on everyday life, as a source of inspiration when building a more entrepreneurial culture and as a formula for bypassing patronage networks often linked to established political power.

Precisely because the social debate on this phenomenon will intensify, it will divert the attention from another economic (and social) phenomenon that is just as relevant, if not more so: the hegemony of a very small number of digital companies and the growing divorce between capital and work. The world’s five largest companies by market capitalisation all belong to this category: Apple, Amazon, Alphabet, Microsoft and Facebook. None is among the world’s largest employers, but they are, on the other hand, at the vanguard of what is surreptitiously called “fiscal optimisation”. Other meaningful facts: in 2018, Jeff Bezos, Amazon’s founder, became the world’s richest person and Netflix overtook Disney as the largest audiovisual company. 2019 will be a year of new records that lay bare both the strength of the digital economy and the risks of an oligarchic drift.

4. Democracy, global regression and resistance

In 2018, populist forces – openly xenophobic, in many cases – came to power in countries such as Brazil and Italy. In 2019 we will have to pay great attention to whether exercising power takes its toll on them. We will also find out whether this ideological group’s attempts to generate a shared political strategy are likely to bear fruit. Above all we will see the extent to which they are able to force regressions on issues of gender, immigration, the death penalty and LGBTI rights. On this they can count on the complicity of other “strong

2019 is a year in which trust will be eroded, leaving us in a worse condition to react jointly to any global challenge

men” such as Trump, Putin, Duterte, Orbán and Erdoğan.

The intensity of the regressions will be measured not only by what these forces propose but by the risk of other political movements normalising, and in the worst cases adopting, part of their discourse. The risk exists of falling into a discursive trap that obliges a choice to be made between “security for us” and “rights for them”. In 2019 one of the great battlegrounds for what we may now call the “right-wing populist international” will be the elections to the European Parliament. This will be the moment to check whether these movements have managed to unite and whether their strategy is no longer that of halting the European construction but instead of appropriating it. There can be no doubt that the strengthening of these groups would further fragment the European Parliament and have the potential to produce institutional dysfunction. But it may also promote a new culture of pact-making in which groups such as the greens – held up in many cases as the main opposition to populism and withdrawal – and certain parts of the non-social democratic left that capitalise on the indignation about widening inequalities will play a more central role.

Outside Europe, the elections in Canada will also provide clues to the global nature of this battle, not least because immigration will be prominent in the electoral campaign. What is more, the fact that some of the world’s most populous democracies – India, Nigeria and Indonesia, that is to say, near-

ly two billion people – have dates at the ballot boxes in 2019, will remind us that the West is not the only field in which the defence of democracy and its capacity to adapt to new challenges is at stake.

The emancipatory protests that spread around half the world in 2011 have gradually given way to a period of withdrawal. Will 2019 be a turning point? Throughout 2018 we have observed the renewed strength of feminism and coordinated work between cities that have, on certain issues such as climate and immigration, come to defy their respective governments. The stronger the regressive movements grow, the more dynamism and breadth a resistance will acquire that is not content with defending the *status quo ante* but will propose a new democratic agenda. Work in networks and coordination between traditional mechanisms of social mobilisation and new technologies will shape the progress in achieving this agenda.

5. Parallel realities, the crisis of trust and digital combat

The gradual ending of the monetary expansion cycle, the fluctuations in energy markets and the fear of contagion between and from emerging economies could deepen the financial difficulties already felt in 2018

The 2018 Brazilian elections suggest a transformation in the use of (dis)information in political activity. The efforts – and hence the disruptive effects – moved from social networks and open platforms to trusted closed digital spaces such as WhatsApp. This means rethinking strategies to adapt to distinct legal, technological and ethical parameters. While this is the trend, some of the ideas proposed in terms of regulation – especially focussed on social networks – will have become obsolete by the time they come into effect.

While in previous years the fashionable concepts have been “infocination”, “post-truth” and “fake news” in 2019 this new society fragmented by information will increasingly express itself through online identities and will continue to configure a digital tribalism that isolates some groups from others. New technologies have placed an enormous amount of information within the reach of citizens and allow them to access highly divergent interpretations of reality. Nevertheless, this technological evolution and the prevailing business model is isolating the digital user within communities that feed back into themselves and reaffirm themselves in their positions, delegitimising those who think differently, questioning the notion of objectivity and contributing to the creation of parallel realities. This exacerbates – and is in part strengthened – by the distrust of intermediaries, experts, journalism and even professional politics. The erosion is even greater when this distrust is extended even to the other citizens who do not form part of the same digital tribe.

