

Moody's changes Turkey's credit rating outlook to negative from stable

Hurriyet Daily News, 11.04.2014



International credit ratings agency Moody's has changed April 11 the outlook on Turkey's Baa3 government bond rating to negative from stable. The change of Turkey's credit ratings comes after a long period of political turmoil.

"The adverse impact of the turbulent political dynamics and lower global liquidity on both international and domestic investor confidence as illustrated by exchange rate volatility is exacerbating the country's existing external financing challenges," the agency said in a statement and also noted that the confidence of investors decreased due to political uncertainty.

"Tensions have dampened foreign and domestic investor confidence, which Moody's expects to intensify existing pressures on the country's balance of payments, particularly the financing of the relatively large current account deficit; and the repayment of approximately \$163 billion in external liabilities of the Turkish corporate, banking and government sectors," Moody's said. The agency said it expected Turkey's economic growth to slow to 2.5 percent in 2014 and 3.0 percent in 2015, linking the weaker growth prospects to the political situation of the country. "Moody's believes that the uncertain policy environment stemming from the heightened political risk will constrain the momentum of structural reforms needed to reduce the Turkish economy's external vulnerabilities," the agency said.

Moody's announcement put the brakes on the Turkish Lira's strengthening trend of recent weeks, causing the currency to slide with its highest pace in three weeks. The lira/dollar ratio, which was around 2.098 level at the stock exchange's closure on April 10, dropped to above 2.12 in April 11 morning. Turkey's two-year benchmark yield also climbed 20 basis points to 10.03 percent in the morning, from 9.83 percent on April 10. However, Moody's stressed that Turkish economy had the necessary capacity to recover from a negative outlook.

"Moody's notes that the capacity of Turkey's banks, corporates and public institutions to roll over maturing debt has historically been high, even at times of elevated financial distress. Moreover, parts of the Turkish private sector have buffers which offset some of the current financing challenges." Fitch Ratings affirmed on April 4 its BBB- rating for Turkey, also the lowest investment-grade rating, but with a stable outlook. Standard & Poor's in February switched the outlook its rating of BB+ for Turkey, the highest speculative-grade, to negative citing a risk of a hard landing for the country's economy.

Turkish ruling party wants Erdogan

Reuters, 17.04.2014



A majority of deputies in Turkey's ruling AK Party have voted in a secret ballot in favor of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan running in the country's first direct presidential election in August, officials said on Thursday. The vote was meant as an informal test of the level of support within the party for a presidential bid by Erdogan, which would mean him stepping down as party leader, but he alone will decide on his candidacy, his aides have said.

Erdogan, who has dominated politics for more than a decade, has made little secret of his ambition to run for the presidency and his party's strong showing in local elections last month.

But his aides have said his determination to press ahead with a fight against U.S.-based Islamic cleric Fethullah Gulen, a former ally he accuses of contriving the graft scandal as part of a plot to undermine him, could instead see him stay on for a fourth term as prime minister, currently a more powerful post. Such a move would require the AK Party to vote to change its internal rules and remove a three-term limit for its parliamentary deputies, something to which Erdogan has repeatedly said he is in principle opposed. "An overwhelming majority within the party says that Erdogan should become the president and the results of the voting have depicted that as well," a senior party official told Reuters after Wednesday's ballot of more than 300 AKP deputies. "A small group said Erdogan should not run in the elections as there will be critical developments ahead during which his leadership will be much needed," the official said.

AK Party deputy chairman Huseyin Celik said on Wednesday that the party would hold a series of meetings on the presidential election culminating at the start of May, after which a decision would be announced. Incumbent President Abdullah Gul was the second choice of presidential nominee in the secret ballot, officials said. Gul is a close Erdogan ally and co-founder of the party, and is tipped as a possible prime minister should Erdogan run. Until now, parliament has elected Turkey's head of state. Erdogan has said the popular vote would confer additional authority on the currently largely ceremonial post, although he ultimately wants an executive presidency for Turkey. "If I step into the presidency post, I would be the people's president. I would use my full competencies," Erdogan was quoted by the daily Hurriyet newspaper as telling MPs at Wednesday's meeting, adding that he had not yet decided on a bid.

He also signaled that whatever happened, the fight would continue against Gulen's Hizmet ("Service") network - which wields influence in state institutions including the police and judiciary and whose followers say they number in the millions. Erdogan accuses what he describes as a "parallel state" of orchestrating the corruption scandal against him, including by illegally wiretapping thousands of government phones over years and leaking manipulated recordings on social media. Erdogan relied on Hizmet's influence to break the grip on politics of the army, which carried out three coups between 1960 and 1980 and forced an Islamist-led government from power in 1997.

Nechervan Barzani's visit to Turkey

ORSAM, 13.04.2014



Nechervan Barzani, the prime minister of the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (IKRG), visited Turkey on March 16, 2014 upon the invitation of Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu to hold a meeting on energy issues.

The fact that Davutoglu hosted Barzani in the city of Van after the visit of KRG President Masoud Barzani to Diyarbakır was an important note regarding this visit. Barzani's visit can also be evaluated in terms of Turkey's internal policy process; however this article will focus on the importance of Nechervan Barzani's visit regarding Turkish foreign policy and Iraqi internal policy on upcoming elections.

Barzani's visit will be evaluated in terms of the following points: The effect of Turkish-KRG relations on Turkish foreign policy; the KRG's political status and its struggle to establish a government; and the relationship between the KRG and the Iraqi central government. The relationship between Turkey and the KRG influences the Turkey-U.S. relationship, Turkey's recent Syria policy, Syria's Kurdish policy, as well as Turkey's Iraq policy. Parallel to the relationship Turkey has developed with the KRG since 2009, it is not possible to say that the relationship between Turkey and the Iraqi central government has fully recovered from the tension. Because of the close relationship Turkey developed with the KRG on energy issues, tension still remains between the Iraqi central government and Turkey. However, as a result of the visits between Turkey and Iraq in the summer of 2013, there are now signs that this relationship is recovering.

Despite all these factors, the KRG has begun oil exports to Turkey, which hinders further development of the relationship between Turkey and the Iraqi central government. At this point, it is important for Turkey to apply a rational attitude and consider Baghdad's initiative. From this point of view, it is possible to suggest that Turkey pursues a more stable policy. The relationship that Turkey has developed with the KRG is also a factor for Turkish-American relations. As is known, the U.S. reacted to the energy relationship between Turkey and the KRG, and warned the latter not to export any oil without Baghdad's consent. Therefore, in order to prevent the Turkish-American relationship from going bad, Turkey would need to consider Baghdad's wishes before acting. On the other hand, the Turkish-KRG relationship especially influences policy toward Syrian Kurds.

