

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

CRISIS IN MALI AND NORTH AFRICA:
REGIONAL DYNAMICS AND INTERNATIONAL PRIORITIES

Washington, D.C.

Wednesday, February 6, 2013

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. KIMENYI: Good morning. I'm Mwangi Kimenyi with the Africa Growth Initiative here at Brookings and I would like to welcome you to this very important event, where we'll be discussing the situation in Mali.

There are so many good stories coming up from Africa. If you look at the growth story, it's been very positive. Africa has been achieving very high rates of economic growth for over a decade. There have been a lot of new natural resource discoveries, and generally even governance and transparency have increased in these countries.

At the same time, you have these pockets where you have continuous crisis. You can say that now for Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, of course, for a long time, it was Somalia, and then we get all these incidences like in northern Nigeria. So, it's a mixed bag where you get good things happening, but other things are also dragging the continent backwards.

The case of Mali, it's a bit sad. It's quite sad, in fact, when you think that a few years ago, Mali was considered one of the real progressive democratic countries. It was scoring very high in terms of rights, freedom, civil liberties and so on. And yet, within a very short period of time, starting with a coup in January, a military coup, then followed by the invasion from the north, the Tuareg activities and the Islamists, we have a country that is in sort of what we would call a total mess. And this has been complicated again, I would say, sort of helped but also complicated with external intervention and, in this case, we have France heavily involved in the country.

And, so, there are many questions that remain. Where do we go from here? What are the long-term solutions for this crisis? And what's the role of

international partners and what's the role of African countries themselves? And, so, this discussion today is supposed to look at all these issues, what are the drivers for this crisis and what are the long-term solutions that would return peace to that country and the democracy?

So, with that, today we have a very good panel of experts, and I'm actually the least of the experts in this panel, and they will be introduced shortly.

We are very happy to have Margaret Brennan to be the moderator. She is with CBS News as a correspondent, where she has been since July of 2012, principally assigned to the State Department and serves as a general assignment correspondent based in Washington or she is here Washington, as she was previously in other areas

Brennan is a Whitehead fellow with Foreign Policy Association and a member of the Economic Club of New York. Brennan anchored Bloomberg Television in *"Business with Margaret Brennan,"* a weekday program broadcasted right from New York Stock Exchange that covered the top political, economic, financial and consumer news impacting the global marketplace.

She has interviewed the International Monetary Fund's Christine Lagarde, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, investor George Soros, Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, as well as Iraq's prime minister and Dubai's ruler following their respective debt crisis. So, she has really been in this game of news.

So, we would like to welcome you to the Brookings Institution and to this discussion. So, I hand it over to you.

MS. BRENNAN: Thank you so much. And thank you to all of you for tuning in and for showing up today. Mwangi, thank you very much and I want to introduce all the panelists to you.

We're going to have a conversation. We're going to first here some of

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the portions of this topic broken down, have a conversation, and then open it up to Q and A from all of you. So, I hope to get you to participate here. And Mali has, as you laid out, gone from the back pages right to the front pages of news around the world and to topics of conversation like this and I want to break it down for you topic by topic.

So, we've got this wonderful panel here. I'm going to introduce to you here next to me. We begin with Dan Byman, who is going to talk to us a bit about Al Qaeda's role in the conflict. He's from the Saban Center, where he's director of research. You also know his area of expertise from his time serving on the 9-11 Commission.

Next to him we have Todd Moss from the Center for Global Development, also previously served at the State Department as part of the Bureau of African Affairs. So, hopefully, we can get a flavor for American support role in this.

You've already met, of course, Mwangi Kimenyi, who is the director of the African Growth Initiative for the Global Economy and Development Program here at the Brookings Institution and can put this in the overall African perspective for us and regional response.

And then rounding us out, we have Justin Vaïsse. He's going to talk about the French role. He is a senior fellow here at Brookings and director of research and previously served in policy planning at the French Foreign Ministry.

So, welcome to all of you.

And, Mwangi, you gave us a view of the conflict overall. I want to get to the French intervention here with Justin.

Justin, can you summarize for us what we need to know?

MR. VAISSE: Well, what you need to know starts with the map. If you look at a map of Mali, you'd see that there are two parts. That's for everybody to see. The northern part of the desert mostly occupied by the Tuareg and since the

independence, you've had a number of Tuareg movements, basically the same pattern, historical pattern, repeating itself in 1963, in 1991, in 2006. And each time, they would come down towards the south, which is more populated and where, once again, the center of populations are, asking for more autonomy, basically for a bigger share of the cake and that would generally end by agreements like the Tamanrasset agreements in the 1990s and they would get some people integrating into the Malian Army and that would be solved politically.

However, that pattern that we saw developing once again starting last year didn't really repeat itself as it had in the past. What happened were a number of game changers. One game changer was the increase in traffic, not of legal goods which has always happened in the Sahel, but of illegal goods, especially from Latin America, meaning cocaine bringing a lot of extra money which didn't exist before.

The second game changer was the war in Libya, and yes, there is a link between the events in Libya and what happened in Mali, and that's also a historical repetition from the past, except this time you had an influx of men coming back from fighting for Qaddafi and who abandoned him when he lost, and also weapons and much better weaponry. And, so, what the result of this was was that the Tuareg made much better inroads, much further inroads into the south than they had done in the past. They basically grabbed the North and started grabbing the South. That's when, as Mwangi reminded us, that's when sort of unhappy or frustrated with the response by the civil government, there was a coup in Bamako by Captain Sanogo who wanted more reaction to this event, a coup that was probably also helped by the last game changer that we must take into account, which is the presence of Islamists and I'll let Dan talk about this, but that is the main game changer the new actors in the Sahel, AQMI of course, but also the splinter group MUJAW, and more importantly Ansar Dine.

And, so, what happened was basically this movement went parasitic on the Tuareg movement. Basically, they hijacked the Tuareg movement and made a sort of clumsy alliance where they dominated the local actors—the Tuareg—not completely unlike what happened in Afghanistan between Al Qaeda and the Taliban. But we'll leave the comparisons to later, I guess. And, so, you had a second wave of advance in the south and the rapid advance towards the capital. And, so, on January 9, Konna was seized, and that's just before Mopti, and Mopti was basically the last city before the capital Bamako, which would have been seized absent the French intervention, hence, the letter by President Traoré asking France for intervention. There were two letters, actually, which were sent on January 9 and January 10, and the intervention started on the 11th.

The French were present in the region because of longstanding ties, but more importantly because of the hostage situation. AQMI and Ansar Dine and others developed mainly because starting in the mid-2000s, they started seizing hostages, capturing hostages, and, so, French intelligence was there, some French troops were there. They had a granular view of who were the actors exactly and they were trying to alert the rest of the international community, including the U.S., but the situation was largely underestimated, including by the French.

And, so, that's when Francois Hollande decided to intervene. Absent the intervention, Bamako would probably have been seized in a matter of days, and we would now have an Islamist state in Mali basically in the heart of West Africa. A little bit there and I can come back to the French intervention later.

MS. BRENNAN: Great, thank you.

Todd, can you pick us up here on the U.S. support role?

MR. MOSS: Sure. I mean, if we think about it in the clear-hold-build,

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three phrases that we like to think about in Washington, the French have now done most of the clearing, at least in the main towns. The hold is going to be passed onto regional troops who are arriving as we speak. We should keep in mind this is going to be a very long investment by the region. We're now coming on 10 years of UNMIL in Liberia. No sign of U.N. troops leaving there. I think we're looking at least a 10-year period in Northern Mali.

