

GEOSTRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Geo-World: Conflict & Social Unrest - Oct Update

Álvaro Ortiz / Tomasa Rodrigo

Iraqi security forces (ISF) launched a significant operation to recapture Mosul, which is expected to continue in the coming months given the severe opposition from ISIS. In Syria, military operations escalated in Aleppo and the campaign against Raqqa started. Tensions arose in Eastern Europe given the recent military build-up by both Russia and NATO throughout the area. North Africa remained on the spotlight with tensions on Morocco on the rise and economic collapse in Libya which aside the situation in Middle East will maintain the refugee's crisis well alive. Meanwhile, Latin America, Western Europe and Asia remained calm, despite some hotspots such as Hong Kong social unrest.

Geopolitical conflicts continued to be in the spotlight during October...

Figure 1

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



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Russian military escalation in Aleppo and higher Turkish military involvement

After the temporary ceasefire, further battles are expected in Aleppo, as well as in Raqqa.

ISF made significant gains in Mosul

ISF advanced into the eastern and south-eastern districts of Mosul for the first time since ISIS took it in 2014, signalling the start of a long operation.

Tensions between NATO and Russia rose with regard to Eastern Europe

Recent military build-up by both powers increased tensions in the area.

The BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index¹ decreased in October, but it is still at extreme levels and above the long-term average. The main developments during the month were:

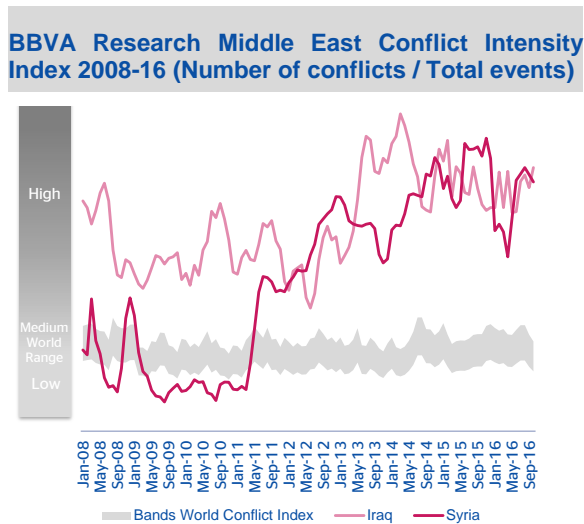
- **Iraqi security forces launched large-scale operations to recapture Mosul** during the month, making significant gains in the area. Although the Coalition is expected to recapture the city in the end, the battle is expected to continue throughout the month given the fierce opposition by ISIS, which is actively defending its territory. In Syria, Russia set conditions for a **military escalation in Aleppo**, following a series of 'humanitarian pauses' during the month. Russia deploys its Admiral Kuznetsov aircraft carrier to Eastern Mediterranean near Syria with a group of warships, signalling intensified offensive against anti-Assad forces. The Syrian armed opposition also launched a significant offensive in the city. The Coalition also launched **further operations against ISIS** in

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

Raqqa, coinciding with the ongoing operations in Mosul. Nonetheless, despite major setbacks for ISIS in its core territory, the group carry out further attacks in Syria and Iraq, as well as in new areas in the neighbouring countries. **Turkish military involvement in Syria and Iraq is also on the rise** and more fierce battles are expected in the following months.

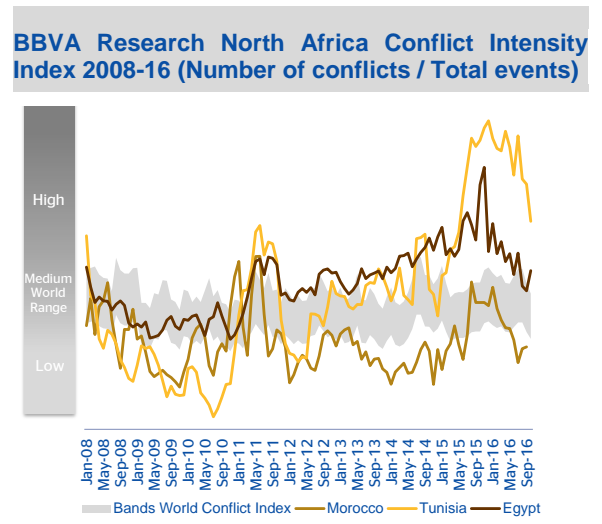
- **In Eastern Europe, tensions increased given the recent military build-up by Russia and NATO** around the Russian borders. NATO's move is a response to Russian deployment in the Baltics as a signal to deter future Russian hostilities on European territory. In Ukraine, **Russian forces continued violating the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine** and opened fire on Ukrainian troop positions in Luhansk, Donetsk and Mariupol.
- **In Asia, tensions surrounding territorial claims in the South China Sea seemed to ease** after the President Duterte's visit to China. China has now stated that its vessels won't prevent Philippine boats from resuming fishing activities in the Scarborough Shoal. After a calmer situation during October, **North Korea could be preparing for another test** shortly, which would be the ninth launch of the missile.

