

Turkish PM Davutoglu signals softening tone to avoid polarization

Hurriyet Daily News, 15.09.2014



Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has said he is trying to use a softer tone in order to ease polarization in society, while blaming the opposition for political tensions in Turkey.

“A new era has started, we have had a new president and a new government for the last month. No one has doubts over the fair and legitimate election of the new president. He made a call on Aug. 10, signaled the start of a new era, and has not been a part of any political debate since,” Davutoglu said. “Who did not participate in the oath-taking ceremony? [...] That is the polarizing attitude,” he added, criticizing the opposition.

Davutoglu slammed main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu for his “attitude” against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. “Our president said he was ready to talk to anyone, but Kilicdaroglu’s answer to that was ‘I will not talk so long as there is not a war.’ Can there be more polarizing language than this? Do we need a war for the president and the main opposition leader to talk?” he said. The prime minister said Kilicdaroglu did not congratulate him when he was elected leader of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), but he called the CHP leader after the recent congress that confirmed Kilicdaroglu as his party’s leader. “I do not expect support from him, the opposition will be the opposition, but courtesy ... I called him the day he won his party’s congress and only then did he congratulate me,” he said.

“Have you heard a polarizing statement from me since I took the office? No. But Kilicdaroglu still uses them, [Nationalist Movement Party Leader, MHP, Devlet] Bahceli still uses them. I address Kilicdaroglu and Bahceli: I am your peer now, not our president. Our president is now in a position beyond politics,” Davutoglu said. “I have been speaking every day over the last three weeks, has there been any polarizing language or stance in my speeches? But the opposition is trying to test our patience,” he added. “From now on, our president and the presidential post should not be subject to debates. Every debate and all tension regarding this post will disturb the nature of politics in Turkey, makes it impossible to settle.

Political debates take place in Parliament, take place between the government and the opposition, and they should take place with respectful language,” he said. The prime minister added that he has always appreciated Bahceli for his politeness in his personal speeches, but his tone becomes harsh when he reads out texts. “Those who write the texts control Bahceli’s wording in such speeches,” he said. “I expect him to use a language compatible with political delicacy. Personal politeness should be reflected in politics. If they don’t respect this post, they cannot expect respect from us.” Davutoglu also criticized the opposition parties’ decision to nominate a joint candidate for the presidential post in the August election.



“What we call a joint candidate is in fact reflective of the March 12 [1970 coup] era: If a president cannot be elected by the normal process, imposing something outside of the democratic process ... They wanted to put Turkey in a transition period, to put it in turbulence. How much of our gross national product, how much of our reputation we would have lost to get out of that turbulence? No one thought about that,” he said. Davutoglu added that despite “scenarios of chaos,” the transformation following the Aug. 10 presidential elections was completed smoothly. “For the first time in Turkey, the handover of the presidential post was done with ease, in front of the eyes of the whole world, as a festivity between two friends who come from the same political movement.

I was tasked with forming the new government and the Cabinet was announced 11 hours later. We overcame two obstacles, the local elections and the presidential elections, by strengthening our institutionalization and increasing our political support. This is not an elected government of eight months; it was built on 12 years of experience. No one should expect new turbulence in Turkey before the general elections,” he said. The prime minister also touched on the Kurdish peace process, saying it aimed to solve ethnic and sectarian-based discrimination. “What makes a state is the strength of the citizens’ feelings of belonging. Ethnic and sectarian-based discrimination loosens the social structure. What we have achieved with the solution process is to have strengthened these ties. Technical details may be debated, what matters is that people saying ‘I’m happy to be a citizen of this country,’ feeling that they are a part of this country and this society,” he said, also describing the peace process is the “sole success story” in the Middle East at present.

“We have come a long way since 2012. While ethnic and sectarian-based conflicts are rising in Iraq and Syria, we are carrying out the solution process. Currently, there is only one success story in the Middle East, and it is Turkey’s solution process. There is not any other success story, but I wish there were,” he said. Davutoglu added that public order and the peace process were not “alternatives” to each other. “We will not tolerate actions that damage public order because we have an ongoing solution process. We have a clear road map, but it is not right at this point to go into the details. I want to add that there is no difference between the information the military has or with what the civilian branches have. I have met our Chief of General Staff three times in the last 10 days. We have come to this point from very difficult places.

That is why we will not easily abandon the process, and we will not sacrifice it to any provocation,” he said, adding that Ankara will meet with any “honest” actors in the region. “We met with the Democratic Union Party [PYD] leader Salih Muslim and he came here. We can meet again, there is no problem with this. If the PYD had listened to us in 2013 and kept a distance from the Syrian regime, their relations with us today would have been different. Today they are more careful, trying to send more cautious messages, and we are taking note of this,” Prime Minister Davutoglu said. “The latest developments prove that we were right in the ‘zero problems with neighbors’ policy. [Nouri] al-Maliki, who had problems not with Turkey, but with his own people, is gone. [Iraqi Prime Minister Haider] al- Abadi told me over the phone the other day that they wanted to open a new page. The problems stemmed not from my ‘zero problems’ policy, but from al-Maliki. If the regime changes in Syria tomorrow, we will continue relations the way they were,” he added.

I will meet prime minister if he wants, says CHP leader Kilicdaroglu

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Turkey's main opposition leader has welcomed Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's remarks on the levels of polarization in the country, saying he will meet with Davutoglu if necessary in the future.

"The prime minister is right that I did not call him to congratulate him, I respect his criticism on that," Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu said. "As you know, we had a congress at that time and things were very busy. But if a request comes from the prime minister to meet about a problem of the country, or if his ministers feel the need to inform us, we will always do what is necessary."

Kilicdaroglu said he welcomed Davutoglu's remarks that social and political polarization is a problem that should be addressed, but argued that the side to blame was the ruling party. "The first thing he did after becoming prime minister was to criticize the CHP, I believe he forgets what he said very quickly. Still, beyond all this, if they want courtesy in politics, then I welcome this," said the CHP leader. "However, the prime minister says we are responsible for the polarization, when the whole world knows that Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been using polarization as a method to consolidate his electorate. Doesn't Davutoglu know that?" Kilicdaroglu added. He said Davutoglu's remarks that he will aim not to have a polarizing political stance were important, but "time will tell whether he will be able to live up to his words."

Kilicdaroglu also said it was the CHP's duty as a main opposition party to voice the mistakes of the government, and this should not be considered as polarizing the country. "We will continue our criticism. We cannot ignore corruption, we cannot keep silent if 301 workers in Soma are sent to their deaths, if tens of workers fall victim to the wild capitalism every day. If some say that such criticism is polarizing, that is not right. The government should lend an ear to such criticism," he said. The CHP leader also added that his party would show respect to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan "as long as he respects the laws and stays committed to the Constitution. "We did not attend the oath-taking ceremony because laws were broken," said Kilicdaroglu. "It should not be forgotten that there were serious accusations of corruption regarding him and his family before he was elected the president. We will keep our relations at a distance until he is cleared of those accusations. The presidency is a post suitable for people who do not carry any single stain on their name," Kilicdaroglu said.

