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PROCEEDINGS

MR. O'HANLON: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Brookings. Thank you for coming, and braving the heat, and the fire alarm, and everything else, to talk about a very important set of subjects concerning Africa and its challenges today, especially the swath of Africa that's most threatened today by famine, often interlaced with and exacerbated by conflict.

So we are talking about a zone, as you know, that extends from Northern Nigeria, really all the way over to Somalia, and then over to Yemen, if we continue beyond Africa. And so, we'll talk today primarily about that zone within Africa, and beginning with Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria, but extending our scope of geography and the subject matter, as you wish, because in the second-half of the program, we'll be asking for your questions as well.

My name is Michael O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy program. I'm joined today by a remarkable panel of experts on Africa. And I encourage you to read their bios.

But just starting immediately to my right, Karen Attiah, who works for The Washington Post in their Global Opinion Section, but also covers many things for The Post including issues concerning Africa, she's a graduate of the SIPA School at Columbia, and has been writing now for The Post on various topics, and has been to Nigeria and other parts of the continent within the last couple of years. And that's probably where I'll begin the conversations with her, on Nigeria.

Just to her right is Kristin McKie, from St. Lawrence University, a professor of comparative politics on Africa, at St. Lawrence; has joined us previously at Brookings for discussions on the Great Lakes Region of Africa, and some of the challenges of democracy, civil rights and other such matters in that part of the world. And we are thrilled to have her join us again today in our ongoing collaboration with St. Lawrence, as part of our Africa Security Initiative.

And just to her right is Comfort Ero, who is here from Nairobi, where she runs the International Crisis Group activities for much of Africa for -- I think all of Africa from that perch. And has a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics. Has written a number of studies on various part of the continent including, most recently, a series of reports on the exact subject we are addressing today. Those countries most afflicted and threatened by famine due to the kinds of ongoing challenges from the weather, but also of course from conflict that we've been witnessing throughout this part of Africa.

I think all of you are aware that some 20 million people are considered to be at risk, we always hear big numbers of people threatened by famine, but this is a really big number, even by the standards of previous conflicts. And the world has gotten perhaps a little better at dealing with famine, but maybe also therefore a little more accustomed to lowering our guard, that we assume it will work out in the end, and that the horrible famines like we saw, for example, in Ethiopia in the '80s, or Somalia in the early '90s, won't necessarily be repeated on that scale.

I'm just putting that forth as a provocation. I hope some of the panelists will address whether they, like me, worry that there may be a certain amount of complacency that's afflicted the international community on issues, concerning everything from food relief and humanitarian provisions, all the way up to how we handle these things in peacekeeping and conflict resolution terms.

I'm about to wind up here and pose my first question to Karen. But just to complete the introduction on the subject matter. As you know, these parts of sort of Sahelian African, or northern sub-Saharan Africa, if you will, these are the parts of the world that have the highest density of peacekeeping missions, from the U.N.

And especially in and around Sudan, Central African Republic, and some of the other areas; we have an African Union Mission in Somalia, we have a Nigerian military that the United States and others have been trying to work with handling some of the challenges in northeastern Nigeria. But obviously it's not quite enough. Whatever is going on is not quite enough. At some level, whether there are new and better policy options available to us, is another part of the subject for discussion today.

And so we'll turn ultimately as well, that once we get through sort of understanding the conflicts, and understanding the threats and the famine dangers, we will also discuss what some of our policy options would be, could be, including everything from increasing humanitarian relief, if that's a smart idea, to getting more engaged in conflict resolution and/or peacekeeping, and/or peace enforcement.

So, let's try to keep the full range of possibilities on the table, and I hope that you'll hold us to that in your questions as well.

So, thank you. And without further ado, let me begin with Karen. And my question really is very simple to start with. It's just to help us understand your sense of where things are in northern

Nigeria today, the ongoing conflict against Boko Haram, and the Nigerian government, the ongoing instability in much of this zone?

We'll begin with sort of a round of questions that tries to lay the groundwork and establish what we know about conditions today. And then maybe the second round of questions we'll get into a little bit more of proactive ideas on how to address these problems more effectively. So, thanks for being here. And, over to you.

