

# Geo-World: Conflict & Protest September

## GEOSTRATEGIC ANALYSIS

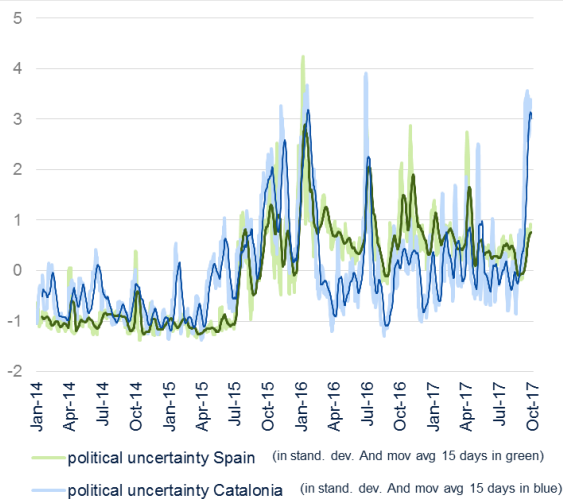
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Elections in Germany and French President Macron’s proposal for an increasing cooperation among the EU member states were the hot topics in Europe together with the referendum vote in Catalonia. The North Korea crisis continues in the spotlight, the US announced that its sole intention to find a diplomatic solution despite the showing off military power for coercive purposes and containment. The Kurdish independency referendum in Iraq rose uncertainty in the region as Turkey, Iraq and Iran strongly opposes the idea but the Kurdish Regional Government insists on going towards the independency. Analyst and neighbors will focus now on the roadmap to independence amid diplomatic, economic and potential military consequences.

### Catalonian referendum and Germany elections are the main hot topics in Europe

Figure 1 Political Uncertainty in Spain & Catalonia



Source: BBVA Research and www.gdelt.org

#### In Europe, Angela Merkel reserved her post as the Chancellor after the elections. Increasing tensions in Catalonia on the Independence referendum day

Angela Merkel’s CDU earned the highest vote and became the leading party but uncertainty about the coalition remains. Instability rose in Catalonia after the referendum.

#### Kurdish Referendum resulted with ‘Yes’ and triggered dispute in the region with too many uncertainties

In the Kurdish independency referendum, 92% of the voters said ‘Yes’. Regional blockage could create uncertainties.

#### US-North Korea war of words follows an uncertain path

Both the US and North Korea escalated the tone of the war of words. Diplomatic channels are still open.

The BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index<sup>1</sup> decreased by second consecutive month during September. The main developments during the month were:

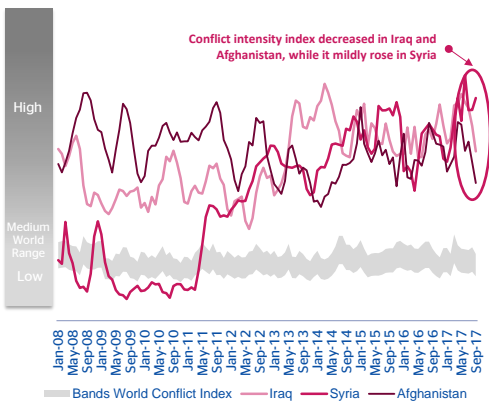
- **In Europe, Germany elections were resulted with the victory of Angela Merkel’s CDU/CSU coalition.** The support to CDU/CSU has decreased compared to previous federal elections (from 41.5% to 32.9%). **The nationalist right AfD entered the parliament by earning 13.1%.** As Mr. Schulz announced that his SPD would not enter into coalition and no other political party wants to cooperate with the AfD, Mrs. Merkel has two options: Either forming a coalition with the liberal FDP (10.5%) and Greens (8.9%) or forming a coalition with the FDP by the support of Greens which would not enter into the cabinet. How would the coalition be formed is critical for the future of Europe as French President Macron proposed series of reforms for greater European cooperation. In Catalonia, riot police clashed with voters in an attempt to stop Catalonia’s independence referendum voting.
- **In Asia, North Korean crisis continued in the spotlight, but the risk of escalation has been contained.** China’s largest banks banned North Koreans from opening new accounts in order to shrink the financial flows to