Turkish President Erdogan warns Moody's and Fitch over assessments

Hurriyet Daily News, 16.09.2014



President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has accused rating agencies Moody's Investors Service and Fitch Ratings of political motives in their assessments of the Turkish economy, warning Ankara could "cut its ties" with them. Both Moody's and Fitch have warned of the potential impact of continued political uncertainty following former prime minister Erdogan's victory on Aug. 10 in the country's first direct presidential election.

Local media quoted Erdogan as telling reporters that such statements were "politically motivated" rather than based on assessments of the economy.

"We stopped our cooperation with Standard Poor's and if they continue on this path, I can tell the prime minister to stop cooperation with these two also. We haven't reached that point yet," the Hurriyet daily quoted Erdogan as saying. Standard Poor's said last year it had failed to reach a deal to offer a full rating for Turkey and would only issue "unsolicited" assessments - meaning it is not paid by Turkey to provide coverage but does so anyway to meet investor needs.

The country responded angrily in May 2012 when SP cut the outlook on its sovereign credit rating to stable from positive. Erdogan warned at the time that Ankara may no longer "recognise" the agency, calling its decision "ideological". Fitch, which rates Turkey BBB- with a stable outlook, said last Thursday that the central bank may face growing political pressure to cut interest rates despite rising inflation in the run-up to a general election next June. Moody's, which has a Baa3 rating on Turkey with a negative outlook, warned last month that Erdogan's victory in the presidential election did not resolve the country's credit challenges and that uncertainty would persist.

No time to waste to solve Cyprus issue

Anadolu Agency, 16.09.2014



Turkey's Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has called on all parties to work together to set a peace-making example in Cyprus. Speaking on Tuesday at a joint press conference with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) President Dervis Eroglu in Lefkosa, Davutoglu said: "This is the time to act."

"I call on Mr Anastasiadis – the Greek Cypriot administration leader – from here, let's make this peace as soon as possible, not tomorrow but today, not next week but this week, not next year but this year." "Every postponed solution actually deepens deadlock, let's not postpone it," he added.

Davutoglu called on Greek Prime Minister Andonis Samaras to work towards a peaceful resolution on the decades-old deadlock, saying: "If the Greek Prime Minister Honorable is ready, let's go to the South first, take a tea together, have a chat." "Then let's come to the North and get together again. The Mediterranean has been the common sea of so many civilizations and nations. Let's together build peace here." He continued: "We wanted the Island of Cyprus to be an island of peace so that peace, prosperity and tranquility come to Eastern Mediterranean through the peace established in Cyprus." "We wanted that Turkey, Greece, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Greek Cypriot administration to sit around the same table and think about how can we make the Eastern Mediterranean a basin of peace, however, no matter how a strong will we have used, unfortunately we did not find a response we wanted."

Regarding the negotiations process in Cyprus, the prime minister said: "The U.N General Assembly will convene soon. Bring the sides together at that General Assembly. Keep them in a closed room for days if necessary. Let peace come to that room, peace and stability should come to the Eastern Mediterranean." Referring to the possible case of a rotational government being established following the negotiations, he said: "I am talking about Cyprus with a Turkish Cypriot and a Greek Cypriot president. I will be the first to visit here whether it is a Greek Cypriot or a Turkish Cypriot president." "If Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots appoint their representatives for the State of Cyprus together as friendly peoples, we will not care whether that is a Turkish or a Greek Cypriot."

A fresh round of negotiations to solve the Cyprus issue will be held on Tuesday between Eroglu and Anastasiadis and interdelegational negotiations will continue on Wednesday. The island of Cyprus has remained divided into Greek and Turkish sides since a Greek Cypriot coup was followed by a Turkish peace mission to aid Turkish Cypriots in the north in 1974. Negotiations over Cyprus resumed after a 2004 deal put forward by the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to reunify the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities. The plan was defeated by a no vote in a referendum on the Greek side of the island, whereas Turkish Cypriots voted in favor.

Turkey safeguards key sites, feeling threatened in region

Hurriyet Daily News, 16.09.2014



Increasing instability in its volatile region and prospects of tensions and conflict have urged Ankara to rethink its defense against precision strike attacks from mostly state actors. Most of Turkey's "sensitive sites" can no longer be defended without new, sophisticated systems.

"We have too many such sites and practically no defense against precision strikes," one official said. "We are moving ahead to correct the situation." Recently, Turkey's defense procurement agency, the Undersecretariat for Defense Industries (SSM), invited bids for a contract designed specifically for that purpose: Protection of "sensitive sites."

A total of 11 Turkish defense electronics companies responded to requests for information: state-controlled Aselsan, Havelsan and Havelsan's electronic warfare specialist Havelsan Elektronik Harp Sistemleri; and privately-owned companies Aydin Yazilim, GATE, Meteksan, Ortadogu Savunma, SELEX and Yaltes. SSM said the program involved sophisticated protection against "guided weapons." Officials say "sensitive sites" may include present and future bridges on the Bosphorus, selected military and air bases and command centers, and future nuclear energy plants and some dams. "This is not an anti-terror program. Here the defined threat is sophisticated missile technology, which can only come from hostile states," one official explained. He said the planned protection system would be similar to naval protection systems. It would consist of sophisticated sensors, missile detection systems, jamming and deception systems and air defense guns.

SSM officials say the program may cost the government a few hundred million dollars, depending on the number of sites to be protected. "The idea originated when the state pipeline company felt that its own security services may fail in the event of a concerted or sophisticated attack on any Turkish pipeline. We think this task requires the services of a professional company or companies for an integrated system," one procurement official said. Botaş, the state pipeline company, runs pipelines that are thousands of kilometers long and currently operates its own security system for protection. The procurement official said the proposed system would feature cameras, drones, a command and control center and a rapid reaction force. "Depending on the features that will be chosen, this program may cost up to a few hundred million dollars," he said.

Last month, SSM also opened a bidding process to procure integrated security systems for all oil and natural gas pipelines in the country. The planned security systems will be for all existing pipelines, others that will be built, and management facilities and units on these pipelines, according to the SSM's response to the request for information. The integrated security systems will protect pipeline facilities from threats like sabotage and theft, the document also states. SSM has begun to respond to bidders as of yesterday, and the contenders will be asked to make bids no later than Oct. 15.

The program intends to provide protection for existing and future pipelines especially in Turkey's southeast. The project comes at a time when oil revenues are a lifeline for the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq, whose peshmerga forces are being supported by U.S. air strikes in their battle against the radical Sunni militants of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). A pipeline, which first began operating at the start of this year, allows the semi-autonomous Kurdish enclave to independently pump and export oil, carrying northern Iraqi Taq Taq crude to Turkey's Mediterranean export outlet of Ceyhan.

The KRG began independently exporting its crude via Ceyhan in May, a move that has infuriated Baghdad, which claims the sole authority to manage Iraqi oil. Baghdad has tried to block KRG's oil sales and prevented some cargoes from discharging through legal action, but the Kurdish enclave has managed to keep loading cargoes from Ceyhan. So far, 7.8 million barrels of Kurdish oil have flowed through the independent pipeline, of which 6.5 million have been loaded onto tankers for export. But Turkey also hopes it will be destined to evolve into a more robust economic and political power with gas from the Caspian Sea set to move from the Southern Caucasus to Europe through Turkish territory.

