

Geostrategic Analysis

Geo-World: Conflict & Protest June 2020

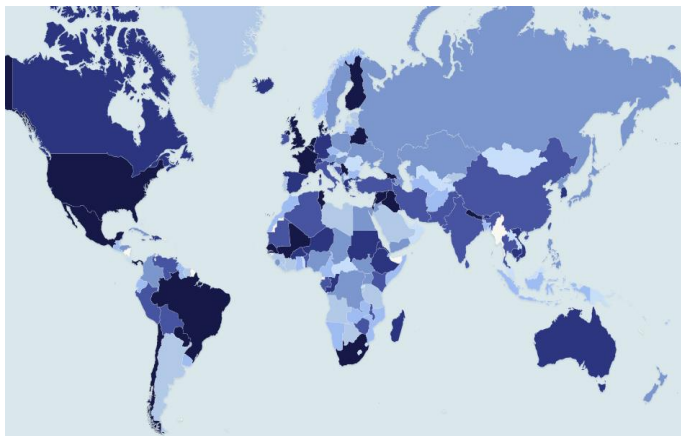
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June 2020

As of the end of June, more than 10 million people have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic, according to official counts. Latin American countries, especially Brazil, are still in the spotlight, the World Health Organization (WHO) has said. The U.S. is ending Hong Kong's special status and U.S.–China diplomatic relations have worsened as China's Parliament recently approved a national security law for Hong Kong. The anti-racism movement has spread globally. Meanwhile, the war in Libya continues as the conflicting interests between major powers remain alive and well. The extension of the Iran arms embargo is another hot topic for the United Nations. Russian citizens have voted in favor of constitutional changes that enable the extension of the mandate of President Putin. French local elections and Israeli annexation plans of part of the West Bank are other relevant topics in geopolitical discussions.

Geopolitical tensions arise while the COVID-19 pandemic continues

Figure 1. **BBVA RESEARCH WORLD PROTEST MAP JUNE 2020. NUMBER OF PROTEST EVENTS / TOTAL EVENTS BY COUNTRY (DARKER COLORS INDICATE HIGHER VALUES OF THE INDEX)**



Source: BBVA Research & www.gdelt.org

The ongoing increase of coronavirus cases in some countries is worrying, the WHO has said.

More than 10 million people have been infected with COVID-19 all over the world.

China approved security law for Hong Kong. The U.S. began to respond.

The Chinese Parliament has passed the new security law. The U.S. is ending Hong Kong's special status.

More uncertainties emerged in Libya.

The UN-recognized Libyan government advances and major powers want to increase their involvement in the war.

Russians voted in favor of constitutional changes. France held its local elections.

As the amendments have been approved, President Putin can have two more six-year terms. President Macron's *La République En Marche!* (LREM) did not win in big cities.

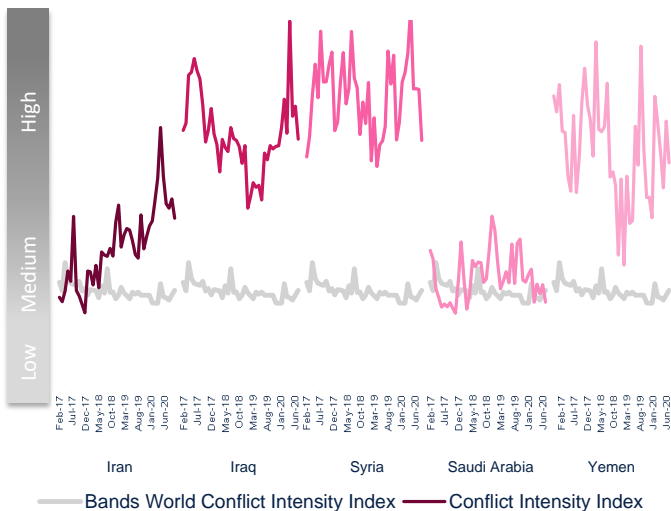
The BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index¹ increased in June. The main developments during the month were:

- **The pandemic continues to be the world's major concern. More than 10 million people have been affected by COVID-19, according to official counts, and at least 500,000 people have died.** While new cases continue to increase in the U.S., Brazil, India, Mexico, South Africa and some other countries, they remain stable in Europe and Asia (Germany, Spain, Italy, Turkey, China and Iran), and are decreasing in other countries such as Russia, the U.K., Chile and Peru. **There are "worrying increases" in Latin America, especially in Brazil, the WHO has said.** On June 25, France and Germany expressed their support for the WHO in fighting the virus. In addition, Germany has promised to give EUR 500 million to the organization this year. **Furthermore, a WHO-led coalition fighting against the pandemic has asked governments and private sector donors to help raise USD 31.3 billion in the next 12 months to develop and deliver tests, treatments and vaccines for coronavirus.**
- On June 30, the **Chinese Parliament passed national security legislation for Hong Kong** to tackle secession, subversion, terrorism and foreign interference. **As a response, the U.S. is eliminating Hong Kong's special status, ending defense exports and limiting Hong Kong's access to high technology products.** Meanwhile, the Chinese government said it would impose visa restrictions on U.S. individuals with "egregious conduct" on Hong Kong related issues. Previously, the U.S. Secretary of State had said the new visa restrictions by the U.S. government applied to "current and former" Chinese Communist Party officials "believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy." In the meantime, **on June 25, the U.S. Senate passed a bill that would impose mandatory sanctions on people or firms that supported Chinese restrictions on Hong Kong's autonomy.** To become a law the bill has to pass in the House of Representatives and be approved by President Donald Trump. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson stated that Beijing would initiate countermeasures against the bill.

1: Further details about the methodology available in the annex.

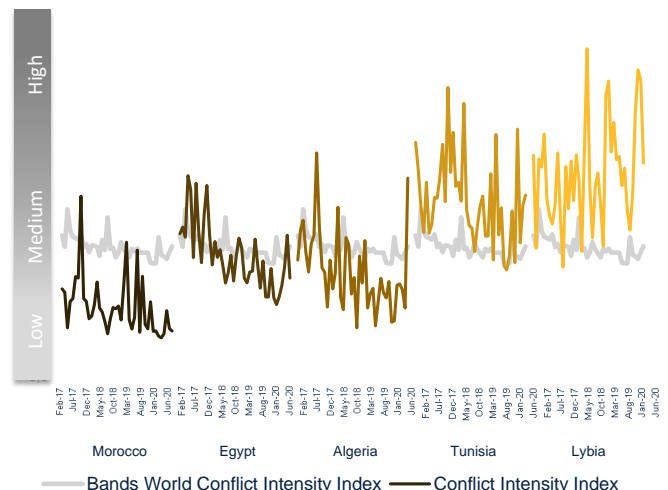
- **The war in Libya, between the U.N.-recognized government (GNA) and Khalifa Haftar forces continued in June.** The GNA advanced towards Jufra and the critical port city of Sirte. The Egyptian leader, al-Sisi, has declared that Sirte-Jufra frontline is their redline. He signaled cross-border operations in Libya if needed. **In the meantime, French President Macron and Russian President Putin discussed Libya-related developments.** As the war escalated, France, Germany and Italy called on forces in Libya on June 25 to initiate a ceasefire. **On June 29, Saudi and U.S. officials called on the international community to extend the UN arms embargo on Iran,** which would end in October. Russia and China have announced that they would oppose any extension. In response, U.S. envoy for Iran Brian Hook said that Russia and China would be isolated at the United Nations if they blocked a U.S. bid to extend the weapons ban on Iran. **On June 25, the U.S. blacklisted four firms operating in the Iranian metal sector.** As the Israeli Prime Minister vowed to annex one third of the occupied West Bank, including parts of Jordan Valley (target date July 1), U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo said it was up to Israel to decide whether to annex.
- **Russia held a nationwide vote from June 25 to July 1 on changes to the constitution, including an amendment allowing President Putin to have two more six-year terms.** As the amendments have been approved in the vote, President Putin will probably run for a new term, as he had previously said. On June 19, the European Union leaders agreed to extend Russian economic sanctions over its annexation of Crimea and the tensions in eastern Ukraine until the end of January 2021. **In French local elections, the Green Party and its left-wing allies made significant gains in the second round and French President Macron's LREM failed to win in the big cities,** according to election results.