Figure 2



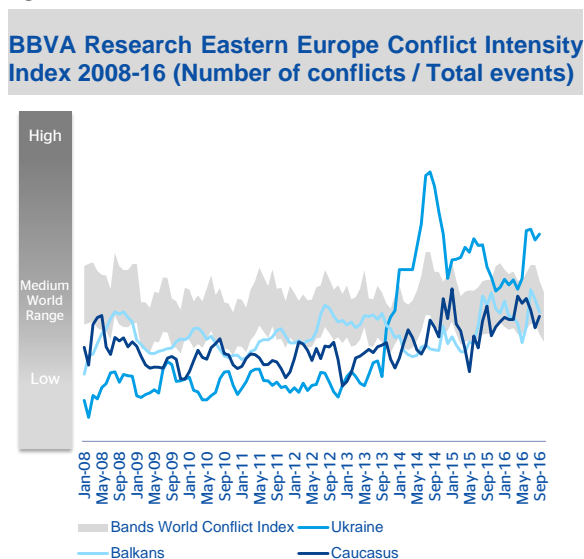
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 3



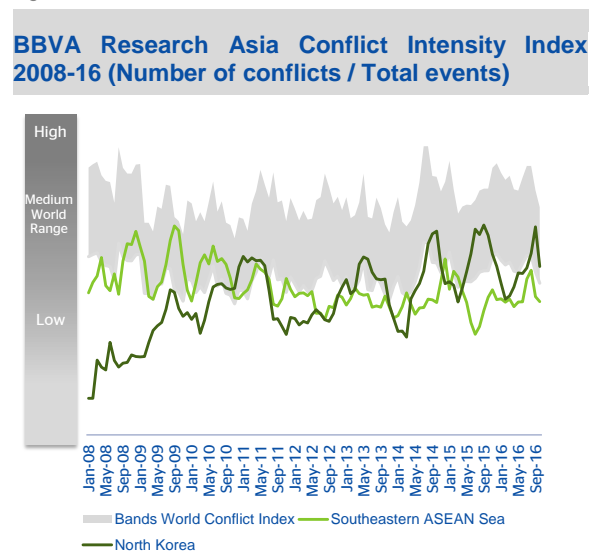
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 4



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 5



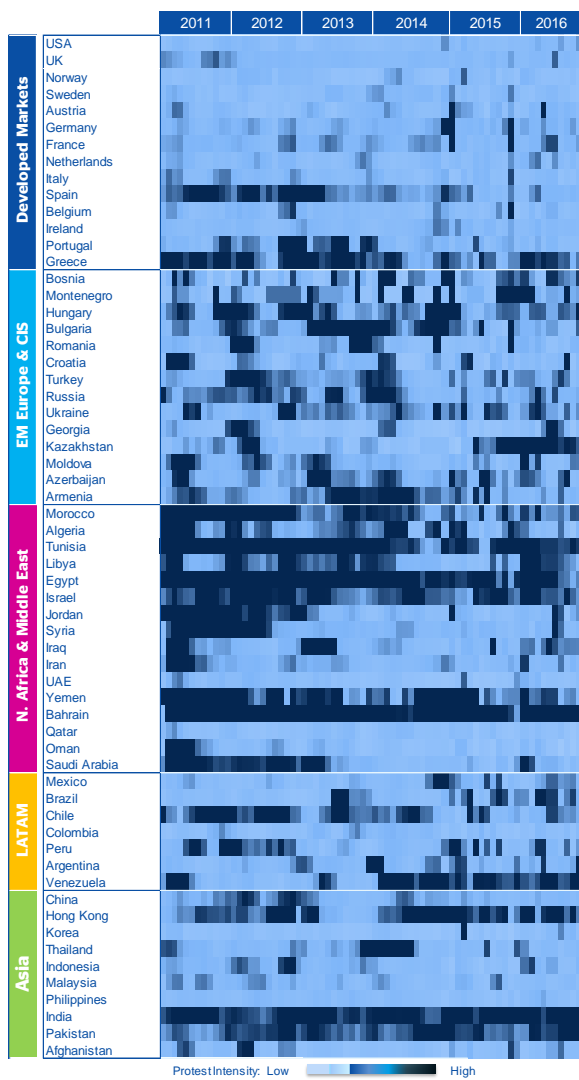
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

... while social unrest mildly eased during the month

The World Protest Index eased during October (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 6

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



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

- In regional terms, tensions rose in US and Eastern Europe, while Western Europe remained calm. Instability in the Middle East and North Africa is still extreme. Social unrest continued in some Latin American countries and East Asia remained stable.

- In Western Europe, Greece continues to be the main hot sport in Europe. Protests also rose in France during the month with police demonstrations regarding the lack of equipment and rising anti-police violence. Demonstrations in US increased given the closeness of the Presidential Elections.

- In Emerging Europe, tensions intensified in some of the Balkan countries and arose in Moldova after its first direct presidential vote in over two decades. The elections have been seen as a battle between those supporting closer ties with Russia or with Europe. The Russian and NATO military build-up in Eastern Europe increased instability.

- In North Africa and the Middle East, social unrest remained worrisome. In North Africa, instability strengthened in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. Former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki continues to shape the political landscape in Iraq. Political landscape in Iraq continued worsening the situation.

- In Latin America, social tensions eased off in Brazil, Mexico and Chile, while they rose in Argentina, Venezuela and Peru.

- In Asia, the situation remained calm. Protests eased off in Hong Kong during October, but erupted again at the beginning of November, while remaining high in India and Pakistan.

Summing up

Fierce fighting could be expected in the short-term in the Middle East given the Coalition offensives in Syria and Iraq, ISIS' opposition and the greater Turkish involvement in the area. Pressures increased in Eastern Europe after recent Russian and NATO military movements, while they calmed in the South China Sea. US presidential elections came into the spotlight, weaking up some tensions and uncertainties in the near future.

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

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