Turkey opens border after tension between Syrian Kurds

Hurriyet Daily News, 19.09.2014



Turkish authorities opened the border with Syria on Sept. 19 to let hundreds of Kurds fleeing from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) to cross into Turkey. "We will take in our brothers fleeing to Anatolia from Syria or any other place without any ethnic or sectarian discrimination," Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said Sept. 19 during his visit to Azerbaijan. "The entries have started now," he said.

The measure came a few hours after tension broke between security forces and locals who reacted against officials who were keeping Syrian refugees waiting at the border with the province of Şanlıurfa.

Turkish police and troops resorted to tear gas and water cannon to disperse the crowd that massed near the wire fence separating the two countries, Doğan News Agency reported. The report also said a woman was injured after stepping on a land mine that triggered an explosion. Live television footage showed Syrian Kurds, mostly women and children, crossing to the Turkish side of the border in the southeastern village of Dikmetaş, under tight security. Sounds of gunfire were still being heard in Dikmetaş, in a sign of ongoing clashes, reports said. "We have taken in 4,000 brothers. The number might increase. Their needs will be met. This is a humanitarian mission," Davutoglu said. "As long as Turkey remains strong, and has a capacity, it will help everyone seeking refuge," he added.

The move came a day after Davutoglu announced Ankara's intention to provide assistance to Syrian Kurds inside Syria, adding that the border would only be opened in the event of increased security threats. During a press conference late Sept. 18, Davutoglu said he had instructed the governors of border provinces to provide assistance to Syrians in need. Thousands of Syrian Kurds fled their homes after ISIL's latest offensive on Kobane, one of the three cantons of Rojava. Monitoring groups said the jihadists had seized 21 villages, using heavy weaponry in the attacks, while locals warned that the group was committing massacres and kidnapping women in the newly seized areas.

Turkey's trade shrinks with war-torn neighbors Iraq and Syria

Hurriyet Daily News, 15.09.2014



Turkey's foreign trade with its two southern neighbors, both engulfed in violent conflicts, does not look good. There is a decline in the Iraqi market, which is Turkey's second most important market with an annual trade volume of \$9 billion. In Syria, war has inflicted a heavy blow on commerce.

The Iraqi market is very important for Turkey, and its shrinkage causes major concerns. Exports to Iraq in the first seven months of the year were \$6.4 billion, a 2 percent decrease from those of the first seven months of 2013. It is a bitter probability that this shrinkage will continue until the end of the year.

We have seen the war against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) gangs create a major recession and a decline in demand in Iraq's economy, both in the north and south. There is a high probability that even larger sale and transportation problems will be experienced in the coming months, particularly in exports from Turkey to Iraqi Kurdish. Turkey's exports to Iraq, especially to the Kurdish region, have risen significantly in recent years. Exports, which reached \$5 billion in 2009, accelerated in subsequent years to hit \$12 billion in 2013. This marked an average increase of 24 percent, but exports started to decline in 2014. In the first seven months of 2013, it was nearly \$6.6 billion, going down to \$6.4 billion in 2014, a decrease of 2 percent.

The products that have seen a decline in exports are those used mostly in construction and other investments. While iron and steel exports declined nearly 30 percent to \$624 million in the first seven months of this year, there have also been significant decreases in exports of products such as cement, ceramics, glass, machinery, equipment and other inputs. Various industry products have a share of 27 percent in exports to Iraq. While live animals and food products make up 24 percent of total exports, the share of machinery and transportation vehicles makes up 15 percent. The details of exports to Iraq reveal more interesting facts. Exports of tanks and armored vehicles reached \$441 million in the first seven months of last year. This year, this figure was \$447 million. It is not known whether these sales are to the Kurdish region or to the central government.



Grains, especially flour, lead in Turkey's exports to Iraq, holding an important place in the total exports of southern provinces, primarily Gaziantep. Other important exports include vegetable oil, fruits and vegetables, poultry and sugary products. Several products are exported to the Iraqi market, from clothing to home textiles, not only from southeastern provinces but also from everywhere in Turkey. The unrest in the country has negatively affected all exporting sectors. Turkey's foreign trade with Syria was full of hope before the war, with discussions of the annual bilateral trade volume with Syria reaching \$5 billion. However, reality confounded expectations.

The bilateral trade volume, which exceeded \$2.3 billion in 2010, plummeted with the civil war. Turkey managed to continue exporting to Syria, if only at a snail's pace, but buying from Syria plummeted. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute's (TÜİK) foreign trade data, exports to Syria stood at around \$1 billion in the first seven months of this year. Hopes have been renewed because the exports of seven months surpassed the seven-month exports of the past two years. In the first seven months of 2012, when relations with Syria were exceptionally strained, exports had declined to \$333 million. Exports remained at \$498 million at the end of 2012.

Despite the relative recovery experienced in 2014, imports from Syria still lag quite behind their previous level. While \$294 million of imports were received from Syria in the first seven months of 2010, imports from the first seven months of this year remained at \$52 million. Trade with Syria had reached its peak in 2010, with over \$1.8 billion in exports and \$453 million in imports: A total trade volume of \$2.3 billion. With the war, however, bilateral trade hit bottom, and in 2012 it plunged to as low as \$550 million. Trade with Syria recovered slowly in 2013. In 2014, however, there are hopes that it could reach its pre-war level. It looks as if the efforts of Syrian businessmen have been effective in increasing trade with Syria to its former level, with Syrians revitalizing trade through companies they have set up in Turkey.

According to data from the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB), companies formed by Syrians operate in several different lines of work. A number of Syrians have set up business along the Syrian border, especially in Gaziantep, Kilis and Mersin, conducting trade between the two countries. These Syrians are exporting goods from Turkey that are urgently needed in Syria, such as wheat, flour, potatoes, onions, pasta, gas bottles and baby diapers. They also import products that are cheaper in Syria to Turkey, although this is quite a limited trade. Meanwhile, nobody denies the existence of unregistered trade with Syria, of significant size. It is often discussed that various firearms and chemical substances are sold from Turkey while smuggled diesel enters from the other side, but the volume and the players in this trade remain vague.

Turkish army working on buffer zone plans against ISIL

Hurriyet Daily News, 16.09.2014



The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) is drawing up plans for a possible buffer zone along the border inside northern Syria that could be established with the contribution of United States-led coalition forces. “The TSK is working on plans and will present them to us, and we will decide if it is necessary,” President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was quoted as saying.

In recent talks with United States officials, Ankara demanded a buffer zone in northern Syria in the event of a military campaign of air strikes in the country against jihadists that could precipitate a massive influx of refugees into Turkish territory.

Turkey has been urging the international community to establish a safe haven in northern Syria since 2011, but could not receive positive feedback due to Washington’s reluctance at military involvement in Syria. However, a no-fly zone, required for establishing a buffer zone in northern Syria, needs the support of a U.N. Security Council decision which is likely to be vetoed by Russia and China. It is believed that Turkey’s attempt to establish a buffer zone is in line with the United Nations Security Council resolution No. 2170, which calls on all U.N. member states to act to suppress the flow of foreign fighters, financing and other support to Islamist extremist groups in Iraq and Syria. Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu told a Paris conference on Sept. 15 about Ankara’s difficulties at controlling the nearly 700-kilometer-long border between Turkey and Syria, but noted the increased security measures along the border, adding that roughly 1,000 foreign jihadists had been deported by Ankara.

