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Davutoglu spells out Turkey's vision for G20 presidency

Anadolu Agency, 11.11.2014



Turkey will open the doors for dialogue against economic inequality when it takes over the G20 term presidency in December, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said. Addressing a parliamentary group meeting of the Justice and Development Party, Davutoglu emphasized Turkey's leading international role in various issues of global importance.

“When we came to power, Turkey was 26th among world economies. Now, it ranks 16th in the world as well as being the sixth major economy in Europe,” he said. Turkey is set to take over the 2015 term of the G20 presidency on December 1 after the ninth meeting of the G20 heads of government.

The Turkish premier is scheduled to depart for Australia to attend the G20 summit along with a couple of his cabinet ministers. About Turkey's role when it takes over the G-20 presidency, Davutoglu said “we will open the doors for dialogue against economic inequality and point out the key role of real sector in world economy.” He said Turkey would also serve as the coordinator country for the Least Developed Countries on behalf of the United Nations. “We will be an aide and mentor for them which they can turn to for solutions whenever they need,” the premier added. Turkish prime minister is expected to hold bilateral talks with other G20 leaders on the sidelines of the summit in Brisbane. He also spoke about Turkey's leading role in helping out neighboring countries. “Our neighboring countries may be suffering from political instabilities and other serious problems, but their people are our brothers and sisters, and Turkey is the sole country that has the power to meet their economic needs,” he said.

Ankara also has an outstanding humanitarian track record of nearly \$5 billion aid allocated for Syrian refugees, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Yalcin Akdogan had said last week. The head of the Turkish government said he would move on to Philippines to pay an official visit as a guest of the Manila government after the Australia summit. Davutoglu said Ankara was a leading country in the mediation delegation for a peace deal between Philippines President Benigno Aquino III and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the group which rules the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, or the ARMM. The deal between the two sides in Philippines was signed two years ago, which ended a decades-old armed conflict in the southern area of Mindanao and allowed for a new autonomous Bangsamoro region in the Muslim-majority south to replace the ARMM in return for turning over their firearms to a third party. Turkish premier also said Turkish Ambassador Haydar Berk was chairing the international decommissioning body for the rebel group's handing over of weapons.

HDP suggests accelerated process for Kurdish bid

Hurriyet Daily News, 13.11.2014



Selahattin Demirtas, the co-leader of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), has urged the government to accelerate the Kurdish resolution process, underlining that delaying the process would result in more provocations.

“Our party is in favor of launching new meetings that we can call ‘negotiations,’ through which all of its dimensions can be discussed. Both our delegation visiting jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and our party is ready for that. We want quick steps and accelerated negotiations. The developments in the Middle East, especially in Syria, do not allow us to delay the process,” Demirtas told.

“The dialogue can be resumed very soon if the government adopts a similar approach. But the negotiation format is up to the government. It should make a decision,” he said. Demirtas’s statement came as the government and the HDP issued calls to each other to resume dialogue after weeks of tension due to Kurdish politicians’ reaction against the government’s perceived inaction over Kobane, a Kurdish populated Syrian town on the border that has been under siege by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since late September. Street protests claimed the lives of more than 35 people on Oct. 6 and 7 and created an angry row between the government and the HDP that led the former to suspend ongoing talks in the peace process bid. “The government has taken the easy way out. It blamed the HDP and tried to save itself by kicking off a political lynch campaign against the HDP,” Demirtas said.

“The government is chasing the enemy at the wrong address. The danger is not the HDP; the danger is the problem itself, the open wound. There are so many circles who want to scratch this wound in the regional aspect. What we should do is heal the wound ... As long as this wound is open, whether the HDP exists or not, there will always be some others who want to scratch it,” he added. Asked whether the process could overcome the turbulence witnessed recently, Demirtas said there was no properly functioning negotiation process even before the unrest began. “After these recent incidents, the dialogue was cut. It should be resumed and should speedily turn into a negotiation process. It’s wiser to look at the future,” he said. Calling on the government to limit the tension and to take measures not to provoke violence, the HDP co-chair reiterated that his party would do its best to avoid armed conflict.

“What happened recently disturbed every one of us. No one wants to live in a climate of conflict. War is not a normal thing. It should not happen. The death of even one single person is a loss for all of us regardless of his identity. Soldiers killed in Yuksekova, policemen killed in Bingol, members of the PKK executed in Kagizman, a non-commissioned officer who was assassinated in Diyarbakir in front of his wife’s eyes ... All of them are grave incidents,” he said. Demirtas cited the killing of the non-commissioned officer in Diyarbakir as an incident that truly “hurt their hearts,” distancing the

HDP from what took place. “Even war has ethics. Whoever violates them should be revealed. These are the methods of dirty powers. These things should not be repeated. I really do not see any other option than the peace process,” he said. “The fact that there will be no elections until 2019 after the next (parliamentary election, scheduled for June 2015) might be an advantage for the resolution process. The political language shifts before elections. Politicians may move in a much more relaxed manner about solving some fundamental problems,” he said. Demirtas also touched on the controversy caused by the Kurdish Peshmerga’s reported chanting of “Bijî Obama” (“Long live Obama” in English) while crossing into northern Syria from Iraq via Turkey. “Bijî Obama is not our slogan. We can never have such an approach. It cannot be attributed to us,” he said.

Turkey brings in new measures in work safety and mining

Anadolu Agency, 12.11.2014



The Turkish government has introduced a new system of precautions and sanctions to enhance working conditions, ensure workers’ safety and prevent the exploitation of labor, after a recent wave of mine disasters in Turkey.

The move came after the flooding of a coal mine trapped 18 workers in the Ermenek district of Turkey’s central Karaman province on October 28. Search and rescue teams have recovered the bodies of two of the miners so far. “Highly-dangerous workplaces with no record of accidents will be rewarded, those having accidents will be penalized,” Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said.

Turkey was also hit by an elevator accident in Istanbul on September 6. Ten workers died after an elevator plunged from the 32nd to the ground floor in a large construction site in the city’s Mecidiyekoy commercial district. “Since the elevator accident, 2,079 construction sites have been inspected and 1,610 of them have been stopped,” he said. He announced that they will also increase administrative fines for workplaces to ensure employers abide by work safety standards and guarantee the lives of their workers. “Employers not supplying their workers with personal protection equipment which conforms to the necessary standards will receive administrative penalties,” he warned. The prime minister added that there will be a record system for employers where a workplace or an employer convicted for a fatal work accident will be denied from bidding for public tenders for two years. This is in addition to the penalty that will be imposed by the courts.

