

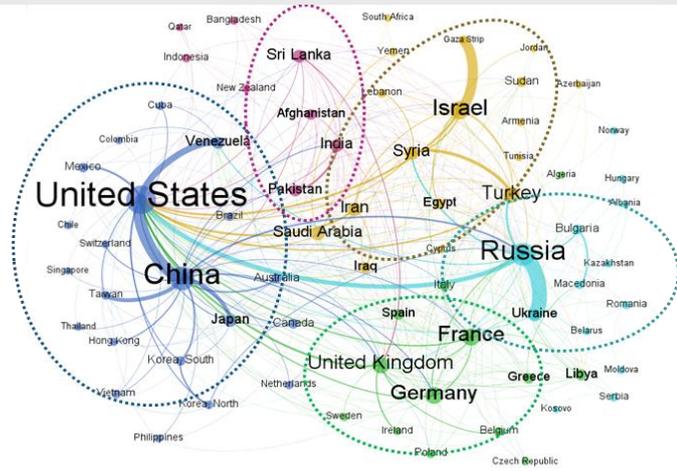
# Geo-World: Conflict & Protest April

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The end of April was marked by the eruption of the Israel-Palestine dispute, which could enter into a more uncertain phase with renewed heavy clashes between Israel and Hamas. Ceasefire has been agreed but risks are alive. Iran related disputes escalated during the month with further US involvement. The US and China has begun new trade talks, but negotiations entered into an uncertain path and tensions heightened. Elections took place in Spain and in Ukraine, where Russian government has an intention to increase its influence in eastern Ukraine. Situation in Venezuela is still fragile.

## Geopolitical agenda was marked by the increase of tensions in different fronts

Figure 1 BBVA Research social unrest country network in the media. Relationship between countries in news related with instability



Source: BBVA Research & www.gdelt.org

### US acts tough against Iran for more containment.

US designated Iran’s elite military unit as a terrorist group and ended oil sanction waivers.

### US - China trade talks entered in a negative track.

President Trump threatened to increase tariffs on Chinese imports.

### Israel – Gaza conflict escalated at the most intense levels in the last years.

After the fiercest exchange of rocket fire in Gaza and Israeli airstrikes since the 2014 war, Israel and Palestinians agreed a ceasefire. Instability is still high and risks continued.

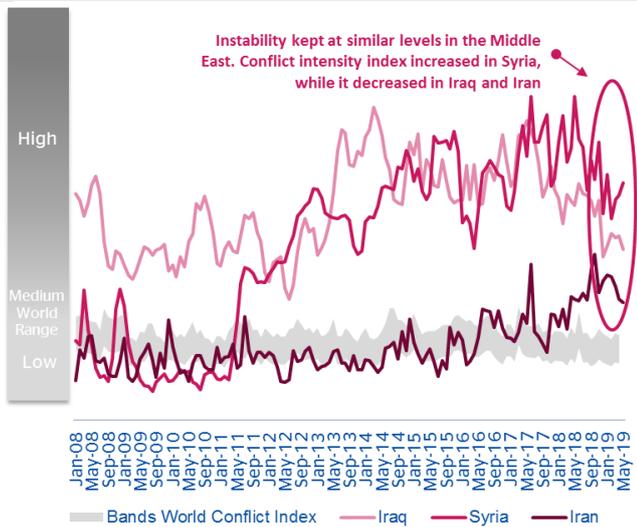
The BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index<sup>1</sup> kept at similar levels during April than the previous month. The main developments during the month were:

- **Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has been able to remain in power according to election results acquired on April 9.** Israel and Hamas, which rules Gaza, exchanged fires during the first weekend of May. They reached a ceasefire. **US designated Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which is one of the main foreign operations forces of Iran, as a foreign terrorist organization.** In response, Iran called all US forces in the Middle East as ‘terrorist group’. The US could be sending an aircraft carrier group and a bomber task force to Persian Gulf amid reports on possible preparations by Iranian proxies to attack against US forces in the region. **The United States has also announced that it ended Iran oil sanction waivers to China, India, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Turkey, Italy and Greece as of May 2.** In November, the US had re-imposed oil sanctions to Iran but granted waivers for the eight economies listed above.
- **North Korean leader Kim Jong-un visited Russia to meet with President Putin on April 24.** After the summit, President Putin called for an “international” security guarantee for North Korea. **Meanwhile, on May 5, President Trump threatened to increase tariffs on Chinese imports as accusing them with renegotiating the deal they were working for five months.** Chinese officials were expected to visit Washington on May 8. **US has sent two of its naval vessels through the Taiwan Strait on April 28,** to sustain its increased frequency of naval movement, which could attract China’s opposition.

