

Geo-World: Conflict & Protest March

GEOSTRATEGIC ANALYSIS

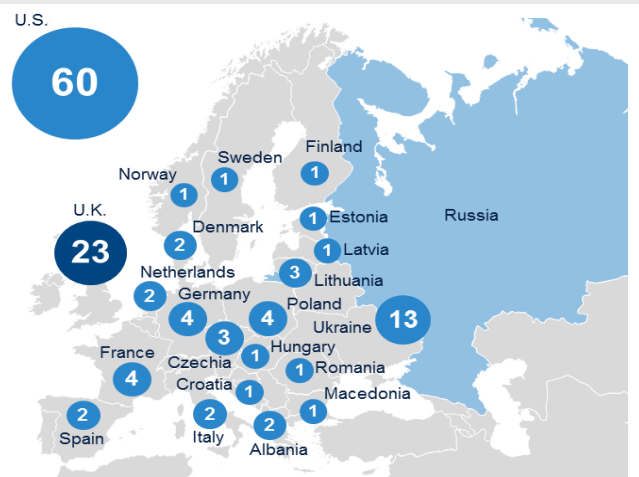
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March 2018

Western nations rose up against alleged Russian nerve agent attack in the U.K. and expelled some of Moscow’s diplomats from their soils. The Kremlin also retaliated in the diplomatic arena. Meanwhile, the new round of diplomatic talks in Korean Peninsula increased the hopes for a permanent solution. Leaders are ready to contain the risks. In March, the Middle Eastern agenda heats up once again with increasing military postures, protests and uncertain U.S. agenda with regards to regional disputes. In terms of protests, tensions sharply rose in the Middle East given Palestinians mass protests and clashes near Israel border. Social unrest also increased in some Eastern European and Latin American countries. Developed countries and Asia remain contained.

Western Countries Retaliate Against Russia by Expelling its Diplomats

Figure 1 The number of Expelled Russian Diplomats



Source: BBVA Research & Mapbox

More than 100 Russian diplomats were expelled

Many western countries expelled Russian diplomats in response to the nerve agent attack in the U.K.

Dialogue with North Korea increased hopes for a solution

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said that he is committed to denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

Trump reshuffled Secretary of State and Security Aid

President Trump fired Rex Tillerson and H.R. McMaster, named Mike Pompeo as Secretary of State and John Bolton as National Security Advisor.

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

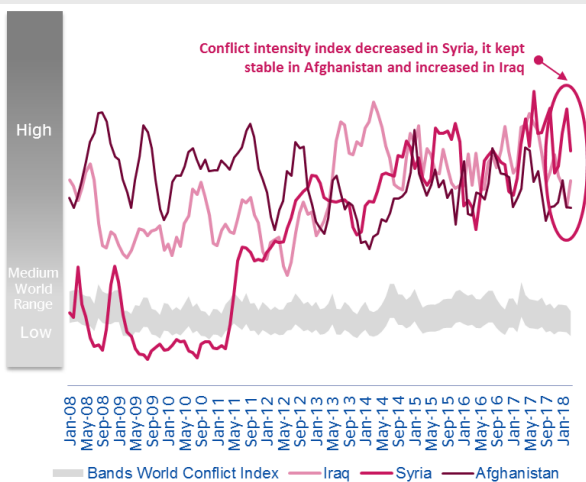
- On March 4, Sergei Skripal a former Russian spy, who was serving as a double agent, was poisoned by a ‘nerve agent’ (chemical attack) in the UK. Prime Minister May stressed that the nerve agent was developed by Russia and vowed retaliation against the aggression. Russian officials denied the allegations. **To show solidarity with the U.K., many western states expelled Russian diplomats from their countries** (Figure 1). For instance, the U.S. expelled 60 Russian officials and closed Russian consulate in Seattle. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov said his country would close U.S. consulate in St. Petersburg. U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis told that “they’ve chosen to seek a different relationship with the NATO nations. **Russia has chosen to be a strategic competitor, even to the point of reckless activity.**”
- The hopes for a sustainable resolution in Korean Peninsula have** increased (as our index shows in Figure 5). North Korean leader Kim Jong Un paid an unannounced visit to China and met with President Xi Jinping. **It was reported that Kim Jong Un said that North Korea is committed to denuclearisation of the Peninsula** and willing to hold a summit with President Trump. U.S. President said that the meantime maximum sanctions and

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

pressure must be maintained at all cost. Yet, he also added to look forward to their meeting. In addition, South Korean officials told that Kim Jong Un would meet South Korean leader at a border village on April 27.