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

North Korea. Besides, Beijing has ordered all North Korean firms in the country to shut down their operations within few months in accordance with UN sanction resolutions. Yet, before the crisis had escalated a bit after North Korea moved airplanes and defenses on its east coast after the United States dispatched bombers to Korean Peninsula in late September. **Nonetheless, US Secretary of State Mr. Mattis stated that US wants to solve North Korea crisis diplomatically.** Thus, the US military manoeuvres in the Korean Peninsula must be an **act of coercive diplomacy** (a type of diplomacy, with which an actor could force the other to act according to its own interests), **not an intention to escalate the conflict.**

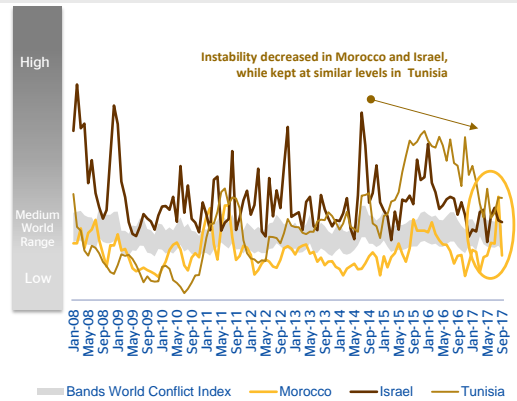
- **The Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq (KRG)** introduced an independency referendum on September 25 and the results are in favour of 'Yes' with 92%. Turkey, Iran and Iraq perceive the referendum as null and illegitimate and announced military and economic measures that would contain the KRG. Iraqi Prime Minister asked the KRG to cancel the referendum or otherwise Baghdad would not be in a dialogue with Arbil. **The US also opposes the referendum but its opposition is mostly to the timing of the referendum as fight against ISIS is still ongoing in Iraq.** The future of the crisis is uncertain. Meanwhile, **Turkey-Iran-Russia agreed on de-escalation plan in Idlib to cleanse the province of extremist groups.**

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



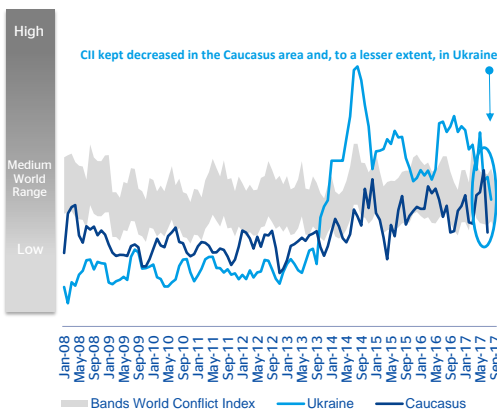
Source: [www.dgelt.org](http://www.dgelt.org) & BBVA Research

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



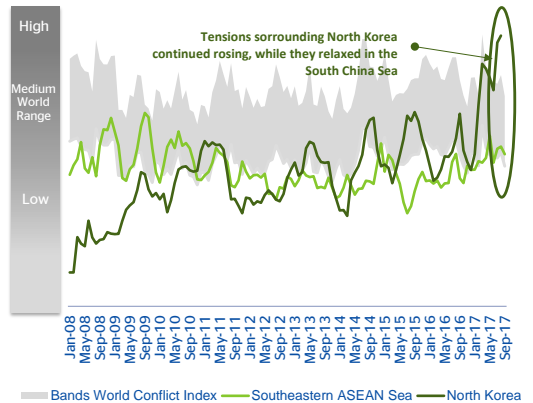
Source: [www.dgelt.org](http://www.dgelt.org) & BBVA Research

