THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
BREAKFAST CAFETERIA PODCAST
America's track record in building foreign militaries
Friday, February 23, 2018

PARTICIPANTS:

FRED DEWS

Host

MARA E. KARLIN

Nonresident Senior Fellow, Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence

SCOTT ANDERSON

David M. Rubenstein Fellow in the Governance Studies program

* * * * *

(MUSIC)

MR. DEWS: Welcome to the Brookings Cafeteria, the podcast about ideas and the experts who have them.

I'm Fred Dews. Since the end of World War II, the United States has sought to strengthen the military forces in fragile states to help those countries improve their internal security situations and better govern their territory. But America's track record in this is decidedly mixed according to my guest today. Mara Karlin is a Non-resident Senior Fellow in the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence here at Brookings and also an associate professor at Johns Hopkins SiSC. She has served in national security roles for five US Secretaries of Defense and most recently served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development. Karlin is also the author of the new book, Building Militaries in Fragile States, from the University of Pennsylvania Press, which we will discuss on the show today. Stay tuned in this episode for another coffee break segment where you will meet a scholar who is studying the US institutions that monitor the use of war powers and forced overseas. You can follow the Brookings Podcast Network on Twitter@policypodcasts to get the latest information about all of our shows.

MR. DEWS: Mara, welcome to the Brookings Cafeteria.

MS. KARLIN: Thank you. I am delated to be here.

MR. DEWS: You are pretty new to Brookings in terms of being a non-resident senior fellow. I wanted to chat with you a little about your background. First, you were the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development. What does that person do?

MS. KARLIN: What does that mean in English? It is an unwieldy title indeed. It is a pretty extraordinary opportunity. The role of that job is to try to figure out what the Defense Department's broad strategy and priorities should be and then based on that strategy and priorities and figure out how to spend a budget of about 650 billion or so dollars. Trying to consider what future wars the US military might be asked to play a role in and trying to ascertain how today we can make sure that military is as ready as possible for whatever that future brings.

MR. DEWS: I also noted on your bio on our website that you were a professor in The Semester at Sea last year. Can you tell me what that is about?

MS. KARLIN: When I was in college a long time ago, I did a study abroad program called Semester at Sea where you sail around the world with about 600 other college students. Simply put it changed my life. It exposed me to things I could never have imagined. It is where I particularly got the bug for international relations more broadly. I always dreamed about going back as a professor. I had the opportunity to do so right after I left the Obama Administration. From January to May 2017, I along with about 20 or so other faculty members and 600 college students sailed from San Diego across Asia, Africa, and a bit of Europe all the way to Germany.

MR. DEWS: That is fascinating, and it is similar somewhat to the story I have when I was in high school. I had a chance to visit the Soviet Union. I went on a high school trip for two weeks. That changed my life, and I decided I wanted to go to college and study Russian and International Relations, and now I am a podcaster. So it all worked out.

MS. KARLIN: It is amazing when you see your world exploded open. I brought my kids with me this time, who are seven and nine, and just watching them learn about what the world looks like, beyond their Washington, DC, bubble was extraordinary.

MR. DEWS: Let's talk about your book, Building Militaries in Fragile States. I first want to ask how you came across this topic. How did you get interested in the topic you researched in this book?

MS. KARLIN: I became interested in this topic because it was something I had been doing. In my first stint at the Pentagon, during the Bush Administration, where I worked as a civil servant covering issues like the Middle East and South Asia, I spent a lot of time trying to build militaries in fragile States from Pakistan's military to the Lebanese military, a whole bunch in between. Everyone that I worked with was similarly trying to do so. So I was really curious to then to figure out well it sees like the hot thing, we are spending a ton of time doing it. When else has the United States tried to do it and in particular under what circumstances has it been more or less successful.

MR. DEWS: Definitionally speaking what does it mean for the US to build partner

militaries?

