



## Geo-World: Conflict & Social Unrest October Update

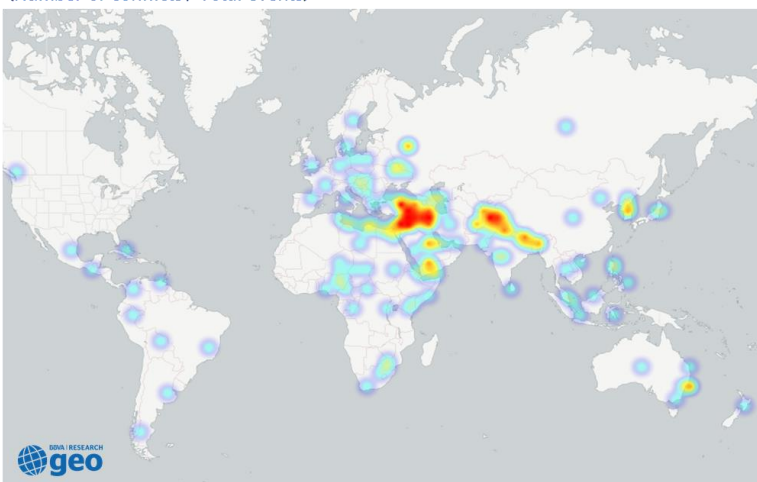
Álvaro Ortiz and Tomasa Rodrigo. BBVA Cross Country Emerging Markets Unit

Russia expanded its military intervention in Syria during the month, confusing its US and NATO allies after intercepting US drones flying over Syria and violating the Turkish airspace, as well as promoting peace talks that would include a transition Government with Assad. Official talks over the Syrian conflict took place between leaders from 17 nations, the EU and the UN. Even some progress seemed to be made, a commitment about Assad’s future has not been achieved. ISIS lost ground in Iraq, but made some advances in Syria and North Africa. The refugee crisis continued posing risks on Europe and could worsen if Aleppo finally falls.

### Geopolitical conflicts around the world continued well alive during October...

#### BBVA Research World Conflict Heatmap (Oct, monthly changes)

(Number of conflicts / Total events)



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

#### • Russia intensified its offensive in Syria and tried to gain allies in the region

Russia expanded its military intervention in Syria deploying ground forces on the area

#### • Simultaneous offensives happened in Aleppo, posing risks on the refugee crisis

The regime and Iranian ground forces, as well as ISIS, launched important assaults in Aleppo.

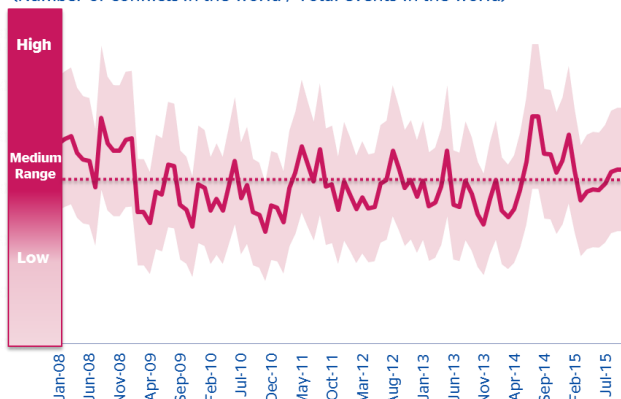
#### • Taliban attacks deteriorated security in Afghanistan

Fierce clashes between Afghan National Security Forces and Taliban militants occurred in the north of the country.

The BBVA Research world conflict intensity index<sup>1</sup> kept stable during October compared with September, but remains above average. Russia escalated its military intervention in Syria, supporting significant advances by joint regime-Iranian forces near Aleppo (through airstrikes coordinated by the Russian special forces). The country also triggered some tensions with US and NATO, especially after the violation of the Turkish airspace by its warplanes and its interception with three US Predator drones over Syria. As a consequence, Russia and US intensified efforts in avoiding “military accidents” and they signed a new air safety agreement. Russia has also deepened its relationships with other regional states such as Iran, Iraq and Egypt, trying to isolate US and to position itself as a power broker in the conflict. Official meetings on the Syrian civil war took place at the end of the month between leaders of 17 nations, EU and UN, but no consensus has been reached yet.

#### BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index 2008-15

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



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

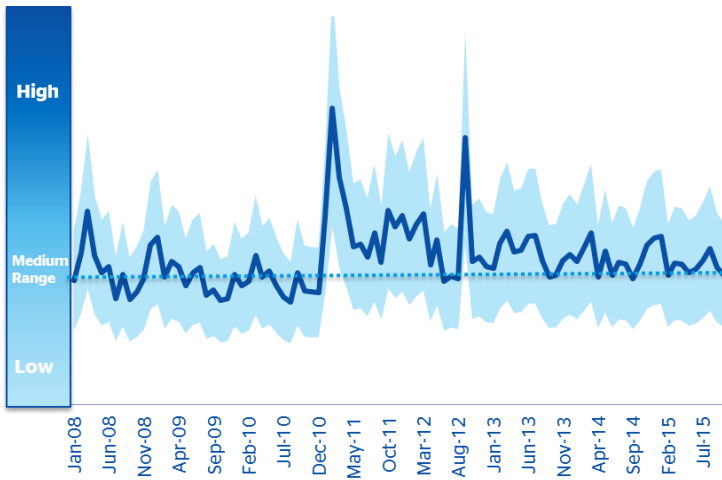
On the other hand, ISIS took advantage of Syrian rebels and loyalist forces’ fights during the month to make its own advances on the Syrian battlefield, **seizing considerable territory in the surrounding area**. It concluded at the end of the month with a **multi-phase ISIS counterattack against the Syrian regime and its allies in Aleppo**, threatening the regime’s control over its primary ground line of communication to the city. On the other hand, **ISIS lost key terrain in Iraq** given the rapid progress made by the Iraqi Security Forces and Iranian proxy militias in Baiji, while they **gained ground in some African countries** such as Libya and Egypt. Moreover, it also exploited the escalating Israel-Palestine conflict.