Davutoglu stressed that sanctions alone are not enough to prevent accidents, but a total change of mentality for both workers and employers is needed to improve working conditions. “It is important for our citizens and workers to have awareness regarding their safety,” he continued. Davutoglu added that the precautions also aim to enable successful crisis management in workplaces. He stated that those working in highly-dangerous jobs will have to hold a professional competence training certificate and new obligatory courses on work health and safety will be given in vocational



schools. Furthermore, only certified occupational safety specialists will be allowed to be leadmen in mines and site chiefs in construction sites. Additional practices will also be introduced to prevent employers from forcing workers to finish their work in limited time periods.

Thus, contract deadlines for workplaces operating on royalties will be extended to at least 15 years. The prime minister continued by saying that royalties will only exist in the public not the private sector, and royalty rights in public tenders cannot be transferred to other employers. "In case of an emergency or danger, all operations in a workplace will halt automatically without relying on inspectors' discretion," Davutoglu said. He added that activities and operations in mining basins will now have to be regularly recorded and updated in an online registry system. This will enable Turkey's General Directorate of Mining Affairs and other regulatory agencies to more easily oversee the operations. Davutoglu added that the inspections in mines and constructions must be recorded with photographs and videos, and the yearly-held emergency routines and drills will be conducted twice a year from now on. As another key step towards improvement of working conditions, there will be lifelines in mines illuminated with phosphorus lamps in case of emergencies. Davutoglu stressed that the mining companies will be obliged to provide life insurance for miners and that mining basins and sites will be supervised by accredited, independent firms.

"The mines that currently have operating licenses will be re-audited," he continued. He stated that they will also make efforts to further develop and enhance basin mining in Turkey by amalgamating small mining businesses. The prime minister highlighted that a certain amount of the license cost received by license holders will be allocated to the rehabilitation and modernization of mines, within the budget system of Turkish Finance Ministry. This measure will enable the Turkish state to revamp the mines if the regular inspections indicate that improvements are needed. The costs will then be invoiced to the employer. "There will be a condition of financial capability while assessing demand for mining permits," he added. Davutoglu added that technical search mechanisms will be established for mineral exploration, so as to boost Turkey's national mining capacity.

Turkey's exports unable to catch the dollar's wave

Hurriyet Daily News, 10.11.2014



The U.S. dollar has been gaining value since May 2013 in all developing countries, including Turkey. The dollar, was 1.86 Turkish Liras between January and September 2013 before rising to an average of 2.16 liras, a 16 percent hike. It is normally expected that this would affect both exports and imports.

It would have been expected that exporters in Turkey would have made use of this sharp hike in the dollar to increase exports. Likewise, the expensive dollar would be expected to deter imports. Well, what actually happened in the first nine months of the year?

We can see that the dollar did not quite facilitate exports, or not as much as expected, and that the increase was limited. The January-September 2013 exports figures only increased 5.5 percent in the same period in 2014 to become \$118.5 billion. It could be said that despite the 16 percent increase in the dollar, the fact that exporters were only able to increase their exports by 5.5 percent is a result of the inertia of the exporter, its muscle relaxation and its bone loss. The expensiveness of the dollar only decreased imports 4.2 percent. In the first nine months of 2013, imports were \$187.5 billion, rolling back just \$8 billion. This shows that Turkey's dependence on imports is not a flexible one while also showing that the dependence of imports has largely solidified.

The result? Turkey's foreign trade posted a \$75 billion deficit in the first nine months of last year. This year, the deficit only decreased to \$61 billion, in other words, increasing exports by 5.5 percent and restricting imports around 4 percent have only been able to shrink the deficit by \$14 billion. This means narrowing the foreign trade deficit nearly 19 percent. However, because the contribution of tourism and other foreign currency-generating activities was not sufficient to finance the deficit, the foreign currency deficit neared \$30 billion in the first eight months of the year. According to the medium term program (OVP), exports will total \$160 billion this year. Imports, on the other hand, will complete the year as \$244 billion. This means a foreign trade deficit of \$84 billion. This deficit could be lowered to \$46 billion with tourism and other foreign currency-generating activities.

The OVP expects \$810 billion national income this year. If this estimate proves correct, then the planned current account deficit will correspond to 5.7 percent of national income. This figure was a very high one in 2013 at 7.9 percent. Even though it has been possible to create a 2.2-point drop in the current account deficit with a modest growth rate of 3 percent, it still looks as if it will continue to be the most important issue causing Turkey to be categorized as fragile. In light of the developments experienced especially in past years, while analyzing Turkey's foreign trade it has become a must to include the "effect of gold" into the analysis.



As a tool for paying, Turkey's scrap gold exports and imports with Switzerland affect foreign trade data and equilibriums to a significant extent. This has especially been influential in the foreign trade balances in the period between 2011 and 2014. Because Turkey was not able to pay for the natural gas it imported from Iran with foreign currency due to the embargo, this situation produced the formula of payment with gold. The gold trade with Switzerland, which was also an issue in the Dec. 17 and 25 graft investigations, has affected foreign trade figures. According to Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) data, while Turkey imported gold worth \$14.4 billion from Switzerland between 2011 and September 2014, it returned that is, exported \$4.2 billion in gold, resulting in a foreign trade deficit of \$10.2 billion. In the first nine months of 2014, exports appear to have increased nearly \$6 billion compared to the first nine months of 2013.

One third of these exports come from reselling gold to Switzerland. When this happens, the increase in exports when gold is excluded falls two points to 3.6 percent. Again, in the first nine months of this year, what looks like a fall of \$8 billion in imports is related to the decrease in the import of gold from Switzerland. While gold worth \$6 billion was imported from Switzerland in the first nine months of 2013, imports went down to \$1.4 billion during the same period. Thus, gold imports decreased \$4.5 billion. Consequently, what looks like a total decrease of \$8 billion in Turkey's imports is actually only \$3.5 billion when gold is excluded, a decrease of just 1.6 percent. Therefore, when the effect of gold is taken into account, it can be seen that the appreciation in foreign currency actually has produced much fewer exports, and that it did not decrease imports as expected. In terms of the Turkish economy and foreign trade, all of these are not considered as healthy signs.

What kind of a regional panorama do the exports present? Turkish exporters, who were not able to take advantage of the increase in foreign currency, were only able to near \$119 billion. What is the situation for EU markets and did the Middle East markets grow? The regional analysis of exports shows that Turkey's exports even decreased, let alone increasing its exports to regions dominated by Muslim populations. From the regions in this category, exports to Near East and Middle East was \$26.4 billion dollars in the first nine months of 2013; in the same period in 2014, there seems to be a decrease of over \$400 million. Turkey's exports to North Africa have also decreased nearly \$300 million to \$7.3 billion. Exports to other African and Asian countries have also decreased up to \$300 million.