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

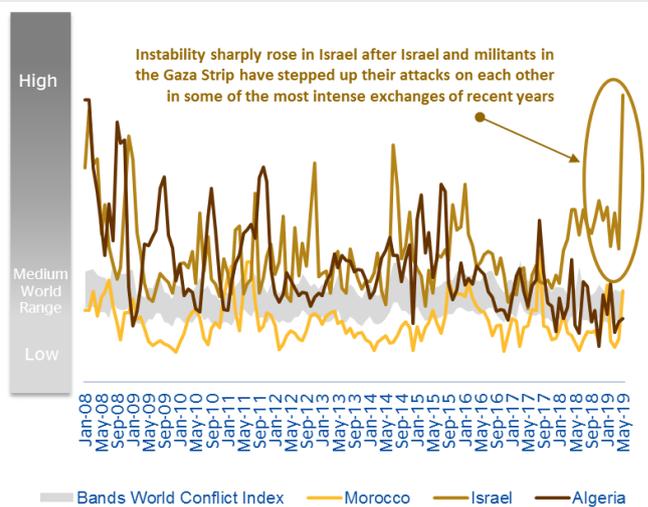
- On April 30, Venezuelan opposition leader **Guaido**, who declared himself as interim leader, called for an armed uprising against President **Maduro**. There were clashes and demonstrations. The US had reiterated its support to Guaido. US Secretary of State said that military option could be possible if Maduro does not step down. TV comedian **Volodymyr Zelenskiy** has won the **Ukraine presidential elections by claiming 73 per cent of the overall votes** but as president Poroshenko's bloc controls the parliament majority, it could be hard for Mr. Zelenskiy to bring major political change. **President Putin has ordered to make it easier for separatist-held eastern Ukraine citizens to obtain Russian passports and citizenship.** Moscow has an intention to offer all Ukrainian citizens an opportunity to acquire fast-track Russian passports. Yet, Ukraine president-elect Zelenskiy rejected Russia's passport offer. NATO agreed to increase military exercises with Ukraine and Georgia in the Black Sea. In the case of Spain, Spain's current Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and his party claimed 122 seats of the parliament in general elections but it needed 176 seats to have majority, so political negotiations would be needed to form government.

Figure 2 BBVA Research Middle East Conflict Intensity Index 2008- April19( Number of conflicts / Total events)



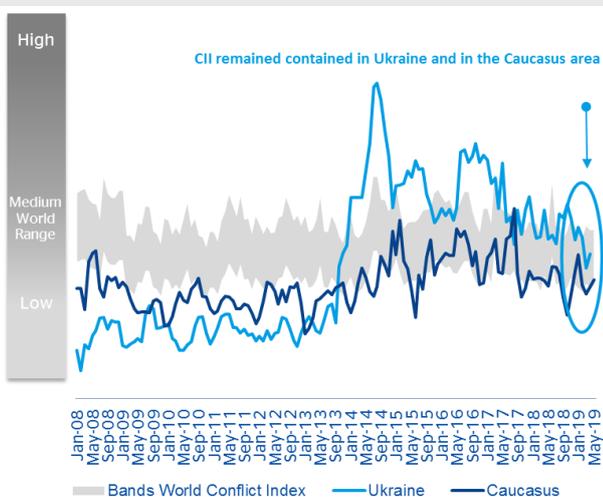
Source: [www.dgelt.org](http://www.dgelt.org) & BBVA Research

Figure 3 BBVA Research North Africa Conflict Intensity Index 2008- April19 ( Number of conflicts / Total events)



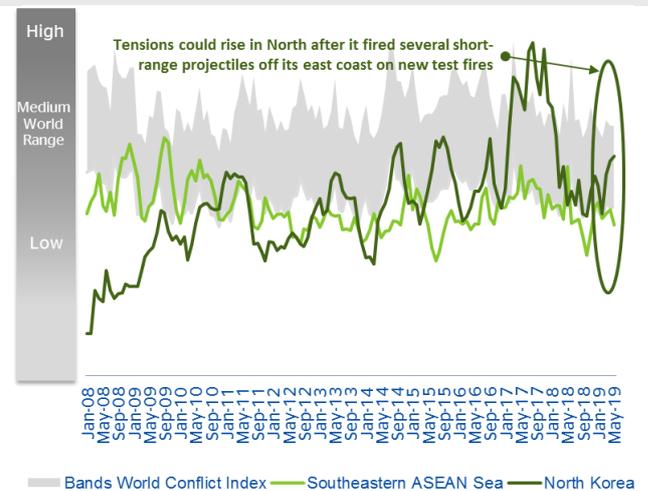
Source: [www.dgelt.org](http://www.dgelt.org) & BBVA Research

