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The dramatic rise of the tension between the United States and Iran that for a few days has sparked the possibility of a generalized conflict in the region has marked the beginning of the year. The assassination of General Qassem Suleimani by means of a drone attack has also revealed Trump administration's lack of expertise and long-term strategy, as discussed by Fred Kaplan in *Slate* where he points out the absence of high-ranking qualified personnel in Donald Trump's staff. Furthermore, the American president continues his bullying politics characterized by wrong strategies according to the analysis of Paul Krugman in *The New York Times*. It is also worth noting that the actions carried out by the US under Trump's presidency, especially those undertaken the last few months, have led the Iranian population (which had been for a long-time divided) to strongly support a government weakened by the protests of the last few weeks, as explained in *Foreign Policy*. Another battle that the US president is carrying out is the fierce competition with China for world hegemony and Evan Osnos wonders in *The New Yorker* who will emerge victorious and therefore shape the 21st century. In *Foreign Affairs* Fareed Zakaria warns of the danger that would entail repeating the same mistakes made during the Cold war against the Soviet Union, since exaggerating the real Soviet threat had important and durable consequences both for the USA and the rest of the world. Latin America is another region of the world destabilized by popular riots caused by the increasing social and economic inequality. The journal *Open Democracy* reviews in a long article the events of 2019 in Haiti, Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, Colombia and tries to foresee how they could develop in 2020 while stressing that the discomfort of the middle classes seeking out to maintain their status merges with to that of the popular classes that are getting poorer. Jair Bolsonaro's

Brazil is also a source of concern. According to Bruno Meyerfeld in the newspaper *Le Monde*, it would be a mistake to consider the Brazilian president as a simple product of a tropical fever passing outburst, as Bolsonaro has achieved to unite around his presidency some of the most powerful circles of influence in Brazil that support him despite the scandals.

The negotiations to confirm Pedro Sánchez as Prime Minister and to form the new Spanish cabinet have focused the attention of Spanish politics for the last few weeks. In *El País*, Josep Ramoneda stresses that the parties supporting the new government have had the courage to break the binary scheme and to address a change of framework, which is the only way to solve conflicts when they become chronic. That happened in a political context where the three right-wing opposition parties have not admitted their defeat and have repeatedly reported the new government as illegitimate. As Arsenio Escolar points out in *El Diario* this reveals a serious democratic deficit and a refusal to homologate to the standard of the European right that does not question the electoral results neither delegitimizes those thinking differently, and knows how to exercise a tough but responsible opposition. José Antonio Martín Pallín reports in the journal *CTXT* the blow delivered to the Spanish justice by the European Court of Justice in the case of Oriol Junqueras and suggests that perhaps Spanish judges are not as European nor as democratic as they say insofar as they seem to feel uncomfortable with the European spaces of freedom, justice and security. As regards European policy, the editors of the journal *Politico* analyse what will be the most important challenges the European Union will face in 2020. They emphasize that in the relations between Europe and China, protectionism will cease to be a forbidden word in the EU's political decision-making. They warn the EU might have to cope with a new financial crisis due to the strong pressures exerted on the world financial system's tectonic plates, although this time the safeguards built after the 2008 crisis might be able to ensure a better response. Finally, they also point out the effective realization of Brexit and the subsequent commercial negotiations that are foreseen long and very complex. In this context, the restoration of government to Northern Ireland has a major relevance after three years of paralysis stresses Kathy Hayward in *The Guardian*. This is an important turning point to tackle the challenges that Northern Ireland will have to face over the next decade. Finally, the political evolution in the Russian Federation also requires attention. President Vladimir Putin has announced important changes in the Constitution that are likely to modify the power structure. In an article in *Politico*, Alec Kuhn believes that the proposed changes are no more than the instrument of a transition that could allow the current president to continue exercising power from another institutional area yet to be defined.