And then the build period which is, of course, the most difficult and we're talking here about rebuilding Mali's democratic institutions and its security capacity, and this is where the U.S. comes into play and what I'd like to just highlight I think are three mistakes that the U.S. has made in the past that we do not want to repeat. This is from 1991, from 2008 and in 2012.

1991, you'll notice Justin mentioned previous Tuareg rebellions that had ended with peace deals. For the most part, those peace deals were never really implemented. The things that the Tuareg were asking for, a little bit more autonomy, a little bit bigger piece of the pie was never really given by Bamako in the south, and we were kind of blind to that.

The good news here is that the outlines of that new peace deal with the Tuareg are basically the same from 1991 and from 2006 previous peace deals, and the other good news is that Tuareg and radical extremists' interests are fundamentally misaligned in Mali and we need to continue to drive a wedge between these two broad sets of goals, which is not only in our short-term interests, but is probably a long-term necessity for U.S. policy.

The bad news here is that it's not very clear who's a legitimate representative of the Tuareg interests in the north and it's also very clear that the mood of Bamako right now is not for cutting a peace deal with the Tuareg. That is going to be

something that the U.S., France and others are going to have to really focus on.

The second mistake is from 2008. I think is actually a mistake we've made in Mauritania, a neighboring country, which is where there was a coup in 2008 by some of the same people that had committed a coups in that country in 2005, overthrowing a democratically elected government. And within a year, there was a quick, hasty, very, very imperfect election and we sort of blessed General Aziz—now President Aziz of Mauritania. We've got a very highly imperfect political transition that we sort of accepted as good enough. I don't think we should do that in Mali. Again, and what that also means is Captain Sanogo needs to depart the political scene. I think the U.S. and France need to be very clear about that.

The third big mistake is 2012, actually it's really about a decade leading up to 2012; maybe many of you saw the front page of the *Washington Post* yesterday—very good story on 10 years of rose-colored glasses on the political and security capacity in Mali.

We've been working with the Malian military for at least 10 years and they collapsed virtually overnight. We thought of Mali as a model democracy, and we didn't see the coup coming. We should not repeat those same mistakes. I know we're going to get into the CT issues. I think it's very important for the U.S. to balance a reasonable counterterrorism response that denies safe havens, that rebuilds the Malian military, but in a new way, not just doing the same old thing that didn't work, and smarter democracy and development assistance than we've done in the past. I think that it's very important, especially given the events of the last couple of weeks, that the United States stay engaged—not just merely react to what the French are doing or what events are going on on the ground but actually engage in a way to help shape events in the United States' interest.

MS. BRENNAN: Yes. Dan, this arguably would have remained and viewed as an internal African conflict were it not for the presence of Al Qaeda, which set off alarms in the French and U.S. political arenas. What is the reality of their presence there?

MR. BYMAN: What we're seeing in Mali is the trend we've been seeing really over the last decade of the shift from the Al Qaeda core as the focus of counterterrorism to these affiliate groups. So, Somalia, Yemen, Iraq and now Mali, we're seeing the rise of local groups, but local groups that have a variety of linkages to the Al Qaeda core and these vary, and they vary in terms of how much aligned the local groups' goals are with the Al Qaeda core.

And this has important implications. There is a good news and a bad news story. The good news story is in terms of the threat to the American homeland, for the most part, these affiliate groups pose less of a threat, but one of the unfortunate things in foreign policy is that when you solve or reduce one problem, you usually get a host of new problems or additional problems. And that's what we're seeing here, which is there's a greater threat to regional stability and often these groups take the more anti-Western, anti-global focus of Al Qaeda and do it in a local sense. So, we see in Algeria in response to Mali going after a set of Western targets associated with oil, gas and energy production, right? And that's a classic affiliate move—to go after something local that has a broader global significance.

So, the danger and threat of these affiliate groups should primarily be seen in an allied and in a regional sense and, as a result, I think the priorities and focus of U.S. policy at times does, and certainly should, shift. Part of the problem though, and I think we may see this in Mali, is that there's a bit of squeezing the balloon when it comes to these groups. When you have porous borders, when you have groups with ties that

cross national boundaries, what you see is that when you push them in one area, they'll show up in another. So, we saw this when Algeria in the 1990s had arguably the worst terrorism problem in the Muslim world. It defeated that for the most part, but it didn't get rid of it. And, as a result, we saw the group still somewhat present in Algeria, but certainly become more regional. And, so, a local success in many ways turned out to be quite troublesome from the American point of view and I would certainly say from a regional point of view.

I agree quite strongly in many ways with Todd's comments about what America should do, but let put a little twist on this, which is I'm almost positive we won't do it. Right? This part of Africa, really it's in fierce competition to be along the lowest American priorities in the entire world. And that's not going to change. Right? If you look at any defense planning document, if you look at any broader statement goals, this is not on the list, right? And there's a little flare up and tension, and I can fairly safely predict that in media terms, this is going to go back to obscurity barring a very dramatic and horrific set of events. So, instead, we'll have a low-level conflict that's primarily ignored by the United States.

So, the question then becomes: How can the United States use very limited means to achieve some results there? And to me, that's in part by supporting allies, whether they're African allies, whether they're European allies like the French, but we have to be careful thinking we can accomplish a lot here. I think in the end, we're going to end up with containment. We're going to end up with the goal being: Try not to have this problem metastasized, rather than trying to solve it. It would be wonderful if we were willing to devote the time and resources, but, unfortunately, I don't think we will.

MS. BRENNAN: On that note, Mwangi, would you jump in here and put some of these pieces together for us because there had been a mandate for some time

via the U.N. for this to be an African-led response and an African-led solution to the conflict in Mali. There was a lot in-fighting, how to pay for that, how to get those 3,000 African troops on the ground. Now you do have a force there. Can the French hand off successfully to the African forces on the ground now?

MR. KIMENYI: Okay, thank you very much. I think first of all in an ideal world, I would not like any intervention from anyone outside continent. I would not like the French or the Americans to intervene militarily in any part of Africa if there is no other alternative because in many of these interventions, the same core problems remain. They are not solved by interventions. You can have a very quick success, but the core problems are going to remain. They still remain in these situations. So, in an ideal world, I would like a situation where we don't have military intervention. I would like intervention through other development approaches.

Why then do we have the situation which it seems to have been necessary? Because there was a vacuum and the vacuum was that the regional bodies like ECOWAS, the African Union itself were not prepared to intervene in this situation. So, even when the French are coming in, it's really a reflection of a failure on the part of African Union, their regional economic bodies to really come together and be able to really deal with these type of situations.

Now, my fear is that even now, they are not ready to deal with a lot of these problems. There are forces there, they are poorly funded, and there's still no clear argument what the mission would be for these particular forces. But I would still suggest that what we really need is my main proposal is that time that the African Union came up with a standing army, well-funded standing army to deal with a lot of these issues.

Now, interventions are also quite—I'm usually concerned by intervention because if you think about this type of intervention and you compare with Central African

Republic where you had similar process—in fact, it's still going on. You have a crisis there and you had a humanitarian crisis and the president asked France to intervene—also a former colony—but that was denied. So, the question is: How do you go about deciding where to go, how do you pick on this, and what are really the long-term success stories?

We had Somalia for a long time, which was really a problem and external intervention did not work, but when African forces came together led by the Kenyans and so on, the problem seems to have been dealt with. So, my view here is that whatever the long-term solution in terms of military, it should be from Africa. That would be the ideal solution.