MS. ATTIAH: All right. Great! Well, thanks, Michael, for having me. And thanks to the Brookings Institution for having me. Gosh! Where to even start? So, you know, I've personally been covering Boko Haram or Nigeria since I had the chance to work with Sahel reporters in 2010. And so of course we saw over those years, from 2010 to 2013, '14, of Boko Haram was -- or just seen as sort of a local issue even, you know, that the previous administration, like I mean, Jonathan's administration can rightfully be criticized for not taking the Boko Haram threat seriously.

Again, this is until 2014 when we know, you know, Bring Back Our Girls, that campaign really thrust Boko Haram and that war into the scene. So, I had the chance to go to Northern Nigeria, Northeastern Nigeria specifically, Adamawa State, which is part of, sort of Borno and Yobe and Adamawa states were the most affected by Boko Haram.

And this was about a year after Boko Haram had amassed sort of so much power and weaponry that they were actually able to control swaths of territories, some swaths between (Inaudible), the size of, you know, small eastern U.S. states.

So, you know, while there was a lot of focus on, naturally, you know, the sort of devastation, the attacks on military holdings, the attacks on civilians, suicide bombings, and when I was there in 2015 Boko Haram had successfully been pushed back by a renewed effort by Buhari, and the International Forces with the Cameroon and (inaudible) -- it was then that people who were on the ground, were sounding the alarms about the food crisis.

It was then I had a chance to visit IDP camps. I had a chance to see where it was the local communities that were really having to absorb these IDPs that had come from Borno State. And again, I think Boko Haram, it wasn't as reported, but part of Boko Haram tactics were not only to slaughter entire villages, you know, that didn't -- resisted them, but they would also burn crops, they would also

actually poison water supplies, kill cattle.

So, many of those people who were in the north who were affected were farmers, and so they had not been able to plant, and had not been able to turn their crops, so the acute food shortage issue was already apparent even two, three years ago. And which is what I wrote about, that this is a crisis that, of course at that time there were sensitivities about using the F-word, the famine word.

But, you know, there were problems of -- and these are still apparent today, problems of access of course. It is extremely difficult to get to, particularly Borno State, even journalists, even the Nigerian journalists are not able to get access to some of those places, it's just frankly too dangerous. You know, the face of the problem of food and security was also frankly, female, women and children were the most affected. I saw, again amazing stories of people opening their homes to IDPs who were traveling down to Adamawa, but again these were cities, the places that were already poor, already stressed.

The American University of Nigeria did an amazing job in trying to use private funds and U.S. support to help distribute maize and oil and corn. I went to feedings where I think in one cathedral 4,000 people showed up. And so now, you know -- So that was 2015, now when we have a situation where I think the recent number is 5 million people who are facing acute food shortages, and something like only 1.8 percent of the global funding call for what is needed has been met.

I think, you know, you saw the humanitarian agencies frustrated with, and also perhaps U.S. officials, frustrated with the sense that the Nigerian government should be doing more. A bit of reluctance, perhaps, from the Nigerian government to (a) admit that this was a serious -- is a serious problem. Of course reluctant to, you know, again use the F-word which has certain political implications.

But it was -- and this is all, again, competing with attention for the Syria and refugee crisis; of course, Somalia, Yemen. So, you know, again, keeping in mind that Nigeria is one of the U.S.'s most, sort of, important partners on the continent, the second largest economy. I know they would trade places back and forth between South Africa and Nigeria, but it really has the potential to set back Nigeria's progress as a whole.

And it's a situation where it's -- you have a sense that it's not being addressed properly at all, and with Nigeria also lurching towards, you know, economic woes as well, and with the political

situation concerning Buhari's health. A sense that, you know, if something doesn't come soon, this could become a really contractible problem for the northeast.

MR. O'HANLON: That's an outstanding summary of how we got here. And I'll come back to you in a little bit with some questions about what we should think about doing next. To the extent the international community may have some options, even if the Nigerian government itself is so constrained with its bandwidth right now.

But first, Kristin over to you to give us a little bit of the lay of the land on Somalia if you could, please?

MS. McKIE: Sure. Absolutely! Thanks again for inviting me, and for this great turnout. So I haven't been on the ground like Karen has, but what I have been looking at most recently, is looking at the famine six years ago in Somalia, around 2011/2012, and the response there. What are some of the lessons learned? You know, what's similar still today from six years ago, what has change on the ground in Somalia, and how we might think about it, as Mike said, moving forward now.