The journal *Foreign Affairs* devotes a special issue on the current state of capitalism and on the neoliberal policies that have led to a dramatic growth of inequalities that explain a great part of riots and demonstrations occurring around the world. In his article, Branko Milanović argues that the actual battle lays within capitalism itself, between two opposing models. On the one hand, the capitalism of Western European countries and North America, where a meritocratic, liberal form prevails and on the other, the model of State-led capitalism as it is the case in China and Russia, which privileges a high economic growth and limits individual political and civic rights. In spite of its hegemony,

Fahnbulleh Miatta believes capitalism is in crisis and that a return to the traditional social democratic agenda is not enough to solve the situation. First, because this agenda would clash with the widespread demand in the developed economies for a more local and collective control of resources. Second, the social democratic model did not consider the most important challenge of our times, i.e. the climate emergency that increasingly deepens the existing inequalities. Actually, those who have least contributed to the climate crisis are those who uttermost suffer the consequences and at the same time these very same groups and communities have been historically marginalised and exploited. To redress the situation, Abhijit V. Banerjee and this year Nobel Prize in economics, Esther Duflo bet on increasing the standard of living with available resources, investing in education and healthcare, improving the functioning of the courts and banks and building more habitable cities to ensure that growth improves the wellbeing of the poor. Finally, in Open Democracy, Natalia Quiroga proposes to revive from a feminist economy those ways to sustain life allowing us to think from other points of view how to defend community, land control, justice and common politics.

Climate change is here to stay and the initiatives looking to reduce its impact on life and lifestyles will demand a sustained collective effort. In The New Yorker, Alice Hill and Leonardo Martínez-Díaz suggest that both government and private agents will have to rethink where and how infrastructures are built, how to use climate and meteorological data and how to mobilize the financial resources needed to compensate for possible losses. In Le Monde diplomatique Anne-Cécile Robert raises another debate regarding the instrumentalization of the environmental cause by the defenders of green capitalism. Following the poor results of the COP25 summit, Gérard Horny considers in the journal Slate that the legitimate criticisms addressed to governments should be qualified insofar as not all governments are equal, and progress in the fight against climate emergency is faster in democratic countries. Consequently, the energy transition must also entail a new conception of democracy that will bring a change to the strategies of development for economic growth.

Several authors also raise the repercussions of the climatic change on the new technologies as well as the responsibility of the latter regarding the global warming. Kevin Lozano warns from The New Republic that climate emergency demands the launching of a new green Internet to ease its effects. He is aware that this new Internet could maybe be slower but at the same time one of its most positive aspects would be the Internet would be geared towards citizens and more heterogeneous. Another challenge posed by new technologies are the ethical implications of their use, as Sara White points out in Slate. By using the example of 3D technology to print authentic copies of human bones, she considers that this constitutes an authentic ethical minefield infinitely more complex as that from now when someone prints these skulls and bones, and reconstructs them, he/she becomes the owner of these data. The ethical implications of more general scope also concern Matthew Longo in Politico where he emphasises that algorithms are not free of human bias and often amplify them. Consequently, new technologies are redefining the relationship between the individual and the State to the extent that the collection and the use of massive data is reducing the privacy of citizens.

Diari de les IDEES

International politics and globalisation

Fred Kaplan Trump is Lurching Toward War With a Very Unqualified Team

There might still be a peaceful way out of the crisis with Iran—the leaders of Britain, France, Germany, and the United Nations, as well as such quite hawkish prominent Americans as retired Gen. David Petraeus and former Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, are urging diplomatic overtures from both sides—but President Donald Trump isn't likely to go that route for two reasons. First, he isn't keen on diplomacy. Second, even if he suddenly were, no one around him is very fit for the task (...)

Paul Krugman Trump the Intimidator Fails Again

International crises often lead, at least initially, to surging support for a country's leadership. And that's clearly happening now. Just weeks ago the nation's leader faced public discontent so intense that his grip on power seemed at risk. Now the assassination of Qassim Suleimani has transformed the situation, generating a wave of patriotism that has greatly bolstered the people in charge. Unfortunately, this patriotic rallying around the flag is happening not in America, where many are (with good reason) deeply suspicious of Donald Trump's motives, but in Iran. In other words, Trump's latest attempt to bully another country has backfired — just like all his previous attempts (...)

Simon Jenkins Donald Trump's belligerent threats to Iran's cultural sites are grotesque

Donald Trump's threat to destroy the sites of ancient Persia should send a shiver down the spine of any civilised person. How can anything justify American bombing of Persepolis or the mosques of Isfahan? Only the demented can see them as "threatening America". It is on the same ethical plane as the Islamic State vandalism of Palmyra and Mosul. The war crimes proposed by the US president would only strengthen his enemy's clerical regime (...)

