

Geopolitics

# BBVA Research Big Data Geopolitics Monitor

Big Data Unit  
28 May 2024

## Israel faces waves of condemnation after a strike in Rafah camp. Spain, Ireland and Norway recognize Palestine as a State. Spain provided military support to Ukraine

**Israel faced a wave of condemnation on strike in Rafah Camp:** Israel faced widespread international condemnation on Monday after an Israeli air strike killed dozens of Palestinians in a camp for displaced civilians in Rafah. According to Palestinian health officials at least 45 people had been killed and more than 200 injured. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the strike a "tragic accident" and the country's military prosecutor ordered an investigation into the strike, adding that Israel regretted "any harm to uninvolved civilians". Most of Western and Arab countries condemned the attack ([FT](#)).

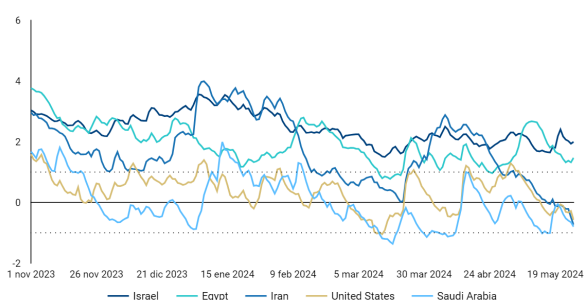
**Spain, Ireland and Norway recognize Palestine:** Ireland, Spain and Norway announced coordinately that they will formally recognize a Palestinian state. Palestinian leaders welcomed the decision, but Israel reacted immediately announcing it was recalling its envoys to the three countries for "urgent consultations" ([CNN](#)).

**Ukrainian President Zelensky visited Spain:** Spain will provide military support to [Ukraine](#) worth 1 billion euros (\$1.08 billion) this year under an agreement signed on Monday between Ukrainian President Zelensky and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez in Madrid. The pact, which covers the next decade, calls for the supply of modern military equipment for ground, aerial, naval and other uses, "prioritizing Ukraine's key capacity needs" ([Reuters](#)).

### The BBVA Monitor: Political tensions kept high in Taiwan and demonstrations in Israel, but a moderated pace

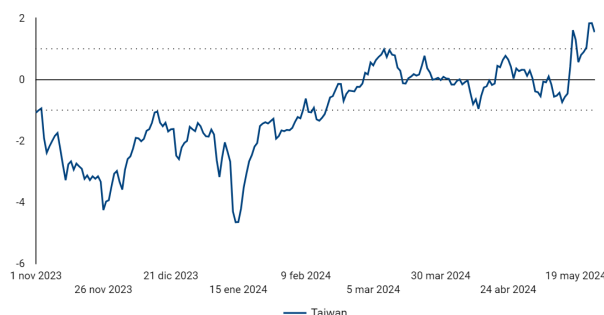
- **Geopolitical risk and conflict** indicators kept in the high risk area in **Israel and Egypt**. Demonstrations in **Israel** kept high, but they started to correct going from the extreme to the high risk area (Fig 1 and Fig 3).
- **Political tensions** indicator continued in the high risk area in **Taiwan** after last week's Taiwan President Lai Ching-te was sworn in as president and his declarations about China's conflict. Political tensions in **Spain** went again to the high risk area, although moderated, given Spain's announcement to recognize Palestine (Fig 2 and Fig 3).
- In the case of Latam, the **Geopolitical risk** indicators kept in the neutral area (Fig 4). Political tensions raised in Ecuador (Fig 3).
- **Economic policy uncertainty** indicators continued in the neutral or low risk area (Fig 3).

