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THE WORLD IN 2017: Ten issues that will set the international agenda

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China deserves particular attention: it can challenge some of the institutions of the liberal world order, co-opt them or simply engage in free-riding.

The reaction of China, India and the EU to the Republican climate change backlash will be crucial.

Any end of ISIS would not mean the end of jihadism.

The refugee crisis will remain global in nature and the abuses committed in transit will remain in the shadows.

The indirect influence of right-wing populists in western European countries will be considerable and if they advance the EU will face an existential challenge.

Russia benefits from any disruption of the EU project and supports any political force that runs under a Eurosceptic banner.

Latin Americans look at 2017 with pessimism. This is a period of failed expectations.

In 2017 we will see how the fracture between elites and citizenship in Africa gets wider and triggers political crises.

Shaky. That's how we imagine 2017. There will be several epicentres, and the White House will be a major one. This year begins on January 20th when Trump becomes the 45th US President. Though the US is not as powerful and indispensable as it once was, the actions Washington does or does not take shape the global agenda like nobody else.

Dangerous. We believe that there is a series of individual events that, although unlikely, could have a major destabilising effect at global level. To give just one example, let's imagine the possible effects of an implausible but still possible victory of Marine Le Pen in the French elections. Anticipation, contingency plans and resilience strategies are very much needed.

Disturbing. Like the images of thousands of people trying to cross the Mediterranean, escaping besieged cities in the Middle East or starvation in Yemen. We'll see more of these images in 2017. They are becoming a new normal. We may be facing crisis fatigue, in which societies and governments alike assume there is nothing they can do to change the course of events.

Masculine. The year 2016 disappointed those who expected women to obtain unprecedented levels of political representation. Hillary Clinton was ahead in most polls and everyone expected a woman to be elected UN Secretary General. Instead, 2017 will be a showcase for testosterone-driven leadership, be it in Washington, Moscow, Ankara or Manila.

And unpredictable. A bonus lesson of 2016 was a warning to avoid betting on the results of elections and referendums. Indeed, the scope of what is imaginable is widening each passing day. So every attempt to look into the future – including ours – needs to be taken with a pinch of salt.

Every year CIDOB selects ten issues that are likely to set the international agenda. The purpose of this exercise is to help us navigate turbulent waters. We map out the rocks that are already visible but we also imagine the even more damaging ones that may be lurking beneath the surface.

1. How radical will the US foreign policy changes be?

During the last weeks of 2016 everyone anxiously watched who Donald Trump might nominate for key positions. In 2017 we will no longer be looking at names, but at actions, policies and strategies.

In a few months we should have a better idea of how robust the US rapprochement with Russia will be, what consequences it will have for transatlantic relations, how far Trump will go in challenging China or humiliating Mexico and, finally, whether the new administration will follow an ideological line on Iran and Cuba or will try to pragmatically take advantage of parts of Obama's foreign policy legacy, even if they abhor the very idea of it.

> 2017 will be a showcase for testosterone-driven leadership, be it in Washington, Moscow, Ankara or Manila.

We expect economic lobbies to play a major role in this process. Donald Trump will be reminded that he promised to get good deals for America; deals that create jobs.

Whether ideological or pragmatic, the US has significant capacity to destabilise. Will the US move its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem? Will there be any further move in the policy towards Taiwan that forces China to retaliate? Will the US back Brexit's advocates and the other disintegration forces in Europe?

Even more important, a disruptive foreign policy decision could also result from what others force the US to do. Friends could try to force the hand of the US by provoking crisis. This is particularly true in the Middle East where Israel may attempt to see if Trump has really written them a blank cheque. Saudi Arabia will be more prudent as they are well aware that there is deep mistrust of them among various segments of the new administration and the Republican Party. Long-term rivals may also test where the limits lie. We should not rule out an attempt by Russia to further destabilise NATO or new provocations by North Korea. Finally, a major terrorist attack in the US or against American interests abroad could trigger an aggressive response with unforeseen consequences.

2. Deconstructing the global order or changing its ownership?

There is much talk about global disorder or the collapse of the liberal rules-based order. This will remain a major topic for 2017, and not only for academics. Part of the discussion will focus on whether and why the US and Europe are abdicating their leadership position. Is it a structural and irreversible process? And if so, will other powers challenge some of the institutions of the global order, resist attempts to move them forward or even fill the vacuum left by the West?