Rohollah Faghihi Killing Suleimani Has United Iranians Like Never Before

Grief and anger seized Iranians after the U.S. killing of Gen. Qassem Suleimani last Friday. Enormous numbers of people took to the streets in cities across the country to commemorate him. It was a passionate outcry in favor of a figure whom American media described as "the world's No. 1 bad guy." But while Suleimani was a bogeyman for the

United States, within Iran he was seen as both a heroic figure and politically far more neutral than he has sometimes been painted. He walked a careful line between moderates and hard-liners, avoiding domestic political fights and allowing others to project onto him their own visions of Iran's future (...)

Peter Beinart The Nationalism That Trump Can't See

Iran's missile attack last night on bases where American forces in Iraq are stationed offered the latest evidence that the Trump administration has done something extraordinary. By killing Qassem Soleimani, Iran's most powerful military leader, at a Baghdad airport, it has turned both Iranian and Iraqi nationalism against the United States. "Just a few weeks earlier," notes The New York Times, Iran's "streets were filled with protesters angry with their leaders over the flailing economy and the country's international isolation. But at least for now, Iran is united—in anger at the United States." Even some of the Iranians who hate their government most have temporarily subordinated that feeling to hatred of the United States. On Sunday, Soleimani was praised, and Trump denounced, by Ardeshir Zahedi—who served as foreign minister to the Shah (...)

James Palmer China's Monumental Year

With the U.S.-China trade war, President Xi Jinping's growing political ambitions, and global fallout from protests in Hong Kong and repression in Xinjiang, 2019 has been a big year for China. On the first day of 2020, here is China Brief's year in review: Five stories from Foreign Policy and five pieces from other outlets that deepened our knowledge of China in 2019 (...)

Evan Osnos The Future of America's Contest with China

Last fall, to celebrate the seventieth birthday of the People's Republic of China, the government planned the largest military parade and "mass pageant" in Beijing's history. On October 1st, more than a hundred thousand performers and soldiers mustered downtown, forming waves of color that stretched from voguish skyscrapers in the east to the squat pavilions of the Forbidden City (...)

Fareed Zakaria The New China Scare

In February 1947, U.S. President Harry Truman huddled with his most senior foreign policy advisers, George Marshall and Dean Acheson, and a handful of congressional leaders. The topic was the administration's plan to aid the Greek government in its fight against a communist insurgency. Marshall and Acheson presented their case for the plan. Arthur Vandenberg, chair of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, listened closely and then offered his support with a caveat. "The only way you are going to get what you want," he

reportedly told the president, “is to make a speech and scare the hell out of the country.” Over the next few months, Truman did just that. He turned the civil war in Greece into a test of the United States’ ability to confront international communism. Reflecting on Truman’s expansive rhetoric about aiding democracies anywhere, anytime, Acheson confessed in his memoirs that the administration had made an argument “clearer than truth.”

Bruno Meyerfeld Brésil: Jair Bolsonaro est parti pour durer

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Democracia Abierta Movilizaciones ciudadanas y cambios disruptivos en América Latina

[This summary is not available in English]

Jean-Pierre Filiu Netanyahu socava la democracia en Israel

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Eva Borreguero El riesgo del mayoritarismo

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Catalonia, Spain and Europe

Josep Ramoneda Trencar el frontisme, guanyar complexitat

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Milagros Pérez Oliva El govern a través dels jutges

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José Antonio Martín Pallín El Tribunal Supremo se sale del sistema judicial europeo

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Steven Forti i Giacomo Russo Spena Spagna, dalla destra xenofoba alla Chiesa: ecco i nemici del governo Sánchez/Iglesias

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Arsenio Escolar Una derecha con déficit democrático

[This summary is not available in English]

Francesc-Marc Álvaro O segunda transición o nada

[This summary is not available in English]

Politico Europe's big problems in 2020

2019 was the year that multiple European governments collapsed, Boris Johnson crushed his opponents with a promise to “Get Brexit done” and a 16-year-old from Sweden rallied environmental protests across the Continent. As the calendar clicks over into January 2020, POLITICO’s editors predict the major tensions that will shape the coming year. Spoiler: The outlook isn’t rosy — and Brexit isn’t done yet (...)