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



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

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

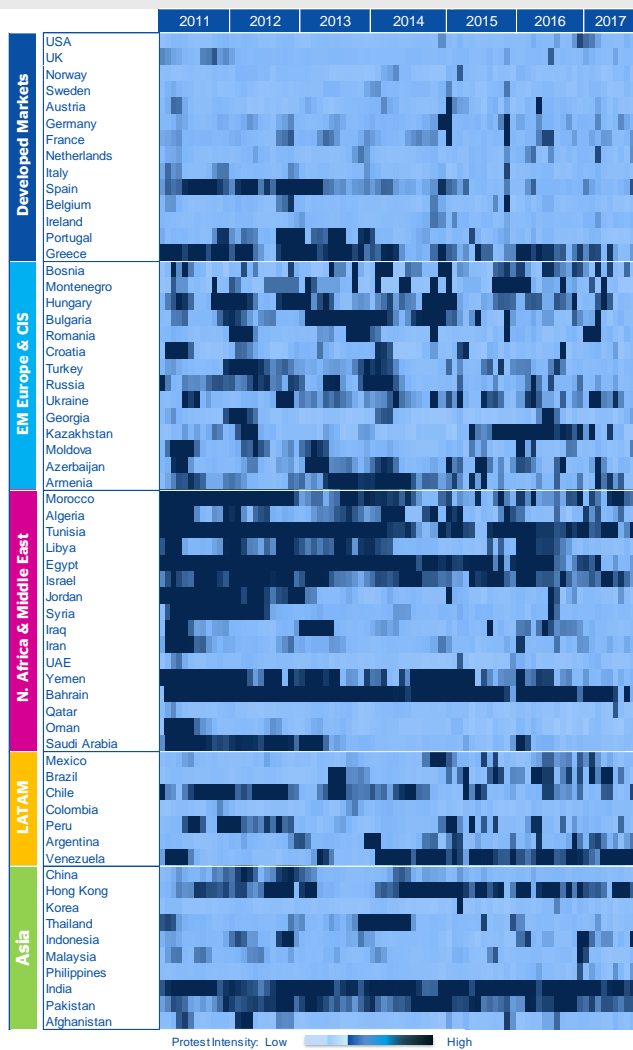


Source: [www.dgelt.org](http://www.dgelt.org) & BBVA Research

## Social unrest eased off in September

The World Protest Index decreased during September (as shown by our BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Index<sup>2</sup>). According to the BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map, the key takeaway facts were:

**Figure 6** BBVA Research World Protest Intensity Map Jan 2011 – September 2017 (Number of protests / Total events)



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

## Summary

European political arena focused the world attention in September given the German elections and uncertainties about how the coalition will be formed and the Catalanian political uncertainty after the referendum vote. North Korea crisis remained as one of the main world threats, as well as the regional instability in Middle East, which increased uncertainties after the Kurdish independency referendum results.

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

- In regional terms, some tensions arose in Europe while social unrest continued in a calmer situation since some months ago. The Middle East and North Africa remained as the main world hot spots. Protests eased off in some Latin American countries, while they emerged in others. In Asia, social unrest increased in some countries:
- In Europe, social tensions emerged in Spain with the Catalan Referendum and political uncertainty. In France, protests rose over the new Labor Reforms. Some social noise persisted in Germany given the elections.
- In Emerging Europe, social tensions rose in Moldova against its new electoral law and Georgia, while they eased off in Ukraine and Bosnia.
- In North Africa and the Middle East, social unrest rose in Tunisia against corruption amnesty. Protests in Morocco remained at high levels, while they eased off in Bahrain and Israel.
- In Latin America, protests rose in Argentina and Chile. Venezuela is still one of the key hot spots in the region.
- In Asia, anti-communism protests sharply rose in Indonesia. Protest also rose in Philippines against President Duterte. Social unrest remained at high levels in Hong Kong, India and Pakistan.

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