

GEOSTRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Geo-World: Conflict & Protest January

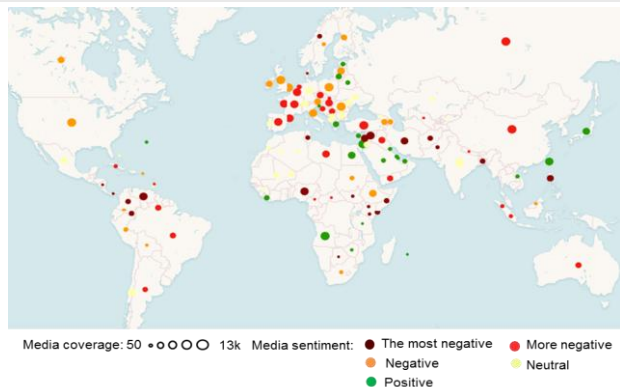
Álvaro Ortiz / Tomasa Rodrigo / Yigit Engin

January 2018

President Trump gave his first State of the Union speech in the Congress to highlight his administration’s policies. Rivalry between Washington and Russia/China and the intention to contain Iran and North Korea have been revealed once again in his remarks. Meanwhile, Turkey initiated a new military operation against terrorist groups in North West of Syria. On the other hand, peace talks between the regime and the opposition groups continued in Sochi with some progress. The North Korean issue reached a level of détente as Winter Games near in which two side of the Korean Peninsula would test peaceful relations. US is still cautious. Europe remained calm, while some hot spots were observed in Latin America and Asia.

Trump gave his State of the Union speech, Turkey initiated a new operation in Syria

Figure 1 Media coverage (observation’s size) and sentiment (observation’s colour) of Trump’s State of the Union speech over the world



Source: syriacivilwarmap & BBVA Research

The State of the Union speech of the US President

President Trump gave his first State of the Union Speech identifying China and Russia as rivals. Signaling gearing up in nuclear arsenal.

Turkey initiated a military operation in northern Syria

Turkish army initiated a new operation in Afrin (north west of Syria) to combat YPG. Syria peace talks continued.

South-North Korea talks continue with ups and downs

The Winter Games would bring the two Koreas together but the US administration follows the events cautiously.

The BBVA Research World Conflict Intensity Index¹ decreased by second consecutive month during January. The main developments during the month were:

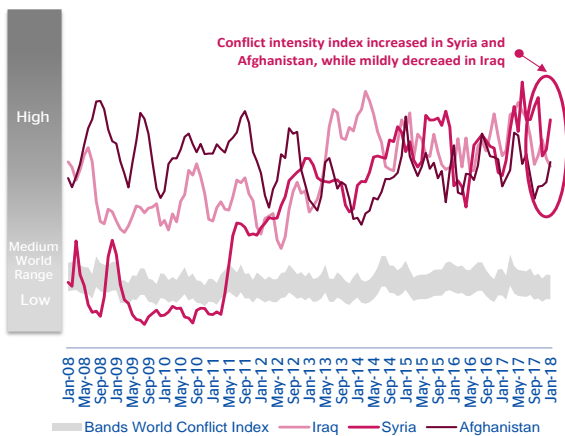
- In his first State of the Union speech, President Trump gave critical messages on geopolitical understanding of his administration ([The New US National Security Strategy](#)). He defined China and Russia as rivals challenging US interest, economy and values. Meanwhile, **the US administration decided not to impose further sanctions on Russia** by saying that the existent legislation on sanctions is deterrent enough. Yet, the administration revealed the list of prominent Russian business and political figures that have close ties to President Putin who considered the release of the list as an “unfriendly act.” In the State of the Union, Trump also said that the US would rebuild its nuclear arsenal. He asked the Congress “to address the flaws in Iran nuclear deal”. He once again backed his administration’s decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital city of Israel and blamed countries that voted against the US in the U.N. General Assembly.
- On January 20, **Turkey has initiated a new operation with the participation of the Free Syrian Army against the YPG**. According to Turkey’s high-rank officials, the operation would continue until the last terrorist would be

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

eliminated in theregion. Meanwhile, **Syria peace talks continued.** Sochi Congress supported by Russia, Iran and Turkey to make peace between the regime and the opposition, decided to set a constitutional committee, which is a one-step further for post-war recovery.

