

Geo-World: Conflict & Social Unrest - April Update

GEOSTRATEGIC ANALYSIS

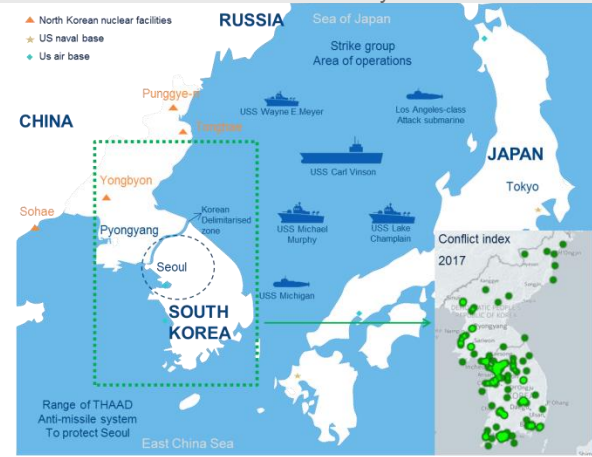
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April 2017

Tensions continued between North Korea and US over the nuclear test programme and the US increased its missile defence system in the area. The Chinese will continue to maintain the status quo while the tone of the US escalated but softened thereafter. In the Middle East, the advances of the coalition forces continue and the ISIS situation deteriorates. The US decided to advance in Raqqa (the ISIS capital) supporting the YPG forces in the combats. Turkey has already protested the decision. Social unrest increased in some Latin American countries, while Asia remained calm. Uncertainties about the future of Europe decreased after Macron's victory in French elections.

Tensions surrounding North Korea nuclear programme continued and US provided support to YPC in Raqqa

Figure 1 The military build-up in the Korean peninsula and BBVA Research conflict intensity index



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

North Korea's nuclear weapons programme and tensions with the US continued to be of concern

The US started to install a missile defence system on the Korean peninsula and is expected to tighten economic sanctions against North Korea.

US support the Kurdish YPG to advance on Raqqa

The US finally decided to provide military support to the Kurdish YPG to seize Raqqa (ISIS capital). Turkey shows its discontent after the decision.

Tensions between Russia and Ukraine eased off and the Minsk 2.0 agreement seems to be alive

The heads of state of Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France met to renew their commitment to the Minsk 2.0 peace agreement.

The BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index¹ increased during April. The main developments during the month were:

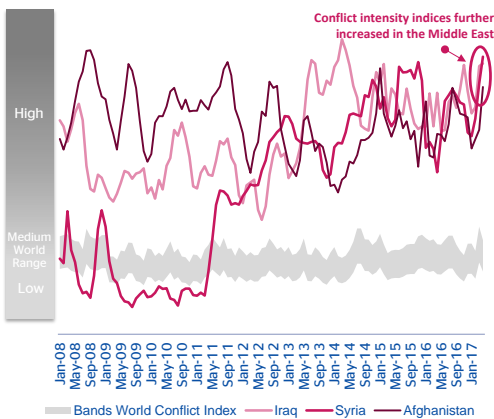
- **Following the US strike in southern Idlib (Syria)** at the beginning of the month, made in response to the Bashar al-Assad regime's use of chemical weapons, **the US dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb** in combat, **targeting an ISIS tunnel** infrastructure showing a tougher stance. The attack was part of the new US officials' offensive strategy in the Middle East against ISIS. **Russia, Iran and Syria expressed their concern** regarding the US action and its expanded deployments to the Syrian-Jordanian border. Turkey conducted air raids against PKK/YPG positions in Syria & Iraq. Finally, **the US decided to support the Kurdish YPG in the seizing of Raqqa (the ISIS capital in Siria)**. The decision was not welcomed in Turkey, as they considered the Kurdish

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

YPG as an affiliate of the terrorists of the PKK. **ISIS** conducted several attacks in Iraq in order to **set conditions to exploit security vulnerabilities during Ramadan**, which this year begins at the end of May.

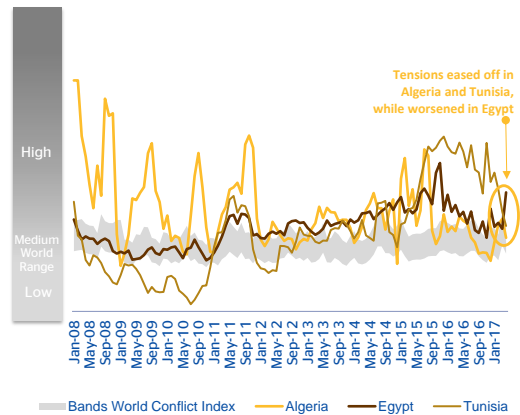
- **In Eastern Europe, Ukrainian conflict stabilised** after the Russian, Ukrainian, German and French heads of state spoke to renew their commitment to the Minsk 2.0 peace agreement. Instability in the Caucasus eased off, while rose in Macedonia given political tensions after Parliament riot. Kosovo's stability is also at risk.
- **Tensions in the China Sea increased slightly and remained of concern in North Korea**, since Kim Jong-un continues to challenge the main powers with ballistic missile and nuclear weapons tests and after both North Korea and the US regional allies conducted military exercises in the border regions. The US deployed warships and a submarine in Korea, activating a missile defence system. Moreover, **the Trump administration is expected to tighten economic sanctions against North Korea, while China opts for a diplomatic solution.**

