



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

PREVENTION

PREVENTION NEWSLETTER

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MISSION

The USIP's Center for Conflict Management (CCM) designs and manages the Institute's efforts to *prevent* the initial outbreak of violent conflict, *resolve* ongoing conflicts, and *stabilize* areas emerging from conflict. The Center also conducts research, identifies best practices, and develops new tools for conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

CALENDAR

January 2012: White House roll-out Atrocity Prevention Board (Date TBD).

18 January 2012: Carnegie Corporation of New York, MacArthur Foundation, and Stanley Foundation's Conference "R2P: The Next Decade" in New York.

22 January 2012: First round of legislative elections in Egypt.

21 February 2012: Presidential elections in Yemen.

PUBLICATIONS

- "Iran, Nuclear Weapons, and the IAEA" *USIP On the Issues* by Daniel Brumberg, 7 November 2011.
- "America's Global Position" *USIP On the Issues* by Abiodun Williams, 15 November 2011.
- "The Gulf States and Syria" *USIP Peace Brief* by Emile Hoyakem, November 2011.
- "Protests Spark New Questions Ahead of Egypt's Elections" *USIP On the Issues* by Lucy Kurtzer-Ellenbogen, 23 November 2011.
- "USIP Builds Bridges in Yemen" *USIP Peace Brief* by Manal Omar and Colette Rausch, 23 November 2011.
- "Egypt in the Eyes of a Democratic Storm" *USIP On the Issues* by Daniel Brumberg, 5 December 2011.
- "Multilateral Political Missions and Preventive Diplomacy" *USIP Special Report* by Richard Gowan, December 2011.

Dear Colleagues,

The year just passed reminded us, sometimes in tragic ways, of the continuing importance of preventing deadly conflict. Despite the clear advantages of conflict prevention, major actors are not eager to bear the costs of prevention today to avoid the larger costs of reacting after conflict has erupted. Governments, multilateral institutions, civil society groups have to take prevention more seriously and rise to the challenge.

In the New Year, USIP's Center for Conflict Management (CCM) will continue our *primary prevention* work on specific nascent conflicts (e.g. Korea, Iran, Pakistan, Yemen, and North Africa), and thematic/cross-cutting issues (e.g. the Responsibility to Protect, and Genocide Prevention) in ways that facilitate effective preventive action by a range of key actors. One of the key objectives of our Pakistan Program is to help build local understanding of and capacity in conflict prevention by supporting networks to promote dialogue among policymakers, civil society leaders, and communities. Our work in North Africa will include on the ground workshops on conflict prevention, and field activities aimed at securing the rights of vulnerable groups, such as women and minorities.

A priority for CCM is developing and refining innovative prevention tools, in particular Track 1.5 dialogues which engage government and non-official stakeholders in order to increase mutual understanding of challenges and opportunities in dealing with a range of security issues. As part of our work on the Korean Peninsula, we will convene Track 1.5 dialogues in the capitals of key countries. We are exploring ways to leverage our ongoing Track 1.5 work in Northeast Asia into a broader effort including in South Asia.

Happy New Year!

Abiodun Williams

Acting Senior Vice President

Center for Conflict Management

U.S. Institute of Peace



SPOTLIGHT

U.S.-Iran Relations . . . From Bad to Worse



Former hostages disembark the plane following their release from Iran in 1981.

Source: United States Department of Defense.

“The U.S. and its allies have to find a way to respond effectively to Iran . . . without feeding the very forces seeking conflict with the West.”

Iran appears to be on a collision course with the international community. On November 29, Iranian radicals stormed and vandalized the British Embassy. Britain retaliated by shutting down the Iranian Embassy in London and expelling its staff—thus coming close to breaking diplomatic relations with Iran. This action was followed by the decision of France, Germany and the Netherlands to withdraw their diplomats from Tehran. The U.S.-Iranian conflict escalated on December 4, when Iran shot down an American spy drone. Iran’s Defense Minister, Ahmad Vahidi, declared the drone now ‘property’ of Iran, and Iran’s ambassador to the UN, Mohammad Khazaee, has asked the United Nations to condemn this U.S. violation of its airspace. Fueled by Iran’s ongoing efforts to produce an independent nuclear fuel cycle—one that according to the most recent IAEA report, probably includes concerted efforts at weaponization—the U.S.-Iran Cold War feels increasingly hot.

