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THE IMPACT OF MILITIAS ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. MALONEY: Good morning. I'm Suzanne Maloney. I'm the deputy director of Foreign Policy here at the Brookings Institution, and a senior fin our Center for Middle East Policy. I'm really pleased to welcome you here today on such a beautiful Friday morning in late June for discussion among a phenomenal group of experts on the perennial challenge posed by militia groups to internal stability and regional security in the Middle East and North Africa.

A quick scan of the headlines over the course of the past few weeks, in particular the rocket mortar attacks conducted by Shia militias in Iraq against American diplomatic and military installations, as well as against several energy projects affiliated with international oil companies in Iraq underscores how relevant and timely this discussion here today is. Arms non-state actors have always been an issue in this part of the world, however, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the vacuum of state authority and the existential competition for power, have contributed to an erosion of sovereignty, and an explosion of violence that has enabled militia groups to rise to the fore like never before.

What is notable in places like Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon is the profusion of sub state security actors that receive a support from both within and without, and they contribute to the fracturing of central authority. These groups have a profound impact on local stability, internal politics, humanitarian access and economic development, as well as on regional security and geopolitics. In Lebanon, Hezbollah has been at the epicenter of regional rivalries and terrorist activity for decades. In Iraq and Syria, paramilitary groups have mobilized and in some cases remobilized to counter the Islamic State, and together with Hezbollah, these Iraqi militias played a central role in the brutal campaign to preserve Bashar al-Assad's grip on power in Syria.

As territorial control was rested away from the Islamic State, the political and economic power of the Hashd al Shaabi, the Shia militias in Iraq has become entrenched and intermingled with the state authority. In Libya infighting among the country's

militias has plunged the country into yet another phase of an awful Civil War.

I want you to introduce my colleagues who will speak to some of these issues. You have their full biographies in front of you, so in the interest of time I'll offer only a brief snapshot of their deep expertise and experience.

To my left, Shadi Hamid, Senior Fellow in our Center for Middle East Policy and the author of a number of books, including Islamic Exceptionalism.

Vanda Felbab-Brown, Senior Fellow on our Security and Strategy team, who has similarly authored many books, including most recently The Extinction Market.

Vanda and Shadi collaborated along with another colleague Harold Trinkunas, who's now out at Stanford, to publish Militants, Criminals and Warlords: The Challenge of Local Governance in the Age of Disorder. You have an opportunity to pick up a copy of that book, just outside these doors.

We're joined today by Dr. Paul Weiss, who is the Richard E. Behrman, Professor of Child Health and Society at Stanford University. He also has a number of other affiliations at all the relevant centers at Stanford. But it's notable that he brings a really important perspective from a long experience and deep work on child health and the impact of conflict on trauma care in Iraq, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the U.S. - Mexican border.

Finally, we're joined today by Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman, who is the John C. Whitehead Visiting Fellow in International Diplomacy here in the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings. Previously served at the highest levels of both the U.S. government in the United Nations, including positions as Ambassador to Lebanon, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs and Under Secretary General for Political Affairs at the UN.

Brookings would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which helped to make this event possible. I'd like to reiterate Brookings commitment to independence and underscore that the views expressed today are solely those of the speakers. After our introductory comments from

each of our panelists we'll have a bit of a discussion and we'll bring you in and look forward to a really interesting and important dialogue today.

Shadi why don't you lead us off with some perspective on the Islamic State, the role of religion and governance and the way that militias have fed into that.

MR. HAMID: Great. Thanks Suzanne. So, when we're talking about ISIS, I think it's easy to become complacent because ISIS has lost all of its territory in Iraq and Syria. So, I think that ISIS hasn't been getting as much attention and I think, to some extent, people have moved on. But I would argue that what ISIS represents is more important than ISIS itself. And that's what I want to talk about a bit right now.

And ISIS as innovation, at least compared to other terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, for example, was its focus on governance. And when we talk about ISIS governance, ISIS wasn't merely making things up as it went. They actually set up fairly elaborate legal and institutional structures. And those structures importantly were shaped by their religious motivations and beliefs. Now, the obvious disclaimer is that this was a very minoritarian take on Islam, and in my view as a Muslim myself, a perverted one. But for ISIS itself, I think we have to take their religious commitments seriously, at least those in the leadership, if not necessarily the entirety of the rank and file.

Now, when we're talking about the governance structures that ISIS set up, there's a lot to say about those. If you're interested, just a little plug. We do go into a lot of detail in our book, which is as Suzanne mentioned, available outside. It's really a deep dive into how ISIS actually governed during this specific period of time. I'd also recommend a paper that we have available on the Brookings website by Mara Revkin, it's called The Legal Foundations of the Islamic State. It's probably the single best thing on how religion shaped ISIS governance.

So, I emphasize this to start because this is in stark contrast to say criminal organizations and rebel groups in Latin America, which is a region that also has a lot of violent actors, and some criminal actors in Latin America play governance roles themselves,

including in Brazilian favelas, where the state is largely absent, but also in prison-based gangs. But there is an important difference here because those groups in Latin America don't really have a distinctive governance vision beyond providing a basic level of governance of security and order. So, religion and ideology aren't really playing a major role in cases like that.

When it comes to, and just from now to return to Muslim majority context, when we talk about religiously oriented governance, ISIS is one example which I just talked about. But we also have the Taliban. And in the 2000's, under Karzai, and with growing corruption and governance failures, and Vanda talks a lot about this in her work, the Taliban moved to fill the gap by providing free mediation of tribal and criminal disputes. And as Vanda has talked about as well, Afghans reported -- have reported surprising levels of satisfaction with Taliban verdicts in these local courts. In part, because petitioners don't have to pay bribes, and this is really important in a context where there's rampant corruption and the Taliban did -- has tried to provide a kind of -- or to portray an alternative to that level of corruption.

Now, we shouldn't overstate how -- we shouldn't overstate the level of governance that the Taliban or ISIS actually provide. These aren't examples of good governance, but they are examples of good enough governance. And I think that that's worth emphasize -- emphasizing. because a lot of this is relative. You don't have to be that great because the bar is so low. So, as long as you're able to draw a distinction and present yourself as an alternative to worse alternatives, then you're able to be somewhat successful.

And also, let's keep in mind that in conflict ridden zones or areas the alternatives are no governance, in-fighting among rebel groups, or sectarian authorities abusing local populations. And obviously that was a major factor in Iraq and Syria in the lead up to the rise of ISIS. So, in other words, if you're an Iraqi or an Afghan and you're considering your options, you might very well hate the ideology of ISIS or the Taliban, but you might still support them for other reasons because they're better than the alternatives

that are available to you.

Now, I think it's important to note here that groups like ISIS or the Taliban, I would argue, have a built-in advantage when we discuss governance be -- and I'll mention that in a second. And they're built-in advantage is because they're able to provide this rough and ready justice. They're able to provide this because they're preoccupied with law, and if, in the form of extreme interpretations of Sharia. So, when they're moving into a space where there's a governance vacuum, their top priority is usually to establish local courts and to provide mediation of local disputes. And we see this wherever they enter into a particular piece of territory. And they can do this precisely because they are extreme -- religious extremists, and they have this vision of Sharia that is very maximalist.

