

Geo-World: Conflict & Protest July

GEOSTRATEGIC ANALYSIS

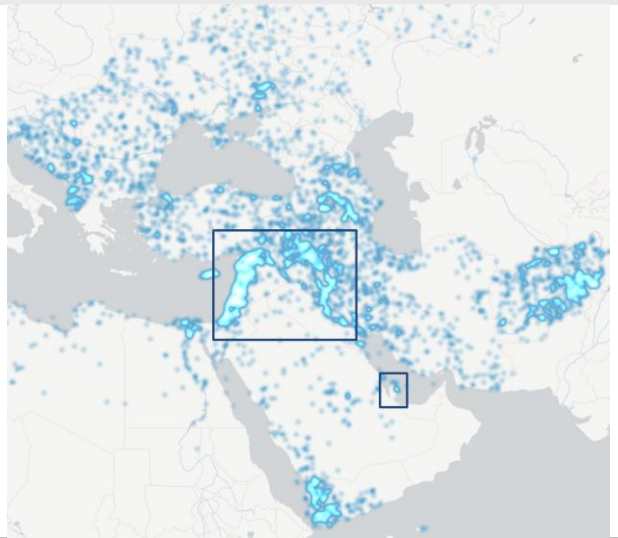
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July 2017

North Korea tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles during the month (on 4th and 28th July), increasing tensions and security concerns in the region, so that even China has needed to increase reinforcements near its border with North Korea. US intensified its pressure on China to take a more active role in the crisis after the second long-range missile test at the end of the month. China has increased its military presence in Asia whilst it could trigger new round of crises with neighboring countries. Meanwhile, US approved a new round of sanctions against Russia. As retaliation, Russia ordered to cut US diplomatic staff by 755 people and plans to take further measures, escalating tension between both countries. The US is also planning to impose new sanctions against North Korea and Iran. The Qatar crisis is no longer escalating thanks to new diplomatic initiatives. The situation in Idlib is still tense and its escalation benefits no one. Social unrest increases in some Latin American countries, while it has been kept contained in Europe and most Asian countries.

Tensions between North Korea - US and Russia - US are on the spotlight

Figure 1 BBVA Research Conflict Intensity World Map 2017



Source: Garanti – BBVA Research & GDELT

North Korea tested two long-range ballistic missiles during the month. US, China, Japan and South Korea condemned the action.

The last missile more advanced than the first one, with a range that seems to reach major US cities.

New US sanctions to Russia and Russian decision to cut its US diplomatic staff as retaliation.

US approved new sanctions against Russia. As a response, Russia ordered to cut 755 US diplomatic staff and it plans to seize two US diplomatic properties.

The diplomatic rift over Qatar eased with new series of diplomatic initiatives

The Saudi Arabia-led bloc dropped the number of items on their list of demands for Qatar from 13 to 6.

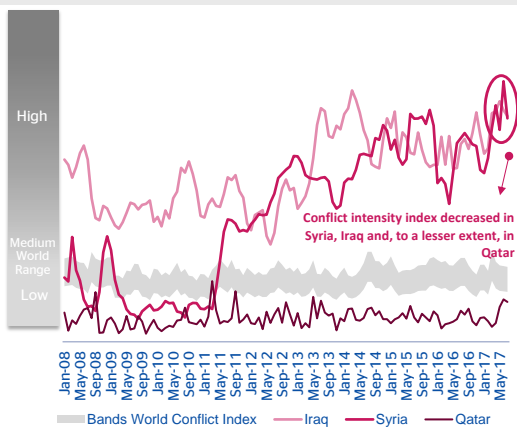
The BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index¹ slightly decreased during July. The main developments during the month were:

- **In Asia, North Korea launched two intercontinental ballistic missile tests;** the second of them seems to have a range enough to reach major US cities. Thus, tensions escalated between both countries, increasing the security concerns. US intensified its pressure on China to take a more active role in the crisis. Meanwhile, China strengthened its border with North Korea for security reasons. China increased its warnings to Vietnam regarding the latter's drilling activities in the **South China** Sea. Meanwhile, India and China entered new tensions over a disputed border area. China has issued a warning to India to withdraw its troops from the area. India is now seeking a diplomatic solution, but it also increased its military cooperation with the US.

