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Ten takeways from EM sovereign debt restructuring

Sovereign debt distress and default has a long history and there are many aspects – financial, economic, political and legal – involved.

In this report, we take a look at the essential aspects, and provide some context for the current developments related to sovereign risk, based on recent episodes of EM sovereign distress and default.

- Sovereign defaults tend to happen in periodic clusters
- Ability versus willingness – the importance of the political dimension
- Liquidity versus solvency – the initial impetus to 'buy time'
- Initial conditions – it is more about the *flow* than the *stock* that drives market sentiment
- Collective action and the creditor coordination problem – there are wide variations in outcome largely related to market-based ad-hoc resolutions
- Methods of restructuring sovereign debt – contractual arrangement or voluntary exchange
- Equivalence – the treatment of different creditor classes and bondholders
- Dynamics of debt renegotiation – examples of sovereign debt distress episodes
- Price action in the prelude to distress or default
- Private sector involvement – bailing in the bondholders

We also discuss the case of Uruguay (2003) and map ways in which sovereign debt has been restructured since the Brady Plan era.

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Ten takeaways from EM sovereign debt restructuring

Sovereign debt distress and default has a long history and there are many aspects – financial, economic, political and legal – involved. Our aim is not to provide an exhaustive treatise on sovereign distress and default. Rather, we aim to provide guidance on what we believe to be essential aspects that can provide context for the recent developments related to sovereign risk based on a more recent history of EM sovereign distress and default episodes.

What follows may or may not be relevant for any particular instance of sovereign distress, whether in EM or DM.

One of the main takeaways from recent episodes is that the features surrounding sovereign default/restructuring and resolution of these episodes – initial conditions, recovery rates, duration in default – all vary considerably across cases. This is due in large part to the market-based, ad-hoc approach to sovereign crisis resolution as well as to the importance of the political dimension (impacting incentives in whether or not to pay as well as in subsequent negotiations with creditors) in assessing sovereign distress episodes. Moreover, the lack of clarity in response of the various agents involved – which can include the IMF, other multilateral or bilateral actors, domestic versus foreign creditors – as well as uncertainty regarding their particular involvement complicates the uncertainty surrounding sovereign restructuring and default.

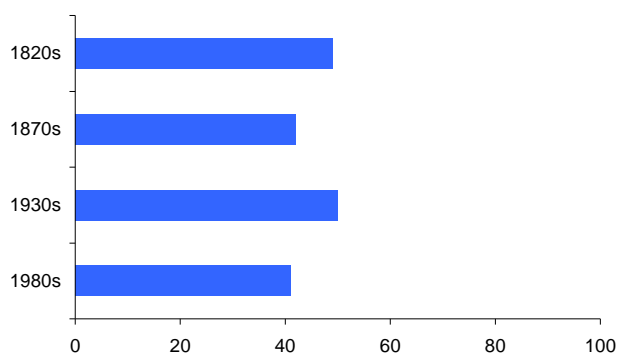
Note that the emphasis here is on ‘external-currency’ bond default as opposed to ‘local-currency’ or domestic bond default. By ‘external-currency’ it is assumed that the central bank of the country cannot generate the currency (foreign exchange) required to repay the debt, irrespective of whether or not this currency is part of the government’s revenue base. This may induce a credit event in the case of payment duress, as opposed to an inflation event in the case of payment duress for ‘local-currency’ bonds. We consider Eurozone economies to be operating under a regime of ‘external-currency’ debt since their central banks are not able to ‘print’ EUR required to repay their EUR-denominated obligations – just as an EM economy is not able to ‘print’ USD required to repay their USD-denominated obligations, even if the economy is effectively dollarized. Recent default/restructuring of local-currency denominated government debt has nonetheless occurred, such as in Ecuador (1999), Russia

(1998), Ukraine (1998) and most recently in the case of Jamaica (2010).¹

1. Sovereign defaults tend to happen in periodic clusters, and historically are rarely isolated incidents – Typically linked to boom/bust cycles, easy credit leads to a boom in borrowing and tight credit leads to difficulty in refinancing and ultimately default. Since the 19th century, sovereign default episodes have occurred on average 50 years apart, with some less onerous episodes in between. This includes the 1820s, 1870s, 1930s and 1980s. During these periods, a significant number of sovereigns were in default.

Exhibit 1

Percent of sovereigns in default/restructuring



Source: Morgan Stanley, Reinhart & Rogoff (2009)

2. Ability versus willingness – When it comes to sovereigns, ability and willingness are both determinants of the prospects of debt repayment. Sovereigns tend to default when there is no access to refinancing and domestic political considerations often come into play. The dimension of external versus internal constituents factors in here, with policymakers tending to retain scarce resource for domestic residents over that of external creditors (see #7: Equivalence).

¹ Bond credit spreads for ‘external-currency’ bonds are a function of default probabilities and an assumed recovery rate. Estimate for default probability given the credit spread:

$$\text{Instantaneous Default probability} \approx (\text{Spread to risk-free in bp}/10,000) / (1 - \text{Recovery rate in \%})$$

Not only are there weak international institutional arrangements for dealing with sovereign debt and repayment duress, but there have been legal precedents established which mitigate creditor claims on sovereign assets in the event of technical/legal default. This is due to the principle of *sovereign immunity*, as pertains to sovereign assets.

Such legal precedents have the impact of impeding creditor claims on a sovereign and therefore of increasing the influence of political incentives whether or not to repay (foreign) creditors. It still may be in the interest of the sovereign to mitigate the risk and cost of litigation, which could include attempts at attachment on sovereign assets and/or to maintain (international) market access.