Fig1. **GEOPOLITICAL RISK: MIDDLE EAST & US**  
(28-day weighted moving avg, normalized by its own history)



Source: BBVA Research & [www.gdelt.org](http://www.gdelt.org). Positive (negative) values indicate greater (lower) risk relative to the mean of period 2021-nowadays

Fig2. **POLITICAL TENSIONS INDEX: TAIWAN**  
(28-day weighted moving avg, normalized by its own history)

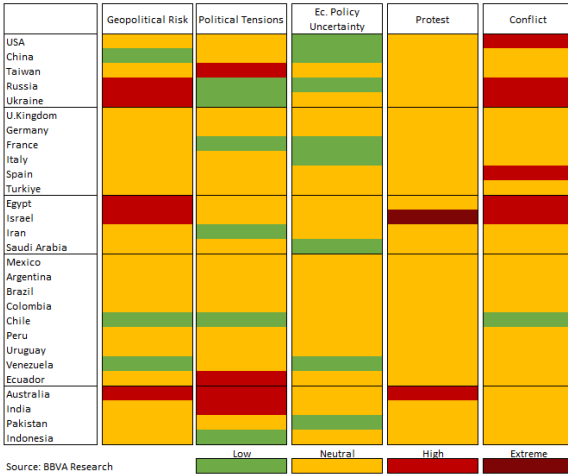


Source: BBVA Research & [www.gdelt.org](http://www.gdelt.org). Positive (negative) values indicate greater (lower) risk relative to the mean of period 2021-nowadays

\*The selection of news has been enriched by the BBVA Research Geo Assistant developed with Chat-GPT.

**Fig3. BBVA RESEARCH GEOPOLITICS MONITOR "SIGNAL" CHANGES**  
(Signals in Geopolitical Risk, Political Tensions, Economic Policy Uncertainties, Protest and Conflict according to Standard Dev)

**Summary of Signals After Hamas-Israel Conflict (May 20th, 2024)**  
(News Sentiment Map. Sentiment relative to average sentiment in each country)

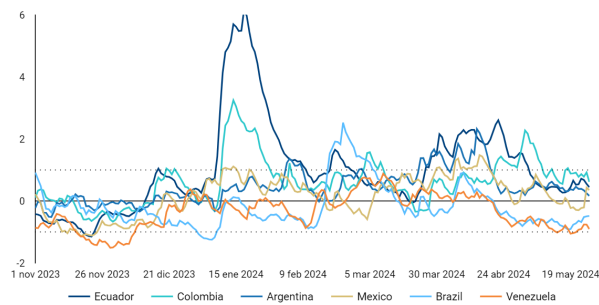


**Summary of Signals After Hamas-Israel Conflict (May 27th, 2024)**  
(News Sentiment Map. Sentiment relative to average sentiment in each country)



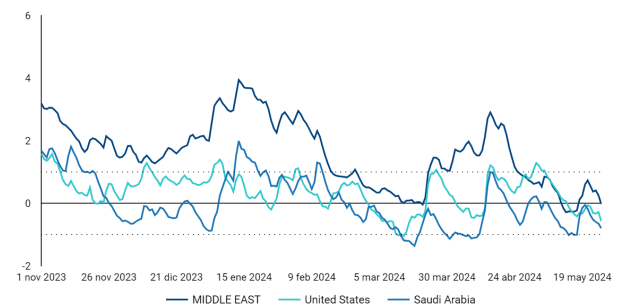
Source: BBVA Research and [www.gdelt.org](http://www.gdelt.org)