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



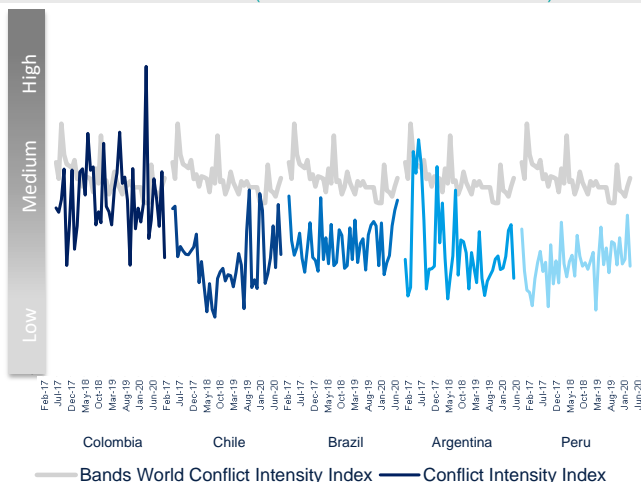
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

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



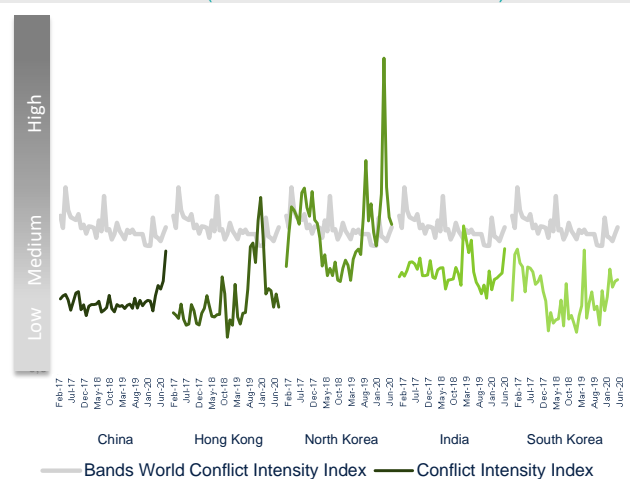
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

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



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

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

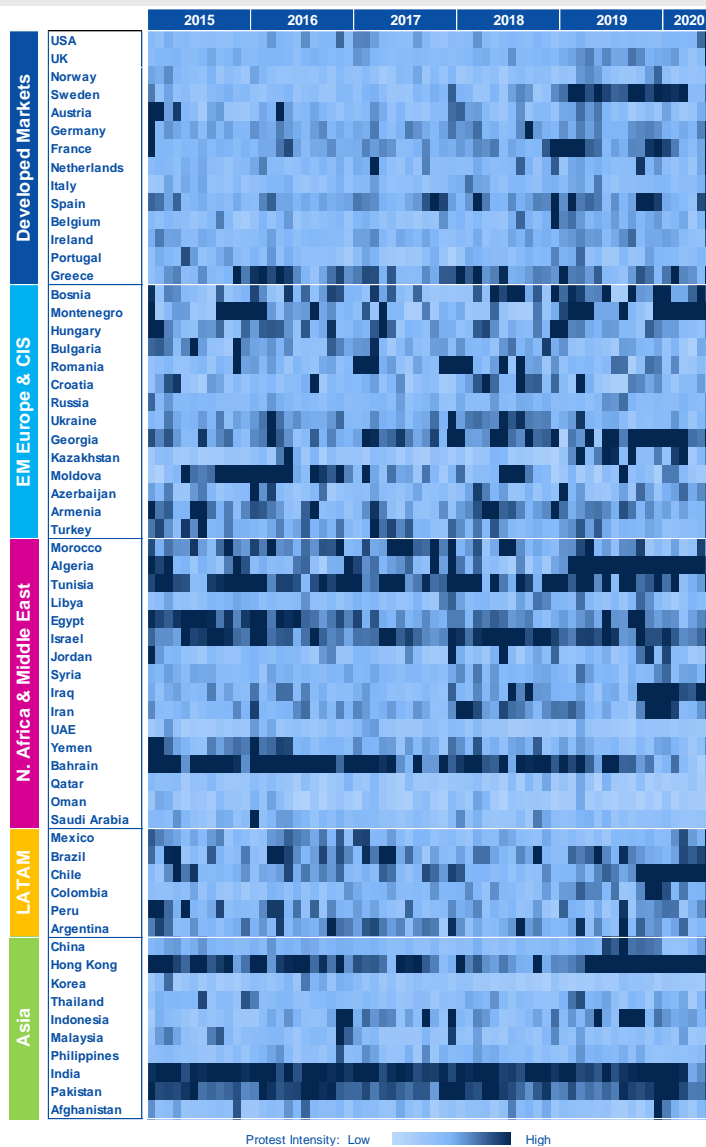


Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Global social unrest has increased in June despite the pandemic

