

Geostrategic Analysis

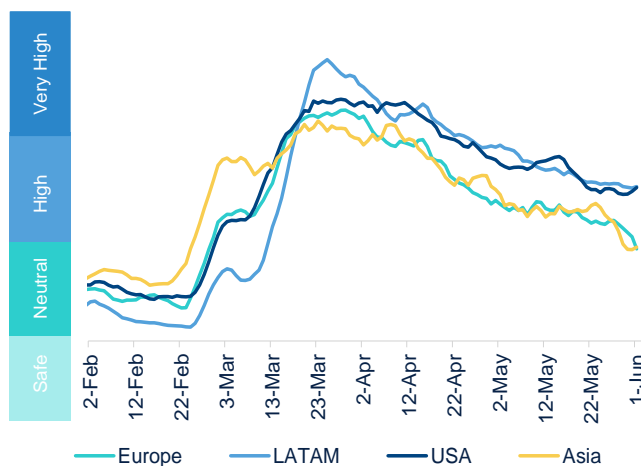
Geo-World: Conflict & Protest May 2020

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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

Figure 1. **MEDIA STRESS INDEX FOR CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK** (WEIGHTED TONE IN MEDIA COVERAGE, STANDARDIZED SERIES IN MOVING 7-DAY AVERAGE)



Source: BBVA Research & www.gdelt.org

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.

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

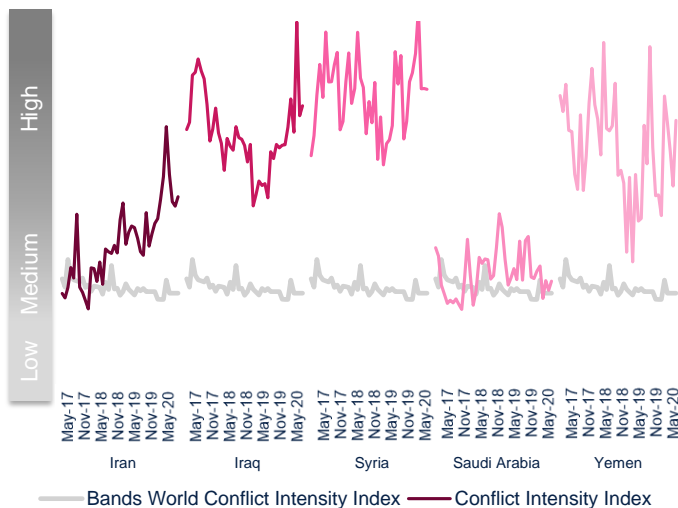
- **The coronavirus pandemic has affected more than 6 million people around the world according to official figures, and at least 371,000 people have died.** While new cases continue to increase in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, India, Iran, and some other countries, they remain stable in the U.S. and China, and are decreasing in Russia, the U.K., Spain, Italy, Germany, Turkey and Japan. **The WHO has said that the Americas have emerged as the new epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic, with more than 2.4 million confirmed cases.** The U.S. has banned entry of foreign nationals who have been in Brazil in the last two weeks. As China pledged USD 2 billion to the WHO over the next two years to help combat the coronavirus pandemic, **U.S. President Donald Trump announced that Washington would terminate its relationship with the WHO**, a decision that the EU has urged the U.S. to reconsider.
- **In the U.S., mass protests have emerged in at least 140 cities across the country after a black citizen was killed in police custody.** Some demonstrations have become violent, triggering the deployment of the U.S. National Guard in at least 20 states. **Diplomatic tensions between the U.S. and China have intensified during May over developments related to Hong Kong.** China's parliament has approved national security legislation for Hong Kong to tackle secession, subversion, terrorism, and foreign interference. **The law is expected to be enacted before September.** In response, **U.S. President Donald Trump ordered his administration to begin the process of eliminating special treatment for Hong Kong**, adding that Washington would also impose sanctions on individuals seen as responsible for "smothering Hong Kong's freedom." **Meanwhile, on May 21, U.S. senators announced that they would introduce legislation to impose sanctions on Chinese officials** violating Hong Kong's independence, as well as secondary sanctions on banks that do business with entities found to violate the law guaranteeing Hong Kong's autonomy.
- **The war in Libya between the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), which is recognized by the UN, and Khalifa Haftar forces has escalated in May.** The GNA has reclaimed some parts of southern Tripoli (Libya's capital city) and has also made strategic advances on the western front. Meanwhile, the United States Africa Command said that Russia has deployed fighter jets to Libya via Syria. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian has