Political and economic incentive (willingness), therefore, plays a large part in the decision whether or not to default or restructure – and how to restructure. Recent research indicates that political factors relating to the debtor nation can and has had considerable influence on restructuring negotiations, delays and the duration a sovereign in default.²

3. Liquidity versus solvency – “New money and buying time” has characterized the initial reaction to payment duress in the midst of sovereign crises, to the extent that they were considered by authorities as liquidity rather than solvency related (even when from the standpoint of external observers solvency was clearly a concern). In fact, it's the norm.

We review two specific examples:

1. In response to the syndicated loan defaults to emerging nations in the 1980s, the Baker Plan in 1985 preceded the Brady Plan in 1989 and called for new money operations to fund debt refinancing. This was in large part based on the assumption that it was a liquidity crisis and needed only time to resolve itself. It did not work. The Brady Plan followed, which called for market-based and voluntary debt reduction negotiated between creditors and debtors.

2. The Argentina ‘mega-swap’ of June 2001 termed out bond payments in an effort to buy time but it did little to address the underlying solvency issue of the government. In fact, it increased the NPV of the debt by nearly 30%³. Argentina attempted another exercise at relieving the short-term repayment burden in November 2001 involving domestic investors – but the sovereign subsequently defaulted end-

2001 (missed the first bond payment January 2002) and engineered a 75% NPV reduction in its bonds by 2005.

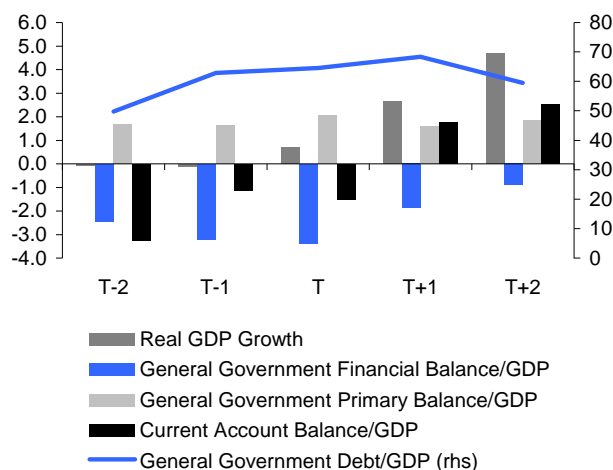
The distinction between liquidity and solvency is oftentimes difficult a priori to ascertain, complicating the path to resolution. As such, the initial impetus to repayment duress has been to ‘buy time’ and in the process effectively deny a more serious underlying payment problem if it exists.

Two types of restructuring have taken place in recent years (see section: Recent Forms of Sovereign Restructuring). *Pre-emptive* restructuring has involved sovereigns in distress but still current on their bonds – and could be considered instances of liquidity constraints. *Post-default* restructuring has involved unilateral default – and could be considered instances of solvency constraints.

In many cases, what was initially considered a liquidity problem turned into what was increasingly considered a solvency problem. Post-default debt restructuring (as in the case of Argentina and Russia) were also typically preceded by pre-emptive re-profiling/restructuring exercises – voluntary exchanges aimed at terming out the debt – utilized as a means to ‘buy time’ due to what was deemed by authorities as temporary liquidity constraints and to stave off default.

Exhibit 2

Macro conditions pre/post restructuring event (T)



The average for the indicators for Argentina, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Pakistan, Russia, Ukraine and Uruguay
Source: Morgan Stanley

4. Initial conditions – What is characteristic from a macroeconomic perspective of individual instances of sovereign default?

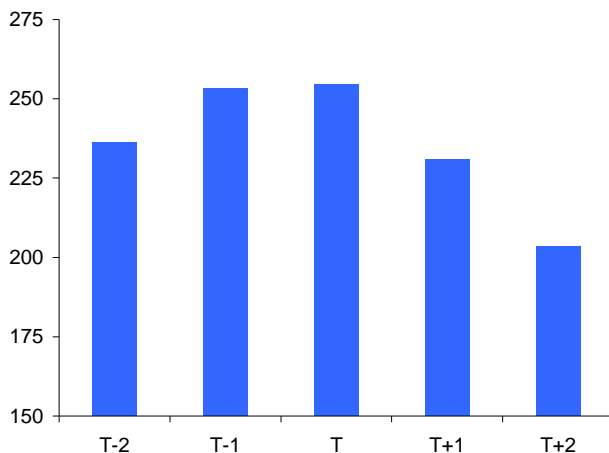
² See *Delays in Sovereign Debt Restructuring. Should We Really Blame the Creditors?*, Christoph Trebesch (Free University of Berlin), September 2009.

³ See *Cross-country experience with Restructuring of Sovereign Debt and Restoring Debt Sustainability*, August 2006 – International Monetary Fund.

Though high government debt/GDP figured prominently in recent sovereign default episodes, fiscal deficits combined with recession/negative growth have been more-prevalent features in what eventually turn out to be sovereign debt restructuring/default episodes – more so than high government debt/GDP ratios, per se.

Moreover, as repayment capacity becomes paramount, and as we are considering here external debt repayment, indicators of external debt repayment capacity (such as external debt/export receipts or external debt service ratios) have tended to be more reliable indicators of impending repayment duress than the aggregated debt stock.

Exhibit 3
External debt/exports (%)



The average for the indicators for Argentina, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Pakistan, Russia, Ukraine and Uruguay
Source: Morgan Stanley

External debt was 2.5 times that of export receipts on average going into recent episodes of sovereign credit events. At the same time, recent EM bond defaults show in many cases sovereigns had relatively low debt/GDP ratios at the time (60% or lower).

The trigger for market concern over default relates more to repayment prospects – the *sustainability* – of the debt (the flow) rather than the overall *level* of debt (the stock). In all cases debt/GDP was rising rapidly prior to the distress/default episodes.

There is also a strong link between sovereign distress/default and banking/currency (balance of payments) crisis. Banking sector stress and capital flight has, in the past, tended to

exacerbate the perception of the sovereign in duress and worsened external debt repayment capacity.