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

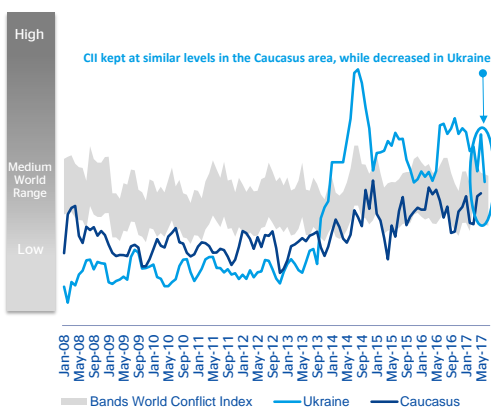
- **Tensions between US and Russia escalated** after US signed a legislation imposing a new round of **sanctions against Russia**. As retaliation, Russia ordered to cut US diplomatic staff in Russia by 755 people, it plans to seize two US diplomatic properties among other further measures, increasing risks of further escalation of tensions.
- The **Saudi Arabia**-led bloc made another alternative move in the **Qatar diplomatic rift** and their list of demands has been reduced. In fact, they have also withdrawn the idea that Turkish base in Qatar is an obstacle. Turkey continued to send new armoured vehicles, artillery and soldiers. Meanwhile, Erdogan made a Gulf visit to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar for mediation. All sides have accepted that there need to be attempts to ease tensions.
- **Idlib**, the province in western Syria near the Turkish border in which extremist rebels are heavily present, **heated up**. The province was under the de-escalation zone plan that Turkey-Iran-Russia have signed. However, two rebel groups that have links with al-Qaeda and extremist al-Nusra were fiercely fighting near Turkish border. The operation in Raqqa against ISIS is continuing, but the liberation of the city would not be easy. Meanwhile, **clashes in Jerusalem** between Israeli security forces and Palestinians became an international verbal crisis amid Israel's decision to close the holy compound because two Israeli police officers were shot on July 14. Recently, Israel removed all security measures and Muslim clerics in Jerusalem told Muslims to return to holy site to pray.

Figure 2 BBVA Research Middle East Conflict Intensity Index 2008-17 (Number of conflicts / Total events)



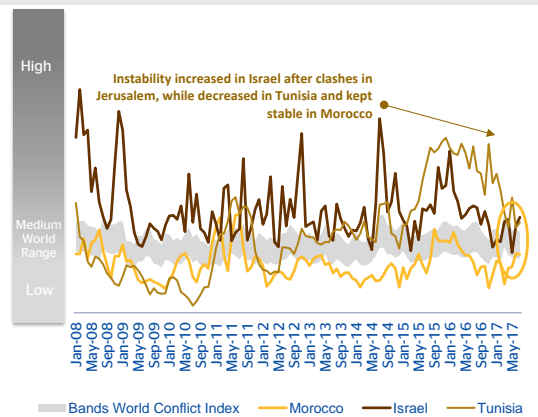
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 4 BBVA Research Eastern Europe Conflict Intensity Index 2008-17 (Number of conflicts / Total events)



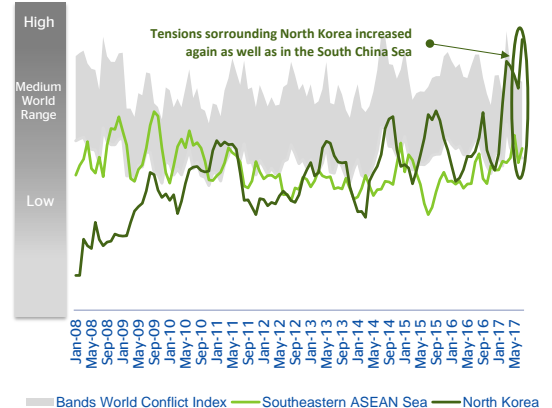
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 3 BBVA Research North Africa Conflict Intensity Index 2008-17 (Number of conflicts / Total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 5 BBVA Research Asia Conflict Intensity Index 2008-17 (Number of conflicts / Total events)