And so think that there are -- even though the situation in Somalia, you know, there are a lot of similarities from six years ago, there are some differences. And of course of those differences are, the new government, the new president being in place. They've moved on from the transitional government that had been in place, you know, during the 2000 and 2012 famine. But clearly the new government is a very young government, and so there are questions of course their capacity, and international partners who will work with this government, and how that will play out.

Another big difference this time in Somalia is that Al-Shabaab has lost a significant amount of territorial control from what they controlled back in 2000 and 2012. They've been driven out of most urban areas, and also away from port cities; you know, port areas. So there's less issue of humanitarian organizations getting access.

However, Al-Shabaab does still control sort of central southern Somalia, which is where, unfortunately, a lot of the drought conditions that are leading to the famine is most -- so that still is certainly a big part of the issue in Somalia, you know.

This question of how to gain access to the Al-Shabaab areas; should humanitarian organizations, you know, try to negotiate with them, try to work with, which is I think is something that we

can come back come back and talk about a little bit later.

And of course, too, linked to, you know, the Al-Shabaab presence is this lingering question that exists today still, of competing agendas between antiterrorism operations against Al-Shabaab, versus the humanitarian famine relief. And I think a lot of the issues that came up in 2011 and 2012 was this tension about, you know, especially antiterrorism laws, humanitarian organizations were basically restricted from trying to aid, you know, suffering populations in those areas because of the fear that resources would be diverted, you know, by Al-Shabaab, or even Al-Shabaab was taxing humanitarian organizations to be able to work in the area.

You know, there was, registration fees of $10,000, and securing fees that Al-Shabaab would charge. And so really it was a case the humanitarian organizations would be thereby funding Al-Shabaab, and that would be, of course, violating anti-terror laws about not funding terrorist-run organizations. And so that created a real dilemma for humanitarian organizations that, again, still exist today.

And the question, too, I think will need to be addressed is both the new Somali government, and also the current U.S. administration have both really signaled that, you know, a surge, a sort of a push, an anti-terror push against Al-Shabaab is something that, you know, needs to be considered. And I think that could raise potential issues for the famine relief. Raising hostilities there, having violence break out would certainly make it much, much harder for humanitarian organizations to reach, you know, even the populations that they are able to reach around Mogadishu and some of the areas of the Al-Shabaab territory.

And so I think, I know a lot of European partners have kind of said, you know, why don't we hold back on any offensive until after, you know, the famine has -- we don't want to say solve, been solved, but until after we get a hold of -- you know, able to bring relieve and get to a point where, you know, the food crisis is a bit more stabilized.

There are those other things to consider. I mean I that the famine here, it's sort of, as Karen said, it's similar to in Nigeria, clearly food security has been an ongoing issue in Somalia, but it's really at a crisis stage right now because of two seasons of poor rain, and so a situation that’s already dire has been made sort of even more so, livestock deaths and --

Another thing that has been different this time around, is that it seems that Al-Shabaab is allowing populations to move out of their areas of control. I think in the 2011 famine, Al-Shabaab really tried to keep people in where they were under Al-Shabaab's control. And then restricting aid coming in, and that created really a PR disaster for Al-Shabaab, you know, with many people dying.

So, I think, interestingly the fact that Al-Shabaab is letting people move, you know, go to IDP camps in Mogadishu, move into Ethiopia or Kenya, is an interesting change for sure. And so I think that the international community needs to think about that. You know, is it worth trying to go into the areas, or trying to encourage people to leave the areas if Al-Shabaab is making that possible?

The last item that I want to bring up, is that Al-Shabaab is trying to take an active role in providing famine relief themselves. How big that role is, you know, we have the sense that they probably don't have the resources to fully address the 6 million people who will need food relief. But they have been trying to provide some, you know, water trucks bringing food aid, and what not, and putting up videos up, and really trying to show that they are taking care of the problem.

And so that, I think, is a new development, whereas six years ago, they were very much, sort of, keeping aid out, but not delivering aid themselves. So, again, a few differences, but I think a lot of the lessons learned about late responses and, you know, various aid modalities that worked or didn’t work can still be applied today.

MR. O’HANLON: Excellent. Thank you. Comfort, over to you. And thank for your excellent work with the Crisis Group on this set of issues. I realize you’ve done reports on all the countries we are talking about today. Is there anything else you want to add? But certainly to bring Sudan and South Sudan into the conversation as well, please.

