

On the rise: Twenty faces who could shape the world in 2020

Some have plotted a debut on the global stage for years, while others have been thrust into the spotlight

VALÉRIE PÉCRESE

Contenders are already vying to unseat Emmanuel Macron in the elections scheduled for two years from now (Charles Bremner writes). On the bedraggled centre-right, Valérie Pécresse, 52, president of the Île-de-France regional council, has emerged as one of the strongest potential candidates, casting herself as a feminist and dynamic manager with conservative values.

She has laid out her claim to power in a book-length manifesto after she broke away last year from the Republicans. She derides Mr Macron as a "French Tony Blair".

Ms Pécresse, who has three adult children, is trying to shed an image as a posh Parisienne. Before she runs for the conservative presidential candidacy, she must win re-election in 2021 to her regional seat.

CHRISTOPHER LUXON

No one lightly gives up a multimillion-pound salary and a job running his nation's airline for the middling pay and perks of an opposition MP (Bernard Lagan writes). When Christopher Luxon, 49, resigned as Air New Zealand's chief executive in September and swapped his £2.1 million package for an MP's £92,000 it was clear he was not going to be content warming the back benches. Many think his ambition is to replace the popular Labour prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, by leading the conservatives to power. Having been chosen as the National Party

candidate for a safe Auckland seat, he will first need to dislodge the party's leader, Simon Bridges.

DAVID HOGG

When a gunman opened fire at his high school in Florida on February 14, 2018, David Hogg recorded a video message from the cupboard where he was hiding, speaking calmly of his predicament and interviewing other students crouching beside him (Will Pavia writes).

The teenager emerged in the days after the shooting in which 17 people died as a powerful speaker. March For Our Lives, the group he co-founded with other pupils, organised a march on Washington. "People call us snowflakes," he said on Twitter, where he has almost a million followers. "What happens when all the snowflakes vote? That's called an avalanche."

Now 19, he has said he plans to work on a 2020 presidential campaign for one of the Democratic contenders and to run for Congress himself when he is 25.

YEGOR ZHUKOV

When Yegor Zhukov came before a court in Moscow last month few of his supporters or relatives expected he would be going home that day (Tom Parfitt writes).

The 21-year-old Russian was charged with extremism for posting YouTube videos that he had made about peaceful protests in which he



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referred to President Putin as a "madman". Surprisingly, he was given a suspended sentence and freed.

The Kremlin may have decided not to make a martyr out of the political science student and blogger because his closing speech during the trial caught nationwide attention for its damning assessment of where Russia had gone wrong. "All the money is concentrated at the top and no one up there is going to let it go. All that's left at the bottom is despair," he said.

DAVID ADEDEJI ADELEKE (DAVIDO)

Fêted across Africa and having sold out London's O2 arena last January, the Nigerian Afrobeat superstar Davido is on the crest of a wave (Graeme Baker writes).

His latest album, *A Good Time*, was named partly to acknowledge the rising global influence of African music. To many of his fans, Davido's bright, feel-good music is a testament

to the growing confidence in African culture. "It's a great time for Africa, it's a great time for African music," the singer, 27, said in June. "Growing up, it wasn't cool to be from Africa, now everyone wants to be involved."

David Adedeji Adeleke, born in Atlanta but raised in Lagos, also has political leanings, backing his uncle as a senator in 2018, and a year later staging concerts to endorse the presidential campaign of Atiku Abubakar, who finished runner-up to the re-elected President Buhari.

GIORGIA MELONI

When a dance track sampling one of **Giorgia Meloni's** raucous speeches went viral in November, a star was born (Tom Kington writes).

The DJs behind the track, in which Ms Meloni repeatedly shouts, "I am Giorgia, I am a woman, I am a

mother, I am Christian," meant it as a ironic stab at her hard-right brand of identity politics, but the joke was lost on her growing legion of fans who adopted it as an anthem. Now Ms Meloni's Brothers

of Italy party is polling at 10 per cent, up from 4.4 at national elections in 2018, and stealing votes from Matteo Salvini's League.

Despite her status as a rising star, Ms Meloni served as a minister under Silvio Berlusconi as long ago as 2008, making her a polished veteran.

SOMEONE BEGINNING WITH B

The person to watch in an unpredictable US election year is someone from the Democrats' B team: Biden, Buttigieg, Bernie and Bloomberg (David Charter writes).

Two or more of them could still be in contention after every state has held its primary contest, setting up the prospect of another B: a brokered convention. The four-yearly gathering of

Democrats in Milwaukee in July could, instead of anointing their presidential candidate, be the stage for a rare showdown. Joe Biden, 77, the former vice-president, is showing the resilience he needs to go the whole way despite numerous gaffes.