Although there is not a totalitarian approach toward Syrian Kurds within the KRG, having the power to rule the KRG, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria's (KDP) attitude towards the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) compliments Turkey's policy toward Syrian Kurds. In this respect, we can contend that as long as the KDP maintains power in the KRG, the Syria policy will still be the same when it comes to the relationship between the KRG and Turkey. In that case, what comes to mind is the possibility of an autonomy declaration on the regions under PYD control in Syria. The KDP, which also has Nechervan Barzani, announced that they do not recognize the PYD's autonomy declaration. Turkey also seems to be bothered by such policies of the PYD, which is located in northern Syria.



It is important to note that Nechervan Barzani's visit to Turkey took place as the government-founding process of the KRG was still ongoing. For six months since the elections of Sept. 21, 2013, Barzani has been working on establishing a government; however, it is hard to say that he has made significant process. That is why his visit is important regarding the fact that the KRG and KDP have taken Turkey's support. The visit took place right before a government was founded in the KRG and it shows how much the winning KDP party cares about Turkey. It is also possible to assess Barzani's visit on an individual level.

It is a well-known fact that Barzani wants to be close to Turkey and have its support because of the silent war between him and Masrour Barzani within the KDP. KDP leader and KRG President Masoud Barzani does not ignore Nechervan completely but still it is talked about in hushed tones that when he has to make a choice he will choose his son, Masrour, over his nephew and son-in-law, Nechervan. That is why we can see that Nechervan is at least trying to sustain his international connections. We can also argue that Nechervan wants to use the power he has gained over KRG economy.

Therefore, it is easier to understand why Nechervan insisted on emphasizing energy collaboration and commerce between Turkey and the KRG during his visit. Nechervan Barzani's visit overlapped with negotiations for the resolution of conflict between Irbil and Baghdad. It is clear that Turkey is acting with sensitivity to Baghdad's concerns regarding energy exports and Turkish authorities have guaranteed that the country won't take any action without Baghdad's permission. Therefore, Turkey creating a softening effect in Erbil's favor can create a positive environment in terms of conflict resolution. The facilitative role that Turkey can play between Irbil and Baghdad can also contribute to the relationship between Turkey and the Iraqi central government. Also, Barzani's visit can be considered a message since it took place before the scheduled Iraqi general elections of April 30, 2014.

The statements of Nechervan Barzani and Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoglu on a television show implied that the course of the relationship between the KRG and Turkey, which developed after 2009, would remain the same. On the other hand, the relationship between Turkey and the Iraqi central government was on the decline and the two countries were even clashing in terms of diplomacy and politics. However, developments in the region, deadlock on the Syrian issue, the influence of the change in Iran over Iraq, Iraq's pursuit of consistency in its domestic policy, and the U.S. suggestion for the improvement of relations were all reasons why there was a need for the relationship between Turkey and the Iraqi central government to be softened. And the fact that the relationships that started on lower levels were raised diplomatically to higher levels has turned the events into shuttle diplomacy between decision makers.

Parallel to the development of the relationship with the KRG and the deranged relationship with the Iraqi central government in 2009, things were previously the other way round. After 2003, the contribution Turkey made to Iraq's consistency were welcomed by the Iraqi central government, 48 memorandums of understanding were signed between Turkey and Iraq in 2009 and the relationship was at its best then. During this period, the relationship between the KRG and Turkey were intense and there was not even direct contact. Saying that the KRG bore this historical process in its mind is not entirely wrong. In this respect, it is possible to conclude that the KRG does not want to lose Turkey's support and that is why they are trying to keep a close relationship with Turkey.

IMF says “herdlike” capital means countries must reform

Agence France-Presse, 13.04.2014



Increasingly fickle capital flows mean that countries have to implement domestic reforms to protect their stability, the IMF's advisory board said Saturday. After many emerging economies were hobbled by sharp capital outflows over the past year, the IMF's steering committee, the International Monetary and Financial Committee, said that more volatility was to come, especially as the US tightens monetary policy.

Singapore Finance Minister, chair of the IMFC, said countries have to undertake structural reforms over the medium term to protect themselves as the global economic recovery enters a new phase.

The IMFC, comprised of two dozen of the world's leading finance ministers and central bankers, singled out increased volatility in capital movements as one of the key challenges for the global economy. "What we have observed is more herdlike behavior in the markets, more herdlike behavior driving capital flows," Tharman said at the end of the IMF/World Bank spring meetings in Washington. "That's not going to be a short-term phenomenon, that's going to be a continuing challenge," he said. "It's partly reflecting a change in the structure of global finance -- more capital flows, and also a changed composition, with a greater share that's been taken up by bond funds, a greater share that's been taken up by mutual funds, ETFs."

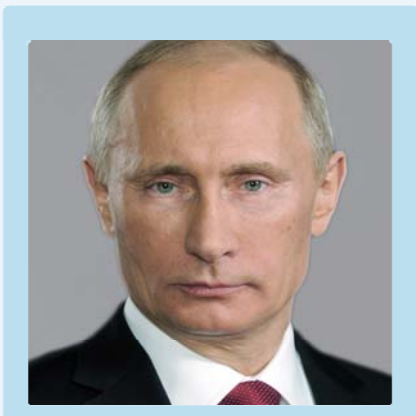
This translates to more frequent, more sudden reactions to changes in risk perception -- exactly what hit emerging economies last year when their growth slowed and interest rates picked up worldwide as the US Federal Reserve began its move away from its crisis-era easy money policy. That shift is one of a number of challenges to global growth the IMF highlighted during the spring meetings, with "structural reform" the byword for adjustments needed in the richest to the poorest economies to adapt to the post-crisis world. "We are turning the corner. The global economy is faring better," said IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde in a press conference with Tharman. At the same time, she cautioned, "it is uneven, it is too slow, it is too fragile." The IMF has spelled out reforms needed like balance sheet repairing for indebted corporations and governments, cleaning up and strengthening banking systems -- including in Europe -- and improving labor markets especially to create jobs for the tens of millions of unemployed youths around the world.

Tharman said that, with investment still weak relative to the stage of recovery, countries need to strengthen their legal and operating frameworks to give private investors more confidence. The message came after the G20 economic powers, meeting at the same time in Washington, failed to demonstrate concrete action to shore up growth and meet their own goal of significantly boosting the current tepid, five-year forecast for world output. Australia's Treasurer Joe Hockey, whose country leads the G20 this year, admitted that the plans submitted by the group this week were "clearly inadequate."