In Afghanistan, security continued deteriorating, triggering a new step back (after the Syrian and Iraqi) in the US strategy. It led Russia to bolster its military forces in Tajikistan this month, rising instability in the area.

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



**BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Index 2008-15**  
 (Number of protests in the world / Total events in the world)



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

... while social unrest mildly eased

Protests around the world decreased in October (as shown by our BBVA Research world protest intensity index<sup>2</sup>). According to our BBVA Research world protest intensity map, the main key takeaways were the following:

-In regional terms, social unrest kept relaxed in Western Europe. In Emerging Europe and East Asia some tensions remained, while the key hot spots continued to focus on the Middle East and North Africa. Political developments rose social unrest in some Latin American countries.

- In Western Europe, some demonstrations took place during the month in Germany to protest against the TTIP trade deal between US and EU. The refugee crisis also provoked some rallies and confrontations between right and left winds.

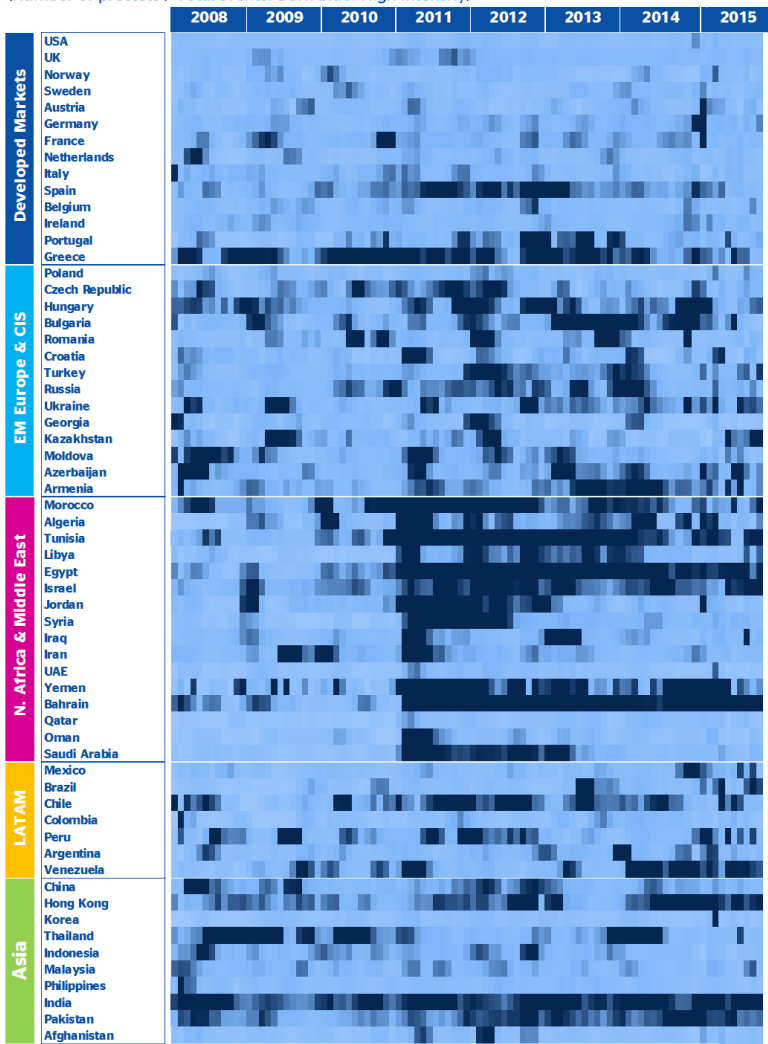
-In Emerging Europe and CIS countries, protests continued in Ukraine given the local elections held at the end of the month. In the same way, tensions also intensified in Turkey due to the Ankara's attack, political fragmentation and uncertainties given elections on 1 November. Social unrest remained high in Kazakhstan and at the Hungary-Serbia border as a result of the refugee crisis. Instability also increased in the Caucasus.

-In North Africa and the Middle East, social unrest is still well alive, especially in North African countries. Demonstrations intensified in Morocco, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt.

- In Latin America, tensions eased in most of the countries, but in Argentina and Venezuela given political uncertainties. In Argentina, elections took place this month where neither presidential candidate gained enough votes to win the total poll. In Venezuela, tensions are also raising in the run-up to the December elections in a context of polarisation and economic deterioration.

- Pressures in Asia continued to be focused on Hong Kong, India and Pakistan, while the rest of the continent remained calm. However, the territorial maritime disputes could trigger instability after recent developments this month when the US navy sent a guided-missile destroyer within 12 nautical miles of Chinese-built artificial islands in disputed waters of the South China Sea. Beijing responded to it saying that the warship had illegally entered waters without Chinese permission and that China will resolutely respond to any country's deliberate provocations.

**BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map Jan 2011 - Oct 2015**  
 (Number of protests / Total events. Dark Blue: High Intensity)



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

Protest Intensity: Low High

In sum, instability continued on the fore in the Middle East and North Africa and it is gaining importance in Central Asia and the Caucasus, given Russian offensives, internal disputes, ISIS advances and the refugee crisis. A comprehensive agreement over Syrian political transition would be key to find a solution to the conflict. The step backs in the US Strategy (Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria) are weakening its position.

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



# Geo-World Monthly Update

## October 2015

Geostrategic Analysis

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