MS. ERO: Thank you very much; and to our audience of participants. Let me go back to your introductory statement, and provide sort of a bigger context and then drill down to South Sudan. I mean I think we shouldn’t lose sight of the fact that the timing which the secretary general announced either the declaration or the imminence of famine and food insecurity, was a time in which the administration here announced its own budget as well.

So it's a real perfect storm, that not only we may see a reduction on this side, in terms of aid assistance, but also at the same time when Europe is going through its own crisis, and Europe is

pulling back and shifting its own priorities, and there are question marks as to whether we are going to get the kind of assistance that we have traditionally expected from either European partners, of the U.S.

So, this has taken place in the context of real economic crisis from the traditional allies that tend to have this sort international humanitarian agenda. So it raises questions as if it's not going to come from there, where is the money -- relief assistance going to come from? So I think that's one thing to bear in mind.

I think also another thing to bear in mind in all these crises, very much spectacularly, I'm seeing from the Nigerian sense, is that the conflicts are now bleeding into one another. So, you've got, you know, a homegrown crisis from Nigeria now -- you know, partly be of Nigeria's own complacency as well, but also the Lake Chad was always a vulnerable place. There was a lot of underdevelopment, there was also poverty, and it shouldn't be lost to any of us that a number of these crises are taking place where the state is absent, certain peripheries.

And so partly of those combinations you saw the insurgency spillover into Chad, into Cameroon, and in Tunisia as well. And also, when you look at it from the South Sudan dimension you've seen the massive refugee flows into neighboring countries that themselves are domestically fragile as well. So, concerns about how you shield them from a crisis.

Also, I think that it should not be lost upon us that this is also taking place at a time when international organizations themselves, that are traditionally the vehicles of providing the relief are also in a permanent state of crisis themselves. Whether it's the European Union, whether it's the United Nations, whether it's regional bodies, the African Union or ECOWAS, they are all in a permanent state of crisis mode as well.

So, I think it becomes a real perfect storm in terms of who is going to support these countries. It also, in finding another way before drilling down to South Sudan, it shouldn't be lost upon us that, with the exception maybe of Nigeria, you know, you saw a recurrence of conflict, particularly in South Sudan, where you had a U.N. footprint. And in the last five years, what we've seen across the continent, in Central Africa Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, in South Sudan, it's where the U.N. has a footprint, we've seen a reoccurrence in conflicts.

So what does that say about the big agenda for peace building? As well, what does that

mean for the future, peacekeeping which you are going to raise? And in South Sudan it comes home clearly to roost. Because here is a country, the latest new country on the Continent that was midwifed by the international community led by the U.S., and by the Europeans, and also by the region.

And, you know, the bulwark, the country that was the enemy, Sudan, has now become -- is now instrumental in helping to avert a real famine, because South Sudan's future is also very much contingent on Sudan keeping its borders open to allow for importation of food as well. So the enemy now has become very vital to prevent South Sudan's crisis as well.

When you look at the conflict, I think from an early warning organization, we save ourselves from trying to say: we told you so, but the interim period between the conflict -- the comprehensive peace agreement, the year of 2005, up until the time when we were supposed to deliver this new country in 2011, there were lots of failed -- there were lots of failures by the international community, and the region, to fulfill the basic requirements of that peace agreement.

And the fundamental one was to encourage, nurture and develop this liberation movement into more of a viable democratic institution that can help guide governance in that country. And what happened is, the international community did what it traditionally does, is that, it does enough to stabilize but it never goes 100 percent of the way, which is to help drive that vehicle for change and transformation.

And so lo and behold you get to 2011 and you get that classic struggle between different forces within the liberation and grouping; a lot of contestation, of corruption, access to wealth, access to key institutions that all have money; a real tension between various ethnic divides, and a real struggle over how you share arrangements. And so you get that classic problem of succession of power, and how you transfer power over.

So we get in 2013, a month before the civil war broke out in December 2013, the language was: we are cautiously optimistic that South Sudan will continue on the right track. That's the United Nations, and we have international donor community holding an investment forum because the economics in South Sudan suggest that this will help lift the country out. And then the country goes into civil war.

Now the region, to be fair to the region, although it never declared it as a central goal, the

region has been successful, and I say it relatively, in averting a proxy war in the region, and averting a regional war. But it hasn't been able to secure an internal peace for the country.

