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ASSESSING UN STATE-BUILDING IN SOUTH SUDAN, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, AND BEYOND

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Good morning. I am Dr. Vanda Felbab-Brown, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and the director of the Initiative on Nonstate Armed Actors and the Africa Security Initiative. And I'm delighted that you can join us today for a conversation to explore the strengths and challenges of U.S. state building missions over the past 20 years.

The opportunities and way forward as we are entering a new era of bold geopolitics and UN state-building mission potential. The post-911 era featured not just a globalized effort against nonstate armed actors, particularly the jihadi ones, but also extensive and frequent UN state building missions that were a part of or sometimes took alongside or on the heels of international military interventions. Some of which were not under the sponsorship of the United Nations.

The missions, the UN missions often became the source of superior information about local actors and violence patterns. They became a crucial mediating, negotiating and state building actors. The UN mission in Afghanistan is such an example. We are meeting today close to the one-year mark since the Taliban took over Afghanistan.

The UNAMA mission there over many years, including over the past years at the time led by Ambassador Deborah Lyons who was the special representative of the secretary general and until very recently did the heroic job in that context.

Sometimes, because UN state building missions have started precisely because of the unique strengths and capabilities were recognized. Other times, they were initiated because the principal intervenors did not want to be saddled with those state building and political responsibilities.

The reality now is that despite massive international resources deployed to places such as South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, the Central African Republic, Libya, and Somalia, many of those missions are continuing to face significant challenges and show only limited improvements towards stable, inclusive and accountable governments led by local actors.

And so, it is now 20 years since many of those missions were initiated. A good time to think about what has worked well and what hasn't worked so well. And we have an absolutely star panel to do so. I would, on my side, suggest one of the key challenges for the UN missions that has been the same challenge that it has been for other actors such the United States, other governments trying to

conduct state building.

Often the local partners have had very different agendas than the state building UN missions. And sometimes, they've proven to be venal, predatory, corrupt, parochial and exclusionary. One of the reasons why the Taliban was able to take over Afghanistan. And so, often that has been a big misalignment, not alignment between the international, UN and other state building efforts, and those of local partners.

And another challenge, of course, is now that we are at the end of the post-Cold War era. We are in the era of new geopolitics, of great power competition or global power competition. But we are also at the end of the post-911 era that was characterized by this universal opposition or this universal desire to neutralize nonstate armed actors even if there are disagreements.

In fact, we are back to the Cold War dynamics of 'my' terrorists being seen as the opponents' freedom fighters. Yet another difficult challenge for UN peacekeeping missions and state building missions as well as for other state building efforts.

So, we have a star team to help the conversation about what has worked well? What hasn't? What needs to adapt? Let me start with Adam Day who is the head of the Geneva Office of the United Nations University Center for Policy Research. There, Adam oversees efforts of programming on peace building, human rights, peacekeeping, climate sector issues, sanctions and global governance. And he also co-leads the institution's high-level advisory board on effective multilateralism.

Prior to this very significant position, Adam had a decade in the UN deployed in missions such as MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the UN special coordinated office for Lebanon. Also, deployments to Khartoum, to Darfur. And also, was a political advisor in both the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the UN in New York.

Prior to his stellar UN career, Adam was the international litigator in New York at the Center for Constitutional Rights where he worked on behalf of 100 detainees and where he worked against the use of torture. Thank you very much for that service, Adam.

He has published widely, and I want to mention Adam has a new book, "States of Disorders, Ecosystems of Governance." If you haven't yet read it, rush to it. You will learn a lot.

Adam, let me start with you. What in your view are some of the key lessons over the past

20 years for the UN?

MR. DAY: Thanks so much, Vanda. That was a great introduction. I was trying to take notes while listening at the same time. And what a brilliant group to be joined by, a really amazing group. I'm looking forward to hearing from all of you.

Really, I want to respond to that question based on some of those experiences I had in UN peacekeeping, in living and working in some of those areas where the UN and the U.S. and others were engaged in state building and stabilization. And then after I left the UN peacekeeping a few years ago, several years ago now, I conducted quite a few years of research specifically on DRC and South Sudan, which is the basis for that book.

And what I hope to offer today is a starting point that is slightly different and hopefully transformative in understanding how state building works and doesn't work in those contexts to try to respond to that question. And for me, the key starting question really is why did those dynamics that you just described take place? Why after 20 years of international state building and billions of dollars of funding has it failed so often and so comprehensively against its own measures?

Because really by failure what I mean is it hasn't delivered the outcomes it lists in its own goals, mandates and programs. And an example of that is, is the Democratic Republic of the Congo where the UN has had a mission there for over 20 years. And over that time has had an increasingly ambitious stabilization, state building, peace building mandate. And the goal of that mandate has largely been to reduce the impact of nonstate armed groups in Eastern Congo, clear areas of insecurity and build up state capacities for governance in Eastern Congo.

And if that kind of shape, clear, hold, build language sounds familiar to you that's the standard counterinsurgency terminology you see in U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. And the idea behind that is really this understanding of 'ungoverned' spaces. This sense that there are places without state governance capacities, without police stations or courthouses. Without the basic delivery of services by the state. And these are considered and openly called 'ungoverned' in traditional state building doctrine.

The former head of the mission in MONUSCO described the situation as a sea of instability and trying to build islands of stability in it that would be kind of state-run islands of stability. But

what's happened over the past 20 years in Congo, yes, there has certainly been some improvements in some very important areas, and we can talk about those.

But that idea of extending state authority and reducing the area of influence and the impact of armed groups. I mean look back in 2002, the UN counted around a dozen armed groups. By 2015, it was around 70 that the UN was counting. And by around 2020 or 2021, there was over 100 that were counted and very little measurable increase in the ability of state led governance institutions in the East to counteract that or replace that to use the kind of state building terminology. And this is despite billions being spent every year.

So, by its own goal of neutralizing armed groups and stabilizing the East through the extension of state authority, there isn't much of a success in a place like Eastern Congo. And this isn't an isolated phenomenon. I was in South Sudan in 2011 during the party to celebrate the country's secession and creation of a new country. The World Bank called that a moment to do state building "from scratch" thinking of South Sudan as kind of a 'tabula rasa' which is what Salva Kiir called it at the time.

And the UN had a plan to extend state authority into all of those ungoverned spaces of South Sudan. Every time I say 'ungoverned,' please put quotes around it. And I actually led part of the conflict assessment that led to that new mission in South Sudan. And we identified state governance capacities as one of the shortfalls that was most in need of work. So, I was part of the problematic starting point there.

And between 2011 and 2013, state building not only failed to develop meaningful state capacities in most places. I interviewed hundreds of South Sudanese people. A huge number of whom saw the UN operations as actually making things worse in some ways, feeding a dangerous dynamic by supporting the so-called Dinka-dominated government at the time. And when civil war broke out only two years later, it was a clear indication that state building hadn't achieved its objectives.

Similarly, when I worked on the mission in Libya helping to set that up in 2012. The same mandate, extension of state authorities, stabilization, the same idea of addressing the risks posed by warlords. And today, a quite similar result in some respects in terms of the inability to extend state authority into those areas. You look at Mali, Somali, Afghanistan the building's biggest state building efforts worldwide. And they all seem to be suffering from a series of deeply entrenched problems in

terms of achieving their mandates.

So, what's the problem? And one of the problems, I think is actually a conceptual one. And we still tend to think of failed and fragile states as broken machines. I mean Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart's famous book, *Fixing Failed States*, captures that idea. But the concept really is that a machine has a broken piece, it has a part that's malfunctioning.

So, for example, North Kivu has the Allied Democratic Forces armed group that needs to be taken out. Or there's a round of intercommunal violence in Jonglei State that needs to be fixed. And the solution is to remove that or fix that broken piece and replace it with a working one, a state institution, a courthouse or a police station or something.