Now, take -- contrast that, for example, to let's say a secular militant group, or a secular rebel group that goes into a piece of territory in Iraq or Syria, they won't be as successful when it comes to establishing local courts or mediating local disputes because they're not able to draw on a distinctive legal orientation. Because a secular militant group, by definition, doesn't have a distinctive legal orientation. In short, religion and governance both matter, and we have to pay attention to how they interact and intertwine in complex ways, and I've tried to give a little bit of an overview of how they interact in the case of ISIS and the Taliban.

And you might be asking, so why does all this really matter? Why should it matter going forward in the coming year two or five to 10 years? And the reason I emphasize governance, in particular, and if I had like one bumper sticker that I could just really emphasize in a very simple way, it would be it's the governance stupid. And the reason I say this is because all the conditions that lead to bad governance, failed governance or no governance are still there in the Middle East. And they are, in my view, going to reemerge.

So, now is the time for all of us who are involved in the policy space to start thinking about the problem of governance in a serious way, so we don't have to repeat this

whole discussion all over again when ISIS 2.0 or 3.0 emerges in, say, five or six years.

MS. MALONEY: Vanda, let me turn it over to you. You've just been doing an enormous amount of work on the Shia militias in Iraq, and we have a copy of a recent policy brief Vanda's just published on that topic available out front. Do you want to take on this question of the role of the Shia militias in Iraq and how they -- what their evolution looks like?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Sure, thank you, Suzanne, and thank you, Shadi. Good morning. The focus of my work has not been just on Shia militia, but on militias that have formed or in many cases reformed as a result of the rise of ISIS and the critical role they played in the defeat of ISIS.

And today, they are in fundamental ways intertwined with governance issues in places like Iraq and other places of the Middle East that you, Suzanne, mentioned, but particularly in Iraq. And they, in many ways, complicate governance and fundamentally complicate the formula and the competition for governance between the state, in this case the Iraqi state, and post-ISIS authority, state building reconstruction and militants such as ISIS. ISIS is defeated. But ISIS is not absent. It still has substantial territorial presence, if no formal territorial control, it conducts regular terrorist attacks on a variety of actors, and it still exports local population.

In many ways, so do many of the militia groups that are nominally -- that are officially referred to as Hashd al Shaabi. Some of whom are militia groups. At the height of their mobilization in 2014, that ISIS controlled Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq and large parts of Iraqi territory, including the provinces of Diyala and Nineveh. And seem to be on the doorsteps of Baghdad with real fear that they might potentially take the capital within the context of the Iraqi military completely melting and oftentimes running away from ISIS and also the Iraqi police acting the same way.

Many militias mobilized. At the height of their power there might have been 250,000 of them. Today, there are at least officially 150,000 of them, that's the official

number. Many of them might be ghost soldiers, ghost fighters at this point, so there might potentially be several, tens of thousands fewer of them, but they are nonetheless a very potent force.

The militias are not uniform. Some of them are Shia militias, but even the Shia militias can be divided into two broad categories, those who declare allegiance to Iraq's most preeminent Shia authority, al-Sistani, and those who declare allegiance to the most, preeminent Shia authority in Iraq, in Iran, al Khomeini.

And this division of allegiance in authority has fundamental implications for some of the geopolitics with which you started, Suzanne, the conversation. And the geopolitical tensions in the Middle East have now come very much to entangle, particularly the pro Iran Shia militias in Iraq. But there are also other Shia militias, those who belong to Muqtada al-Sadr, those of you who have followed Iraq for a long time will remember Muqtada. Thy have now split off from Iran and in fact Muqtada has embraced an Iraqi nationalist ideology very directly opposing Iran's influence in Iraq and quoting Saudi Arabia.

And, in fact, some of his militias are now developing linkages with Saudi Arabia. Despite the Shia Sunni dimensions. There are also Sunni and Christian militias, and then tribal militias. Many of those, not all, but many of those fall under an umbrella group, leadership group called the PMF Commission that has very, very close ties to Iran and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard corps.

They also have very close ties to many Iraqi politicians. In fact, in the May 2018 elections last year, the political power of the militias was significantly strengthened. And so today, as much as the militias contributed to the defeat of ISIS, they pose very severe threats to the Iraqi state, particularly an Iraqi state that would be equitable, capable and motivated of delivering equitable services and essentially depoliticized.

But it would be very naive to think that the militias are simply opposed to the Iraqi states. Many of the core militias, particularly those affiliated with Iran, have deeply permeated the Iraqi state and politicians associated with them and members of the militias

now dominate institutions, such as the Minister of Interior in Iraq, who controls the police, the Ministry of Justice. And they have very significant political representation despite formal laws trying to separate the role of the paramilitaries from the Iraqi state.

In fact, there is not so much of a chance that the militias will try to topple the Iraqi state but rather that they will capture it and significantly distort its vision and its direction. They have enormous street credibility; they are overwhelmingly seen as heroes. They are very active in cultivating a popular image of strength, reverence and untouchability. Anywhere you travel in Iraq these days there are posters and posters and posters of the martyrs and less messaging that the militia save Iraqi society, that they are far more useful than the Iraqi state.

But at the same time, many of them, though not uniformly and there are differences not just in their affinities, but very significant differences in their behaviors. They also pose a multitude of threats to the Iraqi society, from sectarianism to political repression. Some of the militias, particularly those are -- affiliated with Iran, engage in systematic silencing, sometimes murder of political rivals of civil society members. We've seen lots of that in Basra.

They're involved in very systematic economic distortion, having preponderant capacity to capture legal economic markets, particularly in reconstruction that has very significant political effect because it provides them with enormous political capital and capacity to deliver, to create patronage networks, and to deliver patronage in a way that's elusive for others. And sometimes they engage in outright mafia like practices, both political and economic from systematic extortion, particularly explosive in mixed areas, but also in Shia areas, but also smuggling of all kinds of contraband.

So, the militias are a challenge and they are a challenge as to how to deal with them. The challenge is very difficult. Right now. They have deep representation in the state, in state institutions, and in the parliament. The technocrats are very weak vis-à-vis them even when the technocrats in Iraq have an understanding that Iraq's institutional

development, the governance provided by the state will be deeply challenged and distorted if current trends continue.

But how to reign in and moderate the militias is actually enormously difficult. And President Trump's designation of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard corps and of two of the Iraqi militia as terrorist entities, actually very significantly constrains and hampers the U.S. and others' capacity to deal with the militias. It potentially implies a whole set of sanctions that prevents, for example, programs such as demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of fighters, not just for the U.S. but for international partners as well.

Now, the militias have no interest in being demobilized, particularly the Iran militia, some of the Sunni and other sectarian militias would in fact often like to be integrated into either Iraqi army or police, or would be willing to demobilize but the pro-Iran militias oppose that. And they have instead managed to get themselves a very significant legal status. They are now on par with the Iraqi counterterrorism service, and arguably more powerful, more autonomous and with a very substantial formal state provided budget, as well as extra, legal budget from other outcomes.