Many radical leaders in Iran would probably welcome Iran’s escalating conflict with the West. For them, isolation is central to their internal power. Indeed, by vandalizing the British embassy, the attackers knew that their actions would vividly recall the storming of the U.S. embassy in Iran by radical students in 1979. In the ensuing year, the students used the hostage crisis to discredit moderate policy at home and abroad. They succeeded, but contributed to the emergence of an autocratic state increasingly isolated throughout the eighties. During the late nineties, former President Khatami and his reformist allies tried to rebuild Iran’s relations with the West. Their efforts provoked a backlash from the radicals, who since 2005 have pursued a campaign to repress reformists and undermine reconciliation efforts with the West. Today, Iran’s radicals, particularly within the Revolutionary Guards, are trying to recreate some of the old days of conflict with the U.S., and with the previous (and at one point, number one) Great Satan, Britain.

The U.S. and its allies have to find a way to respond effectively to Iran—and its nuclear program—without feeding the very forces seeking conflict with the West. This is no simple task. It might be argued that rapprochement with Iran would in fact undermine the radicals, and thus, that the Obama administration should revive its earlier efforts at engagement. However, since Tehran responded poorly to those efforts, the U.S. and its allies appear to have concluded that there is no alternative to coercive diplomacy. The EU and the U.S. are both considering further sanctions, even on Iran’s oil exports. Both Russia and China condemned Iran’s invasion of the British Embassy, a clear indication that both Beijing and Moscow are increasingly frustrated with Tehran’s actions. Furthermore, with the recent decision by the Arab League to impose sanctions on Syria, Iran’s closest regional ally, Tehran risks alienation from an Arab world in the throes of democratic rebellion.

A further isolation of Iran also poses risks for the United States. With fewer Western interlocutors, the U.S. will have fewer channels of communication with Iran. Under these conditions, future incidents—such as the downing of the drone—may lead to a sudden and unwanted military escalation. The path of an even colder war with Iran—and the threat of it heating up—is sobering, particularly when we consider two facts: first, that punishing



sanctions alone is unlikely to elicit Iran's compliance on the nuclear issue, and second, that Iran's isolation tends to strengthen the country's own radical leaders. This is precisely why most reformists dread the very idea of an intensification of the U.S.-Iran conflict. Their concerns remind us that Washington and its allies are caught between very bad alternatives when it comes to Iran policy.

OVER THE HORIZON— HIGHLIGHTS

U.S.-Pakistan Relations

The U.S.-Pakistan relationship began to recover after tensions, reported in the last newsletter, following Admiral Mullen's statement on the Pakistani intelligence agency's links to the Haqqani network. Bilateral ties appeared to be strengthening again following a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Pakistan. On November 26, however, this modicum of improvement suffered another crisis-driven setback following a NATO airstrike on a border security outpost which killed 24 Pakistani soldiers. In response, Pakistan closed NATO supply routes, demanded that the U.S. vacate an airbase within 15 days, and boycotted the December 5 international Bonn conference on Afghanistan.

While both sides have since expressed a desire to continue working together, the mistrust and resentment on both sides continues to grow. Until fundamental issues are resolved, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship's pattern of oscillation will continue despite the overarching necessity of cooperation on Afghanistan. As it is no longer obvious that an imperfect partnership between the U.S. and Pakistan is enough to clinch a political deal in Afghanistan, the need for close cooperation to ensure a successful security transition has increased. Post-2014, however, the prognosis for the U.S.-Pakistan relationship is poor. As U.S. responsibilities in Afghanistan decline, so too will regular dependence on Pakistan. Given existing negative popular sentiments towards the other side in both countries, avenues for positive engagement beyond counter-terrorism appear limited. Against this background, USIP's Pakistan program remains focused on implementing programs aimed at understanding and helping to prevent and mitigate violent extremism through analytical and programmatic work. USIP is embarking on an extensive media mapping exercise to determine the sources and forms of radicalized messaging in the Pakistani media.