And this might work if you blow a gasket on your car, but my research approach is governance in a more systemic way. And societies are more like living organisms. They're complex ecosystems. They can't be fixed by removing a single piece and change happens in nonlinear ways in those systems.

There's a reason I have a beehive on the cover of my book. It's an example of a complex system. And I think that point about nonlinear change is really important. If you look at a UN planning document, the input in some of them is something like police training, the output is trained police and placement of those police in the field and the outcome is improved stability.

And one of the kinds of transformative moments in my own kind of path through this is Rachel Kleinfeld's great article about planning for sailboats and not train tracks. Change doesn't happen in those linear ways. Change happens in complex systems in nonlinear ways. Inputs don't equal outputs.

And I think what's more important in looking at the specificity of those settings are the patterns and underlying rules that allow a system to self-organize. So, for example, in the DRC there is a system kind of within the police force called the Pahapdui, your umbrella system, which starts at the highest level and each person down the chain is protected in their position as long as they feed resources back up the chain.

And so, from the Ministry of Defense down to the individual police officer, an exchange of money for protection happens. And at the local level, this turns into predatory and corrupt networks and

armed groups. And private actors tend to feed off the population in that context. It links armed groups to the marketing of artisanal minerals on the international market and all the way up to the iPhone that's in everyone's pocket right now.

But it's that network of relationships and that set of rules that kind of exist under the surface that I try to explore in my research. And that I think is actually the modality for change to happen in those systems. And that is the governance system in a place like Eastern Congo or South Sudan. The system may appear different in different places and have different manifestations, but you can map those networks and see the relations that play and that's what I try to do.

So, then what happens when the UN arrives with a Security Council mandate that says to do SSR and the mission says, okay. We're going to reform your security sector. We're going to neutralize armed groups of force. We're going to pour a bunch of money into new state-run governance capacities in Eastern Congo.

And what my research indicates is that the system doesn't respond in an input/output way. In many cases, the attempt to neutralize armed groups actually increases the need for violence and nonstate actors in some of those areas. Sometimes, the exact opposite outcome happens.

And so, what tends to happen is what we call lack of political will or corruption or underfunding. Never really results in the outcome in that you never really get to where you want to get, which is a stable, state-run government system. And so, in South Sudan, for example, multibillion dollar efforts to improve the government's capacities in the South Sudanese police force judiciary and local governors seemed to kind of dissolve into endless deferred plans and never actually resulted in increases in legitimate state capacity over that two-year period.

So, if you look at traditional UN explanations for this, they tend to have three or four. The first one they say is we didn't have enough money. If only we had more resources to put into this system, we could have changed it better.

The second one is – and I think, you can see what my thinking is on that. The second one is lack of political will or corruption. If the leaders weren't so vested in their venal ways of governance, we could have solved this problem.

The third way is we are too top-down. If we'd only really understood the hyperlocal

experiences of conflict, we could have solved it from the bottom up. And there's a kind of fourth one, which is if the UN wasn't so incompetent, we could have done it better. But that tends to be your basket of explanations.

And I think my approach suggests a different focus. The first one is you focus on the underlying rules and patterns. What complexity theorists call Strong Attractors and say, how does this system work? And what relationships are necessary to it? And how is the UN able or not able to affect those relationships?

And so, for example, the relationship amongst politicians, the SPLA in South Sudan, traditional leaders and communities generate a set (inaudible) and how does the UN effect that by entering into it?

And the second question really is how did those systems change over time? How do they deal with shocks? So, for example, how did South Sudan's government system deal with the shock of the comprehensive peace agreement in the early 2000s? And how did that make the system evolve in different ways? And what can we learn from that about how it might evolve in the future?

And I think it shows also, if you start looking at these very different systems, how very different settings like Libya, Afghanistan, South Sudan, DRC and Somali might all end up with a similar set of frustrations when the UN and other major actors tend to do state building in similar ways.

Now, this doesn't let the individual leaders off the hook. And I hope in the second session, we can get into some of the kind of policy implications. But certainly, there are still corrupt people. There's still lack of resources. There's still overly top-down approaches that fail to account for local dynamics, but I think a systems approach is a starting point for state building, allows us to begin to understand how change happens and how it doesn't happen. And how it tends to frustrate many of the anticipated changes we have in those settings.

And so, really what I tried to do and what I continue to try and do is reflect what I heard in the hundreds of interviews I did in DRC and South Sudan because the people there certainly understand how their systems work. They understand how interconnected it is. They understand that what we think of as cattle rustling in the periphery of South Sudan is intimately connected to power brokers in Cuba. And that these relationships and networks are what produce their system.

And so, my attempt really is to relay that experience of the people that exist in these networks into the language of the state builder to try and change the way we think about state building. And so, hopefully in the second round, I can get into what does this actually mean for how we do things differently? But I wanted to start with that as kind of an opening explanation for why I think state building hasn't had the results that the West in general has hoped to achieve. Thanks, Vanda.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: So, what you are really describing, Adam, are systems of misgovernance. Now, that's not quite the right terminology because they are systems of governance that are deeply entrenched and deeply dysfunctional even if not producing peace. But it produces a system of conflict and exclusion but does so in a way that allows the systems to perpetuate themselves effectively even despite the efforts and intervention of external actors.

And how we change that really has been the (inaudible) nod for the international community. You know, you mentioned in your remarks the clear, hold, build elements of the international, U.S., Western counterinsurgency approach.

And what we have seen and continue to see today in places like Mozambique, like Mali, like Nigeria is that maybe, maybe we do some partial clearing. We often are very inadequate in holding and the building just about never takes place or at least not in the way that we have intended it to take place.

Well, I couldn't think of a better person to offer now her reflections and follow Adam than Ms. A. Heather Coyne who is a longtime UN insider like you, Adam, who has been part of many of these missions. Ms. Coyne currently leads the Security Sector Reform team of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen.

Prior to that she served in UN missions in Somalia also working on SSR, building security agencies to oversee armed forces manage weapons and regulate the nonstate armed actors, those aligned with the government. Prior to that she also served in Afghanistan as the acting Senior Police Advisor for the UN mission trying heroically to empower a civil society to make the police forces of Afghanistan more accountable to citizens and more focused on the policing that they wanted and badly needed.

Prior to her glamorous UN career, Ms. Coyne was working in the U.S. Institute of Peace

as the senior program officer for conflict resolution and mediation and USIP chief of party in Iraq. And she also served three years – she had a three-year military tour with NATO training missions in Afghanistan.

A. Heather, I am so thrilled that we are able to have you on this call. Please give us your take on what has worked well and what have been the challenges for UN missions as you have experienced them and broadly?

MS. COYNE: Right. Well, Vanda, my experience in the UN state building is basically a dumbed down version of what Adam's complexity theory talks about, if it's not an oxymoron to simplify complexity theories.

I say the UN but the approaches I've seen across the international community, the U.S. military, (inaudible), the African Union all tend to follow the same playbook. I remember one of my first meetings with the African civil society when I had just joined NATO's training mission, which was really the sort of the usual train and equip, clear, hold, build approach for the army and police.

The civil society organizations told me "all you're doing is training better predators." The state building efforts by the international community, especially the UN's approach to the security sector reform, often fall into the participatory and inclusive security governments, which is almost completely antithetical to the interest of the people in power who, naturally, then work to undermine or slow the programming.

Again and again, I saw efforts that were based on the assumption that security ministries would just give up their extractive practices with the UN working valiantly to convince them it was for their own good.

It's the classic example of pushing on a string instead of pulling on it. Our arguments were just not very compelling against the very clear benefits that the leaders and all the people who work under them could gain from conducting business as usual.

But I have seen initiatives that do work, they are few and far between. And they never really build enough momentum to change the direction of the state building and prevention overall as I saw to my own shame in Afghanistan. But all the things that work better have characteristics that revolved around one line from Adam's book. He said 'what kind of interventions will allow societies to

transform themselves from within?'