MS. KARLIN: Effectively when you have fragile states, states that can't really exert a monopoly on violence you want to find a way to secure them. Particularly if in a post-1945 environment or a post-September 11, 2001 environment this fragility increasingly affects the United States. But, to be frank, the United States doesn't necessarily want to wholly deal with itself, right. It doesn't want to send the US military to try to fix the problem for all sorts of reasons, so it chooses to delegate authority. That is kind of the way in which it is attempting to stabilize fragile states cheaply in blood, in treasure, and in time.

MR. DEWS: You write in a recent article in Foreign Affairs about this topic that Washington is working with the militaries of more than 100 countries and running large programs to train and equip armed forces in such hot spots such Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordon, and Pakistan. But, all 100 of those aren't examples of building militaries in fragile states. So it is a more specific type of US involvement, right?

MS. KARLIN: Where I really try to focus on is smaller states, so I don't look at Pakistan for example. I also don't look at places where you have seen a massive occupation. For example, Iraq and Afghanistan were not examples that I tried to focus on because my view is once you for better or worse have occupied a country, and I would use a similar parallel here to say British Colonies or French Colonies, I think an outside force plays that role, and it is a markedly different situation. So some of the findings I think are translatable, but I try not to get too deep into those for that reason.

MR. DEWS: So you have four case studies in the book. Can you provide a real quick overview of those four case studies?

MS. KARLIN: Sure. In trying to examine when, why, and under what circumstances the US military has been more successful in building militaries in fragile states, I try to take a spectrum of examples since 1945. Effectively, I have those along a continuum of success and failure. Failure, for example, is the US effort to build the South Vietnamese military in the 1950s. What is so interesting on this one you have the US spending about half a decade focused on building South Vietnam's military. This is massive. It is half a billion in assistance, and it does work. You have a South Vietnamese president who organizes the South

Vietnamese military totally according to his preferences. He focuses on conventional external conflict, meaning that his country is not ready for a growing communist insurgency at home. You have a military whose leadership remains weak, its chain of command is confusing, just really a total mess. Because it doesn't work, you end up seeing this really substantial US effort, this effort that ends up costing the lives of 58,000 Americans, to say nothing of a whole lot of Vietnamese. That is sort of the spectacular failure.

MR. DEWS: Can we stick on that for a few minutes. I think of all the conflicts that you detail in the book, there are many conflicts, and I am the most familiar with Vietnam and this from personal reading. I do think it is so fascinating that people may not totally understand the level of involvement that we had after the French basically were leaving in the mid-50s and even until 1960-61 before Kennedy's increased involvement. You really just focus on that one period, and you write fascinatingly and sadly by summer 1960 an entire decade of American military assistance had failed to extend internal defense throughout South Vietnam and as then as you said the 1960s and all the violence followed. But you made an important point just now. You said that President Diem of South Vietnam was focused on external conflict, but one of your theses is that success in building militaries in fragile states helps them focus on internal conflicts. Why is that distinction there?

MS. KARLIN: At the end day the way we think about statehood, in a very definitional term if you look at like Max Vabor, you are looking at a country that has a monopoly on violence throughout its territory. We no longer really have this issue of states dying like you might have seen a hundred years or so ago. There is a kind of panoply of fragile states that can extend this monopoly on violence. If they can't do that, the notion of them, therefore, focusing on an external actor really is problematic. There is a little bit of you have to do the first things first and the second things second. What happens with Diem he is obsessed with the external threat environment and unfortunately the fellow that the United States puts in charge of its military assistance program in South Vietnam also is obsessed. So while you have the community in Washington generally agreeing that you had to solidify internal defense throughout South Vietnam, you have both a political leadership in Saigon who doesn't believe this and doesn't want to follow it, who is getting advised by a US military general officer to do

whatever he wants. Really contrary to what Washington had desired. I should note that the fellow who is advising him on the US side is just one heck of a character, as I think you probably saw. This is Sam Williams, known as hanging Sam, who it is pretty clear before he even takes this job is utterly incompetent. He clashed with the US Embassy officials in Saigon. When you read the archives about he talked to the US Ambassador, you almost just want to close your eyes. You see him cow-towing to President Diem and as I noted he is committed to doing what he wants in building the South Vietnam military. Under the view that because he is the guy on the ground, he gets exactly what is going on. Totally lacking this broader strategic perspective.