**Fig4. GEOPOLITICAL SENTIMENT: LATAM**  
(28-day weighted moving avg, normalized by its own history)



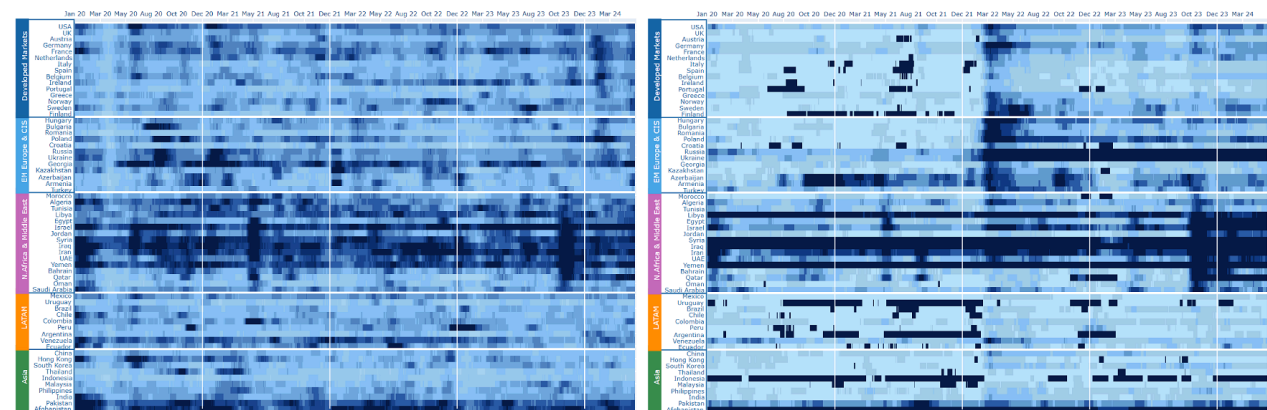
Source: BBVA Research & [www.gdelt.org](http://www.gdelt.org). Positive (negative) values indicate greater (lower) risk relative to the mean of period 2021-nowadays

**Fig5. GEOPOLITICAL RISK: ME, US & SAUDI ARABIA**  
(28-day weighted moving avg, normalized by its own history)



Source: BBVA Research & [www.gdelt.org](http://www.gdelt.org). Positive (negative) values indicate greater (lower) risk relative to the mean of period 2021-nowadays

**Fig6. BBVA RESEARCH PROTEST AND CONFLICT HEAT MAPS**  
(Evolution of Protest and Conflict over time by regions)



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

## Methodological annex: indicators' construction

We have developed a daily tracker with weekly updates to monitor protest and conflict indicators for every country in the world from 2019 to present day. To construct this, we use a rich 'big database' of international events (GDELT), created by Leetaru and Schrodt (2013). GDELT is an open-source database which extracts and parses digital news monitoring 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. Thus, it contains a comprehensive and high resolution catalog of geo-referenced events and themes.

Using different dictionaries, several thousands of taxonomies and themes are identified in the news pieces to classify the information. The algorithms used by GDELT also identify emotions, organizations, locations, news sources and events across the world as well as their average sentiment using Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques and the lexicon approach.

The included indicators are:

- Geopolitical Risk: or sentiment (weighted by coverage) of the country's geopolitical risk perception.
- Political Tensions: or sentiment (weighted by coverage) of the country's political tensions.
- Economic Policy Uncertainty or sentiment (weighted by coverage) about the country's economic policy uncertainty, also disaggregated by media origin.
- Protests or coverage regarding social protests or unrest in the country.
- Conflict or coverage of armed conflicts, which go beyond verbal protests.
- Bilateral Tensions or the sentiment (weighted by coverage) between a specific pair of countries that appear together in the news article (plus NATO and EU).

The indicators track the evolution of tensions and are normalized by its own country history since 2019, thus they are all expressed in terms of standard deviations from their historical patterns. Indicators usually lie within the range [-1,1]. Therefore, when the values exceed one (the upper boundary of the range), this means escalating tensions. While it's possible to observe simultaneous tensions arising in multiple countries (for example, due to geopolitical events affecting several nations, as seen in some of our heatmaps), using these indicators for direct quantitative comparisons of risk levels between countries is not recommended.

We apply a weighted moving average of 28 days (to include four complete weeks with the same number of days of the weeks) to reduce noise of daily information and identify signals more clearly. The weights have been calculated using a discrete geometric distribution such that it puts more weight on recent data and less on past data (see Graph 1). Aggregating by weeks, the weight of the most recent week has a weight of 68%, the past week 22%, the previous 7% and the fourth 3%. The weight of the 28 days can be seen in the following image. In such a way, the indicators reflect what is happening in the last days.

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