Let me give some examples of what that might look like. First, we have to work with actors who can drive change. That means actors who have power to make change and who have a direct interest in seeing that change happen. I had been working on policing in Afghanistan and one activist told me that human rights NGOs, the women NGOs, they're good, but their aspirational. They don't resonate with most of Afghan society.

And when I asked who did, they said, the taxi union, the baker's association and the sports federation. So that's where we start. The sports federation leader was absolutely thrilled at how he could use sports to make police more responsive to the people. And I said, do you mean the police will play against the community? And he said, no. The police are in such bad shape, they will always lose and that will cause more tension. So no, they view that the police will form joint teams and train together on the same team.

Second, a related point. The interventions that work best are ones that involve existing relationships and institutions that are relevant. And often, as Adam mentioned, those are actors or systems that are outside the scope of traditional state building. And if we have time, I'll tell you about that money changers of Kabul – their union was the most effective effort in community policing that I've ever seen.

But let me talk a little bit about Yemen as well. When I first arrived here, I was told that the plan for a peace agreement was to create a new national committee of neutrals who would manage all of the military and security issues in a transitional period. That's exactly the opposite of Adam's focus on existing relevant institutions.

Not only was it overly fixated on the central government, but the plan was to sideline even the existing ministries in favor of a new clean slate that would somehow manage all the security forces without any basis in the Yemeni law, any buy-ins in that society, any relationships with power brokers and not even any chairs.

Do you know how long it takes the UN to buy chairs? It's really a very long time. So instead, our team looked for existing institutions especially at the local level who could take on the functions of implementing a cease fire or a peace agreement and what we could do help them do that.

And what Yemenis told us was needed was to strengthen access for tribal mediators, local peace builders and some municipal authorities to shape the implementation of a ceasefire rather than investing all the power in a central authority.

Those local organizations turned the focus on practical needs of communities and the fighters in the frontline areas. So, exchanging prisoners and corpses, negotiating access to water infrastructure and electricity that was cut off by the fighting. Or just the delivery of emergency services through armed groups in places civilian agencies can't outreach.

A third principle that Adam spoke of refers to making relationships less violent without trying to dramatically change or replace them. That's especially relevant in the security sector where armed forces are often the biggest threat to the people.

So instead of train and equip, we're working under an accountability first approach, which builds on the relationships between security actors in communities that allow people to advocate for their own priorities and to use the leverage that they have to press for improved behavior of the security forces more effectively.

A lot of that is offering opportunities for security forces to interact with the population and say, not extort you at the checkpoint environments like that sports program or helping the police deliver basic safety briefings to schools. The knowledge that actually helps citizens field the challenges on a daily basis.

And the final entry point, just to mention it here, is dialogues between communities and security actors. So, the communities can advocate for their own needs like moving the checkpoints so the citizens can reach their workplaces or not storing weapons in schools, as well as helping security actors then respond to those demands.

So let me stop here and then maybe we can come back to this in the recommendation section to figure out what that means if we're trying to reform UN state building.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Thank you very much A. Heather, you put on a lot of other additional thoughts, some that I would just highlight.

Although you never used the term, you raised really the issues militias which have, of course, been key features of antiterrorism, counterinsurgency effort for many decades including after 9/11

and the past 20 years where often the issue with accountability in arming them, supporting them has been very marginal. And not marginal in the economic sense of making a change but marginal as in very underemphasized.

And generated problems in many ways whether in their weakness or in the consequences of the militia's actors generated. And this, of course, all the more complicated now. But that we are returning to an era of military security companies even less accountable like the Wagner Group, of course, the Russian Wagner Group is not the only private security company. The U.S. has had its very many problems with companies like Blackwater and Sea. But very much – a very significant factor today.

The other point that I do want to put on the table as we all think and move to the further conversation is, you know, the prescription often is emphasize more civil society or focus on the actors who make change. And I love the money changers of Kabul example of being really creative.

Nonetheless, both UN missions and certainly individual government missions are structured to deal with governments. The business of foreign policy is to deal with governments. And so, this raises the question of do we really need to rethink foreign policies? But of course, the governments will be objecting. They don't want to hear 'no money will go to us.' It will go to these actors of change whether they are civil society, or they are other actors.

And so, when the civil society actors become effective, they can themselves become targets of neutralization. I can think of many settings where when the local initiate of the local actors of change really start making a difference. They are undercut and eviscerated by our present governmental allies.

And, you know, perhaps this is a good segue to another just enormously terrific panelist that we have which is Ms. Rachel Kleinfeld who is a senior fellow in the Democracy, Conflict and Governance program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She has written extensively on troubled democracies facing problems such as polarized populations, violence and corruption. But also written very extensively on issues of rule of law, security sector reform, conflict and policing.

Rachel has consulted for the U.S. government and international organizations such as OECD, the World Bank, the European Union. She serves on the UN security sector reforms advisory

board, and she has also a fellow in the Halifax International Security forum. Prior to Carnegie being very lucky to have Rachel, Rachel spent the decade cofounding and directing the Truman National Security project that fosters a new generation of national security leaders and military veterans, work for which Time Magazine recognized Rachel appropriately at the time as one of the top 40 political leaders under 40. And between 2011 and 2014, she served on the Foreign Affairs Policy Board that advises the U.S. secretary of state at the time, Secretary Hillary Clinton.

Rachel is an author of many excellent pieces. Adam already referred to one of her articles that I encourage everyone to read. And she is also the author of many books including two that I want to highlight, "A Savage Order" and "Advancing the Rule of Law Abroad: The Next Generation Reform." If you haven't read them rush to buy them along with Adam's book.

Rachel, over to you on your thoughts and reflections on both the lessons broadly, but also this issue. Can we really 'go local,' recognizing that partner governments, in quote, unquote, partner are often deeply troubled, deeply misaligned or not aligned at all, deeply contradictory to the action of inclusive, stable accountable governments?

Can we simply go around them? Can we only deal with local actors? What is the balance that one needs to strike in maneuvering the systems of complexities about which Adam so eloquent writes?

MS. KLEINFELD: Thank you so much, Vanda. Thank you for that beautiful introduction and following Heather and Adam is really a tough act. I do field research. They've lived in the field for many, many years in multiple, very difficult places. And so, I would take my remarks with a grain of salt given that.

I'm also going to be unduly optimistic here. Usually, I'm the one who says very negative things about the United Nations. I'm going to start off by actually praising them and then moving into the problems because many of my remarks were taken by Adam and Heather. Actually, Vanda in her introduction right now. So, you'll hear some reprises, but I'll bring up some of the good stuff and then I'll caveat and then I'll go into some of the changes that need to happen.

Academic research has been actually really clear on the United Nations peacekeeping being quite effective. And so, I just want to bring that up here that peacekeeping, what the academics

show, is good at resolving civil wars. It's good at reducing violence during wars. It's good at preventing wars from reoccurring. It protects lives. It keeps violence lower. All sorts of good things. Sizeable and statistically significant effects. Conflict zones that have united peacekeeping missions tend to have fewer deaths than places without them.

And in cases where the UN sends peacekeeping missions, those tend to be the hardest places. You tend to get UN peacekeeping missions in the most volatile areas where mistrust is high. Where countries are quite poor or frankly, there aren't a lot of bilateral incentives to engage. So that's all good news. And I want to name all that because there's a reason the UN keeps doing things that we're all going to critique right now.

And one of the reasons is because they can show a lot of positives in a lot of cases, there's a lot of incentive to say, well, these are good things. That the violence is down. The war has stopped and so on. And so, let's keep on doing what we're doing. And I think a lot of the critique falls on two sides. One is you see political critiques on the unintended consequences. The cholera, the distorted local economies that the UN peacekeeping missions bring, the sexual violence, things like that that are unintended consequences of throwing often a lot of young men and a lot of money into different areas.