However, finally, it does not matter what military force you use unless you still have a political solution and that political solution has to do—there are all these cases whether it's Central Africa Republic, whether in Somalia, whether it's Nigeria, there are political situations that bring up this. So, you need to come up to some negotiation, whether it's a limited autonomy for the Tuaregs or the north, I think those are issues that have to be part of the whole package, but intervening and hitting and going out, I don't think you solve any problem. You solve temporarily, but don't you solve the long-term problems.

MS. BRENNAN: But, Justin, the time clock's ticking. I mean, the French have already signaled next month there will be a drawdown from Mali.

MR. VAISSE: Yes, what you have to understand is that Francois Hollande for so long didn't want to go, right? The idea from when he was elected in May 2012 to December, the idea was to have an African force that was sanctioned by U.N. Security Council Resolution 2085, the AFISMA, and that would take care of the problem. There was even an EU force that was voted of 450 trainers for the Malian Army in

December, and, so, that was the plan. And, of course, he was overtaken by events, and, so, there were also more profound reasons for him not to intervene.

One was the fact that he had restated the policy that really started in 1997 with the reform of the African Policy of France, which is a doctrine of *non-ingérence* as we say, of nonintervention in Africa affairs. *Ni ingérence, ni indifférence* neither intervention in internal affairs nor indifference to Africa, but a safe or healthy distance that was a break from the sort of neocolonial past from the early 60s to the mid-1990s and the other pillars were Africanization of that policy and also Europeanization in the sense that development aid in particular would go through the EU and internationalization that is to say that aid and actions would go through the IMF and the World Bank rather than through France itself.

So, for all of these reasons, he didn't want to intervene, but guess what, you don't always have a choice, and what happened was that he found himself in pretty much the same position as the U.S. generally finds itself, that is to say damned if we do, damned if we don't. That is to say damned if we do, meaning that if we do intervene, then people are going to say, "Oh, that's neocolonialism, that's western imperialism again," et cetera, but if we don't, then people are going to say, "Oh, the French had the possibility to act and now look, we have a whole Islamist state in the heart of west Africa." And, so, faced with this dilemma and because he had international legitimacy and legality because of the letters by President Traoré, he decided to intervene and if you look back at the last 10 years, he or Sarkozy or Chirac before him had to make that choice. Sometimes they manage to follow the policy and sit out of crisis, whether coup in Niger, in Mauritania or in Guinea for example, but sometimes they could not sit out.

So, Côte d'Ivoire was the main example, and, so, the French intervening in 2002 and sort of separated the rebellion from the government, launched the political

process that you were alluding to just a moment ago, and this didn't end before 2011, two years ago when the French helicopters and troopers had the U.N. mission to install Alassane Ouattara, who was the democratically elected president—

MS. BRENNAN: Well, what you're talking about—

MR. VAISSE: —instead of Laurent Gbagbo.

MS. BRENNAN: The premise for what you're talking about, which is that the presence of an Islamist state in Africa would be a threat differs so greatly from what you described as the American calculus here, which is sort of so what? It's not necessarily a threat to the homeland in the same way. Why do you think there's such different calculations between the U.S. and the French as to the potential threat of an Islamist state there?

MR. VAISSE: I can tell you from the Pentagon point of view, they were very happy that the French intervened because basically they were saying if they do it, we won't have to do it five years from now.

MS. BRENNAN: Yes. You agree?

MR. MOSS: Well, look, I think Dan's right that Mali is not going to be high on the American agenda and you're right, if there's no crisis, it will fall off the newspapers, as well. But I do think that below the surface, the American foreign policy machine will move in that direction. We're now drawing down from Afghanistan, there's going to be a lot of machines and men that have been working on CT for years, and they will be looking for the next Afghanistan.

We will have a new head of AFRICOM, General Rodriguez, coming out of Afghanistan, and the U.S. military is built to do stuff. They are not built to sit on their hands, and if things start to look like it's an emerging terrorist threat, and we're seeing events like the Algeria gas situation, they are going to want to act. That is going to be

their instinct. And that tension, which I actually think is a healthy tension within the U.S. government, between the civilians and the military, the civilians are going to be taking what Mwangi suggested, look, we need to take a long-term political view here, and the military is going to say look, these are the bad guys, we need to drop things on their heads from the sky, and I think we're going to see a combination of containment from the sky with sort of half-hearted political and development programs on the ground.

MS. BRENNAN: But what you're describing is potentially expanded AFRICOM, a more interventionist instinct perhaps than the military, but is that followed through on the foreign policy side with the desire to do that at the White House level?

MR. MOSS: That's going to be the tension.

MS. BRENNAN: Yes.

MR. MOSS: You know, frankly, this White House has not been super engaged in Africa. I think that's fair to say, but when you start having Al Qaeda-type groups, that starts to get people's attention and I think it starts to focus the mind in a way that you won't get in a lot of other ways.

MS. BRENNAN: Dan, on that note, as you said, Al Qaeda in Mali wasn't viewed really as a "threat" to the homeland, but now you have this redefinition of western interest, U.S. interest with the attack in Algeria. Back it up to September, you had the attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, which there have been threads linked to AQIM. Why is the intelligence so bad?

MR. BYMAN: Right. I actually—

MS. BRENNAN: It's a technical term.

MR. BYMAN: That's right.

MS. BRENNAN: Why?

MR. BYMAN: I actually am a bit of a defender on the community on this

because realistically what you get are strategic threats, right? You say they're oriented in this direction or this direction, but predicting what five people or even 25 will do in a remote part of the world is exceptionally difficult. And investigation after investigation, commission after commission found that you cannot expect tactical warning. You cannot expect that you are going to be able to disrupt every single plot at the local level. This is particularly likely though in the case of Al Qaeda affiliates because where do they show up? They show up in places where government is weak, where civil wars are going on. And, of course, you're going to have difficult intelligence in those situations. It's not a place where you can have lots of your own people wandering around the ground gathering up intelligence in a safe way.

MS. BRENNAN: Even when you have a presence of CIA and other intelligence agencies on the ground?

MR. BYMAN: Certainly, they're trying to gather—what a lot of what they'll try to do is to work with local actors to get information, but there's an irony, right, which is for years, people who are involved in these investigations and recommendations were saying we need a State Department, we need an intelligence community that's willing to get out there, it's willing to kind of mix with people, it's willing to take more risks and going to do things at the local level.

Who is the best example of that in the last five years at the State Department in my view? Ambassador Stevens. It's a brave man, heroic man, who is really willing to work with the local community despite the risks.

What's going to be the result of all this? That we're going to take people like him and say you'll have to be behind danger, you'll have to be behind embassy walls because it's too dangerous. You cannot mix with the locals in the same way; you cannot carry out your mission the same way. So, intelligence collection, information gathering,

engagement at the local level are all going to suffer tremendously, ironically, because of people like Ambassador Stevens were doing what our country needs.

MS. BRENNAN: So, is the wrong direction to funnel things towards AFRICOM and more towards actual intel gathering on the ground?

MR. BYMAN: My personal view is that intel gathering is almost always money well spent, right? Because it's for the most part relatively cheap, especially when compared to as we would say kinetic military operations, right, which are staggeringly expensive. And a lot of intel gathering doesn't work well or is misplaced, but when it works, it can save a lot of lives and save a lot of money down the road. So, I certainly favor a fairly robust intelligence gathering effort and I think that's been in motion in a variety of ways for some time.

