

GEOSTRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Geo-World: Conflict & Social Unrest - Sep Update

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The nationwide ceasefire agreement collapsed and violence once again reached new heights across Syria. Russia intensified its air campaign in Aleppo and Iran strengthened its military support of the Assad regime. The assaults of Russia and the Syrian regime on UN humanitarian aid convoys, in violation of international law, open a dangerous phase and increase risks of a new humanitarian crisis. Increases offensives by ISIS in Iraq led to the reinforcement of security forces across the country. Instability in Ukraine remained high, as it did in North Africa. In Latin America, Western Europe and Asia some hotspots persist, but most of the region remains calm.

Geopolitical conflicts at critical levels during September...

Figure 1
BBVA Research world conflict map 2016
(cumulative number of conflicts/ total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Violence in Aleppo erupted to new heights after the temporary nationwide ceasefire

The cessation of hostilities agreement collapsed and violence once again reached new heights across Syria. Threats of a new humanitarian crisis increased.

ISIS increased its offensives in Iraq

ISIS renewed its attacks in Iraq to weaken ISF forces, which is about to launch an offensive on Mosul.

Fighting continued in eastern Ukraine

Russia deployed additional military capabilities to Crimea and to Ukraine's northern and eastern borders during the month.

The BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index¹ continued at high levels and well above the long-term average during September. The main developments during the month were:

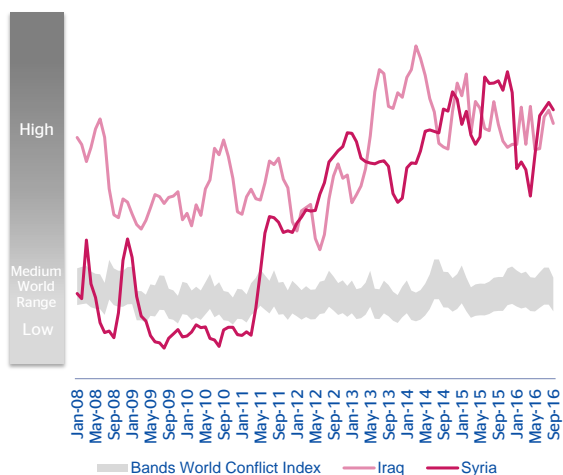
- Violence resumed once again across **Syria** after the nationwide ceasefire agreed by Russia and the US last 9 September. The temporary ceasefire collapsed on 19 September after being used by both sides to consolidate recent gains in Aleppo and to redeploy military resources to prepare for future offensives. After the cessation of the ceasefire, Russia and Iran intensified their military support to the Assad regime in the Aleppo and Idlib Provinces, pushing the conflict to new heights and opening a dangerous phase after denying humanitarian aid to the opposition-held areas, Russia and the Syrian regime attacked UN humanitarian aid convoys in Aleppo, in violation of international law, thereby increasing the threat of a new humanitarian crisis. ISIS also continued to strategically open offensives in northern and western **Iraq**, as well as launching spectacular attacks in central Baghdad, in order to weaken ISF forces and reduce their ability to retake terrain. The Iraqi Army reclaimed the entire city of Fallujah (west of Baghdad) and is about to launch an offensive on Mosul. The US will send 600 more troops to support the operation. At the beginning of the month, the **Turkey backed Free Syrian Army (FSA)** cleansed the entire Syria border of ISIS in the second phase of the operation. In **Yemen**, the Houthi forces unilaterally

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

declared a new government after a Huthi attack on a United Arab Emirates vessel in the strategic Bab al-Mandab strait. The attack provoked condemnation and retaliatory attacks from the Saudi-led coalition.

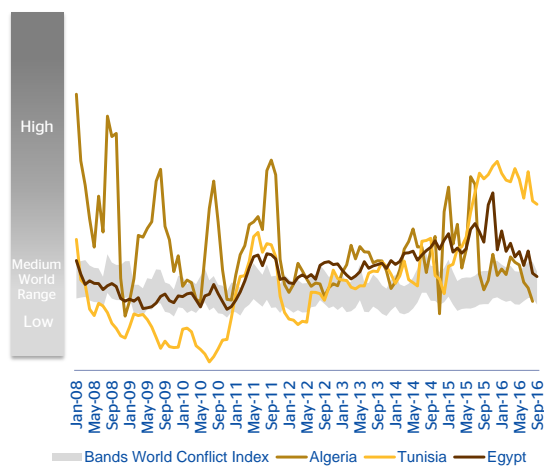
- **In Eastern Europe, fighting eased slightly** during September, but **remains at levels not seen in over a year**. Russia mobilised military forces in Crimea and on Ukraine's northern and eastern borders. The conflict intensity index in the Caucasus decreased during the month, while remained at the same levels in the Balkans.
- **In Asia, tensions about territorial claims in the South China Sea eased** during the month, but there is risk of escalation given the Philippine military exercises with the US Navy in the South China Sea scheduled for this week, which could provoke a confrontation with China. However, **North Korea conflict intensity increased** as the country conducted its fifth underground nuclear test, ignoring threats of heavier sanctions from the US and the UN.

