

Geostrategic Analysis

Geo-World: Conflict & Protest October

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Toward the end of October, the US army killed ISIS leader al-Baghdadi and the ISIS spokesperson in Syria. Meanwhile, Turkey brokered separate deals with U.S. and Russia to ensure a safe zone in northern Syria, containing geopolitical risks. The protests in Iraq and Lebanon are worth monitoring as they could add further uncertainty to the regional political environment. US Congress begins impeachment inquiry procedures, which could dominate the political agenda in the United States next month. The UK decided to hold general elections as the EU granted the country a Brexit extension until January 31. Protests in Hong Kong continued. The US and China trade war eased with a “phase one” trade deal.

Middle East geopolitical agenda was dense. UK granted Brexit extension.

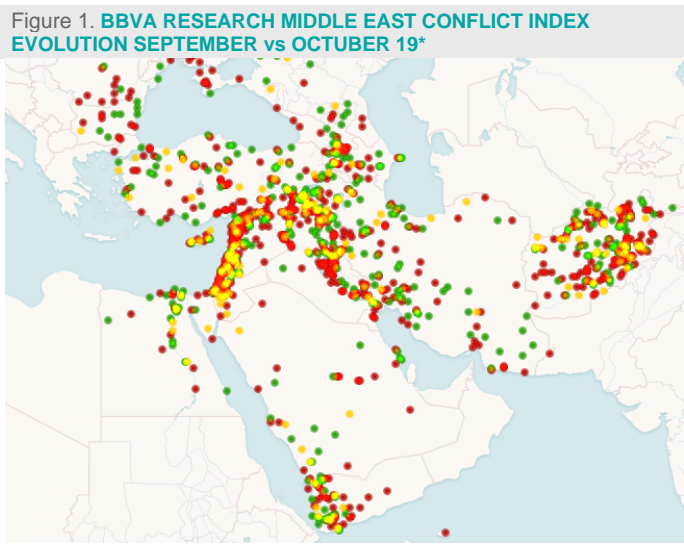


Figure 1. **BBVA RESEARCH MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT INDEX EVOLUTION SEPTEMBER vs OCTOBER 19***
Source: BBVA Research & www.gdelt.org. *Red: Conflict has increased during the month. Green: conflict has decreased during the month. Yellow conflict has remained at similar levels than in September.

Protests and geopolitical uncertainties dominated the Middle East agenda in October.

Syria, Iraq and Lebanon related developments increased uncertainties in the region.

U.S. House of Representatives approved impeachment inquiry procedures.

Impeachment inquiry procedure dominated the political agenda in Washington.

U.K will hold elections and acquired a Brexit extension from the EU.

The new parliament will set the Brexit policy before January 31.

Chile declared state of emergency due to violent protests.

Rising cost of living fueled student protests.

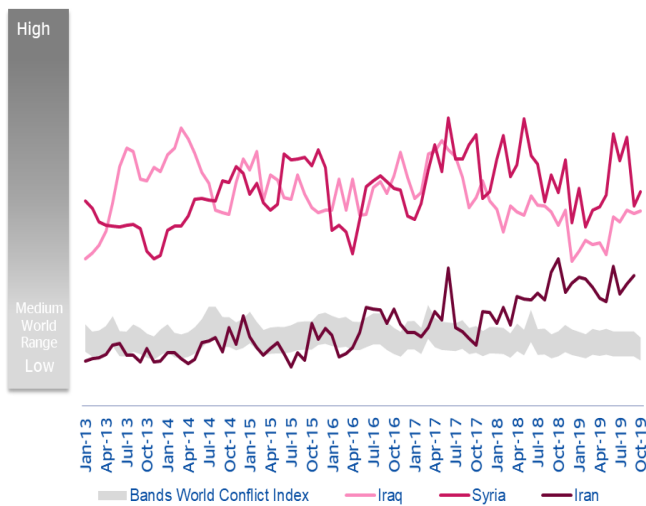
The BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index¹ decreased during October. The main developments during the month were:

- **On October 26, ISIS leader al-Baghdadi was killed in a US raid in Syria.** Two days later, the US also killed the ISIS spokesperson in Syria. Meanwhile, **Turkey and the United States agreed on a safe zone where YPG elements have retreated from a 30km deep area along the Turkey-Syria border.** Turkey also brokered another deal with Russia to ensure that the YPG stays away from areas close to the Turkish border. Turkey plans to relocate 1 to 2 million refugees to the safe zone. On the other hand, **President Trump ordered the redeployment of US troops to oil-rich areas in southern Syria to protect oil fields.** The Trump administration had pulled out its troops from northern Syria as Turkish, Russian and Syrian regime forces now have a presence there. **In Iraq, protests triggered uncertainty with regard to the country's political situation.** Since October 1, Iraq has seen anti-government protests in the capital city of Baghdad and other cities in central and southern Iraq. The protests are intensified at the end of the month. The protestors attacked an Iranian consulate in Karbala. The city is home to several Shia mosques and shrines. **Lebanon has experienced two weeks of anti-government protests,** leading to Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri's resignation on October 29. **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that he cannot form a government,** which will lead the Israeli president to ask the Blue and White leader Benny Gantz to form a coalition. If he fails, another election could be possible.
- **U.S. House of Representatives approved rules and procedures for the impeachment inquiry against President Donald Trump on October 31.** In the meantime, **the United States imposed USD 7.5 billion tariffs on cheese; wine, olives and many other European products** in response to EU subsidies for European aircraft firm Airbus. German Finance Minister Scholz warned his EU counterparts against further escalating tensions with the United States.

¹ Further details about the methodology could be found in the annex
[Geo-World Monthly Update / October 2019](#)

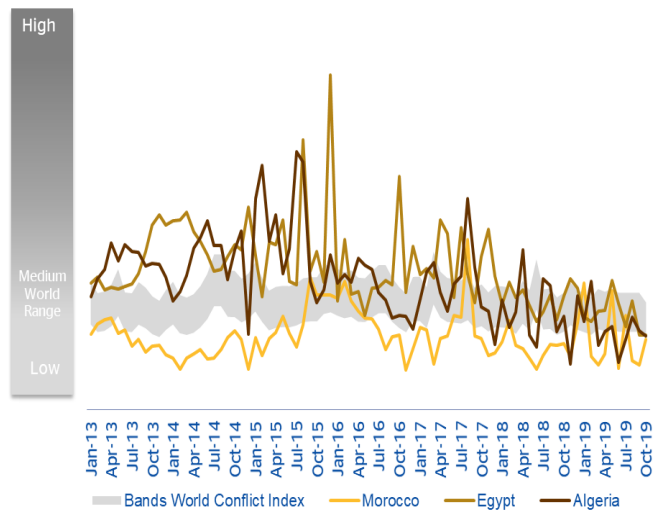
- **On October 28, the European Union agreed to give the UK a Brexit extension until January 31. On October 29, the UK Parliament voted in favor of holding elections on December 12, the fourth in a decade.** The new parliament formed after the elections will have one and a half months to agree on a Brexit agenda before the deadline. **British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party leads the opposition Labour Party by 15–17%, according to two polls shared by Reuters.**
- **As protests in Hong Kong escalated as they entered into their fifth month (as protests evolved into mass demonstrations in June), the Chinese Communist Party announced that China would ensure Hong Kong's stability and protect national security. China has offered to purchase at least USD 20 billion worth of US agricultural goods within a year as part of the phase one trade deal with the United States.** With the agreement, the United States has suspended tariffs scheduled for October 15. In return, China has promised to purchase USD 40–50 billion worth of US farm products and agreed concessions on intellectual property rights and investment access. Meanwhile, **North Korea has fired two unidentified projectiles into the sea, according to South Korean military officials.** If confirmed as a missile test, this would be North Korea's 12th launch in 2019. **India is formally splitting up the disputed Jammu and Kashmir state into two union territories,** triggering street protests against the decision.