Turkey also presented information on its efforts on humanitarian assistance to Iraq since the beginning of the jihadist onslaught. Turkey, meanwhile, did not endorse an international military campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) at the conclusion of the Paris conference. Ankara also refused to make any commitment on the issue of a combat operation, a Turkish diplomat said. “We have kept our stance that was declared during the Jeddah talks,” the diplomat said. Turkey did not sign the final declaration in Jeddah.

A senior Turkish official said Ankara did not sign the communiqué in part due to the sensitivity of efforts to free 49 Turkish hostages captured by ISIL fighters in Mosul in June. On the ground, the United States bombed militants near Baghdad in support of Iraqi forces, striking close to the capital for the first time in its expanded campaign against ISIL. The U.S. air strike against ISIL fighters in the Sadr al-Yusufiyah area, 25 kilometers from Baghdad, came as world diplomats in Paris pledged to support Iraq in its fight against the militants and less than a week after U.S. President Barack Obama ordered a “relentless” war against ISIL.

“U.S. military forces continued to attack terrorists in Iraq, employing attack and fighter aircraft to conduct two air strikes Sunday and Monday in support of Iraqi security forces near Sinjar and southwest of Baghdad,” the U.S. Central Command said in a statement. “The air strike southwest of Baghdad was the first strike taken as part of our expanded efforts beyond protecting our own people and humanitarian missions to hit targets as Iraqi forces go on offence, as outlined in the president’s speech last week.” The strikes destroyed six ISIL vehicles near Sinjar and an ISIL position southwest of Baghdad that had been firing on Iraqi forces. The attacks brought the number of U.S. air strikes across Iraq to 162.

EU Minister promotes Turkey’s new EU strategy

Hurriyet Daily News, 18.09.2014



Turkey has outlined a new strategy to secure accession to the European Union that vows determination in the political reform process, continuity in socio-economic transformation during the process, and effectiveness in communication.

“Prioritizing Turkey’s interests and the benefits of the citizens, the new strategy will lead to a boost in the reform process and the establishment of new communication channels between Turkey and the EU,” said the EU Ministry. The EU Strategy will go into effect upon the adoption of the National Action Plan for EU Accession and the European Union Communications Strategy.

It will be the first step for the “concrete commitment” declared by the new government, said the ministry’s strategy paper. The European Union Strategy consists of the following parts: the political reform process, socio-economic transformation in the accession process and EU communication strategy, according to the paper. The strategy paper outlined the road map as follows:

- The National Action Plan for EU Accession will be implemented in two periods: the first period will last until 2015 and the second will cover the period of 2015 to 2019. Determining the concrete and priority steps required in each negotiation chapter, the action plan consists of three parts; namely the harmonization of primary legislation, the harmonization of secondary legislation and institution building and others.
- Although fundamental laws and pieces of legislation have already been repealed or amended, all legislation bearing the imprints of the military coup of Sept. 12, 1980, will be reviewed in detail under the work for a new Constitution. The new charter will pave the way for the initiatives that Turkey needs by expanding the scope of politics and removing the imprints of the military tutelage.
- Although the relevant screening reports have not been conveyed to Turkey, the country will steadfastly continue a comprehensive reform agenda in all areas covered by the political criteria and accession chapters 23 and 24, such as freedom of expression, institutionalization in the field of human rights, border management, organized crimes and the management of migration.

- The work of the Reform Monitoring Group (RMG) and the Political Affairs Subcommittee (SIYAK) will be intensified in the upcoming period for the preparation of new reform packages.
- All necessary steps will be taken for the successful conclusion of a visa liberalization process.
- Adopting legislation is not sufficient for harmonization with the EU. Upcoming reforms will not only focus on new legal arrangements but also on enhancing the implementation capacity.
- The National Action Plan for the EU Accession will address Turkey's priorities in continuing and enhancing socio-economic change and identify the legislation to be harmonized in addition to the areas of action for improving administrative structures in proper implementation.
- The communication strategy has two dimensions. The first one is communication at home which aims to solidify the domestic perception of the EU process as a modernization project that improves living standards of Turkish people. Such a perception will ensure the support of all segments of society for the adoption and proper implementation of the reforms.

The second dimension of the strategy addresses the international community in a bid to showcase facts about Turkey to mold a correct perception within EU public opinion. This dimension will help establish a trust in terms of Turkey's commitment and self-confidence in the EU process. EU Minister Volkan Bozkır, speaking meanwhile to reporters in Brussels Sept. 18, regretted earlier "progress reports" from Turkey that were announced in 2012 and 2013 in reaction to the EU. "Turkey's own progress reports do not have any value regarding the system," he said, noting that the upcoming report should be functional both for the EU and Turkey. An "inappropriate tone" in the report could cause more problems, he warned.

US announces first airstrikes under new ISIL strategy

Anadolu Agency, 16.09.2014



The U.S. announced the first airstrikes against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, under an expanded strategy against the militants laid out last week by President Barack Obama. U.S. Central Command said two strikes took place Sunday and Monday in support of Iraqi forces near the northern Iraqi town of Sinjar, and southwest of Baghdad.

The Sinjar strike destroyed six ISIL vehicles, while an ISIL fighting position was destroyed in the strike near Baghdad. Under the plan announced by Obama, the U.S. will carry out airstrikes against the militants throughout Iraq, and would for the first time hit them in Syria.

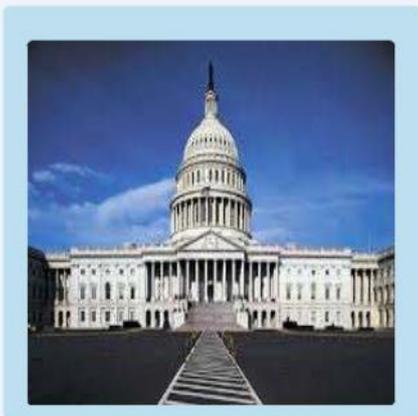
"Asked by reporters if Obama is prepared to retaliate against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces should they attack American aircraft, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said, "it won't surprise you to know that there are contingencies related to self-defense when it comes to these sorts of rules of engagement." A senior Obama administration official was more direct. He told The Associated Press that the U.S. would hit back against Syrian forces if they fired on U.S. aircraft.

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder announced a new initiative on Monday aimed at thwarting the threat posed by homegrown terrorism as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, seeks new recruits. “Today, few threats are more urgent than the threat posed by violent extremism,” Holder said in a video message posted on the Justice Department’s website. “And with the emergence of groups like ISIL, and the knowledge that some Americans are attempting to travel to countries like Syria and Iraq to take part in ongoing conflicts, the Justice Department is responding appropriately.”