Emphasis on debt *stock* becomes more prevalent in the restructuring, related to considerations of what, post-default, would be considered sustainable as far as the debt level is concerned and how that may influence the haircut in a restructuring.

The *NPV reduction* of the debt becomes an important consideration for the market in assessing the prospects for post-default debt sustainability. This will have a bearing on exit yields (the discount rate that the market applies to a voluntary debt restructuring or post-default debt restructuring cashflows).

5. Collective action and the creditor coordination problem

– relates to the difficulty in coordinating the actions of creditors when there is payment duress and/or default. In early sovereign default episodes, there was considerable difficulty in coordinating the actions of creditors to resolve default and this dragged on the curing of these defaults and complicated the path towards restructuring of the debt. Ad-hoc creditor committees typically were established and later, more formal mechanisms were institutionalized. The sovereign bond defaults of the late 1820s, in fact, took decades to finally resolve.

In general, the more dispersed the bondholders, the more difficult the collective action problem.

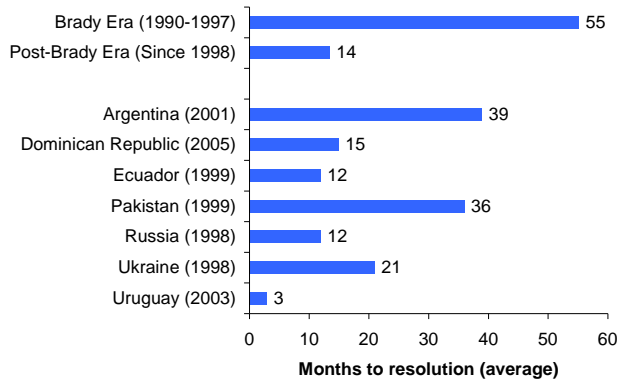
Sovereign bond covenants – under New York law – had specified a majority of bondholders (in some cases 100%) to agree to a change in payment terms, which complicated the resolution of sovereign default and/or restructuring.

This problem induced a move towards voluntary restructurings – bond exchanges – for EM sovereigns, even as collective action clauses (CACs) were introduced into sovereign bond contracts in early 2003. CACs allowed for a qualified majority of bondholders (typically 75%) to represent creditors in terms of a modification of payment terms to reduce the potentially disruptive impact of holdouts. In some cases, CACs included aggregation clauses through which a super-majority could modify each bond if a minimum required threshold is reached for each class of outstanding bond. Some recent contracts also facilitated the establishment of creditor committees (so-called *engagement provisions*).

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Exhibit 4

Time to resolution of sovereign debt distress



Source: Morgan Stanley; Christoph Trebesch, *Delays in Sovereign Debt Restructuring. Should We Really Blame the Creditors?* (Free University of Berlin), September 2009.

In practice, collective action and coordination problems have been less of an issue in recent sovereign bond restructurings, with the exception of Argentina where in the 2005 exchange there had been a sizable proportion of holdouts. Argentina has yet to fully cure the default – and is attempting a swap on untendered bonds in the coming weeks – and as such, its access to international markets remains impaired.

Market responses to the lack of formally-established mechanisms of sovereign restructuring have been met with so-called soft-law principles, based on guidelines established by various creditor groups and agreed upon by a group of sovereign borrowers. These guidelines or the 'Principles' are voluntary but again are intended to mitigate some of the uncertainty surrounding the still largely ad-hoc approach taken between creditor and debtor in dealing with sovereign debt crises.

6. Methods of restructuring sovereign debt – (a) contractual arrangements; or (b) voluntary restructuring are possible avenues. Unlike a corporate bond restructuring, sovereign bond restructuring does not benefit (as of yet) from an internationally recognized bankruptcy/resolution procedure. This was the motivation for the establishment of a Sovereign Debt Restructuring Mechanism (SDRM) as proposed by the IMF in 2002, to provide an orderly and efficient restructuring – or curing of default – of sovereign debt. SDRM did not receive a critical mass of support and was shelved as a policy initiative in 2003, in favor of more market-based approaches (such as inclusion of CACs).

Even so, enforcement against a sovereign may be a concern even if an orderly process towards restructuring and

renegotiation of debt were to be established. As such, due to the limited scope for enforcement, sovereign debt restructuring has tended to be on the basis of negotiation rather than adjudication.

a. Contractual arrangements – Typically associated with unilateral default, in this case the repayment terms and/or bond covenants are amended at the request of the debtor. Such procedures are usually instituted only after a technical/legal default has occurred – though certainly need not be, and any such request may itself trigger technical default and acceleration of principal repayment if voted on by bondholders. Due to collective action problems, such instances have been rare in recent sovereign bond default episodes – but have occurred. Uruguay used the CAC clause in the Samurai bond in 2003 to reprofile the bond while still remaining current on its debt payments and Belize used contractual arrangements (facilitated by CACs) to restructure its sovereign debt in 2006 after suspending external debt payments for a time, for example.

b. Voluntary exchanges – otherwise known as distressed bond exchanges or swaps, these have become more regular occurrences in EM and involve the exchange of outstanding bonds for new bonds that typically have a longer maturity (average life of principal repayment), lower (below-market) coupons and/or reduced principal. In some recent cases in EM, the bonds were already in default (Argentina 2001, Ecuador 2002, Russia 1998, Ukraine 2001) and in others, the bonds were current but the issuer was in distress (Argentina mega-swap 2001, Pakistan 1998, Ukraine 1998, Uruguay 2003). Even in the cases of distressed exchanges (with no unilateral default), rating agencies considered the operations events of distress/selective default because they resulted in NPV losses for bondholders.

