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Kara C. McDonald is an international affairs fellow in residence at the Council on Foreign Relations and a Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Department of State. Ms. McDonald was director for United Nations and international operations at the National Security Council from 2007 to 2009, and served as acting senior director for democracy, human rights, and international organizations during the transition to the Obama administration. Prior to serving at the White House, she was a special assistant to R. Nicholas Burns, former undersecretary for political affairs at the State Department, where she advised on African affairs and the United Nations, including negotiations in the Security Council on Iran, North Korea, Lebanon, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma, and Kosovo. From 2004 to 2006, she was deputy director for planning in the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) at the Department of State. She has served in and advised on multilateral operations and complex contingencies for over ten years, and chaired interagency policy committees on peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, strategy in the multilateral environment, aid effectiveness, and governance in post-conflict.

Prior to joining the Department of State, Ms. McDonald managed elections and political process assistance to Central and Eastern Europe for the U.S. Agency for International Development. Her overseas assignments have included Romania, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Haiti, Macedonia, and Croatia. She holds a BA in French and comparative literature from the University of Michigan and an MA from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. She speaks French and Romanian.

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