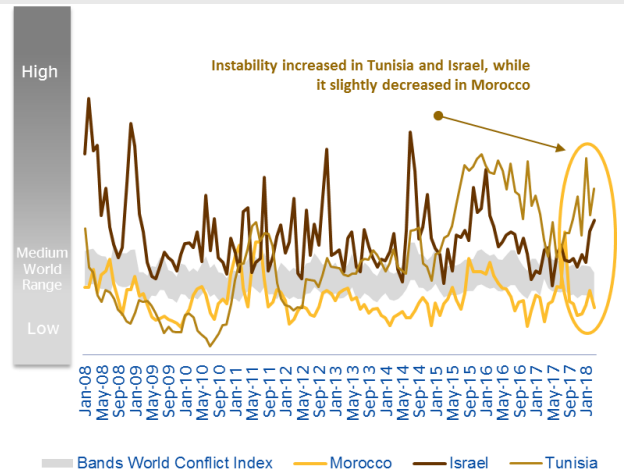
- President Trump reshuffled his Secretary of State and National Security Advisor.** These are agenda-setter posts in U.S. administration. **New Secretary Mike Pompeo and National Security Advisor John Bolton could have a tighter stance with regard to Iran and foreign policy formulation. How they conduct the agenda when they take the office is uncertain.** It is well known that President Trump is pushing for a more deterrent Iran nuclear deal. He threatened to quit from the deal on May 12, if that option fails. Iranian officials said that if the U.S. withdraws they would exit too. **Meanwhile, President Trump announced that the U.S. would withdraw from Syria very soon.** Departments of Defense and State said that they have no information about such a plan. In fact, Russian Foreign Ministry warned the U.S. Army has sent heavy weapons to a southeastern Syrian base. In addition, Turkish President Erdogan told Turkey has started preparations to liberate Syria's northern border provinces neighbouring Turkey, controlled by YPG (Syrian Kurdish militia). On the other hand, Turkey-U.S. diplomatic talks continue to contain the disputes. Progress is on track.

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



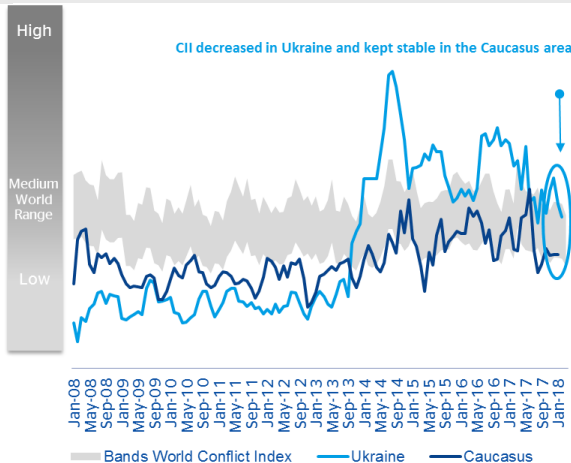
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

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



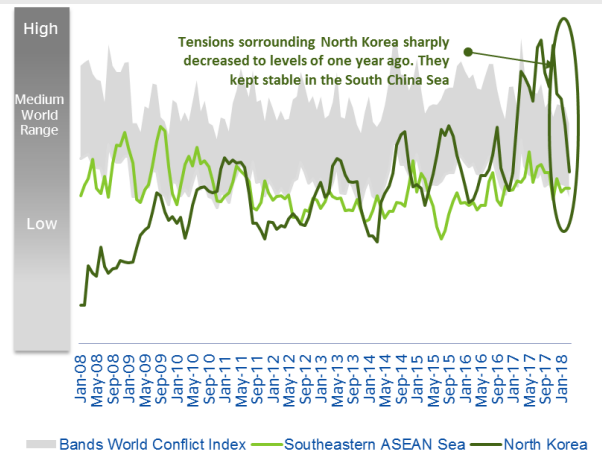
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