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.**

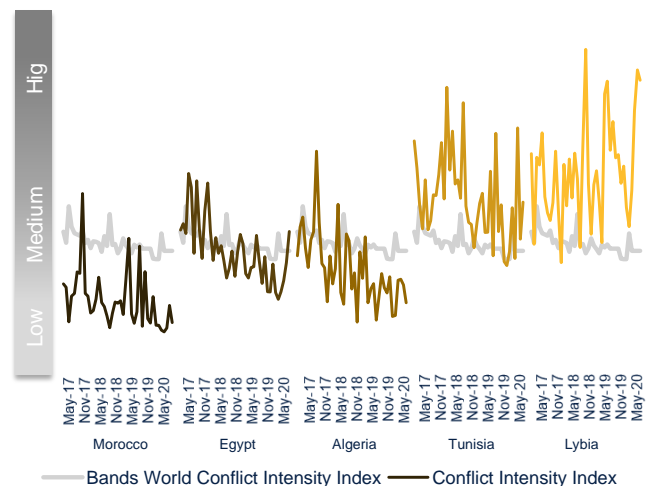
- **The Trump administration has decided to withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty that allows nations to fly over each other's territory to assure they are not preparing for military action.** Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said the withdrawal will affect the interests of all participants, 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)



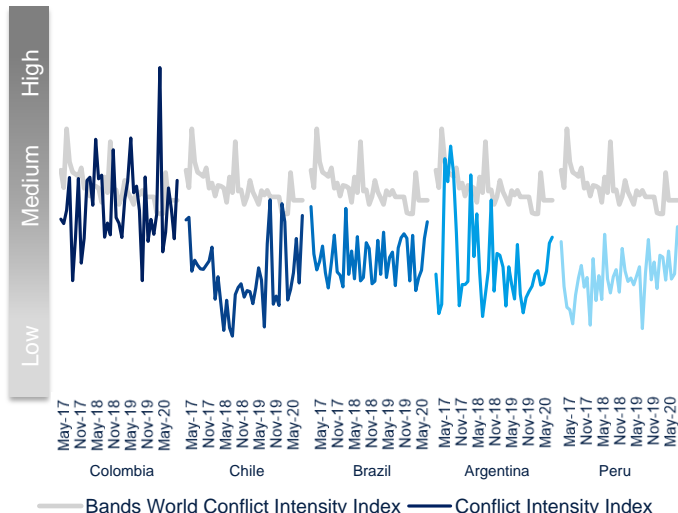
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

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



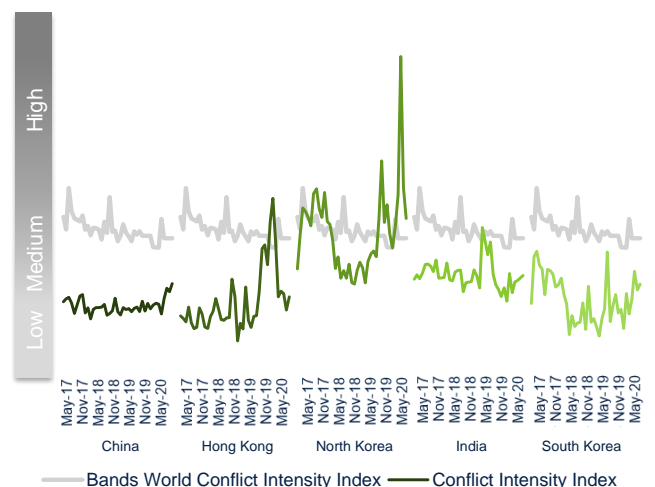
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