MR. DEWS: As you say in the book, it is not just a military issue, it is a very political issue, and so if he is messing up the whole political side of it, it seems like it is doomed to fail, right?

MS. KARLIN: Absolutely. That is what is so interesting really for me was striking as I was researching and writing this book was just how much these efforts to train and equip partner militaries are really political and not technical exercises. I think this is not surprising to those who look at state-building literature or to those in the development space, but in the national security literature, in the strategic studies literature. In particular, for any of us who have been practitioners, I think we have largely approached it in a technical manner. How many Humvees do they have? How much ammunition do they need? It largely distanced from key political issues, and it seems to me after having written this book that is actually a pretty flawed approach.

MR. DEWS: Let's switch now to one of the case studies that is a success, which is Greece. Can you talk about what happened in Greece, and when, and some of the factors involved?

MS. KARLIN: Greece just after World War II is a mess. I mean it is just extraordinary to read about it. This is after this German occupation ended you have a totally destroyed infrastructure, a ravaged landscape, and rampant starvation and disease. It is in such bad shape that Secretary of State Dean Acheson looks back and says Greece is in the position of a semi-conscious patient who is on the critical list whose relatives and physicians have been discussing whether his life could be saved. As I picture it having read so much about Greece

during that period, I am really picturing what we see in like Syria for example, just wanton destruction and violence. The US approach, once Washington makes this decision to build the Greek military is extremely, extremely deep. I was shocked when I was going through the archives to see things like the State Department literally writing the Greek request for aid to make sure it said what Washington wanted it to say. Throughout the process to see just how deeply this US effort to build the Greek military involved reorganizing the entire thing to ensure it was focused on internal defense, to deeply influence the personnel so pushing capable leaders forward. Really the United States oversaw a complete overhaul of Greek military personnel, appointing a new chief of staff, compelling all of the Greek militaries' lieutenant generals except one to resign, facilitating a number of promotions, encouraging the removal of division and corps commanders who did not appear to be up to snuff. It was extraordinary to see what was happening on the ground, but then also to see what was happening in Washington where you saw a pretty smooth process of constant reassessment trying to figure out what are we trying to do here, what really is the purpose of our effort, under what circumstances should whatever we are doing expand. I refer to this as this notion of becoming a co-combatant. You have these senior national security officials in Washington regularly coming together to figure out under what circumstances things in Greece have changed enough that the US military role might need to evolve meaningfully. When I read that I can't help but think about things like Syria today where you have 2,000 US military personnel with an extremely confused mandate and another example in the book if you look at Lebanon in the early 1980s where you have the Marines who are out there also with a confused mandate. I put it, if it is confusing to people who look at it, say back in America, it is also going to be confusing to our adversaries. The Lebanon example is, unfortunately, a pretty spot on one where you see an attack on the US Embassy in 1983. You see an attack on the Marine barracks later in 1983, too. Much of it I think because the US keeps saying we are there only for defensive reasons. Reagan even writes that into his journal the night that he authorizes the USS New Jersey to start firing on militias and Syrian military forces. In Lebanon, he is saying this still falls under the heading of defense. But you can see that other actors don't buy it.

MR. DEWS: You make a point throughout the book that the United States and

Washington very much want to avoid being a co-combatant. It sounds like they definitely achieved that in Greece. Up until the 60s, I think they achieved that in Vietnam. But did they achieve that in Lebanon?

MS. KARLIN: No, I don't think so at all. I think Washington's view was that the Marines in Lebanon were not supposed to be combatants. What is so interesting is that within a year of their presence they are actually getting combat pay. Yet the vision is that they are there merely to be a presence. They are merely there for stability. I very much see that as an example as a slippery slope, and I think therefore it should not be surprising that you start to see these attacks on the forces.

MR. DEWS: And now coffee break.