He said that the initiative will bring together community and religious leaders, public safety officials and U.S. attorneys in cities across the country “to improve local engagement; to counter violent extremism; and – ultimately – to build a broad network of community partnerships to keep our nation safe.” The White House will hold an anti-extremism summit in October, he said. His announcement comes as ISIL continues to recruit fighters across the world, including some from the United States and Europe. U.S. President Barack Obama announced last week that the U.S. would lead an international coalition to combat the terrorist group in Iraq and Syria. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry will chair a ministerial debate of the U.N. Security Council on Friday to discuss Iraq, and the fight against ISIL, deputy State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said Monday. The U.S. currently holds the Security Council presidency.

US congress divided about ISIL operation

Anadolu Agency, 16.09.2014



A day before U.S. President Barack Obama laid out his plans for defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant in a nationally televised address, he met with congressional leaders and informed them that he believes that he has the authority to act alone.

Congress does not oppose the administration’s fight against the terror group but there are concerns among some congressional members about the nature and scope of the mission. Congress is expected to vote on the administration’s proposal for arming and training Syrian rebels as a part of the president’s strategy to fight ISIL.

But ahead of the vote Secretary of State John Kerry will brief the Senate and House about the administration’s strategy – expanding the scope of operations in Iraq, training and arming the moderate Syrian opposition, cutting off ISIL’s financial sources and building a broad coalition to accomplish all of these things. There has been bipartisan support for the president’s decision to fight ISIL but several lawmakers have argued that the strategy is not sufficient and is also late. John Boehner, the Republican House speaker, criticized Obama for waiting too long to set out a strategy. “The president has finally begun to make the case the nation has needed him to make for quite some time,” he said. “A speech is not the same thing as a strategy, however. While the president presented a compelling case for action, many questions remain about the way in which the president intends to act.”



The Republican leader said that it would be a long time before trained Iraqi forces and Syrian fighters would be effective in defeating the insurgent group. Republican Sen. John McCain said the plan did not go far enough and called it a “half measure” which he is concerned will only make the group stronger. “He [Obama] described the correct goal – to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIS,” McCain said. “However, the president’s plan will likely be insufficient to destroy ISIL, which is the world’s largest, richest terrorist army.” McCain did concede that the plan is better than doing nothing. Lawmakers are also divided on whether or not the president needs authorization to embark on such a mission. Some contend that the president can go after ISIL on his own, under the Authorization for Use of Military Force that Congress passed in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

Others say, however, that the Constitution requires the president to get congressional approval citing the War Powers Act that gives the president 60 days to use troops in a foreign theater, after which he needs congressional approval for their continued use. The administration counters that the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 was related to the war on terror, particularly al-Qaida and its affiliates. But the president is experiencing push back from within his own party. Democratic Representatives Raul Grijalva of Arizona, Barbara Lee of California and Keith Ellison of Minnesota put forth a bill in the House that says the 2002 resolution should not apply to ISIL because the group has no “operational connection to al-Qaida or the Taliban and is not currently considered an ‘associated force’ of al-Qaida.” The bill also characterized ISIL as a violent group to be dealt with and that Congress should debate and vote on statutory authorization for any sustained U.S. combat role in Iraq or Syria.

Within both parties, there was criticism for Obama for not seeking approval of military force. “I believe the president is exercising poor judgment by not explicitly seeking an authorization from the Congress where consensus can be reached around a substantive plan of action and support can be built for an operation that he has described will take several years,” said Republican Sen. Bob Corker. Mark Udall, a Senate Democrat, agreed and noted that “any expanded U.S. military role beyond airstrikes in the fight against ISIL in Iraq must be approved by the Congress.” The administration appears, at times, reluctant to classify the operation against ISIL as a war. White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said Friday that, “the United States is at war with ISIL in the same way that we are at war with al-Qaida and its al-Qaida affiliates all around the globe.” But Kerry sounded a different tone a day earlier. “What we are doing is engaging in a very significant counterterrorism operation,” he told the CNN network.

“If somebody wants to think about it as being a war with ISIL, they can do so, but the fact is it’s a major counterterrorism operation that will have many different moving parts,” he said. He later tried to clarify his remarks when he begrudgingly said, “yeah ... we are at war with al Qaeda and it’s affiliates.” He later said that semantics were a waste of time. The goal is to defeat ISIL. One of the significant pillars of the strategy to defeat ISIL is to address its bases in Syria. Obama said that he would do it by expanding the airstrikes in Syria and arming the moderate Syrian opposition. Obama requested congressional authorization to arm and train moderate Syrian rebels during his address last Wednesday – a call he first made in May. Congress seems likely to grant authorization, but some experts say problems, including religious division, will arise in determining which groups are “moderate” from among the many factions vying for control of the country. “Can we identify and train moderates in Syria? Well identifying them is the most difficult problem.

Training them, actually, will be a lot easier,” said Mark Perry, an independent military and foreign affairs analyst who has worked extensively in the Middle East. The process and methods needed to vet the warring factions will likely significantly limit the number of groups that Washington will be able to work with in a country that has seen more than three years of bloody conflict, and the atrocities and reprisals that have taken place. Even if ISIL is removed from Syria, it will not solve many of the problems the country needs to fix in order to restore order. “I think it is a very delicate and uncertain operation, which if carried out even successfully still means the continuation of the Syrian civil war probably into the far future, certainly for the next two years, and that’s really bad news for Syria,” said Perry. Some ISIL militants are reportedly Americans, English-speaking non-Americans, and from countries whose citizens are freely able to enter the United States under the visa waiver program. Some in Congress argue that the fight against the terror group should concentrate on identifying these individuals.

Several bills have been submitted to Congress that focus on the foreign fighters and crop their capabilities to threaten the U.S. homeland. Three Republican House members submitted a bill that would revoke or deny passports and passport cards to individuals affiliated with foreign terrorist organizations. Outspoken Michele Bachmann of Minnesota, along with a number of her House Republican colleagues, advanced a bill that would cause Americans to lose their citizenship if they were found to have sworn allegiance to a foreign terrorist organization. In the Senate, Republican Ted Cruz submitted a similar bill.

Funding woes force UN to slash rations for 4 million of Syrians

Reuters, 18.09.2014



The United Nations will have to slash food rations to four million Syrians by 40 percent in October due to a shortage of funds, despite better access to areas in need, a senior U.N. aid official has said.

John Ging, director of operations at the U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said that the “break in the pipeline” means greater hunger as a fourth winter of the Syrian civil war sets in. A record 4.1 million people in Syria received rations in August as more convoys were able to cross front lines and borders from Turkey and Jordan, the U.N.’s World Food Program (WFP) said this month.

“In October, WFP will be able to deliver 60 percent of what they have been delivering. In November it will be down to 40 percent,” Ging told Reuters in Geneva after attending an unannounced meeting on humanitarian aid to Syria. “It is because the money is not coming in. This is devastating news for people who are aid-dependent,” he said. A WFP official told the closed-door talks that in November the food basket for Syrians could shrink to 825 calories, well under half the daily recommended intake, diplomats said.



Deep cuts also loomed for many of the three million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. There is a three month lag between the time food supplies are purchased and delivered on the ground, Ging said. “This will come at a time when the suffering is exacerbated by winter. “So we will find humanitarian agencies cutting down on aid deliveries when aid is needed more than ever,” he said. “It is not just food, it is vital shelter material, clothing and supplies for water and sanitation.” The WFP requires \$44 million for its immediate operations in Syria, Ging said. A further \$56 million is needed to avoid cuts in food assistance in neighboring countries, diplomats said. Yacoub El Hillo, U.N. resident coordinator in Damascus, told Reuters after attending the talks that the lack of funds had created a “really critical situation.”

