

Issues that will shape the year ahead

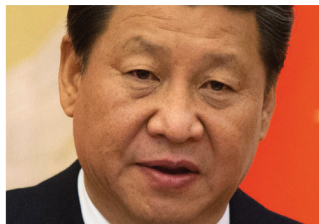
1 Israel: Elections called by Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** (above) on March 17 are seen by many as a contest of fundamental values, with Israeli settler movement within Netanyahu's **Likud-led coalition** pushing for annexation of much of West Bank. Unlimited expansion of settlements could trigger **Third Intifada** – attracting militants from neighbouring countries

2 Syria and Iraq: America and its allies face dilemma of intervention or standing back and letting jihadism spill over into Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. **Islamic State militants** could ignite full-blown sectarian war in Iraq, pitting Shiite Muslim majority against Sunni minority

3 Iran: Negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme extended until June 30. Failure to reach deal with five permanent members of UN Security Council plus Germany is likely to see sanctions ramped up further and pressure for military attack on Iran's nuclear facilities

4 Baltics: Intense Russian naval and air activity continues around EU and NATO members Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Russia's President **Vladimir Putin** (right) is expected to escalate rhetoric over some 427,000 ethnic Russian "non-citizens" living in Estonia and Latvia

5 Ukraine: Putin-backed rebels, supported by Russian forces, could drive west in Ukraine to create a land corridor to **annexed Crimea** region. Move could trigger more economic sanctions from U.S. and EU, pushing Russia into severe recession. If Russia's state-owned companies default on external debt, French and German banks will suffer most

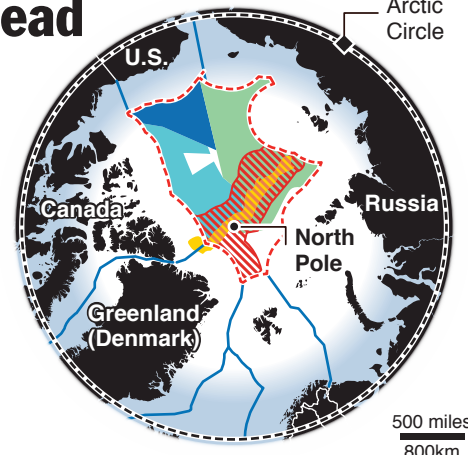


6 China: Starts year as world's biggest economy. President **Xi Jinping** (above) is likely to advance maritime claims, island-building and provocative expansion of **air defence identification zone** from East to South China Seas, alienating Japan, U.S., Australia and others

7 India: Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** (right) plans to replace outdated food and fuel subsidies with world's biggest biometrics database.



Under so-called **Aadhaar system**, 1.2 billion people would receive cash payments and other subsidies paid directly to their bank accounts by end of year



8 Arctic: Denmark's bid for 895,000 sq km of Arctic Ocean around **Lomonosov Ridge** – an underwater mountain range which traverses North Pole – could spark political battle with U.S., Russia and Canada. Russia and Canada also claim North Pole as part of their continental shelf

- U.S. claim
- Canada
- Russia
- Lomonosov Ridge
- Danish claim



9 Nigeria: Al Qaeda has given \$500 million to **Boko Haram** to mount attacks ahead of February 14 general elections which are expected to return President **Goodluck Jonathan** (above) to power. Islamist group is likely to gain control of more territory for its self-styled caliphate

12 Europe: Hard-left **Syriza** party is ahead in polls and has pledged to take Greece out of eurozone if it wins next election. Moratorium on external debt repayments would trigger new crisis in eurozone

11 United States: Cash-rich venture capital and private equity firms are continuing to pour money into technology start-ups which generate no sales or cash flow. Valuations spike before bursting, possibly dragging down markets worldwide

10 Pakistan: Members of breakaway **Pakistani Taliban** group and militant Afghan **Hezb-e-Islami** are considering aligning with Islamic State, posing new threat to Afghanistan