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



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

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

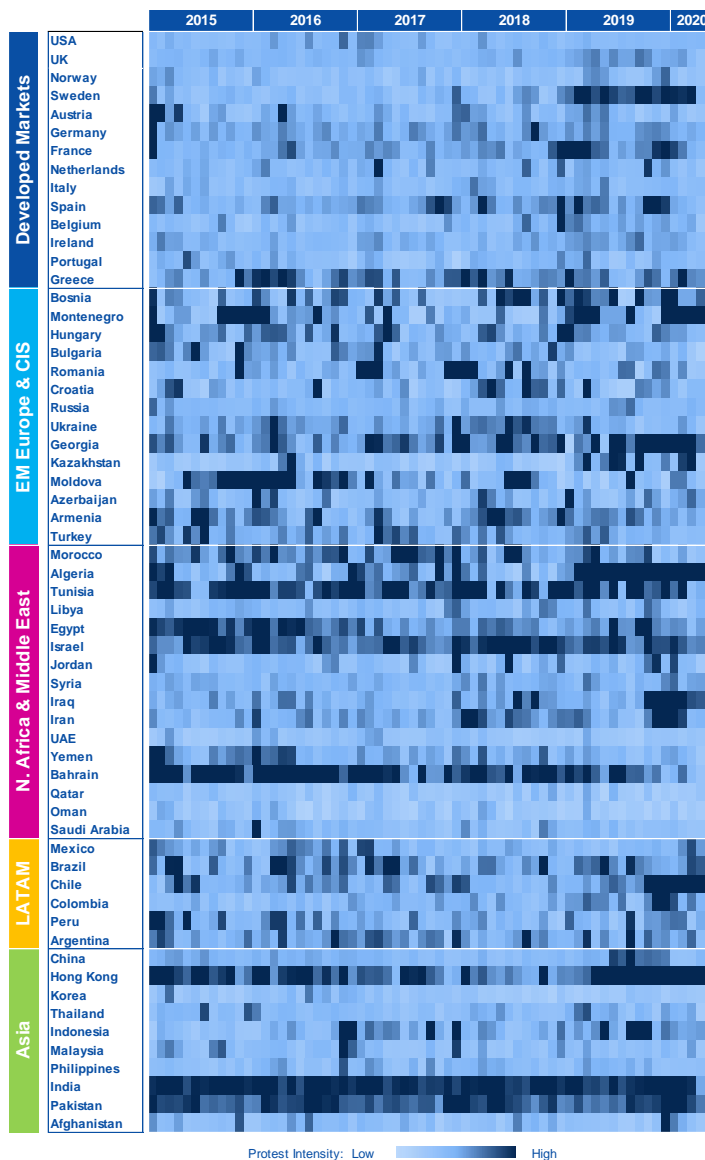


Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Global social unrest remains mainly stable during May

In May, the World Protest Intensity Index² 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:

Figure 6. **BBVA RESEARCH WORLD PROTEST INTENSITY MAP JAN 2015 – MAY 2020 (NUMBER OF PROTESTS / TOTAL EVENTS)**



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

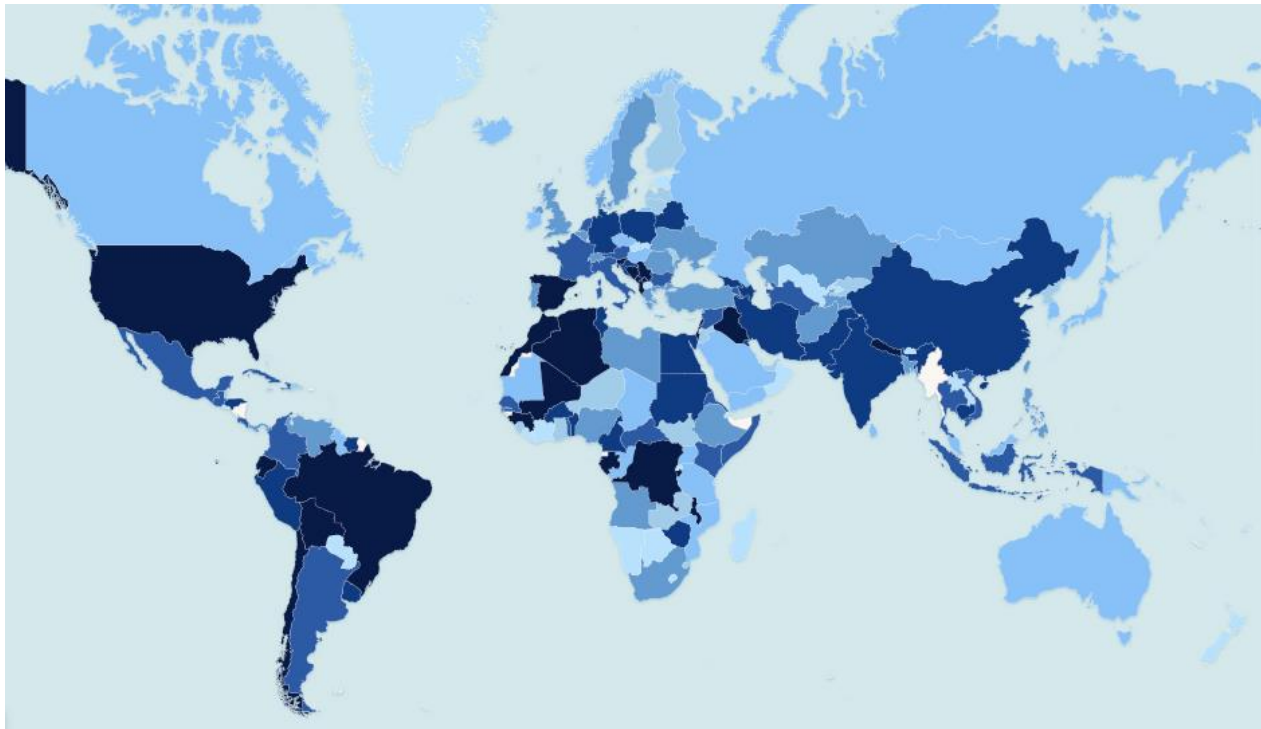
Summary

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.

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

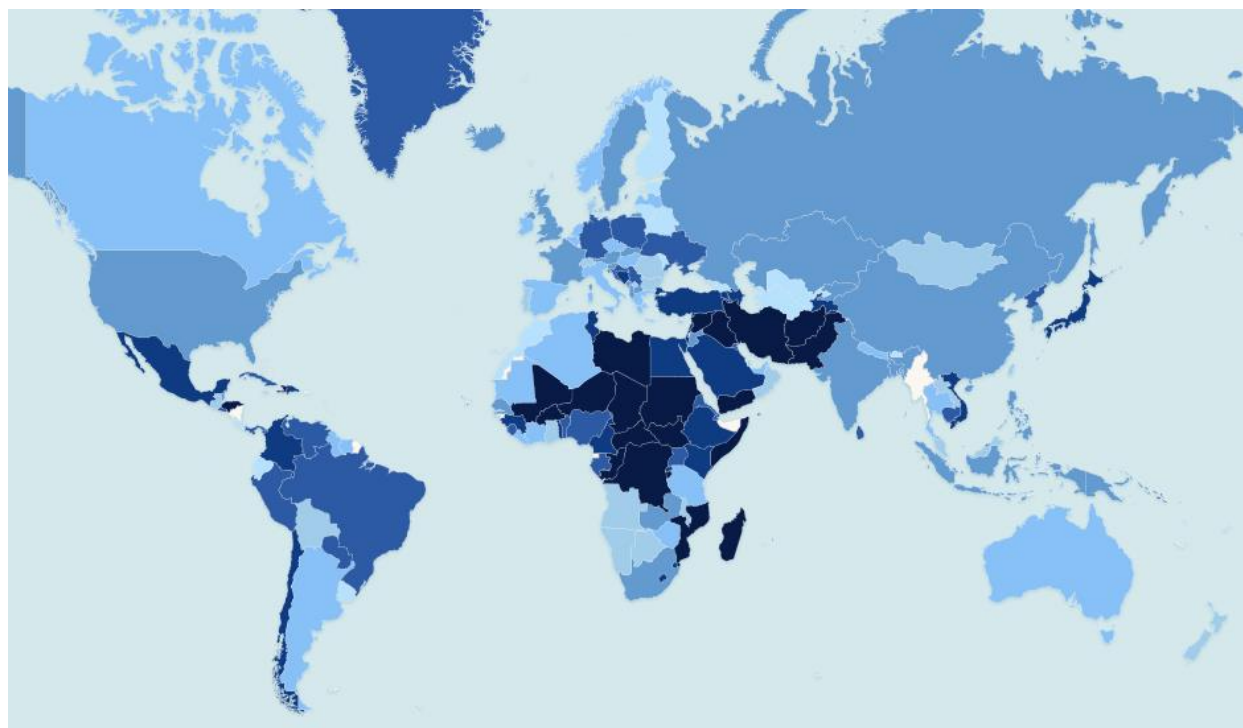
Annex

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)