“Syria is the most complex and most urgent and largest operation, but it is one of many. Donors are able to do so much,” he said, noting competing pressures for funding. Diplomats from Western donor countries, as well as Syria’s allies Iran and Russia attended the discussions. In July, the U.N. Security Council authorized the delivery of emergency aid across the Syrian border without the consent of Damascus. To date there have been 14 U.N. convoys that have entered Syria via Turkey and Jordan, Ging said. “We have been gaining access for the first time to some besieged and hard to reach areas we have never been able to reach before. We have more access opportunities, but are not able to scale up because of funding. You can’t deliver what you don’t have.”

Syrian ambassador Houssam Eldin Alaa told the talks: “We heard today that under funding remains the main obstacle to providing humanitarian aid to Syrians. The countries that are used to boasting in their statements about their will to donate funds have not done so and this must be admitted.” Cross-border aid, often presented as the “magic solution”, amounts to only two or three percent of the total aid provided, he said in the text of a speech obtained by Reuters. He said sanctions against Syria’s banking sector had hurt the provision of basic needs, while “terrorist groups” – an apparent reference to Islamic State forces who control swathes of both Syria and Iraq – had disrupted access to certain areas.

El Hillo said: “Access is still a problem, but it is much better than we were seeing in June. But we’re not there yet. Claus Sorensen, director of the European Union’s humanitarian aid department ECHO, said cross-border operations accounted for 30 percent of EU aid reaching Syria. “There are vast areas with no access. Millions are living in areas under ISIS-control, a big caseload is out of reach. “The funding issue is a challenge for all of us. With Ebola, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, the caseload is huge. It is difficult, but there is a willingness to step up to the plate.”

EU may revise anti-Russian sanctions within month

ITAR-TASS, 15.09.2014



The EU External Action Service within a month will assess the implementation of the peace plan in Ukraine to decide whether to revise or cancel anti-Russian sanctions, EU chief diplomat Ashton's press secretary Kosijancic said. European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, after announcing that new sanctions against Russia came into force on Sept. 12, said the EU may cancel sanctions in whole or in part.

Rompuy said, "This will leave time for assessment of implementation of the ceasefire agreement and the peace plan. Depending on the situation on the ground, the EU is ready to review the agreed sanctions in whole or in part."

When the new set of sanctions was published, Rompuy said, "It is my understanding that the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) before the end of the month will carry out a comprehensive review of the implementation of the peace plan on the basis of an assessment carried out by the European External Action Service (EEAS)." "We have always stressed the reversibility and scalability of our restrictive measures. Therefore, in the light of the review and if the situation on the ground so warrants, the Commission and the EEAS are invited to put forward proposals to amend, suspend or repeal the set of sanctions in force, in all or in part," he added. The EU Official Journal published the new set of sanctions on Friday, September 12.

The sanctions targeted three largest Russian state-owned companies — Gazpromneft, Transneft and Rosneft, banning them from taking loans from EU countries for more than 30 days, and the Uralvagonzavod and Oboronprom defense industrial companies and the United Shipbuilding Corporation were also barred from EU loans. Aside from companies, the European Union added 24 names to its blacklist, bringing the total number of blacklisted officials to 119. On September 3, Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed a plan to settle the crisis in Ukraine, calling for a ceasefire, for stopping offensives by all forces in south-eastern Ukraine, withdrawal of artillery at a safe range from residential sites, international control over ceasefire observance, no air strikes against civilians, "all-for-all" exchange of captives and opening humanitarian corridors. A Contact Group in Minsk on September 5 agreed on a protocol based on the Russian president-proposed plan. The main points of the protocol were ceasefire and exchange of captives.

Scotland votes 'no' to independence in historic referendum

CNN, 19.09.2014



Scotland will remain part of the United Kingdom -- along with England, Wales and Northern Ireland -- following a historic referendum vote. By 55% to 45%, a majority of voters rejected the possibility of Scotland breaking away and becoming an independent nation.

UK Prime Minister David Cameron welcomed Scotland's decision in a televised statement outside 10 Downing Street, saying it was a clear result. "Like millions of other people, I am delighted," he said. Cameron said he would have been heartbroken to see the United Kingdom broken up -- but paid tribute to the efforts of both sides in the campaign.

"We hear you," he said to those who voted for independence, adding this was an opportunity to change the way people in the United Kingdom are governed, and "change it for the better." His government has delivered on devolution in the past and will deliver on it again, Cameron said. A "new and fair settlement" will be created for Scotland and for the other countries of the United Kingdom, he said. Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond accepted defeat in an earlier televised statement -- and urged the rest of the pro-independence camp to do the same. He thanked Scotland "for 1.6 million votes for Scottish independence" and said the turnout -- which electoral officials said was 84.6% from an electorate of more than 4.2 million -- was one of the highest in the democratic world for any such vote.

The final result in the referendum was 1,617,989 votes in favor of independence from the United Kingdom to 2,001,926 against. This means the pro-union camp won by a margin of 55.25% of the vote to 44.65% -- a much wider gap than opinion polls in the final days leading up to the vote had suggested. The result means the main political parties in Westminster -- and many people across the United Kingdom and Scotland -- can breathe a collective sigh of relief that the threat of a breakup of a centuries-old union is over. However, many on the "Yes" side will be bitterly disappointed. The referendum was closely watched around the world, particularly in nations like Spain, whose Catalonia province is home to a vocal independence movement.

The outcome will likely please President Barack Obama, who said that while the decision was down to the Scots, it was in the interest of the United States to have the United Kingdom remain a "strong, robust, united, and an effective partner." NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen also welcomed the news that the United Kingdom, a key member of the defense bloc, would remain united. Investors liked what they saw. The pound was firm against the U.S. dollar and the euro, after recovering much of the ground lost earlier this month when surveys suggested Scotland was on the brink of abandoning the union. Stock markets also rose, with shares in Scottish companies doing particularly well.



Salmond, who heads the governing Scottish National Party, hailed the political engagement seen in Scotland during the campaign and appealed for unity going forward. "Today of all days, as we bring Scotland together, let us not dwell on the distance we have fallen short. Let us dwell on the distance we have traveled and have confidence that a movement is abroad in Scotland that will take this nation forward, and we shall go forward as one nation," he said. Salmond has previously said that if the "Yes" campaign lost the referendum there would not be another vote on independence in a generation. Labour lawmaker Alistair Darling, who led the pro-union campaign in the Scottish referendum, hailed the result Friday but said that the message that the people of Scotland want change must be heard.

"The people of Scotland have spoken," he said. "We have chosen unity over division and positive change rather than needless separation. "Today is a momentous result for Scotland and also for the United Kingdom as a whole -- by confirming our place within the union we reaffirm all that we have in common and the bonds that tie us together. Let them never be broken." He gave a commitment that the political changes promised by the Westminster parties -- involving the devolution of more powers to Scotland -- would be kept. Darling also called for the country to unify after debate that "has created some fairly deep divisions in our country," and a campaign "that has both energized but at times divided" the Scottish people.