One concept that will be useful to portray the dynamics in the readjustment of the global order is that of the *norm antipreneurs*. That is, states that resist or openly oppose normative change. The year 2017 will not be promising for trade liberalisation, for transnational justice or for the protection of civilians. We should keep an eye on the consequences of the decision of several African countries to withdraw from the International Criminal Court, on the discussions in the UN on how to react to massive violations of human rights and humanitarian crises and on national debates on asylum.

Trade will be an interesting laboratory, as three different and somewhat contradictory strategies will be at play. Protectionist nostalgia will gain ground, particularly in the West. Most trade agreements under negotiation will be shelved for a while. Asia and to a lesser extent Latin America will explore trade liberalisation possibilities without Europe or the US. Finally, China will try to project itself as a global player and will become an advocate of trade liberalisation.

We believe that this year China deserves particular attention. Firstly, it is the global player with the largest room to manoeuvre: it can challenge some of the institutions of the liberal world order, co-opt them or simply engage in free-riding. Whatever the decisions are, the effects will be felt globally. Secondly, when discussing China's rise, we will focus more on the sustainability of its economic model and the resilience of its political system. All eyes will converge on Beijing when the 19th Congress of the China's Communist Party is held in the autumn. Thirdly, the same power that appears as a conservative actor when it comes to classical notions of sovereignty, non-interference and great-power politics appears as a revisionist one when norms work against its interests. The controversies around the Law of the Sea and its applicability in the South China Sea will be the clearest example of this contradiction.

Paradoxically, those actors that founded the global order are less adamant about its defence and those that initially perceived it as an imposition are now willing to co-own it.

3. Will interest rate shock provoke a deeper crisis in emerging markets?

The incoming Trump presidency will be marked by debt-financed infrastructure spending, which will send US interest rates soaring. A strong US dollar will make US exports less competitive and encourage imports. Despite Mr. Trump's protectionist rhetoric, the US current account deficit will likely widen. European countries still have a more accommodative monetary stance with lower interest rates and will appreciate their increased competitiveness as a result of dollar resurgence. According to the Bank for International Settlement, the dollar appreciated by more than 40% against a basket of emerging market economy (EME) currencies from May 2014 to January 2016 alone. Emerging markets will be affected. Servicing and refinancing outstanding debt in US dollars will be more difficult, as will the attraction of foreign investment. This will possibly lead to more corporate defaults and lower sovereign credit ratings.

While the dollar is showing its muscle, emerging economies are feeling the end of their honeymoon. When low interest rates were the norm in developed countries, international funds looked further away in order to obtain higher returns. EMEs with developing financial systems in need of dollars were the perfect oases. The flow of dollars entering the EMEs through dollar-denominated bonds translated into supply of local credit and investment and boosted asset prices. With the dollar persistently rising, so is the cost of servicing, and with about 10% of EME dollar-denominated corporate debt scheduled to mature in 2017, problems are looming on the horizon.

Countries such as China and South Korea with ample foreign exchange reserves and limited outstanding dollar debt compared to their economies and exports will be less vulnerable than Brazil, Turkey, Indonesia, Russia and South Africa. Brazil for example has the second-largest dollar-denominated debt after China, while Turkey's short-term dollar debt alone amounts to 8% of its GDP. A stronger dollar will help Chinese exports and China will be able to enhance its influence in Asia as the US withdraws from negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). But China will also be caught between a rock and a hard place as it tries to stimulate its domestic economy just at the time that the Fed is more hawkish.

4. Climate change and renewables: Economics overpowering the Trump administration?

The Trump administration will pose a severe challenge to progress in climate change mitigation. This challenge is not only a matter of the idiosyncratic personal opinions of the incoming president, but builds on deep-rooted positions within the Republican Party that are informed by lobby groups concerned about the profitability of stranded hydrocarbon assets. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry and the head of the Environmental Protection Agency Scott Pruitt are known deniers of climate change, which the president himself once depicted as a Chinese conspiracy to sap American competitiveness.

US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement is a real risk, but would require 4-5 years for legal reasons. An exit from the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) would be easier and faster to achieve and could only happen in a worst-case scenario. Obama's Clean Power Plan, with its tougher environmental standards and promotion of renewable energies, will likely be scrapped. On the other hand Trump will be supportive of further development of shale gas, which has been a major factor in reducing US greenhouse gas emissions by replacing coal-fired power generation. Renewable energies have also become increasingly competitive: their main challenge is not price anymore, but storage that can address intermittency and promote their inclusion in electricity grids.