So, DDR would be a huge challenge under the best of circumstances. It's particularly a challenge with the moves by the Trump Administration. In fact, the geopolitical tensions, not only put the paramilitary groups at the front and center of policy, and they are very aggressively and actively the pro-Iran one's lobbying to get the us out of Iraq, out to Middle East, and their voices are resonating robustly among certain sectors of Iraqi society and politicians. But they also make policy, developing good sustainable policy to moderate the militias far more challenging.

In the paper I outline a variety of options and the challenges as to what policies can be adopted toward them. Let me just end by proposing that in the conceivable term in the next few years, really the only realistic policy will be a very political, complicated one, appeal of approach, perhaps sanctioning and variety of mechanisms, the most egregiously behaving ones, those that are most abusive toward local populations.

Sometimes they might not be the most powerful ones simply because there is not enough political power by the Iraqi state to mobilize that resources.

But they will be a significant factor for a long time to come, and the fact that it's very different than, in the context of other militias, they are now fundamental part of the state, but they are also a very unhealthy part of the state.

MR. WISE: Thank you very much. Well, just to begin, it's important to recognize that health workers are always the ultimate inheritors of a failed social order. Sooner or later the destruction of the rule of law, the destruction of the bonds that hold together community life, will show up in the clinics, on the wards, or in the morgue. And that gives health workers and humanitarian perspectives a -- an opportunity, if not a responsibility, to address the underlying political dynamics that are shaping the humanitarian need, and also the capacities of the humanitarian response.

And the proliferation and importance of militias, not only in the Middle East, North Africa, but around the world, are creating new challenges and perhaps new opportunities for humanitarians to respond to the dual tasks of protecting civilian populations, and also addressing their needs to the provision of humanitarian and health services in these areas.

The proliferation of militia groups and armed non--state actors, is increasingly difficult in shaping the capacity to negotiate a humanitarian space in these areas. Both in parts of Iraq but also in Mali and Nigeria, and other places, you may have different militias running checkpoints and controlling space and access to communities in need every few miles. And these militias may have their own international affiliations, they may have their own strategies and tactics, and humanitarian workers and organizations will then need to negotiate and understand these strategies and tactics among what can be hundreds of militias operating in a relatively small area.

The other thing is that these tactics and strategies affiliations are dynamic. And that puts a huge burden on humanitarian actors to understand this political space and

the dynamics of this political space in ways that really did not exist until relatively recently. So, just the proliferation of militias in a very dynamic political environment creating new challenges.

A second issue is the global and the national response to the militias, particularly in the promulgation of counterterrorism laws, both national laws, but also global postures counterterrorism since 911. That it used to be, and many places still is, that the biggest challenge for humanitarians was protecting their own people. Now, the challenge is not being prosecuted or being sanctioned for violating counterterrorism laws that may be national counterterrorism laws, or global counterterrorism regulations. That it's gotten to the point where humanitarian groups feel compelled to vet each individual beneficiary to make sure that they are not associated with some band group or showing up on some list, either at a national or regional level or at a global level. And this has created a kind of immobilization of the humanitarian organizations operating in some of the neediest areas of the world.

That's fundamental challenge number one, is the changing nature of warfare combatants and the global response. There's also another important driver of the current challenges to humanitarian action as it relates to militias. And that is the humanitarian enterprise itself. It has grown enormously over the past two decades. The number of organizations their funding, but particularly their ambition and their capabilities have grown enormously such that they want to go everywhere, be every place and do everything that modern humanitarian capability can provide.

And when you have a changing nature of warfare and combatants colliding with a far more capable and ambitious humanitarian enterprise, you begin to have greater risk for humanitarian workers, their facilities, but also the growth of new kinds of challenges that we haven't faced prior. Let me give you a quick sentinel illustration of how these two things can collide.

The Battle of Mosul, one of the worst urban battles since World War II, and generated a large number of civilian casualties. There was no real response that was

planned for, put in place prior to the initiation of the retaking of Mosul to take care of civilian trauma patients. The United States, others provided funding to the World Health Organization, do something fast, set up a trauma response. WHO looked, what is the state of the art of dealing with trauma, and they looked to NATO, the US military medicine. Which is, get people into care quickly, on the battlefield deal with hemorrhaging, deal with resuscitation, get them to a stabilization point very quickly within the first hour, which has been called the Golden Hour for trauma response, and then out to do more definitive care quickly.

Great. How are you going to do that the Battle of Mosul? Well WHO said we want humanitarian medical personnel to be functionally embedded with the counterterrorism service. Leading edge, the Iraqi security forces in the Battle of Mosul. Well, Doctors Without Borders, International Committee of the Red Cross, it is a gross violation of humanitarian principles of neutrality and independence.

World Health Organization said yeah, we have to save lives, that's part of our humanitarian principles too. In other words, changes greater capability in the medical world was plagued with new burdens on traditional humanitarian strategies. What happened was WHO found humanitarian medical people that were willing to go, they placed them with the CTS. And I was part of a small group that evaluated this response. They did save lives. But there is no consensus to date about how the humanitarian world needs to respond to trauma requirements because of this new medical capability, this new ambitious more aggressive humanitarian impulse, what we would call a technical imperative, to move in a particular direction that is fundamentally incompatible with traditional humanitarian strategies.

There's also been the criminalization of humanitarian medical services. In other words, the counterterrorism laws are being applied to doctors who are providing care on an impartial basis, which is part of our medical ethics and also a humanitarian principle of impartiality in the provision of medical services. But being prosecuted because our patients

have been associated as enemy fighters, or associated with some terrorist group or another.

We also see this ambition colliding with the reality of political military space, particularly related to militias in the eastern Congo, where efforts to control Ebola have been undermined by militia activity and insecurity in those areas.

I would also raise the question, what happens when we're talking about a peer to peer or peer near peer fight? What then happens to levels of casualties, our ability to respond, humanitarian concerns? I know this is mostly a hard security audience and panel, but in a peculiar way, the elevation of humanitarian concerns over the last 20 years, is -- has a very much larger public presence than it has in the past. Such that just recently, a strike on Iran was called off either fig leaf or for real because of humanitarian concerns, or the perception that this would be disproportionate in terms of lives lost for a strike on Iran. And that, when we're talking in the Korean Peninsula, we're talking about fight in Iran, we're talking about a scale of civilian casualties and combatant casualties that we really haven't seen over the past several decades.

The last point is the geopolitical space and the geopolitical relations that have always been critical to the humanitarian enterprise. In large measure, the modern humanitarian approach has been based on, or supported by, or enforced by a western liberal international order. And if the perception or the reality is that the United States, Western Europe is in retreat around humanitarian concerns due to domestic politics, anti-immigrant politics, what then is going to take the place of that support in the humanitarian world? My suggestion is that militias combined with these other drivers of humanitarian action are likely going to play out in the months and years to come.

