

Geo-World: Conflict & Protest November

GEOSTRATEGIC ANALYSIS

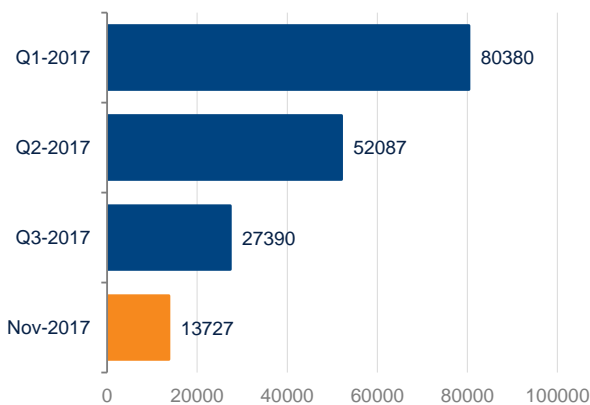
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November 2017

ISIS lost all of its urban strongholds in Iraq and Syria. Meanwhile, the US is increasing its military presence in the region. Saudi Arabia's crown prince Mohammad bin Salman consolidates ruling powers despite it creates political noise in the country. Iran's increasing influence in the Middle East and Saudi Arabia's determination to contain Iranian aspirations increased uncertainties. In Asia, North Korea's ICBM launch, which was more advanced than the previous ones, created geopolitical imbalances and increased uncertainty.

ISIS lost all of its strongholds, Saudi Arabia is going through political changes

Figure 1 ISIS controlled territories in Syria (km²)



Source: syriacivilwarmap & BBVA Research

ISIS lost all its urban areas in Syria and Iraq

ISIS has lost all of its strongholds and its ability to impose a serious challenge for Syria and Iraq diminished dramatically.

Saudi Arabia – Iran rift resurfaced again

Saudi Crown Prince consolidates power; Iran increases its influence in the Middle East.

North Korea tested a new nuclear-capable ICBM

At the end of November, North Korea fired a nuclear-capable ICBM, which flew higher and longer than the older ones.

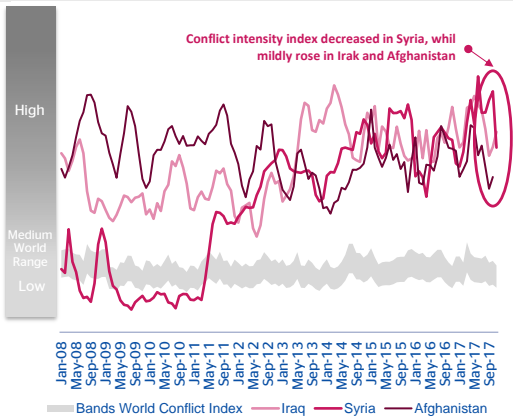
The BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index¹ slightly decreased during November. The main developments during the month were:

- **After U.S. backed forces have captured Raqqa and Deir-az-Zour from ISIS and Iraqi army seized the last urban town held by ISIS near Syria**, ISIS now only controls a deserted area near Iraq and Syria borders. Iraqi army continues to push towards remaining ISIS-held areas. Nonetheless, it could be interpreted that the war against ISIS is about to come to an end on the ground. However, there are many ISIS fighters returned their home countries, who could impose a security risk. According to Soufan Center, 5,600 citizens or residents from 33 countries who have gone to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS have returned their home so far. Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, U.K., Russia, France and Germany are some of the home countries.
- **The US-North Korea rift was calm during November but North Korea's recent ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile) test at the end of the month rang the alarm bells.** The test came after President Trump had put North Korea back on a list of "state sponsors terrorism". The fired missile flew higher and longer than the previous missiles and landed in the Sea of Japan. U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis expressed his concerns on the technical advances of the test. **The U.S. and South Korea began a joint air exercise on the Korean peninsula involving 230 aircraft and 12,000 American troops.**

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

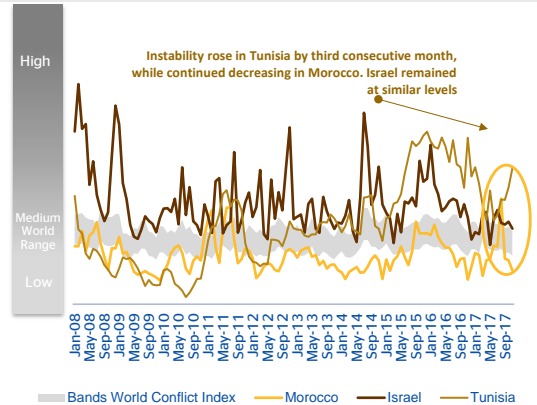
- As Lebanon's Prime Minister Hariri announced his resignation from his post whilst he was in Saudi Arabia, militias close to Iran fired a missile to Riyadh from Yemen and Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) consolidates the power, **the dispute between Tehran and Riyadh heated up during the month, both of which have interests in Yemen's proxy conflict.** Furthermore, the exchange of words intensified. Some princes in Saudi Arabia who controls the wealth, construction sector and the National Guards (a military organization in Saudi Arabia whose aim is to defend the King and the Holy Sites) have been arrested and toppled down. Meanwhile, Lebanese PM Hariri returned Lebanon. The Lebanese President has not accepted his resignation. **Hariri continued to blame Hezbollah on regional crises.** Hezbollah is operating in Syria and has close ties with Tehran. **Iran's increasing influence in the region and Saudi Arabia's strong opposition to Iranian aspirations continue to put the situation in an uncertain path.** Moreover, the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson may step down as early as January and Mike Pompeo would probably replace him, who seems to have a more hard-line stance in North Korea.