The fragmentation and crisis of trust will deepen in 2019 and with it so will the reflection on how to face it, especially among groups who are committed to open societies. Politicisation and charismatic figures combined with positive messages and new representations – based on generation, gender, class or identity – may be the trump card for tackling processes of withdrawal. We saw this in the US mid-term elections of November 2018. The 2019 European elections could be a second laboratory for the formulation of positive alternatives and, possibly, a turning point at the level of electoral participation if thought about in these terms.

6. Normalisation of conflict (and violences)

Most of the conflicts that have broken out over recent decades fail to show signs of resolution. There are exceptions, such as the agreement reached in 2018 between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the thawing of relations between the two Koreas, and the relative advances in the conversations between Serbia and Kosovo. Nevertheless, the trend is towards the chronification of conflicts and even towards increased tension in certain crisis whose intensity had previously dropped, such as that between Ukraine and Russia. Not only have conflicts been normalised, so have their effects: states that exist in appearance only, borders that lose their meaning and, above all, underfunded humanitarian needs and forced displacement of people that, far from receding, continue to grow.

What is receding is the attention paid internationally to these points of instability.

Fatigue grows, the sense of urgency disappears and the hope of finding arrangements that are satisfactory for the parties involved wears out. That does not mean that in 2019 no proposals will be on the table. A good example is the already famous “agreement of the century” the United States is promoting to put an end to over 70 years of Arab-Israeli conflict. Attention will have to be paid to the electoral ramifications as Netanyahu may find himself compelled to call early elections. But this plan, like others that may be proposed for Syria, Libya or Yemen, will be received with scepticism and, above all, will not be seen as mechanisms for ending the violence in the field.

International action will not aim to achieve situations of peace and much less build democratic, liberal states. In a context of lowered expectations it would be considered a success to contain the points of instability, stopping the phenomenon of territories that escape the control of their respective states, increasing the resilience of societies while absorbing crises that crop up, avoiding conflicts spreading towards neighbouring territories and, above all, preventing their effects reaching developed countries. We will see this in the formulation and development of the missions of the United Nations, the European Union and other international organisations in the countries of Western Africa and the Sahel. To the extent that the aim is to prevent the situation from degenerating, a certain level of violence will be normalised.

Only when victims manage to make themselves visible and proximate, for which they need international collaboration, will the attention of public opinion and global leaders be regained. It is a long-distance race, as the campaigns to raise awareness about the Rohingya, the war in Yemen and violence against women in all manner of contexts demonstrate. A novelty in 2019 will be that Latin America and specifically Central America will play a more prominent role in the global discussions on violence than in the past. The migrant caravans leaving Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador in autumn 2018 were a reminder of the extremely high levels of violence from which many Latin American societies suffer.

7. Border desires: physical and symbolic walls

In 2019 the 30th anniversary will be celebrated of the fall of one famous wall: Berlin's. And yet it will be a year in which many more are put up, both physical and symbolic. The dynamics of withdrawal and the desire to contain pockets of instability have a clear reflection in two parallel processes that will continue growing stronger in 2019: the militarisation and fortification of existing borders and the externalisation of border control. United States and European Union policies will contribute to building international standards. Australia will be a reference point, along with many other Asian, North African and Middle Eastern countries who are putting a great deal of effort into sealing borders.

For migrants, the increase of risk and violence en route will provoke a greater feeling of urgency to reach the final goal. This is one of the points where Spain will take on greater international importance in 2019. Great attention will also have to be paid to the effects of border militarisation in spaces where territorial limits exist only on paper because local communities ignored them and maintained strong social and economic ties. The Sahel is one area where this dynamic will be most intense.

The other side of the coin will be the dynamics of trans-territoriality that have one old protagonist – diasporas – and one newer one – social networks and digital platforms. Even as physical borders are erected, the circulation of ideas and information will grow, generating new (inter)cultural dynamics and, on occasions, political and social mobilisation. The urban centres can be laboratories of debordering and hybridisation. Cities will be the setting in which the confrontation will be settled between hospitality and hostility.