David M. Herszenhorn et al. As crisis engulfs Middle East, EU is off the pace

With the Middle East in meltdown and fears of “World War III” trending on social media, the leader of the EU’s new “geopolitical Commission” was nowhere to be geo-located. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who aims to make the bloc a bigger player on the world stage, made her first public comments about the escalating hostilities between Iran and the United States on Monday evening — more than three days after an airstrike ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump killed Iranian general Qassem Soleimani (...)

Edwige Camp-Pietrain Le parti indépendantiste écossais n’est pas prêt à un deuxième référendum

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Kathy Hayward Now Stormont is back, Northern Ireland has hope once again

The restoration of government to Northern Ireland was three painful years in the making. Since the Stormont assembly and executive collapsed in January 2017 over the Democratic Unionist party's handling of the renewable heat incentive scandal, the country has effectively been run by civil servants facing down a health crisis, the impact of austerity and Brexit-related insecurity (...)

Alec Luhn How Putin plans to stay on

If one thing was clear about the resignation of Russia's prime minister on Wednesday, it was that a step had been taken toward President Vladimir Putin remaining in power after his term ends in 2024. When Putin began his annual speech to the federal assembly at noon, no one could have anticipated the string of bombshells that was to follow. After more than an hour of talk about social problems like Russia's long-running population decline, the president suddenly called for a raft of constitutional changes. Parliament, not the president, should appoint the prime minister, he said, and the status and role of the state council, a little-active advisory body, should be enshrined in the constitution (...)

The Economist How Vladimir Putin is preparing to rule for ever

What is Vladimir Putin playing at? On January 15th Russia's president took Kremlin-watchers by surprise. In his state-of-the-union speech, he announced a radical overhaul of the Russian constitution and a referendum on its proposed (still very unclear) terms. This bombshell was immediately followed by another. The prime minister, Dmitry Medvedev, resigned along with the entire cabinet. As The Economist went to press, the reasons for Mr Medvedev's ejection and replacement by an obscure technocrat remained a riddle wrapped in a mystery (...)

Karolina Wygura i Jaroslav Kuisz Populists understand the power of human emotion. Europe's liberals need to grasp it, too

The battle for 1989 was won by illiberal populism. That's one thing we can say with certainty 30 years on from the fall of the iron curtain. In the narrative spun by Jarosław Kaczyński, Viktor Orbán and their supporters, democratic transformation turned out to be a fraud, liberal democracy an illusion, and integration with the EU an upmarket form of foreign occupation. The illiberal populists, under the cover of such rhetoric, simultaneously dismantle the rule of law and independent institutions. Meanwhile, liberals seem devoid of ideas or initiative, agreeing only that somehow, it all went wrong (...)

Democracy, diversity and culture

Enzo Traverso El tortuoso camino de la libertad

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Gabriele Giacomini Perché il populismo digitale minaccia la democrazia

[This summary is not available in English]

Serge Halimi De Santiago à Paris, les peuples dans la rue

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Cas Mudde The 2010s' grim legacy: the decade of the far right

The past decade was the decade of the far right. In January 2010, leftist and centrist politicians led three of the largest democracies in the world: Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Brazil), Manmohan Singh (India) and Barack Obama (US). In December 2019, all three countries have far-right leaders: Jair Bolsonaro, Narendra Modi and Donald Trump. In Europe, center-left parties have been decimated, while mainstream right parties mainly survive by adopting frames and policies from the radical right. Only Germany still has the same center-right leader, Angela Merkel, but that will probably change in the next year, too. This political sea change is in large part the (delayed) consequence of demographic, economic and social shifts. After 9/11, the political debate in many countries shifted from socio-economic to socio-cultural issues. Even the Great Recession only changed this temporarily; once the dust over the bailouts had settled, immigration and security quickly replaced austerity and economic inequality as defining issues once again (...)