The decrease in exports to these regions is expected to continue in the coming months as well. It is estimated that the wars in the Middle East and the fall in oil prices will continue to affect negatively the exports to these regions. Exports to Iraq, a country that has become Turkey's second biggest market, fell \$500 million in the first nine months to \$8 billion; there have been drops also in exports to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Turkey, in this period, seems to have increased its exports to Israel by \$300 million. In North African markets, on the other hand, exports to Egypt have decreased \$100 million, and in the Asian markets, exports to Iran decreased almost \$1 billion. There was also an increase in exports to EU and non-EU countries in Europe in the January-September 2014 period. Exports to the 28 members of the EU increased 12 percent when compared to the first nine months of 2013, nearing \$52 billion. It is meaningful that at a time when the EU is going through a recession, exports to this market increased 12 percent.

Exports to Germany, which is the biggest market for Turkish exporters, also increased \$1.4 billion in nine months to reach \$11.5 billion. This is important. Also, exports to the third biggest market, the United Kingdom, also increased \$1.1 billion to \$7.5 billion. This is also important. Exports to other markets, to Italy, for instance, look like they were limited to \$400 million and to France \$200 million. It is appropriate to remember the partnership of these two countries in the automotive production chain with their Fiat and Renault companies. Exports to non-EU European countries generally increased 15 percent to \$12 billion. But again, in this region, exports to Russia dropped \$600 million. It can be said that Russia's restriction of imports due to falling energy prices has had an impact in this, as well as the rapid devaluation of the ruble.

The increase in exports to Switzerland in the non-EU European zone is noteworthy. In 2013, these exports were not even \$1 billion, but they exceeded \$3 billion this year. There is an increase of approximately \$2.3 billion in exports. This increase is related to the scrap gold sent to Switzerland. At a time when the payment of the natural gas imported from Iran was done with gold and a figure such as Reza Zarrab emerged, gold imports from Switzerland went up to \$6 billion in 2013. Then there was some kind of a return of this gold in 2014 when this payment style lost its popularity, although there was an increase in gold exports to Switzerland to the tune of \$2.3 billion.

Turkey, Greece to hold business forum

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Aegean neighbors Turkey and Greece will hold a joint business forum bringing together hundreds of participants on Nov. 12 in İzmir, with Turkish Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci and Greek Development Minister Nikos Dendias making speeches.

Turkey's Foreign Economic Relations Council (DEIK), the Greek Embassy in Ankara and the Union of Hellenic Chambers of Commerce and Industry are organizing the event together. A total of 243 participants from Turkey and Greece will have bilateral meetings, but with the business-to-business meetings a total of 538 gatherings will be held.

The event aims to promote bilateral trade and enhance investment flows between the two countries. It will also explore opportunities for Greek - Turkish trade and investment cooperation in third countries. The forum will focus mainly on the areas of food and agricultural products, tourism and real estate, construction and building materials, shipping, transport and energy. Participants will seek to become up to speed with the latest economic and business developments in both countries; meet potential investors, exporters, importers, business and technology partners; promote trade, investment and business opportunities; and multiply business footprint across the Aegean Sea. The main sectors of interest are tourism and real estate, agriculture and food, marine and shipping, manufacturing, construction and building materials, commerce, energy and transport.

European Parliament calls on Turkey to ‘stop provocations’ in Greek Cyprus

Hurriyet Daily News, 13.11.2014



The European Parliament has condemned Turkey’s “maritime survey”, saying they encroach on Greek Cyprus’ exclusive economic zone and “its sovereign right to explore the natural resources within it.” The text also called on Turkey to stop its “provocative actions” and “threats” against Greek Cyprus.

Turkey’s maritime surveys “must be seen as both illegal and provocative,” the European Parliament motion said, stressing that they constituted a violation of the sovereign rights of Greek Cyprus and of international law. It said Turkey should immediately withdraw its vessels operating in and around Greek Cyprus’ exclusive economic zone.

“Turkey’s actions and threats undermine the continuation of negotiations for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem,” MEPs added, warning that their continuation “could have a negative impact on Turkey’s relations with the EU.” “Any gas finds would benefit both communities in Cyprus if a lasting, political solution can be found to end the conflict,” notes the text. However, Turkey’s EU Minister Volkan Bozkir said that Ankara will “not accept” the European Parliament’s decision on the resolution. “It has no validity for us,” said EU Minister Volkan Bozkir, in reference to the draft resolution, during a meeting with Hungary’s minister of foreign affairs and trade in Ankara. “Although Turkey is respectful of the European Parliament’s decision, this draft resolution is likely to end up like many other resolutions,” he added, implying that it will have little or no consequences. His statement came soon before the European Parliament’s vote on a resolution on tensions between Turkey and the Greek Cypriot administration, and on oil and gas exploration in the waters.

The draft resolution demanded that Turkish vessels operating in waters in and around what the Greek Cypriot administration and the EU deem to be an “exclusive economic zone” be withdrawn immediately. Negotiations between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots resumed after a two-year pause in February 2013. The previous round of talks had collapsed partly because of the Eurozone debt crisis’s impact on the government in the Greek Cypriot administration’s capital of Nicosia. The Greek Cypriot administration suspended the most recent talks on Oct. 7 after Turkey sent a ship to monitor an oil and gas exploration mission off the island’s coast. Turkey and the the Turkish Cypriots have strongly opposed any unilateral move by the Greek Cypriot administration to explore hydrocarbon resources around the island, saying its natural resources should be exploited in a fair manner by a united Cyprus.

Turkey will discuss its development focused agenda at G-20 summit

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Turkey will strive to implement a heavy agenda aimed at narrowing the disparity between the most and least developed countries during its G-20 presidency, its prime minister vowed ahead of this weekend's G-20 leaders' summit hosted by outgoing president Australia in Brisbane.

While the leader of the G-20 will discuss a wealth of hot issues, primarily economic, during the summit to be held on Nov. 15 and 16, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, who arrived in Brisbane, will seek to explain his country's agenda just few weeks before its assumption of the G-20 presidency on Dec. 1.