Figure 2. **BBVA RESEARCH MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT INTENSITY INDEX 2013 - OCTOBER19** (number of conflicts / total events)



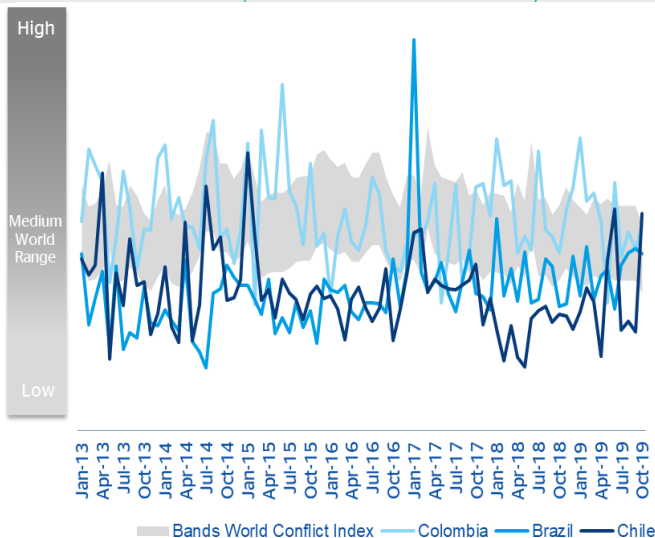
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 3. **BBVA RESEARCH NORTH AFRICA CONFLICT INTENSITY INDEX 2013 - OCTOBER19** (number of conflicts / total events)



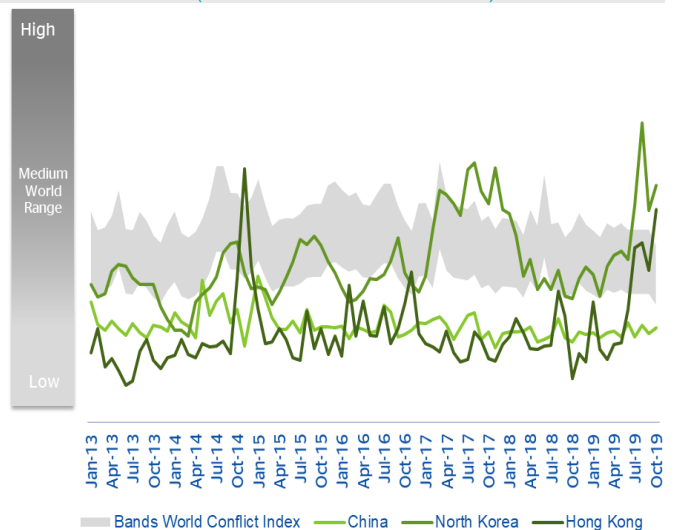
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 4. **BBVA RESEARCH SOUTH AMERICA CONFLICT INTENSITY INDEX 2013 - OCTOBER19** (number of conflicts / total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

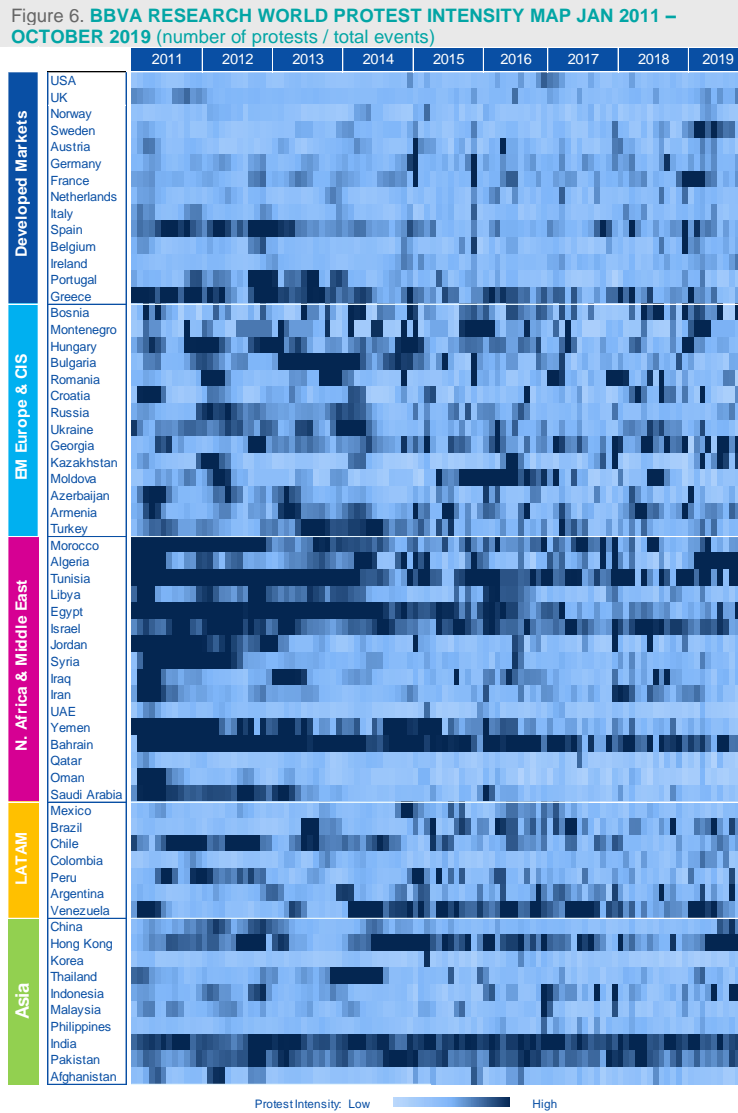
Figure 5. **BBVA RESEARCH ASIA CONFLICT INTENSITY INDEX 2013 - OCTOBER19** (number of conflicts / total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Global social unrest increased during October, new hotspots were followed