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

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



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

- **By regions, social unrest increased considerably in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East and Latin America, due to the anti-racism protests following the death of George Floyd. It also increased in Asia and Eastern Europe, but to a lesser extent.**
- **In the U.S.,** Donald Trump signed an executive order to improve how policemen treat African Americans. The anti-racism movement has spread all across **Europe with mass demonstrations**. Anti-government protests erupted in 70 **Italian** cities. In **Greece**, pro-migrant demonstrators caused the extension of coronavirus lockdown in migrant camps.
- **In Emerging Europe,** police in **Montenegro** used tear gas to disperse a rally of the pro-Serb opposition. **Ukrainian** cities demanded the resignation of Interior Minister. A crackdown on **Azerbaijani** migrants unable to cross the border pushed **Azerbaijan** and **Russia** to discuss the border crisis. Pro-Kurdish party protests **Turkish** government crackdown.
- **In North Africa and the Middle East,** unemployment protests in **Tunisia** turned violent. Protests erupted in **Egypt** after **Ethiopia** announced the filling of the controversial Blue Nile dam. Thousands rallied against **Israel's** annexation of areas of the West Bank. As the economic crisis deepens, **Syrian** protesters call for Assad's downfall. New protests emerged in **Iran** after the rise in oil prices.
- **In Latin America,** countries like **Mexico, Chile, Colombia** and **Peru** are organizing mass protests against police violence despite the pandemic. In **Brazil**, protests against Jair Bolsonaro intensified when the government stopped disclosing coronavirus data. In **Colombia**, labor demonstrations were held again.
- **In Asia,** tensions between **China** and **India** have risen again over their Himalayan border. Amid new tensions regarding the **Hong Kong** Security Law, thousands took to the streets to mark the first anniversary of the anti-government movement. In **Thailand**, activists protested to mark the anniversary of the end of the absolute monarchy. The Black Lives Matter movement has given new impetus to the fight against injustices towards West Papuans in **Indonesia**. In **Philippines** many rallied against a new anti-terrorism bill.