MR. ANDERSON: My name is Scott Anderson. I am the David and Rubinstein Fellow in Governance Studies here at the Brookings Institution. In addition to my role here at Brookings, I am a senior editor at Lawfare, and so I spend a lot of time with them ensuring that we have quality coverage of major developments in national security law area and national security policy.

I grew up in Arlington, Virginia, just across the river from us here in our Nation's Capital. Growing up in the DC area I was inspired to become a scholar by the fact that so many world events and national events were happening so proximate to me. A lot of the professors, parents, and people I knew growing up were involved with policy issues that were very important and impacting a lot of people's lives in the newspapers. So, I knew from an early age that I wanted to be a participant in a lot of the important policy discussions happening in our country.

Among the many very important policy issues we are facing today, one of the most important certainly is the manner in which we are pursuing and expanding our use of force overseas. The war on terrorism has led to US activities in a number of forums and a number of different types of activities at a scale and a volume that very few people would have anticipated 10 or 15 years ago. A lot of them are very reasonable. A lot of them respond to very real threats. There are good reasons policymakers want to pursue them. But, the framework that we have, the legal framework, the institutional framework for ensuring

democratic accountability and public accountability for a lot of those actions have not kept up with a lot of those changes. Finding ways to ensure that as we engage in these new types of conflict, we still stay true to our democratic principles and the other principles of law that we have in our country should be a major priority for many of our lawmakers and policymakers.

While in addition to spending a fair amount of time covering and responding to some major developments in the middle east, I spend a good amount of my time here at Brookings working on or at least starting currently a new project looking at the institutions that we have to monitor the use of war powers and the use of force overseas. The war powers resolution that was enacted in 1973 has certain reporting requirements. The use of those has evolved over presidential administrations over the last several decades. But, a lot of the actual requirements and those practices that have evolved from them don't track ways that we use force currently. Congress has authorized a wide range of related activities, type of security assistance, and other sorts of security cooperation that don't clearly fit into that framework but obviously have a huge impact on how we prosecute our national security policy overseas. So I am trying to develop new frameworks and proposals about ways we may be able to reform those systems to ensure that we have better accountability and oversight.

If there were two books that I could recommend to listeners, the first one would be a book called Moral Man in a Moral Society, by Reinhold Niebuhr. It was a book assigned or at least recommended to me by my professor my first week of college of my International Relations 101 class. It has influenced the way I think a lot of things. The author, Reinhold Niebuhr is a theologian but also a political activist and a deep thinker about both domestic politics and international politics. In it, he really wrestles with how one can both embrace ethics but understand some of the sometimes unethical seemings or the unethical things that emerge from human institutions and systems of government. He tries to find a way to craft policy that navigates between those two poles and does so in a way to inform not just as a scholar but also as a practitioner and activist.

The second book I would recommend is actually technically a lecture I believe, Max Weber's Science as a Vocation. It is his less read lecture after Politics as a Vocation. But it is really showing wrestling with what the advent of the era of rationality can mean for

spirituality and personal belief as well as including political belief and political ideology. He paints a picture of the limits of rationality in our day to day lives in addressing some the major questions that we face as human beings that I think really speaks to a lot of the social trends over the 20th and 21st century and it is something that I find myself thinking about almost every day when I read the newspaper.

MR. DEWS: Another really important factor you look at throughout the case studies is the presence or the role of external actors in the countries. It was fascinated to learn that in Greece for example, while the US was trying to stand up and rebuild the Greek military, it was faced with an insurgency that was supported by outside countries – I think Yugoslavia and maybe Bulgaria and I think there were others. Talk about the effect or the importance of considering what the external actors were doing as the US military is working on this problem.

MS. KARLIN: This is not just a bilateral effort. I think sometimes it is a little too easy for us to focus on the US role and the partner military's role. Antagonistic external actors the nature of their support to an insurgency whether it is providing material or offering sanctuary or broadly trying to undermine a state's ability is really also important to focus. There are antagonistic external actors for whom it is not in their interest for a stable country to actually be established. They may have a fundamental vision of what that states should look like for all sorts of reasons. In writing this book, I found it was really important to ensure that US policymakers were thinking through what role external actors were playing, at a minimum acknowledging and paying attention to it, and at a maximum actually starting to take some kind sort of response toward it.