The World Protest Intensity Index² increased in October (as shown by our BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Index). According to the BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map, the key facts were:



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

- In regional terms, social unrest increased considerably in Latin America, North Africa and Middle East countries. Eastern European and Asian countries remained at similar levels. Instability also rose in some European countries.
- In Europe, farmers protest against emissions pollution rose social noise in Netherlands. In Spain, Catalan independence movement protests also rose the index. In Sweden thousands of protests against the latest events related with Syria took place.
- In Emerging Europe, an opposition rally against low salaries, corruption and lack of democracy in Azerbaijan has ended with more than 80 detentions.
- In North Africa and the Middle East, Morocco faced peaceful protests over journalist's conviction calling into question press freedom. In Algeria, foreign investment projects aggravated the social unrest that began in February. In Tunisia, the mood was calmed by the newly elected president Kais Saied with 73% of the votes in the second round. In Egypt, although dissatisfaction persisted, the authorities appeared to have contained the popular anti-corruption movement. In Iraq, popular manifestations gained momentum by rejecting political promises.
- In Latin America, Chile declared a state of emergency due to violent demonstrations, resulting in 13 deaths. Argentina alleviated tensions with Alberto Fernandez's electoral victory, although political challenges given polarization are still alive. Political uncertainty increased in Peru due to a conflict between the legislature and the executive.
- In Asia, protests continued in Honk Kong, still at historical top levels with the occupation of major roads by demonstrators after Lam announced anti-mask law. Indonesia continued under a wave of violent protests in the provinces of Papua. India and Pakistan maintained tension after Kashmir's formal reorganization and Delhi's security concerns increased.