The other side of it though is that when the UN does these peacekeeping missions, they have a model as the previous commentators have mentioned. And that model tends to reify the government and it tends to reify structures of power that are governmentally sanctioned. And so, those things can do all the good things that I just mentioned in terms of bringing down violence and so on. But what they do is solidify a structure that then becomes very hard to change afterward.

And that structure causes ongoing problems. And so, if you look at what the UN says about its peacekeeping missions, it acknowledges failures like Haiti and then it names successes like Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia and Libya and so on, Timor-Leste. And then it talks about Cambodia usually in a positive way.

But the blindness to these political structures and these power structures that can be predatory or brutal and the sort of aspirational aspect of working with NGOs in civil society that are gender neutral or positive to women and various things that the UN wants, leads to a reification of the central authority even when it's not congruent with the powers structure. And that's particularly the case

in countries that Alex de Waal talks about as political marketplaces, where power might be very transactional and be changing quite quickly or where it's just very personalistic.

And so bureaucratic structures don't work particularly well with those personalistic structures. Or where the government itself as in Sudan, for instance, is sort of a prop of the international structure and the actual powers that move underneath it do not fit within the lines of authority that have been set out on a nice PowerPoints that sort of set out what the government is supposed to look like.

In those cases, after bringing down violence or what have you, what the UN is doing by pouring money unto these systems in a slow way that takes a long time to get chairs as Heather has mentioned, and by working with certain actors and sidelining other actors is that they build up the power of actors who either do not actually have power, and therefore, cannot continue without the backing of the United Nations or they're building up the power of some actors in a world in which there are other actors still fighting for power. And the UN has kind of put a top on that by just being present.

But it can't actually create a power structure out of whole cloth. They're international. They rely on a government to say that it's okay for them to be there and so on and so forth. And so, there is sort of, I think of my pressure cooker, they're sort of holding things down on top of this pressure cooker while all the activity is going on inside and underneath.

Now, I don't need to expand too much on the fabulous suggestions that Adam and Heather have already made. I think they're absolutely right that the way in which we have to move beyond UN 1.0 into UN 2 or 3.0 has to do with actually examining the power structures, working with who actually has power in these states and then moving toward using that power structure to move towards more open structures. Whereas the UN tends to perhaps inadvertently enable autocratic structures both in economic and in political terms. And so, working towards more open structures politically and economically would be the next phase that we would want to move to.

But I want to talk as I started out with here are the good things that the UN is doing and why it's hard for them to necessarily see the problems. There are problems with the UN structure that are making this very hard. One is the workforce development issue. There's a lot of actors in the United Nations and a lot of them need to get this understanding. For very few of them is it in their incentive structure to do this well. It's a very hard thing to do as others can testify on the ground.

And the structures and incentives for any particular job within the workforce of the UN is to do the things for which metrics are easily developed and that meet those metrics. And this stuff doesn't work with that kind of a metric system. Especially a metric system developed ahead of time that doesn't change.

Adam mentioned my piece on sailboats not trains. These are extremely dynamic systems, and you have to navigate like a sailboat not like train. And as a result, these predeveloped metrics that the workforce has to meet just aren't going to function in these systems. But until that changes, you're not going to get the UN to change because the UN is simply a conglomeration of lots of individuals.

The second point I wanted to make was about the geopolitical nature. Vanda just talked about the new Cold War moving beyond the kind of old coin and CT world into this new Cold War world. That certainly is impacting the United Nations given who is on the Security Council, the great power competition that has started up with the U.S. and China, the U.S. and Russia, many allied nations of the U.S. and Russia.

And also, the often unacknowledged in the U.S. fact that most of the world hasn't joined that democratic grouping that's fighting Russia but is actually sitting on the sidelines, has many more mixed views, doesn't necessarily see this as democracy versus autocracy.

And so, you have a large sort of rebirth of the nonaligned movement that plays a very significant role in the United Nations. Without acknowledging those dynamics, we can't really move into UN 2 or 3.0 because those are the power holders within the United Nations ultimately as the Security Council and all the other nations that make up the UN power structure.

And they're not necessarily on board with moving towards a more democratic type of peacekeeping. Many of them are backsliding democracies themselves. The whole world is seeing backsliding democracy. And so, if you're saying, well, the UN should be moving towards open economic structures and open political competition then many, many countries have no interest in that whatsoever internally. You're going to see it hard to push that within the UN structure.

And then the final issue is the issue that Adam and Heather have already touched on. So, I won't emphasize it, but I just want to double down that in-country, there is a reason that these long-

term power structure issues get reified and that the hard issues get punted or get moved to the side. And it's because UN personnel are functioning in a world in which they have to have government sanctions.

And as long as they have to have government sanction doing things that sideline the very government they're working under because it doesn't actually have power or that sideline parts of that government in order to open up these power structures, is a very difficult enterprise. I'm not quite sure how you do that. I gave my first book talk on a *Savage Order* at DPKO and when I got to the end of the book talk and I had to talk about what they should do, I realized I had no recommendations whatsoever. Because when you started from the point of view of you have to work with the government and the government is the problem and you have to open up the government, I just hadn't thought through what you do about that.

And frankly, four years later, five years later, I still haven't come up with a lot of great ideas for what you do. And it's a fundamental challenge in the system. So, I'll stop there.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, thank you very much, Rachel. You have, you know, one of the many fascinating points you made is something that I want to ask Richard which is about the new geopolitics. What does this mean for functionality of authorizing UN missions and for making them effective, perhaps more effective but at least effective on the ground?

In picking people for a panel and thinking how to conceptualize a panel, when I know that I have three enormous stars, it's always an issue to come up with a closer who will be star in that same high caliber and quality. And I'm so terrifically grateful that Richard Gowan has been able to join us and that he is now going to bring us to the end of the first round. And then we will much more briefly go into policy recommendations.

Richard Gowan oversees the International Crisis Group's advocacy work at the United Nations where he engages diplomats and UN officials in New York. And he is without a doubt one of the leading voices on all matters UN. Richard has also worked at the European Council on Foreign Relations, the New York University Center on International Cooperation and the Foreign Policy Center in London.

He has taught in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia and at Stanford. He also has been a consultant for many of the organizations that we are speaking about

including the UN Department of Political Affairs, the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on International Migration as well as a plethora of other actors involved with international state building efforts such as the U.K. Foreign Commonwealth Office and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Global Affairs Canada.

Richard, geopolitics, what does that mean for us?

MR. GOWAN: Well, thank you very much, Vanda. And it's an honor to be the equivalent of the reserve pitcher that was brought in, in the last innings of the baseball game to try and close things out. It's difficult for me to follow such a distinguished panel, but I'll share a few thoughts.

The first thought was actually listening to all the presentations reminded me of one of my favorite poems which is *On Dover Beach* by Matthew Arnold. And that's a poem about the loss of Christian faith in the 19th century. And Arnold talks about the long melancholy withdrawing role of the Christian faith.

And I think what we're hearing today is the melancholy long withdrawing role of faith in state building, because as you said at the outset, you know, this belief in state building, this sort of aspiration for state building really dates back to the first decade of this century. And to be quite honest, we've seen diplomats and UN officials gradually losing faith in this construct for pretty much a decade.

It's worth keeping in mind that the Security Council last mandated new, large scale Blue Helmet missions in 2013 and 2014. Those were the missions to Mali and the Central African Republic. And while the Security Council has continued to renew the mandates for peace operations in places like South Sudan, it hasn't sent any new operations of that type to other countries suffering from civil wars or major insurgencies.