A major reason for the decline of coal power has been economics, not regulation. While the Trump administration can affect the latter, it has less of a say about the former and will likely appreciate the considerable employment generation already attached to renewable energies. Climate change mitigation policies and renewable energies can also muster powerful political support and economic interests in other parts of US society and politics, most notably in Silicon Valley and Democrat-governed California.

Hence there are also powerful US private sector interests that are pushing for an expansion of renewables. The reaction of China, India and the EU to the Republican backlash against fighting climate change will be crucial. China and some EU countries such as Germany will try to capitalise on the vacuum and increase the competitiveness of their renewable energy industries, which they regard as strategically important. Renewables also offer attractive options for decentralised rural electrification in India, which will soon be the most populous country in the word.

> There will be several epicentres: the White House will be a major one.

5. Jihadism beyond ISIS and the future of Syria and Iraq

The territorial control of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) will be further reduced in 2017 by the fall of Mosul, the largest city under its control, which has been a symbol and laboratory for the brutal implementation of its austere interpretation of Islamic law.

This will mean the end of ISIS as a proto-state in Iraq, but it might survive as a mafia-like organisation in rural areas and in some urban neighbourhoods. It will be able to capitalise on Sunni grievances and use its ideological narrative to give the semblance of respectability to protection rackets. Territorial setbacks for ISIS in Syria might be more limited as the Assad regime and its Russian and Iranian allies will prioritise fighting off other rebels in the north-west after taking Aleppo in December 2016. The Assad regime will also exploit the continuing threat of ISIS in its narrative of legitimacy for domestic and international audiences. Other actors will not prioritize the fight against ISIS only. For instance, the YPG (People's Protection Units in Kurdish) forces seek to unite Kurdish territories in northern Syria and Turkey's military presence there tries to prevent that from happening.

The ability of ISIS to project ideological and military force will suffer and its brand of expansion and seeming invincibility will be damaged. However, the incentive to assert its continued relevance with terrorist attacks in Europe and the Maghreb is high and returning foreign fighters could pose a significant security threat alongside homegrown jihadists.

Any end of ISIS would not mean the end of jihadism, which would likely live on in the form of various splinter groups or a resurgent Al-Qaeda. The Assad regime's brutal repression and indiscriminate bombardments of civilians, the plight of refugees in neighbouring countries and of internally displaced persons and the occurrence of ethnic purges of Arab Sunnis by Shiite militias and Kurdish forces constitute powerful political and socioeconomic grievances that can be used in recruitment efforts.

Neither a political nor military solution to the Syrian crisis is in sight. A protracted continuance of the civil war is likely. The Assad regime has been able to conquer territory, but has not necessarily been able to hold it without support from its Russian and Iranian allies, as the renewed fall of Palmyra to ISIS showed in December 2016. Its legitimacy is all but lost among a large share of the populace. It is unlikely that it will ever be able to rule again over a territorially integer Syria. In Iraq sustainable control of Sunni areas by the government in Baghdad would require an offer of participation to Sunni elements and a successful reining in of retribution by Shiite militias. A continued push by the Kurdistan Region of Iraq for independence is a distinct possibility.

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With all eyes focussed on ISIS and the developments in Syria and Iraq, many could neglect other trends that are equally destabilising. The economies of most Middle Eastern and North African countries are not good at all. Egypt is particularly worrying, as it represents a systemic risk for the whole region and beyond. Yemen may remain a forgotten war as the victims don't knock on Europe's door, yet it represents a much heavier burden than expected for the House of Saud. Additionally, let's not forget that the Arab-Israeli conflict is far from solved. This year comes with some destabilising elements before us. Netanyahu may test the loyalty of the new American administration. Palestinians may want to remember that their struggle has a long history behind it: 2017 marks the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, 70 years since the UN partition plan, 50 since the humiliating defeat in the Six-Day War and 30 years since the first intifada.

6. It was never gone: The protracted refugee crisis

The refugee crisis will remain global in nature. Crises in the Middle East, sub-Saharan countries and Afghanistan will continue to provoke forced displacements. Too often, the attention will be put only on those trying to reach Europe. Yet the situation of internally displaced persons and the abuses that are committed in transit will remain in the shadows. Scarcity of resources, both for host states and international organisations, will make this situation worse.

