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## WHAT HAPPENED IN THE WORLD IN 2015? A vision from CIDOB

**W**e're leaving 2015 behind. It's been a year that will be remembered for the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees in Europe, for the escalation of the terrorist threat on the global scale, and for agreements reached in borrowed time. It's now time to look back through the studies published by CIDOB over these last twelve months and to take stock of a particularly intense year.

### Our Forecasts

At the beginning of 2015 we identified **fifteen trends** that would emerge over the year. We ventured that Greece wouldn't leave the Eurozone and suggested that the European crisis would take on an increasingly political dimension. We also warned of the importance of refugees, that Schengen would be in the spotlight and that terrorism would aggravate the contradiction of freedom versus security. We noted, too, a stronger influence of anti-TTIP movements, expressed concern over a defiant Russia and chose three words to sum up the immediate future of the Middle East and North Africa: conflict, frustration and (tensions over) succession. We described mobilised Latin American societies with special attention to Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela. We also referred to a "hemispheric moment", a result of the Panama Summit, which ended up taking the form of rapprochement between Washington and Havana. Finally, we predicted that oil prices would remain low, that emerging countries would be victims of their own contradictions and that, in the case of climate change, agreement would be reached but with some doubts as to whether this would be sufficient.

### Terrorism

Many of these forecast trends materialised and became the focus of CIDOB's analytical work. In 2015 we have given special attention to understanding the causes of, and responses to terrorism in Europe. Moussa Bourekba discussed the **power of attraction of the Islamic State**, while Jordi Moreras asked why **some young people become radicalised and others don't**. After the Paris attacks of **13 November**, Diego Muro wondered **why ISIS targeted France**, Pol Morillas analysed France's

surprising resort to **Article 42.7** of the Treaty on European Union and Josep Maria Lloveras argued in favour of **Europeanising solutions** for a major European problem. In the pages of the newspaper *La Vanguardia*, Eduard Soler and Lurdes Vidal (European Institute of the Mediterranean – IEMed) detailed **seven traps** that would have to be avoided in the struggle against terrorism.

Previously, with regard to the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, our researchers had emphasised identity-related tensions. Bourekba cautioned that gestures of solidarity such as “**We are Charlie**” could be followed by responses more in keeping with the political agenda of the extreme right wing. Yolanda Onghena looked at the Belgian case to explain the appearance of initiatives by **Europe’s Muslim** citizens who reject both terrorism and stigmatisation.

## **The Refugee Crisis**

The other serious crisis to which we have devoted special attention is that of the **refugees**. As early as last April, terrorism and refugees had appeared on the agenda of a **Euro-Mediterranean meeting** of foreign ministers which had been called to review the European Policy on Good Neighbourly Relations. However, after summer it was no longer possible for anyone to deny that this global tragedy had become a challenge for the EU, one that was equally or more important than the economic crisis which has beset the continent in recent years. CIDOB’s work in this domain has been structured into three levels: monitoring the causes at their origin, analysing the responses on the European scale, and contributing towards designing better reception policies in the local sphere. Jonathan Zaragoza (European University Institute – EUI) warned in July that a change of policy was needed in order to mitigate the **tragedy in the Mediterranean**, Eckart Woertz described an **unsustainable situation in the Middle East**, Elena Sánchez and Eduard Soler proposed a more active role for **European cities**, noting that this is an area where Barcelona could take on a certain leadership role, while Blanca Garcés explained why Europe’s **asylum policy** is now obsolete. Finally, a monographic work signed by several CIDOB researchers analyses **ten side effects** of this crisis for the European integration project.