Davutoglu said the timing of Turkey's presidency coincides with a crucial time for the group "Turkey will take over the term presidency in a very crucial year because 2015 is also a crucial year in terms of the U.N.'s development agenda." "This will be a year when many important development issues will be approached," he said. The U.N. had set eight millennium development goals aimed to be achieved by 2015 in its Millennium Summit held in 2000. As the targets' deadline has come to an end, the international organization is working on a post-2015 development plan that will extend the gains of the past 15 years. Within this context, Turkey will be tasked with a heavy burden of coordinating the implementation of decisions made by G-20 countries in 2015, as well as harmonizing these plans with the U.N., according to Davutoglu. The prime minister also recalled Turkey has another position as the coordinator of the least developed economies of the world, which was granted to it in 2010 for a 10-year period. According to Davutoglu, this will enable Turkey to be a "bridge between the least and most developed countries." Supporting small and medium enterprises will be prioritized in Turkey's G-20 agenda as part of this bid, he added.

The current host, Australia, set the grouping an ambitious target of growing its combined economic output by 2 percent, or about \$2 trillion, over the next five years. Davutoglu said their meeting over the weekend will also provide grounds to debate the steps needed to be taken to urgently achieve these goals. For its part, the Turkish government has recently announced the first nine programs of a detailed economic transformation plan that is aimed at reaching ambitious economic goals and boosting the economy. Davutoglu said Turkey will also have the chance to share its experiences and review other countries' strategies and growth targets while forming the Brisbane Action Plan, a set of goals aimed to agree on at the end of the summit. The Brisbane Action Plan will be discussed by the world leaders at the summit to organize and list short and medium-term actions to help in achieving ambitious growth targets. Developing common understandings in several fields related with global economy, including trade, energy, investments, financial systems and infrastructure, as well as discussing solution alternatives for current global problems, are among the summit's targets, he added.

U.N. envoy to Syria formally proposes cease-fire in Aleppo

The Washington Post, 11.11.2014



The U.N. representative to Syria formally proposed an “action plan” for a cease-fire in the besieged city of Aleppo that could serve as a step toward a broader solution to the ongoing civil war.

Speaking from the Syrian capital, Staffan de Mistura said such a confidence-building measure could be used “as a building block in the direction of a political solution” for a nearly four-year-old conflict that has killed an estimated 200,000 people.”This is a new way to see and achieve what we hope to bring a de-escalation of violence,” he said at the end of a three-day visit to Syria.

He said the government has responded with “constructive interest,” although Syrian rebels expressed doubts about the plan. De Mistura discussed the idea during a meeting in Damascus with President Bashar al-Assad. Starting such a plan with Aleppo would have symbolic value. The city, once Syria’s commercial heart, has over the past two years come to embody the devastation wreaked by the conflict. Relatively moderate rebels have clung to Aleppo despite being gradually hemmed in by radical Islamist fighters and forces loyal to the government, which has intensified attacks on the city in recent weeks. Past cease-fires have been met with suspicion by rebel groups, which accuse the Assad regime of regularly breaking them. Islam Alloush, a spokesman for the Islamic Front, an umbrella organization of rebel fighters, dismissed the proposal as mere “talk in the media.” He said it would be a successful initiative if it actually “stops the killings” and the bombs “delivered by Assad’s planes.”

De Mistura first proposed the idea of local cease-fires at the United Nations in New York last month. The freeze on fighting in certain war-torn areas of Syria would help humanitarian workers deliver aid to residents, he said. The truce also could serve as a steppingstone for a wider political settlement, which has proved elusive. In his address, de Mistura also referred to the extremist groups Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra, an al-Qaeda affiliate, as capitalizing on Syria’s instability, arguing that his plan could help avert “the real threat of terrorism.” He also expressed shock at what he saw in Homs during a visit to the western city. “Have you been to Homs? Have you seen the levels of destruction? Have you seen the levels of horrific destruction of a beautiful city? We don’t want that to happen in Aleppo,” he said. In May, rebel forces evacuated Homs as part of a cease-fire deal after a brutal siege by regime forces that brought scores of residents to the brink of starvation. Many rebels regard such truces as surrender-or-starve agreements. Those seeking a new approach appear to be driven by two new factors in the Syria equation the rapid spread of the Islamic State and the U.S.-led intervention to counter it. Although the Assad regime seems to be winning against more moderate rebels, it has suffered significant setbacks against extremist groups, including the Islamic State’s takeover of government air bases and oil fields.

At the same time, Turkey's long-standing refusal to become directly involved in the Syrian conflict a source of some comfort for Assad appears to be softening. Emile Hokayem, a Middle East security analyst at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, said the cease-fire proposal for Aleppo could "lower levels of violence." But referring to the fragmentation of rebel forces, he added that "these truces tend to crumble very quickly, and the idea could have a negative effect on the rebellion and fracture it even more." Hassan Hassan, a Syria analyst at the Abu Dhabi-based Delma Institute, said proposals such as de Mistura's could be successful if properly implemented. "With the right will from the international community, it is possible for such freezes to be part of a plan of consolidation of stability in areas under the control of either the regime or under moderate rebels," he said. The key, he said, is to "make sure areas stay outside extremists' reach."

Islamic State and al-Qaeda 'agree deal' in Syria

The Telegraph, 13.11.2014



Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isil) and al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria have reached a deal to stop fighting each other, it was claimed on Thursday night. Isil and Jabhat al-Nusra have battled bitterly for more than a year to dominate the rebellion against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

However, The Associated Press, citing a high-level Syrian opposition official and a rebel commander, reported that the two groups had promised to stop fighting and team up in attacks in some areas of northern Syria. If confirmed, the deal would represent a serious blow to the US-led coalition's strategy in combating Isil.

There was no confirmation of such a deal from US officials. The deal was apparently cemented at a meeting in the town of Atareb, west of Aleppo, held on November 2. The four-hour meeting is said to have concluded with an agreement between Isil and al-Nusra to cooperate on destroying the Syrian Revolutionaries Front, a rebel group armed and trained by the United States that is believed to have between 10,000 and 12,000 fighters. Isil also apparently offered to send fighters to help al-Nusra in an assault it staged last week against Western-backed rebels from the Hazm movement near Khan al-Sunbul in northern Syria. A US State Department spokesman said: "We are aware of press reports of an alleged accord between ISIL and al-Qaeda-affiliate Al-Nusra Front and are seeking more information. However, we haven't seen signs of a strategic reconciliation and have no information corroborating a November 2 meeting between these groups, as described in the article." The agreement follows a period of bitter recriminations between the two group – marked by fighting as well as verbal clashes between Abu Bakr Baghdadi, Isil's leader and Ayman al-Zawahiri, the head of al-Qaeda.