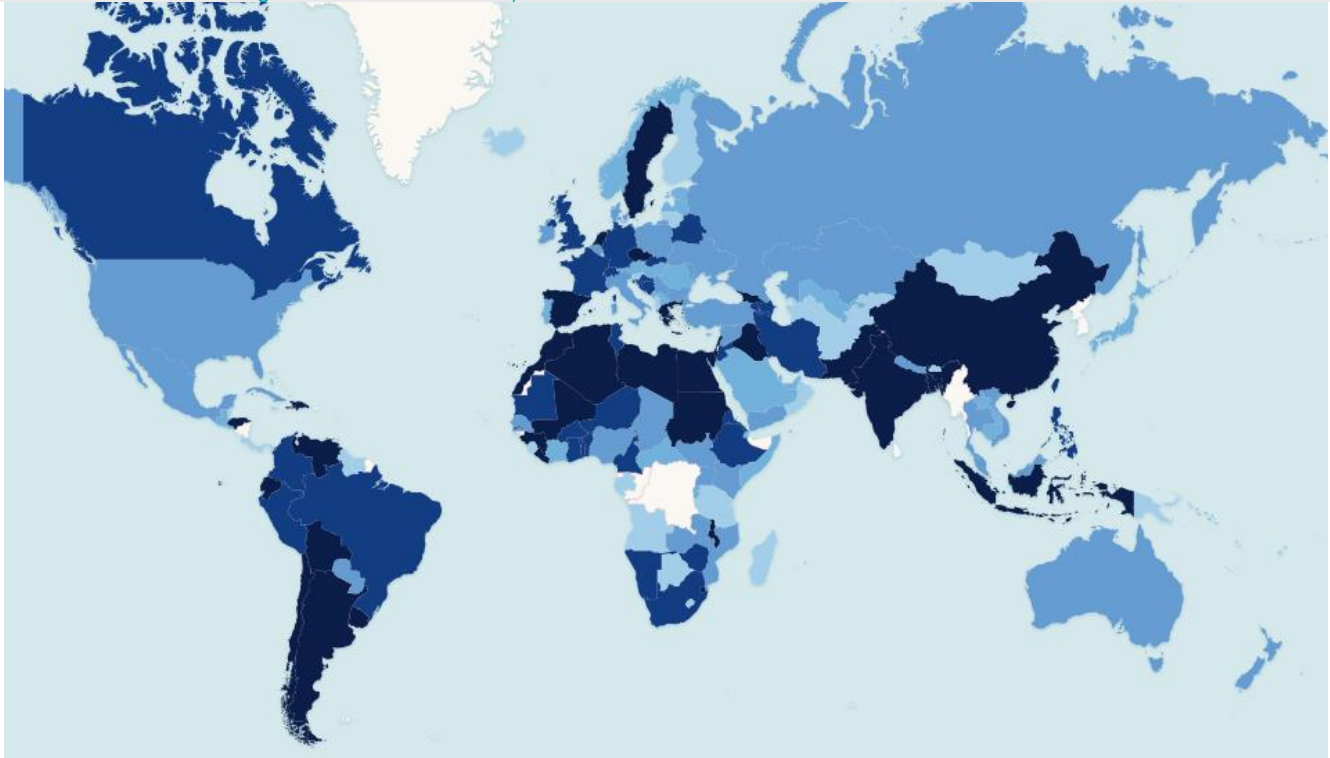
Summary

Turkey brokering safe zone deals with U.S. and Russia contained some of the uncertainties in Syria. U.S. army killing ISIS leader and spokesperson are positive developments in the fight against ISIS. Protests in the Middle East could escalate political uncertainties. The political agenda in the U.K. and in the U.S. could become denser in the coming months. The easing in trade war between U.S. and China has positive effects for the global market.

² Further details about the methodology could be found in the annex.