Pete Buttigieg, 37, mayor of South Bend, is an alternative centrist but may not have the resources to stay the course. Bernie Sanders, 78, the firebrand from Vermont, is no quitter, as his recovery from heart surgery showed, and would receive a boost if his rival progressive senator Elizabeth Warren, 70, quits.

Michael Bloomberg, 77, the billionaire media entrepreneur, cannot be discounted because of his deep pockets, slick marketing and formidable data analysis team.

PRINCESS LEONOR



Spain's 14-year-old Princess Leonor won Spanish hearts last year with an impressive debut on the public stage that bodes well for the royal family's future (Isambard Wilkinson writes).

King Felipe VI's elder daughter and heir to the throne was thrust into the country's worst political crisis for decades in November when she gave a speech at an awards ceremony in the rebellious region of Catalonia. Anti-royalist sentiment was running high after a Madrid court had sentenced separatist leaders to lengthy jail terms, with protesters surrounding the venue and burning photos of her father. The princess rose to the occasion, speaking so well in Catalan, Spanish and Arabic that she received a standing ovation. The prospect of Princess Leonor as a unifying figure comes at a crucial time for the monarchy as Spain suffers deep political fragmentation.

JIMMY SHAM

The 32-year-old Hong Kong protest organiser is a uniquely distinctive figure (Richard Lloyd Parry writes).

In a movement with few charismatic leaders, he is a passionate and electrifying speaker. In a city that is still conservative on such matters, he is unselfconsciously gay. And in a movement dominated by earnest young people, he carries about him an air of old-fashioned cool. With his intense gaze and dramatically styled hair, Mr Sham has been close to the centre of the Hong Kong's democracy protests since they began last

summer. As the "convenor" (the movement shies away from explicitly identifying people as leaders) of one of the largest protest groups, the Civil Human Rights Front, he organised the first and biggest anti-government rallies, in which as many as two million people marched against the Hong Kong government and its Chinese overlords.

Twice he was physically attacked on the street. He still walks with a stick after the second beating in October. And in November he was one of the young democratic candidates to defeat a pro-Beijing incumbent in a landslide victory in local council elections. He has taken a careful line as the demonstrations

have turned violent, and if the two sides do establish enough common ground to sit down and talk, Mr Sham will be a central figure in the negotiations.

GIDEON SAAR

Binyamin Netanyahu may have just won a leadership election, but his days appear numbered (Anshel Pfeffer writes). A dismal result predicted for him in Israel's general election in March, coupled with the criminal charges against him, will almost certainly force him from office.

The only Likud leader challenging him is Gideon Saar, 53, a popular former cabinet minister. He lost the recent leadership election but is consolidating his status as frontrunner to succeed Mr Netanyahu. And since Israeli politics are split down the middle, the next government is likely to be a national unity coalition, ensuring him at least part of the term as prime minister.

Mr Saar is something of an anomaly in Israeli politics. A native of Tel Aviv, which is not Likud territory, he is a staunch nationalist who at the same time has cultivated a young, relatively secular image, including occasional stints as guest DJ at some of the city's trendiest nightclubs. Add to that a glamorous second wife, a television news anchor for Israel's public broadcaster, and he is poised to take Likud into the post-Netanyahu future. China story," China Central Television, the state broadcaster, said. Speculation is rising that Ms Li could now be recruited into the state's propaganda campaign.

YURY DUD

The 33-year-old Russian vlogger has been tipped for a career in politics (Marc Bennetts writes). Born in East



Germany to Soviet academics, he began his career as a sports journalist. In 2008, he broke the story that Zenit St Petersburg, the Gazprom-sponsored football team, was unable to sign black players due to the team's many racist fans.

Mr Dud's YouTube channel, which has more than six million subscribers, featured an interview with Alexei Navalny, the prominent Kremlin critic, and his straight-talking, witty style has proved wildly popular.

Some Russian analysts have suggested he could one day emulate Volodymyr Zelensky, the comedian and actor who in May became president of neighbouring Ukraine.

SHINJIRO KOIZUMI

There are two views of Shinjiro Koizumi, the youngest member of Japan's cabinet (Richard Lloyd Parry writes). Either he is a hereditary political aristocrat with a pretty face but no original ideas, or he is the most interesting and promising Japanese politician of his generation. This will be the year when he is put to the test.

Mr Koizumi, 38, is the son of Junichiro Koizumi, who 15 years ago was Japan's most popular prime minister. Both his grandfather and great-grandfather were well known politicians and when he was elected to his retired father's constituency in 2009 he was following a familiar path of political privilege.