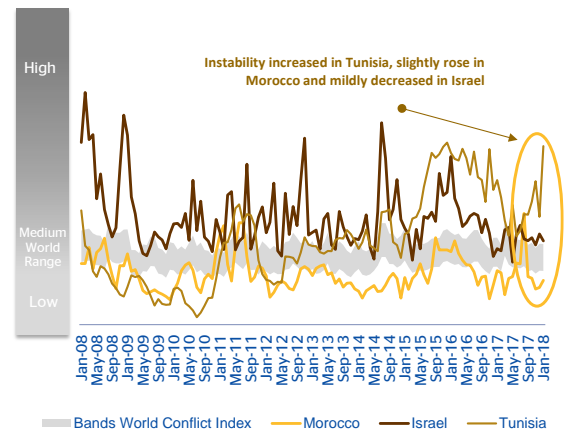
- **North Korea tensions eased off** given the reapproachment to South Korea because of the Winter Games. North Korea will bring 22 athletes to where they will march under a unification flag in Winter Games to be held in South Korea during 9-25 February. This raised hopes for a détente in the Korean Peninsula. **The US still stays in high alert even though it eased military manoeuvres to back the rapprochement.** CIA Director Pompeo said North Korea would not rest until reaching the capacity to threaten multiple nuclear attacks against U.S. In his State of the Union speech, Trump said that US wages a campaign of maximum pressure to prevent North Korea to threaten American homeland.

Figure 2 BBVA Research Middle East Conflict Intensity Index 2008-18
(Number of conflicts / Total events)



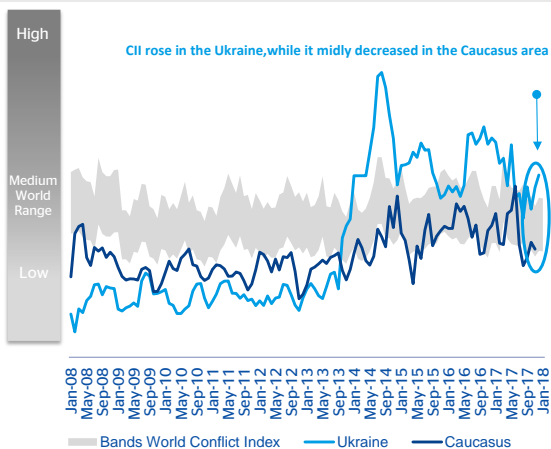
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 3 BBVA Research North Africa Conflict Intensity Index 2008-18
(Number of conflicts / Total events)



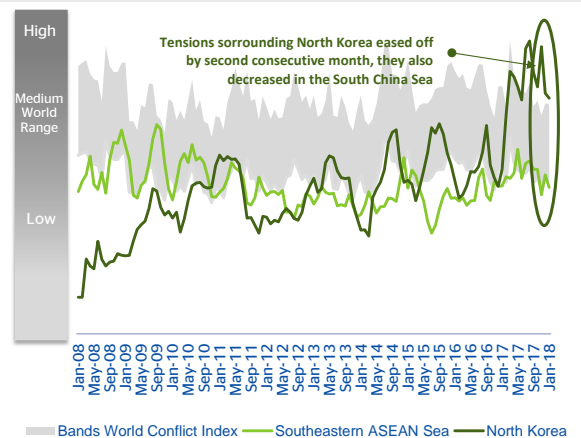
Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 4 BBVA Research Eastern Europe Conflict Intensity Index 2008-18
(Number of conflicts / Total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Figure 5 BBVA Research Asia Conflict Intensity Index 2008-18
(Number of conflicts / Total events)

