

Geopolitics

BBVA Research Big Data Geopolitics Monitor

Big Data Unit

11 September 2024

Tense US Presidential Debate with Harris maintaining momentum. Western Countries sanction Iran for Military Support to Russia.

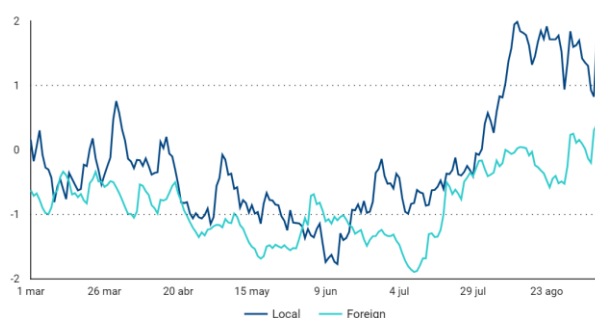
Tense Presidential Debate between Harris and Trump: Vice-President Kamala Harris and Donald Trump clashed fiercely on issues such as abortion, the economy and immigration. Harris initially struggled but gained confidence, portraying Trump as an extremist unfit for the presidency. She attacked his handling of abortion rights, mocked his eccentric statements and criticized his refusal to accept the 2020 election results. Trump, while critical of the Biden administration's economic record and immigration policies, often lost his composure during Harris's attacks. The debate could have significant implications for the election outcome, with Harris narrowly leading Trump. According to the poll of polls by ABC news, Harris maintains a slim margin of +2.7 (Harris: 47.1%, Trump: 44.4%). Both campaigns are now focused on swing states to bolster their positions ahead of the election ([ABC news](#)).

US, France, Germany, UK sanction Iran for supplying missiles to Russia: US, France, Germany, and the UK announced new sanctions against Iran for providing missiles to Russia for its war in Ukraine, escalating Iran's military support for Russia. The sanctions will include canceling bilateral air services with Iran and targeting key individuals and entities involved in Iran's ballistic missile program and its weapon transfers to Russia. The EU confirmed that Iranian missiles are likely aiding Russia's attacks on Ukrainian civilians and infrastructure, prompting a strong response from the EU and additional sanctions from the US. Both Kyiv and the West have warned Iran of severe consequences if it continues supporting Russia's aggression ([Politico](#)).

The BBVA Monitor: political tensions in the high risk area in Venezuela and contained in the US

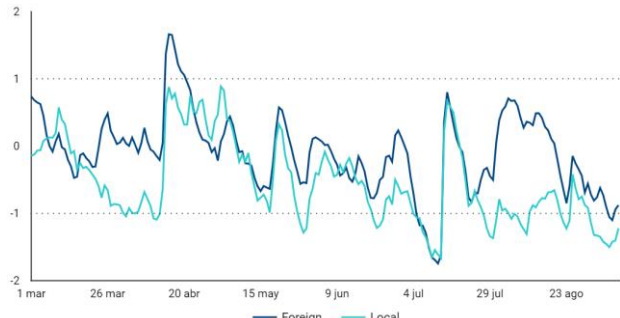
- **Political and geopolitical tensions** indicators increase in **Venezuela** given political turmoil and the Venezuelan opposition leader Edmundo Gonzalez's departure to Spain, seeking political asylum (Fig 1 and Fig 3). Despite the US presidential elections, **political tensions index** remains calm in the **US** (Fig 2).
- **Geopolitical risk and conflict** indices keep in the high risk area in **Ukraine and Russia** and bilateral tensions index continues increasing (Fig 3 and Fig 5). **Social unrest** in the **Middle East** keeps as the main hot spot where geopolitical risk, protest and conflict indicators are in the high risk area (Fig 3).
- Despite political tensions continuing deteriorating in Venezuela, **social unrest** and demonstrations are relaxing in the country and in most of the **Latin American countries** (Fig 3 and Fig 4).

Fig1. **POLITICAL TENSIONS: VENEZUELA PRESS**
(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. **POLITICAL TENSIONS: UNITED STATES PRESS**
(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

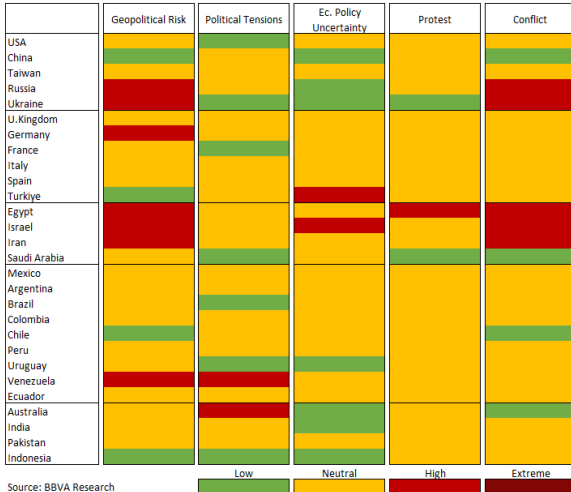
*The selection of news has been enriched by the BBVA Research Geo Assistant developed with Chat-GPT.