For European governments, refugees and migration will remain at the top of the agenda. They will feel the pressure on Europe's borders and from right-wing parties pushing this topic to the top of the agenda in upcoming electoral races.

In the east, the Balkan transit route will most likely remain closed. Turkey may threaten to cancel its refugee deal with the EU, but if it does, it will lose important leverage. European governments may feel assured that fewer refugees will try to cross than during the height of the refugee crisis in 2015 for two main reasons: refugees risk being stranded on a Greek island or in a detention camp and they know that the Balkan route is closed. Thus, any aggravation in the east would lead to a Greek refugee crisis, not necessarily a European one.

In contrast, traffic on the central route will intensify. The Sophia mission that has aimed to cut down on human trafficking via maritime surveillance cannot deliver as long as Libya remains a dysfunctional state. Moreover, push factors in Africa may even get bigger. Those arriving in Europe will face difficulties in being recognised as refugees. They will be portrayed as economic migrants, eligible to be expelled.

If the situation in the Strait of Sicily becomes unmanageable and Italy takes recourse to its earlier practice of "waving through" migrants to its northern neighbours, Schengen will be suspended again. In contrast, we may see a further communitarisation of border control policies (e.g. the European border and coast guards and partnership agreements with origin and transit countries). A reinforced European border policy will not mean progress on the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) as that would imply more "responsibility sharing" and there are fewer willing to share it. Relocation quotas (160,000 as agreed in September 2015) will fail to be met this year, once again. This confirms the idea that the "refugee crisis" –supposedly a European one- is turning into a Greek and Italian problem.

Finally, a way out that will be further explored are EU and bilateral readmission agreements with transit and origin countries. The number of deportations will increase, but not to the extent of significantly reducing the number of irregular immigrants and rejected asylum seekers in Europe.

7. Will right-wing populism hijack the European Union?

Entrenched in Poland and Hungary and emboldened by the Brexit vote and Donald Trump's election victory, right-wing populism will see a further upsurge in Europe in 2017. This does not mean that they will get to rule in more countries. Geert Wilder's Party for Freedom will gain an upswing in votes in the Dutch elections in March, but this will not necessarily translate into participation in the government or winning the premiership. Marine Le Pen of the French Front National may lose in the second round of the French presidential elections. Alternative for Germany (AfD) will get well over 10% of the vote in September's federal elections and it will be the first time since World War II that a xenophobic party enters the Bundestag although they will be sidelined in any coalition-building. Moreover a terrorist attack, a new migratory crisis or major political scandals could however increase their chances. If this happens, particularly in France, the European Union would face an existential challenge.

Even if there is no victory of right-wing populists in western European countries, their indirect influence will be considerable. Against the backdrop of a protracted refugee crisis, they will be able to set agendas and will complicate the coalition-building of mainstream parties. During the general convention of her ruling CDU party German Chancellor Angela Merkel already said that the partly uncontrolled influx of refugees in 2015 "should not repeat itself", thus acknowledging the considerable pressures she is facing on this critical question. The terrorist attack on a Christmas market in Berlin in December 2016, presumed to have been perpetrated by a rejected Tunisian asylum seeker, increased such pressures and they could grow in the case of further attacks.

External players will be well aware of Europe's vulnerabilities and will try to exploit them. In Turkey, Erdogan knows that its European partners and particularly Angela Merkel desperately need his cooperation in containing the flow of refugees, at least until the German elections. Russia also benefits from any disruption of the EU project and supports any political force that runs under a Eurosceptic banner.

The "refugee crisis" –supposedly a European one- is turning into a Greek and Italian problem.

Dutch, French and German voters will be shaping the EU's future just at the time when it will be trying to negotiate a Brexit deal with the UK. The EU will remain in poor shape to command its own destiny and fulfil citizens' expectations. This pertains not only to security issues such as the control of borders and the countering of Russian ambitions, but also to tackling socioeconomic polarisation, which has risen steeply over three decades of neoliberal discourse.

8. Has Putin reached his peak?

Putin could not have hoped for a more promising start to 2017. In fact, not even the Kremlin was expecting Trump to be elected: their plans for the next year consisted of an attempt to delegitimise Clinton's victory. But, surprisingly, a friendly president will sit in the Oval Office. While, less surprisingly, Europe will be busy dealing with its own problems and divisions.