MR. FELTMAN: Good morning everybody. I hope I can complement Dr. Wise' presentation and talk about the humanitarian implications of dealing with militias by talking about the political engagement of the United Nations with militias. For the nearly six years I worked on peace and security matters at the United Nations from inside the Secretariat, this was one of the most vexing questions we dealt with. And as imperfect or

outdated as the guidelines on humanitarian -- UN humanitarian actors' engagement with militias non-state armed groups to use UN terminology. It exists, there is guidance.

There's also an imperative, mandated by the Security Council, for those that are trying to deal with children in armed conflict, for those trying to deal with sexual violence and conflict, to deal with the armed groups. There is no parallel guidance or mandate in general for how you deal politically with armed groups if you're a United Nations official. And there's no guidance for this because of the opposition from Member States themselves about the development of such guidance.

Now, inside the Secretariat we maintained the principal, you know we asserted the principal I should say, that in order to prevent conflict, in order to manage conflict, reduce conflict, to resolve conflict, we had to be able to reserve the right to talk to everybody. Anybody necessary for peace process should be fair game for UN envoys, UN special rep -- representatives to engage. How can you prevent conflict if you're not talking to the guys with guns or resolve conflict with the same question.

That was a fine theory to assert though it was much harder to implement in practice. Again, because member state opposition. And why was there such strong opposition to having some kind of guidance, some kind of mandate for doing this? Well, we operated in the UN under the principles of member state consent within the framework of respect for member state sovereignty, the sovereignty of those states that make up the United Nations. And there was a real fear, palpable fear that by engaging politically with armed groups, with militias, with non-state armed groups, you're essentially giving them diplomatic recognition, you're essentially legitimizing, you're the essentially raising their profile, raising their status. And Member States obviously don't like that sort of thing.

Now, in individual cases a special envoy for Syria, for Yemen, Special Representative for Libya, you might -- we might be able to work with the Security Council quietly to insert language in the Security Council Resolution on that specific case. So, we were able to get some top cover, you could say, Security Council cover for specific cases on

engaging with non-state armed group, but the general guidance didn't exist. And frankly, I think, again the member states had legitimate concerns given the fact that some non-state armed groups sought UN political engagement in order to try to raise their status.

Let me talk a bit about the cases of Libya, Syria and Yemen, because as different as these conflicts are, there are some similarities in terms of dealing with militias, in terms of dealing with non-state armed groups. In all three of these cases, Libya, Syria, Yemen, there is what the UN would consider a legitimate government, a government that's represented in the General Assembly, a government that's that holds that country's membership in the United Nations.

But in all three cases that government does not have a monopoly on power, that government does not have control over all of its territory. And there are non-state acting -- non-state armed groups acting on the territory, in some cases acting on a large part of the territory with large control.

So, what do you do, if you're a UN envoy, UN special representative in cases like this? Well, first of all, you have to be very, very careful on how you engage the non-state armed group. Not to raise that issue of legitimatization. You have to think about who is it in the non-state armed groups you want to engage? Are you weakening the groups that are striving for a peaceful solution by engaging with the armed groups? There are a lot of -- are you affecting the internal structures of the armed groups themselves by finding someone who speaks whatever language you speak rather than dealing with the actual leadership?

You -- the very fact of UN engagement can affect the non-state armed -- can affect the structures of the non-state armed groups and sometimes in not a very helpful way. How do you deal with the governments, with the so-called legitimate governments who don't have control over the entire territory? How the government's deal with you.

Yemen, as I said there's a legitimate government that's recognized by a Security Council resolution. But that very Security Council resolution also gives us the UN

Special Envoy a particular mandate. The mandate calls for the Houthi -- I'm sorry the de facto authorities, the people who have control over Sana, to seize control of Sana. It calls for basically their surrender, laying down of arms and then holds up the possibility of talks. It's a very -- it's a political resolution more than the practical mandate for negotiations. So, that means that the Houthi's in Sana are quite suspicious of the UN. The UN's coming in with a mandate seen as completely one-sided.

But now, if you look, the government of Yemen is quite concerned because the government of Yemen, the recognized government of Yemen that holds Yemen's seat in the UN believes, that the UN has tilted too much in favor of that non-recognized government -- authority in Sana so that both sides have suspicions about the UN. Trying to address these complications you go through a number of means.

You try to find outside actors who have influence on the inside parties. You try to find perhaps non-UN or nonmember state groups that have access. Who are the people who have influence on these groups to try to address these issues?

Libya is a similar situation. General Haftar, whose current -- whose troops are currently besieging Tripoli, doesn't like the UN, simply because the UN mandate recognizes the government that's in Tripoli. The government in Tripoli is unhappy when the UN tries to engage General Haftar. So, it's very, it's politically fraught.

Then we have the issue of militias non-state armed groups like Hamas and Hezbollah that appear on powerful member states terrorist list, and this is -- this complements some of the things that Dr. Wise was talking about earlier. How do you, as the United Nations deal with these sorts of groups where the United States considered to be terrorist organizations, but who do not appear on any UN terrorist list? There are actually very few groups that appear on a UN terrorist list. The Security Council has to adopt this, and you can imagine the politics of trying to propose terrorists' designations in a polarized Security Council.

So, Hamas and Hezbollah do not appear on the UN terrorist list. They do

appear on the U.S. and other countries terrorist list. So, that's a very discreet negotiating process. The UN does maintain political engagement with these armed groups, but they do it a very discreet way. In order again, to try to prevent, manage, or resolve conflict.

When I was U.S. ambassador to Lebanon, before I joined the United Nations, I found the UN's discreet dialogue with Hezbollah often to be useful in preventing escalation of minor incidents into full blown things. So, is it at a political level, I support this type of UN discrete engagement. Where I have questions goes back to some of the things that Shadi and Vanda were talking about. Where I have questions about is when the UN is engaged with the non-state armed groups on the development side, or on the institutional side.

And I'll use Hezbollah as the example on this. Hezbollah, in a way like some of the Iraqi Shia groups, has managed to, you said permeate Vanda, I would say infiltrate the Lebanese state institutions, while simultaneously expanding its weaponry. Its sophistication in its number of its weaponry. So, Hezbollah is inside the government and Hezbollah exercises the power to bring Lebanon into war outside the government. And through intimidation and threat or through the peculiarities of the Lebanese political system in partnership with some rather obsequious our allies that Hezbollah has maintained to cultivate. Hezbollah can block anything that the Lebanese state wants to do, while at the same time preventing any outside scrutiny or any outside veto over its own activities, which again have a progression of war and peace.

So, again, I support the idea of the discreet UN engagement with what the U.S. would consider a terrorist organization. But when the UN, World Bank or others start dealing with the state institutions, under the control of Hezbollah, I find I question whether that's really strengthening the state the way that some would say. The bottom line, is the common sense, is each of these examples of the UN dealing with militias has to be looked at on a case-by-case basis. Has to be considered in the broader conflict, peace and security context.

What I will say contrasting the service I had with the U.S. government with the service I had at the United Nations, is United Nations does offer a lot more flexibility to their envoys and representatives on the ground to figure out how to do this. The 3,000 mile screwdriver that Washington often exercises over its embassies doesn't really exist in the UN. And I wasn't sure even after six years, whether that was by design, or simply by capacity of the UN, but thank you.