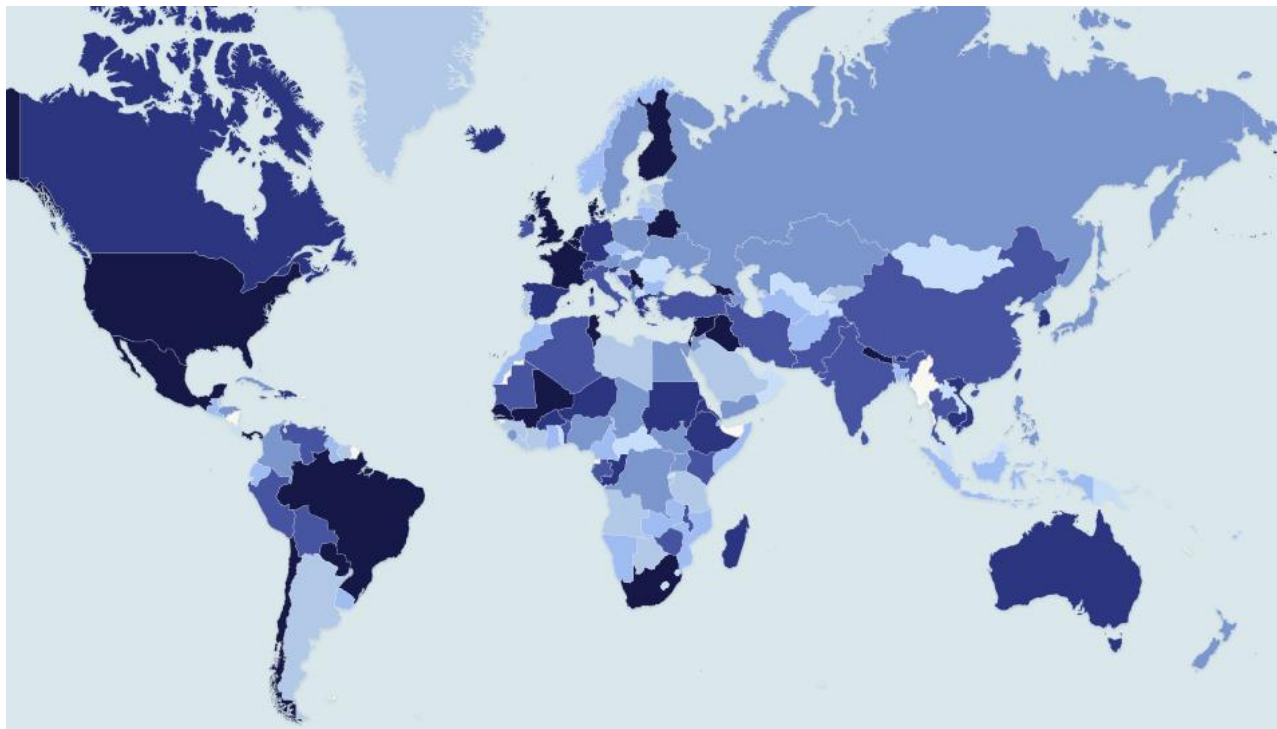
Summary

The COVID-19 health crisis continues to be the main hot spot and will still be the next month's one. As more than 10 million people have been affected, more funds are needed to fight the coronavirus and for treatments, the WHO-led coalition has stressed. Meanwhile, the death of George Floyd has initiated anti-racism and anti-violence mass movements that have spread across the globe. U.S.–China relations are worsening due to Hong Kong-related developments, even though the trade deal is still on track. President Putin can have two more six-year terms because the constitutional changes have been approved in the vote. French President Macron's LREM did not win in the big cities. The Libyan war has created more uncertainties in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The Iran arms embargo extension could be another diplomatic tension among major powers in the coming months. Israel's annexation plan for the West Bank could trigger further uncertainties in the Middle Eastern region.