Figure 2
BBVA Research Middle East Conflict Intensity Index 2008-16 (Number of conflicts / Total events)



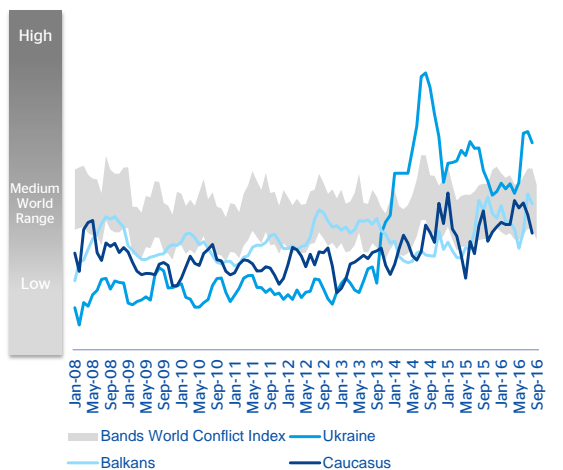
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 3
BBVA Research North Africa Conflict Intensity Index 2008-16 (Number of conflicts / Total events)



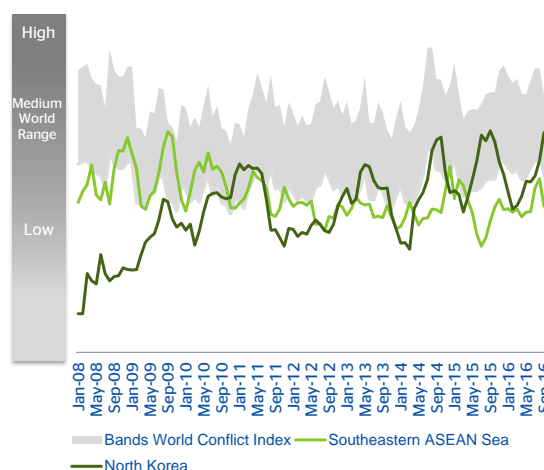
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 4
BBVA Research Eastern Europe Conflict Intensity Index 2008-16 (Number of conflicts / Total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 5
BBVA Research Asia Conflict Intensity Index 2008-16 (Number of conflicts / Total events)

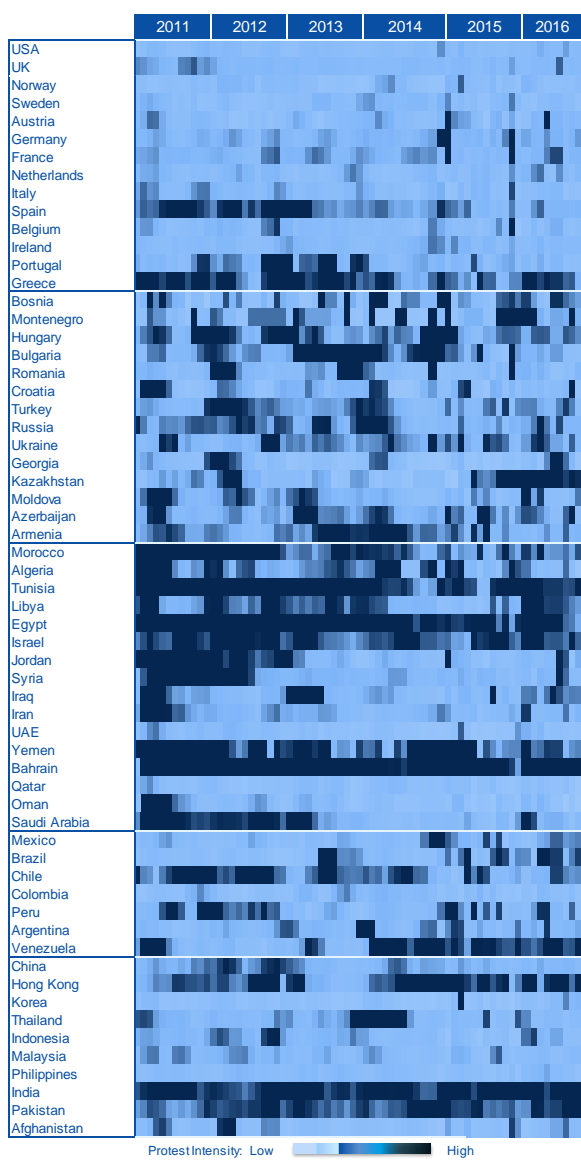


Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

... social unrest also increased during the month

The World Protest Index rose during September (as shown by our BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Index²). According to the BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map, the key takeaway facts were:

Figure 4
BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map Jan 2011 – Sep 2016 (Number of protests / Total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Summing up

The increase of violence in Syria, particularly in Aleppo, after the temporary ceasefire increases risks of a new refugee crisis. The MENA region still displays the highest instability levels, while the rest of the world remained stable with localised hot spots.

- In regional terms, Europe remained calm and demonstrations eased in Emerging Europe. The Middle East and North Africa situations are still worrisome. Social unrest continued in some Latin American countries and East Asia remained stable.
- In Western Europe, the social climate remained calm, tensions continued to ease in Greece, and some mild pressures appeared in Germany after the regional election results, where the populist anti-immigration party Alternative fuer Deutschland (AfD) came second in a state election for the first time.
- In Emerging Europe, the refugee crisis continued pressuring the Balkans. Some tensions surged in Hungary after the referendum on the resettlement of EU migrants, which indicated that society is deeply divided. On the other hand, social unrest eased in Montenegro, Croatia and Turkey.
- In North Africa and the Middle East, social unrest remained critical. In the Middle East, instability strengthened in Tunisia and to lesser extent in Morocco. Demonstrations in Iraq resurged because of a political fight over a cabinet reshuffle.
- In Latin America, social tensions rose in Brazil given local elections; they remained at similar levels in Mexico and Chile. In Colombia the final referendum on the Peace Process led to a surprising victory of the “No”. The social unrest during the peace process remained absent.
- In Asia, social unrest continued to be limited, with Hong Kong, India and Pakistan as the main hot spots.

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

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