Israel Butler i Eefje DeKroon Three reasons why rights and climate activists should fight populists together

Without a habitable planet there are no humans and, consequently, no human rights. And to make the planet habitable, we need the tools human rights offer us. Those promoting human rights and environmental protection face a shared problem: the destruction of our home, with all its accompanying injustices. Those who have contributed the least to the climate crisis are the ones that will be hit hardest and hit first by the detrimental impacts of climate change. These are disproportionately groups and communities that have been historically marginalised, vulnerable and exploited. And they have the fewest resources at their disposal to protect themselves. So we need a shared solution: creating a fair and

sustainable future. But to date, environmental and human rights organisations in Europe and those who fund them tend to work in silos. The fight ahead is too big and important to lose, so if we are to create a free and fair society in which all can live sustainably on a healthy planet, then the two sectors need to work together much more closely. Here are three reasons why (...)

Joshua Rothman The Equality Conundrum

Michael and Angela have just turned fifty-five. They know two people who have died in the past few years—one from cancer, another in a car accident. It occurs to them that they should make a plan for their kids. They have some money in the bank. Suppose they were both killed in a plane crash—what would happen to it? They have four children, who range in age from their late teens to their late twenties. Chloe, the oldest, is a math wiz with a coding job at Google; she hopes to start her own company soon. Will, who has a degree in social work, is paying off his student debt while working at a halfway house for recovering addicts. The twins, James and Alexis, are both in college. James, a perpetually stoned underachiever, is convinced that he can make it as a YouTuber. (He’s already been suspended twice, for on-campus pranks.) Alexis, who hopes to become a poet, has a congenital condition that could leave her blind by middle age (...)

Zoë Carpenter This Was the Decade of Feminist Uprisings in Latin America

One of the most significant stories of the last decade in Latin America was the flourishing of a regional, grassroots feminist movement that put gender politics at the center of public debate. The mobilization emerged first in response to staggering rates of femicide and other forms of gender violence, and then mounted challenges to the region’s abortion laws, which are among the world’s most restrictive. Beginning in Argentina and spreading to Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, and elsewhere, the movement washed the region in green—green for the bandanas that activists wore around their necks, or tied to their backpacks, or hung on their walls; emerald symbols of solidarity, or as one Argentine described them, a “badge of dissent.” The story of the “green wave” does not end with the decade. Despite some concrete victories—including, in September, the partial decriminalization of abortion in the Mexican state of Oaxaca—many of its legislative goals remain unrealized, and feminist activists across the region are now facing a right-wing political backlash. In Ecuador, where I reported this year on an escalation of abortion-related prosecutions, a protracted political battle over the decriminalization of abortion in cases of rape is ongoing (...)

Claire Levenson 'Qu'est-ce qu'une femme?', la question qui oppose activistes trans et féministes radicales

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Elena Losada De mujeres y pistolas. La revisión de los estereotipos de la novela criminal

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Economy, welfare and equality

Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo How Poverty Ends

For all the worries today about the explosion of inequality in rich countries, the last few decades have been remarkably good for the world's poor. Between 1980 and 2016, the average income of the bottom 50 percent of earners nearly doubled, as this group captured 12 percent of the growth in global GDP. The number of those living on less than \$1.90 a day—the World Bank's threshold for "extreme poverty"—has dropped by more than half since 1990, from nearly two billion to around 700 million. Never before in human history have so many people been lifted out of poverty so quickly. There have also been massive improvements in quality of life, even for those who remain poor. Since 1990, the global maternal mortality rate has been cut in half. So has the infant mortality rate, saving the lives of more than 100 million children. Today, except in those places experiencing major social disruption, nearly all children, boys and girls alike, have access to primary education. Even deaths from HIV/AIDS, an epidemic that once seemed hopeless, peaked soon after the turn of the millennium and have been declining ever since (...)

Branko Milanović The Clash of Capitalisms

Capitalism rules the world. With only the most minor exceptions, the entire globe now organizes economic production the same way: labor is voluntary, capital is mostly in private hands, and production is coordinated in a decentralized way and motivated by profit. There is no historical precedent for this triumph. In the past, capitalism—whether in Mesopotamia in the sixth century BC, the Roman Empire, Italian city-states in the Middle Ages, or the Low Countries in the early modern era—had to coexist with other ways of organizing production. These alternatives included hunting and gathering, small-scale farming by free peasants, serfdom, and slavery. Even as recently as 100 years ago, when the first form of globalized capitalism appeared with the advent of large-scale industrial production and global trade, many of these other modes of production still existed. Then, following the Russian Revolution in 1917, capitalism shared the world with communism, which reigned in countries that together contained about one-third of the human population. Now, however, capitalism is the sole remaining mode of production (...)