Additional elements indicate that the winds are favourable for Moscow: Turkey is adamant about exploring a new beginning in its relations with Russia, OPEC is finally trying to move the oil price up and Russia's allies in Syria have managed to seize Aleppo.

The Kremlin will push for sanctions to be totally or partially lifted and the chances of success are greater than they were some months earlier. It will also try to deepen the divisions among Western countries and inside each of them. And yet, the Kremlin will likely modulate its strategy. With Trump as US president and some European leaders (particularly in France) potentially more compromising, the victimisation rhetoric will become more conspiracy-based and point the finger at groups in the shadows as a common enemy. When trying to (re)build alliances and partnerships, Moscow will stress the existence of a common enemy in the form of jihadist terrorism.

Yet there are some risks ahead. Russia will continue to meddle in the domestic politics of Western countries, but this could have unwanted consequences if these manoeuvres become too evident or too offensive. This is particularly true for cyber-security. Trying to test the limits of solidarity among NATO members might be tempting, but a crisis, once started, takes on a life of its own and you never know if you'll be able to end it.

On Syria, the key question will be the degree of Russia's involvement and whether it will be able to withdraw from the battlefield in due time. Being trapped in a war that does not have existential significance for Russia is dangerous and could carry the risk of over-reaction if and when Russian interests are targeted by terrorist groups.

Finally, let's add structural economic uncertainties to this catalogue of risks (low productivity, deficient infrastructure and dependence on energy and arms exports). When talking about the economy, what it is at stake is the level of public support, but also the cohesion of the elite.

So, though Putin knows that 2016 finished much better than he expected, when looking at the future he may need to moderate expectations and calibrate risks.

9. Emergency landings in Latin America

Unlike Russians, Latin Americans look at 2017 with pessimism and Trump's victory is only one among the many reasons. This is a period of failed expectations. Some years ago, the continent was on the rise and the largest of its members, Brazil, projected itself as a global player. Nowadays, the economic prospects for countries like Mexico, Ecuador, Argentina, Colombia and Brazil are dire, at least in the short run. Not to mention Venezuela, whose population will suffer the consequences of political polarisation and dysfunctional economic policies of a country addicted to high oil prices. Chile and Peru may be the lonely exceptions to this gloomy scenario.

Politically, it is remarkable how quickly national leaderships have been eroded. Except for Colombia, where two strong figures compete, traditional political leaderships are rather weak. Moreover, the left has lost its political references. All this can evolve in three different directions: the emergence of unconventional and apolitical leaderships as happened in 2016 in El Salvador; increased social discontent that explores new forms of political protest; or increasingly frustrated but passive societies. It is also worth remembering that 2017 will be a year of political impasse as three key countries (Colombia, Mexico and Brazil) have elections scheduled for 2018 and will be getting ready for them.

When the world looks at Latin America the attention will be put on five additional focuses: the effects of US decisions on issues related to trade and migrations, with a particular impact on Mexico; political instability in Venezuela with increasing doubts on whether its own camp could try to get rid of Nicolás Maduro; whether post-Fidel Cuba opens up, also due to the impossibility of relying on Caracas; a peace process in Colombia that faces many challenges in the implementation phase; and, below the surface, the key position of the continent in global illicit flows, particularly drug trafficking, which has a destabilising effect that spreads for thousands of miles, as we have witnessed in West Africa.

All across Africa, societies are asking governments to be accountable.

Dragged down by structural economic problems, focused on short-term domestic quarrels and leaderless at regional level, Latin America will have to wait some time to take off again.

10. African societies rise up … but leaders resist change

All across Africa, societies are asking governments to be accountable. Young, urban and well-connected activists are asking to be heard. In 2017 we will see how the fracture between elites and citizenship widens and triggers political crises.

It is particularly significant that some of the largest countries will face a significant level of contestation, which will most likely be met by harsher repression. We have to keep an eye on the Democratic Republic of Congo. The postponement of the elections and Joseph Kabila stubbornly clinging to power could easily ignite the country. Ethiopia, often portrayed by external leaders as an anchor of stability whose federal model was once praised, is becoming more unstable and repressive.

Although much smaller in size, the way Gambia resolves its political crisis may have a regional effect, as what it is at stake is how much an African leader can resist leaving power when not only citizens but also regional organisations ask him to do so. Quite often, Zimbabwe manages to be part of the global agenda. Elections are scheduled in 2018 and Mugabe, who will turn 93 in February 2017, incarnates the "President-for-life" logic and faces growing contestation.