Figure 4 BBVA Research Eastern Europe Conflict Intensity Index 2008-April19 ( Number of conflicts / Total events)



Source: [www.dgelt.org](http://www.dgelt.org) & BBVA Research

Figure 5 BBVA Research Asia Conflict Intensity Index 2008- April 19 ( Number of conflicts / Total events)

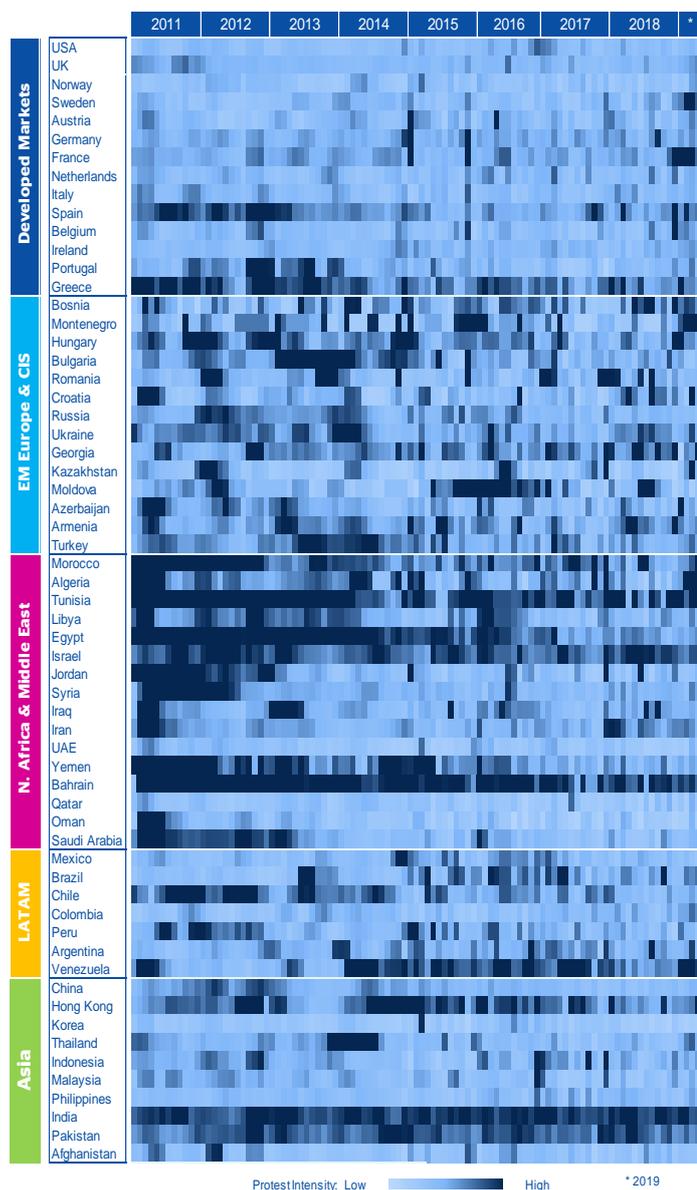


Source: [www.dgelt.org](http://www.dgelt.org) & BBVA Research

## Social unrest slightly decreased during the month

The World Protest Index mildly decreased in April (as shown by our BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Index<sup>2</sup>). According to the BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map, the key facts were:

Figure 6 BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map Jan 2011 – April 2019 (Number of protests / Total events)



Source: [www.dgelt.org](http://www.dgelt.org) & BBVA Research

- In regional terms, the main focus of instability continued in the Middle East. Social noise decreased in Eastern and Western Europe, while it increased in North Africa. In Latin America and Asia, some hot spots remained:
- In Europe, In UK, Norway, Ireland and Sweden Youth Strike for climate and Extinction Rebellion supporters demonstrated pacifically asking for respect climate policies. In France, protests eased off after Macron gave a response with promises of tax cuts, higher pensions and a reform of the civil service.
- In Emerging Europe, the main hot spot was in Montenegro where demonstrators asked for the resignation of the nation's top government and judiciary officials. In Georgia, several hundred people took to the streets to protest against poor labor safety measures. Social noise decreased in the rest of countries.
- Social unrest continued at high levels in North Africa and the Middle East. In Algeria, instability kept worrisome and leadership changes are negatively affecting the oil and gas sector. Demonstrators demand complete political reform. Morocco faces a new protest that calls into question the long-term stability of the country.
- In Latin America, a new trucker strike threat highlights vulnerabilities in Brazil due to the attempted rise in diesel. Colombia held a national strike over budget cuts. Situation in Venezuela remained unsolved.
- In Asia, in Hong Kong, the controversial sentence of the "umbrella movement" demonstrations has triggered a new alarm about the political freedom. Protests are looming over the Indonesian elections claiming polling fraud.