When the G20 made the commitment last year to enhance growth, Hockey added, “We really meant it. It wasn’t just a rhetorical figure put in the communique for publicity purposes. “Instead of simply spending a lot of time reflecting on the lessons of the past, we need to be ambitious for the future,” he added. The IMF also pointed to other problems that remain on the horizon for the global economy, including the Ukraine crisis, low inflation in the eurozone and Japan, and new pockets of high-risk financing, including in the United States.

Putin warns EU leaders on Ukraine gas debt, European supplies

AFP, 10.04.2014



President Vladimir Putin on Thursday sent a letter to EU leaders, expressing his “extreme concern” over Ukraine’s debt for Russian gas and warning them that supplies to Europe may be affected, his spokesman said.

“Indeed, such a letter signed by Putin was today delivered to heads of state of Eastern and Western Europe through diplomatic channels,” Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov told the state RIA Novosti news agency. “Putin expresses extreme concern over the critical situation around Ukraine’s non paid gas bill debt and supplies of Russian gas related to it,” Peskov said.

The letter, sent after a government meeting on Wednesday, contains a number of proposals on how to settle the situation, Peskov said. “The proposals are aimed at taking urgent measures, since (a solution to) the situation cannot be delayed,” he said, declining to be more specific. The Interfax news agency, citing Peskov, said Putin had proposed “dialogue mechanisms to urgently discuss the situation.” “The complicated situation indeed may negatively affect the transit of Russian gas via Ukraine,” Peskov was quoted as saying. Putin on Wednesday warned that Russia may begin requiring advance payment for natural gas from Ukraine, which has accrued \$2.2 billion in unpaid energy bills, according to Russian natural gas giant Gazprom. He added that it was “strange” that EU countries, while supporting the new authorities in Kiev “are doing nothing to support Ukraine.” “This situation cannot last indefinitely,” he has said.

Earlier this month, Gazprom announced it was raising the price of gas exports to Ukraine by more than a third, scrapping a previous discount amid soaring political tensions between the two ex-Soviet countries. Ukraine now has to pay \$485 dollars for 1,000 cubic metres of gas, the highest price of any of Gazprom’s clients in Europe. End-of-the-year haggling over energy prices has become a familiar problem in ties between Russia and Ukraine, with Moscow cutting natural gas to Ukraine and disrupting transit supplies to Europe in the past. Ukraine maintains that Russia is punishing Ukraine for its Western ambitions and has threatened to take Moscow to court.

Fighter jets, special Forces: Photos 'show Russian military buildup' near Ukraine

CNN, 11.04.2014



NATO has released satellite photos that show the extent of Russia's military mobilization on its border with Ukraine capable to invade Ukraine within 12 hours if called upon, say officials. The photos appear to confirm Western leaders' fears that Russia may be preparing for a ground invasion of eastern Ukraine, despite NATO's call for Russia to withdraw its forces from the border.

The photos, which private satellite imaging firm DigitalGlobe says it took between March 22 and April 2, purportedly reveal dozens of Russian jets, helicopters and infantry units that were not spotted in photos of the same areas last year

NATO estimates there are up to 40,000 troops massed at various locations along the Ukrainian border, and says it has spotted Russian forces at more than 100 different sites. The photos of military equipment and infantry personnel should be greater cause for concern than the ones of the fighter jets, according to experts who have examined the photos for CNN. Another photo purportedly shows a build-up of Russian Su-27 Flanker, Su-24 Fencer, and MiG-31 Foxhound fighter jets at the formerly vacant Buturlinovka air base, 150 kilometers from the Ukrainian border.

Sutyagin says the recent build-up of these jets in what appear to be sparsely resourced air fields doesn't make much sense from a strategic standpoint. "The planes seem to be more about parade than about preparation," he says. "Firstly, they're designed to fly hundreds of kilometers anyway, so moving them another 90 kilometers closer to the border won't make much difference." He added: "If the Russians do not have installations to service the planes, or utilize weapons storages, and if they're far from their permanent bases where their rear-support units are concentrated, they cannot be operationally effective for an invasion."

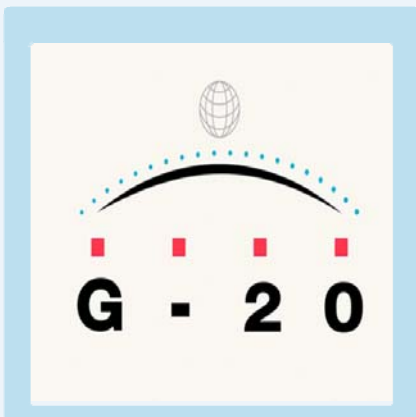
Keir Giles, an associate fellow at the Chatham House think tank, says there must be serious cause for alarm for NATO to have released the photos. "You have to assume that there have been behind the scenes consultations between Russian and NATO, but obviously those have been limited in effectiveness for NATO to release this kind of imagery, which it would not normally do," Giles says. "Should we trust NATO on this? Yes, because it has no interest whatsoever in exacerbating the situation. This is a crisis which they're trying to play down wherever possible and make it clear it's not involved." Giles also says that the Russian military officers he regularly speaks with have suddenly gone silent. "One possible explanation is that they've been told to curtail contact with foreigners," he says. "And if that is the reason, whenever that's happened in the past, it has not been a good sign."

A Russian military official told Russia Today that the photos were taken in August of last year during military drills -- a claim NATO called "categorically false" in a statement Friday. "This is a force that's very capable at high readiness," British Army Brigadier Gary Deakin said at a briefing at NATO military headquarters in Mons, Belgium on Thursday. "And as we've illustrated through the imagery, it's close to routes and lines of communications and it has the resources to be able to move quickly into Ukraine if it was ordered to do so." While many of the Russian troops are 50 kilometers or more from Ukraine's border, some are just 6-7 kilometers away, according to RUSI's Sutyagin.

"In one hour some of these troops could be on the Ukrainian side, though for others it will take longer," he says. One of key aims of the Russian military transformation effort since 2008, according to Chatham House's Keir Giles, was to create "permanent readiness units" that need just an hour to move if required. "What we're seeing on the border doesn't necessarily mean Russia is preparing to invade," he says, "but it would seem to mean that Russia wishes to be fully prepared to launch an invasion if Vladimir Putin sees that it's necessary." Sutyagin says NATO is trying to show the Kremlin that even the slightest move now will provoke a disproportionately severe reaction. "NATO is telling Russia: 'Look, we are serious and we mean business. We're not going to keep silent over any of your moves, so you better just pull back.'"

Reforms to IMF hit serious deadlock: G20 official

Reuters, 13.04.2014



Reforms to the International Monetary Fund have hit a deadlock despite a declaration from global financial chiefs that they would move forward without the United States if it fails to ratify the changes by year-end, a G20 official said on Sunday.