Some incentive is necessary to induce bondholders to agree to the swap. This can be (1) the threat of non-payment on outstanding bonds for holdouts (the new bonds would include *exit consents* – including provisions for excluding cross-default of the old bonds to the new bonds); (2) 'sweeteners'/'kickers' – an additional instrument (with additional cashflows on event triggers) or inducement (such as a proportion in up-front cash) to tender into the exchange; and/or (3) depending on prevailing market prices, a higher NPV post the swap on the assumption that the resolution of payment duress as a result of the voluntary exchange would lower yields and raise prices of the new bonds (even with below-market coupons or extended maturities).

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Therefore, the market's confidence in the exchange being an *exit restructuring* (i.e., putting the sovereign on the path towards debt repayment sustainability) is crucial in determining (1) the participation rate of the exchange; and (2) the exit yield/spread.

Typically, the larger the implied NPV haircut, the lower is the yield/spread after the exchange as the market factors in a more-sustainable debt trajectory for the sovereign. This can offset the reduction in NPV stemming from a reduction in the notional cash-flow stream.

7. Equivalence – There are several aspects related to equivalence, or similar/dissimilar treatment across creditors/bondholders, including: (a) Legal jurisdictions – local versus foreign bondholders; and (b) NPV versus par claim.

a. Legal jurisdictions – Bonds relating to differing legal jurisdictions may be treated differently in a restructuring/default scenario – particularly local holders versus foreign holders. In some cases, foreign debt may be implicitly senior to that of local debt. Local holders may be penalized more than foreign holders where international law does not apply, particularly where weak domestic enforcement mechanisms prevail or where it may be easier to identify and negotiate favourable terms with creditors.

The sovereign also holds considerable sway on domestic creditors and bondholders, which has at times led to efforts at inducing domestic agents to absorb stresses experienced by the sovereign – such as the purchase and holding of sovereign bonds.

Furthermore, the rationale for a sovereign remaining current on foreign jurisdiction obligations and defaulting at the same time on local jurisdiction obligations is that it may preserve some degree of access to new money in international markets. Russia initially defaulted on domestic-currency bonds in August 1998 (70% of which were held by domestic residents), remaining current on external bonds for a time and in fact never defaulting on Russian Federation global/Eurobonds.

In practice, the treatment of domestic versus foreign creditors has been uneven and has depended on the costs involved in absorbing a write-down of debt on domestic agents – particularly where the banks (and more broadly the domestic financial system) are involved. In Ecuador and Ukraine, terms of restructuring were, for example, more onerous for foreign creditors/bondholders than for domestic creditors/bondholders – for Ukraine this was even where the same domestic-currency instruments were involved.

b. NPV versus par claim – Some recent EM sovereign bond restructurings tended to emphasize the curing of defaults by concentrating new issues in larger, more liquid new bonds with limited consideration made to the NPV losses suffered across the curve or creditor classes.

Instead, restructurings included new bonds that provided the sovereign with a low repayment burden in early years and a rising repayment burden in later years (Argentina, Russia), not just a terming out of the debt. This included features such as step-up coupons, capitalizing principal, pay-in-kind (PIKs), and/or amortizing principal. In these cases, assuming the holder held on through the period of payment duress and default/restructuring, if they held a short-tenor high coupon bond they would have suffered significantly larger NPV losses relative to a holder of a longer-tenor lower coupon bond.

Practically speaking however, NPV gains or losses will, in the end, depend on where an investor bought the bond and the market discount rate on the cash flow stream of the restructured bonds over a given time horizon.

More recently, in an effort to be fair across the curve to bondholders, there have been *NPV-equivalent* exchanges (Ecuador 2002, Uruguay 2003).

In these cases, the attempt was to treat bondholders across the curve more or less equally from the standpoint of NPV losses. In the case of Uruguay, the exchange involved a terming out of maturities, in order to have the same NPV impact across the curve. In this case, bond prices had already converged reflecting the market's assumption of recovery value, obviating the need for considering fair treatment across bondholders on an NPV basis.

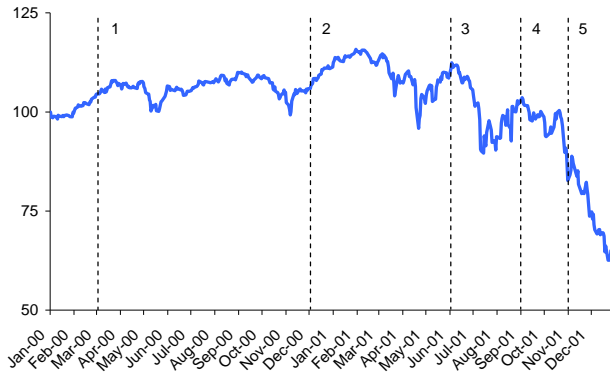
8. Dynamics of debt renegotiation – EM sovereign bond default episodes do not take a straight line from the market sensing payment duress to default. Most episodes involve policymakers denying the existence of payment duress and attempting many approaches – including soliciting outside assistance and support (bilateral or multilateral aid) – before considering a (voluntary) restructuring in some cases involving terming out of the debt or moving towards default as these attempts fail to instill market confidence.

The larger, more prominent EM sovereign default episodes (Argentina, Russia) have been characterized by interim periods of optimism and pessimism before the eventual defaults (Exhibit 5).

We outline a possible path of sovereign debt distress, based on recent episodes (Exhibit 10).

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Exhibit 5
Argentina: bond price dynamics before default



1 IMF SBA program approved
2 First disbursement under IMF program and program increase one month later
3 Mega-swap terming out maturities
4 Additional IMF program increase
5 Swap of locally-held bonds for guaranteed loans
EMBI+ Argentina bond total return index rebased to January 2000 = 100
Source: Morgan Stanley, Bloomberg

9. Price action in the prelude to distress or default – As the market front-loads the probability of default the credit curve necessarily inverts as the likelihood of default becomes more immediate. Cash-at-risk becomes the paramount consideration as the market’s anticipation of a credit event rises. In fact, as default risk becomes tangible, the probability to receive future cash flows is seen as very low so that yield and spread concepts become irrelevant in terms of return, and so the duration for hedging purposes. The price of each bond then reflects the sole recovery value anticipated by investors.