Its impact was compounded by Isil's release of a voice recording purportedly of Baghdadi making belligerent threats and clearly designed to quash rumours that the jihadist leader had been killed in an American air strike. The tape depicted Baghdadi threatening to launch "volcanoes of jihad" and vowing that his followers would fight to the last man. It surfaced days after reports that the jihadist leader had been wounded in US-led coalition air strikes that killed one of his closest aides. The news fuelled rumours that Baghdadi himself may have perished. While it was unknown when the 17-minute tape had been recorded, its release on several jihadist websites was clearly designed to convey the message that he was still alive and in command of a group that has captured swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria in recent months, alarming Western leaders and governments in the region. "Be assured, O Muslims, for your State is good and in the best condition. Its march will not stop and it will continue to expand," the voice in the tape said. "Soon, the Jews and Crusaders will be forced to come down to the ground and send their ground forces to their deaths and destruction ." There was no immediate confirmation of its authenticity, although the voice sounded similar to previous Baghdadi recordings.

The speech did not mention last Friday's attack on a convoy of vehicles in the Iraqi city of Mosul in which Baghdadi was supposedly wounded but does refer to events that have happened subsequently including President Barack Obama's decision to deploy an extra 1,500 troops to Iraq. He is also heard declaring that coalition military campaign against Isil was failing and said its members would never stop fighting "even if only one soldier remains". The call for "volcanoes of jihad" included a plea for attacks in Saudi Arabia, whose leaders he calls "the head of the snake". The tape accepts the allegiance of jihadist fighters in Egypt, Algeria and other countries who had pledged to support Isil. The tape's emergence came after Chuck Hagel, the US defence secretary, vowed that American-led air strike against Isil would intensify as Iraqi ground forces become more effective but warned that a protracted struggle lay ahead. "As Iraqi forces build strength, the tempo and intensity of our coalition's air campaign will accelerate in tandem," Mr Hagel told the House of Representatives' armed services committee.

"Isil 's advance in parts of Iraq has stalled, and in some cases been reversed, by Iraqi, Kurdish, and tribal forces supported by US and coalition air strikes. But Isil continues to represent a serious threat to American interests, our allies, and the Middle East and wields influence over a broad swathe of territory in western and northern Iraq and eastern Syria." Meanwhile, General Martin Dempsey said that US soldiers could be required to fight alongside Iraqis, even though President Obama has clearly ruled out American "boots on the ground". Speaking in front of Congress, he said: "I'm not predicting, at this point, that would recommend that those forces in Mosul and along the border would need to be accompanied by US forces, but we're certainly considering it." As if to emphasise that, the group claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing at a police headquarters in the west of Baghdad, saying it had been carried out by a Dutch national it named as Abu Abdullah al-Hollandi. It said he had detonated an explosive-laden bomb belt.

Local officials said the attack was preceded by a car bomb nearby and that the two attacks had killed a total of 11 people and left 23 injured. But Isil's statement challenged that assertion, insisting there had been only a single bombing. The need for a united front against the group's advance was underlined by Hizbollah, the Lebanese Shia group allied to both Iran and Bashar Assad, Syria's president, whose embattled regime is now in the forefront of the fight against the jihadists. Mohammed Fneish, a leading Hizbollah member and minister in Lebanon's coalition government, said the organisation was prepared to make common cause with West's fight against Isil even

though it mistrusted Western policies and blamed them for the jihadists' rise. "Sometimes common interests do cross, but not necessarily for the same goals," he told. "We might find ourselves together in the battlefield without their being a common effort in co-ordination. If the West has finally awoken, albeit late, to the danger caused by those groups, it has to prove that it has reconsidered its position in using them for its own political gain."

UN warns of return to full-scale war in Ukraine's east

Anadolu Agency, 13.11.2014



The fragile cease-fire agreement between rebel pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces are "under continuous and serious strain," a senior UN political official said.

"With the Minsk agreements in question, and uncertainty over how much strain the cease-fire can withstand, we are deeply concerned over the possibility of a return to full-scale fighting," UN Assistant Secretary-General Jens Anders Toyberg-Frandzen said. The meeting was held amid growing tensions between the West and Russia, with Kiev authorities claiming that dozens of military convoys carrying weapons have crossed into eastern Ukraine from Russia.

"The promise of renewal, and of renewed energy towards solving Ukraine's problems embodied in the recent parliamentary elections threatens to be overshadowed by the worsening security situation in the east of the country," the UN official said, referring to Ukraine's early parliamentary vote held Oct. 26. One week after the parliamentary elections, pro-Russia rebels held self-rule polls in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk amid disagreements over legitimacy. The EU and NATO have denounced the poll as illegitimate, and said it undermined efforts to resolve the conflict. Russia recognized the vote, however, and separatist leader Alexander Zakharchenko was sworn-in as head of the self-declared Donetsk People's Republic. Tensions in the region has been reported to be at their worst in months since last week, with a heavy exchange of artillery shelling in and around Donetsk. "Currently, the security situation in Donetsk and Lugansk almost rivals the period immediately preceding the cease-fire agreement of Sept. 5," Toyberg-Frandzen warned. Between mid-April and Oct. 6, at least 3,600 people have died and 8,700 people have been wounded during the conflict, the UN Human Rights Office said in a report last month.

Russia to build two more nuclear reactors for Iran

Agence France-Presse, 11.11.2014



Russia on Nov. 11 signed a deal with Iran to build two new nuclear reactors and agreed to expand the total number of Russian reactors in the country to eight, the state nuclear agency Rosatom said.

A series of agreements, signed by Iran's nuclear programme chief Ali Akbar Salehi, includes a contract for two new reactors at the existing Russia-built Bushehr plant. The so-called Bushehr Phase II consists of two reactors at the same Persian Gulf coast site as the existing 1,000 megawatt reactor Russia launched last year. The countries also agreed to expand the total number of reactors in Bushehr to four.

The countries agreed to construct "four similar power units on another site in Iran," the location of which is yet to be provided by Tehran, Rosatom said in a statement. The project "will be under the IAEA safeguards and fully meet the nuclear nonproliferation regime," Rosatom said. Nuclear fuel will be produced in Russia and spent fuel returned to Russia. However, the countries "plan to go into the issue of economic expediency and feasibility of fabricating fuel rod components in Iran, which will be used at these power units," it said. Iran plans to build 20 more nuclear plants in the future, including four in Bushehr, to decrease its dependence on oil and gas. Tehran has been locked in thorny nuclear talks with six world powers, including the United States and Russia, with pressure mounting ahead of a November 24 deadline for a lasting deal to be clinched. A particularly sensitive issue is Iran's ability to enrich uranium, which Tehran argues is needed to power Bushehr but Israel and Western powers fear will be used to make an atomic bomb. On Nov. 9, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Oman to try to narrow differences ahead of the deadline.