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



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

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

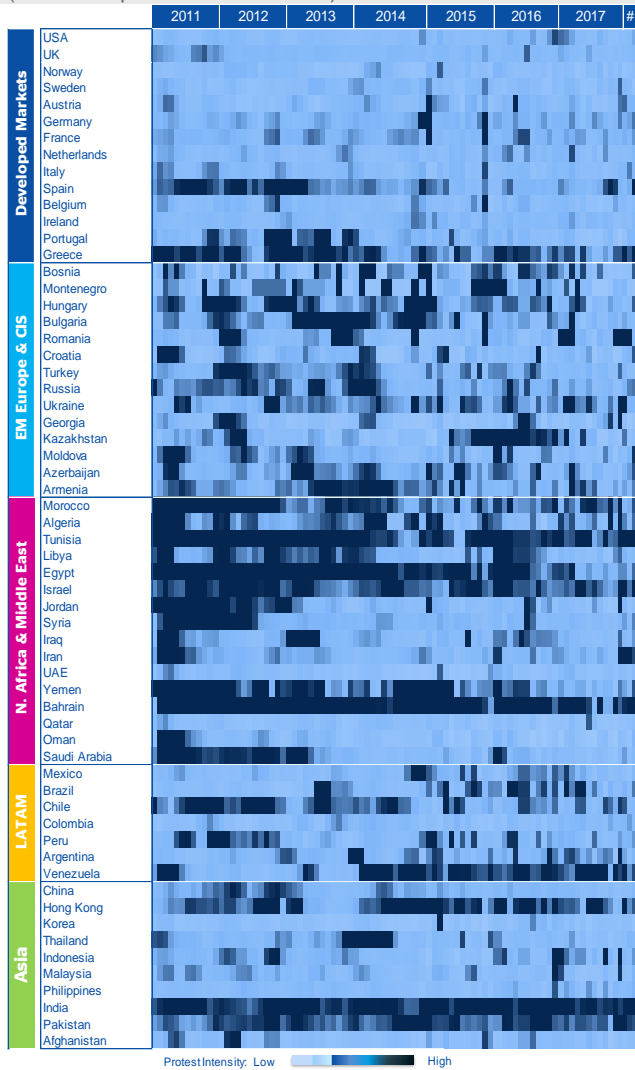


Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Social unrest index rose during the month

The World Protest Index slightly increased during March (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 – March 2018
(Number of protests / Total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

- In regional terms, tensions remain low in Western Europe, while in the Eastern, they seem to be slightly increasing. Social instability rose in North African and the Middle East. In Latin America, social unrest increased in some countries. The situation in Asia carries on from last month:
- In Europe, social noise increased in Spain, and slightly in Germany and France. In Greece, protests remain due to the FYROM naming controversy.
- In Emerging Europe, tensions in Bosnia, Hungary Croatia, Moldova and Azerbaijan, while they decreased in Romania. The fire in a shopping mall, with several fatalities, in Russia also raised our social unrest index.
- In North Africa and the Middle East, tensions were sparked when 15 Palestinians were gunned down by Israeli soldiers during mass protests demanding the right of Palestinian refugees of Arab-Israeli War to return to their land. Four Palestinians were killed.
- In Latin America, protests remain high in Venezuela during the month, when 78 inmates died on prison fire. Social unrest also increased in Brazil and slightly in Argentina.
- In Asia, India and Pakistan are the key hot spots in the region with continued protests. Hong Kong suffered mild social tensions as election process comes to an end.