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



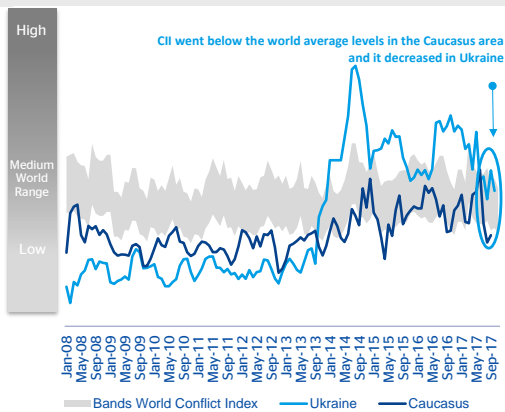
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

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



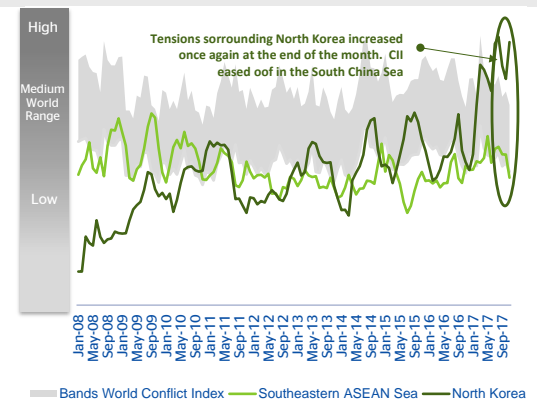
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 4 BBVA Research Eastern Europe 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)

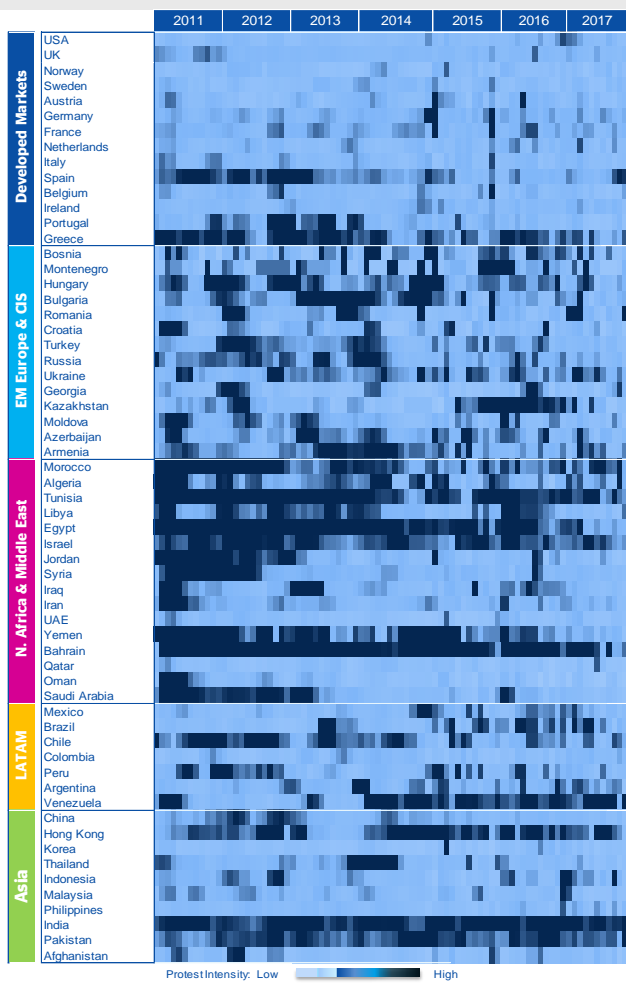


Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Social unrest slightly rose during November

The World Protest Index slightly rose during the month (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 – November 2017
(Number of protests / Total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

- In regional terms, tensions in Europe continued contained, as well as in Eastern Europe with some particular hot spots. Social instability remained at high levels in North Africa and the Middle East. In Latin America, protests generally decreased in most of countries. Asia remained at similar levels of social unrest:
- In Europe, uncertainty remains in Spain, although it eased off with respect to the previous month in waiting for the Catalanian elections on December 21st. In Belgium, some social noise also arose. In Greece anti-government protests rose.
- In Emerging Europe, protests against judicial reform plans in corruption rose in Romania. Social unrest rose in Armenia with the new draft law on military service, while eased off in Ukraine and Georgia.
- In North Africa and the Middle East, instability rose in Egypt after the deadliest-ever attack in the country. Social unrest rose in Libya and Bahrain while eased off in Morocco and Algeria.
- In Latin America, protests against government rose in Venezuela and eased off in Chile.
- In Asia, India and Pakistan are the key hot spots in the region with continued protests. Social tensions eased off in Hong Kong.

Summary

ISIS continues losing territorial control in 2017, while US is increasing its military presence in the region with a positive impact in terms of regional security. However, the risk regarding foreign fighters returning their home countries could continue. Saudi Arabia's political noise and Riyadh-Tehran rift created uncertainties during the month. North Korea's recent missile test increased the alarm to a higher level in Asia with increasing risks and potential spillovers.

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

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