South Africa also deserves attention. Not only due to its economic vulnerabilities, but also because the African National Congress is less and less popular even among segments of the society or parts of the country where it used to be hegemonic. This year, it will have to elect Zuma's successor but the emotional gap between the party and the society will not be bridged. Angola will also matter. This country, which has seen an economic boom thanks to the oil industry, will also go to polls and Dos Santos has already announced that he is not going to run. He has decided not to follow the example of other fellow presidents but this does not mean that his party, the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) is ready for power-sharing.

These political dynamics will coexist with conflict-driver situations in other parts of the continent and the situation in 2017 is likely to deteriorate. The UN has already warned that South Sudan may become a new Rwanda. The UN agency for humanitarian aid (OCHA) has also warned of a humanitarian crisis in the making in Borno (northern Nigeria). This list could be expanded to the whole Horn of Africa, the Central African Republic, Sudan and Burundi. And terrorism will continue to hit the most vulnerable.

Overall, 2017 will be a bittersweet year for Africa. On the one hand, the population is empowered and there is considerable global interest in Africa's development. On the other, the political interests of incumbent elites and mushrooming security and humanitarian crises will prevent Africa from exploiting its full potential.

A word of caution: it can get worse

"Predictions are difficult, especially about the future", George Bernard Shaw once pointedly said. When the year comes to an end, it is easy to identify issues that went under the radar (the coup attempt in Turkey) or electoral results that were unlikely few months ago (Trump's victory, for instance). For 2017 we have already identified many risks: territorial conflicts in the South China Sea, a military escalation between Saudi Arabia or Israel and Iran with the aim of drawing the US into the conflict, Venezuela's collapse, hybrid warfare by Russia in the Baltics to test the resolve of NATO, the hijacking of the EU by the far-right, a defiant North Korea, genocidal events in failed African states such as South Sudan, violent unrest in the Democratic Republic of Congo and terrorist attacks of severe magnitude that could alter electoral processes and force military retaliation. But we also need to get ready for black swans (events that we cannot foresee until they happen) and grey rhinos (highly probable, high impact yet neglected threats). We have a bumpy and dangerous road ahead of us and it is impossible to predict what the final destination will look like.