MS. MALONEY: Well, thank you. This has been a fantastic start to our discussion. And I'm going to probe some of our -- some of the points that were raised by the speakers a little bit from here and then open it up to all of you, so please get your questions ready.

Let me start from the place where Shadi actually began, which was this kind of bumper sticker summation of the conditions that enable militias to emerge and thrive and in some cases even capture state institutions, which is, it's the governance stupid.

So, if it's the governance, what are the policy responses, particularly from Washington but not necessarily limited to Washington, that can actually create conditions in which militias don't thrive, or in which established militias actually begin to recede in ways that are conducive to the expansion of state authority and state legitimacy? And if you want to start from there and I'll kind of follow up, but maybe we can all jump in in ways that are relevant from the perspectives that you each brought to bear on all of this.

MR. HAMID: Yeah sure. So, it's not just government, there's governance and there's also civil war, which we've talked about in the three cases that Jeff mentioned. That civil war empowers these extremist groups in pretty obvious ways. So, if you look at the two places where ISIS gained significant territory, they were also the two countries most riddled by civil war, Iraq and Syria, right.

So, what do we do about it? Now, this is where it gets complicated. And as Dr. Wise said the U.S. and many others are in retreat, there is a different international context now, where the U.S. doesn't seem particularly interested in playing a leadership role.

The problem with dealing with governance questions, it requires a lot of local knowledge, and it requires a lot of engagement.

And it requires you to just be significantly more involved than we currently are.

And even though the Obama Administration had trouble with this, and the Obama Administration was one that was suspicious of long term commitments of any sort in the Middle East, and of just getting bogged down in these conflicts, which I think from the Obama Administration standpoint, they saw as being just very messy and difficult and a time suck and all of that, right.

So, if I had to kind of lay out policy recommendations on this it would require a kind of a different starting premise of an American Administration that was willing to rethink its entire approach in the Middle East. And as far as I can tell there isn't a lot of stomach for this, so I hope that will change in the future. And it also involves things that we've also moved away from, like support for democracy and political reform.

Because one of the problems -- one of the bigger problems that is tied to the question of governance is authoritarian repression. Authoritarian regimes do not help on this. We have the misfortune of having bad allies in the Middle East, many of whom aren't just normally repressive but extremely repressive, and it's actually gotten worse in recent years. So, all of this contributes to a very difficult situation, are we willing to put pressure on our “bad allies”, our authoritarian allies, who don't play a very constructive role on this. And we also shouldn't be outsourcing development and reconstruction to countries that have a bad record on political reform and repression. So, I don't want to see, personally, Saudi Arabia really getting too much in the business of post conflict reconstruction for reasons, for many reasons.

So, where does that leave us? It requires changing the conversation. So, we could be a little bit straight up and say, well hey we realize that governance is very important, but we don't have the political will to do enough about it. Tough, we're going to have to accept the consequences. That would actually be a more intellectually honest way

of addressing it.

The other choices to kind of trying to shift the conversation in DC, even if it doesn't happen in 2020, but perhaps in subsequent terms, where there -- where we can rebuild a willingness to engage on this deeper level.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: You know, picking up on the notion of intellectual policy honesty, the difficulty that militias is not that they simply arise in the absence of an effective state with ISIS being on the doorsteps, they are often embraced. Cultivated by the state and by outside actors. So, Shadi brought in a conversation about Afghanistan, it's true about other places. The United States systematically embraced, cultivated, paramilitary forces with the short-term objective of killing more of the Taliban as a mechanism of accomplishing its counterterrorism objectives.

Embracing the militias just like embracing warlords created various significant political repercussions. But it also set up conditions where the state would systematically be both conditioned to not be averse to militias, but also states systematically weakened to deal with the militias. So, in any contemplation of policy, I will say there is a real need to focus on the original sin. The moment anyone, the state itself, or outside actors go for militias because of the short-term goal, they are unleashing a long-term set of consequences that are excruciatingly difficult to roll back.

And there is often this presumption that there will -- that whether it's providing state assistance, such as through the security sector, or building capacity as the jargon in Washington says, or building up militias, the fact that at a particular moment there is a convergence of interest, that this convergence of interest will stay. In reality that convergence of interest, it's oftentimes just a point on two lines that very, very rapidly diverges.

And yet that moment of convergence, that moment of interaction gives whether it's the state or whether the militias enormous power in all kinds of domains, not just the formal legitimation international domain, but also in terms of local impact and local

governance.

Now, we can be far more sophisticated with the United States policy, perhaps UN policy, in how we deal with it. And, Jeff, lots of your comments about discreet, much less visible engagement is a first start, it is tremendous political effect and political empowerment of U.S. military counterterrorism forces going to an Afghan warlord and putting their hands around that warlord, local governor, and saying you are our partner. And that impact lasts for a long time, and oftentimes it impacts come with severe abuses of governance and structures, how governance develops.

I would also endorse the notion that Shadi implied that the state building project, really not nation building project, it's the wrong language that systematically use, that the state building project is a fundamentally political one. And it requires the willingness, intelligence where we know in time to get one's hands dirty. It's about a lot of political choices back and forth. It's a very sloppy, very unpleasant, very nonlinear process frequently, and it is really about playing the political game.

As long as we stay with the notion that the outside world, the U.S., other actors can provide institutional building capacity, that somehow neutral or nonpolitical, you'll be constantly failing and will be constantly struggling. And then it implies the dealing with the militias, with the paramilitary forces, might actually involve quite a bit of engagement. The question is how one engages, not just in the visibility, but also how one is willing to provide certain level of incentives and other kinds of punishments. And not very blunt punishments like designations, like on the terrorist list which oftentimes create long term, years and decades long problematic policies.

Still today in Colombia, where the government is negotiating a deal with -- a peace deal with the FARC and there is a robust effort to prevent conflict. The U.S. cannot even buy the FARC a cup of coffee, even though there is a peace deal, even though the FARC is now part of the political process, because they were designated at one point as a terrorist group. Any kind of U.S. dollar material assistance, as much as a cup of coffee, still

continues to be illegal in the case of FARC and Colombia. And we see the same situation in Somalia, in Nigeria, for that matter with the designations in Iran.

In my view, those policies are deeply counterproductive to both state building and U.S. interest. So, I would posit that a lot of engagement, and that scope for engagement is needed, but that engagement needs to be about not eliminating or removing these groups, but perhaps eliminating the most egregious ones, and shaping the behavior of the others toward less perniciousness, toward less abuses, toward greater if not perfect alignment with U.S. interests.

MR. WISE: Would you like to go?

MR. FELTMAN: No go ahead.

MR. WISE: Okay. Well, I build on this conversation and particularly Shadi's reminder that it's about governance stupid. From my perspective, it's about governance for what, stupid? We've been talking about the control of violence, which is of course central and fundamental. But for humanitarian, particularly humanitarian health, each intervention, each health intervention, places a different burden on governance, immunization places a different burden on governance then maternal mortality reduction, or Ebola surveillance and control.