And that suggests that members of the Security Council are increasingly mistrustful of what UN state building can achieve. Instead of these large-scale missions, we've seen the Security Council returning to experimenting with quite small, lightweight observer missions. There is, for example, a lightweight observer mission in Hudaydah, in Yemen overseeing a humanitarian agreement there.

And in addition, the UN as a whole is shifting back to a focus on what humanitarian agencies can do. And whereas 10 to 15 years ago, it was the Department of Peacekeeping Operations that really set the agenda around conflict management in the UN, we now see the humanitarians and

organizations like the World Food Program increasingly setting the agenda for what the UN can do.

And this is actually especially relevant and interesting in one case that we referred to at the beginning which is Afghanistan. Because in Afghanistan, we're now in a situation where effectively we've given up the 20 years of peace building that began in 2001 with the Taliban takeover of Kabul. But the UN humanitarians are still there. And actually, as the World Food Program and UNICEF and organizations like that which are basically keeping Afghanistan alive.

And what we've got in Afghanistan is the UN sustaining a state run by the Taliban that has overthrown all the state building work we tried to do. Largely for humanitarian reasons and also because no one wants to see a massive outflow of refugees from Afghanistan. So, I think the era of state building has been replaced by a much more ad hoc era of lightweight peacemaking and humanitarian engagement.

And then, yes, the geopolitics is kicking in. One of the reasons the Security Council isn't innovating so much in terms of peacekeeping is precisely that there are growing tensions between the permanent members and obviously those who have accelerated this year. China and Russia do push back on some of the ambitious, liberal concepts of state building that the U.S. and allies would like to propose through the Security Council.

And outside the UN, we're also seeing these powers getting involved in proxy wars and deploying either their own personnel or deploying private military companies often into many of the places where the UN already has a presence. So, the Wagner Group which you referred to is present in Libya, is present in Mali and is present in the Central African Republic. And certainly, what we're seeing in Mali at the moment right now is that the Malian government, relying more and more on Russian mercenary support, is becoming increasingly aggressive and negative towards the UN presence. So, a lot of these geopolitical tensions are playing out in a very pointed way and very direct way in places where the UN is deployed.

I also think it's worth touching on one other perhaps more positive development of the international crisis management scene which is that we're seeing a shift in interest from UN large scale operations to operations run by the African Union and other regional organizations. There's a big focus in the UN on what can be done to support regional peace operations. And it may be that the future of

stabilization and state building lies not with Blue Helmet operations but with Green Helmet operations of the type that is already deployed in Somalia and is being discussed now in the context of the Sahel as an alternative to the UN operation in Mali.

So, what's the big picture? The big picture is a mess. And the mess is likely to get messier in a period of increasingly fragmented geopolitics. But I think that the sort of 2001 to 2011 period of aspirational state building is probably now a historical artifact. And a lot of what we're still looking at is really the leftovers of an earlier and perhaps more hopeful era.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, in many ways, Richard, those are not surprising comments, but they are still very sobering. And, you know, even though I, in my opening remark, made some similar points, I want to emphasize to all of us, not just all of us on the panel today, but our audience that despite your very poetic description of the loss of faith in state building, we should be mindful that the aspirations and objectives of state building remain enormously valid.

They are about people having greater accountability of their government or nonstate armed actors who rule them. They are about people having greater inclusion in the politics and economies of the countries where they have to live. About having decent and improving life. About being subject to less violence, to less severe human rights abuses.

And so, even as the international appetite has significantly diminished for state building as we have been doing over the past 20 years and the geopolitics makes it very difficult to continue doing it, the aspirations remain valid.

We are also at a time where countries like the United States have lost appetites for great military interventions against terrorist actors. So, on the one hand, we are pulling back from large military deployments, but we are also pulling back from state building. What does this leave us with? It leaves us with occasional hits against particularly bad nonstate actors.

I would posit this is not a good overall conceptualization of the issue. And I would suggest that we look at some of the lessons from anticrime efforts which for many years in the various times and periodically become shrunk to the occasional hit against a narco, the occasional hit against a Mafia boss, and ignore the need to enable communities to support the anticrime efforts. And it requires making lives of the communities economically, politically with respect to human rights, viable with legality.

So, this perhaps is a transition now to hearing from all four of you, your key thoughts given the challenges, given the new geopolitics, given the lessons that you all outlined in such very eloquent ways, what are some of the key actions? What are some of the policy recommendations, in about four minutes please so we can go to also questions from the audience, in how to do state building better? Or if we are no more doing state building at all, what do we do instead? Adam, let me start with you and go in the same order please.

MR. DAY: Great. Thanks, Vanda. I'll try and do six in four minutes. Six policy thoughts, a couple of sentences each.

The first one comes from one of my favorite words doing this research which is thixotropy, which has to do with substances that get less viscous when they are shaken up and then harden when they calm down. And I think we tend to assume that these moments of immediate post-conflict are the right time to try and set new things in place and to create a new elite bargainer, a new national power-sharing arrangement.

And some of my research indicated that these moments of immediate post-conflict flux are often the moments when the strong attractors and the rules governing those systems actually exert themselves most strongly. And so, there may be some thought to be given about the timing of interventions rather than trying to change course in the storm or right after it when societies may feel those strong attractors and maybe focus on addressing those issues in a different moment.

And I actually think Rachel's book *Savage Order* talks about that kind of downward trajectory of middle-income countries not in conflict. And offers a lot of really interesting ways to transform those ones. So just buy Rachel's book and that has all of the positive indications I want.

The second one is this point I kind of hinted at which is to reimagine the local. And it's kind of the converse as Rachel's point about reifying the government and the state. We also tend to reify the local and romanticize it and think it has all the answers. It's kind of an idyllic village where conflict can be understood, which I think is actually a very colonial attitude. And much of what I hear is kind of reminiscent of the British mandate period when I hear about kind of the local turn and things like that.

Systems don't have a local in that sense. The local is a node, a meeting of relationships and a point where different actors come together. And so, for me a very concrete change we could make

is within the UN to get rid of Civil Affairs and Political Affairs as a distinction. Civil Affairs deals with local, Political Affair deals with national. Get rid of that and work to map networks and their interconnectiveness. What Rachel calls mapping political structures, I think would be a much more interesting starting point for this.

The third is also to revisit resilience. We tend to think of it as a normatively positive word, UNDP, kind of organizes its work around this resilience. My research shows that systems of governance like those in the DRC and South Sudan are extraordinarily resilient and they're capable of dealing with massive shocks including the shock of state building without changing their underlying ways.

And we may need to think more about how to work with the grain of those systems rather than to transform them right away and to gradually shift underlying rules and patterns rather than to try and push them towards some sort of Western understanding of peaceful resilience, which tends to be behind things.

The fourth is agency. We tend to blame a lot of the fault on a lack of political will. We talk about Kiir and Machar kind of failing South Sudan and Kabila being at fault in Congo. And yes, those are culpable actors. But the systems around them constrain them and shape their decisions more than we tend to know. And I think by mapping the system you can see how Kiir's attempt to appoint a multiethnic cabinet in South Sudan actually was, I think a fairly good faith effort to change things and the system really worked hard against it. Similarly, with many of Kabila's reforms.

So, I think to reframe the issue of political will and think more about what complex systems people would call the phase space for system change. So, what's the range of potential change in this system, in this given time period would be a better starting point than to think about political will.

Almost finally, I do think that this idea of having what John Paul Lederach calls a moral imagination and a willingness to let people tell their own stories about their societies and not to try to fit them into a log frame would be very useful. Having that humility to have the long slow change. Again, Rachel's metaphor of tacking against the wind.

I think if you try to impose a results-based budget of success and failure over the year, you'll never have the space to hear what people say about their own system and their own society. And I certainly think that Frank Fukuyama's *End of History* is wrong. There are many manifestations of

governance that don't meet the Western liberal model. And staying open to that, being listening to that is another important point that tends to get obscured by results-based budgets.