50 events to mark on the calendar

January 1st	**Antonio Guterres takes office as the new Secretary General of the United Nations.** Guterres inherits a complex Syrian peace process, an unsolved migration problem, tense Israel-Palestine relations and the demand for new pushes towards regulating climate change measures at a state level.
January 12th	**Cyprus reunification talks**. Following the failure of the talks in November 2016, the negotiations are set to resume in Geneva, with both sides intending to accelerate meetings to reach a comprehensive settlement as soon as possible.
January 15th	**Paris Peace Summit for the Middle East.** Despite French attempts to relaunch the Middle East Peace Process and the Obama's administration backing, those efforts are likely to fail due to Netanyahu's opposition and the support received by President-elect Trump.
January 15th–18th	**UN World Data Forum.** South Africa will host the forum to help build consensus among national statistical offices and other parties involved in generating data to work together to develop open data services for official statistics on the continent.
January 17th–20th	**World Economic Forum**. The annual meeting will be held in the Swiss municipality of Davos, bringing world leaders together to shape the global, regional and industry agendas. For the first time President Xi Jinping will attend the meeting, which means the event will highlight China's global ambitions.
January 20th	**Inauguration Day in the United States**. This date will mark the commencement of the four-year term of Donald Trump as president of the United States. The domestic and foreign policy moves of the new administration will show if Trump is indeed capable of "making America great again".
January 22th–31st	**African Union Summit**. This year's summit will mark the 15th anniversary of the replacement of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) by the African Union.
January 23rd	**Astana Peace Talks on Syria.** These talks are the result of a new attempt to finds a political solution to the conflict in Syria in the framework of a previous deal brokered by Russia, Iran and Turkey. The marginalization of the US has been widely commented and it remains to be seen whether the new Trump administration will join this process.
February 19th	**Presidential election in Ecuador**. The first election since 2006 in which current President Rafael Correa will not appear on the ballot. His successor, Lenin Moreno, is leading the polls; and yet, according to the Ecuadorian electoral system, a second round will be held unless a candidate receives over 50% of the votes.
February 22nd–24th	**World Ocean Summit.** The summit, to be held in Bali, Indonesia, will place the focus on how to finance a capital- and private sector-driven sustainable ocean economy.
March	**Brexit negotiations**. According to Theresa May, Britain will formally begin EU exit negotiations by the end of March, to be finalized within a two-year deadline.
March 15th	**General election in the Netherlands.** This will be the first election to put the success of far-right populism – in this case, Geert Wilders and his Party for Freedom (PVV) – to the test.
March 25th	**The 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome**. The anniversary might create an occasion for European leaders to gather and discuss the problems the EU is facing, and a new vision if necessary.
March 26th	**Hong Kong chief executive election.** Since the 2014 Umbrella Revolution protests that sought the direct election of the chief executive rather than by Beijing's appointment, Hong Kong politics has been divided. The pro-Beijing incumbent since 2012 has announced that he will not run for the position. The popular discontent that diffuses into the politics of Hong Kong could give rise to conflicts with China.
April	**Legislative and local elections in Algeria**. Due to president Bouteflika's health problems, these elections may be a succession battlefield. Low voter turnout would be a significant indicator of popular discontent.
April 23rd	**1st round of French presidential election**. Following the Dutch elections, the rising far right will be tested in the ballot boxes again. A good result for Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far-right National Front, will create uncertainties among European leaders and global markets.
May 4th	**United Kingdom local elections**. Elections to English, Scottish and Welsh councils and English mayoral elections will be held this year.
May 7th	**2nd round of French presidential election**. If Le Pen makes it to the second round, a high voter turnout and the opposition's ability to convince the public of the idea of Le Pen as a threat to French republican values could be the only way to prevent another far-right victory.
May 9th, 11th & 13th	**Eurovision Song Contest**. The contest has become a political issue in the host country, Ukraine. Because of the difficulty of allocating the money from the state budget, if Ukraine cannot afford to hold the event, the country who held the second place in the contest last year, Russia, will take it over from Ukraine.
May 14th	**State legislative election in North Rhine-Westphalia**. A state with more voters than all eastern German states put together, elections in North Rhine-Westphalia will be an important test case ahead of the 2017 national elections.
May 19th	**Presidential election in Iran**. The first election Iran will go through since the launch of the nuclear deal, it is significant for the country's short-term political decisions.
May 25th	**OPEC Meeting**. The member states are expected to extend the production cuts for the period following the meeting.
June	**Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit**. The summit is planned to be held in Astana. This year, India and Pakistan will formally become full members of the organisation. This will be the first enlargement of the SCO, but is not likely to be the last. The inclusion of one or some of the current observers – Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia – might follow in the medium term.
June 5th	**50th anniversary of Naksa**. The anniversary of the occupation could spark new waves of violence between the Palestinians, especially the youth, and the Israeli state.
July latest	**Presidential election in India**. The election will be held in India before July. The ruling BJP aims to expand its national footprint and consolidate its role as the main political force in India. The presidential contest will be preceded by elections in key states, such as Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.
July	**NATO Summit**. The event will, for the first time, be held in NATO's new headquarters in Brussels.
July 7th–8th	**G-20 Summit in Hamburg**. The leaders of the world's top economies will meet to talk about global governance, particularly issues related to stability, responsibility and viability.