It accepted a notion, a very narrative notion of peace which is Juba is secure, and also Uganda averted a coup by intervening very quickly to bolster Salva Kiir, the president's position. But we have a situation today where the other key leader in the crisis, Riek Machar has been exiled, and we have to deal with the government's own notion of peace, which is the use of force as an instrument to get the various opposition groups to negotiate a pathway into the transitional government, an offer of amnesty, or the default position is to pressure through force.

The government's strategy; or the government appears to be, or think it's winning a war, I mean it's a peace through attrition. Now the key question is how does the international community deal with that, and it's not a surprise of where the declaration of famine has been declared is in these two areas where there's a lot of pressure and a lot of fighting in these two counties. Again, not surprising because one of the consequences of the conflict is that the opposition groupings are fractured, the conflict has become increasingly localized, and the solution has to, at one level, be localized.

We have a real dilemma in South Sudan today. It is a country that was delivered by the international community, but it's also a country that has managed to avert all pressure by the international community in terms of finding a pathway to peace. So, I think the other very stark, brutal lesson that we've had to learn over the last five years, is that increasingly there are limits to what the international community can do to deliver peace in these countries.

The institutions have been exposed, they've become increasingly fragile, they don't have the bandwidth to cope, there are too many other crises, either on the continent or elsewhere. Syria is the big one. And we are leaving the solutions to the region, the region is part of the solution, but it's also part of the problem.

So, in terms of where we find the solutions, I think we need to rethink the formula, and we'll need to also think how we do peacekeeping, how we do peace-building, and the kind of ingredients that we put in place to help build in this instance, a new country.

In Nigeria, I think a number of people are wary that you have this incredibly wealthy country that has been complacent in its own response. And in Somalia you really do have a conflict that

has been in existence since 1992 -- 1991, and not enough ideas in terms of how to turn this around. But the lens of countering terrorism has been the lens -- which international communities try to solve that problem and not looking at the bigger issues to stabilize Somalia.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. It's a lot on the table already. Let me ask a couple of question to just maybe bring a couple of concepts together and then ask for policy ideas as well. I guess one thing that occurs to me, in reading about this issue over the years, and then hearing the three of you, is it seems that at least in two of the three countries food is actually being used as a weapon, by one group or another, or maybe multiple groups.

Maybe less so in Somalia, these days, compared to the past, because as you said, Kristin, Al-Shabaab maybe is even trying to -- for whatever reasons -- to be slightly more cooperative. So, I guess to go down the row, if I could, first of all, could you explain for the country that you talked about specifically; and Comfort, feel free to, you know, clean up and talk about all of them if you wish. But we'll begin with Karen and Nigeria, and then Kristin and Somalia.

To what extent is food being used as a weapon? And then in the case of Somalia, why do you think Al-Shabaab is not using food as a weapon as much as it might have want? What's behind that change in thinking? Just as we sort of set the landscape for then discussing policy options?

MS. ATTIAH: I think as far as, you know, if it's this -- seen as the strategies of Boko Haram, it was again, the sort of deliberate poisoning of crops and cattle. You know, as people were fleeing. As a tactic I think, again, where you had, at least from what I saw, a bit of, you know, not so much as a weapon but perhaps local leaders being accused of using food, or using supplies that were being received, or that were received from the international community as political leverage.

So, I believe not too long ago, there was -- one of the locals, mayors or leaders, was found guilty of hoarding supplies, so that was a situation that was going on. As far as, you know, again it was -- I think Nigeria I think now and back then when I had a chance to be there on the ground, suffered from, again, its international reputation as being fantastically corrupt, and yet having -- that Nigeria should have enough money and enough resources to deal with this problem. That it was just a lack of political will, really.

And again I think Nigeria was a case, and still is a case where I saw, where at least for

me, you know, as a young reporter, you are kind of questioning the sort of international aid scheme that you have various organizations that we have this idea that if people are displaced we should build camps, and that the camps can only have their own ways of reporting, and their own ways of admitting those who have been victimized by Boko Haram. But the vast majority of people who have been affected, and are going through these hunger issues, are not -- are outside of that system, and are being taken in by families and by communities.