So, we're talking about strategic governance that there are abilities to negotiate access with militias or with states, to provide immunizations that may be a very different negotiation than building facilities able to do certain cesarean section, crucial to reducing maternal mortality.

So, while the political conversation, rightly so maybe dominated by the control of violence and the political parameters and constraints on the use of force, that humanitarian activities may be seeking the strategic components of governance, that may be crucial to improving the health and well-being of communities in need, that may not rise to the level or have anything much to do, with the kinds of governance infrastructure that may be required for security and for political movement in a constructive direction.

MR. FELTMAN: On this question of governance, I was thinking about some of the examples that we've all raised and Vanda and Shadi I'm sort of curious on one aspect of this. Shadi you talked about good enough governance, and when I look at the history of Hezbollah yes it was an Iranian created subsidiary, but they were able -- Hezbollah was able to put down such strong local popular roots, because the Hezbollah was appealing to a part of the Lebanese population that had been neglected, that had been despised, that had been subject, that had been subjected to corrupt institutions and so forth. So, the good enough government applies to that case.

If you look at ISIS and Mosul, I think you made a strong case, I won't repeat it. If you look at the Houthi in Yemen, you could make a case that they were neglected, despised for years and tried to take matters into their own hands with a combination of good enough government and so forth. But the Shia militias of Iraq that looks to me to be a somewhat different case because they, the Shia majority in Iraq had the prime ministry, had a significant role in parliament and other institutions. Is this a different type of example?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, I and I would just say that there are the Shia militias are not uniform, there are multiple groups but very broadly and crudely, one can say they are the Shrine militias, those affiliated with al-Sistani, whose primary purpose of existence is to protect the Shrines and the Shia population. And then there are the pro-Iran groups that have existed, many of them since the 1980's, battled Saddam in various incarnations. And continued to be very prominent, often sectarian and often pernicious features of the political space in Iraq.

So, the Shrine militias often do deliver all kinds of humanitarian and governance services in ways that are very welcome, and they tend to be quite moderated in things like extortion. They receive large donations from the community to start with because of the popularity, they don't need to extort. So, they do have significant political capital, and they do provide governance functions that the Iraqi government is not providing adequately, but they don't have political ambitions.

The pro-Iran groups are the trickiest ones, because they do deliver some governance, oftentimes and there is competition also between them and Sadder and Sadder no longer is a pro-Iran actor. So, they deliver all kinds of governance, but often that governance is heavily interlaced with extortion and oppression, that's not very different than what happens with other groups. And they're much less receptive in balancing that extortion that and calibrating the violence with the governance.

But in other cases like in Basra, they're failing fundamentally. And Basra is in an enormously unfortunate place. So, very significant humanitarian suffering last year in the summer, and lots of political instability, and we're heading into that same summer in Basra with lack of access to clean water, of massive spread on infectious diseases, really quite catastrophic conditions this summer.

And when they failed in the governance provision, in fact when they compound the governance provision and coupled it with silencing, executions, murders of political activists, civil society actors that, in my view, provides great vulnerability and opportunity for the Iraqi state to come in and deliver better governance.

The problem is that even in this context where the bar is so low, the Iraqi state is often failed, whether out because of red tape, incompetence, corruption, focus on other areas. So, even in the moments that are ripe to outcompete them in governance that has not happened, whether in Iraq, or in Afghanistan.

The Taliban was never really popular. They were just better than civil war and abuse. It was such a low bar to overcome after 2001. And yet it was systematically not overcome. Getting down to the point that predictable brutality was just much better than unpredictable brutality. So, again, I think there are real opportunities in Iraq. This summer is a big opportunity in Basra. Mosul continues to be big opportunity for even there several months before I was there this spring, the level of destruction in the west side of the city is just unbelievable. And now this is what two years after there's been essentially not any construction of any kind in that part of the city. Barely just starting to remove some of the

rubble, some of the destruction from the street.

Those are failures of the government that don't have to be there. And as long as the government cannot step up its game even that little bit, even very problematic militias will not face sufficient competition.

MR. HAMID: A very quick point to add. And this, so Vanda brought up some anything that's really important, is that religious extremist groups like say ISIS, they are oftentimes significantly more brutal than other organizations, but the arbitrariness of their oppression is actually lower. And so you could even make a sort of comparison between say ISIS and the Assad Regime, or any other of the more repressive regimes in the region. And that's why it is important to understand different types and intensities of repression across cases.

When it comes, and I'll also say like when it comes to groups that are not extremist, Islamist organizations in the way we talk about ISIS and are more mainstream and have popular buy in support, like Hezbollah, I don't think it's just an issue that they represent despised minorities. It's also that religiously oriented organizations tend to have higher levels of organizational discipline.

It doesn't always hold, but in most of the cases that I'm familiar with, if you take an Islamist organization and its secular counterpart, the Islamist organization will tend to be much more disciplined. And that allows them to work more effectively in local communities, and they actually get things done.

So, my kind of intuitive guess is that some of that would also apply to Shia militias in Iraq to some degree, maybe not the main factor but it's at least one factor, especially considering that there are different Shia orientations as you sort of alluded to Vanda.

MS. MALONEY: Okay, we have about 20 minutes left for our conversation, and much as I'd like to dive deeper on some of these points, I'm going to give you the opportunity to do that. Two quick points of order. Pease identify yourself. The mics are

going to come around, please identify yourself and please ask an actual question. We'll take three questions to start. And I'm seeing a lot of hands go up. Let me just note that when I call on the questioners, I like to preserve some sort of balance in terms of gender. So, I see a lot of men raising their hands, please I got one woman in the back of the room. So, let's get these two up here and the woman in the back of the room. We'll take three at a time and hopefully have a couple of -- time for a couple of rounds.

PAUL SEDFIN: Yes hello my name is Paul Sedfin, Former State Department person, I worked a lot with Jeff, and when I was with senior Resources Consulting Group. We have a lot of discussion about being allied with militias for convenience. One of the serious challenges we face is clearly what do we do with our alliance with the Kurds in Syria.

And looking at across the border in Iraq, we've seen a situation where we've depended on the Kurds to beat ISIS. But we didn't want them to pursue their own independence, for good reason and policy over years. But we face a similar challenge now where a group we've supported is now designated as a terrorist organization by regional allies or suspect, very suspicious of the federal government in Iraq.

So, how do we deal with our own allies that have a significant role to play in security, particularly with the Syrian Kurds?

CHELTER: Thank you, Chelter, from the country formerly known as the UK. Just -- I'm just based at SAIS. And during my studies I was looking at things like insurgency and was the U.S. has predominantly attempted versions of you know, enemy centric or population centric, something I'm surprised, I haven't heard at all mentioned is Russia and their punitive measures towards, which basically they've outmaneuvered the entire western coalition in Syria.

And I just wanted to know your opinions about the greater power play with the U.S. changing its mandate now. And also China with its investments and sort of potentially indirectly supporting some questionable individuals and groups. And what you

think that's going to do for the future of state building? Thank you.