The inability to proceed with giving emerging markets a more powerful voice at the IMF and shoring up the lender's resources appeared the most contentious issue for officials from the Group of 20 leading economies and the representatives for all IMF member nations who met over the weekend. In a final communique, G20 finance ministers and central bankers said they were "deeply disappointed" with the U.S. delay.

"Some said that we need to give the U.S. more space," the official, who participated in the G20 talks and spoke on conditions of anonymity, said. "I say we are at a dead end." Any attempt to break the package of reforms, proposed by the G20 in 2010, would be disastrous not only for the United States, but for the whole group, he said, because most countries have already gone through the ratification procedures. "If you pull the 2010 package apart, you will have to start anew," the official said. "And this factor cannot be overcome. How to overcome it? Nobody wants to go again through this process for the second time."

Emerging markets, most handicapped by the lack of reforms, expressed exasperation over the weekend that a four-year wait for the reforms is asking too much of them. But it is unclear what moves could be taken to overcome the impasse. There could be some ad hoc measures taken to achieve at least some of the governance overhaul for the global lender without formal U.S. approval. Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said developing nations may demand changes to the IMF's emergency borrowing mechanism if the United States does not approve the overhaul. Most of the solutions, however, giving the structure of decision making at the IMF, could not be implemented without the U.S. approval. U.S. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew said President Barack Obama's administration would do its best to push IMF quota reforms through the U.S. Congress this year.

Christine Lagarde, managing director of the IMF, said it is too early to talk about alternatives. "Plan A is going to be explored to the end, and in depth, but if that plan A doesn't work, then we will worry about plan B." For now, the G20 official said, there is no plan B. "There is nowhere to go," he said. "Initially, you have a discussion, but then when you move to details, there is nothing." The impasse in the reforms has already had some side effects, including the increase in regional funds that act on a smaller scale, but which altogether could potentially undermine the role of the IMF in the future. At the G20 meeting over the weekend, officials tried to stay optimistic that the U.S., despite complaints from some Republicans have that the changes would cost too much at a time Washington was running big budget deficits, will come forward. But the prospects are not promising, the G20 official said. "It is impossible to defend national interests, and we are all forced to do so, and not offer a breakthrough solution that would respond to current needs," he said. "At a time when the world has become multi-polar, why should one country should have the veto power?"

Iraq elections overshadowed by claims of corruption

Financial Times, 14.04.2014



Campaigning for Iraq's first national elections since US forces left the country in December 2011 is well under way, with posters covering the walls of the country's decaying buildings and political advertisements dominating the airwaves.

But a lack of transparency and perceptions of widespread corruption have undermined faith in the democratic process just as the country faces a growing insurgency spurred on by al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorists. Experts warn that Iraqi politics remain highly vulnerable to unseen, undeclared money both inside the country – flowing along patronage networks – and from regional powers eager to maintain their influence.

"For 11 years now [since the 2003 US-led invasion] the existing political parties have dug their roots deeply into the state," said Zaid al-Ali, a former UN adviser in Baghdad and the author of *The Struggle for Iraq's Future*, a book published this year.



“They control ministries [and] various state organisations and they pull a lot of money out of the state to buy votes and finance patronage networks.” Alia Nsaif, a lawmaker and member of parliament’s integrity committee, the anti-corruption watchdog, warned this month that money was already finding its way into the parties’ campaigns from abroad and from “the governmental corruption prevalent in this country”. Iraq’s parties need money to launch and run their own television channels, buy campaigning materials, fund religious celebrations and organise conferences and workshops – all as a way of mobilising voters as the April 30 elections approach. After eight years in power, Nouri al-Maliki, prime minister, is seeking a third term but this is far from a certainty, with voters tired of poor public services and renewed levels of violence as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, feeds off the conflict in Syria with extra recruits and weapons.

Last year the electoral commission approved rules that for the first time set ceilings of \$85,000 per candidate for campaigning, barred donations from abroad, required auditing of party campaign bank accounts and forbade the use of cash for big-ticket election spending. None of these regulations have the force of law, however, and although they stipulate possible fines for transgressions and even the invalidation of votes, few people believe the commission’s monitors will have the authority to enforce the rules or the political muscle to take on the most powerful parties. A potentially more important draft law that would regulate political parties is tied up in parliament. “In the absence of [this] law, no one will be able to know the source of financing for big or small parties,” said Ahmed Abbadi, a Baghdad-based legal expert and political analyst.

“A law forcing parties to disclose sources of funding is the only way to . . . really find out how much is being spent, from which funds, if a party is exceeding its spending limits and [if so], where this extra money is [going].” But, he added, the biggest parties were refusing to allow a vote on the proposed law because it would “expose their funding sources, most of which are coming from abroad”. In the meantime, about the only curb on corruption during the campaign with any force comes from the clergy, with Shia religious leaders in particular calling on politicians to keep their hands clean.

The allegations that the various blocs are supported by foreign cash is further poisoning already strained sectarian relations. Many accuse Iran, for example, of backing the country’s Shia parties, such as Ammar Hakim’s Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq; on the other hand, Sunni and secular parties such as al-Wataniya, led by former prime minister Iyad Allawi, are widely believed to receive funds from Saudi Arabia. “All political blocs in Iraq get funds from outside Iraq, especially the Shia religious blocs in parliament,” said Abbas Anbori, an adviser to one of the chamber’s deputy speakers. “Most of them are funded by Iran. They do not deny it and everybody in Iraq knows [it, while] the Saudis fund and subsidise many activities of the various Sunni blocs.”

Political insiders also claim that parties are siphoning off cash from well-connected businesses they helped to establish. This, they claim, involves ministries under the control of certain parties demanding backhanders for the award of state contracts. For instance, two years ago Iraqis were disgusted but not surprised after a leading politician, Salah Mutlaq, went on television to accuse a political party of paying the government millions of dollars provided by two businessmen “to facilitate deals with the defence ministry”. Without the patronage of a major party, however, it is well-nigh impossible to break into politics. Candidates who lack the support of a major party face stiff challenges to break into the political world. With the exception of a reformist party in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region, Goran, which won eight parliamentary seats in the 2010 elections as a result of frustration over corruption and entrenched interests, very few independent candidates or movements have made it into office.

Rouhani says Iran sanctions will unravel in months

Reuters, 14.04.2014



President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday international sanctions on Iran would unravel in months following negotiations with world powers on its nuclear program, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Some international sanctions imposed over Iran's nuclear program have been eased temporarily after a deal was reached last year, but Washington has said the lifting of sanctions can only happen "in total" after a comprehensive deal is reached. "With your support, this government has taken the first steps towards the lifting of the brutal sanctions ... We will witness the sanctions shattering in the coming months," Rouhani told.

