

Geopolitics

BBVA Research Big Data Geopolitics Monitor

Big Data Unit
26 March 2025

US Backs Russian Export Boost as Moscow Seeks Sanctions Relief for Black Sea Ceasefire. Iran’s currency feel pressure

US Backs Russian Export Boost as Moscow Seeks Sanctions Relief for Black Sea Ceasefire: The US has agreed to help Russia enhance its agricultural exports and regain access to international payment systems, particularly SWIFT, as part of broader negotiations involving a cease-fire in the Black Sea. This comes in response to Russia’s demand for sanction relief, specifically in banking sectors linked to agriculture, despite opposition from European allies and Ukraine itself, which has firmly objected to easing sanctions. Russia insists that reconnecting certain banks, notably Rosselkhozbank, to the SWIFT network is critical to facilitate its grain and fertilizer exports, claiming existing sanctions have indirectly hindered these sectors.

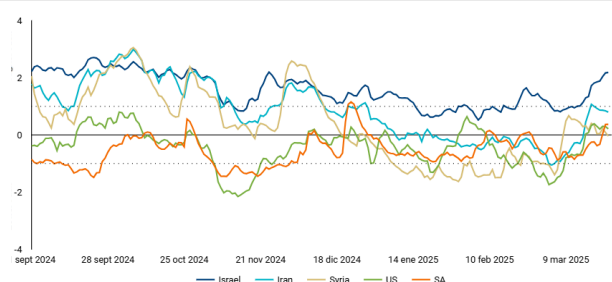
European countries are cautious about relaxing financial sanctions due to concerns it could diminish pressure on Russia’s economy. Although sanctions do not directly target agricultural products, Moscow argues they indirectly impair its export capabilities by complicating financial transactions and logistics. The complexity of easing sanctions involves potential disagreements among Western allies, as any significant relief, such as reconnecting Russian banks to SWIFT, would require unanimous European agreement.

Iran’s currency at Critical Values: Iran’s currency recently dropped below the critical threshold of 1,000,000 rial per US dollar amid ongoing US sanctions. Under President Trump’s “maximum pressure” campaign, sanctions have tightened, leaving market participants pessimistic about any swift policy change. The US has imposed four rounds of sanctions on Iran’s oil sales since President Trump returned to office.

The BBVA Monitor: geopolitical tensions increased in Israel, Venezuela and Turkey during the week

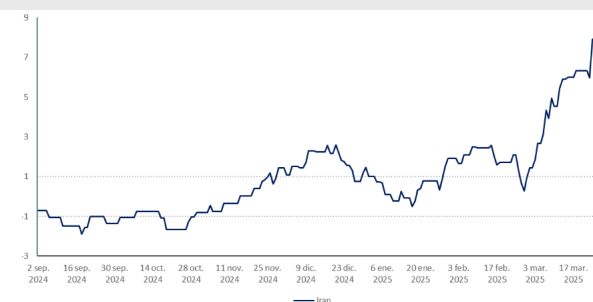
- **Geopolitical risk indicators** increased in **Israel** during the week, remaining close to the high-risk area. The index increased in **Saudi Arabia**, although it stayed in the neutral zone given its role as a key mediator in conflict resolution negotiations (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 3). The geopolitical risk index also rose in **Ukraine** and **Russia** this week, even as discussions of a permanent ceasefire continued (see Fig. 3 and Fig. 5).
- **Economic Policy Uncertainty** continued to rise sharply in **Iran** amid US pressure to tighten sanctions (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).
- **Geopolitical risk** reached the extreme-risk zone in **Venezuela**, driven by escalating tensions with the US over Donald Trump’s announcement of secondary tariffs of 25% on countries purchasing oil or gas from Venezuela, combined with the repatriation of its citizens from the US (see Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).
- **Social unrest** increased in **Turkey** following the arrest of Istanbul’s Mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu, on corruption charges (see Fig. 3).

Fig1. **GEORISK INDEX: ISR&IR&SY&US&SA**
(28-day weighted moving avg, normalized by its own history)



Source: BBVA Research & www.gdelt.org. Positive (negative) values indicate greater (lower) risk relative to the mean of period 2021-nowadays

Fig2. **EPU INDEX: IRAN**
(28-day weighted moving avg, normalized by its own history)



Source: BBVA Research & www.gdelt.org. Positive (negative) values indicate greater (lower) interest relative to the mean of period 2021-nowadays

*The selection of news has been enriched by the BBVA Research Geo Assistant developed with Chat-GPT.

Fig3. **BBVA RESEARCH GEOPOLITICS MONITOR "SIGNAL" CHANGES**

(Signals in Geopolitical Risk, Political Tensions, Economic Policy Uncertainties, Protest and Conflict according to Standard Dev)

BBVA Research Geopolitics Monitor main "Signal" changes during the week

Summary of Signals (March 18th, 2025)

(News Sentiment Map. Sentiment relative to average sentiment in each country)



Source: BBVA Research

Summary of Signals (March 25th, 2025)

(News Sentiment Map. Sentiment relative to average sentiment in each country)

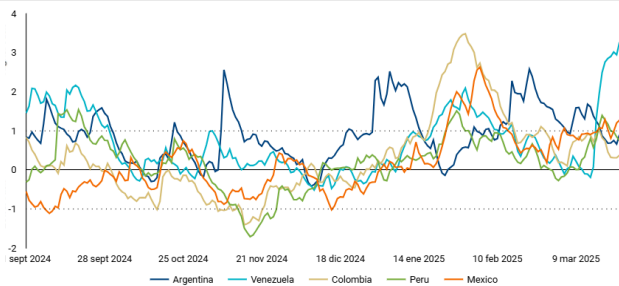


Source: BBVA Research

Source: BBVA Research and www.qdelt.org.