The global phenomenon of increased internal inequalities is erecting social borders that are less visible but no less significant. The distance is growing between spaces that generate wealth, attract talent and investment and those that remain on the margins of the dynamics of growth and that even depopulate. Fragmentation of political communities increases with major electoral impact as seen in the United States and in many European countries. Invisible walls are also those that segregate the neighbourhoods of individual cities by

levels of education, healthcare, infrastructure and facilities. It will be shown that borders do not have to be either physical or political to be meaningful.

8. Protracted Brexit

March 29th 2019 is marked on the international calendar as the deadline for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. That is what British citizens expressed in the referendum in 2016 and that is what the government requested when activating the famous Article 50. The genie was let out of the lamp when then prime minister, David Cameron, erred in his calculations for maintaining control of the Conservative Party. At the end of 2018 domestic policy issues, particularly the fratricidal confrontation among the Tories, again unleashed all manner of speculation. Could the clock be stopped? Would it be possible to back out? Are both parties really prepared for a no-deal scenario? Can what has already been agreed be renegotiated?

As the decisive moment has approached the unknowns have become no clearer and doubts have instead grown around when and how this saga will end. Nevertheless, all the pos-

The stronger the regressive movements grow, the more dynamism and breadth a resistance will acquire that is not content with defending the *status quo ante* but will propose a new democratic agenda

sible scenarios for 2019 converge around two certainties. The first is that everything Brexit-related will continue to shape the European agenda not just this year but beyond it, consuming efforts and diverting attention from other equally urgent priorities. The United Kingdom will continue to be tethered one way or another to the European Union and even in a no-deal or in a "hard Brexit" scenario it will be very difficult to reverse 40 years of regulatory convergence and commercial, human and political relations between the United Kingdom and the continent. The second certainty is that British society will remain divided. Brexit is a reflection of a series of divisions (generational, territorial, socio-educational and identity-related) that have emerged with particular severity in the United Kingdom, but are also present in other European societies.

2019 should be another year of introspection. A time to evaluate the risks and consequences of the decisions made in 2016. It is highly difficult, not to say impossible, to see any of the main players in this episode emerging as victor. More likely is that they will be left to count their losses. Any dramatic shifts that occur in injury time could further increase the perception of risk. Clearly, the United Kingdom will be the country that is most affected by this uncertainty but its effects will spread to places where the economic and human links with the United Kingdom are strongest: Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and, of course, Ireland. For the latter, the final outcome must not alter the balances that allowed the Northern Ireland conflict, which lasted decades and left more than 3000 people dead, to be buried.

9. Brazil: division with global reverberations

In our report for 2018 we warned that the elections in Latin America would take place in a context of polarisation. And indeed, the battle was not for the centre ground but a counterposing of highly distinct models, and the middle classes – fearful of losing their status or jaded by the corruption of previous governments – tipped the balance. The elections that carried Jair Bolsonaro to the Brazilian presidency were the most notable example of this dynamic, both due to the intensity of the political and social fragmentation and the country's particular weight in the Americas. Politically, 2019 will begin with the new Brazilian president's inauguration, which is planned for January 1st.

Brazil is a mirror in which many of the dynamics that will shape 2019 will be reflected, at times with real intensity. We will have to pay great attention to the evolution of the Brazilian economy, as it will be one of the scenarios that will condition the global perception of the fragility or resistance capacity of the emerging economies and even where the line is drawn between different types of emerging econo-

The trend is towards the chronification of conflicts and even towards increased tension in certain crisis whose intensity had previously dropped, such as that between Ukraine and Russia

my: China and India on one side and the rest on the other. We will witness the political and social division between those who feel like victors and those who have been cornered and who, to a large extent, are also the main victims of the economic deterioration. The populism and aggressiveness Bolsonaro displayed in the electoral campaign will be transformed into government action with a strong militarist component. Over the first months, many will ask whether the exercise of power will soften their positions. The Donald Trump precedent is not particularly encouraging. Continuing with the United States parallel we will see the extent to which Brazilian society mobilises against some of Bolsonaro's policies or gestures, and whether democratic resistance phenomena with new forms of mobilisation and solidarity mechanisms emerge.

Brazil's political shift will acquire global importance as a reverberation of the Trumpist worldview and specially if a new means of attacking multilateralism opens up. Nevertheless, this political shift will have greatest impact in Latin America. In 2019 the regional divide will widen and Venezuela will continue to be one of its epicentres. Cuba, on the other hand, will seek to make trade-offs and continue its policy of diversifying partners. But the novelty will be that Brasilia's alignment with Washington will begin a revision of the traditional struggle for regional leadership with Mexico. López Obrador's victory in the Mexican elections has placed the two main Latin American powers poles apart. Which of the two will be better able to negotiate and evade the storms that await them both?