"Today we already see the sanctions unraveling," he said, according to IRNA, referring to the modest easing of sanctions in return for concessions made by Rouhani's government in nuclear talks with world powers. World powers want Iran to curb its nuclear activity, which Western nations fear is aimed at giving Tehran the capability to make a nuclear weapon. Iran denies that, saying its nuclear program is only for power generation and civilian uses.

The sanctions have bitten deeply. In late 2012, Iran's economy was losing billions of dollars per month as sanctions slashed oil sales. Its currency plunged, inflation jumped and the economy went into recession. In an interim deal with Iran reached in November, U.S. and E.U. negotiators agreed to lift sanctions on sectors such as petrochemicals and precious metals for six months, with broader sanctions relief if Iran agrees to permanent curbs on its nuclear program.

The president blamed both the sanctions and "tactless policies" by the previous hardline administration of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for the economic hardship faced by his nation. "Due to the brutal sanctions and unwise administration, our country has faced myriad problems in the past years... but we will break down the inhuman sanctions," Rouhani said. "We will prove to the world through these negotiations that what has been said about Iran is a lie. Iran has never pursued nuclear weapons and never will."

Negotiators from Iran and the so-called P5+1 - the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany - met in Vienna last week to start drafting a long-term agreement on settling their decade-old nuclear dispute by a July 20 deadline. Western powers, along with Russia and China, want to prevent tensions in the Middle East from boiling over into a wider war or triggering a regional nuclear arms race. Iran exported oil at levels higher than allowed under the sanctions for a fourth straight month in February, ship loading data seen by Reuters showed, raising the risk of a crackdown if Washington feels economic pressure is being relaxed too quickly. Iran's main clients are mostly in Asia.

Iranian negotiators reject hard-line criticism of nuclear talks

Reuters, 16.04.2014



Iranian hardliners stepped up criticism of Tehran's negotiations with world powers over its nuclear program on Wednesday, but negotiators defended the planned deal that could lead to an end to economic sanctions. The hardliners, unsettled by the shift to a more moderate foreign policy since President Rouhani took office, have repeatedly criticized the talks in recent months but Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei backs them.

Iran and six world powers - the U.S., France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China - struck an interim deal in November under which Tehran agreed to limit some of its nuclear work in return for the easing some sanctions imposed on Iran.

They set a July 20 deadline to clinch a long-term deal that would allow a gradual lifting of all nuclear-related sanctions. In their latest charge, critics of the negotiations leaked an audio recording purporting to show Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi criticizing Rouhani's view of the nuclear program, the official IRNA news agency reported. Araghchi lashed out at his critics on Wednesday, saying the audio filed was "selected and distorted" and urging them not to play politics with what he called Iran's nuclear rights. "I am worried. How far is this toying with our national interests going to go?" he was quoted as saying by IRNA, which did not name his hardline critics but said they appeared to belong to the far-right Steadfast Front party.

Foreign Minister Javad Zarif told Reuters he did not fear opposition from hardliners and was optimistic about reaching a comprehensive agreement with world powers by July 20. "The domestic audience will be satisfied if we have a good deal," he said. "Of course some people will never be satisfied but that is fine because we have a pluralistic society." On Tuesday, the critics claimed Iran has had difficulty receiving billions of dollars of oil revenue unfrozen under an interim agreement struck with world powers in November.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, another deputy foreign minister, promptly denied that, saying Iran's central bank has had no problem accessing the unblocked funds. Araghchi, a key negotiator in the talks that produced the November interim deal, is one of the few carry-overs from the previous administration of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He has also participated in bilateral discussions with the United States. Iran and the six powers ended their latest round of talks in Vienna last week and said they would start drafting an agreement ahead of their next meeting there on May 13. The Islamic Republic denies accusations by Israel, Western powers and their allies that it has tried to develop the capability to produce atomic weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear energy program.

Putin says to speed up process of switching Crimea to ruble

Reuters, 17.04.2014



Russian President Mr Putin said that the country would speed up the process of switching Crimea's banking system to the ruble. Crimea has officially introduced the ruble and started paying out pensions and state salaries in the currency since the region voted overwhelmingly in favor of joining Russia on March 16.

Kiev and the West have denounced the annexation. "The (situation) in the banking sector has not been completely resolved," Putin said in a televised call-in with the nation. "The situation leaves no choice but to move to an accelerated circulation of the ruble."

Putin says annexation of Crimea partly a response to NATO enlargement

Reuters, 17.04.2014



President Vladimir Putin on Thursday said Russia had been forced to respond to NATO enlargement and that its annexation of Crimea, home to its Black Sea Fleet, was partly influenced by the Western military alliance's expansion into eastern Europe.

Putin said Moscow will respond if the United States moves ahead with plans to base elements of a missile defense shield in eastern Europe, accusing Washington of fuelling a Cold War-style arms race. "When the infrastructure of a military bloc is moving toward our borders, it causes us some concerns and questions. We need to take some steps in response," Putin said in a televised call-in with the nation.

"Our decision on Crimea was partly due to ... considerations that if we do nothing, then at some point, guided by the same principles, NATO will drag Ukraine in and they will say: 'It doesn't have anything to do with you.'" Putin accused the military bloc of 28 nations of seeking to squeeze Russia out of its historic stomping ground in the Black Sea region, where Russian warships are based in the Tsarist-era city of Sevastopol. "NATO ships would have ended up in the city of Russian navy glory, Sevastopol," Putin said.

Putin said Moscow wants to continue talks with Washington over its objections to U.S. missile defense plans, but would take all steps necessary to ensure its security. The Ukraine crisis has left ties between Russia and the West at their lowest ebb since the Cold War. Moscow has demanded binding guarantees from the United States and NATO that the defense system would not threaten Russian security, a non-starter in Washington because of strong opposition to any set restrictions on missile defenses. “The deployment of these systems near our borders cancels out our strategic land-based missile positions ... We have to do something in response. It is fuelling an arms race,” Putin said. “We will continue these negotiations but in any case we will do everything possible to guarantee the security of the Russian people.”

Russia's Vladimir Putin still has friends in the west

Financial Times, 17.04.2014



John Kerry has a nice phrase. The west will respond to Russia's 19th-century behaviour with 21st-century tools. The US secretary of state is missing something. Leaving aside whether Europeans can summon the political will to impose serious economic costs on Moscow for its march into Ukraine, there is another dimension to the conflict. Vladimir Putin has been winning the propaganda war.

Mr Putin, has dusted down the disinformation playbooks of the cold war. He has added an expensive 21st-century gloss, harnessing news, digital networks and social media to the Kremlin's cause.

