

Geopolitics

BBVA Research Big Data Geopolitics Monitor

Big Data Unit
21 May 2024

The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israel and Hamas Leaders. The Iranian President and Foreign Ministry died in Helicopter crash.

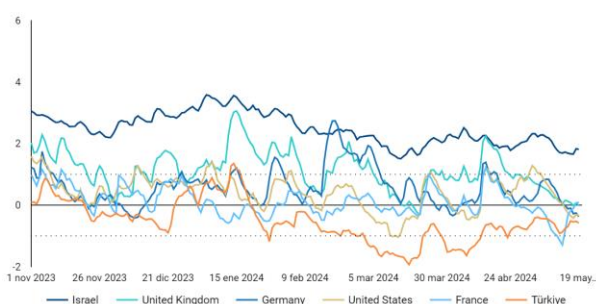
The ICC issued arrest warrants for Israel and Hamas Leader: the international Criminal Court Prosecutor Karim Khan finally issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and senior Hamas leaders over alleged war crimes, as well as Hamas military leaders Yahya Sinwar and Mohammed Deif and its political head Ismail Haniyeh. The call triggered a fierce reaction from Israel and criticism from the US President Biden. ([FT](#))

Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi died in a helicopter crash: Iran’s hardline President Ebrahim Raisi, who was once considered a potential successor to the 85-year-old supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, tragically died in a helicopter crash on Sunday. On Monday, the Iranian branch of the red crescent humanitarian network reported that its search and rescue teams had reached the crash site and found "no signs of the helicopter’s occupants being alive" ([POLITICO](#)). Analysts question now whether the successor to the President and Foreign Minister will keep communications open and avoid direct conflict with the US or change their strategy.

The BBVA Monitor: Protest indicators continued well alive in Israel. Political instability increased in Taiwan, while decreased in Spain

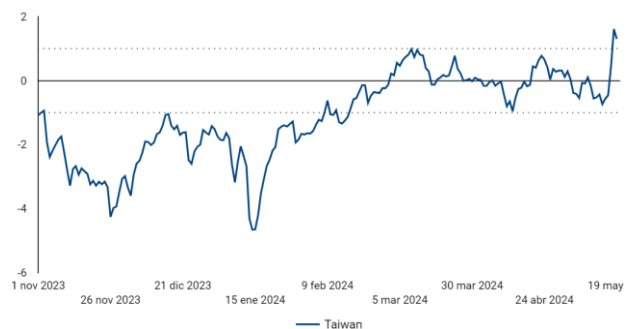
- **Israel’s** protests against the war continue in the spotlight and the indicator kept in the extreme risk area. Nonetheless, the demonstrations eased in the rest of the countries, such as **the US** and the **European countries** (Fig 1 and Fig 3).
- **Political tensions** indicator raised in **Taiwan** given the Taiwan President Lai Ching-te was sworn in as president on Monday, going to the high risk area, increasing tensions with China ties. On the contrary, the indicator came to the neutral area in **Spain** after the increases observed during the last weeks (Fig 2 and Fig 3).
- **Geopolitical and conflict indicators in the high risk area in the Middle East** (Fig 3). Compared with the last week, social unrest and conflict indicators eased in several countries.
- In the case of Latam, the **Geopolitical risk** indicators kept contained (Fig 4).

Fig1. **PROTEST INDEX: ISRAEL, US & EUROPE**
(28-day weighted moving avg, normalized by its own history)



Source: BBVA Research & 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. 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 13th, 2024)
(News Sentiment Map. Sentiment relative to average sentiment in each country)

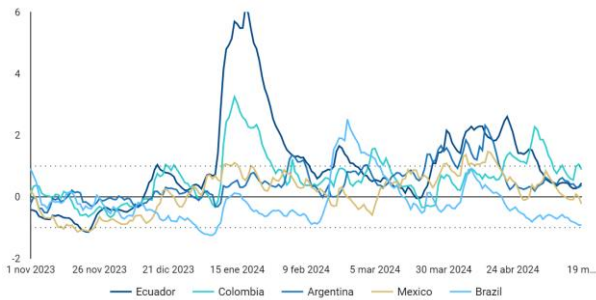


Summary of Signals After Hamas-Israel Conflict (May 20th, 2024)
(News Sentiment Map. Sentiment relative to average sentiment in each country)



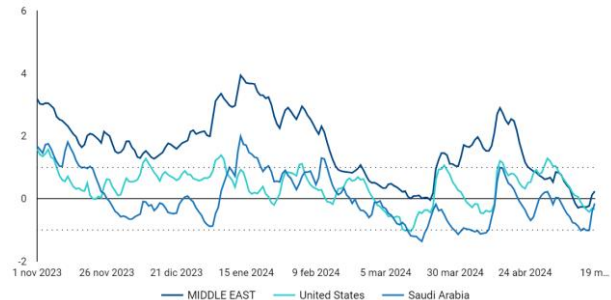
Source: BBVA Research and www.qdelt.org

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



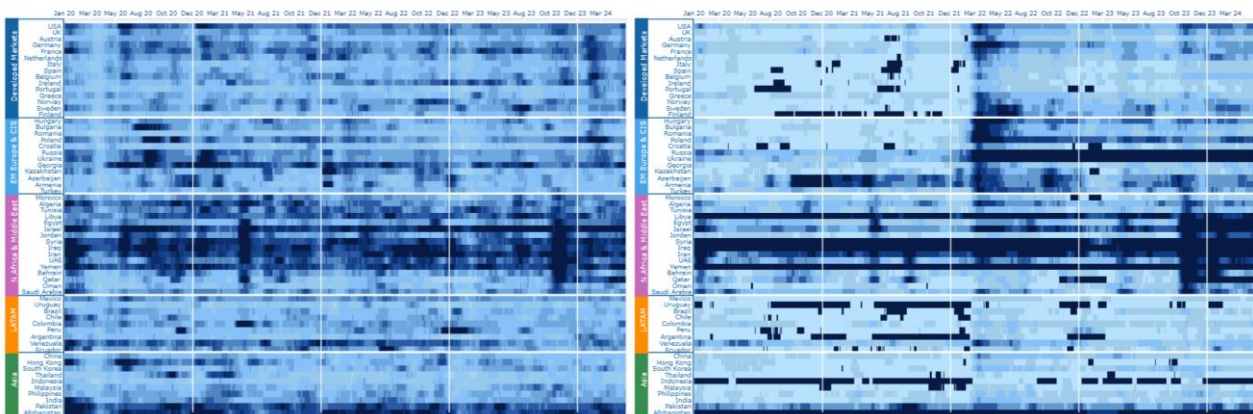
Source: BBVA Research & www.qdelt.org. Positive (negative) values indicate greater (lower) risk relative to the mean of period 2021-nowadays

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



Source: BBVA Research & www.qdelt.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.qdelt.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 Schrod (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 normalised 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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