The question though is: Okay, as you gather that intel picture, what do you do with it, and as Todd says, there certainly will be some interest on the military side to be more aggressive, but there's this broader issue which is this is a region where the United States doesn't have good political answers, right?

I mean, there are things we all want to do, right? We want to build up strong states with good government, we're all for that. The how we do that is an exceptionally difficult issue and one I don't think we've solved as a policy problem, and, as a result, we're going to fall back on these more kinetic approaches in part by default.

MS. BRENNAN: Mwangi—sorry, go ahead.

MR. BYMAN: I don't think there's any question that we're going to devote increased intelligence assets to this part of the world. We just saw status of forces agreement with Niger. Clearly, we're going to do that. The question though becomes a policy question. As you start to gather more information about extremely small numbers of dangerous people—we're talking dozens, maybe hundreds of people—

the question is: Does this get to the level of threat to the United States that we need to act in a kinetic fashion either by ourselves or with allies because we want to snuff out the potential of the future for this to be really dangerous or do we wait and see? And this is, frankly, a question that we're going to face in lots of parts of the world and we've been facing this for 10 years and that will only accelerate and I think that's that tension where there's always going to be a lot of Monday morning quarterbacking and there's going to be judgment from the intelligence and the policy community.

MS. BRENNAN: Mwangi, the U.S. State Department, at least, has described the support role of the U.S. as being aimed at stability in Mali, and that means clearing out Timbuktu, clearing out Gao, that means paving the way towards political transition. What does that actually mean? How far away from an actual political transition in Mali?

MR. KIMENYI: Well, I don't think we are close. The government in power is not, to me, a legitimate government. I mean, we know that.

MS. BRENNAN: Because they came to power through a coup.

MR. KIMENYI: Yes, a coup, and, so we are talking discussing and supporting a government that's not legitimate, and in my view, even supporting that government is giving it more credibility and you end with the same guys probably in the leadership. So, it's not that we are helping. So, it's a short-term solution to intervene, but it's not a long-term solution in terms of building the state of Mali, where the people in Mali have to sit down and negotiate peace and actually discuss how they are going to organize their state, whether to decentralize more powers, to devolve, to give more autonomy, it has to be a political solution where they have to deal with it.

Now, it's true that these short-term interventions resulted in relative what we call cessation of these atrocities, but I think it needs to bring the people together really

to start the political process now and in my view, I don't think that their current government is going to be the one to pave that way to a legitimate democracy in Mali.

And they don't want to negotiate. Right now, they don't want to negotiate with the Tuaregs. They've been empowered. So, they don't want to negotiate. And whenever people in a country don't want to negotiate within others, then you have weakened the possibility of democracy.

MS. BRENNAN: So, Justin, is March actually a deadline then?

MR. VAISSE: Well, first thing is you don't always get to choose the partner you dance with, and of course you can choose negatively, meaning forbidding Ansar Dine and AQMI to come in power in Bamako. That you can do through kinetic action.

Choosing Captain Sanogo is not really an option. So, what the French have done is to put in place with the agreement of the international community of political process by which at the end of July of this year, there will be elections in Mali, and, so, we all hope for the best, but the truth is that as very often in political and security policy, you have to choose between the lesser of two evils and clearly the lesser of two evils here was the power in place in Bamako in spite of the difficulties that the French now have to face because they're on the ground, which is that after the mix of Tuareg and Islamists of getting back to the north, there is retribution and vengeance.

The other point was about American capabilities and assets. The truth is there are some intelligence assets, but very, very few, right, that don't have the granularity of the intelligence that the French, having been on the ground, have and the truth is the French underestimated the threat by about coefficient of two and the Americans by coefficient of three, but I would add it's very difficult. It's very difficult because the way it works, the Katibas, so, the combat unit, it's basically a number of

pickups and sometimes heavier equipment, but it's general pickups with machine guns on them coalescing at one point, and, so, depending on whether you estimate there are two guys per pickup or three guys, it increases the force from 500 to 1,500.

So, intelligence is very difficult plus when these katibas start being defeated, then opportunistic soldiers start disappearing from them and vanishing. And, so, you get from numbers from the few dozens or hundreds that Todd was talking about to suddenly 2,500 and then back to 800. Once again, it's a very volatile situation and very difficult.

What the future holds, I think, is that yes, there will probably be more at least cooperation from the U.S. I don't see much kinetic operations simply because the assets are not there and I don't think there will be sort of standby forces that will be able to respond to the same kind of threat, but now that we've been warned once, I also think that the cooperation that has been put in place between the U.S. and France and the African armies on the ground will prevent them from basically leaving the confines of Algeria and northern Mali.

MS. BRENNAN: But how far off is the political transition or is that not part of the French mandate?

MR. VAISSE: As I indicated, there's already a political transition in place with the elections towards the end of July of 2013 that Captain Sanogo has agreed to, has committed to, and, so, that's one part of the plan. The other part of the plan, of course, is to deal with the Tuareg situation, especially in the context of retribution or vengeance that I was alluding to. These things take time. I mean, once again, I think Côte d'Ivoire is a very good example.

So, basically, the Brits have rule for civil wars, right? They say there are three rules. The first one, don't intervene. The second one, if you intervene, pick a side.

And the third one is if you pick a side, make sure it wins. (Laughter)

So, what the French did in Côte d'Ivoire and elsewhere is they systemically violate these three rules. They intervene, they don't pick a side because they want a political process, and, of course, they can't make sure that it wins and that's exactly what the French did in Côte d'Ivoire. And, so, that's why it took so long to get to elections first, to get Alassane Ouattara elected democratically, and then to get rid of the president who didn't want to leave. So, it took from 2002 to 2011, but in the end, democracy was restored and the underlying political problems, which are very deep in Côte d'Ivoire, are at least starting to be addressed.

MS. BRENNAN: Dan, Al Qaeda in Maghreb had gotten on the radar in Washington, particularly at the U.S. Treasury Department, because of their incredible business in kidnapping for ransom.

MR. BYMAN: Yes.

MS. BRENNAN: And arguably up until their expansion in Mali, that was really only how they registered.

MR. BYMAN: Yes.

MS. BRENNAN: The French paid something between 20 and 30 million euros in ransom to AQIM to free some of their nationals. Does there need to be more of a unified Western response to AQIM and some of their tactics in a non-kinetic fashion?

MR. BYMAN: Sure, and this is I would say a constant frustration of Washington. One thing, there aren't many patterns in terrorism, but one thing we know is that when you start to pay ransoms, you simply encourage groups to use this tactic again and again, and we saw this in the 70s with leftist groups, we saw this with Palestinian groups, that when you give into the demands of terrorist groups, they will do the action again. So, there's a frustration in the United States with various European governments

who understandably are concerned for the welfare of their citizens, but when you pay these humongous ransoms, you endanger citizens in the future.

So, certainly, there should be a set of ground rules, an obvious one being you don't give millions of dollars to terrorist groups, even if you're well intentioned. Right now, this is outside the AQIM realm, there's a discussion of what to do about Hezbollah—because Hezbollah has done attacks and the Bulgarian government has formally accused it of doing so.

Again, a unified western response on counterterrorism would take the limited capabilities of most governments, including the United States, and make them far more effective. So, certainly, there's more to be done. I will commend the Obama Administration and the Bush Administration before it; we're much better than we were 10 years ago on this, but we still have a very long way to go.