## **The Other European Crises**

If anything is now clear, it is the fact that the EU has a remarkable ability to keep accumulating crises without finding solutions for any of them. In this regard, **Greece** stood out in 2015 with two elections, one referendum and also as the focus of crucial negotiations for the sustainability of the euro zone. The electoral calendar in the south of Europe has been particularly intense. Hence, besides analysing the situation in Greece CIDOB researchers have also inquired into why the traditional political parties in **Portugal** have been more resilient than those in the neighbouring countries, the role of the EU in the **Catalan elections** of 27 September, and the impact of the economic situation on the **Spanish elections** of 20 December. Everything would seem to indicate that a prominent theme in the next two years will be what has come to be called Brexit, which is to say whether the United Kingdom will remain in the EU (and under what conditions). CIDOB has begun to study this crucial question by looking at the role of **public opinion**. Pol Morillas and Berta Barbet identify sovereignty, immigration and mobility as elements which will determine the position of the British people in the future referendum.

As for the elections that have been held in other European countries, a worrying consolidation of extreme right and Eurosceptic – not to mention Europhobic – movements has been observed. Dídac Gutiérrez argued that if we are to under-

stand the present clout of **Euroscepticism**, simply focusing on the rise of these parties isn't enough as it's also necessary to inquire into the absence of policies favouring a project that would require social support to justify its existence. Posing the question of whether it really is so complicated to **communicate Europe**, Yolanda Onghena and Isabel Verdet edited a monographic study dealing with the role of the **mass media** in constructing a critical, open and fluid European-ness. Meanwhile, Jordi Muñoz (Open University of Catalonia) discussed the crisis of **social democracy** in a time of serious recession. We have also studied the EU's foreign and security policy this year. Pol Morillas edited a jointly-authored study titled "**The World in Europe**" which gave an account of the crises and global trends that insert the European Union into international dynamics and determine its position in the world.

## **The Mediterranean and the Middle East**

If one thing is clear this year, it is that EU security is inextricably bound with the intensity of the conflict on the other shore of the Mediterranean. CIDOB has continued to analyse the **conflict in Syria**, especially with regard to the ambitions and strategies of regional and global powers. The escalation of terrorism in Tunisia has also been monitored with special concern. Eduard Soler discussed **five responses to the terrorist threat in the Maghreb**: unity, regional collaboration, regional vision, struggling against arms trafficking, and resilience. Francis Ghilès argued that the EU needs to have **a more generous attitude** if the collapse of Syria is to be avoided. We have looked into the responsibilities and policies of the international community in the case of **Libya** and have also continued to scrutinise the **new Saudi Arabian policy** with regard to Yemen. In the latter situation we have confirmed a certain weakening in the **alliance between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan** wherein Emma Hooper identifies Islamabad's unprecedented pragmatism. Then again, in the Arab-Israeli conflict we have observed increased violence which was even described as **a form of individual intifada** and a **hard-line position adopted** by the newly re-elected Binyamin Netanyahu.

However, rather than limiting ourselves to studying levels of violence in North Africa and the Middle East we've also studied political processes. Inmaculada Szmolka (University of Granada) edited a special number of the review *Afers Internacionals* devoted to the **actors and dynamics of change** after the Arab Spring. In a text written for CIDOB, Ricard González analysed the institutionalisation of the Al Sisi regime in **Egypt** while Francis Ghilès contrasted the slow but real progress in the economic situation of **Morocco** with that of **Algeria**, which is adversely affected by the fall in oil prices and burdened with political leaders who are incapable of dealing with the challenges they face. Against a gloomy background, recognition of the Tunisian transition with the **Nobel Peace Prize 2015** has been an eloquent reminder of the benefits of dialogue and inclusion.

## **Russia and the Security Order in Europe**

In this arc of crisis we have remained attentive to the situation of Eastern Europe. Nicolás de Pedro analysed the impact in Spain of European **sanctions** against Russia, the sustainability of the **Minsk Agreements**, misunderstanding and tension as the new normality in **European Union-Russian relations**, and the repercussions of Russian actions in Syria. Agneska Nimark studied the impact on the global order of tensions with Russia regarding **non-proliferación**. And, on the fourth anniversary of the **Helsinki Summit**, Pere Vilanova noted that European – or, better said perhaps, Pan-European – security is an essential condition for better global security.