10. Iran: scope and consequences of the sanctions

In 2018 we said that the Gulf had acquired greater centrality. The trend will be maintained in 2019. We will see how united the anti-Iran bloc led by the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia is and, above all, what the scope and consequences are of the sanctions imposed by Washington. The most immediate impact is on Iran's society and economy. Those most harmed will be reformist sectors of the regime that had promised economic dynamism and an international opening up. On the other hand, the hardest-line factions of the regime, along with the sectors that are best established within a self-sufficient economy, will feel more legitimated and will feed the rhetoric that Iran should set itself to resistance mode. Yet, in 2019 the fortieth anniversary will be celebrated of the Islamic Revolution and it is likely that this event will be taken advantage of to unite the regime against external enemies.

In 2019, we will also see if the grace period given to eight countries to correct their dependence on Iranian oil runs out or whether another extension is granted. The decision will be conditioned by oil prices, relations between Russia and Saudi Arabia, and the capacity to overcome bottlenecks in terms of exporting crude. China and Turkey will appear as economic lungs for the Iranian economy and, above all, it will be a year in which we will see which international companies and governments decide to adapt to the US demands – most, in all likelihood – and which seek ways to evade or openly challenge them. This will consolidate the trend among certain countries to use their own currencies instead of the dollar. In everything connected to the sanctions on Iran, the debate will swing between principles – above all in relation to the need to maintain the agreements reached and preserve the multilateral frameworks – and the ability to defend national or business interests.

We began the list of issues that will shape the international agenda speaking of a game on which basic questions depend and, among them, naturally, are the rules of the game themselves. Although China and the United States are the players with the strongest cards, other rivalries should not be overlooked. Players with fewer trump cards may be able to change the dynamic of the game if the attention of the main opponents is distracted. The tension between Iran and the United States will, therefore, be the other focus of attention in this long game. The threats and provocations that will be made will be one of the main decisive factors on the global agenda. The stakes may rise and the significance of this game will grow if the struggle is not only between Washington and Tehran but instead between the White House and the other players. Russia, the European Union, China and the other large Asian economies have made significant bets and will not be content merely to be spectators of this duel.