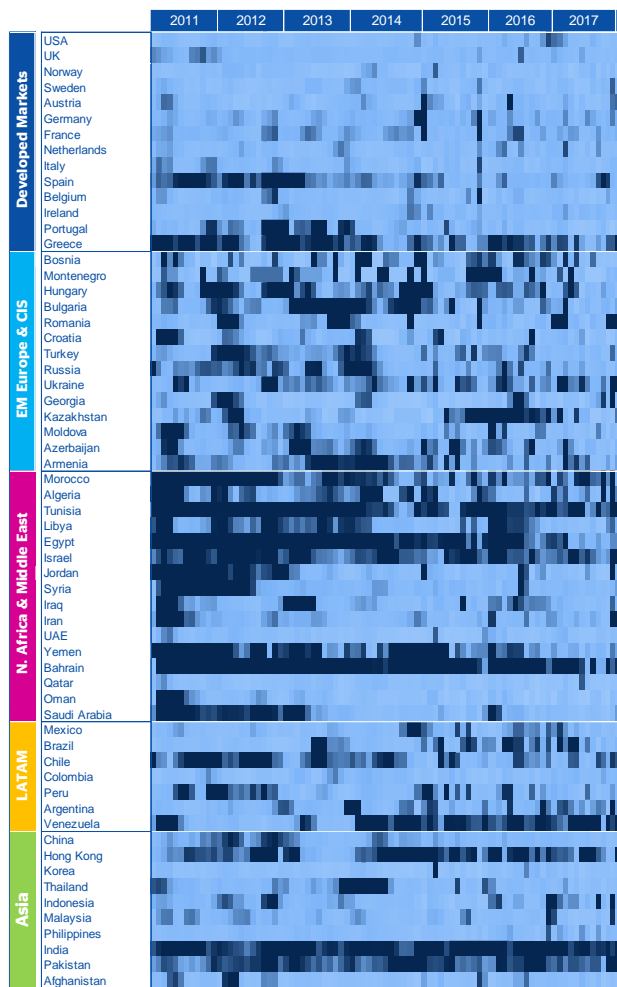


Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

Social unrest eased off by second consecutive month during January

The **World Protest Index decreased during January** (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 – Jan 2018
(Number of protests / Total events)



Source: www.dgelt.org & BBVA Research

- In regional terms, **Developed Europe and the US remained in a calmed situation. In Eastern Europe, some tensions persist from last month. Instability in the Middle East and North Africa rose in some countries for the second month in a row. Protests decreased in general terms in Latin America, while in Asia, demonstrations rose again in Hong Kong:**
- In **Europe**, protests rose in **Austria** against the presence of far right party in the government, while tensions decreased in **Sweden** and **Germany**. **Greece** remains as the main hot spot in Europe.
- In **Emerging Europe**, protests continued in **Romania** due to changes in anti-corruption law; **Ukraine** is still under high tensions after the rise of last month. Unrest also rose in **Kazakhstan**.
- In **North Africa and the Middle East**, social unrest kept at high levels in **Tunisia, Israel** and **Iran**, while it eased off in **Morocco, Algeria** and **Jordan**.
- In **Latin America**, protests intensity decreased in **Chile**, but still at high levels, and in **Argentina**. **Venezuela** remained at the key hot spot.
- In **Asia**, Muslim countries saw a relieve of tensions after last month's protests in support of Palestine, while demonstrations in **Hong Kong** rose after a two month break. Tensions eased off in **Indonesia** and **Malaysia**. Portest intensity idex in **India** and **Pakistan** remained at high levels.

Summary

After President Trump's State of the Union Speech, Iran and North Korea is given top priority and the intention to see Russia and China as rivals continue. South Korea and North Korea walking under the same flag in Winter Games could change the atmosphere if sustained. Middle East and North Africa continued focusing the attention in terms of instability. Social unrest in Latin America is contained despite several electoral process are opened.

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

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