MR. VAISSE: So, sorry, Margaret, I just want to correct something. The French didn't pay 20 to 30 million. Otherwise, they wouldn't still have nine hostages. There you wouldn't have seen the raids that you've seen in northern Niger or in Somalia for that matter, where sometimes hostages die—

MS. BRENNAN: Those are U.S. government estimates. The period of time—

MR. VAISSE: Right, but it's not the case. I just wanted—

MS. BRENNAN: So, you don't think—

MR. VAISSE: —to correct that.

MS. BRENNAN: —the French have helped to feed Al Qaeda through this—

MR. VAISSE: No.

MS. BRENNAN: —argument that Dan was making?

MR. VAISSE: No, that's not correct, no.

MS. BRENNAN: Paying for ransom you don't think strengthen that?

MR. VAISSE: Paying for ransom, yes, is basically a bad thing to do and what I'm saying is that the French government did not do that.

MS. BRENNAN: Dan, why do you think that's a different perception on the American side?

MR. BYMAN: Okay, there are multiple questions here, right? When money changes hands, there is always a question of: A, is it sanctioned at the highest level and, B, is it something that is done in spite of government policies or not? And we've seen a number of European states have, whether their companies pay for their own people.

At times, this is facilitated by government; at times, it's not, and, so, the question is to me: Is the government aggressively trying to stop this or is the government facilitating in various ways and it's a difficult thing to say, right, when money changes hands because it can be done with a wink and a nod, it can be done with formal blessing. So, I think it's understandable that there are different perceptions on this issue.

I will say, putting the French aside, I will say we have seen a number of European governments facilitate the flow of money to these groups, again, to be fair, for a good reason; they are concerned about the survival of their citizens, right? They're not doing it to make a terrorist group stronger. They're doing it to solve an immediate short-term crisis, but it creates a longer-term problem.

MR. MOSS: And it's not just Europeans.

MS. BRENNAN: "Not just Europeans" is what you said there.

MR. VAISSE: Canadians, also. (Laughter) Or another possibility is— not to point finger at anyone. Another possibility is what you saw in Somalia two years

ago, where a ransom was paid by the French government a couple of hours before a raid was done on Somalia territory to get the ransom back and the hostages back and capture the pirates. So, that's another thing, but money doesn't change hand for more than a few hours.

MS. BRENNAN: Mwangi, you've been sitting there and nodding your head throughout this. What are some of the things that have jumped out?

MR. KIMENYI: Well, just really looking at this continent of ours and the many actors who are planning many different things and what they plan to do, and I just feel like Africans are sort of totally absent in this game and I don't even think there are clear consultations of what exactly would stabilize, for example, the West African region.

We have all these agreements within the African Union, the Continental Free Trade Area coming within the entire continent and you would imagine that when like the U.S. is thinking about these policies, or France, one of the areas they would like to do is can we have a conversation with the African Union to see how we should proceed, but you see like, again, Africans themselves playing a very marginal role in their own continent and this is something that I personally feel that should not be happening today, 50, 60 years after independence. So, I think that there should more participation with these issues by the Africans together with the international community.

MS. BRENNAN: And you have the introduction of some fairly new actors into the region, too.

MR. KIMENYI: Yes.

MS. BRENNAN: You've got China investing very heavily throughout the continent; you've got other foreign governments in there.

MR. KIMENYI: Yes.

MS. BRENNAN: How is that changing the chemistry?

MR. KIMENYI: Well, okay, so, these other countries, Turkey, Brazil, India and China are really focused on economic engagement. A lot of them is really economic engagement. They are changing more not just looking at what you used to think about, the natural resources, but they're also focusing on development in the area. So, they have a development program for Africa, and they are actually quite attractive to Africa. And I think what the west may need to change is actually having a real well-coordinated development program. The main driver for interventions in many cases is security or engagement.

I mean, to a great extent, the U.S. engagement with Africa has a big component of security. That's different from China. China has an economic approach. So, I think, of course, security interests are very important, but I would like to see where the development of the people, the welfare of the people comes first and because even all these problems, whether you talk about Mali, there's always a development problem that actually triggers a lot of these groupings, whether it's in Somalia, whether it's in Nigeria, you go deeper there, you'll find that there's some issue of marginalization. There are either groups that are left behind and this has to be brought into these discussions.

MS. BRENNAN: Jump in here, Todd. I mean, we've talked a lot about sort of the defense role here, but on the softer diplomacy and development side, I mean, is there more of a role for the west to complement more along the lines what Mwangi is talking about?

MR. MOSS: Well, look, I think we're talking about U.S. and French counterterrorism interests, so, of course, we're going to talk about what our governments are planning to do. I think in terms of the political solution, it's very clear that the regional actors are going to take the lead. Burkina Faso is, for good or for ill, is playing a key role in trying to negotiate a deal as they did in Côte d'Ivoire. I mean, we don't think of Burkina

Faso as a diplomatic hub. I don't think it makes the U.S. papers very often, but it's actually becoming one of these countries that's starting to assert itself using a charismatic leader that with a strategic location, it's able to play that role. So, I think we are going to see the African Union, the West African region, ECOWAS, and particular actors in the region play the key negotiating role.

MS. BRENNAN: But play that out. I mean, you can negotiate, but does that actually happen in an effective way? I mean, can you stave off instability?

MR. MOSS: Well, getting to the containment point, if the U.S. and France decide that they're just going to wage war from the sky against Al Qaeda, that is going to then leak into Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania, Algeria, that is going to just get pushed into the region. So, it's in their interest to be involved in negotiating a political solution. The U.S. and France are going to have leverage on Sanogo and the group in Bamako right now to push for a political solution, but it's really going to have to be the region that's there for the long haul. It's going to be their troops sitting in Timbuktu and Gao and probably Bamako. So, they're also going to have leverage and that's the way I think that the U.S. and France would like it, and I think that's the only way that we would see it working.

MS. BRENNAN: But on that timetable, Mwangi, I mean, it sounds like you're not in favor of intervention as a general principle, but what's complementary support to ECOWAS, to the African Union because they haven't stepped up until now?

MR. KIMENYI: Yes, I think there's a lot of support that would actually come from these developing countries. For example, building the militaries. There is good support, the African military, for example, the training. The Americans, I think, trained (Sanogo) also, so—

MS. BRENNAN: Well, they've got, what, like 100 military trainers

through CoDA.

MR. KIMENYI: Yes, but I think that type of support so that Africans can be able to build their own military and as I said, I think that in the African Union, they've been talking about this many times about having a standing army. I think the way things are with all these groups that are coming up, the crisis that we have seen in recent years as even in democratic countries, I think its need to support—I would really aggressively support—the standing army in Africa that would deal with these type of issues.

MS. BRENNAN: Great, but what Todd described is this displaying out of the problem into surrounding countries.

MR. KIMENYI: Yes.

MS. BRENNAN: If you look at—maybe not use the term domino effect.

MR. KIMENYI: Yes.

MS. BRENNAN: But if you look at the next area that draws concern for you beyond Mali, what is it?

MR. KIMENYI: Well, okay, so, we have a perpetual problem in central Africa, where—Democratic Republic of Congo. So, that one is likely to remain there for quite a while, together with the Central African Republic. So, that is a volatile area.

In West Africa, I see it seems Nigerians are doing a better job, but they still have a problem within the ... northern Nigeria is still a problem, whether it spills over the boundaries. Nigeria is a big country. It's another issue. And, of course, we haven't settled the Sudan issues there, there are also problems still going on.

So, all these pockets that remain and Somalia is a good case, but it's still not out of the woods, there are still a lot of problems there. So, yes, there are many pockets of problems that can spread out and if you go deeper, you see that there are these groupings that militant, the Al Qaeda-type related groups, in a way, and that can be

a problem in the long run.

