In 2014, we find ourselves struggling to make sense of a landscape of enduring yet shifting conflicts and their impact on development, international partnerships, and human rights. We face many challenges: negotiating the future of a decade-long intervention in Afghanistan, extremism and state control in Pakistan, understanding the nexus between development and security in Africa, and a Syrian conflict seemingly at an impasse, among others. There are no easy answers in 2014.

Within these pages, our authors consider the role of leadership, international law, communications technology, and public diplomacy to address these challenges.

In an interview with The Forum, JOSEPH S. NYE, JR. discusses the nature of executive leadership in the United States, in light of his recent book Presidential Leadership and the Creation of the American Era. G. WILLIAM ANDERSON also touches on leadership, urging the United States to better integrate security and development activities in Africa through a stronger partnership between the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of Defense. Colonel CHARLES J. BUTLER argues that to remain a superpower, the United States needs to address the mining and manufacturing of rare earth elements—a natural resource, of which China currently monopolizes the production.

Pivoting from U.S. leadership, we turn our focus to current and post-conflict societies and concerns. ROBERT DOWD looks at the relationship between violent conflict and religious diversity, employing the example of Nigeria to lend a richer understanding. In an interview with The Forum, SARAH HOLEWINKSI and MARLA KEENAN of the Center for Civilians in Conflict share the perspective of an organization whose main goal is to aid those caught in the midst of armed conflict, by working with the affected civilians, the agencies and policymakers tasked to assist, as well as the military groups involved. They speak to the current and future challenges of Afghanistan, a topic also covered by MICHELLE BARSA who discusses the role for women in determining Afghanistan’s future.

Also looking at post-conflict societies, ERIN TUNNEY reveals the extent of gender-based violence in the peace processes of two post-conflict
countries, South Africa and Northern Ireland. **Daniel Markey** examines both internal and external threats to Pakistani security and specifically addresses the risks posed by Hizb-ut-Tahrir. **Halil Rahman Basaran** looks at conflict and violence from a legal perspective and analyzes the concept of Responsibility to Protect while comparing it to our theory of humanitarian intervention. **Juan Carlos Portilla** also lends a legal perspective in his article on amnesties and international law, using Colombia as a case study.

From conflict and its ensuing legal questions, we shift to examine the new age of communication and technology as well as the role of public diplomacy. **Philip Seib** considers the future of NATO and calls for an increased public diplomacy effort. Lieutenant Commander **Joshua A. Frey** assesses the role of social networks and how they change the relationship between the community and the government, particularly with respect to wars amongst the people. **Sarah Lange** also looks at these networks, but from a different perspective. She examines social media revolutions and how new mass surveillance technologies have shifted the power balance from citizen to sovereign in authoritarian regimes.

**Matt Herbert** scrutinizes a different kind of network; he describes the systems of Syria’s illicit economy, focusing on how insurgent organizations and smuggling groups have usurped what was previously a government organized operation, as well as the consequences for Syria’s post-conflict transition.

Each of the articles within these pages represents a critical issue in today’s study and practice of international relations. Our authors make salient arguments on current developments in the field, whether they speak to the security implications of a natural resource, the complexities of post-conflict transitions, an all too significant arms trade, or the various powers of social networks and new communications technology.

These articles also represent countless hours of hard work by our dedicated editing team. I cannot thank my staff enough for their time and effort, which comes on top of their Fletcher coursework. In particular, this issue would not be in print without the help of my colleague, Stephanie Flamenbaum, who with a keen eye and vicious pen, improves every paragraph and ensures that the journal does not go up in flames.

We encourage you to visit our website, [www.fletcherforum.org](http://www.fletcherforum.org), where we continue these conversations. As always, we welcome your thoughts, feedback, and submissions.

From the staff here at The Forum, we wish you a happy and healthy 2014.