And then I think Rachel did a great list of activities that can have an impact. And I found in my own research significant impact in unanticipated areas like quiet work on rule of law in South Sudan. Support to mobile courts in Eastern DRC. Surprisingly strong impact of political advice by mediators like (inaudible) and others.

And I think focusing really on what works, getting out of that – Rachel is correct – critique of the metrics approach to impact. Think about what change really looks like and investing in that rather than continuing on investing in these cookie cutter models of peacekeeping with the same mandates and the same capacity. So maybe we just need to invest in more chairs for Yemen on A. Heather's point, or roads. Everybody I talked to in South Sudan, when I asked what they wanted, mentioned roads. That might be another way to respond to needs rather than spending another $9 million on troops.

Again, those structures and incentives within the UN system are very hard to change as Rachel has pointed out. And I think this may actually lead to what Richard is talking about which is a contraction to smaller, potentially more humanitarian focused missions centered around the clear value added of the UN. It might mean more outsourcing to Green Helmets. Maybe even a new generation of peacekeeping that's driven by a different set of goals. That's what the new agenda for peace in the common agenda report is meant to open the door to. Maybe some of Vanda's ideas about being more kind of following anticrime model.

But I do want to finish with one thought which is that I think there is still going to be a need within the international system to offload those intractable conflicts on something. And that something is probably going to be the UN. And so, we are probably going to need to grapple with another couple of biggish missions in the medium term. And so, I don't think we can count on that contraction happening too quickly. Thanks, Vanda.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, A. Heather, over to you, one other addition I would make here which is let me reiterate again how superior the UN has been often in really understanding local systems.

So, you know, A. Heather is very eloquent, and we need more political mapping, but let's

also comparison with how countries like the United States or actors like NATO have done it. And the level of UN presence, really UN on the ground, UN understanding of the mission of the situation has in many of these missions often been vastly ahead of even actors with very superior signal intelligence. A. Heather, over to you, please.

MS. COYNE: Well, Vanda, that may say something about the level that the other international interventions work at rather than the high quality that we're bringing to it. But I'll take the compliment as intended.

I wanted to start by echoing Adam's call for humility. It's funny that you both mention the anticrime efforts because I think my first recommendation is always to make everybody who goes into these interventions first watch The Wire, the miniseries about counterdrugs in Baltimore. And if anything captures complexity, it is that show.

And if you can't fix the drug problem in Baltimore where you know the language, you know the culture, you know the history, you know the players, it's your own country. How are you going to do that in Afghanistan or Somali or Yemen or anywhere else? So, I make all my of my young civil service folks watch that before they come out.

The second, my takeaway and recommendation is to focus on process rather than preferred outcomes. So, there are a few things that we have some value added as the UN to do. One is enabling access for actors who are outside that traditional scope of state building to access the hull of power, to push for their own priorities. By virtue of the UN's relationship with national security neighbors, we can actually insist that civil society and local mediators get a chance to be at the decision-making table.

And the other thing that they can do is support alliance between likeminded organizations so that they can be stronger in their own lobbying for their interest. And that's where, at the risk of being a colonialist, that's where we can make connections with people who do have outcomes that may give UN value because we can encourage those kinds of organizations and share our values to align with each other and be stronger at what they do.

Then the third point I would like to make is just that there are new guidelines on SSR that the UN has just issued that really do try to internalize some of these lessons. But as Rachel explained,

there are some really hard obstacles for inculcating them into the field missions. And I think that's still going to be an uphill battle. It sometimes feels like being a little bit of a loose cannon when you are advocating for some of these things. So, I really appreciate all the moral support and therapy that I've gotten from this session. Over for me.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Rachel, please.

MS. KLEINFELD: Sure. Well, but first I want to just set the stage a little bit because we've lived through a bit of a hiatus from history for the last couple of decades and history has come back with a roar. And I think it's worth just setting the stage for the UN within that.

Democracy is declining quite significantly, and we've got different isms fighting again. Not just China's more autocratic development model versus the United States. But people underestimate I think Russia's model to the world, that sort of traditional, hierarchical, white male, Christian model is very attractive within a lot of countries. And so, we've got isms fighting. We have democracies declining. That suggests to me that we're looking at a world with much greater conflict. Much more local conflict than we've seen over the last couple of decades. Many more regional players involved in that local conflict than we've been seeing. And we've been seeing it growing obviously for the last few years. And more international war, which has almost been an advance and has certainly come back.

This is what's going to be the next generation of conflict. And as Vanda was saying, the UN does it better than the U.S. Does it better than France. And that's, you know, maybe not saying much, but it really does put the onus on us to help the UN get it still better because it's going to get worse. And this is the best we've got.

Heather mentioned The Wire. I also am a big aficionado. I actually watched it after writing my book and I felt a little bit of despair. I thought, you know, people should just not read my book, watch The Wire and kind of squint. And then they'll get to whatever country they're working in. So, I think that has most of the lessons, and I'm just going to embellish on that screenplay.

But I have five quick points. One is I want to go back to how do we get the UN to change? You know, there's the old joke, how many psychiatrists does it take to change a lightbulb? One, but the lightbulb has to be wanting to change. That is the situation of the UN. It has to want to change to do these kind of big changes we're suggesting. It does not currently want to change.

But there are some reasons it might. The U.S. is still not paying its full arrears. Those arrears got really large under Trump. China is walking towards paying more. That's an interesting dynamic. So, there's things that might encourage the staff to want to change. And I think we need to harness those to make the changes we're suggesting.

In terms of things it can do outwardly. Heather mentioned the new Secretary General's report on UN SSR. It's a really good report. I really like it, so I don't want to be overly critical. But there's an assumption in that report that if the UN addresses the hard stuff up front then later implementation will go better, that one of the problems that the UN is having is that it's punting the hard stuff. And then in that moment of flux that Adam was talking about you can get more done. I agree that you can get more done in that moment of flux. But I'd suggest that one of the reasons hard things aren't addressed upfront is because they're the hard things. Those are the most crucial elements around which security apparatuses, militias and so on are jockeying and often increasing the violence to have a bigger stance at the negotiating table and the UN's incentives to keep down the violence and so, to get an agreement and punt on these hard things.

So, the thinking I've been doing recently is that the question for the international community is not just how do we get a peace or even how do we prevent those who gain from war, from profiting from peace, but this kind of work with the grain that Adam is talking about. It's really how do we transform a moment of peace that necessarily is going to entail providing undue power to people who profited from violence, undue power to corrupt individuals and groups and transnational networks? Just accept that that is what the peace deal is going to entail. And there's only so much we can do about it.

We should do whatever we can, but there's only so much. We're going to be starting from there. But how do we transform that into a long-term political and economic settlement that's more just and more democratic, more open and more lasting? We've given a lot of intellectual effort to that first step. How do we get a more just and lasting peace? And very little to what do we do with our imperfect peace and how do we transform it into a more fair and open political settlement that's realistic about what we're starting with?

And I think if we treat this as a two-step process, we might be able to come up with some more creative ideas that are more realistic for how we get to that second step. I've been thinking a lot in

terms of trip wires. Provisions that, for instance, might strip violence actors of political or economic power or security sector power. But they aren't retroactive. They kick in only after missteps down the line so that you can maybe get them into the initial peace agreement. Nobody thinks they will actually be applied, that might provide part of the answer.

Another idea is creating more institutions of justice that are outside the reach of the politicians that also kick in. So, trip wires that have investigative institutions that are funded internationally that are kind of semi-governmental and semi-independent. Ghana had structures like this to investigate corruption, for instance, very recently.

Denuded them of all their power, but it worked for a while. But anyhow, investigative institutions, adjudicative institutions that would allow more transparency into the system. Donors could insist on accounting procedures, audit bodies, things like that that would enable power to be taken away after the fact. And even institutions of justice like C6 style activities that would be built into the initial peace agreement but would take in effect later and would sort of grow in power.