100 dates to mark in the calendar

January 1st:	60 years since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. Commemoration of Fidel Castro's arrival in Santiago de Cuba, which marked the beginning of Castroist Cuba and the end of the Batista dictatorship.
January 1st:	20 years since the euro's creation. Introduced in the first phase as an accounting currency and for electronic payments, the physical currency entered circulation on January 1st 2002. It is currently the official currency in 19 of the 28 EU member states.
January 1st:	Renewal at the United Nations Security Council. South Africa, Indonesia, Germany, the Dominican Republic and Belgium will become non-permanent members of the UN Security Council, replacing Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Bolivia and Sweden, whose mandates end.
January 1st:	Inauguration of Jair Bolsonaro. A new era begins in Brazil with the incoming president's promise to reduce the country's levels of insecurity and to apply a series of structural reforms.
January 3rd:	10 years since the creation of Bitcoin. A turning point in the so-called digital economy, allowing the payment of goods and consumption using a cryptocurrency.
January 18th:	10 years since the end of the Gaza War. Also known as the Gaza Massacre, it lasted nearly three weeks and provoked the destruction of much of the territory's infrastructure.
January 20th:	10 years since the financial crisis started in Iceland. Hundreds of people protesting in front of the Icelandic parliament began the so-called "Pots and Pans Revolution" against an economic crisis that ended with the collapse of the three main Icelandic banks and the intervention of the IMF.
January 20th:	Tenth anniversary of Obama's inauguration as US president. A good time to analyse the impact of his two terms and the differences from the current Trump administration.
January 22nd-25th:	Davos Forum. Annual event bringing together the main political leaders, senior executives from the world's largest companies, heads of international organisations and NGOs, and prominent social and cultural leaders.
February 3rd:	Presidential elections in El Salvador. The sixth presidential elections since the peace accords were signed in 1992. The new president will have to focus their efforts on the three main concerns of Salvadorean society: high levels of violence, corruption and impunity.
February 3rd:	50th anniversary of Yasser Arafat's appointment as head of the PLO. A key figure for understanding the present state of open conflict with Israel. He led the Palestinian Liberation Organization until his death in 2004 after 35 years of government, and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994 alongside the Israeli president Yitzhak Rabin and the foreign affairs minister Shimon Peres.
February 4th:	15 years since the birth of Facebook. The world's largest social network, with more than 2.2 billion active users worldwide.
February 5th:	25 years since the Markale massacre in Sarajevo. One of the worst massacres of the civilian population in the siege of Sarajevo, which took place between April 1992 and December 1995. Radovan Karadžić, Ratko Mladić and Slobodan Milošević were convicted of the killings by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).
February 11th:	40th anniversary of the declaration of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The coup led by Ayatollah Khomeini caused the fall of the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, a traditional ally of the United States, and the establishment of the Islamic Republic, which completely changed the geostrategic relations of the whole region in a way that persists to this day.
February 15th to 17th:	Munich Security Conference #MSC19. Annual meeting of the largest independent forum on international security policies, bringing together high-level figures from over 70 countries.
February 16th:	Presidential and parliamentary elections in Nigeria. The largest economy in Africa faces a new electoral cycle in which current president Buhari will attempt to revalidate his position. The main challenges facing the next president are: the weakness of the domestic economy, the fight against Boko Haram and the independence claims of Biafra.
February 24th:	Presidential elections in Thailand. The country is currently ruled by a military junta that emerged from the coup d'état by the Thai army in May 2014. The centre-left party Pheu Thai, led by the Shinawatra siblings, hopes to defeat the list proposed by the military junta itself.
February 24th:	Presidential, regional and local elections in Senegal. The incumbent, Macky Sall, has announced his intention to renew his mandate. The country faces a new presidency with growing instability due to the terrorist threat throughout the region and the persecution of opposition political and social leaders in recent months.
February 24th and 25th:	First EU-Arab League Summit. Held at the request of the Arab League, it aims to strengthen relations with European states. The main issues on the agenda will be migration and the Arab-Israeli conflict.
March 16th:	Fifth anniversary of the declaration of the Ebola epidemic outbreak in Guinea. The start of one of the worst health crises the world has experienced in recent decades. Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia were particularly hard hit, with nearly 28,000 people dying.
March 20th:	Third anniversary of the Turkey-European Union migration agreement. Three years after its implementation, the agreement has substantially reduced the volume on the Turkey-Greece migration route to the detriment of the western Mediterranean route, which affects Spain. A good moment to discuss the effects of border externalisation policies at global level.
March 26th:	40th anniversary of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Its signing by Anwar el-Sadat, president of Egypt and Menachem Begin, prime minister of Israel, brought an end to 30 years of conflicts between the two countries, starting a new chapter in the complex contemporary history of the Middle East.
March 29th:	The United Kingdom should leave the EU after more than 45 years. For the first time in EU history, a member would leave the club. A transition period in which the two parties would negotiate their future relationship would then begin that is initially predicted to last until December 31st 2020.
March 30th-31st:	Pope Francis visits Morocco. The Moroccan authorities will take advantage of the occasion to send a message of tolerance. The Pope, for his part, may address both interreligious dialogue and the migration agenda, with Morocco an entry point to Europe many of whose Christians are migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa.
March 31st:	Presidential elections in Ukraine. The recent resumption of the conflict between the Ukraine and Russia is conditioning the electoral process that is just beginning. The current president, Petro Poroshenko, has announced his intention to renew his mandate.
March 31st:	Local elections in Turkey. These elections will serve to measure the support for Erdoğan in the main Turkish cities, the differences between the urban and rural votes and the unity of the opposition parties.
April:	Presidential elections in Algeria. Abdelaziz Bouteflika stands for re-election for a fifth consecutive term, postponing the debate on his succession again.