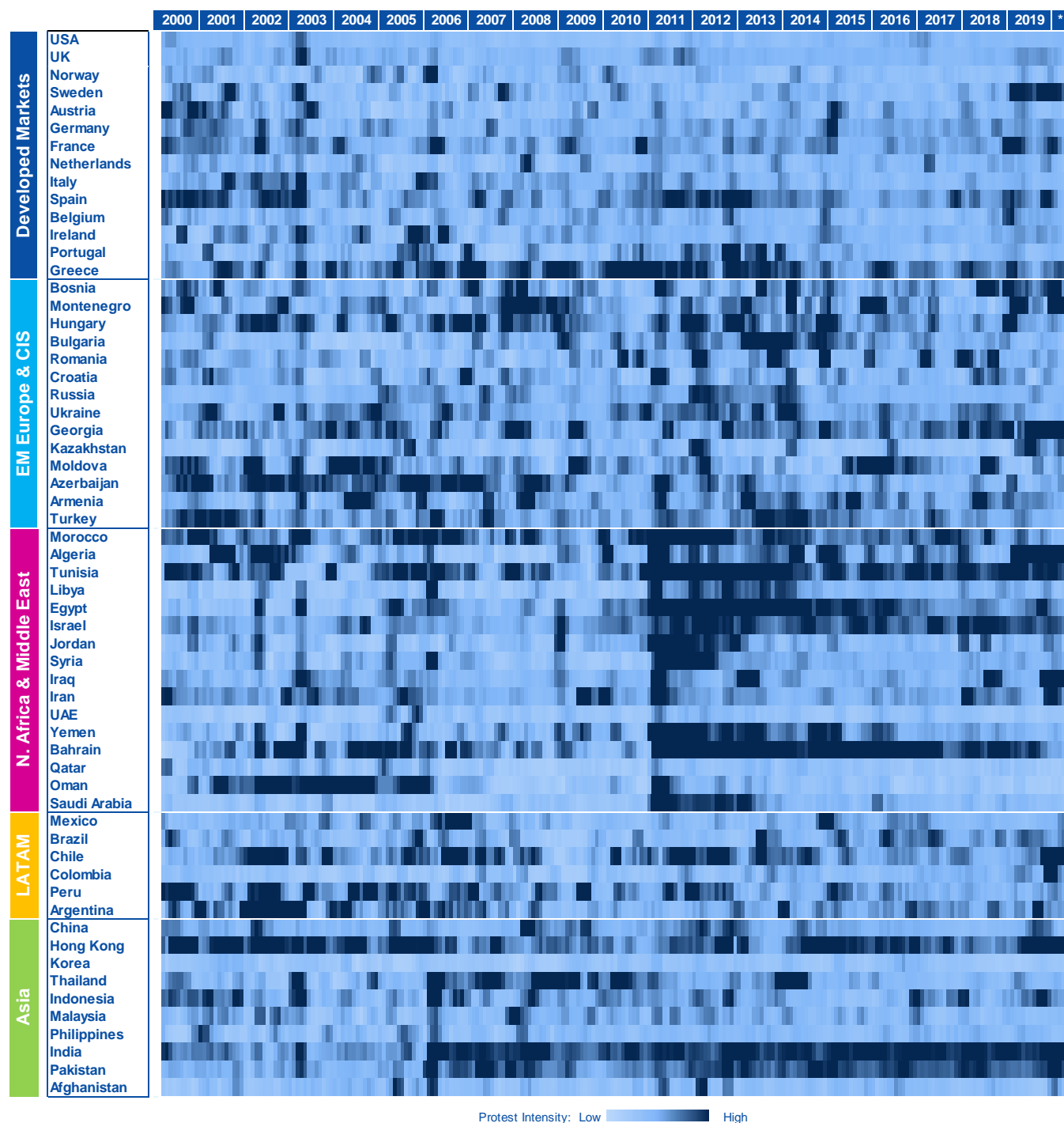
Source: BBVA Research and www.gdelt.org

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 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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