As of the end of May, there have been more than 6 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally. As the World Health Organization (WHO) warned, the Americas have become the new epicenter of the pandemic, while the health emergency situation has been contained in Europe and Asia. Meanwhile, the U.S. witnessed mass protests in at least 140 cities after a black citizen was killed in police custody. The relationship between the U.S. and China has worsened after China approved new national security legislation for Hong Kong. The war in Libya has escalated and attracted further international attention. President Donald Trump has said he will postpone G7 meeting until September or later.

**Americas become the new epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in May**

According to the WHO, the Americas have become the new coronavirus epicenter. The WHO announced that, with more than 2.4 million cases, the Americas have come into the spotlight, while tension decreases in Asia and Europe.

**U.S. – China relationship has worsened due to Hong Kong developments**

China introduced national security legislation for Hong Kong which displeased the White House.

**Libyan war has escalated in May**

Tripoli-based government recognized by the UN has advanced on the western front.

**G7 meeting to be postponed**

President Trump will postpone G7 summit and plans to invite more countries.

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1: Further details about the methodology can be found in the annex.
warned that the situation is worrying, and that the scenario in Syria is being replicated in Libya. The U.S. said that it is considering deploying a Security Force Assistance Brigade in neighboring country Tunisia for training following increasing Russian activity in Libya. On May 27, the U.S. announced that it would terminate the sanctions waiver that had allowed Russian, European and Chinese firms to carry out work at Iranian nuclear plants in order to make it harder for these sites to be used for the development of weapons, in a decision criticized by France, Germany and the U.K.

The Trump administration has decided to withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty that allows nations to fly over each other’s territory to assure they are not preparing for military action. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said the withdrawal will affect the interests of all participants, including NATO member countries. European countries have also expressed concerns over this new development. Meanwhile, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said on May 27 that Brexit talks, which have resumed after a break due to coronavirus pandemic measures, are not going well, adding that “deep differences remain.” The U.S. President said he will postpone the G7 summit set to take place in June until September or later, and plans to expand the list of participants to include Australia, Russia, South Korea and India. “I don’t feel that as a G7 it properly represents what’s going on in the world,” President Trump added.

**Figure 2. BBVA RESEARCH MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT INTENSITY INDEX JAN 2017 – MAY 2020 (number of conflicts / total events)**

**Figure 3. BBVA RESEARCH NORTH AFRICA CONFLICT INTENSITY INDEX JAN 2017 – MAY 2020 (number of conflicts / total events)**

**Figure 4. BBVA RESEARCH SOUTH AMERICA CONFLICT INTENSITY INDEX JAN 2017 – MAY 2020 (number of conflicts / total events)**

**Figure 5. BBVA RESEARCH ASIA CONFLICT INTENSITY INDEX JAN 2017 – MAY 2020 (number of conflicts / total events)**

Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research
Global social unrest remains mainly stable during May

In May, the World Protest Intensity Index remains at similar levels to last month (as shown by our BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Index). According to the BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map, the key facts are as follows:

In regional terms, social unrest has remained at similar levels in Eastern and Western Europe, with the exception of some countries where it has peaked, and in Asia. In North Africa and the Middle East, as well as in Latin America, it has increased slightly.

In most countries in Europe, social unrest has continued to decrease amid the COVID-19 crisis. A number of anti-lockdown protests have taken place in Germany during May. Moreover, anti-racism protests have been held in Berlin over the killing of George Floyd, as well as spreading nationwide in the U.S. Thousands of people in Spain protested to demand the government’s resignation in a car demonstration organized by political party Vox. Recently, protests have taken place in Spain as Nissan confirmed the closure of its Barcelona plant, which will result in the loss of 3,000 jobs.

In Emerging Europe, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, many citizens took to the streets to protest against the mass to honor Croatia’s Nazi collaborators during WWII. In Montenegro, police and protesters clashed following the arrest of a bishop, and tensions with Serbia are rising again due to the decision by Montenegrin authorities to partially open borders, but not to Serbian citizens.

In North Africa and the Middle East, tensions are rising in Morocco as a result of the enormous socio-economic problems that the country is facing during the coronavirus crisis. A documentary about the Algerian protest movement broadcast on French television has sparked another diplomatic confrontation, in addition to angering the protesters themselves. In Iraq, the fiscal crisis will increase social tensions with Iraqi Kurds.

In Latin America, Brazil’s crisis endangers governance and democracy. President Jair Bolsonaro joined another demonstration calling for the closure of the Supreme Court. In Chile, protests have re-emerged as the lockdown worsens food shortages, leading to clashes with police.

In Asia, thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Hong Kong to protest against the Chinese government’s plans to introduce controversial new anti-sedition legislation.

Summary

More than 6 million people have been infected by the novel coronavirus around the world. While new cases have slowed in several of the most affected countries, the situation has worsened significantly in Latin America. The U.S. is about to cut ties with the WHO. Widespread anti-racism protests in the U.S. have been a hot topic in May. Worsening U.S.-China relations over developments related to Hong Kong has increased geopolitical concerns. The war in Libya has intensified as the UN-recognized Tripoli government has retaken critical areas on the western front. Russian fighter jet deployment to Libya has attracted U.S. attention.

Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

2: Further details about the methodology can be found in the annex.
Annex

Figure 7. **BBVA RESEARCH WORLD PROTEST MAP MAY 2020** (NUMBER OF PROTEST EVENTS / TOTAL EVENTS BY COUNTRY. DARKER COLORS INDICATE HIGHER VALUES OF THE INDEX)

Source: BBVA Research and www.gdelt.org

Figure 8. **BBVA RESEARCH WORLD CONFLICT MAP MAY 2020** (NUMBER OF CONFLICT EVENTS / TOTAL EVENTS BY COUNTRY. DARKER COLORS INDICATE HIGHER VALUES OF THE INDEX)

Source: BBVA Research and www.gdelt.org
Figure 9. BBVA RESEARCH WORLD PROTEST INTENSITY MAP JAN 2000 – MAY 2020 (NUMBER OF PROTESTS / TOTAL EVENTS. COLOR DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO 2000-2020 TIME HORIZON. MOVING AVERAGE: 3 MONTHS)

Source: BBVA Research and www.gdelt.org *2020
METHODOLOGY: TRACKING PROTESTS AND CONFLICTS

We have developed tracking for protest and conflict indexes for every country in the world from January 1, 1979 through to 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 are 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 rights, 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 suicide bombing, carrying out car bombing, carrying out roadside bombing, car or other non-military bombing not specified below, use of a human shield, use of previously unspecified conventional military force, imposing blockade, restricting movement, occupying territory, fighting with artillery and tanks, employing aerial weapons, violating 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 construct 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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