Sanctioned Russian banks said to woo exporter dollars

Bloomberg, 12.11.2014



Russian banks cut off from U.S. and European capital markets by sanctions are wooing exporters with higher rates for deposits in euros and dollars, according to three people with knowledge of the situation.

Steelmaker OAO Severstal (CHMF), which received about \$2 billion from the sale of its U.S. assets in September, has received offers to hold cash with Russia's two biggest lenders with rates of 6 percent to 7 percent, compared with about 1 percent at international banks, two of the people said, asking not to be identified as the talks were private. OAO Novolipetsk Steel has got pitches for as high as 5 percent.

Barred by the U.S. and the European Union from borrowing for more than 30 days, Russia's three biggest lenders are seeking dollar and euro funding to meet clients' needs and pay back their own debt. The sanctions imposed after Russia annexed Crimea and as a separatist conflict flared in Ukraine, have raised Russia's borrowing costs, stoked capital outflows and led to a record currency rout. The banks, including state-run OAO Sberbank and VTB Group, are willing to pay 4.5 percent to 7 percent for long-term dollar deposits, compared with about 1 percent to 2 percent previously, the two people said. The biggest international banks are ready to pay about 1 percent, they said. The premium traders are willing to pay for dollars rather than rubles reached a record on Oct. 10, data compiled by Bloomberg show. The so-called three-year basis swap has since strengthened 92.5 basis points to minus 208. Severstal and Novolipetsk Steel, known as NLMK, cut net debt to Ebitda to less than 1 in the third quarter and as a weakening ruble helped them reduce costs. The ruble has slumped 23 percent in the past three months, the worst performance among about 170 currencies tracked by Bloomberg.

Severstal has moved some cash from international lenders, two of the people said. Severstal's press service declined to comment on its bank deposits. The steelmaker, controlled by billionaire Alexey Mordashov, will probably keep about \$1 billion of its proceeds from the U.S. asset sale in a dollar account at a "very good rate," after paying out the other \$1 billion in dividends, Chief Financial Officer Alexey Kulichenko told investors on a conference call on Nov. 5. It is more attractive to keep the money in dollar deposits than repay debt, he said. "VTB's currency deposit rates are always in line with the market and are competitive," the lender's press service said, declining to provide details for corporate clients. "The current FX liquidity deficit has led deposits rates to increase." NLMK said there are some attractive offers, without giving specifics. "We actually have received some appealing proposals for currency deposits. It may bring us additional financial benefit given our liquidity is mostly in dollar and euro denominated," Grigory Fedorishin, NLMK's CFO, said in an e-mailed response to questions, without disclosing any details. Sberbank declined to comment, while Gazprombank didn't immediately return calls or messages.

Russian Central Bank expects Western sanctions to remain until end of 2017

Reuters, 10.11.2014



The Russian central bank said that it expects zero economic growth in 2015 and only 0.1 percent growth in 2016, in a three-year monetary policy strategy that anticipates Western sanctions against Russia will remain until the end of 2017.

The gloomy forecasts underscore the damaging impact that two major external shocks, falling oil prices and Western financial sanctions imposed over the Ukraine crisis, are set to have on the Russian economy in the years to come. The base scenario also forecast that capital investment would fall by 3.1 percent next year, while inflation would be 6.2-6.4 percent by year-end, above the bank's 4.5 percent goal.

The bank said that it was also calculating its base forecasts on the Urals oil price recovering to average \$95 in 2015, but falling to \$90 by the end of 2017, a long-term downward trend which it said would constrain economic growth. The three-year plan has been revised significantly since September, when the bank published a draft version that envisaged economic growth of 1 percent in 2015 and 1.8-2.0 percent in 2016, with oil prices recovering to above \$100 per barrel. In its revised plan, the bank also significantly raised its forecasts for net private sector capital outflows, to \$128 billion this year and \$99 billion in 2015, reflecting the damaging impact of Western sanctions on investment flows. The bank anticipated that the current account surplus would be \$60 billion in 2015, while the bank's forex reserves would fall by \$42 billion as a result of forex operations and conversion of sovereign wealth funds.

The bank said that it intends to stick to its plan of completely floating the rouble by the end of this year, abolishing the currency's floating corridor, but that the bank could carry out irregular forex interventions in future if financial stability is threatened. It said that a recently launched scheme to provide forex repos to banks would be its major instrument for operations with foreign currency, anticipating that demand for them would remain at least in 2015. The rouble has slumped nearly 30 percent against the dollar this year as plunging oil prices and Western sanctions over the Ukraine crisis reduced Russia's exports and investment inflows. The bank also considered a range of other scenarios. These included the possibility that the oil price would recover to \$105 per barrel next year and the possibility that sanctions would be lifted in the third quarter of next year, as well as a "stress scenario" in which the oil price fell to \$60 per barrel by the end of 2015, which the bank considered unlikely.

No sign of thaw in Obama's brief encounters with Putin

Bloomberg, 11.11.2014



U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin had informal encounters during a meeting of Asia-Pacific leaders in Beijing that opened the way to discussions of issues that have frozen ties between their two nations.

The two leaders greeted each other last night during a session of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum and then crossed paths several times today as they joined other heads of state at working sessions hosted by Chinese President Xi Jinping. "On three occasions throughout the day, for a total of approximately 15-20 minutes, President Obama had an opportunity to speak with President Putin.

Their conversations covered Iran, Syria, and Ukraine," White House National Security Council spokeswoman Bernadette Meehan said in a statement. Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, provided a similar readout of the discussions. Meehan and Peskov provided no other details, and there were no signs the differences between the countries were bridged. The U.S.-Russia relationship has grown increasingly tense over Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support for separatists battling the Ukrainian government. The U.S. and its allies have escalated economic sanctions that combined with low oil prices have pushed Russia to the verge of its second recession in five years. The U.S. joined the European Union yesterday in threatening to further tighten sanctions. U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki blamed Russia for continuing to arm separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine, where a cease-fire has crumbled over the past week.

