



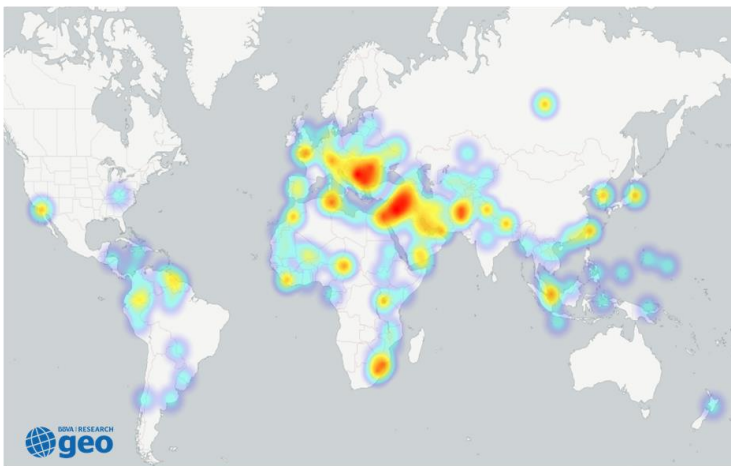
Geo-World: Conflict & Social Unrest February Update

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The US and Russia agreed on a "cessation of hostilities" in Syria that calls upon the regime and its foreign allies as well as the armed opposition to cease all military actions, but it excludes ISIS and the al-Nusra Front. Despite Russia temporarily reduced the intensity of its air campaign to support Assad, it resumed its activity at the beginning of March. ISIS retained control of terrain despite some setbacks in Syria and Iraq, and strengthened its position across Libya. It also expanded over the Gulf, Maghreb, the Caucasus and Southeast Asia. Russia continued its offensive operations in Eastern Ukraine. Tensions in Latin America continued to ease in most of the region's countries during the month and Europe remained calm, but with an unsustainable refugee crisis that urges a solution. China's latest missile deployment in Southeast Asia could escalate tensions in the region over territorial claims.

Geopolitical conflicts around the world slightly eased again during February...

BBVA Research World Conflict Heatmap (Feb, monthly changes)
(Number of conflicts / Total events)



Source: www.gdelt.org & BBVA Research

• A fragile "cessation of hostilities" agreement in Syria

Despite the deal, Russia continued its air campaign in support of the Assad regime in Aleppo.

• ISIS strengthened its offensive in North Africa and continued expanding in Southeast Asia

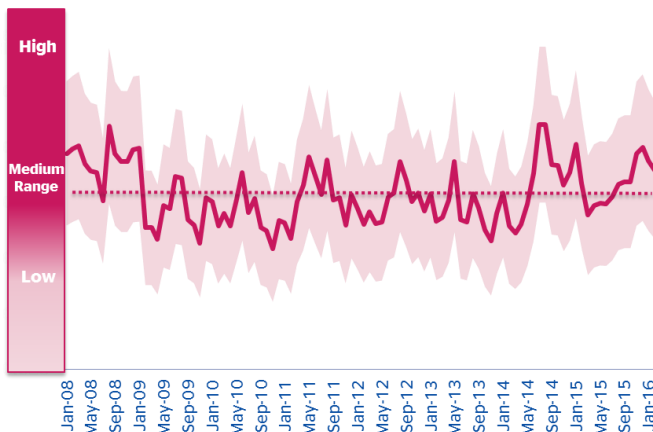
Despite some setbacks in Iraq and Syria, ISIS strengthened its presence in Libya. It also expanded in the Gulf, Maghreb, the Caucasus and Southeast Asia.

• Russian offensive continued in eastern Ukraine

Russia is taking advantage of Kiev's political instability in Ukraine to intensify its offensive.

The BBVA Research world conflict intensity index¹ moderated again in February thanks to the "partial cessation of hostilities" in Syria and some ISIS setbacks in Syria and Iraq, but it is still above the long-term average. The UN Security Council unanimously approved a nationwide 'cessation of hostilities' in Syria on 26 February brokered by Russia and US. However, it has **not been very effective**. Although Russia temporarily reduced the intensity of its air campaign, since the beginning of March Bashar al-Assad and his allies in Moscow and Tehran continue with their efforts to complete the encirclement of Aleppo despite the agreement. Moreover, the cessation of hostilities does not apply to ISIS and Syrian al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra.

BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index 2008-16
(Number of conflicts in the world / Total events in the world)



Source: www.gdelt.org & BBVA Research

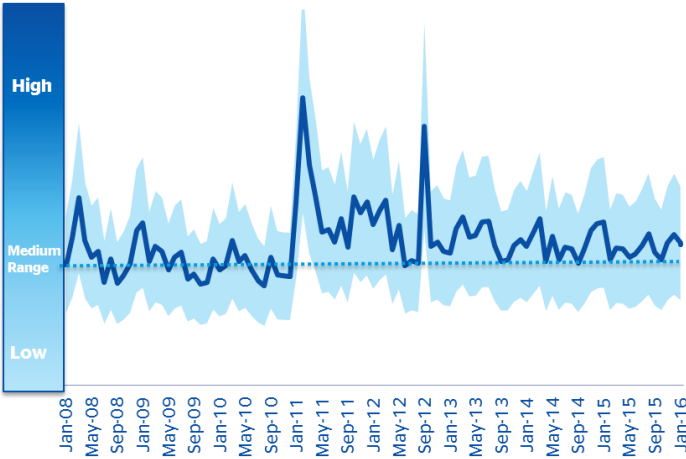
ISIS lost an important resource in north-eastern Syria and was excluded from its remaining positions in Ramadi (western Iraq), but despite some important setbacks in Iraq and Syria, ISIS continued to develop its regional presence, launching large-scale attacks in the Gulf, Maghreb and the Caucasus and strengthening its presence in Libya. ISIS also continued expanding its influence in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, China deployed a small number of modern fighter jets and two batteries of surface-to-air missiles to the disputed Woody Island in the South China Sea, which threatens to escalate regional tensions.

Russia continued to use military force to pressure Ukraine's fragile government and Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine intensified their offensive operations against the government this month.

¹Details about methodology can be found in the following link: [Methodology, tracking protests and conflicts](#).



BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Index 2008-16
(Number of protests in the world / Total events in the world)



Source: www.gdelt.org & BBVA Research

... in line with social unrest

The World Protest index slightly decreased in February for a second consecutive month (as shown by our BBVA Research world protest intensity index²), but still far above the long-term average. According to our BBVA Research world protest intensity map, the main key takeaways were the following:

-In regional terms, social unrest in Western Europe continued to ease. In emerging Europe, the Balkans are still in a tense situation given the refugee emergency crisis. In Eastern Asia, tensions increased in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, and North Africa continued with the same persistent and worrisome dynamics. Demonstrations in Latin America seemed to ease during the month.

BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map Jan 2008 - Feb 2016
(Number of protests / Total events. Dark Blue: High Intensity)



Source: www.gdelt.org & BBVA Research

Protest Intensity: Low High

- In Western Europe, social unrest continued calm, with some minor protests in Spain and in Netherlands. Greece continues to be the main hot spot, with important demonstrations throughout the month against policies over taxes and pension contributions apart from the instability caused by the refugee flows.

-In Emerging Europe, pressures over the refugee crisis continued in the Balkans with new border controls that halt migrants moving through the region. On the other hand, tensions emerged again in Turkey after another brutal terrorist attack in Ankara during the month. Social unrest is mounting in Ukraine given the latest political crisis and the disintegration of the governing pro-Western coalition.

-In North Africa and the Middle East, social unrest continued at critical levels. Threats to security rose in Libya and Egypt given ISIS' strength in the region. In the Middle East, sectarian clashes continued in Saudi Arabia. Instability also rose in Iraq given ethnic disputes, corruption and lack of governance, as well as in Iran, given early elections that led to the victory of Rouhani and his independent and reformist allies.

- In Latin America, social tensions remained contained in most countries. In Venezuela, political disputes continued aggravating the severe economic situation.

- Instability in Asia remained low in general, but some pressures erupted given the ISIS offensive in Southeast Asia and the escalation of tensions over territorial claims.

Summing up

The expansion of ISIS in North Africa and Southeast Asia reinforces its regional influence in pursuit of its aim to control all Muslim lands. Early action would be needed to limit ISIS's ability to develop an affiliate in the area. In the same vein, a comprehensive solution to the Syrian War is urgently needed and it is still a big uncertainty.

²Details about methodology can be found in the following link: [Methodology, tracking protests and conflicts](#).



Geo-World Monthly Update

February 2016

Geostrategic Analysis

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