MR. VAISSE: Yes, just a point on that, I mean, if we focus on the Sahel itself, I mean, it's a region that no one has even controlled for a good reason, which is that it's enormous in size and it's populated by nomadic populations and it's always been a place for traffics north to south and south to north, whether slaves or legal goods, and now as I alluded to earlier, illegal goods like cocaine bringing a lot more money.

And, so, it's the perfect place for Islamist movements, for AQMI, to thrive because it's very difficult to catch them and because you have borders that have been drawn by the inheritance of colonialism and which are pretty arbitrary and that Tuareg cross without even thinking about it between Mauritania and Mali, between Mali and Algeria, although the Algerian do control a bit more, their border, and then onto more towards the east.

And, so, we'll see this problem of these groups going to Niger and taking hostages there and then moving beyond the border for a long time. And, so, what this calls for is obviously trying not to be drawn into an Afghanistan or perhaps Waziristan-type situation where we pretend we can control everything, but try to make sure that cooperation is the name of the game.

And one of the problems with the former president, the deposed president ATT was that he was not seen as being very cooperative, especially with Mauritania, vis-à-vis AQMI and, so, this was one of the reasons also why AQMI could thrive, at least in the last year-and-a-half, two years. And, so, that's the objective for the future.

MS. BRENNAN: I want to get to questions from the audience, but just to button it up, one country we really haven't talked about and their role in the region is Algeria. France has had a long and troubled relationship with Algeria. Are you as

confident as the United States has signaled, at least in the past few months, that they can take more of a lead role in trying to control AQIM or—

MR. VAISSE: Yes, it's difficult and, I would add, even more then difficult, it's ambiguous in the sense that the Algerian services have always been ruthless in persecuting Islamists but not without shades of different attitudes, I would say, within the intelligence services and sometimes tolerating some dose of presence on their soil.

And, so, we've tried, the U.S. and France have tried to get Algerian cooperation to get them to intervene to crack down better on AQMI. They actually have a right of hot pursuit in northern Mali that they've not used too much. And, so, I think yes, I don't know what Dan and Todd think, but I think that will be one of the main challenges. It's a key partner and it's a difficult partner.

MS. BRENNAN: Did you want to comment before we—

MR. BYMAN: If you don't mind. Algeria really is the key partner in the sense of, in all the states we've been talking about, it has far more power, right? It has a large and competent military, and it has a large and competent intelligence service. It also has been a ... nightmare is perhaps too strong, but I will certainly say incredibly difficult as an American partner and in different ways as a French partner. There is a history of colonialism that is born in Algeria that has made them very, very prickly and very reluctant to anything they see as outside meddling and very reluctant to cooperate to the extent that they fear that their sovereignty would be impinged in any way.

And as Justin mentioned, I think, rather politely, they have a very troubled history with these groups. I'll just name a few things a little less politely. The Algerian government, at times, massacres its own people. In addition, the Algerian government has, at times, worked with some of these groups to foment terrorist attacks to discredit the broader movement. Both of these have worked fairly well for the Algerian

government, though we don't want to say so.

The result though is a government that has tactics, that has goals that are anathema, at least I hope so, to the United States and to France and to what they want to accomplish. And, so, there's quite a difference in means, there's often a difference in ends, and there is a broader kind of spirit in Algeria that's resistant to regional and international cooperation. So, Algeria is in some ways the most important question as we try to move forward in going after these groups.

MR. MOSS: Can I just add one point?

MS. BRENNAN: Sure.

MR. MOSS: It's worth remembering when we talk about AQIM that it's mostly Algerians, and it's mostly Algerians that grew out of GSPC inside Algeria and came down into the neighborhood. What's been troubling is that we started to see a handful of Malian and other sub-Saharan groups start to ally with them and maybe even potentially join AQIM, but it is really at heart an Algerian problem, and there's no way we're going to be able to deal with it without Algeria for all the difficulties of trying to do so.

MS. BRENNAN: I want to open it up to questions from the audience. Do we have a hand? And is there a microphone that we can bring up here? Right here, this gentleman. There's a microphone here. If you would just say your name and your question.

MR. WEINTRAUB: Thank you; I'm Leon Weintraub of University of Wisconsin.

MS. BRENNAN: Okay.

MR. WEINCHER: I'd like to ask a question of Mr. Moss. Before I retired from the State Department, I spent a fair amount of time in the Africa Bureau, and I

remember going back to the 90s, we had a variety of training programs for African military that was mentioned by one of the speakers, CoDA was born of them, a variety of acronyms, primarily with the Nigerians, but with others, as well, and I believe that was exactly to handle situations such like this, to get local forces up to speed so we wouldn't have to have foreign military intervention.

I'm wondering what was the scope of those efforts that apparently went on for many years and was there any value out of that?

MR. MOSS: You want me to take that or are you going to take a group?

MS. BRENNAN: Sure, no, you go to that because CoDA has been deployed, right, 100 military—

MR. MOSS: Yes, so, there are multiple programs for military training and what was interesting is that what began as the Pan-Sahel Initiative, I think in 2005, grew into the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership, TSCTP, which was growing while I was there. I think it continued to grow. So, there's somewhere between 9 and 11 countries would come together to do joint exercises.

You read in the paper about Flintlock, which we're sort of war gaming, different kinds of activities, but the problem, of course, is that we were having a number of coups in West Africa. So, Mauritania had been an important partner, there's a coup. Niger had been an important partner, there was a coup. Really, Mali had become the center of TSCTP by the end of the 2000s. Mali was seen as a democracy, we had invested a lot there, the activities were going on there. It was, in a sense, the hub and that's why it was such a problem when there was a coup last March. And that whole thing collapsed.

Now, we did have significant military training with Malian forces. We're still only talking about—the Malians only had about 3,000 troops in the north, not very

well equipped. It's just not an area that you can—you can't even really drive around. The idea that we're going to secure the border there is crazy, right? Even with unlimited resources, nobody is securing Mali's northern border. That's not going to happen. So, you have a very difficult environment, you had very limited Malian capacity. It had, on a good day, maybe one airplane, maybe two helicopters. So the idea that you're going to meet that threat with this kind of response doesn't make sense. But that was what we were trying to build this regional coalition. There's also a military component to that, which was Operation Enduring Freedom: Trans-Sahara, and, so, there were a number of things going on.

In hindsight, obviously, it didn't work. So, hopefully, we will not just try to do the same thing over again. I'm not a military expert at all so I don't know what we need to do differently, but clearly, our model for building security capacity did not work and our model—one reason you do all this training is to build relationships. If we didn't know that Sanogo—if you listen to Sanogo on the radio, his English is pretty good, right? We didn't know that it was so bad that this was coming down the pike we also did not have those relationships that you would normally get from training and cooperation. So, I do think we need to revisit the model.

MS. BRENNAN: Well, and U.S. law, once that coup happened, prevented helping the—

MR. MOSS: Yes, correct.

MS. BRENNAN: —government that came to power through coup.

MR. MOSS: Exactly.

MS. BRENNAN: So, that stopped in—

MR. MOSS: Right, which is why accelerating the election time table was important if the U.S. is going to get re-engaged.

MS. BRENNAN: Realistic or no?

MR. MOSS: Yes, probably.