Ben Rhodes, Obama's deputy national security adviser, said the sanctions so far haven't yet forced Russia to alter its actions and that will force an additional international response if Putin doesn't alter his course. Obama and Putin last met in June in France at ceremonies to mark the anniversary of the D-Day invasion during World War II. Remarks at the time were brief and didn't cover substantial issues as relations between the two nations worsened. Obama and Putin also are scheduled to attend the G-20 summit of developed and developing nations in Brisbane, Australia, later this week. The strains from the conflict in Ukraine were evident for Putin during other parts of the summit. In an emotional meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, Putin reiterated Russia's condolences to the families of those killed in the MH17 air crash in eastern Ukraine in July. The U.S. and other nations have accused Russia of supplying the missiles that shot down the Malaysian airliner.

Najib said a cease-fire was essential to allow investigators access to the crash site in rebel-held territory, but the truce "doesn't appear to be respected by either side." "We hope we can count on you to help us to conclude what happened with flight MH17," Najib told Putin. The Russian president replied that "we feel together with you" and he blamed Ukraine for the continued violence, saying that separatist militias "do not shoot at themselves." There were 38 Australians among the

298 people killed in the crash and Prime Minister Tony Abbott also met with Putin on the sidelines of the Beijing meeting. Peskov said Putin and Abbott “talked briefly.” Both men “quite decisively called for a real investigation of this catastrophe, for expediting this investigation,” Peskov said. “Putin said that the situation when experts can’t access the crash site is unacceptable.” The lack of access is caused by Ukrainian forces, Peskov said. Abbott said during the 15 minute meeting with Putin that Russia and other countries should fully cooperate with the investigation, according to a statement from his office.

China and US strike deal on carbon cuts in push for global climate pact

The Guardian, 12.11.2014



The United States and China have unveiled a secretly negotiated deal to reduce their greenhouse gas output, with China agreeing to cap emissions for the first time and the US committing to deep reductions by 2025.

The pledges in an agreement struck between President Barack Obama and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, provide an important boost to international efforts to reach a global deal on reducing emissions beyond 2020 at a United Nations meeting in Paris next year. China, the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world, has agreed to cap its output by 2030 or earlier if possible.

Previously China had only ever pledged to reduce the rapid rate of growth in its emissions. Now it has also promised to increase its use of energy from zero-emission sources to 20% by 2030. The United States has pledged to cut its emissions to 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025. The European Union has already endorsed a binding 40% greenhouse gas emissions reduction target by 2030. Speaking at a joint press conference at the Great Hall of the People, Obama said: “As the world’s largest economies and greatest emitters of greenhouse gases we have special responsibility to lead the global effort against climate change. I am proud we can announce a historic agreement. I commend President Xi, his team and the Chinese government for their making to slow, peak and then reverse China’s carbon emissions.” He said the US emissions reductions goal was “ambitious but achievable” and would double the pace at which it is reducing carbon emissions.

“This is a major milestone in US-China relations and shows what is possible when we work together on an urgent global challenge.” He added that they hoped “to encourage all major economies to be ambitious and all developed and developing countries to work across divides” so that an agreement could be reached at the climate change talks in Paris in December next year. Xi Jinping said: “We agreed to make sure international climate change negotiations will reach agreement as scheduled at the Paris conference in 2015 and agreed to deepen practical co-operation on clean energy, environmental protection and other areas.” China’s target to expand energy from zero-emission sources to around 20% by 2030 was “notable”, a White House statement said. “It will require China



to deploy an additional 800-1,000 gigawatts of nuclear, wind, solar and other zero-emission generation capacity by 2030 – more than all the coal-fired power plants that exist in China today and close to total current electricity generation capacity in the United States.”

The new US goal will double the pace of carbon pollution reduction, although the Republican-controlled Congress is likely to oppose Obama’s climate change efforts, though administration officials argue the new target is achievable under existing laws. Frances Beinecke, president of US-based environmental group the Natural Resources Defense Council, said: “These landmark commitments to curtail carbon pollution are a necessary, critical step forward in the global fight against climate change. We look forward to working with both governments to strengthen their efforts because we are confident that both can achieve even greater reductions.” Senior US administration officials said the commitments, the result of months of dialogue between the world’s top two carbon emitters, would encourage other nations to make pledges and deliver “a shot of momentum” into negotiations for a new global agreement set to go into force in 2020.

Tao Wang, climate scholar at the Tsinghua-Carnegie Center for Global Policy in Beijing, said: “It is a very good sign for both countries and injects strong momentum [into negotiations] but the targets are not ambitious enough and there is room for both countries to negotiate an improvement. “That figure isn’t high because China aims to reach about 15% by 2020, so it is only a five percentage point increase in 10 years, and given the huge growth in renewables it should be higher.” Andrew Steer, president of the World Resources Institute, which promotes sustainable resource management, said the announcements would “inject a jolt of momentum in the lead up to a global climate agreement in Paris”. “It’s a new day to have the leaders of the US and China stand shoulder to shoulder and make significant commitments to curb their country’s emissions,” he said.

Li Shuo, of Greenpeace East Asia, said the announcement showed that the world’s “two biggest emitters have come to the realization that they are bound together and have to take actions together”. At the Warsaw climate talks in 2013 nations were encouraged to draw up post-2020 climate plans by the first quarter of 2015, ahead of the final negotiations for a post-2020 global pact late in the year. The White House statement said: “Together the US and China account for over one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions. Today’s joint announcement, the culmination of months of bilateral dialogue, highlights the critical role the two countries must play in addressing climate change. “The actions they announced are part of the longer range effort to achieve the deep decarbonization of the global economy over time. These actions will also inject momentum into the global climate negotiations on the road to reaching a successful new climate agreement next year in Paris.”

Obama pens secret letter to Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei as nuclear deadline looms

The Guardian, 08.11.2014



A secret letter sent by U.S. President Barack Obama to Iran's religious and political leader suggested that diplomacy between the two adversaries over the nuclear issue might presage a broader rapprochement, despite the Obama administration's denials.

The letter, penned in October and sent to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, reportedly referenced a shared interest between the US and Iran in combatting Islamic State (Isis) militants in Iraq and Syria. White House officials did not dispute the authenticity of the letter, reported by the Wall Street Journal on Thursday, but would not discuss its contents.

Cementing an agreement with Iran to prevent it from building a nuclear weapon is the Obama administration's highest diplomatic priority. It faces enormous opposition in Congress, where legislators of both parties consider the outreach to be a naive folly opposition that may prove fatal now that both legislative chambers are controlled by the Republican Party. But the administration has repeatedly stated that the nuclear talks, the first sustained and overt diplomacy between Washington and Tehran since the 1979 Islamic revolution, are a discrete endeavor that do not necessarily herald a wholesale thaw in the relationship. Despite that assurance, the US and Iran are substantively aligned against Isis, both backing a new Shia-led government in Baghdad against a mutual foe. Deep skepticism in Washington exists about a thaw in relations, as the US and Iran compete for influence in the Middle East and South Asia. Opposition to an Obama deal with Iran has united Israel with the Gulf Arab states, all of whom consider Tehran an implacable foe.