And then the last thing I'll say is that one thing the UN could do right away, and bilateral donors too, is be much more transparent about its security and aid assistance. Often one of the issues with this assistance is not just that it distorts the local economies, which can be a little inevitable with that much money and personnel flowing into a poor and small country, but that no one knows where the money is going and that builds distrust. It builds distrust for internationals. It builds distrust within the system. And I think if there was much more transparency, if people knew where it was going and if they knew where to place the blame, if they're upset with the UN versus upset with people in their own country who are stealing the money. Transparency could go a long way towards helping with that. So, I'll stop there.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Richard, please. Thank you, Rachel.

MR. GOWAN: Thank you. I mean, so I am unique in that I have not watched The Wire. But I did go to school with the actor who plays McNulty. So really you should have asked Dominic West to come and speak in this slot, but he may have been too expensive.

I would make three points. I mean, the first relates to my argument about the new focus on the UN's humanitarian role. And I would simply say we shouldn't underrate that. And even if you look

at a situation such as Ukraine. The UN has no political role in Ukraine at the moment. But it has played a humanitarian role there including in trying to cut this very fragile deal we saw again over the last week of getting grain out of Odessa.

There are places where the UN's optimum role may be to mitigate conflict and contain conflicts, and we shouldn't be ashamed of that. It's also worth saying that the bits of the UN that do that work are often chronically underfunded. I'm sure Heather can tell us how chronically underfunded aid work is in Yemen. But if you look at the funding flow for a lot of humanitarian operations, it remains well below what is required. And sometimes, I think we should simply throw a bit more money into those efforts as, you know, they do play a useful role.

Secondly, if we are seeing a turn towards more regionally led peace operations like African Union-led peace operations. There's a lot more we can do to strengthen those. There is, for example, a longstanding proposal for the UN to provide more systematic funding, what's called assessed contributions to African Union peace operations. And I think that's something which the U.S. could push on in the Security Council with support from African states, but also actually countries like China. To try and create a stronger basis for the AU in missions going forward, perhaps in places like the Sahel.

And thirdly, I think it's absolutely crucial to emphasize what Rachel and others have said which is the UN does retain a lot of unique expertise in a lot of aspects of peace operations and that ranges from mediation to rule of law. But also, the technical stuff. The UN is much better at budgeting and administering peace operations than most regional alternatives such as the African Union.

And even if we're going to transfer a lot of operational responsibility to these other organizations, we should make sure that the UN is sort of there as a hub of expertise providing service and support and background support to these other actors because we shouldn't waste the expertise that has been built up in New York and in UN field missions over the years.

So those are three fairly pragmatic low-key bits of advice. The other thing I would say is keep an eye on Haiti because everything is looking very bad in Haiti now. And traditionally for the last 30 years almost whenever things go really bad in Haiti, the Security Council sends in the Blue Helmets.

Right now, there's no appetite in the Security Council to send in a large peacekeeping force. But Adam may be right, we may see a new generation of Blue Helmet missions and it may well be

that one of the first places that sees that happen is actually Haiti. We may go right back to one of the places it all sort of kicked off in the 1990s.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: I would also add here that even as the West is losing appetite for state building, certainly, the way that it has been conducting and perhaps for UN state building missions as part of the lost appetite for state building, that China and Russia are moving into the conflict space. Russia with actors like Wagner Group simply promising that they will be more brutal than anyone else and will support whoever is in power will act at the praetorian guard for governments in power. And China both in its support for partner governments as well as promises that its economic engagement will strengthen those, quote, unquote, partner governments.

But also, we have just seen China's first ever international, outside of Asia, mediation conference in the heart of Africa. So, we might not have appetite, but others are moving in.

We have 15 minutes at this point to take some questions from the audience. We received very many questions, and they are excellent questions. A lot of the issues that our audience has been asking has actually been already covered in the remarks, which was one of the reasons why I was not pushing very much to greater brevity because they were engaging with issues of high interest to the audience.

So perhaps let me put two questions on the table and whoever would like to engage them please let me know, if we have time for another round, I will come to two more questions.

So, one of the questions asks about how does the UN learn and adapt? To what extent measures and metrics that are always part of UN missions incorporated in any kind of different action in another mission? Anyone who would like to engage in that? And have we done better? The reasons of why systems of disorder, systems of certain behaviors, systems of problems exist, they might perhaps also exist in the UN.

And the second question I would like to put out right now is a fundamental issue for all UN state building missions but has been also for all U.S. state building missions. How do we get out? How do we get out when the governments don't want us to get out? When they are very comfortable with the international, whether the UN or the U.S. or NATO, suppressing conflict to just the level that allows their parochial interest to persist, and are very happy that they do not have to take on the key elements of

what has been conceptualized as being a government such as preventing violence by other actors? So, Adam, please.

MR. DAY: Those are great questions. I'll try and take a stab at both of them, but I know others have different perspectives.

The first one on how the UN grows and adapts is one that we kind of, we're a think tank that tries to help the UN grow and adapt. So that's what we're trying to do all the time, and it's really difficult. And I think in the peacekeeping context there are a few ways.

One is it's often easy to underestimate how few people are actually involved in setting mandates for peacekeeping missions. And it's often the same group of P3, P5 members who sit around writing the mandates of these different missions over years. And they gradually kind of learn across them. And often, it's a process of, you know, a mission in Mali has an initiative that tries to track the role of criminal networks in driving armed groups. And then the people that wrote that mandate realize they can do the same mandate in Congo. So, there's a bit of learning at that level.

I think the more interesting learning is through practice and to have people who move from mission to mission and who bring that experience from mission to mission. Until you get someone – I mean I worked for David Gressly who had spent years in Mali, years in South Sudan and then came to Congo. And a lot of the discussions we had was how can you take those experiences about what works and doesn't work in those situations and bring them.

So, it's very – for me many of the changes that you see are through the individual experiences of the people that have moved around. What I don't think tends to happen – and there are entire departments in the UN that try to make it happen – is the kind of systemic conscious change to change a policy. That happens occasionally but it's very difficult to actually effectuate change in that, so I think that is a difficult one to try to engage with.

And then there are shocks that can change. You know, M23 invades Goma in 2012. Suddenly, you have a new doctrine on authentic use of force. Sometimes the outside world creates the shock and I think we may be in a moment of shock. And the question that I think we're all grappling with is what does that shock result in, in the peacekeeping front?

On the how do you get out? I mean, Kofi Annan wrote about this, *No Exit Without*

Strategy I believe is the paper. And I mean it's a recurrent question of what are the conditions under which you can get out of a country? I think what my research was started with is if you continue to have the same goals you had articulated in terms of security sector reform and national transformation, you'll never get out. And we'll never leave Congo if we have to implement the entire mandate there. We'll never leave Mali.

So, I think one of the things we did actually work on in the exit strategy for MONUSCO in Congo is – the first question is what are the minimum conditions under which you can transition to something else? So, you start maybe with – and in Congo, we started with the security conditions. What are the minimum-security conditions under which we could shrink this static footprint of what it's doing for a transiting path to others?

Even that gets really complicated. But I think one of the things I keep coming back to is there is a tendency within the UN to assume that the UN is doing something that it's not doing. So, and you say, you know, we're going to turn this – often there's a phrase of we're going to turn security back over to the Congolese. My point is that there never was a moment where the UN was in charge of security in Eastern Congo. It just legally, it was never the case. Factually, it was never the case.

But I think the starting point is actually asking the question, what is the UN actually delivering now that is irreplaceable by someone else? And then how do you gradually transition that set of capacities? One of the most interesting ones I can think of right now is Darfur where the UN's role in providing protection to evening patrols – doing evening patrols to protect women doing firewood gathering dramatically reduced the number of violent sexual assaults against women.