Joseph Stiglitz et al. The Starving State. Why Capitalism's Salvation Depends on Taxation

For millennia, markets have not flourished without the help of the state. Without regulations and government support, the nineteenth-century English cloth-makers and Portuguese winemakers whom the economist David Ricardo made famous in his theory of comparative advantage would have never attained the scale necessary to drive international trade. Most economists rightly emphasize the role of the state in providing public goods and correcting market failures, but they often neglect the history of how markets came into being in the first place. The invisible hand of the market depended on the heavier hand of the state. The state requires something simple to perform its multiple roles: revenue. It takes money to build roads and ports, to provide education for the young and health care for the sick, to finance the basic research that is the wellspring of all progress, and to staff the bureaucracies that keep societies and economies in motion. No successful market can survive without the underpinnings of a strong, functioning state (...)

Robert Sweeney Financial capitalism is here to stay, but in what form?

It is no exaggeration to say financialisation has been one of the defining changes in the structure of capitalist economies over the past four decades or so. It is also little exaggeration to say it has evoked major debate on the left. There is intense discussion about what the role of the financial sector in today's world is or should be, its appropriate size, how it might be used to tackle the existential threat of climate change and so on. As healthy as many of these conversations are, the rise of finance is widely misunderstood: critical economists, analysts and policy-makers have got many of its essential features basically wrong (...)

Miatta Fahnbulleh The Neoliberal Collapse

Capitalism is in crisis. Until recently, that conviction was confined to the left. Today, however, it has gained traction across the political spectrum in advanced economies. Economists, policymakers, and ordinary people have increasingly come to see that neoliberalism—a creed built on faith in free markets, deregulation, and small government, and that has dominated societies for the last 40 years—has reached its limit. This crisis has been long in the making but was brought into sharp focus in the aftermath of the global financial meltdown of 2007-8 and the global recession that followed it. In the developed countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, economic growth over the last decade ceased to benefit most people. At the end of 2017, nominal wage growth among OECD members was only half what it was a decade earlier. More than one in three people in the OECD countries are estimated to be economically vulnerable, meaning they lack the means to maintain a living standard at or above the poverty level for at least three months. Meanwhile, in those countries, income inequality is higher than at any time in the past half century: the richest ten percent hold almost half of total wealth, and the bottom 40 percent hold just three percent (...)

Natalia Quiroga Díaz Hacia una economía feminista emancipadora

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Climate change and sustainability

Alice Hill i Leonardo Martínez-Díaz Adapt of Perish. Preparing for the Inescapable Effects of Climate Change

Ever since climate change became a concern for policymakers and laypeople alike, the focus of public debate has largely been on mitigation: limiting greenhouse gas emissions, capturing carbon, and transitioning to renewable energy. Those efforts must continue if we hope to keep the planet hospitable. But it is also time to acknowledge that—no matter what we do—some measure of climate change is here to stay. The phenomenon has already affected the U.S. economy, U.S. national security, and human health. Such costs will only grow over time. The United States must build resilience and overhaul key systems, including those governing infrastructure, the use of climate data, and finance. Otherwise, the blow to the U.S. economy will be staggering. Assuming that current trends continue, coastal damage, increased spending on electricity, and lost productivity due to climate-related illness are projected to consume an estimated \$500 billion per year by the time a child born today has settled into retirement. Other estimates suggest that the U.S. economy will lose about 1.2 percent of GDP per year for every degree Celsius of warming, effectively halving the country's annual growth (...)

Elizabeth Kolbert What Will Another Decade of Climate Crisis Bring?

Last week, thousands of people in the Australian state of Victoria were urged to evacuate their homes. "Don't wait," the alert warned. Bushfires were burning across the state; so large were some of the blazes that, according to Victoria's commissioner of emergency management, they were "punching into the atmosphere" with columns of smoke nine miles high. The smoke columns were producing their own weather, generating lightning that, in turn, was setting more fires. Some time after residents received the evacuation warning, many of those in the most seriously affected region, East Gippsland, which is a popular tourist destination, received another alert. It was now too late to leave: "You are in danger and need to act immediately to survive." (...)