North Africa and the Arab Spring

One year after the Tunisian popular uprising that unseated the country's dictator, and set in motion a regional movement of popular protests and revolutions that became known as "the Arab Spring," those countries that have witnessed regime change as a result, are undergoing challenging and distinct processes of transition. In Egypt, protesters have returned to the streets to register frustration at what they cast as the slow pace of reform and attempts by the ruling military council to secure long-term and heavy-handed influence. Despite such protests and a heavy-handed and fatal response by the authorities, the proposed election timeframe has moved forward as planned, and Egyptians have participated in record numbers in two rounds of staggered parliamentary elections that saw a strong showing for the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party. A third round of polls is scheduled for January 4th

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but, in the meantime, army crackdowns on continuing protests are turning increasingly violent and the situation grows more precarious. Meanwhile, in Libya, the National Transitional Council overseeing the transition has pledged to hold elections for a national assembly that will oversee the writing of a new constitution within eight months after the selection of a new government.

However, as former rebels attempt to assemble a government, regional rivalries are rising to the surface with local militia leaders abandoning a pledge to relinquish their weapons in a seeming attempt to hold onto political leverage. In Tunisia, the country held its first free election in October, to elect an assembly that would draft a new constitution. The moderate Islamist party Ennahda emerged victorious and will now lead the formation of a new coalition government.

Arab–Israeli Conflict

The Palestinian bid to achieve statehood recognition at the U.N. has stalled, lacking the necessary support in the Security Council. The United States has therefore avoided the need to exercise a promised veto on the matter. However, the Palestinians successfully pushed for recognition at UNESCO and seem poised to make similar requests to other specialized U.N. bodies in the absence of meaningful progress towards a resumption of serious negotiations. The U.S. is keen to avoid such a move, maintaining its position that the only route to a peace agreement is through direct negotiations between the parties. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking on the Middle East Quartet timeline put forward in September. Under this plan, a two-state agreement is to be reached by the end of 2012, and the Palestinian and Israeli governments are to present each other with detailed proposals on territory and security by late January. But the prospects of adhering to this time frame look slim. Indeed, the Quartet roadmap called for a return to direct talks in October—a benchmark that has yet to be met.

Korean Peninsula

North Korean leader Kim Jong-il died on December 17, reportedly succumbing to mental and physical exhaustion while conducting on-site guidance visits. When news of Kim Il-sung's death was unveiled in 1994, international reaction—particularly in regional stock markets—stabilized quickly. What is different now is that we are dealing with a North Korea that has conducted two nuclear tests and significantly expanded its nuclear weapons programs.

The loyalty of the elites to Kim Jong-eun, Kim Jong-il's third son and anointed successor, is currently uncertain. Kim Jong-il had handpicked the powerful officials in Kim Jong-eun's inner circle. These are now like powerful solar panels that have suddenly lost their energy source after the sun has set. This raises serious questions about the viability and legitimacy of Kim Jong-eun. We have just entered into the fog of the post-Kim Jong-il period. The main task is to determine who or which group is in control of North Korea. It is too late to reach out and establish new contacts and channels. China is the only country that has previously established extensive ties via a relationship between the Communist Party of China's International Department and the Workers' Party of Korea. However, it is important to point out that while China has such ties with key groups in North Korea, this does not necessarily mean it has special influence or leverage.

A fundamental challenge is to determine who is in control and how effective that control is. If it appears that instability is rapidly unfolding, the surrounding countries will respond in different ways. It will be critically important how the respective countries navigate through



Flag of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Source: Wikimedia Commons.



Kim Jong-eun, Kim Jong-il's third son and anointed successor.

Source: Flickr.



this fog. A compounding effect will be various countries' misreading of each other's defensive preparations and military movements. USIP will continue to promote clear and regular communication among the countries in the region, especially during this fog.