So a real sort of -- and we are seeing a group struggling with how to deal with that. And I think, again, as far as, you know, using again not so much of the weapon, but the problem with the government; and then again back then in 2015, trying to pressure people who were in the these IDP camps to go back; when, again, no crops, no food.

I interviewed farmers who just said, there's nowhere for us to go back to. And yet in this effort, politically, to show the world that they were winning the war on Boko Haram, the government, and still is, trying to pressure people to go back home.

So, I think that is one serious issue. You know, and again, as far as -- I think this really could be, we discussed the challenges but, you know, could this be an opportunity for us to, again, rethink how we structure our aid response. Could we rethink about other ways that the private sectors or universities can step in and fill these of gaps? Again, we start, we think immediately, World Food Programme, we think immediately UNICEF, and they are doing amazing work, but at least from what I saw it hasn’t been enough.

So, could this be a way that we rethink how we deal with food crisis, but also, you know, migrant crisis. And again, Nigeria is extremely difficult because even one community that has been compounded and recorded in one community, they are on the move constantly. So, I met a lot of people who would come down from Borno, go to Adamawa. Some would leave to try to make their way to Abuja, and then come back.

And so it was incredibly difficult to really kind of get a hold on even just accurate numbers, accurate sort of tracking of disease spreading as well. I think these camps also, we talk a lot about food, but also water and hygiene is a serious issue when it comes to these conflicts, and when it comes the international community's response.

So, I know this is the case in Somalia, I believe, about cholera, measles, so it was very difficult to be able to contain the spread of these diseases. So, I mean, I think in Nigeria's case, again, not so much that if anything Boko Haram fighters were also suffering from, you know, lack of food, and then we saw evidence of their fighters also starving, right.

And they would raid towns anytime there is -- and this is the problem again when it comes to humanitarian assistance coming to help people who have been victimized by Boko Haram. I had an opportunity, I didn’t know this at the time, but I had an opportunity to be a part of an aid convoy, delivering medicine, food.

And it was fascinating to be able to see that, but also an incredibly dangerous experience, because you knew that Boko Haram they were hungry, they were lacking medicine, they had been pushed back into the use of force. And so any delivery of aid, we knew that they had a high potential for it to be -- for that town to be attacked, and those supplies to be raided. And sure enough a few days after we left that town was attacked.

And so that’s a perennial problem when it comes to providing any sort of aid, and support to these areas that are affected. How do you do that without potentially strengthening the terroristic forces that you are trying to fight. But then, also how do you deliver aid without making that population a target, right?

MR. O’HANLON: Yes. Yes.

MS. ATTIAH: So that was a difficult situation.

MR. O’HANLON: That’s good. I'm going to come back to you one more time in a minute on some of the options we ought to be thinking about. But Kristin, if you could say a word about Somalia, and also maybe explain a little further on how this antiterrorism concern has inhibited the actions of international agencies, or at least American agencies. I don't have a really good feel for just what the effects of that have actually been in people's decision-making.

MS. McKIE: Yes. I think that’s an astute observation that food is not being used as much as a weapon now. And granted I have to say that the famine and the famine relief is still quite new this time around, so we'll see, you know, as we go forward in the months, if the situation changes. But, yeah, I think Al-Shabaab has sort of shifted its use of food as a weapon mostly because that strategy last

time really didn't serve them at all. It was quite shortsighted.

They were trying to keep, humanitarian organizations out of the region, but yet were not then able at point to fill the gap, and provide the food relief, or even in the case of medicine and other services. And it really created a backlash against Al-Shabaab, among the populations that were living in the area that they controlled.

So I think this time around Al-Shabaab has, you know, taken a long-term view, and know that if they, again, try to keep the humanitarian organizations out that -- and don't replace the food aid, that it's not going to turn out well again for them.

But I think they are still politicizing food aid. So, they are not using it as a weapon but still making it very political. Even six years ago they banned World Food Programme and some other -- you know, more Western organizations, but yet they were able to work a bit with some of the more Muslim and Arab humanitarian organizations. The Red Crescent was able to deliver aid and some of the other organizations. And even bilateral partners: Turkey has actually gotten involved this time and -- both last time, but even more this time in Somalia. Or Saudi Arabia has, I believe, promised aid.

And so it will be an interesting picture to see this time, you know, who Al-Shabaab is willing to negotiate with versus not. You know, will they still ban World Food Programme, and then the U.N. agencies. Will the Arab and Muslim organizations have a better chance of providing some aid?