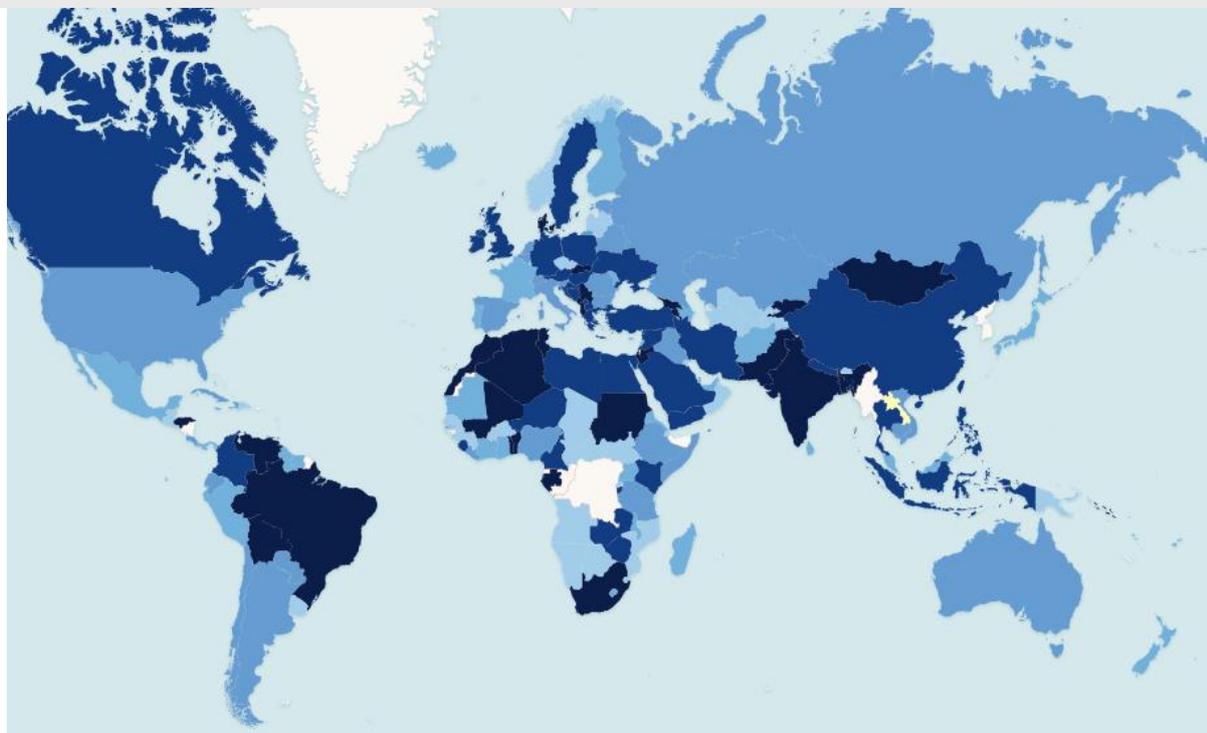
## Summary

In April, major elections were held in Israel, Spain and Ukraine. The political agenda earned higher weight this month. Russia tries to increase its influence in Ukraine, which could trigger Western objection. The United States flexed muscles for further containment against Iran, i.e. ending oil sanction waivers and designating its elite army units as terrorist group, which could contribute to more uncertainties. China and the United States trade talks entered into a negative path. Situations in Venezuela and in Israel-Palestine territories are still fragile.

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

## ANNEX

Figure 7 BBVA Research World Protest Map April 2019  
(Number of protest events / Total events by country. Darker colors indicate higher values of the index)



Source: BBVA Research and [www.gdelt.org](http://www.gdelt.org)

Figure 8 BBVA Research World Conflict Map April 2019  
(Number of conflict events/ Total events by country. Darker colors indicate higher values of the index)



Source: BBVA Research and [www.gdelt.org](http://www.gdelt.org)

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