He has a confident manner, expensive-looking hair and a glamorous fiancée, Christel Takigawa, a French-Japanese television celebrity. But he is also a shrewd political operator who has risen to power in a nationalist conservative government while maintaining an aura of liberal-minded cool. He is already being spoken of as a successor to Shinzo Abe.

ALI BABACAN

It has become something of a ritual in Turkey for a former ally of President Erdogan to turn rival (Hannah Lucinda Smith writes). Soon, it will be the turn of Ali Babacan, a former deputy prime minister who split from his boss and the AKP in July and is expected to launch his own party imminently. It will be the second

grouping started by an AKP exile in the space of a month, after Ahmet Davutoglu,

the former prime minister, launched his Future Party. Mr Babacan, a technocrat, is seen as more credible and less tarnished than Mr Davutoglu, an Islamist.

AMIT SHAH

After a career steeped in controversy, Amit Shah, India's home minister, has affirmed his reputation as the most feared man in the country (Hugh Tomlinson writes). As

president of the ruling BJP party and right-hand man to Narendra Modi, Mr Shah was the principal architect of the back-to-back general election victories in 2014 and 2019. A devout Hindu nationalist, he has become the lightning rod for a radical government agenda that opponents fear is hell-bent on destroying India's secular foundations.

Previously considered too toxic for government, he now has sway over national security, law and order, and the press, which has been strong-armed or fallen meekly into line.

ISABEL SCHNABEL

The eurozone is all but paralysed by the conflict between two seemingly irreconcilable factions (Oliver Moody writes). One, led by France, is seeking to turn the European Central Bank (ECB) into something much more like the treasury of a nation state. The other, centred on Germany, views these efforts as an outrageous plot to bail out southern fecklessness with the proceeds of northern thrift.

The task of bridging this chasm has



fallen to Isabel Schnabel, 48, recently appointed to the board of the ECB.

MIKULAS MINAR

Thirty years after the marches that freed Czechoslovakia from communism, the young people of Prague are back on the streets, demanding an end to corrupt government (Oliver Moody writes).

The ringleader is Mikulas Minar, 26, a Charles University philosophy student with a penchant for bright yellow clothes and a distinct resemblance to Damian Lewis. He is emerging as a key player in the country's politics.

MARKUS SÖDER

The 52-year-old prime minister of Bavaria and leader of Angela Merkel's sister party there, is hailed as a rousing speaker with an often comedic touch (Oliver Moody writes).

He does a convincing Marilyn Monroe and a passable Shrek, and this time next year he may be the dark horse in the race to replace Mrs Merkel as Germany's first new chancellor in more than 15 years. If nothing else, he will add a splash of Tabasco to Germany's stodgy politics.

FLORENCE PUGH

It's not that Florence Pugh, 23, hadn't been noticed at all before a year ago (Ben Hoyle writes). You might have

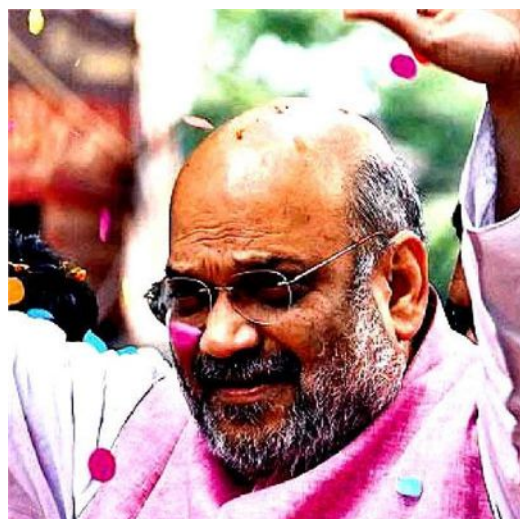
seen the Oxford actress on TV as Cordelia in *King Lear* or in last year's BBC adaptation of the le Carre novel *The Little Drummer Girl*.

Now her rise, referred to by some smitten fans as the "Florenaissance" is about to become unmissable. In *Black Widow*, out in May, Pugh plays a female assassin opposite Scarlett Johansson. Some say she is being groomed for her own Marvel film.

QASSEM SOLEIMANI

This will be the year in which the slight, grey-haired general cements his reputation as the Machiavelli of the Middle East — or proves that even the smartest operators can suffer hubris (Richard Spencer writes).

As head of the al-Quds Force, the overseas arm of the Revolutionary Guard, he has established Iran's long-held dream of a land corridor from Tehran to the Mediterranean, controlled by loyal militias. But he is experiencing resistance, with Iraq's Shia population turning against Iran. General Soleimani knows he must now show he deserves the trust of the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.



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