While little is known about the potential restructuring terms, the market tends to assume a percentage of par recovery across the curve so that bond prices converge across the curve, towards the assumed recovery value.

Typically, this means the market value of shorter-tenor and/or with higher coupon bonds falls more relative to longer-tenor and/or lower coupon bonds (see Exhibits 6 and 7). However, distinction is made between bonds with the highest accrued coupon and those with lowest accrued coupon. Bonds with higher past-due interest (PDI) will stabilize at higher market prices to reflect the fact a certain percentage of PDI is expected to be acknowledged in the restructuring process. However, prior to default, bonds with higher accrued coupon will fall more than bonds with lower accrued coupon. On many occasions, market practice in EM has been to trade bonds flat (of accrued) in anticipation of/following default.

Bond prices tend to converge prior to default as the market’s anticipation of a credit event increases. The market moves from a yield/spread (duration) basis to a price (cash-at-risk) basis. This process can happen (and has happened) at prices well above eventual assumed recovery.

Exhibit 6
Uruguay 2027 v 2010 yield differential (bp)

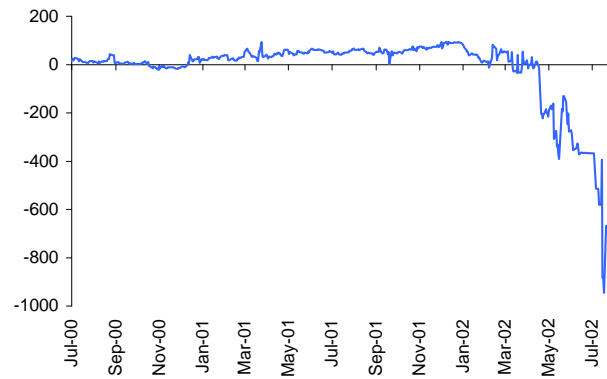
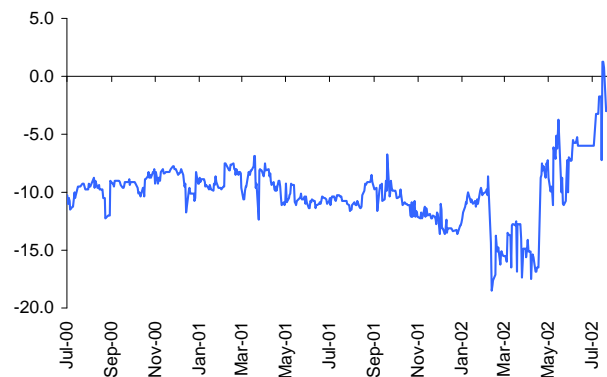


Exhibit 7
Uruguay 2027 v 2010 clean price differential



Source: Morgan Stanley

In terms of sequence:

(1) The curve starts trading on a price and not yield basis as the notion of default or restructuring becomes widespread – the yield/spread curve flattens and then inverts;

(2) as default intensity rises, price convergence begins and bonds across the curve gravitate towards the same cash price;

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(3) prices fall further, towards the assumed recovery value of the market. Note, in the process of price convergence, higher coupon bonds may trade at a modest premium to lower coupon bonds but bonds with higher accrued interest fall more than bonds with lower accrued interest.

The more the market anticipates NPV equivalence, the less likely prices are to converge. However, there is usually a considerable degree of uncertainty with respect to future events, and the market has tended to gravitate towards the assumption of a par claim across the curve. Moreover, the more onerous the debt burden, the more likely the market may consider a larger NPV reduction exercise, beyond which NPV equivalence could be affected.

10. Multilateral engagement and private sector involvement (PSI)

Official sector and IMF involvement in sovereign debt crises has taken several forms. First, the IMF may have been providing financial assistance under standard programs to a sovereign in the run-up to repayment duress; or the Fund might get involved once the sovereign has fallen into arrears with private creditors. With the exception of Belize, the IMF had financial programs in place during recent sovereign bond restructuring episodes (Exhibit 9). Bilateral creditor groups – the so-called *Paris Club* of official lenders – has also had influence on sovereign bond restructuring.

The IMF can influence debt restructuring under its lending into arrears (LIA) policy. Under LIA, the IMF can provide financial assistance to a sovereign that has fallen into arrears with other (private) creditors. But as a condition for providing the financial assistance, the IMF can seek to affect policy change on the debtor nation via an adjustment program and take a mediating role with respect to negotiations with creditors – though the LIA policy itself is ambiguous on this aspect.

What is instructive regarding IMF practice in recent cases of sovereign debt duress is the steady loosening in conditionality that applied as a response to failures to meet program requirements. In these – Argentina and Russia – the eventual suspension of the IMF program and disbursements set the stage for eventual default.

Moreover, the involvement of the IMF in private creditor debt workouts has at times compromised its position in the minds of market participants given that the IMF itself is a creditor.

The IMF is a preferred creditor and though not explicitly recognized, implicitly multilateral/IMF debt is often considered by the market as senior to private creditor debt. Sovereigns

were less likely to default on multilateral debt as IMF aid was a last resort in terms of access to external financing – particularly given that bilateral aid was typically tied to an agreement with the IMF and private creditor sentiment was enhanced with the existence of IMF backing. This, however, depended and is likely to depend on the relative share of the debt repayment burden across creditor classes. In the past, bilateral debt was considered implicitly subordinate to private creditor debt, and private creditor debt implicitly subordinate to multilateral/IMF debt. Due to the principle of *comparability of treatment* (discussed below), this dynamic has changed.