MS. BRENNAN: Do you agree—

MR. VAISSE: Yes, just a very quick word. I mean, the Malian Army is not a fighting army, it's basically like many African armies, not all of them, but many made up of three layers, the top officers who have good jobs and try to keep the status quo and possibly not fight, then the sort of junior officers, the captain level, who want to get the top jobs, but don't, and then the troop, which is basically trying to get paid and trying to eat.

And, so, and the sociological reality is that this army has many functions, but fighting is not really one of them; its function, to integrate people to, for example, when there's a deal with the Tuareg to integrate them into the army, et cetera, but it's not a functioning army.

And, so, that's why in many countries like in Burkina Faso, for example, the coup always happens at the mid-level, the level of captains or Captain Sanogo or Blaise Compaoré in Burkina Faso and others, and, so, that's the reality you have to deal with and you have only a handful of armies and parts of these armies that you can really count on to hold territory, to behave properly and not sort of feed on the population and that's the huge challenge we have. France and the U.S. had programs to build up African capacities. The truth is, faced with the sociological reality, it doesn't work very well.

MS. BRENNAN: Mwangi, do you have a comment before we go as to why those programs didn't take hold or work better?

MR. KIMENYI: Well, I am not very familiar with the programs, but the training I don't think has been as broad as you would get to work. And, to me, my fear is that and training the Africans, I think the idea of AFRICOM may be a substitute to building

the African capacity in itself. So, the question is whether there is a way of building—whether you still have AFRICOM, but you still strengthen the armies. I mean, I would say like the cooperation between the U.S. and Egypt is a real resource, real training, and that, I mean, of course, for like a country like Egypt is fairly well able to defend itself.

MS. BRENNAN: Question here. If you can bring the microphone up here to the front row.

MS. DEAL: Hi, I'm Jessica Deal from National Public Radio. Todd, you mentioned that there isn't entire overlap between the Tuareg and Al Qaeda in Mali. Can you just elaborate a little bit more on where you see there's interest and motivators overlapping and where you see them diverge? You mentioned that it was sort of incumbent on the community that's intervening here to drive a wedge, so—

MR. MOSS: Yes.

MS. DEAL: I'd love to hear a little more about that.

MR. MOSS: Okay, I'm sure Justin will have insights here. Look, I think it's extremely important that we not conflate Algerian jihadist groups that are taking the opportunity of vacuum in governance to use a particular space with legitimate grievances by minority groups in a place like Mali, which include the Tuareg. The Tuareg are even a minority in the north, so, we shouldn't expect that it's not Tuareg land up there. It's just that they are a group that has survived for centuries on trading and on autonomy from central authority and that means they know how to fight in that area and they know how to survive in that area and they've often resisted central control from French colonial authorities or Malian authorities in the south.

And but what we want to be very careful is even if these groups are operating in the same geographic space and at some moments in time like a very narrow set of weeks last spring, where they had a convenient alliance that, fundamentally, their

objectives are totally different. Jihadists want to impose an Islamic state in that part of the world, impose Islamic law, and a variety of other objectives. The Tuareg for the most part want to be treated a little bit better than they feel they have been treated in the past. That means a little bit more autonomy, ironically, a little bit more investment in the north, and great opportunity for these minority groups which is not always expressed in the way that we would normally think is totally legitimate through rebellions, but it's a very real, real grievance. We do not want to conflate those two or drive them together like they were driven together post-coup. I think that's very important.

MS. BRENNAN: Is there a split into two states?

MR. VAISSE: No, no, I don't think that would be the case, but one key moment you can think of or two key moments that will speak to the U.S. experience is the end of September 2011, when Colin Powell asked the Taliban to cut the ties with Al Qaeda and to basically given bin Laden to them. Otherwise, there would be an intervention. They didn't, so, there was an intervention.

Another one was the surge in Iraq and the idea that the Sunni populations would turn against al-Zarqawi and the Al Qaeda branch there. And, so, the question here is sort of similar that is to say the disassociation between, on the one hand, the regionalist movement of the Tuareg and the Islamists. The good news is that the ties between them as far as I know are very weak and they're very opportunistic, much more than between the Taliban and Al Qaeda, for example, and, so, because of this, it's possible to drive a wedge, as Todd was saying, and I'd love to have Dan's input on these comparisons because he knows the situations really well. And what you've seen in the recent days, for example, is the MNLA, the Tuareg movement, helping the French capture some of the Ansar Dine and AQMI people. So, that's probably good news if it continues and if we can keep them separate and keep that wedge between them.

MS. BRENNAN: Is Afghanistan a fair analogy for Mali?

MR. BYMAN: For the most part, no, but there are some moments, right?

So, in a general sense, the scale of what was happening in Afghanistan under the Taliban dwarfs anything that has happened in Mali. In Afghanistan now, we have a very competent, well-funded, skilled foreign power, Pakistan, actively backing anti-American, anti-government forces there. There's no equivalent, again, in Mali. However, what's interesting are some of the comparisons are the divisions within the groups. All right, so, not only do you have this Tuareg-Islamist division, but you have tremendous divisions within the various Mujahedeen groups.

And Justin mentioned opportunism. I think that's really the key is that you have groups that come together or go apart based on a whole host of factors, some which are personality. You have a number of rival leaders, you have familial relations that vying groups together are at times—if your family's a bit like mine, a time to separate them. You also have competition for smuggling and competition for kidnapping ransom. So, you have a whole host of things and the real key in some ways is the lack of unity, yet cooperation. So, it's a balance between rivalry and opportunists.

MR. MOSS: Can I just add one point?

MS. BRENNAN: Sure.

MR. MOSS: Is that if we think about the history of Timbuktu, it's a very odd region of the world to expect radical Islam to flourish. I mean, Timbuktu was a cosmopolitan crossroads of cultures for trading; it was a place of learning.

I mean, look at the incredible efforts that went on over the last couple of months to hide these Islamic scrolls. I mean, this is not a place where you would expect radicalism to gain favor easily and that very much this was seen as a foreign imposition and that, I mean, Islam in Mali has been probably among the most moderate of anywhere

in the world. So I think that that's an important piece to keep in mind.

MS. BRENNAN: Do we have another question here in the front? And then we'll go to the back.

SPEAKER: Thank you. Pat (inaudible) from the EU delegation here. I have a question to Mr. Vaïsse. You mentioned that France is building towards elections in July as part of the political solution for the problem. But we know that elections are simply to a democracy, they're not democracy in itself.

Do you think that the prerequisites, the groundwork is there for an actual political solution in Mali through elections? I mean, the political elites, some sort of civil society needs to be present in order for elections to be successful and what are the guarantees that we won't end up with something as your colleague highlighted in Mauritania, with too hasty elections? Thank you.

MR. VAISSE: Yes, thanks. No, I mean, the answer is contained in the question in the sense that no, elections don't make democracy, but democracy is impossible without elections. And, so, we're not going to wait for five years thinking that we'll have a perfect civil society with trade union political parties, a free press, et cetera, and this situation's already probably better than in other countries in the region. There has been, after all, democracy for a long time. There are some press outlets, et cetera. So, it's not just a sort of sham elections that will enable the U.S. and others to intervene. I think it's more than that and Malians themselves have voiced their desire to move towards that solution.

So, bottom line, it's not enough, but it's a necessary step and we just can hope for the better, but we cannot rebuild the society itself.

MS. BRENNAN: Mwangi, do you think that elections result in democracy?