Fig4. **GEOPOLITICAL RISK INDEX: LATAM**

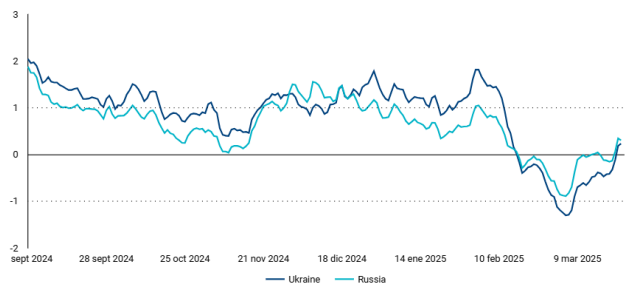
(28-day weighted moving avg, normalized by its own history)



Source: BBVA Research & www.qdelt.org. Positive (negative) values indicate greater (lower) risk relative to the mean of period 2021-nowadays

Fig5. **GEORISK INDEX: RUSSIA & UKRAINE**

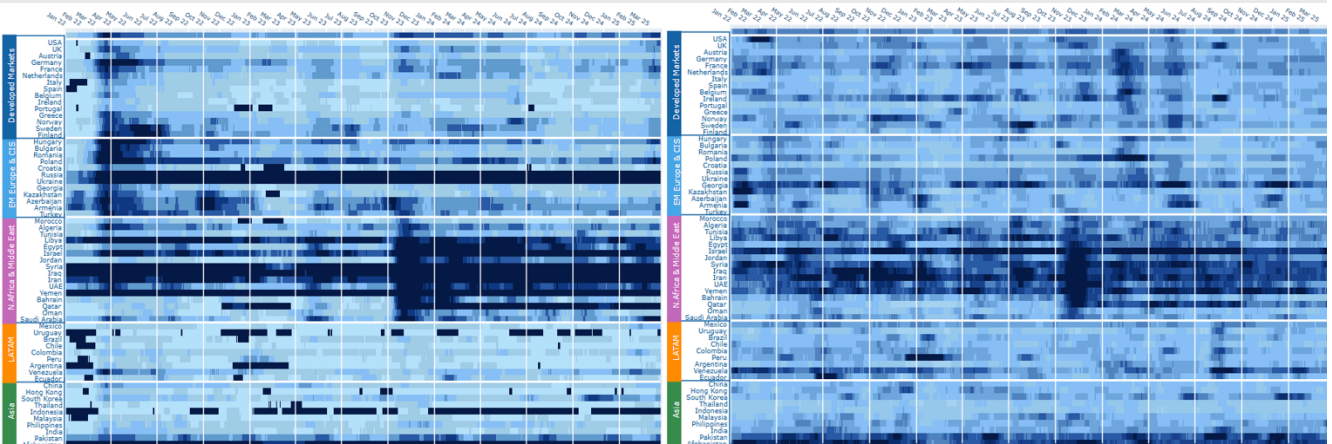
(28-day weighted moving avg, normalized by its own history)



Source: BBVA Research & www.qdelt.org. Positive (negative) values indicate greater (lower) risk relative to the mean of period 2021-nowadays

Fig6. **BBVA RESEARCH PROTEST AND CONFLICT HEAT MAPS**

(Evolution of Protest and Conflict over time by regions)



Source: BBVA Research and www.qdelt.org.

Methodological annex: indicators' construction

We have developed a daily tracker with weekly updates to monitor protest and conflict indicators for every country in the world from 2019 to present day. To construct this, we use a rich 'big database' of international events (GDELT), created by Leetaru and Schrodt (2013). GDELT is an open-source database that extracts and parses digital news monitoring world events covered by news media from nearly every corner of the world, whether broadcast, printed, or published on the web, in over 100 languages, every moment of every day, updated every 15 minutes. Thus, it contains a comprehensive and high-resolution catalog of geo-referenced events and themes.

Using different dictionaries, several thousands of taxonomies and themes are identified in the news pieces to classify the information. The algorithms used by GDELT also identify emotions, organizations, locations, news sources, and events across the world as well as their average sentiment using Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques and the lexicon approach.

The included indicators are:

- Geopolitical Risk: or sentiment (weighted by coverage) of the country's geopolitical risk perception.
- Political Tensions: or sentiment (weighted by coverage) of the country's political tensions.
- Economic Policy Uncertainty or sentiment (weighted by coverage) about the country's economic policy uncertainty, also disaggregated by media origin.
- Protests or coverage regarding social protests or unrest in the country.
- Conflict or coverage of armed conflicts, which go beyond verbal protests.
- Bilateral Tensions or the sentiment (weighted by coverage) between a specific pair of countries that appear together in the news article (plus NATO and EU).

The indicators track the evolution of tensions and are normalized by their country's history since 2019, thus they are all expressed in terms of standard deviations from their historical patterns. Indicators usually lie within the range [-1,1]. Therefore, when the values exceed one (the upper boundary of the range), this means escalating tensions. While it's possible to observe simultaneous tensions arising in multiple countries (for example, due to geopolitical events affecting several nations, as seen in some of our heatmaps), using these indicators for direct quantitative comparisons of risk levels between countries is not recommended.

We apply a weighted moving average of 28 days (to include four complete weeks with the same number of days of the weeks) to reduce the noise of daily information and identify signals more clearly. The weights have been calculated using a discrete geometric distribution such that it puts more weight on recent data and less on past data (see Graph 1). Aggregating by weeks, the weight of the most recent week has a weight of 68%, the past week 22%, the previous 7%, and the fourth 3%. The weight of the 28 days can be seen in the following image. In such a way, the indicators reflect what has been happening in the last few days.

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