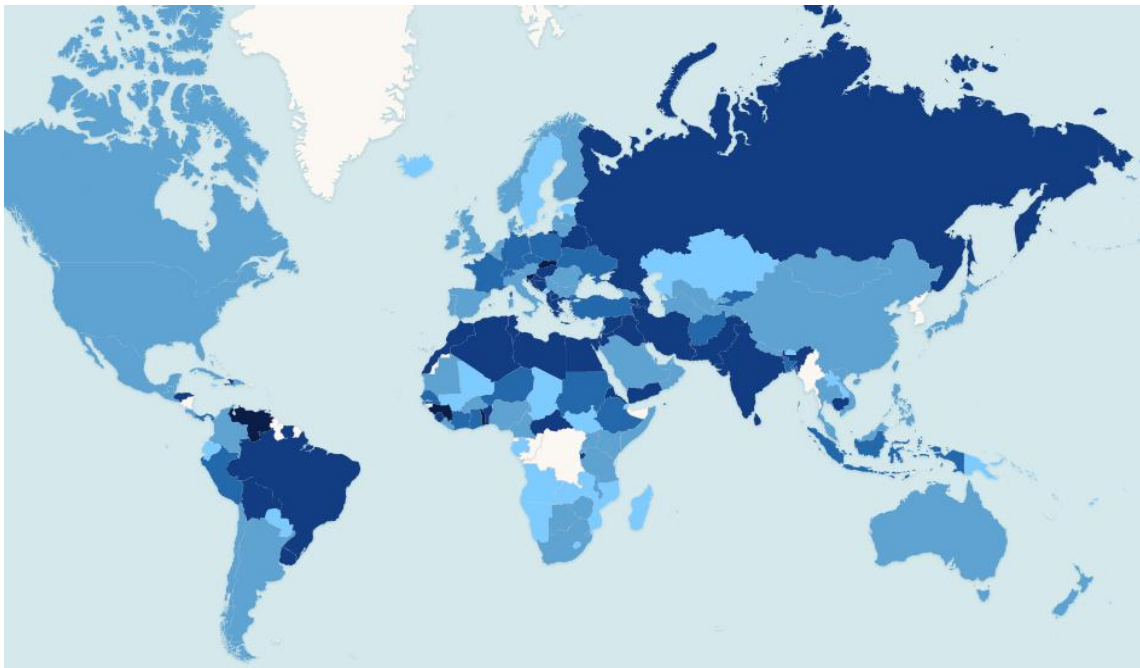
Summary

Russia’s alleged aggressive actions in British soil triggered new diplomatic crisis between western nations including the U.S. and Moscow. This was the hottest topic of the foreign policy agenda across the globe. North Korean crisis has been contained to neutral levels and diplomacy gained ground. The uncertainties regarding Middle East are still well alive. Security situation in the region deteriorates. Social unrest increased in some Eastern European countries, as well as in the Middle East and North Africa. Developed countries and Asia remain contained.

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

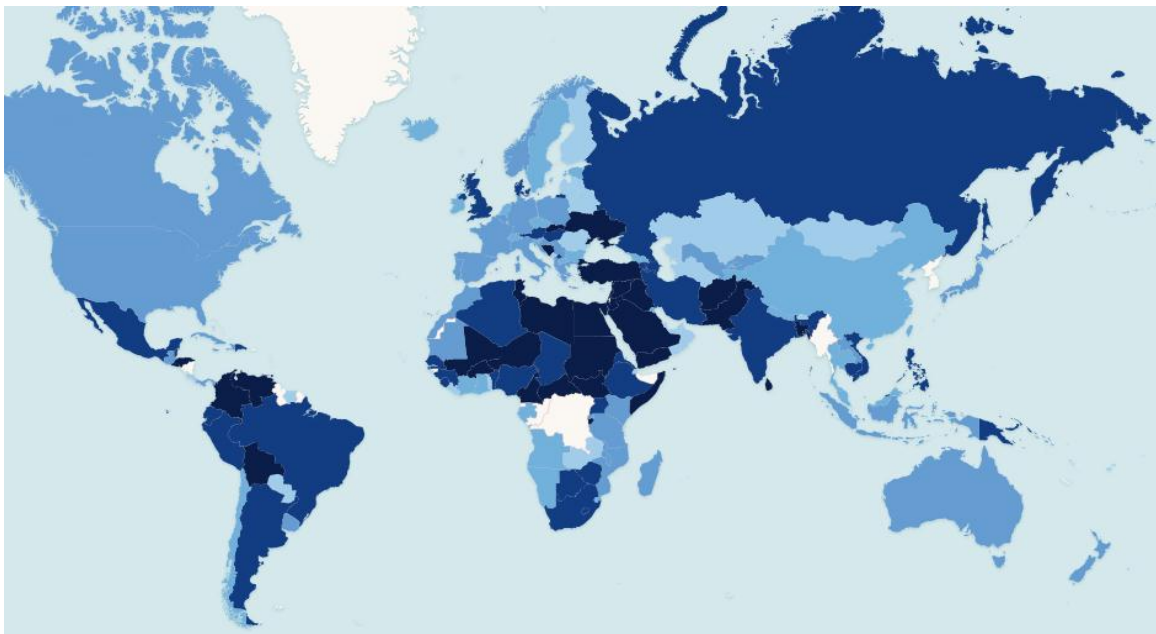
ANNEX

Figure 7 BBVA Research World Protest Map March 18 (Number of events of protest / Total events by country. Darker colors indicate higher values of the index)



Source: BBVA Research and www.gdelt.org

Figure 8 BBVA Research World Conflict Map March 18 (Number of events of conflict/ Total events by country. Darker colors indicate higher values of the index)



Source: BBVA Research and www.gdelt.org

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