Given the state's iron grip on the domestic media it is unsurprising that Mr Putin commands strong support at home. The stifling of internal dissent has seen him tap a powerful emotion – nationalism rooted in grievance. He is far from alone in seeing the collapse of the Soviet Union as a catastrophe and the US as the author of Russia's subsequent ills. The foreigners are to blame. More striking is the impact that the sharp, well-funded propaganda strategy has had on opinion beyond Russia. Much public sentiment, particularly in Europe, runs from indifference to a sense that Mr Putin may have a point. If he turns Ukraine into a failed state, what is in it for others to interfere? Doesn't democratic Europe have troubles enough of its own?

The Kremlin starts with the credo that if you repeat a lie often enough, and with sufficient conviction, some will imagine it a truth. Thus the heavily armed Russian troops who annexed Crimea were said to be local militias. This was asserted with an entirely straight face. The latest seizures of government buildings in eastern Ukraine is likewise characterised as an act of self-defence by Russian speakers. It is an old and effective trick – provocateurs stir up unrest giving Moscow an excuse to intervene “in defence” of the locals. Such blatant dissembling is not available to democratic states with a free media. Journalists, rightly, make their own judgments.



The clarity of the west's counter-message is anyway clouded by differences among governments – between the US and Europe and within the EU. Some in Europe want a robust response; others, such as Hungary's Viktor Orbán, rather admire Mr Putin's authoritarian nationalism. Territorial land grabs cannot get in the way of business. The self-appointed poster boy for this "realism" is Joe Kaeser, the chief executive of the German engineering company Siemens. After the annexation of Crimea, Mr Kaeser made a personal pilgrimage to Mr Putin's residence outside Moscow. Siemens sells a lot of equipment in Russia and, as Mr Kaeser told the newspaper Bild, "dialogue is for us an essential part of long-term relationships". Europe's peace and security must take their place in the queue.

Italy's policy towards Russia has often seemed to have been written by the energy group Eni. After visiting Rome, I have the impression nothing much has changed under the new centre-left government of Matteo Renzi. French defence companies have lucrative export contracts to worry about, while Britain's BP is concerned about losing hefty dividends from its Russian energy interests. Then there are the London-based financial institutions who wash and press Russian roubles, and the expensive public relations outfits, such as Portland Communications, who are ready to polish Mr Putin's image. The parties of the xenophobic right who hope to prosper in next month's European elections are more shameless still in their backing for Moscow. They share Mr Putin's authoritarian instincts and cultural conservatism. He can count on the support of the neo-Nazi Jobbik in Hungary and Golden Dawn in Greece. Nigel Farage, the head of the UK Independence party, has been positively gushing about the Russian president. Marine le Pen, who heads France's National Front, accuses the EU of hypocrisy over Crimea.

On the same side – though for different reasons – stand old-fashioned conservative "realists". They take a 19th-century view of international relations. Tough as it may seem to liberals, the west should focus on its narrow interests. Just as the US once had its Monroe Doctrine, Russia has the right to exercise suzerainty over former provinces of the Soviet Union. The expansion of the EU and Nato to Russia's borders was indeed provocative. In this world view, Ukraine is no more than an unlucky pawn on the great power chessboard.

Perhaps the world is heading back to the 19th century. The realists can at least claim clarity and conviction. This cannot be said of apologists on the liberal left, who seem entirely indifferent to Mr Putin's internal repression and external aggression. The west, according to Helmut Schmidt, the former German chancellor, should not get so "worked up" about Ukraine. Parallels are drawn between Russia's land grab and the west's intervention in Kosovo. Except no one wanted to annex Kosovo. High quality global journalism requires investment. Except no one wanted to annex Kosovo.

Left-leaning academics cite the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan in order to draw a phoney moral equivalence between Russia and the US. The logic is at very best twisted. If US military adventurism was so heinous, how can it be acceptable for Russian troops to trample over Ukraine? Am I missing something? Or does liberal postmodernism now inhabit a perverse world where if it is anti-American it must be right? Ultimately, the west's democratic diversity is its strength. Its cities are full of Russians. Mr Putin's apologists would not dream of running off to live in Moscow. Nor can Moscow's effort to destroy Ukraine hide the simple fact that Tsar Vladimir is leading Russia into precipitate decline. But Europeans need to learn to speak up again for their values. The continent's freedom, peace and security have long been taken for granted.

EU agrees to Putin's call for gas security talks

Reuters, 17.04.2014



The European Union told Russian President Vladimir Putin it is willing to hold talks with Moscow and Kiev on gas security as the bloc scrambles to defuse a deep political crisis over Russia's annexation of Crimea.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, replying to a letter Putin sent last week to 18 EU countries, accepted Putin's proposal for three-way talks. "The European Union agrees on your proposal for consultations with the Russian Federation and Ukraine with regard to security of gas supply and transit," Barroso said in his reply, released by the European Commission on Thursday.

Putin warned EU leaders a week ago that Russia would cut natural gas supplies to Ukraine if it did not pay its more than \$2 billion gas debt and said this could lead to a reduction of onward deliveries to Europe. The EU has voiced outrage over Moscow's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region and is extremely nervous about the energy implications of the conflict as Ukraine is a major transit route for Russian gas. Russia provides Europe with roughly one third of its gas imports, some 40 percent of which flow via Ukraine. Russia also provides Ukraine with around half of its domestic gas needs. Putin said Russia had been assisting Ukraine with cut-price gas for years and blamed Ukraine's economic and political crisis on the EU.

Barroso hit back at that criticism and said the European Union, as part of an International Monetary Fund aid package, was already providing support to Ukraine. Ukraine's gas debts and import prices should be considered as part of that, he said. Barroso reiterated his call on Russia to respect contractual commitments on gas supplies. "I would like to recall that supply contracts are between European companies and Gazprom. It therefore continues to be Gazprom's responsibility to ensure the deliveries of the required volumes as agreed in the supply contracts," he wrote. Barroso reminded Russia it had a duty to warn Europe before taking "any unilateral steps" in a reference to an early warning system set up between the EU and Russia in response to previous gas supply crises due to price spats between Russia and Ukraine.

Putin says Russia has no interest in new 'Iron Curtain'

Reuters, 17.04.2014



Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday, April 17; that Russia would not seek to cut itself off from the outside world with a Soviet Union style Iron Curtain. "The Iron Curtain is a Soviet invention," President Putin said during a live televised call-in with the nation. "We have no intention of closing off our country and our society from anyone."

During the televised program, Mr. Putin accepted questions. When the Russian President was asked by journalists whether he would be willing to remain president for life, Mr. Putin basically answered the question with a precise answer: "No."

Italy request to push back budget targets dismays Brussels

Financial Times, 17.04.2014



Italy's new government led by Matteo Renzi has raised concern in the European Commission by requesting an extra year to reach agreed budget targets, citing "exceptional circumstances" and the need to raise debt levels.