Anne-Cécile Robert Au nom de l'urgence écologique

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G rard Horny Le plus efficace pour lutter contre le changement climatique? La d mocratie!

[This summary is not available in English]

George Monbiot Lab-grown food will soon destroy farming -and save the planet

It sounds like a miracle, but no great technological leaps were required. In a commercial lab on the outskirts of Helsinki, I watched scientists turn water into food. Through a porthole in a metal tank, I could see a yellow froth churning. It's a primordial soup of bacteria, taken from the soil and multiplied in the laboratory, using hydrogen extracted from water as its energy source. When the froth was siphoned through a tangle of pipes and squirted on to heated rollers, it turned into a rich yellow flour (...)

Innovation, science and technology

Mark Scott In 2020, global 'techlash' will move from words to action

It's safe to say that 2019 was not a good year for tech. Facebook, again, found itself at the center of a global regulatory maelstrom. Other tech giants, from Amazon to Apple, faced similar questions about their activities worldwide. The wider public's trust in digital services — and their ability to control them — was tested almost to the breaking point. But as we enter a new year, it's worth asking: Where do we go from here? Despite a litany of investigations, fines and new laws aimed at reining in tech's worst excesses, the industry — and particularly the largest (American and Chinese) players — has gone from strength to strength, with almost all of the companies' stock prices hitting record highs in 2019 (...)

Kevin Lozano Can the Internet Survive Climate Change?

In a tiny apartment in the Spanish coastal town of El Masnou, just outside of Barcelona, Kris de Decker runs a website completely powered by a small solar panel crammed into the corner of his balcony. With its light blue background and low-res imagery, the site for Low-Tech Magazine is intentionally retro—a callback to blogs and self-hosted sites from the mid-to-late 1990s. Each web page uses only .77 megabytes of data, making it more than 50 percent leaner than the average web page. It is also static, meaning it lives entirely on its locally hosted solar-powered server and as a result is only generated once, requiring less computing power than a dynamic site that generates anew for each visitor. Low-Tech has no ads and doesn't use cookies. Even if the site were not powered by solar energy, these choices would make it that rare thing: an environmentally friendly web page (...)

Matthew Longo Your body is a passport

Sooner than you think, your body will be your passport. Retina and iris scans, and special cameras that identify you by your posture and gait, will replace the classic booklet bearing your nationality, a bad picture and some blurry stamps mapping your recent travels. If the inevitable end of the passport were just another transition from paper to digital, that would be fine. Instead, governments' growing preference for biometric data at border crossings represents an alarming, opaque change in how they use — and possibly abuse — your personal data. Ruling authorities have issued travel documents since at least medieval times, and some of these early versions included a brief description of the bearer: age, height, weight, distinguishing features. But it was only with the introduction of the passport photograph in Europe during World War I that they could be reliably used to verify their owner's identity — although even this was not certain (...)

Sarah Wild The Ethical Dilemmas Surrounding 3D-Printed Human Bones

3D-printing human bones can improve medical procedures, map how humans have evolved, and even help show a courtroom how someone died. But there are challenges. Ten years ago, it wasn't possible for most people to use 3D technology to print authentic copies of human bones. Today, using a 3D printer and digital scans of actual bones, it is possible to create unlimited numbers of replica bones—each curve and break and tiny imperfection intact—relatively inexpensively. The technology is increasingly allowing researchers to build repositories of bone data, which they can use to improve medical procedures, map how humans have evolved, and even help show a courtroom how someone died (...)

Bruno Schneier Bots Are Destroying Political Discourse As We Know It

Presidential-campaign season is officially, officially, upon us now, which means it's time to confront the weird and insidious ways in which technology is warping politics. One of the biggest threats on the horizon: Artificial personas are coming, and they're poised to take over political debate. The risk arises from two separate threads coming together: artificial-intelligence-driven text generation and social-media chatbots. These computer-generated "people" will drown out actual human discussions on the internet (...)