If you look at Lebanon in the early 80s, you see the Israelis, the Syrians, and the Iranians all undercutting US efforts to build the Lebanese military at various moments. There are all sorts of reasons why they are doing it in their interests. It is important to be cognizant of that. Washington may want to take some steps to respond to external actors, and you can see this in terms of sanctions. You could see this in terms naming and shaming for example, which I think is one thing we have seen in Syria for example where there has been an effort to name and shame Hezbollah in Iran for supporting the rotten regime in Syria. This could scale all the way up to using force. Of course, that all depends on priorities for Washington. If we use

Syria as an example again today, it may be that Washington decides that its priorities vis-à-vis Moscow are a lot bigger and more important than its bad behavior in Syria.

MR. DEWS: Speaking of Lebanon in the 1980s, you just mentioned Israel was there, Syria was there, and Iran was there. There was a civil war there. Why did the United States get so involved in Lebanon in the early 1980s?

MS. KARLIN: Trying to disentangle what is going in Lebanon in the 1980s is actually something I started learning in 1999, and I am not sure I can even tell you at this stage what was going on. It is amazing. There is this great declassified cable by Phil Habib who had been the US envoy to Lebanon during this period. He says something in a cable like while I am writing this cable there is all sorts of artillery fire and rocket fire that I am listening to. It could be any one of the 80 odd groups that are wandering around this place. I think you can't read that but feel kind of profound empathy for the folks who are trying to actually figure out what is going on at that moment.

I think for Washington, the biggest motivation is the Israeli invasion. There is a view at least that then-Secretary of State Al Haig had turned a blind eye to Israeli warnings that it would invade and the invasion does incur. But, importantly you also see this massacre at Sabra and Shatila that is pulled together by the Christian militia that is affiliated with Israel. This massacre at Sabra and Shatila occurs as the Marines are literally sailing away from Beirut shores. When you go through the archives, you see there is this profound guilt that animates a number of senior officials as this happens. They decide effectively turn the ships around, send the Marines back. I think that really played into it.

There is also this vision among various folks in Washington that you could find a way to split apart Syria and Lebanon and bring some kind of Lebanese-Israel (inaudible). In fact, there is this peace deal, and I use that I quote that the US pressures Lebanon to sign with the Israeli in about 1983 or so. It is effectively dead on arrival. There is no support for it.

MR. DEWS: You have Greece in the 1940s, Vietnam in the 1950s, and Lebanon in the early 80s, but then your fourth case study is again Lebanon in the mid-2000s. What did you learn about the US involvement in building Lebanon's military in that period and also talk about what you learned when comparing the two case studies just of Lebanon?

MS. KARLIN: This was a really interesting one to research because biases upfront, I worked on this one. I had certain views of it, and it is one of sort of the great and terrible things of doing good research. Sometimes your answers don't turn out exactly as you want them to. The US gets involved in Lebanon in the mid-80s after the assassination of former prime minister Rafic Hariri. There is then this massive uprising encouraging the Syrians to stop their three-decade-plus occupation of Lebanon. The Syrians get pushed out, and there is this effort in Washington to try to rebuild Lebanon, focused specifically on its military, a military that is generally at this stage pretty cross-confessional, a military that while hasn't actually fought a whole lot has a lot of support throughout Lebanon and among the Lebanese people. In particular, this is after President Bush has talked a lot about his freedom agenda, Lebanon for all sorts of reasons is kind of seen as a place ripe for this. It is really an interesting moment in which Washington really wants to try to strengthen the Lebanese military in the hopes that it can exert sovereignty throughout its territory. Obviously, Hezbollah, especially in a post-9-11 environment and its bad behavior, factored into this too. So this effort begins, and it is in many ways supposed to be a case study for how quick and how effective the US effort to build militaries can be. It has supported the highest levels in Washington. You have extremely capable individuals in Beirut which I think is some of the research into the 1980's case it is not necessarily the case. During that one, you have one US official who has tries to get the head of the Lebanese military to start a slush fund and wants to give them a slush fund for weapons. Another who tries to convince him to conduct a coupe after he is out of power? All sorts of not great things happening there. Building the Lebanese military kind of 2005 – 2006 onward is supposed to be a real success story. A couple of things come out of it. First of all, it turns out even under the very best case scenario US programs to deliberate are really, really slow. The US system, of course, is one designed to constrain action, and this manifests even with all sorts of special congressional authorities. I think one of the more upsetting parts in doing the research was when I was conducting a bunch of interviews with Lebanese military and political officials. I had been very aware of this massive US effort to supply the Lebanese military in the summer of 2007. It is an effort I had worked on, and it is really this extraordinary effort to try to deliver tons and tons of assistance. You have forty C-130s and C-17s filled with materials.