Pier Carlo Padoan, finance minister, sent a written request to the commission on Wednesday as part of its 2014 economic and financial document requiring approval from Brussels, which formally replied that it would deliver its assessment on June 2nd. EU officials on Thursday privately conveyed their concerns to Rome. "Brussels is very upset," commented one senior Italian official who asked not to be named.

Officials in Brussels said the commission was expected to push back Rome's demand for greater fiscal flexibility. "The Commission will be firm," said a senior EU official. "Other member states, Germany on top of the list, will make it clear that we can't allow any delays. "Italy like other member states has to remain on course with its effort to implement structural reforms and meet its budgetary goals." Citing the "severe recession" that set Italy back in 2012 and 2013, Mr Padoan wrote that Italy wanted to "deviate temporarily from the budget targets" and that because of "exceptional circumstances" the government had decided to accelerate the payment owed by the public.

Italy is now aiming for a balanced structural budget in 2016 rather than the 2015 target agreed with Mario Monti's technocrat government in 2012. A year earlier, then prime minister Silvio Berlusconi had promised a balanced structural budget by 2013. Both chambers of Italy's parliament on Thursday voted in favour of the government's economic plan and targets, following sharp exchanges over Mr Padoan's letter to Brussels with Mr Berlusconi's opposition Forza Italia party. Mr Padoan described the debate over his letter as a "storm in a teacup".

Brussels officials said that they were not surprised by the move. "Whenever a new prime minister arrives they always want to change everything but after a while in their job they realise that they need to stick to what has already been agreed," an official commented. In its attempt to drive growth and jobs by cutting some income taxes and public spending, Mr Renzi's government has raised the projection for this year's fiscal deficit to 2.6 per cent of GDP from 2.5 per cent, and next year's projection to 1.8 per cent from 1.6 per cent. The target for Italy's public debt, now running at some €2.1tn, has been raised to 134.9 per cent of GDP this year from 132.8 per cent previously, falling to a targeted 133.3 per cent in 2015.

Analysts suggested that Mr Renzi would even welcome a confrontation with Brussels as a potential vote winner ahead of next month's European parliamentary elections, which will be seen in part as a referendum on the performance of Italy's unelected prime minister, who came to office by ousting his predecessor, Enrico Letta, through an internal party power struggle in February. Debt markets appeared unmoved by Italy's request to put back its budget target, with the yield on 10-year bonds rising just above record lows. The Treasury on Thursday received orders totalling €20.6bn for a six-year inflation-linked bond, with requests almost evenly divided between retail and institutional investors. Bloomberg reported that the Treasury last week had raised its 2014 gross funding target by €20bn to €470bn because of the extra state payments to companies for overdue debts.

Iran cuts sensitive nuclear stockpile, key plant delayed: IAEA

Reuters, 17.04.2014



Iran has acted to cut its most sensitive nuclear stockpile by nearly 75 percent in implementing a landmark pact with world powers, but a planned facility it will need to fulfill the six-month deal has been delayed, a United Nations report showed on Thursday.

The monthly update by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which has a pivotal role in verifying that Iran is living up to its part of the accord, made clear that Iran so far is undertaking the agreed steps to curb its nuclear program. As a result, Iran is gradually gaining access to some previously blocked overseas funds.



Japan has made two more payments totaling \$1 billion to Iran for crude imports, two sources with knowledge of the transactions said. Under the breakthrough agreement that took effect on January 20, Iran halted some parts of its disputed nuclear program in exchange for a limited easing of international sanctions that have battered the major oil producer's economy. It was designed to buy time for negotiations on a permanent settlement of the decade-old dispute over nuclear activities that Iran says are peaceful but the West fears may be aimed at developing atomic bomb capability. Those talks got under way in February and the next meeting is due on May 13 in Vienna.

The IAEA update showed that Iran had - as stipulated by the November 24 agreement with the United States, France, Germany, Britain, China and Russia - diluted half of its higher-grade enriched uranium reserve to a fissile content less prone to bomb proliferation. One of the payments from Japan, of \$450 million on April 15, was contingent on Iran meeting this target. It has also continued to convert the other half of its holding of uranium gas refined to a 20 percent fissile purity - a relatively short technical stage below 90 percent weapons-grade material - into oxide for making reactor fuel.

Together, Iran has in the last three months either diluted or fed into the conversion process a total of almost 155 kg (340 pounds) of its higher-grade uranium gas, which amounted to 209 kg when the deal took effect. That will be seen as a positive development by Western powers as it lengthens the time Iran would need for any effort to produce a nuclear weapon. Iran says it is only refining uranium to fuel nuclear reactors, not to make bombs. The IAEA report also pointed to a new delay in Iran's construction of a facility that is designed to turn low-enriched uranium gas (LEU) into oxide powder that is not suitable for further processing into highly-enriched bomb-grade uranium. Iran told the IAEA last month that the plant would be commissioned on April 9 and that operations would start once that had been completed.

But Thursday's IAEA update said the commissioning had been delayed, without giving any reason. However, "Iran has indicated to the agency that this will not have an adverse impact on the implementation of Iran's undertaking" to convert the uranium gas, it said. The delay means that Iran's LEU stockpile - which it agreed to limit under the November 24 agreement - is almost certainly continuing to increase for the time being since its production of the material has not stopped, unlike that of the 20 percent uranium gas.

Diplomats and experts said earlier this matter was of no immediate concern since Iran's commitment concerns the size of the stockpile towards the end of the deal, in late July, meaning it has time both to complete the site and convert enough LEU. But they also say that the Islamic Republic's progress in building the conversion line will be closely watched. The longer it takes to complete it, the more Iran will have to process to meet the target in three months' time. Under the interim deal, Iran will get a total of \$4.2 billion in eight installments over the January-July period if it meets its commitments. After Japan's latest payments, it has received \$2.55 billion. South Korea, another importer of Iranian oil, has made one payment.

Four-way talks end with agreement on calming Ukraine tensions

Financial Times, 18.04.2014



International talks between Ukraine, Russia, the US and the EU ended in Geneva on Thursday evening with an agreement on a plan to calm tensions in Ukraine. As foreign ministers arrived at Geneva, diplomats were playing down hopes of substantial progress, given the big differences between the delegations on how to resolve the latest round of conflict in Ukraine's east.

However, after seven hours of negotiations, the Russian foreign minister, and his US and Ukrainian counterparts said a statement had been agreed calling for the disbanding of armed groups, the vacation of occupied streets and buildings, and an amnesty for people detained during the unrest.