MS. MALONEY: And one more in the back.

MS. SCHAUMBURG: Hi, my name is Melissa Schaumburg, I'm an intern with the State Department right now. My question is sort of a broad question, anyone can answer, but mostly directed at Ambassador Feltman. Given the political constraints of the United Nations that you mentioned, do you think with the status of non-state actors being a more relevant party that all groups are having to deal with, do you think the United Nations has the capacity to sort of adopt its role and engage with these actors? Or do you think that the history of the United Nations has built it to be too politically entangled, where it's giving them too much power? And along with that, do you see there being a need for a rise of other organizations to be involved, whether that's humanitarian assistance, or otherwise? Thank you.

MS. MALONEY: Do you want to kick things off Jeff and we'll?

MR. FELTMAN: Okay I'll start with the last questions. I don't think that the U -- I mean, I was there for six years. I don't think the UN has a monopoly on wisdom, on leverage, on context, on contacts, on credibility, on trust. I mean the UN may be the right actor, in some cases, it may not be the right actor in other cases.

If we're talking about mediation, facilitation, on the political level, I think you need to find the actor who has the ability to influence those that can take the country to war or bring it back to peace. And it may not be the UN.

I remember the beginning of the -- of the Ukraine fight, for example. This is an example of how difficult the UN can sometimes be in. The Russians were demanding that we start dealing with the authorities, the so-called authorities and in quotations in Donbass. And of course, Kiev which holds the seat at the United Nations, and was there. in fact, then on the Security Council and the United States and Western European allies, of course, would be loathed to have the UN deal with any actors in the East that looked like we were legitimizing separatism.

So, that sort of shows you the complication. Other actors may be able to have some kind of political fil -- facilitation in the situation like that, because it doesn't convey statehood in the same way that the UN does.

Now, in the case of Ukraine it was solved when the OSCE got the lead and the UN was absolved with this. However, the humanitarian actors in the UN do deal with them for the reason I said before, its political engagement was controversial, it's not humanitarian engagement that tends to be less controversial, not free of controversy.

In other cases, the UN might be the actor that provides the confidence. In the Colombia peace process that Vanda mentioned. The UN was not engaged at the beginning of this, but as the Havana talks proceeded, it became clear that there needed to be some kind of official confidence building organization, and the FARC, and the government together invited the UN to join the process, because the UN had the type of legitimacy.

So, I think it's again, it's a case-by-case basis. In terms of inventing new organizations, there is a wealth of mediation organizations compared to say 20 or 30 years ago. There's a lot of nongovernmental, non-UN actors who can play a mediation facilitation role, plus a lot of regional, sub regional organizations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West Africa states have developed their own capacities for conflict prevention mediation.

So, that, so there's a bigger menu of potential actors now than there used to be, which I think is all to the good. The problem is, in the Middle East, those institutions don't really exist in the same way they do in Africa and in other parts of the world. I think there is still room in the Middle East that we're discussing for more other organizations to play a role when it's not appropriate or politically fraught for the UN to do so.

MR. HAMID: Go ahead, I'll go last.

VAND FELBAB-BROWN: I'll start with the question on China, Russia and state building. And yes it is true that Russia, in particular, has succeeded in particular

context, most visibly and importantly Syria, and certainly the situation in Ukraine is not diverging from Russia's preferences, let's put it that way.

But I don't believe that either of countries, either China or Russia have particular wisdom, either on how to handle their militias, or on state building. They have been successful because they have been able to rely on brute force in a way that the United States is restrained from and should be restrained from. That's part of our core values of who we are. We should not simply unleash the might of formal or informal military power.

But I don't believe that Russia will be particularly effective in advising the Syrian government, Assad or for the method, the government in Venezuela as to how to develop state building that is sustainable. So, Russia has bought itself, bought the regimes that it likes a lot more power, but its power that centering on very narrow space. Take Maduro and the catastrophic humanitarian situation that Maduro is not going away anytime soon, unfortunately. But there is also no prospect that Maduro and the order that Russia is helping to foster is any kind of order, and it's sustainable.

And both Russia and China policies toward militias and the proxies has brought them into often lot of difficulties. And particularly, China just want to spend a bit of time talking about China and Africa. There is very much the sense that China has a better model, because it's asking for no accountability in Africa, because it's allowing governments to do whatever they want. Well, that might be comfortable with the regime that's in power for a particular moment, but it's generating tremendous amount of friction in the delivery of governance at the local level.

And it's exposing and will continue to be exposing Chinese government, Chinese officials, Chinese workers, to more and more response and entangle them in ways that are going to be very problematic and very difficult. So, unfortunately, though I think we're heading towards a situation where the points of friction, the points of divergence will be many, many more and they'll be much more intervention, I don't mean necessarily military intervention but much more pulling of the greater powers into conflict, I think are

fundamentally unhelpful for inclusive, accountable, equitable governance.

Ultimately, the reckoning will only come when local populations manage to develop enough capacity to ask for better performance from their governments in many parts of Africa that has not yet been taking place.

And on the situation with the Kurds are enormously unfortunate, but brings back the points that I started with. We tend to embrace armed actors in particular coincidences of time and are either willfully or inadvertently oblivious to the long-term challenges this poses. And it should have been at the moment when we decided we need the Kurds, whether in Syria or the Peshmerga in Iraq, that we should have thought, okay what does this mean for the moment when ISIS is defeated. However, the demise comes about, what are we going to do then.

And that policy strategy development is because of difficulties, political difficulties, or other reasons, often just not done. And the focus is just on the counterterrorism moment. And as long as that will con -- and I will say that China and Russia are making the same mistake all over the place that they are no wiser to this than we are.

But unless that's going to be our policy each time we run into a security threat, we are all the time going to be dealing with the dilemma. And so now what? Whether it is the threat from the militia to the state, or the society, or whether it's the issue of betraying someone whom we have built up as fundamental ally and implications for credibility.

MR. HAMID: Just a brief note on the second question that Russia, especially after its 2015 intervention it wasn't just a military intervention, but they were also shaping the discourse around how to deal with different militant groups. So, they were saying that pretty much everyone was tied to al-Qaeda, or what was then Jabhat Fateh al-Sham in one way or another. And they were -- they essentially tried to delegitimize the entire opposition or rebel space. And I think they were quite effective in shaping that

discourse.

And remember talking to folks at the State Department, Defense Department and elsewhere, there was a lot of time wasted on having these torture discussions about whether or not we should engage with say, Ahrar al-Sham. Ahrar al-Sham was not designated, so I think as Vanda and others have been saying the very egregious organizations, let's stay away from them. But here's one that wasn't even on the terrorist list and might have been bad and ideologically problematic, and all of that. But we had to spend a lot of time having a debate about whether or not to even engage with them.

So, I think that we on the American side, fall into this quite a bit and it gets to something that's come up time and time again in this conversation of how do we deal with bad but not entirely egregious, or not the worst militant groups. So, we put ISIS in a little category on its own. I don't think anyone would realistically talk about talking, engaging or having some diplomatic initiative with ISIS. But most groups are not like ISIS.