The Lebanese military is fighting against this group Fatah al-Islam, an Al Qaeda affiliate of course and the optics are just extraordinary. You have a Sunni prime minister in (inaudible) who is working with a cross-confessional Lebanese military to fight all sorts of bad guys in this Palestinian refugee camp, bad guys who were affiliated with other bad guys who don't like the United States. So you see this extraordinary effort where US assistance is coming planeload by the planeload. It is then getting put onto helicopters that are flying because of US spare parts and therefore landing not long after in a refugee camp where this battle is being waged.

To me, it really stood out. I can't tell you how disheartening it was when I started doing my field research and talking to various folks in Lebanese political-military leadership, to hear their responses of what happened. When they said things like we didn't really get anything from the Americans but promises, best wishes, some ammunition. That was soul-crushing. One of them said it is through the Americans are telling die first, and assistance will follow, similarly soul-crushing. Perhaps the worst was Lebanese television mocking US aid and showing US government officials literally handing out socks and toy airplanes to Lebanese generals. So what was supposed to be this extraordinary put on a pedestal case definitely was not seen as such as those in country.

Mr. DEWS: They were not engaged in the deep involvement as you said the personnel affairs of the Army like they were in Greece and some other very specific issues to do with helping that country run its military.

MS. KARLIN: Absolutely, it was much more focused on getting the training and getting the equipment, which can be useful. I don't want to completely argue that that is not helpful. It is just that that sort of limited involvement with a partner military will invariably have a limited effect. And, you might be okay with having a limited effect, unlimited security sector reform. It can be useful for a couple of different reasons, but it will never transform a partner military. I think it is important to be clear-eyed about that.

MR. DEWS: Another fascinating issue that courses throughout your research and throughout the case of US involvement in other countries' militaries is when US military is involved in that kind of deep way, how does it avoid becoming a co-combatant like it did in Vietnam in the 1960s and where are the firebreaks? Who says we can't do this anymore

because it's getting too hot?

MS. KARLIN: I think a lot of that comes from this continuous reassessment. From writing clearly in inner agency documents here is why we are working with this military. Here are our expectations. Here are the indicators and warnings that we need to watch for. And, coming back to that every few months or so, depending on the nature of that conflict -- ensuring that the diagnosis of the situation on the ground is clear in Washington and that the prescription meets it. There are times where the US may decide it needs to become a co-combatant, but that is not a decision it should just sort of slip into.

MR. DEWS: I have another question it has to do with do partner militaries ever start to become dependent on US aid to the degree that they might just say, we don't really try that hard because the US is going to just keep throwing Humvees and bullets at us. We don't really need to worry about reforming our own internal structures.

MS. KARLIN: Oh, absolutely. It is important to recognize when those circumstances are the case. I think you could argue Pakistan is probably one of those. It will be really interesting to see what happens with recent decisions to try to withhold some assistance from the Pakistani military by the Trump Administration. But today, I think the Pakistanis pretty rightly figured out that the United States was generally going to give them assistance no matter what without probably as many checks and balances as would have been pretty useful.