But I think, too, another thing that was a result of the food as a weapon last time, is that a lot of the humanitarian organizations shifted aid modalities. Instead of just providing in-kind food aid, they started moving to more market-based solutions. So, unconditional cash transfers and voucher programs, to try to get around this issue of food as a weapon. And even though some I think who were skeptical of these types of interventions and aid modalities the last time, they actually seem to be quite effective.

They are able to be scaled up more quickly. You know, getting vouchers, or getting cash transfers to people was a lot quicker than bringing food from abroad. They offered greater choice to the end recipient. You know, a lot of people, you know, maybe they were able to take out a loan and buy food previously, so now they had a debt. And so with that cash they would be able to pay that debt back, but they didn't need -- the food, they needed the money to pay the previous debt.

So that was another advantage of these types of cash transfers for purchases. And also

there was a sense from, you know, reports of the previous famine relief that these cash transfers really were able to sort reach a good number of people than food aid would have been. And also you got a better sort of return on your money, a lot more of the actual dollar amount went to the programming than would have if the funds had been used to purchase food and transport it and what not.

So, I think that's another interesting result of the weaponization of food before, has been the shifting of aid modality that might actually be, you know, a positive development.

MS. ATTIAH: Could I jump in?

MR. O'HANLON: Please.

MS. ATTIAH: So, yeah, when you mentioned Turkey and its involvement with Somalia. I don't know if anybody remembers, at least until a few months ago, when all of a sudden there seems to be this activism around, Turkey Airlines help Somalia. I don't know if anybody remembers that. But basically it was actually a big sort of campaign. Celebrities got a hold of it basically, and found out that Turkish Airlines was one of the few airlines that could fly, you know, to Mogadishu, so he thought was: well, if they can, then they should be able to fly truckloads of aids.

And so there was a huge, you know, social media kind of campaign to try to pressure Turkish Airlines to pay for a plane of food. And, you know, in a sense what that shows, as we are talking about kind of the changes in the sort of global geopolitical landscape when it comes to aid, and it's thinking about now, who are the new partners, the new people on the scene. Turkey, Gulf States, even, gosh, China, that could fill the gap where Western countries are unable to sometimes unwilling, right, to send aid.

MS. McKIE: Right, absolutely.

MS. ATTIAH: So I mean I feel like that's also kind of this thought when you are having perhaps the U.S. indicating that it's going to step from this traditional kind of humanitarian role at this (crosstalk).

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Excellent! Good point. And over to you, Comfort, please?

MS. ERO: I wanted to just to --

MR. O'HANLON: Jump in on that, or whatever else.

MS. ERO: So I just want to say one of the things that we observed that it's very much of

what you -- your reading of Al-Shabaab, I think in terms of differences and similarities since 2011, one thing that we have observed currently is that, and especially February and March of this year, we saw large numbers of drought-stricken families and victims try to flee certain areas in South Central.

Al-Shabaab was still continuing to block and prevent that exodus out. And it wasn't just blocking Western relief, but it extended that effort to prevent aid by Muslim NGOs as well. So that paranoia that we saw in response to the U.S. air strikes, and also the regional intervention in 2011, is still very much there today. So, I just wanted to put that as a qualifier.

But also I want to add that we are right to focus on Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, but one of the things that we have seen is the humanitarian fallout of the counterinsurgency as well, by Nigeria and the region. But while the military approach -- the military first approach has been an important one, and we've seen some successes, it has come at a high cost.

And one of the things, in terms of policy options, I think if there's one thing that needs to be corrected today, is that that military first approach must be accompanied by a more comprehensive approach that thinks through how it's going to provide reconstruction and political dialogue, I mean, and how to engage Al-Shabaab. Some of that's happening anyway in terms of how you release the girls as well.

And also I think that's why we've also been very clear that has to be a more civilianized dimension to the Multinational Joint Task Force, that much of the operation, the thinking, even around camps, it's been delivered by the military who don't have the knowledge to know how to run camps as well.

And I think we should also, you know, caution the State Governor of Borno States, while Nigeria generally has an allergy to this kind of international aid assistance, and a lot of it stems from the Biafra War, and how sides were taken in that conflict. What is also driving Nigeria's awkwardness is the concern that the foreign becomes a permanent body even if it's altruistic foreign in the notion of the humanitarian agency as well.