The tying of multilateral financial assistance to the restructuring of private creditor debt has given rise to the premise of private-sector burden-sharing. Otherwise known as private sector involvement (PSI), this has become a more familiar feature of sovereign distress episodes in recent years.

Indeed we feel it important to emphasize the potential adverse aspects of official/IMF involvement in sovereign support, from the vantage point of private creditors. The official sector has, in recent episodes pushed for ‘bailing-in’/burden-sharing of private creditors in the resolution of sovereign payment debt duress.

Exhibit 8

Pre-restructuring IMF involvement

Country	Program	Approval	Status
Argentina	SBA	Mar-00	Emphasis on fiscal adjustment. Program failed.
	1st increase	Jan-01	Relaxation of fiscal targets and reviews approved despite not having met fiscal targets. Support for the mega-swap.
	2nd increase	Sep-01	Did not complete 5th review.
Pakistan	EFF/ESAF	Oct-97	Program off track in Jul-99.
Russia	EFF/ESAF	Mar-96	Targets relaxed.
	1st increase	Jul-98	Support for GKO into Eurobond swap. Program suspended once Duma failed to ratify fiscal adjustment.
Ukraine	SBA	Apr-96	Program successfully implemented.
		Aug-97	Conditionality not satisfied.
Uruguay	SBA	May-00	Loose conditionality given emphasis as a precautionary program due to Argentina contagion.
		Apr-02	Tighter conditionality but successful implementation.

Source: Morgan Stanley, Bank of Spain (Occasional Paper 805)

Another related aspect of IMF involvement revolves around the exceptional access framework (EAF) which was introduced in 2002 and detailed conditions under which it

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would provide financial assistance beyond standard limits. Under the EAF, the IMF would provide debt-sustainability analysis and if the sovereign were deemed to be under unsustainable debt conditions, the debtor would receive financial aid only after a process of restructuring had begun.

Liquidity facilities have, nonetheless, taken centre stage. Since the 2008/2009 financial crisis, the IMF has introduced new lending and liquidity facilities, eliminated others and has extended the flexibility of the Stand-by arrangement (SBA). Moreover, program conditionality and the frequency of reviews have, in general, declined.

Even so, IMF and official sector involvement in private sector restructuring has been a recent feature of sovereign debt distress episodes. Earlier this year, Jamaica's local-currency government bonds were restructured as part of the IMF program (Jamaica remains current on its foreign-currency denominated bonds).

Looking back, the IMF conditioned its lending programs to Ecuador and Ukraine on private creditor debt relief. Similarly, as was previously mentioned, the IMF had originally called for a more onerous restructuring of Uruguay's private creditor obligations (note, 45% of Uruguay's external debt was to multilaterals, including the IMF at the time).

And what of the Paris Club? In 1999, Pakistan was compelled by the official sector to re-profile its Eurobonds as a condition for Paris Club aid on the principle of debt-forgiveness equivalence – so-called *comparability of treatment* – with bilateral debt relief. Similarly, for the Dominican Republic in 2005, bonds and commercial debt were restructured to comply with comparability of treatment standards vis-à-vis Paris Club debt.

Whether the changing program stance at the IMF, in response to the financial crisis, alters the approach it takes towards sovereigns in distress with respect to private creditors remains to be seen. But based on historical precedent, the involvement of the official sector in providing aid likely increases the prospect of some form of private-sector 'bail-in' in our view as far as the resolution of sovereign payment duress is concerned, to the extent that official-sector liquidity provision is considered ineffective in restoring market confidence.

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Box 1: The case of Uruguay (2003)

The proximate cause of Uruguay's financial and economic duress in 2001-2003 was the suspension of the Convertibility Law in Argentina in 2001 and subsequent debt default. The abandonment of the currency board (in which the Argentine peso was linked 1 for 1 with the US dollar and each peso in circulation backed by US dollar reserves) led to a collapse in real economic activity, real depreciation of the ARS of 150% and a run on the currency following the asymmetric "pesification" as well as freeze of bank deposits. Uruguay had strong links with Argentina, in particular via trade and its banking system, leading to contagion and ultimately a run on the country's banks in mid-2001. Uruguay did receive multilateral support from the IMF and engineer policy adjustments, including a crawl and eventual float of its currency, fiscal adjustment and a shutting down of insolvent banks. But this proved to be insufficient given the sustained reversal in financial flows at the time and ongoing economic contraction.

In an effort to stave off a liquidity crisis, Uruguay engineered a bond exchange operation in May 2003 that effectively termed out the bond redemption profile by five years. Officials were initially at odds with the IMF over the solution to the banking system and bond payment duress, with the IMF arguing for a more-onerous burden-share by private creditors and securitization of bank deposits (into bonds) but Uruguayan officials with US backing insisting on retaining as much as possible creditor rights. Uruguayan officials insisted the country was in the face of a liquidity crisis and not solvency crisis and as such, "buying time" – in large part to allow the external market environment and domestic growth conditions to improve – would be sufficient to stave off outright default.

The market had a sense of the payment duress that the sovereign was under, as traded prices for USD-denominated bonds were in 50-60 range prior to the announcement of the exchange. It was clear to market participants that a significant adjustment needed to take place, but that said at the time it was not evident that Uruguay was beyond the tipping point with respect to debt sustainability and solvency.

Uruguay's sovereign credit ratings had already declined from mid-BBB in 1997 to low-B in 2003, prior to the exchange.

The bond exchange took place across three jurisdictions consistent with where the bonds were originally issued – locally, internationally and Japan. In all cases but the Samurai bond, a voluntary exchange mechanism was introduced. In the case of the Samurai bond, given the CAC provisions in

the bond a contractual arrangement was executed at a bondholders meeting.