MR. DEWS: Mara you write in the conclusion of your book that "We are doing it wrong" and I emphasize that this the present tense. So where are we doing it wrong and where do we absolutely need to be getting this right, if not everywhere?

MS. KARLIN: I think one of the cases that I find really interesting at this moment is Iraq. Effectively the US has been working with Iraq's military now for a good decade and a half or so. What we saw only a couple of years ago was a military that dropped all its weapons and fled when ISIS rose up. I think you saw mass amounts of equipment being lost and I think we keep getting more and more updates of how that happens.

MR. DEWS: ISIS took those weapons.

MR. KARLIN: ISIS took weapons, and they have done pretty decently with them, and that was quite clearly not a success. What has been particularly interesting to me, I was in

Iraq a couple of months ago and what was interesting is to see there is this massive effort to try to counter ISIS militarily. The Iraqi military played a role. Notably, the counter-terrorists services played the best role of any part of the Iraqi military. This is kind of cream of the crop, hand-picked, really falling in line with this notion of your people matter. But, outside of the Iraqi military, it was a whole bunch of militias that are actually responsible for much of this victory, this kind of military victory over ISIS. To me, it is important to acknowledge that what we were doing before wasn't working. There was a real cost to it not working. And, now the US has got to figure out the extent to which it wants to support a broad swath of the Iraqi military, maybe bringing in various militias, etc., or just focus on certain elite forces. So I will be really curious to see the extent to which that happens and obviously not doing so will have some real costs as we saw just a couple of years ago with ISIS.

MR. DEWS: Let me ask in conclusion, Mara, to talk about some of the research you are doing now at Brookings, now and in the future?

MS. KARLIN: I just wrapped up some work on Syria. I was testifying last week on the situation on Syria trying to think through the way forward, and I briefly noted before the thing that worries me the most right now on that front is figuring out what the US military's mission and rules of engagement are there. More broadly I would like to start a project that I have been sort of cogitating on now for a bit which is thinking through what the United States has inherited from the last 15, 16 years of war. This is the longest period of time America has ever been in active conflict. Never have we seen so few serve for so long. There is an amazing book about this by Secretary of Defense Mattis when he was out at Stanford and the scholar Kori Schake, and it really details what has been happening in terms of who is serving, their relationship with the public, a real (inaudible) which we have only seen grow strong in recent years. Kind of thinking through what have we inherited –- biases, processes, and structures -- from all of this and how do we make sure that there is an effort to acknowledge it so we can move on.

MR. DEWS: In some sense, I guess we hope that the military inherits the lessons that you document in your book about Greece. That sounds like a success story. So I definitely hope that they are reading your book over in the Pentagon.

MS. KARLIN: I hope so too.

MR. DEWS: I want to thank you very much for sharing your time and expertise with me today.

MS. KARLIN: Thank you so much for having me.

MR. DEWS: You can learn more about Mara Karlin and her research and especially her wonderful new book, Building Militaries in Fragile States on our website Brookings.edu.

My thanks to audio engineer and producer Gaston Reboredo, with assistance from Mark Hoelscher. The producers are Brennan Hoban and Chris McKenna. Bill Finan does the book interviews, and to Jessica Pavone, Eric Abalahin, and Rebecca Visor for design and web support. Thanks also to our intern Steven Lee and finally thanks to Camilla Ramirez and David Nassar for their guidance and support.

The Brookings Cafeteria is brought to you by the Brookings Podcast Network, where you could also subscribe to Intersections, 5 on 45, and our events podcasts.

Email your questions and comments to me at BCP@Brookings.edu. If you have a question for a scholar, include an audio file and I will play it and the answer on the air.

Follow us on Twitter @PolicyPodcasts. You can subscribe to the Brookings Cafeteria on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get podcasts and listen to it in all the usual places. If you go to Apple Podcasts, please rate and review the show. Visit us online at Brookings.edu.

Until next time, I'm Fred Dews