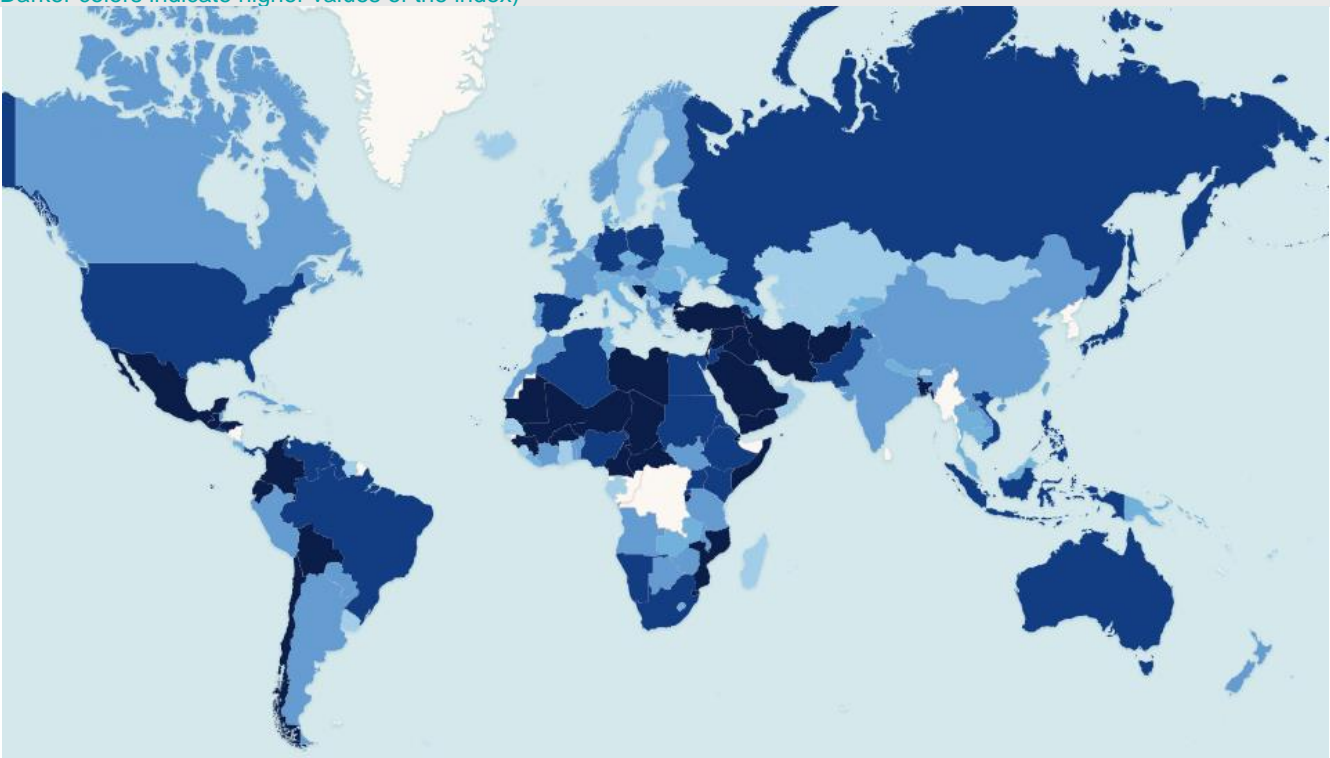
Annex

Figure 7. **BBVA RESEARCH WORLD PROTEST MAP OCTOBER 2019** (number of protest events / total events by country. Darker colors indicate higher values of the index)



Source: BBVA Research and www.gdelt.org

Figure8. **BBVA RESEARCH WORLD CONFLICT MAP OCTOBER 2019** (number of conflict events/ total events by country. Darker colors indicate higher values of the index)



Source: BBVA Research and www.gdelt.org

METHODOLOGY: TRACKING PROTESTS AND CONFLICTS

We have developed a method for tracking protest and conflict indexes for every country in the world from January 1, 1979 through to the present day, with daily, monthly, quarterly and annual frequencies. To construct this, we use a rich 'big database' of international events (**GDELT**), which monitors world events covered by news media from nearly every corner of the world, whether broadcast, printed or published on the web, in over 100 languages, every moment of every day, updated every 15 minutes.

- **BBVA Protest Intensity Index:** We collect information on every registered protest in the world for a particular time, which is then separately collated under the various headings of the **CAMEO taxonomy** as: demonstration or rally; demonstration for leadership change; demonstration for policy change; demonstration for rights; demonstration for change in institutions and regime; conducting hunger strikes for leadership change; conducting hunger strikes for policy change; conducting hunger strikes for rights; conducting hunger strikes for change in institutions and regime; conducting previously unspecified hunger strikes; conducting strikes or boycotting for leadership change; conducting strikes or boycotting for policy change; conducting strikes or boycotting for change in institutions and regime; conducting previously unspecified strikes or boycotting; obstructing passage or blocking; obstructing passage to demand leadership change; obstructing passage to demand policy change; obstructing passage to demand rights; obstructing passage to demand change in institutions and regime; protesting violently or rioting; engaging in violent protest for leadership change; engaging in violent protest for policy change; engaging in violent protest for rights; engaging in violent protest for change in institutions and regime; engaging in previously unspecified political dissent.
- **BBVA Conflict Intensity index:** In the same way, we collect information on every registered conflict in the world for a particular time, considering a **wide variety of conflicts under the CAMEO taxonomy headings** as: imposing restrictions on political freedoms; banning political parties or politicians; imposing a curfew; imposing a state of emergency or martial law; committing suicide; carrying out a suicide bombing; carrying out a car bombing; carrying out a roadside bombing, car or other non-military bombing not specified below; using a human shield; using previously unspecified conventional military force; imposing a blockade; restricting movement; occupying territory; fighting with artillery and tanks; employing aerial weapons; violating a ceasefire; engaging in mass expulsion; engaging in mass killings; engaging in ethnic cleansing; using previously unspecified unconventional mass violence; using chemical, biological, or radiological weapons; detonating nuclear weapons; using previously unspecified weapons of mass destruction.
- We use this information to construct an intensity index for both events. **The number of protests and conflicts each day/month/quarter/year are divided by the total number of all events recorded by GDELT for that day/month/quarter/year to create a protest and conflict intensity score** that tracks just how prevalent protest and conflict activity has been over the last quarter-century, correcting for the exponential rise in media coverage over the last 30 years and the imperfect nature in which news is processed by computers.

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