## Diplomatic Opportunity

2015 has also been marked by intense diplomatic activity. Notable here are three agreements in very dissimilar spheres which, with their different voices and intensity, have been dubbed “historic”. The **nuclear agreement with Iran**, analysed by Roberto Toscano, is a commitment, not exempt of risk, which reflects political changes in the United States and Iran and the need to work together in order to confront **the threats they share**. The **Trans-Pacific Partnership** on trade liberalisation which, according to Jordi Bacaria, contrasts with pressures in different social and political sectors in Europe aiming at restricting or abolishing the **TTIP**. In this domain, CIDOB has also devoted a monographic number of *Afers Internacionals* to **interregional relations**. Finally, the **global summit in Paris** to confront global warming was described by Luigi Carafa in the pages of *El País* as the **most crucial summit of the century**. In this regard, Oriol Costa analysed **the role of a European Union** which no longer leads climate negotiations but which can, as happened in Paris, make the most of favourable circumstances.

## Latin America

The Americas have not been absent from the global dynamics, especially in connection with diplomatic and electoral intensity. In December last year a thawing of relations between Cuba and the United States was announced. The rapprochement between Washington and Havana, which has continued throughout 2015, was described by Anna Ayuso as an irreversible fact when she analysed the **Panama Summit**. Apropos of elections, the outstanding examples to be highlighted are, first, those held in **Argentina** and won by Mauricio Macri with a discourse of change. Second, the legislative elections in **Venezuela** were a major blow for Chavism. Anna Ayuso appraised their regional importance, arguing that the rest of the continent mustn't turn a blind eye if Maduro doesn't respect the electoral result. In a hopeful spirit, CIDOB has also followed the **peace process in Colombia** and devoted a dossier of documents to this subject.

## Emerging Countries

At the global level, CIDOB researchers have successfully completed the **Atlantic Future** project and followed the evolution of the emerging (or re-emerged) powers which are causing concern owing to questions arising from the sustainability of their economic growth and internal tensions. We have attentively observed the scope of reforms in **Mexico** while, in **Brazil**, we have noted rising domestic criticism of the president, Dilma Rousseff. We have also been watching the political changes in **Turkey**, which held two elections in a little less than four months. Moreover, Sean Golden analysed the reality behind what President Xi calls the “**China dream**”, and Nicolás de Pedro turned his attention to **India** to evaluate Narendra Modi's first year in power. Africa has also been included in our studies over 2015 and the seminar **War and Peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century** gave special attention to this continent. Furthermore, we analysed the **African electoral cycle**, the role of the armed forces in the transition of **Burkina Faso**, the **Ebola crisis** as a challenge to state-building, and **China's** role in the continent.

## Issues of Proximity

CIDOB has always been characterised by a research agenda combining international affairs at the global level with study of their repercussions and dynamics in realms closest to the citizen. Along these lines, CIDOB and the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) produced a study forecasting the **Scenarios of Macro-**

**Economic Development for Catalonia on Horizon 2030.** Besides inquiring into the importance of **tourism**, it also contributed to the analysis of **cities** as emerging soft-power actors on the global stage and their role in **making a local contribution to sustainable development** in accordance with the “wise cities” model.

### **A Focus on 2016**

In 2016 we shall continue to analyse the main themes of international concern and CIDOB’s participation in a number of EU **research projects** will allow us to expand this effort. We already have some decisive moments clearly marked on the calendar, these including the presidential elections in the United States and, in all likelihood, a referendum on the United Kingdom’s EU membership. Unfortunately, we’re going to be talking more about refugees and terrorism in 2016 and, perhaps, about the economic crisis as well, although this may mean referring less to Europe and more to describing the present situation of some emerging powers and countries that depend on hydrocarbon exports. With a little luck, we hope that 2016 will bring new opportunities whereby diplomacy and political dialogue will achieve their goals in different conflict zones, from Colombia to Syria, and from Ukraine to Libya. We also hope that society remains active and mobilised and we’ll be doing our best to keep contributing with our research, analysis and proposals.