"Those divisions now need to be addressed and that requires leadership," he said, promising to play his part. Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, whose Liberal Democrats are in a coalition government with Cameron's Conservatives, said he was "absolutely delighted" by the result. "But a vote against independence was clearly not a vote against change and we must now deliver on time and in full the radical package of newly devolved powers to Scotland," he said. "At the same time, this referendum north of the border has led to demand for constitutional reform across the United Kingdom as people south of the border also want more control and freedom in their own hands rather than power being hoarded in Westminster." Labour Party leader Ed Miliband also hailed a "historic achievement" in keeping the union together. He promised change across the United Kingdom in a speech to supporters in which he looked forward to the general election battle due next May.

The first of the 32 councils to declare all went to the "No" campaign, as did the capital, Edinburgh, which voted overwhelmingly to stay in the union. Fife and Aberdeenshire also voted "No." Glasgow delivered a solid win for the independence camp but the lead was not big enough to overturn the "No" camp's overall majority. Dundee, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire were the only other councils to vote "Yes." Scotland has had a devolved government since 1999, meaning many, but not all, decisions are made at the Scottish Parliament in Holyrood, Edinburgh.

As opinion polls showed the lead held by the "no" vote shrinking fast in the days leading up to the referendum, the leaders of all three main parties in Westminster responded with the promise to give major new powers over tax, spending and social welfare to Scotland if it stuck with the United Kingdom. Now the party leaders face the challenge of pushing those changes through a possibly rebellious Parliament on a tight timetable. The process of handing over those new powers will start from Friday, Cameron said in a speech in Aberdeen earlier this week, with draft legislation expected as soon as January. "This is a timetable that is now agreed by all the main political parties and set in stone and I am prepared to work with all the main parties to deliver this during 2015," he said.

Although Scotland has chosen to stick with the union -- staving off potential calls for his resignation -- Cameron will still face political fallout over the vote. Critics have accused him of complacency during the long months of campaigning when Salmond's "Yes Scotland" campaign was laying the groundwork for its late surge. Cameron's longtime Labour rival, former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, is credited by many with bringing the vital energy that eventually carried a lackluster "No" campaign to victory. Critics have also accused Cameron and the other main party leaders of giving away too much in a last-ditch effort to keep Scottish voters on board. It remains to be seen how the promise to give greater powers also to England, Wales and Northern Ireland will be borne out. Cameron will also likely face difficult questions over his own leadership in the run-up to a general election due to take place next May.

French government wins crucial vote of confidence

Anadolu Agency, 16.09.2014



France's prime minister has won his second vote of confidence in five months amid sinking popularity, with President Francois Hollande's standing at a record low and the country seeking to conquer both political and economic crises.

Manuel Valls won the vote with 268 lawmakers voting for, and 244 against the confidence motion in the National Assembly. There were 53 abstentions, 32 of them Socialists. "Governing is to resist, governing is to hold on, governing is to reform, governing is to tell the truth in order to seek confidence," said Valls in a speech.

Valls has been under tremendous pressure since his first cabinet fell apart last month amid criticism from key ruling Socialist ministers. Earlier, Valls called for discipline and party unity, saying it was not the time to question the administration and the authority of Socialist President Francois Hollande - whose popularity is at a record low - as the country's leader. He vowed that Hollande and he would see out their mission "to the end". "We will go to the end of our mission because we don't flee," said Valls. Valls also defended his Responsibility Pact, which aims to cut €50 billion (\$65 billion) of public spending by 2017, and hand more than €40 billion to businesses in tax cuts.

He said that reforming the economy did not mean scrapping the French social system. Valls claimed the "the main weakness" of France's economy was French companies' "lack of competitiveness". He reiterated that France and the Eurozone were facing an "exceptional situation" with weak growth and very low inflation. "We don't do austerity," he again claimed, arguing he was not in favor of a lesser role for the state in the French economy but "a better state". Valls also urged European nations to be more "flexible" and ease fiscal tightening, saying that the euro needs to weaken further to revive growth. He called on neighboring Germany - whose leader, Angela Merkel, he will meet in Berlin next week - to do more to stimulate growth in the Eurozone.

“An agreement between our two countries is vital to re-launch growth and give back real ambition to the European project,” he said, adding: “Germany must fully assume its responsibilities.” He also ruled out changes to France’s 35-hour work week and cuts to the minimum wage and promised new benefits to poor pensioners on less than €1,200 a month. In his first policy statement on April 8, Valls obtained an overwhelming majority in a confidence vote of 306 votes for, 239 against and 26 abstentions, while six members did not participate.

House of Representatives approves Obama plan to arm Syrian rebels

The Guardian, 17.09.2014



Doubts over United States strategy in Syria grew on Wednesday as a key vote in Congress allowing the arming and training of groups fighting against the Islamic State saw a larger-than-expected rebellion among both Democrats and Republicans.

The authorisation requested by the White House – which was presented as an amendment to a finance bill preventing another government shutdown and was strongly backed by leaders of both parties – passed in the House of Representatives by 273 to 156 votes. The Senate is expected to vote as soon as Thursday.

But the decision of 85 Democrats and 71 Republicans to vote no came after six hours of debate that saw concerns raised about the ability of moderate Syrian groups to pivot from fighting president Bashar al-Assad and instead help the US defeat Islamic State fighters known as Isis. Among those who spoke out against the amendment were Iraq war veterans Duncan Hunter and Tulsi Gabbard, who said the administration had not learned lessons from earlier US interventions in the Middle East. “We’ve heard this story before. We know how it ends. Look at Iraq. Look at Libya,” said Gabbard, a Democrat from Hawaii. “Clearly, our leaders have not learned their lesson. We must focus on taking out our enemies and investing in our own country here at home.”

The administration plan also came under pressure in the Senate, where a hearing of the foreign affairs committee pressed secretary of state John Kerry to name the un-specified allies in the region who he claims are ready to join the US in air strikes against Isis. “Later this week we will have more to say about our partners and the coalition,” replied Kerry. “Not every country will decide that their role is to have military engagement, but every country can do something,” he added. Republicans on the committee attacked the White House strategy for being ill-thought-out and accused Obama of “exercising terrible judgement” by not seeking broader congressional authorization. “Typically you have a coalition in place before you announce it; in this case we have announced one and are attempting to put it together,” said senator Bob Corker “Do you realise how unserious the things you are laying out sound?” he added. “We know the Free Syrian Army cannot take on Isis, you know that. You talk about a multi-year process, this is going to take decades.”

The Democratic chairman, Bob Menendez, also criticised the administration for not seeking explicit authorisation from Congress for its plans to broaden air strikes against Isis in Iraq and Syria. Earlier both Kerry and Obama were forced to distance themselves from remarks by the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff suggesting that US ground troops may fight alongside the Iraqi army against Isis. Pressed on what would happen if the US reliance on Syrian rebels and Iraqi army units was not enough to defeat Isis, Kerry hinted at a possible plan B involving US enemies in the region. “I am not going to get into hypotheticals but you are assuming that Iran and Syria aren’t going to take on Isis,” he said. “If we are failing miserably, who knows what decisions they might make?”