The US military, which holds Iran responsible for an influx of deadly homemade bombs known as explosively formed penetrators during the 2003-2011 Iraq war, insists it has no coordination with Iranian units assisting Iraqi ground forces and militias. An influential and shadowy Iranian general, Qassem Soleimani, has permitted himself to be photographed throughout Iraq, bolstering his regional prestige as a power broker. In an interview with National Public Radio in June, General Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said it was not "entirely impossible that we would at any point act collaboratively with Iran," and recognized that the US and Iran had "potentially the same goal" in Iraq. Yet formal collaboration appears not to have manifested, with both sides for now being said to prefer non-aggression against one another. Reports of the latest Obama letter to Khamenei, believed to be the fourth the president has written to his Iranian counterpart, suggested that a deeper collaboration could occur should nuclear talks bear fruit.

The parties to the nuclear discussions have until 24 November to reach a deal. John Kerry, the US secretary of state, will meet with his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif and Catherine Ashton, the senior European Union representative at the talks in Oman at the weekend. “I want to get this done,” Kerry said on Wednesday in Paris, who denied that the new Republican Congress will make a deal more elusive. Congressional opposition to a deal ran white-hot even before the Republicans prevailed in Tuesday’s midterm elections. The incoming chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, Bob Corker of Tennessee, signaled in June that he would back new economic sanctions on Iran should a deal not be reached. Ahead of the Republican takeover of Capitol Hill, the White House was reportedly considering ways to cement a deal with Iran that would not be contingent on congressional assent. Yet Iran wants a deal to end the US-led sanctions regime, which Congress would have to repeal for the sanctions to permanently expire. It remains to be seen if Iran can live with a sanctions regime that a US president declines to enforce.

The White House appeared to acknowledge the existence of the letter in answering criticism that it made it look like it was more willing to talk to the Ayatollah than Congress. “I recognize it may sound that way but the fact of the matter is there are also secret conversations between the administration and Congress,” said spokesman Josh Earnest. “We have been reading them in as we have been trying to negotiate this deal.” Earlier Earnest refused to comment on “private correspondence” but he stressed that the “policy that the president has articulated about Iran remains unchanged”. Nevertheless reports that the letter made US cooperation over Isis “contingent” on nuclear progress do suggest a departure from stated administration policy that the two issues are separate. The White House has previously acknowledged only talking to Iran about Isis on the sidelines of international nuclear talks, something its spokesman re-iterated on Thursday. “The US will not cooperate militarily with Iran but their interest in this has been discussed on the sidelines of other communications,” said Earnest.

Obama seeks review of Syria strategy, sees Assad removal as necessary

Reuters, 13.11.2014



President Barack Obama wants his advisers to review the administration’s Syria policy after determining it may not be possible to defeat militants of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) without removing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, CNN reported on Nov. 13.

Citing senior U.S. officials, the network said Obama’s national security team held four meetings in the past week that were driven by how the administration’s Syria strategy fit into its campaign against Islamic State, which has seized large parts of Syria and Iraq. “The president has asked us to look again at how this fits together,” CNN quoted.



“The long-running Syria problem is now compounded by the reality that to genuinely defeat ISIL, we need not only a defeat in Iraq but a defeat in Syria.” A White House National Security Council official told Reuters: “The strategy with respect to Syria has not changed.” The official said Obama’s national security team “meets frequently to determine how best to carry out the strategy he set forth to counter ISIL in Iraq and Syria through several military and non-military lines of effort.” “While the immediate focus remains to drive ISIL out of Iraq, we and coalition partners will continue to strike at ISIL in Syria to deny them safe haven and to disrupt their ability to project power,” the official added. Noting that Obama had made clear Assad had lost his legitimacy, the official said: “Alongside our efforts to isolate and sanction the Assad regime, we are working with our allies to strengthen the moderate opposition.”

Announcements & Reports

► *Delivering public service for the future*

Source : Accenture

Weblink : <http://www.accenture.com/SiteCollectionDocuments/PDF/Accenture-How-Europe-Can-Lead-Public-Sector-Transformation.pdf>

► *Global powers of consumer products 2014*

Source : Deloitte

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Source : Brookings Institute

Weblink : <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Interactives/2014/thinktank20/chapters/TT20%20Nov%207%20FINAL%20Web%20v2.pdf>



► *Project on nuclear issues*

Source : Center for Strategic & International Studies
Weblink : http://csis.org/files/publication/141107_Minot_PONI2013Conf_Web.pdf

Upcoming Events

► *Assessing the European Fiscal Framework*

Date : 17 November 2014
Place : Brussels – Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/472-assessing-the-european-fiscal-framework/>

► *Defining Opportunity and Prosperity Beyond Economic Growth*

Date : 18 November 2014
Place : Washington – USA
Website : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2014/11/18-prosperity-beyond-economic-growth>

► *Third International Seminar on Trade Facilitation in North-East Asia*

Date : 18 - 19 November 2014
Place : Vladivostok - Russian Federation
Website : <http://www.unescap.org/events/third-international-seminar-trade-facilitation-north-east-asia>

► *Energy and Economic Summit*

Date : 20 - 21 November 2014
Place : Istanbul – Turkey
Website : <http://www.acsummit.org/>

► *Mapping Competitiveness with European Data*

Date : 28 November 2014
Place : Brussels – Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/470-mapping-competitiveness-with-european-data/>

► *11th Asia Europe Economic Forum*

Date : 05 December 2014
Place : Tokyo – Japan
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/view/460/>



► *18th Middle East Iron and Steel Conference*

Date : 08 December 2014
Place : Dubai – United Arab Emirates
Website : <http://www.woodmac.com/public/events>

► *PONI 2014 Winter Conference*

Date : 09 - 10 December 2014
Place : Washington – USA
Website : <http://csis.org/event/poni-2014-winter-conference>

► *Security and Defense*

Date : 23 February 2015
Place : London – United Kingdom
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/Defence2015>

► *Diversifying MENA Economies*

Date : 02 - 03 March 2015
Place : London – United Kingdom
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/conferences/MENA-Economies>

► *Creating an Effective Financial System*

Date : 09 March 2015
Place : London – United Kingdom
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/conferences/financialsystem>