The Responsibility to Protect

During the 2005 UN World Summit, heads of state and government unanimously embraced their *Responsibility to Protect* civilians from mass atrocities. In the following UN dialogues on R2P conceptual discussions were gradually replaced by operational debates. The question was no longer what this new acronym entailed, but how it could be implemented. During her opening speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2011, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff tried to reignite the conceptual discussion by emphasizing the international community's "*responsibility while protecting*." In order to shape the debate on the use of "humanitarian force" post-Libya, Brazil repackaged the "do no harm" principle, urging for strict limitations on the use of military force and mechanisms to avoid the misuse of R2P. So far, the response by R2P advocates has been lukewarm. Both President Rousseff's speech and the concept note from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, formulate a distinction between collective responsibilities and collective security, and propose a chronological sequencing of R2P's three pillars—the protection responsibilities of each State, international assistance and capacity-building, and timely and decisive response. These proposals raise numerous concerns, as they could undermine existing agreements and strategic proposals. For example, whereas UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stresses the importance of early and flexible responses, the Brazilian proposal demands a complete exhaustion of non-coercive means before robust approaches can be applied.

All things considered, this Brazilian initiative represents a constructive proposal that deserves consideration in upcoming GA discussions. The proposed concept is largely complementary to existing agreements, and could help bridge the deep divide between advocates and opponents that obstructs a normative convergence on R2P. In 2011, the buy-in of emerging powers has proven to be critical to the ability of the international community to address the risk of mass atrocities. Whether the Brazilian proposal represents a threat to or opportunity for R2P will depend on the ability of R2P advocates to engage the creators of this concept. In the past, R2P's fan base has often ignored concerns raised by skeptics, whether illegitimate or not. Discounting this constructive concept note could antagonize an indispensable partner, and undermine our efforts to turn 'Never Again' from a fashionable slogan into reality.

The Power Transitions in Yemen

On November 23, 2011, President Abdullah Ali Saleh signed an agreement to immediately transfer power to his vice president, to be followed by the creation of a unity government. Protesters—particularly the youth—expressed strong reservations about whether the agreement goes far enough in meeting their demands and ensuring an active role for them in the transition. They were particularly angry at the provision that granted immunity to him and his family. While many hoped that this deal would help end months of deadly conflict between pro-government and opposition members, Saleh has shown strong signs that he is not committed to giving up power and violence has continued throughout the country. In early December, fighting in Taiz, between pro-government forces and armed tribesmen allied with the protesters resulted in at least eight fatalities and Saleh's security forces continue to crack down on protests in Sanaa.

“These proposals raise numerous concerns, as they could undermine existing agreements and strategic proposals.”

- “The Fog of the Post-Kim Jong-il Period” *USIP On the Issues* by John Park, 19 December 2011.
- “Stakeholders of Libya’s February 17 Revolution” *USIP on the Issues* by Susanne Tarkowski Tempelhof and Manal Omar, January 2012.

WORKING GROUPS

- On December 1, the **Korea Working Group (KWG)** co-convened a closed briefing with the House’s bipartisan U.S.-China Working Group (USCWG) for Representatives Rick Larsen (D), Charles Boustany (R), and Susan Davis (D). Dr. Richard Solomon (President of USIP), Dr. Bates Gill (Director of SIPRI) and Dr. John Park briefed the Members on USIP’s ongoing policy work examining China’s deepening relations with North Korea and implications for the U.S. North Korea policy.
- The **Lebanon Working Group (LWG)** hosted Nicholas Blanford, Beirut correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor and the Times of London. Blanford, who recently published a book entitled “Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah’s Thirty Year Struggle Against Israel,” discussed Hezbollah’s military evolution since the 2006 war with Israel, the prospects for renewed conflict with Israel, as well as the impact of the Arab Spring on Hezbollah’s strategic decision-making.
- A fourth meeting of the **Working Group on the Responsibility to Protect** is scheduled to take place on February 14. This session will deal with the role of public opinion, advocacy communities, and media in enhancing efforts to address R2P crimes.
- The **Yemen Working Group** is resuming under the joint auspices of the United States Institute of Peace and the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies. The primary goals of the Working Group are to facilitate interaction and knowledge-sharing among Yemen analysts, experts, and the foreign policy community, and to develop proposals, ideas, and policy recommendations geared towards the management and prevention of conflict in Yemen.



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