The structure of the exchange was as follows – an effective 5-year terming out of the bond redemption profile, with coupon structures maintained.

More specifically:

1. Three new benchmark USD-denominated global bonds were to be issued, in which the outstanding bonds would be exchanged – the 2011, 2015 and 2033.
2. Investors were given several options in the exchange, with the effect of attempting to equalize the NPV impact across the curve. Some options even included the provision for up-front cash in addition to new bonds, particularly for shorter-tenor bonds to sweeten participation in the exchange – given the priorities of reducing the near-term redemption burden.
3. There were specific threshold conditions under which the exchange itself would become effective. At least 80% participation was required for the exchange offer to become valid.

Eligible securities were 46 domestically issued T-bills and bonds, 18 internationally issued USD and EUR-denominated bonds, and 1 Samurai JPY-denominated bond.

Overall participation in the exchange was 93% and represented USD5.2bn of securities. Participation ranged from 25-100% depending on the security. In the case of the Brady bonds, participation rates were very low, in part given the embedded US Treasury collateral and that some holders who did not require marking-to-market, would need to do so (and as a result take a loss) following the exchange.

A number of important mechanisms were employed to reduce the prospect of holdouts and to enhance overall participation in the exchange.

Exit consents were employed, which effectively altered some of the contractual terms of the to-be-exchanged bonds, effectively making them subordinate to the new bonds. Such provisions included de-listing the outstanding bonds to reduce liquidity and removing provisions relating to cross-default and acceleration. This prevented holdouts from forcing cross-default on new bonds in the case of default on outstanding bonds; this also gave confidence to participants that non-payment on old bonds would not trigger cross-default.

Another aspect employed was the establishment of a trust indenture mechanism that replaced the fiscal agent for the new bonds. This had the effect of mitigating the risk of legal

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attachment of bond payment flows for outstanding bondholders in case of litigation for creditor claims.

NPV reduction was achieved by extension of maturities alone. NPV losses were on the order of 13% based on a post-exchange/exit yield of 12% – but in time there was effectively no NPV loss as yields post-exchange declined and bond prices increased as macroeconomic and financial conditions for Uruguay improved. Post-exchange, NPV losses were higher for domestic bonds compared to international bonds. Though not a technical/legal default, the exchange was deemed an episode of default by the credit rating agencies given their criteria that the exchange, though voluntary, was executed under duress with the intent of reducing the NPV of debt leading to bondholder losses.

The exchange had the effect of reducing the payment burden over the prevailing five years (2003-2008) by 5.1% of GDP. But this was not enough. The country had to engage in fiscal consolidation to an extent that put debt/GDP on a sustainable path. At the time, it was recognized that Uruguay would need to grow by on average 3% per year and sustain a primary fiscal surplus of 3% of GDP as well. Uruguay was able to tap the international markets five months later, with USD200mn-equivalent 3-year bond issued in Uruguay pesos and linked to CPI. Though arguably largely aided by a vast improvement in external macroeconomic and market conditions after 2003, a sustained commitment to fiscal adjustment and the floating of the exchange rate were likely important preconditions for the sustained recovery in Uruguay that followed the bond exchange operation.

Uruguay represents one rare example in recent episodes of sovereign distress of a successful 'buying of time' to allow external and domestic economic conditions to improve, such that a more onerous treatment of bonds was avoided.

Recent forms of sovereign restructuring

There is any number of possible structures for a given debt re-profiling episode. That said, the structure of any particular debt re-profiling exercise will tend depend on a number of factors, including (1) the extent of debt relief or NPV reduction that is required to aid in achieving debt sustainability; (2) legal jurisdictions involved; (3) specific contractual terms of the debt; (4) the extent of dispersion of bondholders; (5) mark-to-market implications for bondholders when participating in an exchange; (6) the extent to which NPV equivalence is considered an objective; and (7) affecting a high participation rate, including the use of exit consents and sweeteners.

One of the primary goals of any re-profiling, whether unilateral or voluntary, is to ensure a high participation rate. This necessarily improves the extent of debt relief, but just as important mitigates the potential disruptive impact of holdouts.

With respect to debt relief, it is important to distinguish between liquidity and solvency. To the extent that the nature of payment duress is considered temporary, a terming out of the debt may be sufficient to allow external conditions and market access to improve. This will also tend to aid in achieving NPV equivalence. To the extent that it is considered a solvency issue, a more onerous NPV reduction of the debt is likely to be required, including principal haircuts. This may also complicate – though not necessarily eliminate – the prospect of NPV equivalence across the curve.

In the more recent EM sovereign bond re-profiling episodes, distressed exchanges in which the sovereign remained current on its bonds tended to be associated with much lower NPV reduction than re-profiling episodes that occurred post-default. In all such cases, pre-default sovereign bond re-profiling involved a terming out of bond maturities and involved no principal write-downs.

That said, in the case of Argentina, the so-called mega-swap of June 2001 amounted to a terming of bond redemptions and the country was at the time current on its debt. It did little to affect favorably the country's debt repayment ability and Argentina subsequently called a standstill on debt repayment in December 2001 (missing the first bond payment in January 2002), leading to a much more onerous write-off of its bonded debt in the exchange of 2005.

Recent episodes of sovereign bond restructuring ended in NPV reduction on average or value-weighted average of 23% or 53%, respectively corresponding to recovery rates of 47-77% (Exhibit 9). Traded prices tended to decline further prior to the credit events, anticipating even larger NPV losses but

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this also reflected forced selling of defaulted debt by market participants. Traded prices then increased post-event as exit yields declined into and out of the bond exchanges.

In most cases, the NPV reduction was modest. Argentina and Russia did include a significant principal reduction of the bonds – 18% in the case of Russia and 56% in the case of Argentina, for example.

Participation rates were generally high, over 85%.

In almost all recent cases, high participation rates facilitated the payment in full of holdouts.

