

Geo-World: Conflict & Social Unrest March Update

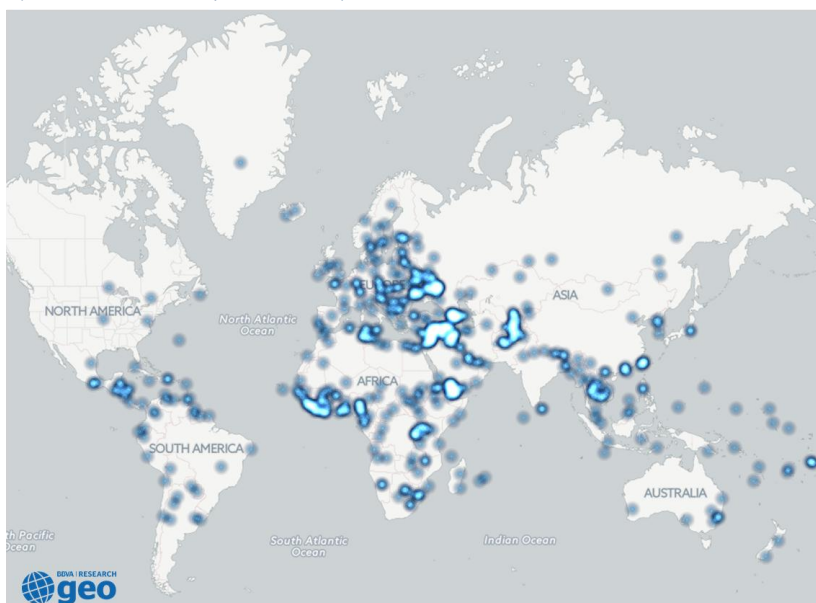
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The Russia-Ukraine crisis remained contained during March thanks to the Minsk II agreement, although the situation is still critical. ISIS' threats spread into North Africa while international forces gained some ground in Syria and Iraq. Instability escalated in Yemen. Geopolitical tensions in East Asia stayed contained. Social unrest eased in Europe.

Geopolitical conflicts around the world eased in March...

BBVA Research World Conflict Heatmap (from 2H 2014 to Mar 2015)

(Number of conflicts / Total events)



Source: www.gdelt.org & BBVA Research

•The BBVA Research Conflict index continued to decrease in March

Although at a slower pace than last month

•Ukraine-Russia situation remained critical despite the ceasefire deal

Sporadic fire-fights happened in Donbas increasing fears of the conflict's escalation

•ISIS spread to North Africa

The attack in Tunisia raised worries in neighbouring countries

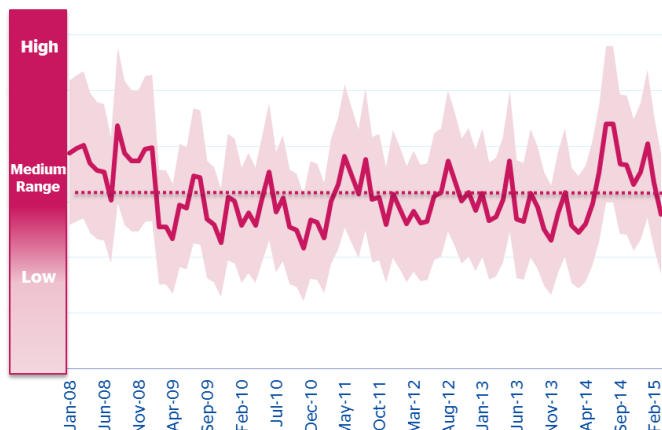
• Tensions escalated in Yemen

Instability increased after Saudi Arabia's direct military intervention

The BBVA Research world conflict intensity index¹ continued to decrease during March on a monthly basis, although at a slower pace than in February. The index fell below the historical medium range. One of the main reasons for the decline was the **de-escalation of the Ukraine-Russia crisis** due to the **ceasefire** implemented after **the Minsk II agreement**. The situation is still critical and sporadic fire-fights occurred in Donbas and surroundings.

BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index 2008-2015

(Number of conflicts in the world / Total events in the world)



Source: www.gdelt.org & BBVA Research

The risk of an accidental escalation is still well alive as pro-Kiev volunteer battalions are not entirely under government control and are getting involved into heavy battles with the separatists.

Despite the ISIS' initial and rapid advance in Iraq and Syria having been halted by the International Coalition, the **Islamic State holds important strategic positions in Syria** (such as Aleppo) and **Iraq** (such as Mosul). Tensions are **now spreading into North Africa**, increasing fears in neighbouring countries, especially after the recent attack on foreign tourists in Tunisia.

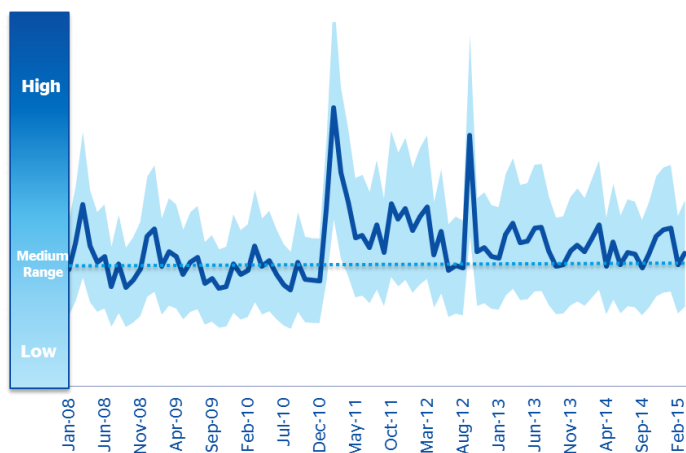
At the end of the month, **instability rapidly escalated in Yemen** after Saudi Arabia's direct military intervention against the Houthis, increasing the possibility of a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia to control the country. The evolution

of the situation in Yemen will be key, since it could greatly exacerbate regional tensions, triggering fragmentation and social unrest throughout the region.