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

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

Summary of Signals After Hamas-Israel Conflict (September 4th, 2024)

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



Summary of Signals After Hamas-Israel Conflict (September 10th, 2024)

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



Source: BBVA Research and www.qdelt.org

Fig4. **PROTEST INTENSITY INDEX: AR, CI, PE, UY, VE**
(28-day weighted moving avg, normalized by its own history)

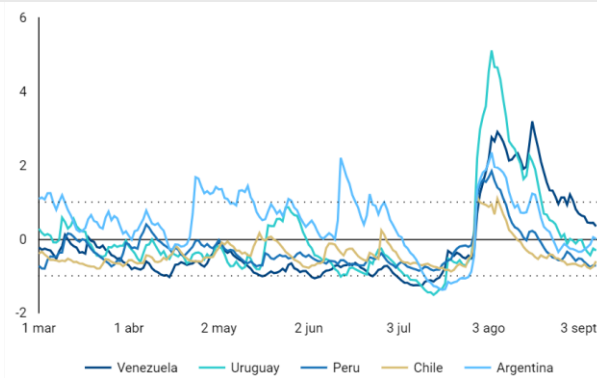


Fig5. **BILATERAL TENSIONS: USA-EU & USA-RUSSIA**
(28-day weighted moving avg, normalized by its own history)

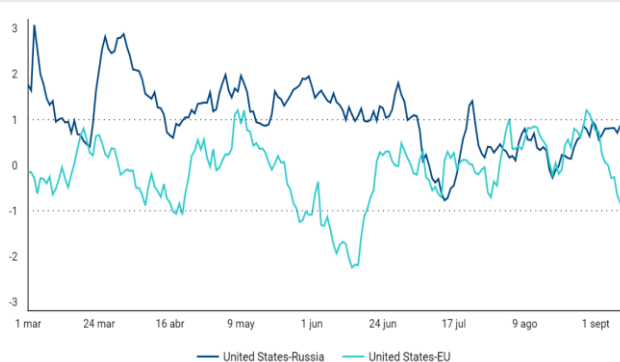
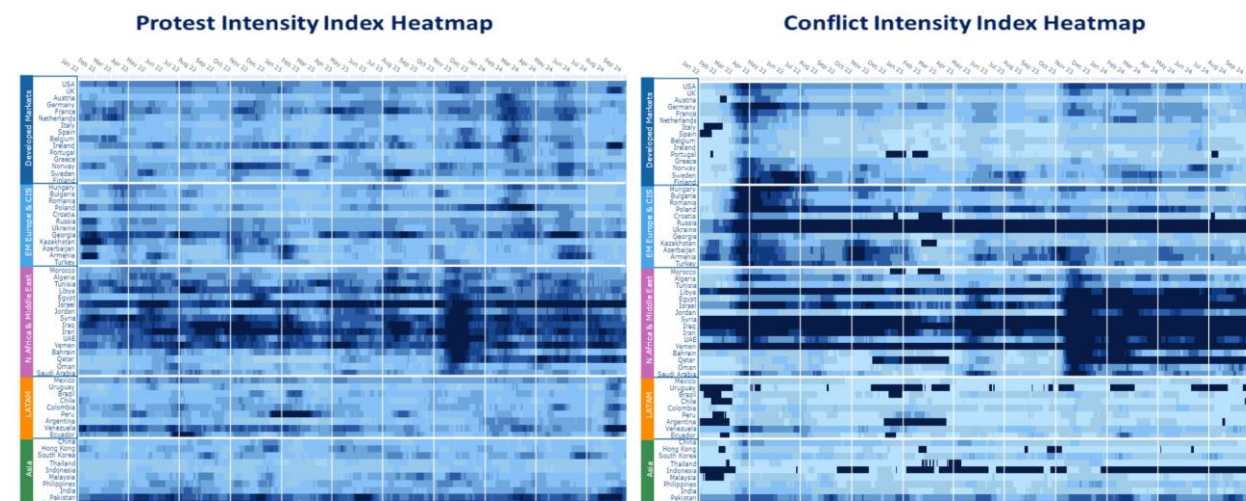


Fig6. **BBVA RESEARCH PROTEST AND CONFLICT HEAT MAPS**

(Evolution of Protest and Conflict over time by regions)



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 Schrod (2013). GDELT is an open-source database which 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 its own country 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 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 is happening in the last days.

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