April 1st:	Centenary of the creation of the Bauhaus school. One of the major cultural events of 2019. Its creation revolutionised urbanism and modern design around the world. Considered the most influential school of architecture.
April 1st:	80th anniversary of the Spanish civil war. This anniversary takes place in a context of strong debate in Spain and Europe over the increased presence of far-right parties in national parliaments.
April 4th:	70th anniversary of the birth of NATO. The world's largest military organisation continues searching for its place in the global strategic landscape, under pressure from President Trump and the open debate in the EU about the creation of a European army.
April 7th:	25 years since the Rwandan genocide. This massacre led to the killing in 100 days of between 20% and 40% of Rwanda's population – mainly Tutsis and moderate Hutus – and met indifference from the international community.
April 11th:	Centenary of the International Labour Organization. Unites governments, employers and workers from 187 member states.
April 14th:	Parliamentary elections in Finland. Immigration will again occupy much of the country's political debate and could be decisive for the results of the far-right Finns Party and their participation in possible parliamentary arithmetic.
April 15th:	100 years of the Save the Children Fund. Founded by Eglantyne Jebb after the First World War, it is now one of the world's largest NGOs.
April 17th:	General elections in Indonesia. A repeat is expected of the 2014 electoral line-up, which pitted current president Joko Widodo against retired general Prabowo Subianto. These elections will select the president, the representatives of the national parliament and the regional and provincial parliaments.
April 20th:	Presidential elections in Afghanistan. The fourth presidential elections since the fall of the Taliban government in 2001. Current president Ashraf Ghani has already announced his intention to stand for another term.
April 30th:	Abdication of Emperor Akihito. The planned handover of Japan's head of state, with Emperor Akihito, on the throne since 1989, abdicating in favour of his son, Crown Prince Naruhito, who will become the 126th Emperor of Japan.
May:	General elections in South Africa. The ANC, in power since apartheid ended in 1994, will attempt to renew its mandate amid growing discontent among the South African population about the economic situation.
May 2nd:	500th anniversary of Leonardo Da Vinci's death. A good time to assess the artistic and scientific legacy of one of the most influential thinkers in the history of humanity.
May 4th:	Centenary of the May Fourth Movement. The mass student movement begun in 1919 was a reflection of the transformative demands made by an urban middle-class section of Chinese society to the feudal ruling class.
May 9th:	Sibu European summit. Two weeks before the European elections EU leaders meet in Romania to reflect on the new Strategic Agenda for the next five years.
May 14th–18th:	Eurovision Song Contest in Israel. One of the world's largest music events will be marked by the identity of the host country, which will seek to make political capital from the festival's visibility in international public opinion.
May 17th–18th:	Tenth anniversary of the end of the conflict in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan army defeated the Tamil Tiger guerrillas after 25 years of conflict.
May 23rd to 26th:	European elections. Held simultaneously in the 27 countries that make up the EU, just a few weeks after the Brexit started, if they keep to the schedule. One of the greatest unknowns will be how well the populist and far-right parties do, who will enter these elections better organised and with greater external help.
May 26th:	Federal and regional elections in Belgium. Unless early elections are called, Belgians will elect their parliament on that date. The end of the Belgian coalition government after the departure of the N-VA Flemish nationalist party opened a deep political crisis. Once again, migration will be one of the main themes.
May 30th:	International Relations is 100 years old. A group of 37 academics and experts from the United Kingdom and United States who had participated in the Paris peace conference met in the Hotel Majestic in Paris to discuss how to continue their collaboration. From these debates would emerge the British Institute of International Affairs, or Chatham House, in London in 1920, and a year later the Council of Foreign Relations in New York. In 1919 the first Department of International Politics was also created, at Aberystwyth University in Wales.
June:	New European Commission presidency. The results of the European elections in May will influence the election of the new EC president and other important positions will be negotiated in parallel, such as those of the President of the European Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security.
June:	General elections in Guatemala. The departure of Jimmy Morales from the presidency will be an opportunity for a country that will face a new presidency conditioned by the migration crisis that has taken hold in the region, by the high levels of violence, the constant cases of corruption and the economic situation.
June:	General elections in Denmark. Immigration will occupy much of the political agenda in the months leading up to elections in which the governing conservative coalition hopes to renew its mandate. The opposition, led by the socialist group, won the most votes in the 2015 elections and will seek a large enough majority to recover the power lost.
June 4th:	30th anniversary of the deaths in Tiananmen Square. The anniversary arrives at a time when the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, has recovered some of the identifying traits of the Mao presidency, against a youth that is increasingly resistant to ideological homogenisation in schools and universities and critical of the growing inequality that prevails in the country.
June 11th:	Tenth anniversary of the outbreak of the H1N1 Avian Flu pandemic. The WHO's declaration of a pandemic signified a worldwide public health problem, not so much due to the gravity of the illness as its geographical extension. It is calculated that it caused the death of more than 20,000 people around the world.
June 13th:	Tenth anniversary of the Green Movement in Iran. After the controversial presidential elections that handed Ahmadinejad victory, called fraudulent by the opposition led by Hossein Mousavi, protests against the opposition took place in the country's main streets and significant repression followed.
June 24th:	Summit of the two shores of the Mediterranean. Called by Emmanuel Macron, it seeks to promote cooperation and dialogue, with migration and security on the agenda and questions remaining about which countries will be invited.
June 28th:	Centenary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Six months after the armistice that put an end to the First World War, the treaty of Versailles was signed between Germany and the Allies, which imposed significant territorial concessions and the payment of substantial reparations. Many historians believe this treaty contributed to Adolf Hitler's rise to power.
June 28th:	50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots. Marked the take-off of the fight for the rights of the LGTBI community, gay pride marches will be held in commemoration.

