



الكتلة الوطنية
NATIONAL BLOC

Crisis Group United States' Nineteen Conflict Prevention Tips for the Biden Administration (28 January 2021)

A summary

This document summarizes the recommendations for the Biden Administration concerning Lebanon and the region stipulated in the Crisis Group United States Briefing N°2.

We remind that Robert Malley, International Crisis Group's President & CEO, was assigned by Biden the Iranian dossier and that he was the architect behind the nuclear deal. Furthermore, his approach is seen by some as favorable towards Iran.

1. Lebanon

Crisis Group United States recommends to the Biden administration the following measures related to Lebanon:

1. Rather than looking at Lebanon through the lens of disempowering Hezbollah, the U.S. should make its number-one goal strengthening the state and avoiding its collapse.
2. U.S. should throw its weight behind the French effort to corral Lebanese political players, including Hezbollah, into a new government, and rally them around essential reforms.
3. Encourage Lebanese allies to forge a level of pragmatic cooperation with their adversaries that would allow for the measures – especially legislation to safeguard the independence of the judiciary, and anticorruption and public procurement laws – necessary to unlock international support.
4. To shore up core state institutions, the U.S. should continue and perhaps even expand its support of the Lebanese Armed Forces.
5. It should guide humanitarian support toward mitigating the effects of the crisis on the most vulnerable segments of the population, including refugees, and avoiding mass poverty and famine.



6. It should ensure that its development support for the rehabilitation of critical infrastructure is tied to institutional measures that counteract patronage and rent seeking, for example through transparency in procurement and fund allocation as well as through civil society participation.

2. The region

Crisis Group United States recommends to the Biden administration the following measures related to region:

A- Afghanistan

1. The Biden administration should immediately signal its commitment to continue supporting the peace talks.
2. U.S. diplomats should swiftly move to persuade the Taliban to extend the February 2020 U.S.-Taliban agreement, potentially by six months, given it took that long for Afghan peace talks to get under way.
3. Washington should also prioritize the establishment of a regional diplomatic framework to support Afghan peace negotiations as well as the outcome of any peace settlement.
4. To determine whether the Biden Administration intends to maintain an indefinite, if small, military presence in Afghanistan for counter-terrorism purposes, as Biden himself has suggested.

B- Iran

1. The Biden administration should pursue U.S. re-entry into the 2015 nuclear deal, starting by revoking the 2018 order ending U.S. JCPOA participation and initiating a process of



fully reversing Trump-era sanctions while Iran brings its nuclear program back into full compliance.

2. As further confidence-building measures, Washington could support Iran's International Monetary Fund loan request as a sign of good-will in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and perhaps engage Tehran in discussions on a prisoner swap.
3. Early discussions on ending the conflict in Yemen and supporting a dialogue between Iran and Gulf Arab countries could also help lower tensions.

C- Iraq

1. One priority for the Biden administration's Iraq policy should be to defuse the persistent state of near conflict between U.S. forces and Iraqi paramilitary groups that assembled to fight ISIS in 2014.
2. The Biden administration should urge the government to tolerate peaceful mass protests, redouble efforts to ensure that elections can take place on time, and encourage confidence in their integrity by issuing biometric cards to eligible voters by June so that October elections are possible.

D- Israel and Palestine

1. The Biden administration should re-examine traditional U.S. goals, place a greater focus on the protection of individual rights and keep its ambitions in check.
2. In reaffirming its preference of the two-state solution, the Biden administration should insist that if Israel continues to obstruct the establishment of a fully sovereign and viable Palestinian state, any alternative to the two-state solution will have to respect the right to full equality and enfranchisement of all those in any space controlled by Israel.
3. Establishing the conditions for meaningful talks while protecting those whose rights are being violated in Israel and the occupied territories.
4. Disavowal of the January 2020 Trump plan



5. Refrain from actions that shield Israel from the costs of its occupation and make peace more difficult to achieve, such as vetoing UN Security Council resolutions.
6. Encourage the Palestinians to undertake their own political renewal, advance internal reconciliation and give breathing space to non-violent strategies for achieving their goals.

E- Libya

1. Help shore up the October ceasefire by pressing the UN Security Council to back it, including by standing up a scalable monitoring mechanism that the UN secretary-general presented to council members in December 2020.
2. Washington can express support for parliamentary elections in December 2021.
3. The administration should help resolve Libya's oil revenues dispute.

F- Russia

1. New START arms control treaty extension
2. Preserving Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integration
3. Washington should work with Brussels and key EU member states, including Normandy Format members France and Germany, on a unified transatlantic strategy toward Russia with clear and defensible red lines.
4. U.S. and its allies help Russia, Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan unblock transport corridors and kick-start trade in the South Caucasus.

G- Yemen and Saudi Arabia

1. First, the Biden team should rescind Trump's eleventh-hour terrorism designation of the Huthi entity, or Ansar Allah, and certain Huthi leaders, which triggers sanctions that will only aggravate the humanitarian disaster and complicate diplomacy.



2. Secondly, it should throttle back military assistance, making clear that it will protect Riyadh from threats to its territorial integrity if they reach a certain magnitude, but that it cannot extend a blank check for the war in Yemen.
3. Thirdly, it should make clear that good-faith efforts by Riyadh will be important as the U.S. re-evaluates the future of the U.S.-Saudi security partnership.
4. Fourthly, the U.S. should up its support for UN-led peace efforts and perhaps even name a special envoy for Yemen to help.
5. Finally, on the margins of negotiations with Tehran over the Iran deal, the U.S. should ask for help persuading the Huthis to reach a ceasefire and engage constructively in peace talks – not as a condition for U.S. re-entry to the JCPOA, but rather as a confidence-building measure that would benefit the region.

H- Syria & Turkey

1. U.S. to commit to an eventual gradual withdrawal, conditioned on attainment of a negotiated arrangement that would protect the millions of civilians residing under SDF control from a violent free-for-all that ISIS elements could exploit.
2. Washington should seek to address Ankara's two major priorities: preventing a PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) armed presence and activity south of its border; and ending any YPG (People's Protection Units, the dominant Kurdish component of the SDF) arms supplies to the PKK, as Turkey claims exist.
3. Until a deal can be made, the U.S. would need to offer the SDF effective protection from Turkish and pro-Turkish forces.
4. U.S. should work with Ankara and the SDF to define a mutually tolerable endgame for Syria's north east, and then seek to reach agreements on tactical steps toward that end.
5. The Biden administration should work with Congress to shore up the legal basis for troops to be in Syria.

In conclusion, Crisis Group United States recommends the Biden Administration not to focus all its attention on countering Hezbollah in Lebanon but encouraging reforms instead. Crisis Group United States also recommends fewer extreme solutions for other states in the region than the Foundation for the Defense of Democracy (FDD).