MR. KIMENYI: My fear is that the people in power are likely to be the ones that are going to have an advantage. So, it may be a process to legitimize an illegitimate process. But, again, you don't have a lot of options to—you're in a situation where you have a bad situation, so, elections are necessary but July may be too soon in terms of preparation. I don't know what will happen on the ground to be able to have a national election, but I still feel that the people who are currently in power are likely to come back as elected leaders.

SPEAKER: And what if the Islamists win the elections?

MR. VAISSE: But there's something important to understand, is that there is no deep roots of Islamism in Mali, and even in the katibas, et cetera, you wouldn't find many Malians, right? It's not a deeply rooted movement that would be—we're not talking here are comparisons, it's difficult, but we're not talking about Egypt or Syria or something else, and as you've seen in the news, Islamists have been fiercely rejected by the populations.

The thing is that when you have a gun to your head, generally, you tend not to voice that rejection very strongly, right? So, and that's exactly what happened and if there had been no intervention and there had been Islamists in Bamako, we would have had an Islamist state with very shallow roots, but fear and intimidation is enough to make a regime stand and I'll leave it at that.

MS. BRENNAN: I promised a question there from the back. Can we run the microphone --

SPEAKER: There's one.

MS. BRENNAN: Oh, great, the gentleman waving.

MR. FANUSIE: My name is Yaya Fanusie. I am the lead person of the Special Operations Division of the United States of Africa-2017 Project Taskforce. .In

September, we're launching what is called the Civic Educational Campaign for the African Union charter on democracy, good governments and elections. It means a grassroots campaign for the people to understand and demand democracy, free and fair elections.

MS. BRENNAN: Do you have a question?

MR. FANUSIE: No, I'm just making a statement.

MS. BRENNAN: Okay.

MR. FANUSIE: We ask you --

MS. BRENNAN: Well, can you pass the microphone back so we can ask some questions?

MR. FANUSIE: We ask you to support us when that campaign is going on.

MS. BRENNAN: The woman standing next to you I hope does have a question.

MS. DICKEY: My name is Angela Dickey. I'm a State Department fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace and also working on the CoDA program there.

Twenty years ago, I was a young political officer in Mauritania and spent a lot of time with Tuaregs. They came across the border to Mauritania because the Tuareg rebellion kept them from going to Bamako and I'd like to just suggest that the problem is not lack of information in Washington. We've been reporting consistently through the years the Tuareg grievances as outlined upfront, and I just wish we would listen better including to the Africans. That's my comment.

MS. BRENNAN: You want to fix the State Department here? No?

Can we have some questions so we can engage the panel here?

Up towards the middle here.

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SPEAKER: Hi, can you hear me? I'm from the Fund for Peace and I'm just wondering there have been reports about retaliatory violence against the Tuaregs and how do you see that playing out in the political negotiations and establishing peace in the country? Thank you.

MS. BRENNAN: The question was about retaliatory attacks against the Tuaregs in particular.

MR. VAISSE: Yes, I mentioned that earlier. The difficulty, and that's something that French groups have had to sort of monitor and, of course, try to avoid because there was some blood spilled, there was some women raped, there were some hands and feet cut, and, so there is hatred, there is anger, and all that hatred and anger sort of superimposes itself to some of the ethnic differences which sometimes were important, sometimes were less important, but which has always existed. And we've seen, yes, some retaliation, we've seen some bad behavior on the part of the Malian Army.

The difficulty for the French troops is that it's basically the Malian Army first in the sense that they are the ones who should retake—so, think Eisenhower and the goal in 1944, right, leading the free French take Paris in other cities first. So, it's sort of what happened. Of course, you had airlift operations by the legion and other parts of the French Armed Forces, but the Malian Army was always there, at least some of the elements of the Malian Army to retake the cities and show that they were in charge. And, so, yes, of course, you want to monitor them, but there was so-called belligerence. There were also brothers-in-arms in retaking all these cities at a very fast pace.

So, it's a very difficult balance for the French troops there and then the African troops and then the U.N. troops because Joe Biden two years ago in Paris in his meeting with Francois Hollande said that we should transition at some point towards—

transition the African force towards a U.N. force. So, the whole difficulty or the whole balancing act is to try to make sure that the Malians themselves are in charge and the Africans themselves are in charge, but that no retaliation or no human rights violation happened and that's a very tricky thing to do.

MS. BRENNAN: We probably have time for about one more question here. You seem very eager. Down in back and waving, thank you.

MS. OBLU: Yes, thank you. Blanche Oblu. I'm a student in economics and international relations. We've talked about long-term political solutions. My question is: What are the next steps in establishing governing institutions that could adequately mitigate crises such as these? More specifically, we've heard what the AU and ECOWAS have been reluctant to do. What should they do?

MS. BRENNAN: Did you want to direct that towards anyone in particular?

MS. OBLU: It's an open question, but I'd like to invite Dr. Vaïsse or Dr. Mwangi.

MS. BRENNAN: Anyone want to take that? Mwangi?

MR. KIMENYI: Well, first of all, on the issue of retaliation, I think it's a real possibility if the French leave very quickly again. Now, I was not advocating for French in there, but now that French are there, leaving very quickly can actually be a problem because, again, you can't trust the Malian Army and that can be a real issue and has happened also.

Now, in terms of the long term, I believe that it will be important to find a way. The real problem with that part is like Burkina Faso might do a better job of bringing the different parties to start some discussions even before their scheduled elections.

The Malian institutions, if you think about the institutions that were in

place before, legislative bodies, the legal system were actually okay. I mean, they had a good system that was functional, but I don't think it was inclusive enough in terms of getting everybody particularly in the North. So, I think it's a question of getting a more inclusive process even before the scheduled elections if they happen in March, but the African forces should be there I think also to trying the system, the maintenance of peace for a longer time, also.

MR. VAISSE: Just a word perhaps on sort of running the issue. One word we didn't say was global warming because, of course, we're talking about the Sahel and we know that the desert has been progressing for years and is still progressing and is eating away at the pastures and the lands that feed many people, including the Tuaregs, but also the other groups there.

And, so, basically what you have, when you have these illegal traffics, especially cocaine; once again, that's really an important part of the equation coming in with much more money than you can make, and when you have many populations who have to leave because the desert is advancing, you won't have a very stable situation for the long term.

So, what is called for is, of course, stable political institutions in Mali, but also efforts—well, efforts towards global warming, but we know how fast this is going. And on the other hand, more concretely fighting against these traffickers because there are the Islamists and we know they've been a major game changer as I was trying to explain, but the traffics have also taken a huge toll on the local populations and on the stability of these societies.

MS. BRENNAN: Mwangi, I mean, it sounds like you're still describing a place in the North that ends up with pockets of power rather than unity.

MR. KIMENYI: No, I --

MS. BRENNAN: Among some of these groups --

MR. KIMENYI: Yes.

MS. BRENNAN: Among drug-traffickers, among Islamists, among the Tuaregs. Is that the way you see it?

MR. KIMENYI: No, I think the country—I mean, we'd like to see a united country, but the way it is is that I believe even now, the Tuareg will still feel marginalized, but, of course, there are other groups. They have several fractionalized groups that used to have, like in Somalia, doing this sort of illegal activities.

But I think for the long-term solution, somehow, we have to bring particularly the Tuaregs into the political process. I think that has to be part of it and more development efforts in that part of the country. Now, how you deal with that, with the problem that Justin described is still an issue, but you still need to get more investment in that area.

MS. BRENNAN: Okay. Well, I think that concludes as we're out of time. But thank you—all of you—for coming and thanks to our panel here. To Mwangi, to Justin, to Dan. Thank you so much and Todd, as well. (Applause).

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