June 28th:	Centenary of the creation of the League of Nations. The first large international organisation and the precursor of the United Nations.
June 28th and 29th:	14th G20 Summit. The first G20 meeting to be hosted by Japan.
First half-year:	Second summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un. A good time to evaluate the discussions that began in 2018 between North Korea and the United States over the North Korean nuclear programme.
First half-year:	45th G7 Summit in France: Biarritz will host a new edition of the G7 at which discussions will be held and agreements sought on some of the world's most pressing problems. President Macron will have the climate on his agenda.
First half-year:	General elections in India. The current prime minister, Narendra Modi, begins as favourite to prevail over an opposition, grouped in the historic Congress Party, seeking to reduce the support he won in the last elections.
July 5th:	25th anniversary of the creation of Amazon. One of the largest electronic commerce companies in the world, which has revolutionised international commerce, reaches 25.
July 9th to 18th:	High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Held in the US, this is the central United Nations platform for the monitoring and revision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Objectives. This edition will focus above all on issues of inclusion and equality.
July 20th:	50 years since man reached the moon. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, in that order, were the first human beings to set foot on the moon, continuing the space race the two great superpowers of the time, the United States and the USSR, had begun a decade before.
August 15th:	50th anniversary of the Woodstock Festival. This festival, which shaped the history of modern music, was a turning point for the peace culture movements around the world, especially the United States.
August 31st to 15th September:	Basketball World Cup. A good opportunity for China to show its soft power to the world in a particularly important year of critical "anniversaries" for the Chinese government.
September:	World Summit on Climate 2019. Brings together heads of state and government from around the world to review the commitments made at the Paris Summit. The presentation of more ambitious plans for sustainable development are also expected.
September 1st:	80 years since the start of the Second World War. Poland's invasion by Germany marked the beginning of the largest armed conflict in history. A good time to analyse the current framework of international relations, especially of the construction of the European project, and the new goals and challenges accumulating on the international agenda.
September 1st:	50th anniversary of the September Revolution in Libya. Commemoration of the coup d'état against the regime of Idris I, king of Libya, which led to the establishment of the Libyan Arab Republic that was presided over by Muammar al-Gaddafi.
17th - 30th September:	74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. An annual date that brings all world leaders together to evaluate the current state of their national politics and their vision of the world. Bilateral meetings normally take place at the highest level.
September 20th:	500 years since the circumnavigation of the globe by Magallanes. This voyage, which lasted until 1522, was a milestone in the world's maritime history.
September 23rd:	High-Level Dialogue in the UN on financing for development. Seeks to attract and direct public and private investment from around the world for the implementation of actions and programmes aligned with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
September 1st:	50th anniversary of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Composed of 57 member states, it represents the collective voice of the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia and Turkey vie for its leadership.
September 27th to October 9th:	World Championships in Athletics. To be held in Doha (Qatar), it will serve as a barometer for evaluating the country's organisational capacity before the challenge of hosting the football World Cup in 2022.
October:	Elections in Bolivia. Current president Evo Morales, in the post since 2006, will seek a fourth consecutive mandate. He faces a conservative opposition that will have to decide whether to stand together at these elections or with separate candidacies.
October 2nd:	150th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi. Historic Indian figure of great influence for the civil disobedience and non-violence movement around the world.
October 2nd:	First anniversary of the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi. The first anniversary of the assassination of the journalist in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, which has seriously affected diplomatic relations with the Saudi regime.
October 6th:	Legislative elections in Portugal. The country faces a new electoral cycle in a much more stable political and economic situation than in previous elections. It is expected that the current government led by the socialist António Costa will renew its mandate.
October 15th:	Presidential and parliamentary elections in Mozambique. The country's two historic parties, Frelimo and Renamo, which are immersed in new peace talks, will compete for the presidency again. The current president, Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, has announced his intention to stand for reelection.
October 15th and 16th:	20th anniversary of the Tampere summit. Permitted advances to be made in the creation of a common space of freedom, security and justice in the European Union, marking a before and after in European migration policy.
October 18th:	20th anniversary of the creation of the figure of the High Representative of the EU for the CFSP. The appointment of Javier Solana marked the beginning of a common foreign, security and defence policy in the EU.
October 20th:	Elections in Greece. After the finalisation of the bailout programmes in 2018, Greece faces a new electoral cycle in which the current prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, will stand again.
October 21st:	General elections in Canada. The current prime minister, Justin Trudeau, vies for reelection in elections shaped by the debate on immigration and relations with the United States.
October 24th:	90th anniversary of the 1929 crash. The most devastating market fall in the history of the United States stock exchange brought about the start of a Great Depression with global effects.
October 27th:	General elections in Uruguay. The left-wing Broad Front coalition, which has governed the country since 2005, is seeking a fourth term against the two main opposition parties, the National Party and the Colorado Party.
October 27th:	Elections in Argentina. Executive and legislative positions will be chosen at national and provincial level, as will the president. The current president, Mauricio Macri, aspires to reelection.
October 29th:	50th anniversary of the first message over ARPANET, the internet's predecessor. Two terminals, one at the University of California and the other at the Stanford Research Institute, established the first communication between two remote computers.