¹Details about methodology can be found in the following link: [Methodology, tracking protests and conflicts](#).

BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Index 2008-2015

(Number of protests in the world / Total events in the world)



Source: www.gdelt.org & BBVA Research

...while social unrest pointed upwards

Protests around the world rebounded in March, returning to the medium tension area (as shown by our BBVA Research world protest intensity index²) and reversing the decreasing trend observed in February.

According to our BBVA Research world protest intensity map below the main hot spots were the following:

-In regional terms, **social pressures increased in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries** after ISIS' advance into North Africa and the developing Yemen crisis. **Demonstrations significantly moderated in Western and Central Europe** but increased in some Latin American countries. The situation in East Asia remained calm.

-In Western Europe, social tensions continued to ease, showing a more stable situation than at the beginning of the year.

-In Emerging Europe and CIS countries, **social instability increased** as countries in the region began to be affected by the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Furthermore, **oligarch confrontations in Ukraine revealed new tensions** to the country's long-term stability after the resignation of Igor Kolomoisky as governor of Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region. On the Russian side, **Vladimir Putin's popularity remains high** (85% according Levada polls), but some dissension and internal power struggles are becoming more evident.

-In the MENA region, the background situation continued clearly unstable with high levels of social unrest in Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt. **Yemen's situation could greatly exacerbate regional tensions** as Iran and Saudi Arabia maintains opposite strategies. Moreover, the power vacuum that has been generated in Yemen could be exploited by radical Islamic groups, thus creating further instability.

-In Latin America, the situation in Mexico relaxed while social unrest in Venezuela remained high.

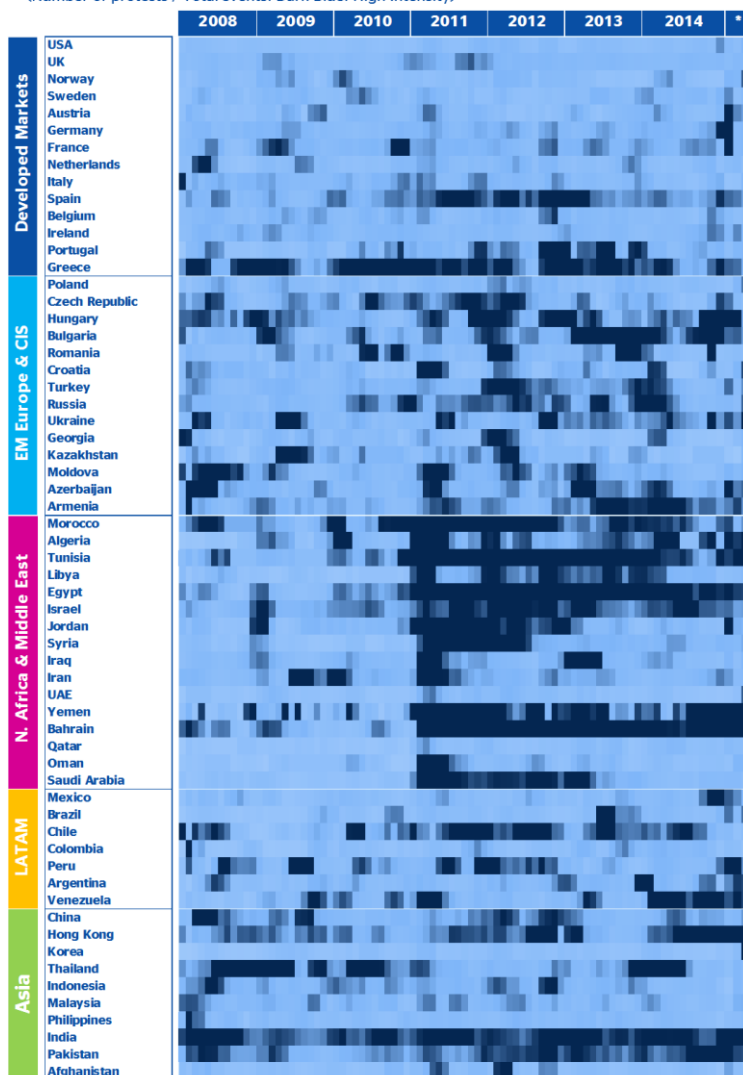
-Pressure continued to ease in Asia, focusing the main social alerts in Hong Kong, India and, more recently, in South Korea.

In sum, **social unrest continued at critical levels in some countries, especially in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe.** The critical outlook in the MENA region escalated after the Yemen crisis and ISIS' recent attacks. On the other

hand, social unrest in Western Europe and Asia remained quite calm.

BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map Jan 2011 - Mar 2015

(Number of protests / Total events. Dark Blue: High Intensity)



Source: www.gdelt.org & BBVA Research

²Details about methodology can be found in the following link: [Methodology, tracking protests and conflicts.](#)

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