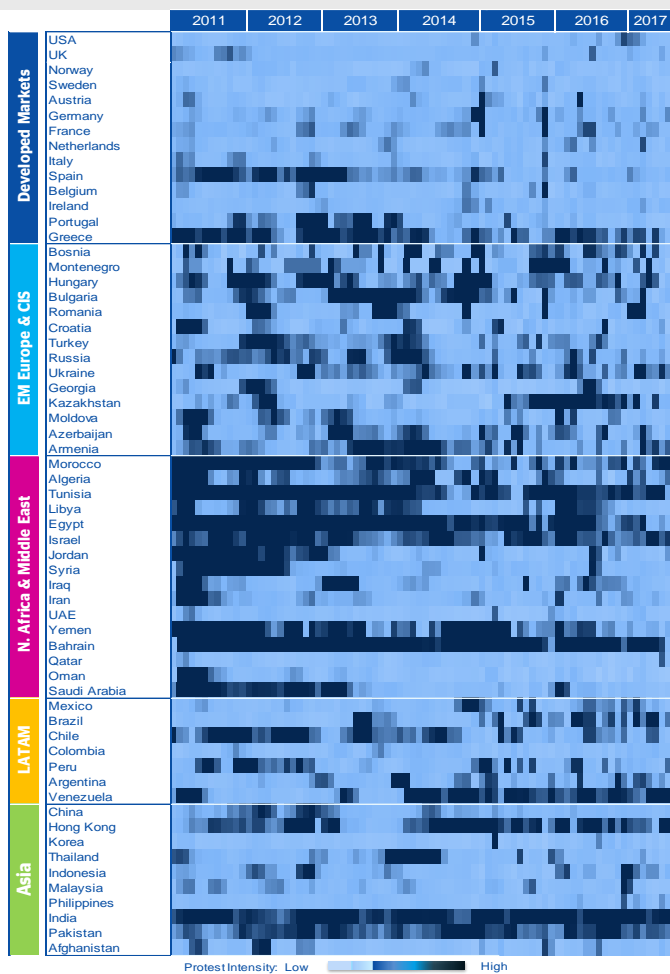


Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Social unrest eased off during the month

The World Protest Index increased slightly during July (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 – July 2017
(Number of protests / Total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

- In regional terms, Europe remained calm. In Eastern Europe, social unrest eased off in most of the countries, while the Middle East and North Africa continued at worrisome levels of instability. Protests intensified in some Latin American countries, while they kept at similar levels than previous month in Asia:
- In Europe, protests mildly rose in Germany given the G-20 Summit and in Poland against the controversial judicial reform, while they relaxed in the UK and Greece.
- In Emerging Europe, social tensions increased in Armenia, while they eased off in Russia and Ukraine after last month's rise.
- In North Africa and the Middle East, social tensions rose in Israel. Protests for greater governance remained at high levels in Morocco and increased in Tunisia. On the other hand, social unrest eased off in Qatar and Bahrain.
- In Latin America, protests rose in Venezuela after constituent elections took place, as well as in Brazil and Peru.
- In Asia, Hong Kong and India remained the key hot spots in the region, while social tensions eased off in Philippines and mildly in Pakistan.

Summary

North Korea increased security threats after its two long-range missile tests this month, increasing tensions with US, which also rose US pressure for higher Chinese involvement in the crisis. New US sanctions against Russia and Russian response to it also increased tensions between both countries. The Qatar diplomatic rift has been eased off. Chinese military activity in the region is on an increasing track. Meanwhile, Syrian war continues with fierce fighting in Idlib and Raqqa.

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

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