October 31st:	End of Mario Draghi's term at the head of the European Central Bank. His successor will be chosen from among the 19 members of the eurozone. 2019 means the end of an era in the ECB as five of the seven main posts in the ECB will become vacant by the end of the year.
November:	Parliamentary elections in Poland. The electoral decline of PiS in the local elections of October 2018 sent a clear warning about the discontent of some citizens with the authoritarian and populist drift of the current government. The European elections halfway through the year will be a good gauge of their strength before the elections at the end of the year that may bring an end to the government led by Mateusz Morawiecki.
November 9th:	30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The fall of the Berlin Wall led to the collapse of the communist bloc as well as the reunification of Germany, which was able to consolidate even greater power inside the EU.
November 17th:	150th anniversary of the inauguration of the Suez Canal. Its construction completely changed international trade, cutting the distance between Europe and Asia by thousands of kilometres.
November 17th:	APEC summit. Chile will host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum for the second time: one of its main programmatic focusses will be international trade, as well as the reduction of gender gaps.
November 18th to 22nd:	United Cities and Local Governments congress in Durban. A good time to analyse the implementation of the SDGs and their impact at local level.
November 19th:	Bicentenary of the Museo El Prado. One of the world's greatest art galleries, an institution that has been central to the development of contemporary art worldwide, celebrates the bicentenary of its creation.
December:	Presidential and legislative elections in Tunisia. A new chance to check on the level of consolidation of the democratic transition, the ideological evolution of Ennahda, the capacity to forge coalitions and channel the discomfort and frustration of young people and the peripheral regions.
December 10th:	Nobel Peace Prize. The most controversial of the Nobel prizes is awarded on Human Rights Day, which is also the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death.
December 25th:	Fortieth anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviet intervention in the country, continued by the United States in 2001, has shaped the history of Afghanistan in recent decades.
Second half-year:	Parliamentary and presidential elections in Tunisia. The political disputes between the Tunisian president and the prime minister shape the implementation of new democratic reforms in the country, which started after the fall of Ben Ali.
Pending:	11th BRICS Summit. Brazil will host this summit, which unites South Africa, Russia, India, China and Brazil. This bloc has been losing strength due to the crisis situation in some of its members and the absence of a proposal for an alternative global order.
Pending:	Legislative and municipal elections in Cameroon. The political and social instability in Cameroon since the revalidation of Paul Biya's presidency in the last presidential elections could condition the pending electoral calendar.
Pending:	Legislative elections in Israel. The weakness of the current Israeli government led by Benjamin Netanyahu makes an advance election likely in which forming a stable government is expected to face serious difficulties. If one is not formed, the elections will be held on November 5th.
Pending:	Federal elections in Australia. Internal struggles for power and changes of leadership have shaped Australian politics over the past decade.