That is something that is very difficult to turn over to another actor right away. So, then you get into the question of how do you continue to have that impact of the reduction or maintaining that low level of sexual assaults on women without the UN there?

And I think those are very interesting questions when you get into transition moments. And Haiti is a great example. They reconfigured Haiti, Richard, I don't know ten times. Different acronyms, different sets of skills, different peacekeepers flowing in and out, a rule of law focus and then not a rule of law focus.

I think that question keeps coming back which we tend to gloss over the key starting point

which is what is the unique value added of the UN at a given situation? I think that's the interesting question to get to and it's often it's more than you think it is. But it's almost always different than what the mandate says it is. I'll leave it there.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Heather, please. And I'm noticing that we are at 11:21 on my watch. So, this will be the only round. If you want to add a sentence, any kind of closing remarks, please do so. A. Heather, please.

MS. COYNE: So, let me start with the how do we get out? And the twist on that and say, maybe it's more about how we get in. There's a phrase that says, start as you mean to go on. And maybe we should only be doing things from the start that we're okay doing indefinitely. And we don't take on a lot of the pieces that make it impossible for us to ever get out because the actors then kind of get dependent on that. And things would break very badly if we withdrew as we've seen.

So that sort of gets back to some of the recommendations I made on doing positive outcomes and catalyzing relationships that are more productive between local actors as opposed to us taking on some of those responsibilities.

On the learn and adapt. Maybe I'm still waiting to see the learning and adapting, but I think in contrast to the small number of movers and shapers that Adam talked about in peacekeeping, the special political missions where I've mostly spent my career are a lot more actors floating around in different places. Not so much centralized guidance and help for us to do those things we do.

I think though I do agree with Adam. If people find what works, they find things and then they take it with them when they move to another place. Not that the context is going to be the same solution because everything depends on the unique characteristics of that environment, but there are certainly things that tend to be, groups of things that people should consider looking at.

And what I would love to see is something that incentivizes using those. So, structures that support, that have funding or expertise that support the kinds of things that we've seen work in other contexts that can maybe fit or be considered for the new place. Such as the emphasis on civil defense and accountability programming to start rather than the big train and equip missions. Thank you.

MS. KLEINFELD: Well, I can say a word or two. I'm not going to speak to the learning and adapting because the other three panelists know much more than me.

But in terms of getting in and getting out, I think there's two ways to look at this. One is as Heather was saying, only go in doing the things that will enable you to get out. Don't take on core functions that you can't get out of.

Another way of looking at this is take on things that you're willing to do for 10, 20, 30 years. And accept that the UN is going to be there. That it's a very low cost, tends to be light footprint compared to most other options and you're always looking at what's the other option.

And that in some cases having the UN there to protect the women gathering firewood or water might be the best of all available options. In other cases that might be something to build into local abilities through some kind of governmental or nongovernmental functionality.

But there's something else the UN is going to be doing indefinitely. And I'm not perfectly comfortable with that suggestion. Certainly, myself in the 1990s would have been extremely uncomfortable with that suggestion. But myself of the 2020s thinks that we might need long-term footprints in some of these places, that there might not be another viable alternative.

And that thinking about what the footprint looks like, how it functions within that society and just accepting that the world of nation states that have full sovereignty over their countries and borders with no international encroachment has been a very short period of international history. That for much, much longer there were colonies. There were states made up of religious groups that covered large empires. There were all sorts of different arrangements.

Right now, we're in a world of nation states that doesn't seem to be working all that well. In which we pretend they are nation states but in fact they are colonial arrangements of one sort or another. There are still large empires. And we kind of pretend that's not the case, but when you look particularly at these conflicts in which regional powers are playing large roles and so on, we just have to sort of admit what it actually is.

And if what actually is is a much messier world with much less clear sovereignty, maybe the UN has a role to play in that that it just needs to acknowledge.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: And certainly in places like Somalia, the role that international actors envision for the African Union mission, now ATMIS, is not just for protecting women going to firewood, perhaps not at all protecting women going to waterholes and collecting firewood, but stopping Al

Shabaab from taking over the country explicitly. Richard, your thoughts on recommendations?

MR. GOWAN: Firstly, I think that the UN has many imperfections when it comes to learning and change, but it's also still a remarkably open institution primarily because there's no real confidentiality in the UN. So, nothing is really secret, which makes it easier to share ideas.

And also, everyone expects the UN to fail. I mean I remember a Norwegian diplomat saying to me 15 years ago, the great thing about the UN is that it always fails so you can be honest about the fact that it's failing. Whereas a lot of other institutions and governments don't really like to admit failure. So overall, I think the UN is open. And the fact that the UN listens to people like Adam and Rachel is very much part of that. So that's a positive note to end on.

On getting out? Let's just keep in mind that we've got out of quite a few places okay. The UN is largely out of Kosovo. It's out of Timor. It's out of Libya. It's out of Côte d'Ivoire. There are a lot of places where we did state building and guess what? There are states there. And so, actually in a lot of cases this has worked. The real challenge is getting out of the Darfurs or the Eastern Congos where there is really no obvious endpoint on the horizon.

And there, I would agree somewhat with Rachel that even in places like Mali, Crisis Group would argue that however constrained MINUSMA is now, it's better to have the UN than not. So, we shouldn't hurry. We shouldn't sort of always hurry for exit strategies. Sometimes, the UN is better than nothing at all.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, I mentioned earlier that a challenge for designing a panel is always thinking how the stars will line up and how the excitement will carry across the conversation. And the challenge can be particularly when one talks about issues such as UN reform which could be rather esoteric and a stale conversation. This has certainly not been the case at ours.

I'm enormously grateful to our speakers and the tremendous amount of inside punchy lines, poetry and the real deep thinking and knowledge from the field that they brought to the conversation of how UN state building missions have fared and how they are evolving. What kind of constraints and opportunities they face and the way forward.

We heard analysis of the systems of disorders that are so perpetuating and resilient that Adam so powerfully writes about in his new book, *States of Disorder*. We heard about how change is

nonlinear as Rachel has written about in her work. We heard from A. Heather as well as many others about the overfocus on governments and power elites that are not aligned with the agenda of stabilizing – of getting a way out of conflicts, stabilizing the situations and making governance more accountable and more inclusive.

But also, about the challenges from Rachel about simply going local, something that Adam also spoke about. Or simply relying on civil society actors, these agents of change are very important. But they can be coopted into the system and/or they can be neutralized by the systems. So, the limits of simply saying, you only deal with civil society or with nonstate armed actors does not seem like a viable solution.

We also heard from Richard about the new geopolitics and the opportunities, perhaps the shrinking of missions to more humanitarian-oriented missions. And nonetheless, the enormous usefulness, but also highlighting to us that we might be on the cusp of a new deployment such as to a place like Haiti.

I would like to add one thought of my recommendations. And that is that in this new era, we should perhaps be focusing not on the way things have been done, but on shaping nonstate armed actors and shaping our present partners. And instead of engaging in broad transformational efforts, we will really need to focus on incremental change. Looking for moments of opportunities, dealing with actors that might be partners and allies one moment but understanding that they might stop being valid partners and allies in another moment. Being able to show them and perhaps realizing that the objectives that we have to work more peaceful society, towards a more accountable society, to a more inclusive society might stall sometimes, might go back and we might locate another moment of opportunities in this shaping environment where we shape both our enemies as well as our present partners.

Thank you very much all for your terrific remarks. Thank you, our audience for sending really terrific questions, for joining us today. I look forward to more events from the Initiative of Nonstate Armed Actors and the Africa Security Initiative including our conversation on Friday at Brookings that we will have the outgoing Columbian Ambassador about Colombia and its state building efforts. I will be joining him on the panel. And my colleague, Dr. Michael O'Hanlon will be the moderator.

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