August 4th	**Presidential election in Rwanda**. Paul Kagame will run for his third term in office. A few months ago a referendum approved the constitutional amendments allowing for this possibility. This referendum also passed a shortening of the presidential term from 7 to 5 years, although this change will not come into effect until 2024.
August 8th	**General election in Kenya**. Elections have been a very problematic issue in the recent history of the country (in 2007, more than 1300 people were killed and 600,000 people displaced due to electoral violence). Tensions will most likely increase as the election date approaches.
Between 27 August and 22 October	**German federal election**. In the chancellor's office since 2005, Angela Merkel has announced that she will run for a fourth term. On the other hand, the far-right Alternative for Germany party, which was fairly successful in the state and local elections, will receive growing popular support depending on Merkel's migration policies and the opposition she faces.
September 11th	**Parliamentary elections in Norway**. In the 2013 elections, the centre-left coalition handed over power to a coalition of the Conservatives (Høyre) and The Progress Party (FrP), advocating free-market policies but accused of populism. Focusing on issues like tax cuts, roadbuilding and tighter immigration policies, the Progress Party has gained increasing popularity. The question is whether the centre-right can hold on to power by following such policies.
September 12th–25th	**72nd Session of the UN General Assembly**. With the election as the next US president of Donald Trump, whose statements have been in conflict with the UN on issues like human rights, refugees, climate change and the Middle East peace process, the UN is headed toward a new and potentially challenging relationship with the US.
September 26th	**End of the 2nd Emergency Relocation Scheme**. After the failure of member states to comply with the scheme, the European Union will need to decide on the next step for dealing with the refugee relocation issue.
October	**Presidential election in Kyrgyzstan**. The election is likely to be held in Kyrgyzstan at the end of the year. Incumbent President Atambayev has insistently repeated that he will not seek the role of prime minister or any other national political office. The electoral process will test the resilience and credibility of the partly democratic system of the country.
October 10th	**General elections in Liberia**. The Liberian civil war is still casting its shadow over the current Liberian political landscape: many of the top officials from that period are participating in the elections.
October 24th–27th	**19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China**. The retirement rules call for replacing as many as 11 of the 25 members of the ruling Politburo, including five of the seven members of its supreme Standing Committee.
October 29th	**Legislative elections in Argentina**. A third of the Senate and almost half of the Chamber of Deputies will be renewed, including representatives of the strategically and symbolically important province of Buenos Aires. While facing legal proceedings, former President Cristina Kirchner has launched a determined campaign to present her candidacy.
November 6th–17th	**UNFCCC COP 23**. Conference of the Parties (COP 23) to the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will be organised by Fiji and hosted in Bonn, Germany. As the first country to ratify both the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement, Fiji is likely to repeat its call to Trump to change his stance on climate change.
November 7th	**100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution**. It will be interesting to watch what importance will the Kremlin give to this date which is a defining one in Russian (and world) history. All the more if we remember that Putin once declared that the end of the Soviet Union was one of the main catastrophes of the 20th century.
November 19th	**General election in Chile**. The ex-president, Sebastián Piñera (2010-2014), is leading the polls. However, it is not clear whether Piñera will run for the presidency, which he said he would declare by March 2017. The number of undecided voters is high, so the elections are hard to predict. The results will depend on Piñera's decision, and the potential coalitions to be formed in the coming months.
November 26th	**Presidential election in Honduras.** Former President Manuel Zelaya, who was ousted in a military coup d'Etat in 2009, has been a key voice in opposing incumbent President Juan Orlando Hernandez' bid for re-election at the 2017 elections, which Zelaya and his supporters claim to be an illegal act.
December 20th	**Presidential election in South Korea**. Following the corruption scandal that broke out in October 2016, involving the current President Park Geun-hye, the majority of the National Assembly voted to impeach her. The election process comes with political turmoil that is not likely to fade away in the coming months.
TBA	**Local elections in Tunisia.** The elections should allow Tunisians to vote for local representatives for the first time since the 2011 uprisings. It will be important to take note of the youth participation rate, as their expectations of change remain largely unmet.
TBA	**ASEAN Summit**. 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the summit, which will be chaired by the Philippines. The summit will be significant in highlighting Manila's regional role.
TBA	**General Elections in Lebanon**. As the current parliament – in office since 2009 – extended its own mandate twice amid fierce opposition, this will be the first legislative vote to take place in eight years.
TBA	**Legislative election in Angola**. President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, who has been in power since 1979, signaled that he might not stand for re-election at the ballots.
TBA	**Proposal for a referendum in Catalonia**. The Catalan government announced that by September at the latest a referendum on independence will be hold. The Spanish government reiterated that this will not take place.
TBA	**Possible constitutional referendum in Turkey.** A referendum on constitutional change is expected to be held next summer. The most prominent and controversial amendment is the introduction of an executive presidency to replace the existing parliamentary system.
TBA	**General election in Thailand**. The death of the Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who blessed the latest military coup in May 2014, in October 2016 created turmoil in Thailand's politics. While new Thai elections may bring forward civilian government, the polarisation between the urban middle class and the populous rural poor as the country's fundamental problem is not likely to be solved soon.
TBA	**General election in D. R. Congo.** Following a political deal designed to end the rule of President Joseph Kabila, the Democratic Republic of Congo's first peaceful transfer of power since independence in 1960 is on the horizon. If the parties to the deal keep to the terms, Kabila will be unable to change the constitution to allow him to stay in power for a third term and elections should take place before the end of the year.