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

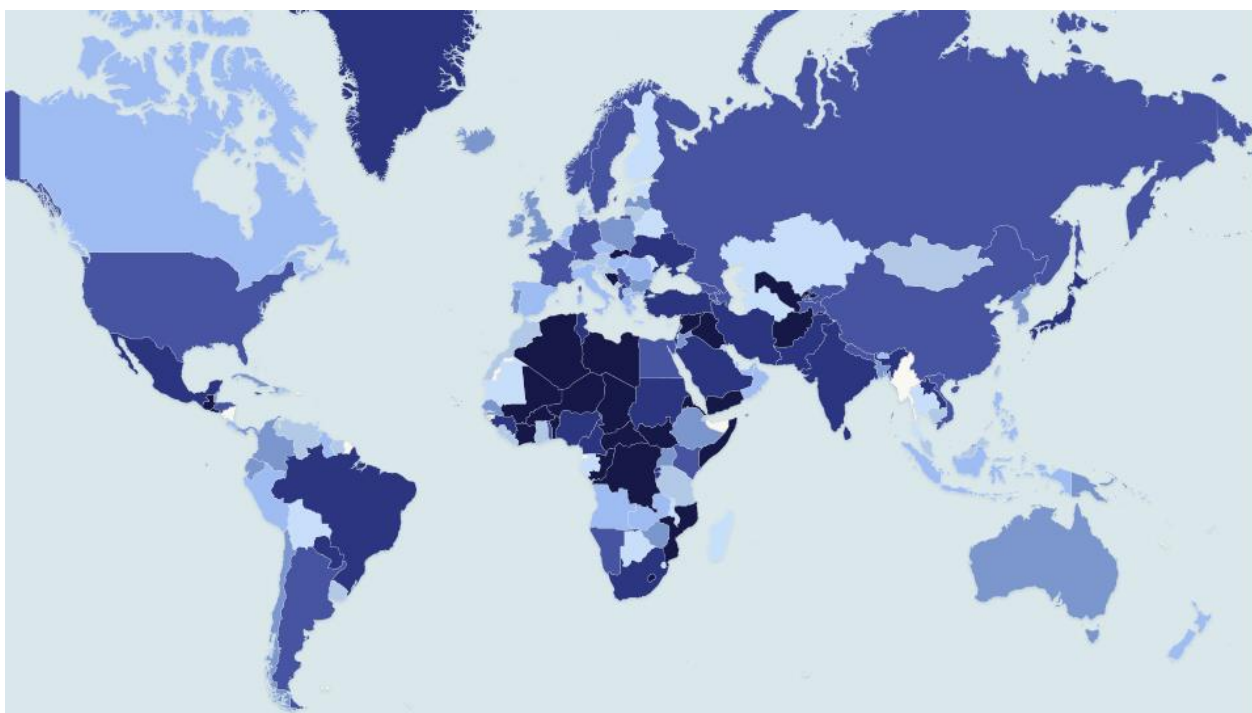
Annex

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



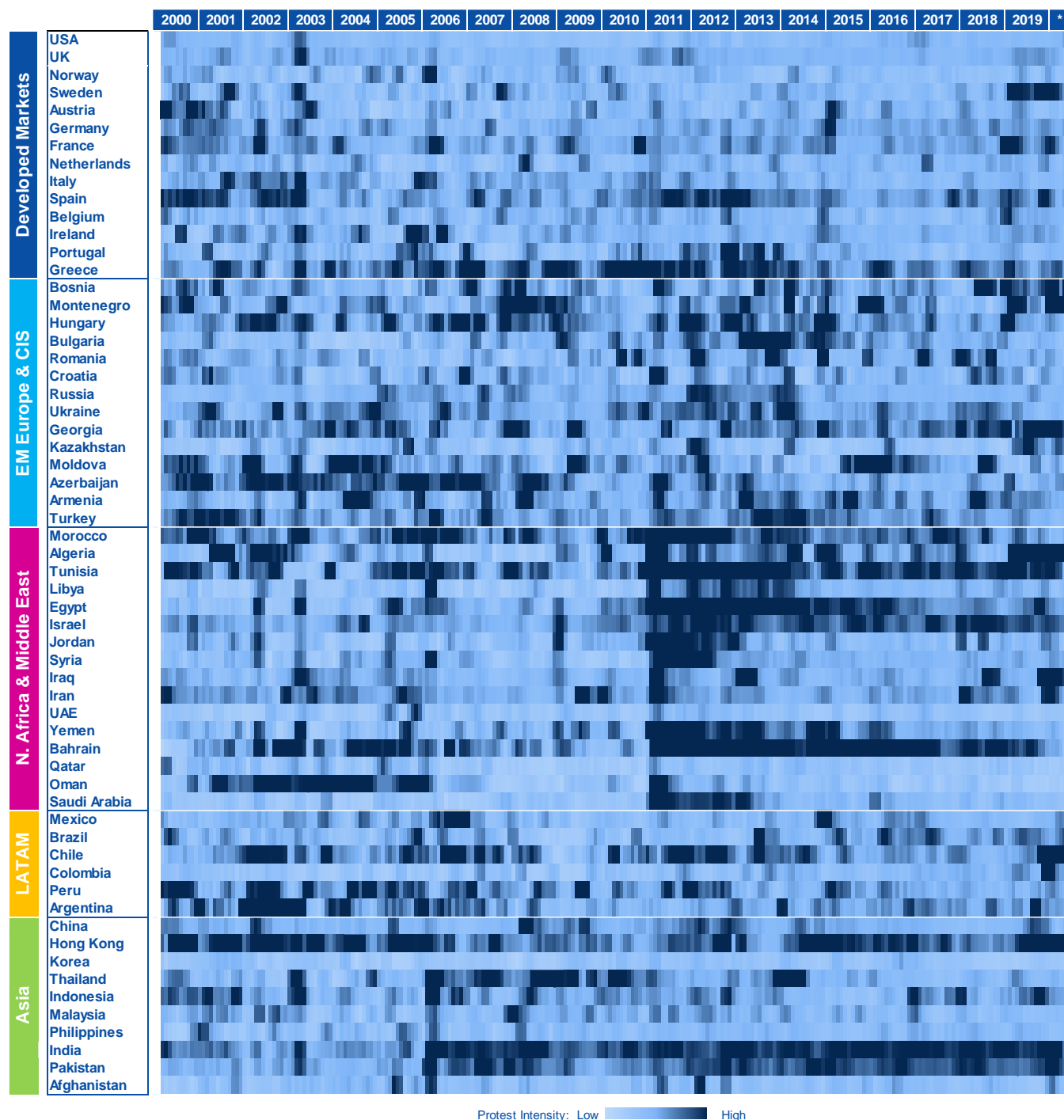
Source: BBVA Research and www.gdelt.org

Figure 8. **BBVA RESEARCH WORLD CONFLICT MAP JUNE 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 – JUN 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

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 protest recorded around the world at any given time. The protests 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 conflict recorded around the world at any given 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, 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, impose 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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