In addition, Ukraine will embark on a process of constitutional reform designed to foster regional autonomy, local self-government and the protection of minority rights, a process which both Mr Kerry and Mr Lavrov stressed must be "inclusive, transparent, and accountable". "The Geneva meeting on the situation in Ukraine agreed on initial concrete steps to de-escalate tensions and restore security for all citizens," the joint statement said. "All sides must refrain from any violence, intimidation or provocative actions."

Mr Kerry and Mr Lavrov said Russia and the US would provide additional staff to the OSCE mission already present in Ukraine to bolster efforts to calm the situation. "My hope is that we actually do see follow through over the next several days, but I don't think given past performance that we can count on that, so we need to be prepared to potentially respond to what continue to be efforts at interference by the Russians in eastern and southern Ukraine," President Barack Obama said. The White House said Mr Obama agreed in a phone call with German chancellor Angela Merkel that "the United States and Europe are prepared to take further measures if this de-escalation does not occur in short order." The unexpected agreement will come as a relief to those European countries anxious of the effects on their economies if they are pressured into increasing sanctions on Russia.

It emerged on Thursday that EU governments have received confidential calculations from Brussels weighing up the effect that sanctions would have on each country's gross domestic product as well as on individual sectors. According to several foreign ministries, the countries have until Tuesday to study the report and respond with their own assessments of their vulnerability in the case of a showdown with Russia. This will lead to final verdicts on whether each country is at "low", "medium" or "high" risk. The European Commission's risk assessments could lay the ground for a possible emergency meeting of national leaders in Brussels to discuss whether the 28-member bloc is able to launch broad sanctions against Moscow should the crisis remain unresolved or even worsen. On Monday, EU foreign ministers said such a meeting could happen next week but a date has not been confirmed.

Europe is deeply split over whether to take strong action. Some of the states that will suffer the worst economic consequences from a clash, such as the Baltic countries and Poland, argue that tough measures are nevertheless required to stop Moscow from trying to control the former eastern bloc by force. Countries such as Germany, the UK and Italy are far more cautious. Rome says it wants to delay a decision on sanctions. Cyprus has suggested compensation for any sanctions that would damage its banking system, which is heavily dependent on Russian depositors. Such opposition to sanctions makes consensus difficult but unanimity would be required for hard-hitting measures. Despite the delegates' success in agreeing Thursday's statement, the foreign ministers acknowledged the real test would be whether the agreed steps began to be implemented in the coming days. Indeed, many of the points in the multilateral agreement resembled previous attempts to quell the crisis, which were quickly disregarded by elements of all sides of the dispute. For example, the disbanding of armed groups was part of the original February deal brokered by EU foreign ministers before then-President Viktor Yanukovich fled the country.

In his press conference on Thursday, Mr Lavrov stressed that the disbanding of illegally armed groups must include all such groups, in a thinly veiled reference to veterans of the Maidan protests in Kiev, including Right Sector, a radical group that emerged during the protests in late January. Mr Deshchytsia acknowledged this would be a "very sensitive issue" but said Ukraine would have to find a way to achieve it. "Security is more important," he told reporters. "This [disbanding] will address all those who have arms. It is very important that these people are redirected to more peaceful ways of protest – if they need to protest." Mr Deshchytsia reiterated Ukraine's willingness to carry out significant constitutional reforms but stressed that the next few days would be crucial if the agreement were to lead to a lasting de-escalation. Mr Kerry echoed this stance, saying: "I made clear to foreign minister Lavrov today, that if we're not able to see progress on the immediate efforts

to implement the principles of this agreement this weekend, then we will have no choice but to impose further costs on Russia." However, he insisted that the US had not come to Geneva to be threatening and was hopeful that the talks would help create the circumstances that would "provide space for further de-escalation." Mr Kerry and Mr Lavrov both also said that additional measures could be taken to stabilise the Ukrainian economy, which has been badly affected by the crisis. However, they stopped short of unveiling concrete measures.



Announcements & Reports

▶ *The Sources of Russian Conduct*

Source : Council on Foreign Relations
Weblink : <http://www.cfr.org/ukraine/sources-russian-conduct/p32785>

▶ *Iraq in Crisis*

Source : Center for Strategic and International Studies
Weblink : <https://csis.org/publication/iraq-crisis-0>

▶ *Evolving Threats and Strategic Partnerships in the Gulf*

Source : Center for Strategic and International Studies
Weblink : <https://csis.org/publication/evolving-threats-and-strategic-partnerships-gulf>

▶ *The Challenges to Transition in Afghanistan: 2014-2015*

Source : Center for Strategic and International Studies
Weblink : <https://csis.org/publication/challenges-transition-afghanistan-2014-2015>

▶ *The Need for a New “Realism” in the US-Saudi Alliance*

Source : Center for Strategic and International Studies
Weblink : <https://csis.org/publication/need-new-realism-us-saudi-alliance>

▶ *A Delicate Balance: The EU 2030 Climate Framework*

Source : Center for Strategic and International Studies
Weblink : <https://csis.org/publication/delicate-balance-eu-2030-climate-framework>

▶ *The State of U.S. Power: Perceptions across the Globe*

Source : Center for Strategic and International Studies
Weblink : <https://csis.org/publication/state-us-power-perceptions-across-globe>

▶ *Afghanistan after the Drawdown*

Source : Center for Strategic and International Studies
Weblink : <https://csis.org/publication/afghanistan-after-drawdown>



Upcoming Events

► *3rd World Turkic Forum*

Date : 28 – 30 May 2014
Place : Edirne – Turkey
Website : http://www.tasam.org/en/Etkinlik/579/3rd_world_turkic_forum

► *International Conference on Emergence of India as an Economic Superpower: Challenges and Opportunities*

Date : 29 April 2014
Place : Udaipur - India
Website : <http://www.mlsu.ac.in/showpdf.php?cat=Conferences>

► *4th Global Conference Forum for Economists International*

Date : 30 May 2014
Place : Amsterdam - Netherlands
Website : <http://www.f4ei.org/>

► *9th International Turkish - African Congress*

Date : 24 – 25 April 2014
Place : Turkey
Website : http://www.tasam.org/en/Etkinlik/592/9th_international_turkish_-_african_congress

► *European Energy Horizons 2014*

Date : 8 May 2014
Place : Stockholm - Sweden
Website : <http://www.economistinsights.com/energy/event/european-energy-horizons-2014?region%5B4%5D=4®ion%5B7%5D=7>

► *3rd World Turkic Forum*

Date : 28 - 30 May 2014
Place : Edirne - Turkey
Website : http://www.tasam.org/en/Etkinlik/579/3rd_world_turkic_forum

► *The 5th International Conference on Business and Economics 2014*

Date : 1-3 June 2014
Place : Madrid - Spain
Website : <http://www.icbe.co>