Figure 2 BBVA Research Middle East Conflict Intensity Index 2008-17
(Number of conflicts / Total events)



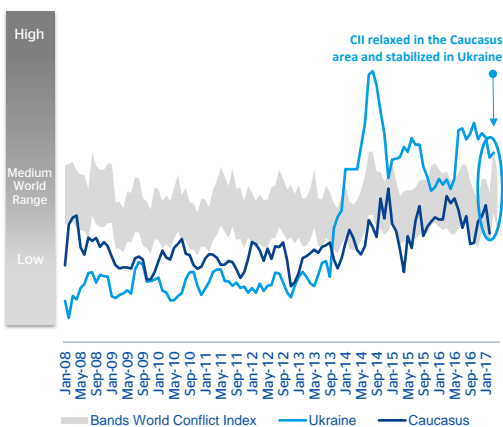
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 3 BBVA Research North Africa Conflict Intensity Index 2008-17
(Number of conflicts / Total events)



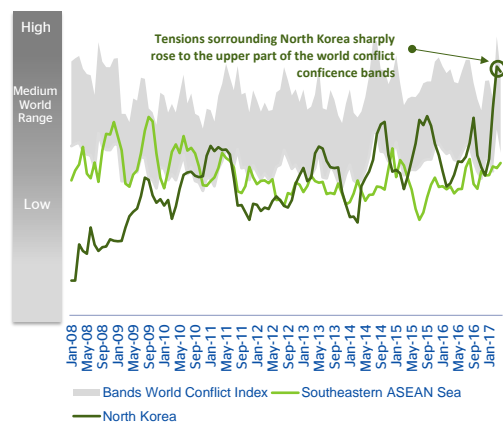
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 4 BBVA Research Eastern Europe Conflict Intensity Index 2008-17
(Number of conflicts / Total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 5 BBVA Research Asia Conflict Intensity Index 2008-17
(Number of conflicts / Total events)

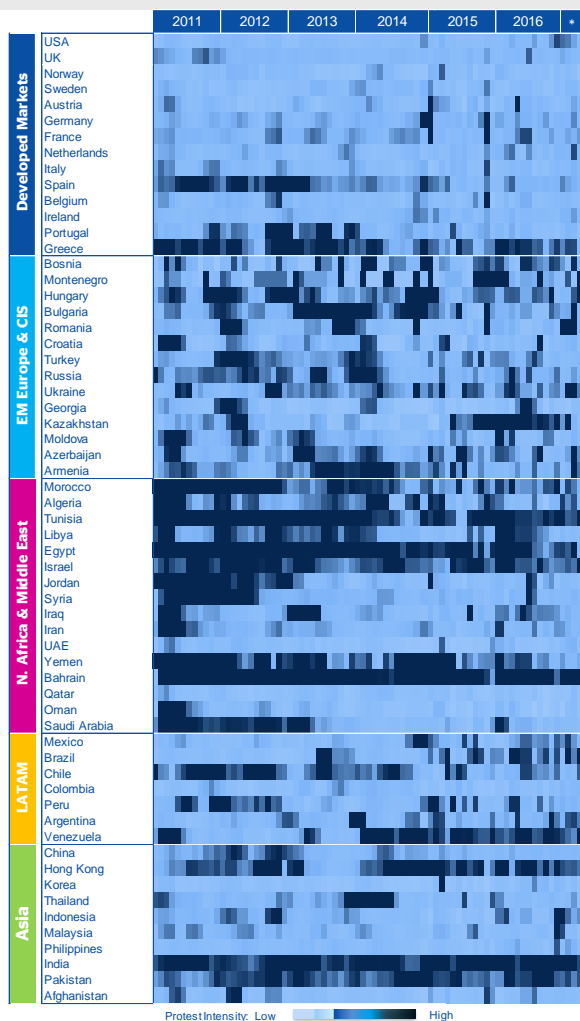


Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Social unrest eased off during the month

The World Protest Index decreased during April (as shown by our BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Index²). According to the BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map, the key takeaway facts were:

Figure 6 BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map Jan 2011 – Apr 2017
(Number of protests / Total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

- In regional terms, Europe remained quite calm and demonstrations alleviated in the US. Tensions in some Eastern European countries persisted, but the highest instability levels were registered in the Middle East and North Africa. Social unrest increased in some Latin American countries, while remaining at low levels in Asia:
- In the US, social unrest decreased during the month, reaching similar levels to early 2016. In Europe, demonstrations rose in France during the period before the elections and relaxed after the results. Social unrest eased in Greece after six months of high instability levels.
- In Emerging Europe, the social climate worsened in Montenegro, Hungary, Macedonia and Kosovo, while easing off in Bulgaria and Romania. Instability also relaxed slightly in Ukraine as well as in the Caucasus and Kazakhstan after the rise registered last month.
- In North Africa and the Middle East, protests to demand employment rose in Tunisia, while easing off in Morocco, Algeria and Egypt.
- In Latin America, protests rose in Venezuela, in Brazil and Chile, while slightly easing in Argentina and relaxing in Mexico.
- In Asia, the intensity of protests decreased in Thailand and increased in Pakistan. Hong Kong and India remained the key hot spots in the region.

Summary

The US intervention in the Middle East intensified once again during the month. The size of Raqqa could be imminent once the US has decided officially to support Syrian Kurds, angering Turkey. North Korean tensions should be closely monitored in the coming months. Macron's victory in the French elections has reduced uncertainty and boosted confidence over the future of the European Union.

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

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