We outline below two possible scenarios of sovereign restructuring. In the first case, a liquidity crisis is likely considered to be at play rather than a solvency crisis and in this case it is more in line with pre-default distressed exchange episodes in recent history, such as Uruguay (2003). The second scenario considers a more onerous NPV reduction of the debt and is more reminiscent of unilateral default episodes as in the case of Argentina (2001) and Russia (1998).

Scenario 1 – Pre-emptive: Terminating out the redemption profile. In this case, a re-profiling amounts to extending maturities of all eligible bonds. The goal is less NPV reduction per se, but more immediate repayment relief. New bonds would have similar coupons as the outstanding bonds. To achieve NPV equivalence, the terminating out would be identical across instruments. Participation rates are likely to be a function of how confident bondholders are that this will ease payment duress and the extent to which they are induced to participate in the exchange. Exit consents, sweeteners (such as up-front cash or value kickers) coupled with an understanding that a strong contingent of bondholders will in any case go into the exchange may influence this decision.

Scenario 2 – Post-default: More-onerous NPV reduction.

Such a scenario involves a more-onerous treatment of outstanding obligations in an effort to achieve a larger more-impactful NPV reduction of the debt. The goal is to provide an *exit restructuring* that helps achieve long-term debt sustainability. Typically, this has happened after a sovereign has fallen into default. Such an exercise may involve the exchange into new bonds with below-market coupons, and/or a terming out of maturities. Principal reduction may also be involved. In such a case, bondholders exchange outstanding bonds for a smaller notional equivalent of new bonds. To affect a more front-loaded reduction in repayment burden and on the assumption that repayment capacity will improve in later years, the exchange may involve new bonds with step-up coupons, capitalization of coupons, amortizing principal and/or PIKs.

In the Brady/London Club deals in the 1980s and 1990s, principal collateral was also provided in the form of US Treasury bonds as well as some extent of rolling coupon coverage. These exchanges may also involve the use of sweeteners that have asymmetric payoff profiles (to the benefit of bondholders), which are important to enhance participation. Argentina's 2005 exchange also involve the introduction of GDP-linked warrants as sweeteners to the deal; similarly Brady/London Club exchanges in the 1990s and more recently involved the use of similar warrants (such as oil-linked warrants for Mexico, Nigeria and Venezuela).

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Exhibit 9

Recent sovereign bond restructuring episodes

Country	Event year	Year Cured	Bonds USDbn	Type	Bond prices [1]		Part. Rate	Est. NPV loss [2]
					Pre	Post		
Russia	1998	2000	72.7	Default	18	50	98	44
Pakistan	1999	-	1.6	Pre-emptive	52	65	95	8
Ecuador	1999	2000	6.6	Default	44	60	97	25
Ukraine	1998, 2000	2000	1.1	Pre-emptive/Default	69	60	95	5
Ivory Coast	2000	2010	2.8	Default	18	61	91	20
Argentina	2001	2005	82.3	Pre-emptive/Default	27	30	76	75
Uruguay	2003	-	5.7	Pre-emptive	66	85	93	8
Dominican Republic	2005	-	1.6	Pre-emptive	95	95	-	1
Ecuador	2008	2008	3.2	Default	26	38	-	-
Jamaica [3]	2010	-	7.8	Pre-emptive	-	-	97	20
Average					46	60	92	23
Value-weighted average					25	41	85	53

* We exclude some more recent sovereign bond defaults/restructurings including Moldova (2001, 2002), Grenada (2004), Belize (2006), Seychelles (2008)

[1] 30 days prior to default or exchange and 30 days after

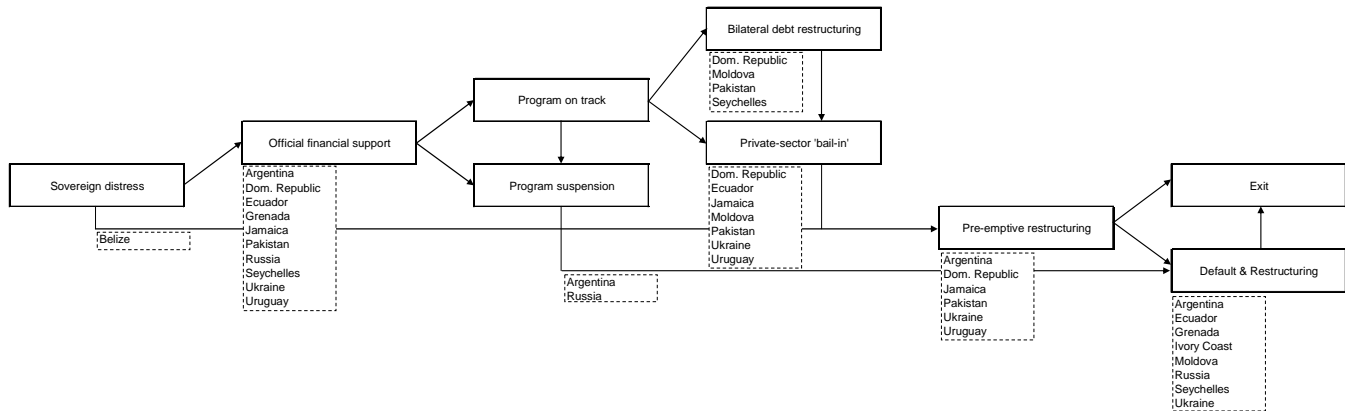
[2] Ratio of PV received in the exchange relative to what was initially promised using the yield that prevailed prior to default/exchange

[3] Restructuring of local and foreign-currency denominated government debt

Data based on best estimates
Source: Morgan Stanley, IMF, Moody's

Exhibit 10

Path to sovereign restructuring



Based on recent episodes as detailed in Exhibit 9
Source: Morgan Stanley

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