MR. WISE: Just a quick response on the role of Russia, China, which is very much important to crafting the future of humanitarian activities. State support for humanitarian action is always a reflection of the state's exercise of power. And if indeed we see a retreat of Western Europe and the United States in supporting the infrastructure of humanitarian norms and activities in much of the world, what's going to, who's going to fill the vacuum that's created?

China has had a particular posture and stance on humanitarian action and response to civil conflict for some time. However, the growth of China's global economic interests, coupled with its growth of its military capability, may, in fact, suggest, and in fact the signals are that the humanitarian approach of China is very much in flux. And we may see a different type of Chinese approach to humanitarian action support for humanitarianism than we've seen in the past.

What that looks like is likely to be very different than what the United States and Western Europe has supported. But it seems likely that China's changing position, and

its emerging role in shaping humanitarian response throughout the world will continue to grow over the next few years.

MS. MALONEY: I think we have time for two more quick questions, very quick and hopefully quick answers from our audience. So, let me move to this side of the room. There looked like two side by side right here. Or almost side by side.

LEE TUCKER: Thank you so much. My name is Lee Tucker and I'm with the State Department. My question comes from glancing down at Vanda's paper and the Hashd al Shaabi. This whole conversation and many of the conversations we have on this topic tend to be from the top down political level. How do we talk to or about these groups? What has given them rise to power? How are they providing governance and why? But a lot of times I think we tend to forget that these groups are also consumers of governance and that there are rank and file masses of people that give these groups a lot of their popular power too.

So, my question to the panel is, what are some of your recommendations for policies, but also things that we could do in terms of programs or activities that are thinking more about individuals who belong to these groups and their role and the communities that they play?

SPEAKER: I'm going to ask, I'm a recent Ball Graduate from Fletcher. My question is about the role that this kind of reforms and governance play in, especially looking at the kind of sectarian spoil systems in Iraq and Lebanon, and how you address the fundamental challenges that those pose, and that kind of incentives they create for the emergence of these militias without destabilizing the system, that the sectarian spoils systems perpetuate?

MS. MALONEY: Okay we will go across panel. You can respond to those two questions, make any final points, but we should keep it quick because we'd like to end somewhere close on time. And with apologies to all those of you who would like to pose questions. There's a lot of material out front. Our folks are very engaged online. So, hope

you can continue the conversation after today. Let's start with Shadi.

MR. HAMID: Maybe just a very quick response to the second question. So, the overly sectarian nature of the Iraqi government but also just Iraqi political competition, although it has -- I think it has decreased somewhat in light of the last election. But I don't think you can entirely undo that. I mean, these are societies that are deeply divided. Citizens disagree on foundational questions about the role of religion in public life, about how to view the other sect, about how to distribute power between sex, so on and so forth.

Some of that I think was exacerbated by the way the political system was designed. And then there can be a broader debate about in the founding moment of, say a new political system, how should constitutional frameworks be developed to minimize the sectarian spoiled system?

I think the tendency has been to see -- well, we'll just divide things up and make sure each sect has a particular piece of the pie. But that just reified sectarian divides. That said, the other alternatives don't always work very well either. But I would say that as much as we want to be critical of the Iraqi system, when people ask me what the bright spots -- well the relative bright spots in the region are, I mean Tunisia is the obvious one and that's like the only actual bright spot. But then I tend to say that Lebanon and Iraq are the other two, that are at least somewhat positive because they do have democratic competition. They do respect a certain level of political freedom. And there actually seems to be hope because those political processes are in place, and people then can negotiate within those political processes.

And I would actually say Lebanon's probably the most successful failed state in modern history as far as I can tell. So, I mean it's good to kind of keep those things in perspective.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, I'll pick up with the questions on individual members of militia groups, paramilitary groups, as consumers of governance. In many ways that is the most immediate entry point in places like Iraq, and there certainly has been

interest and efforts to have some DDR-like initiatives that would focus on individual fighters.

The problem is that they have been squashed very vehemently by the PMF commission, that's very acutely focused on not losing rank and file membership that applies, particularly to the pro-Iran group. In the case of the Shrine militias, many of them -- many of their fighters have actually disbanded on their own without state assistance.

Part of the opportunities and part of what I was trying to say is that as long as economic opportunities are simply linked to the militia, such as militias have very prominent role in the reconstruction, the most obvious economic activity. We are constantly setting up a system where even the individual preferences will be aligned with the group preferences.

So, the more that can be done to create economic and political space that is separate from the paramilitary political structure, the more we are enabling at least the movement of individuals and hopefully shaping their allegiances away from the paramilitary groups and toward a state that is a more inclusive, more neutral, less captured state.

But I also do want to end on a bright note. You know, my time in Mosul was very challenging time, both in terms of the destruction that was there, some of the conversations with the people in the IDP camps, those that were wives, ex-wives widows of ISIS fighters.

But at the same time, it was a lot of very horrific stories. And the issue of internal reconciliation in Iraq did not come up. It's fundamental those who are labeled as ISIS affiliates, or the women, or the children, face profound discrimination and abuse and very limited opportunities that might bring about new militancy soon.

But at the same time, there was just some incredibly young civil society people in Mosul. Often operating despite the threats from the paramilitary groups. Sometimes threats from the Iraqi state. Musicians trying to create bands across sectarian lines. People trying to create cafes where women would go often Sunni women deeply religious. There was also inoculation against the extremism and brutality of ISIS and that

level of religious dogma.

And pan-Sectarian cooperation. Now, the sad thing was that they felt that they were politically disempowered. They tried to run politicians for the elections, they were uniformly defeated. And they felt that their impact on the Iraqi state and structures was constantly drawn down.

But those human level interactions were enormously rewarding and admirable, and gave me more hope that if those people can be protected, if we can engage with them, if we can support them in a way that's not the case of death that doesn't subject them to labels of being U.S. stooges or something similar, then over time the system can get to a more equitable, more inclusive, happier place.

MR. WISE: I think your comments can be more directly relevant. So, go ahead.

MR. FELTMAN: I on that -- the sectarian question, I think that the field we need to watch right now is what happens in Syria. The war is winding down, the conflict is not over, but the active parts of the war are winding down. And it goes to Paul's question about the Kurds.

You know if I would suspect the Kurds are probably flirting with how you make a deal with Damascus. Given the -- that you, they can't rely on the U.S. deciding to stay there forever and be their protecting -- their protector against the Turks forever.

But Damascus has been very clear that they don't want the Lebanon model. They don't want to see something like the Iraqi model. So, will the Kurds and Damascus be able to come up with something that would satisfy the Kurdish -- the Syrian Kurdish desire for some sort of recognition of a special status, something less than -- less than Iraqi Kurdistan.

But that would fit with Damascus' idea of a so-called nonsectarian state. I don't know. I think there's going to be -- there's going to be a really interesting space to watch and see how this develops.

MR. WISE: In the interest of time I totally agree with everything my colleagues just said.

MS. MALONEY: Well, please join me in thanking our panelists for just a very close up discussion.

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2020