US Senate confirms John Bass as ambassador to Turkey

Hurriyet Daily News, 17.09.2014



The United States Senate has finally confirmed John Bass as the new United States ambassador to Ankara. Bass, who was nominated in June but had his nomination held up by the Senate until after the August recess, was approved on September 17 by a vote of 98 to 0. There are 100 members of the Senate.

He served as United States ambassador to Tbilisi from 2009 to 2012. A career member of the Senior Foreign Service, Bass led the Baghdad Provincial Reconstruction Team from 2008-2009. From 2005 to 2008, he served as director of the State Department Operations Center.

During his tenure, the Operations Center led the response to over 25 crises, including coordinating international assistance in response to Hurricane Katrina and orchestrating the largest U.S. government evacuation of American citizens in 60 years. Bass faced a series of tough questions from Senator John McCain during his hearing at the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations over his nomination as ambassador to Turkey back on July 15. McCain said he would not support Bass’ nomination until he got a straight answer on whether he thought Turkey was drifting towards authoritarianism. “It is a drift in that direction, yes,” Bass eventually replied.

The Obama administration has been critical of the Senate for holding up the nominations for 65 posts, 43 of which are career diplomats, including Bass. According to the State Department statistics, 39 of the 65 nominations are pending in the Senate while 26 are in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Around three quarters of the nominations have been waiting for approval since last year. Because Bass’ nomination was not approved earlier, the U.S. was represented by the charge d’affaires at the inauguration ceremony of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in August. This will leave time for an assessment of the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and the peace plan,” Rompuy said in a statement.

Announcements & Reports

► *The implications of the war on Isis in Kurdish*

Source : ORSAM

Weblink : http://www.orsam.org.tr/en/enUploads/Article/Files/201495_policybrief10ing.pdf

► *Future of Afghanistan and Turkey's contributions*

Source : USAK

Weblink : http://www.usak.org.tr/images_upload/files/Afghanistan_Report.pdf

► *Human development report 2014*

Source : UNDP

Weblink : <http://www.tr.undp.org/content/dam/turkey/docs/Publications/hdr/2014%20Human%20Development%20Report%20-%20English.pdf>

► *CEO briefing Spain 2014: business executives' perspectives*

Source : Accenture

Weblink : <http://www.accenture.com/SiteCollectionDocuments/PDF/Accenture-CEO-Briefing-2014-the-Business-Agenda-Spain-English.pdf>

► *Tackling the "Too big to fail" problem*

Source : Accenture

Weblink : <http://www.accenture.com/SiteCollectionDocuments/PDF/Accenture-Tackling-the-Too-Big-to-Fail-Problem.pdf>

► *Rapid-growth markets*

Source : Ernst & Young

Weblink : http://emergingmarkets.ey.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/02/1000759_RGM-Feb2014-OK-LR.pdf

► *Global CFO signals, wanted: political and regulatory clarity*

Source : Deloitte

Weblink : <http://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/Finance/gx-q2-2014-global-cfo-signals-final.pdf>

► *Asia Pacific economic outlook*

Source : Deloitte

Weblink : http://d2mtr37y39tpbu.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/APAC_September14_MASTER.pdf



► *Broking 2020: leading from the front in a new era of risk*

Source : PwC

Weblink : http://www.pwc.com/en_GX/gx/insurance/reinsurance-rendezvous/assets/pwc-insurance-brokerage.pdf

► *The Gulf states and Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution*

Source : Baker Institute

Weblink : <http://bakerinstitute.org/media/files/files/20f674a4/CME-pub-PolicyReport61.pdf>

Upcoming Events

► *International Conference on Economics, Energy, Environment and Agricultural Sciences*

Date : 21 September 2014

Place : Kuala Lumpur - Malaysia

Website : <http://www.pakrdw.com/>

► *The International Criminal Court and Libya: Complementarity in Conflict*

Date : 22 September 2014

Place : London – United Kingdom

Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/international-criminal-court-and-libya-complimentarity-conflict>

► *Security Challenges and Strategic Imperatives for India*

Date : 23 September 2014

Place : London – United Kingdom

Website : <http://www.iiss.org/en/events/events-s-calendar/security-challenges-and-strategic-imperatives-be1d>

► *A Path Forward: European Union Integration for the Balkans*

Date : 23 September 2014

Place : Washington – USA

Website : <http://www.gmfus.org/archives/a-path-forward-european-union-integration-for-the-balkans/>

► *The Transatlantic Relationship at a Crossroads: a Conversation with Karen Donfried*

Date : 23 September 2014

Place : Washington – USA

Website : <http://www.gmfus.org/archives/the-transatlantic-relationship-at-a-crossroads-a-conversation-with-karen-donfried/>



► *Security Challenges and Strategic Imperatives for India*

Date : 23 September 2014
Place : London – United Kingdom
Website : <http://www.iiss.org/en/events/events-s-calendar/security-challenges-and-strategic-imperatives-be1d>

► *Investing in Gender Equality at the G20 Leaders Summit - From Australia to Turkey*

Date : 24 September 2014
Place : Canberra - Australia
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/investing-gender-equality-g20-leaders%C2%80-summit-australia-turkey>

► *Dynamic Industrial Policy in Africa*

Date : 24 September 2014
Place : London – United Kingdom
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/dynamic-industrial-policy-africa>

► *The crisis in Ukraine*

Date : 24 September 2014
Place : Texas – USA
Website : <http://bakerinstitute.org/events/1668/>

► *To Restructure or Not? Managing the Euro Area Debt Crisis*

Date : 24 September 2014
Place : Brussels – Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/458-to-restructure-or-not-managing-the-euro-area-debt-crisis/>

► *Shifting Patterns of Trade: TTIP and the South Atlantic*

Date : 26 September 2014
Place : Brussels – Belgium
Website : <http://www.gmfus.org/archives/shifting-patterns-of-trade-ttip-and-the-south-atlantic/>

► *Energy and Economic Competitiveness*

Date : 06 – 07 October 2014
Place : London – United Kingdom
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/Energy2014>



► *Abenomics – Stock-Taking and Lessons for the EU*

Date : 08 October 2014
Place : Brussels – Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/452-abenomics-stock-taking-and-lessons-for-the-eu/>

► *Europe's Strategic Choices: Building Prosperity and Security*

Date : 17 – 19 October 2014
Place : Berlin - Germany
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/Berlin2014>

► *The New Shape of Banking: Regulation, Reform and Resilience*

Date : 20 October 2014
Place : Berlin - Germany
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/Banking>

► *7th International Energy Congress Expo*

Date : 24 - 25 November 2014
Place : Ankara - Turkey
Website : <http://www.energy-congress.com>

► *The Comprehensive Assessment, the ECBs' New Role and Limits of a Common Supervision in the EU*

Date : 30 October 2014
Place : Berlin – Germany
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/461-the-comprehensive-assessment-the-ecbs-new-role-and-limits-of-a-common-supervision-in-the-eu/>

► *Food Security: Mapping Risks, Building Resilience*

Date : 01 – 02 December 2014
Place : London – United Kingdom
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/foodsecurity2014>