And I also just wanted to sort of nuance the Nigerian narrative, to say that this almost a huge leap of faith for a government that has been in denial for a very long time, to accept that there is a crisis on the Northeast border. And it wasn't until the Chibok girls happened that there was a reality

check on the country anyway, and particularly south of the federal capital; so, getting the rest of the country to understand the crisis.

But in response to what you said about the private sector, completely right; what we observed, we went to the Nigerian Economic Summit, kind of Nigerian own mini Davos, among the private sector, and there was a very clear message by the private sector -- to the private sector to say that the government is on his own in trying to work this out in the Northeast, and you have support him, and that we can't rely on the government, a government that is overstretched itself, and is slowly moving its own governance plan out. And the partnership has to be private-public as well.

So, where we are there, I think is still a struggle, but the governor has been at the front face, in trying to encourage the public-private partnership, but again, it's been at the hugely for faith for Nigerians to even accept that, so you cannot understand the psychological dilemma for Nigerians to accept that in their own territory there's food insecurity, malnutrition, on the same scale, potentially, as the Biafra War. And that generation is still alive as well.

The other thing I want to say about Somalia is that it's not just Al-Shabaab, actually, that I think poses a danger, in terms of famine relief and drought as well. We have the clan ministries as well, who are also, in terms of policy options, I think, how you get the clan ministers to also unblock the checkpoints, and to provide relief to their own areas.

So, Puntland, Somalia, and also have a drought as well. The one common link between all the three countries is the bureaucratic impediments that we've seen, either from very much at either the provincial level, or at the state level. So, I think that’s a big ask in terms of how you sort of unblock access to a number of areas. It's important that you get rid of this red tape, at the Somali level, but you also provide access to a number of the areas in Nigeria as well.

MR. O’HANLON: Excellent! We've got a lot on the table, including a number of elements of potential new policy approaches that have been discussed, either are being attempted on the ground or have been proposed by our panelists today.

So, let's invite you all now, to keep pushing the conversation forward on whatever parts of this broad subject are of interest. Whether it's sort of understanding better conditions on the ground or thinking about what we should do, or what we should encourage local parties to do.

I'll take two at a time. Please wait for a microphone. I'll start with the woman in the yellow sweater, and then we'll take one more before coming back to the panel.

SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you very much for a very, sadly, interesting presentation. Nao Hossain, I'm at the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex. My question is, we've been talking a lot about conflict as a cause of famine, but I really wanted to ask and to push a little bit on, is the extent to which the panel think that food insecurity, chronic food insecurity in a lot of these areas linked of course to climate change, is actually a cause of this conflict. And whether these are kind of cyclical secular problems we are facing here.

MR. O'HANLON: Great question. Thank you. And let's one more, and let's take the gentleman here in the red shirt. Actually we'll take two more, we'll deal with row three here, so both of you, and then we'll take another round afterwards.

MR. HERBERT: I figured it was Comfort who said the comment about crisis following in the wake in the of the U.N., and I'm wondering if that could be interpreted in one of two ways. That they are doing things that are generating a crisis, but also are they simply being installed in places that are already unstable and they are just postponing the inevitable kinds of adjustments that are needed?

All of this has a sort of -- echoes also of the refugee camps in DRC, and there a critical lesson was the physical placement of it, and the ability to maintain security of people moving in and out, because as soon as you had people masquerading as refugees coming and going, the militants (inaudible) came in the camp, and they took over the distribution of medicine and food and other things, so I'm not convinced the cash transfer is any kind of remedy to that.

It really goes to a recommendation of how you are managing and controlling the valuables that are there, and also controlling the physical space around the camps, so that if there's not the ability to be moving in and out perpetually and infiltrating the camps, so they are putting them well away from the battle zone, and it seems to be a critical feature.

MR. O'HANLON: And before you pass the microphone, could you identify yourself, please?

MR. HERBERT: Ross Herbert, with USAID.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

MS. ARIEFF: Hi. Alexis Arieff for the Congressional Research Service. I also wanted to follow up on Comfort's point about the reemergence of conflict in -- or the sort of continuation of conflict in new forms in places where there are already U.N. peacekeeping operations. And you noted that that should maybe provoke some discussion or consideration of what that means for international peacekeeping approaches, and the international peace-building agenda.

I wonder if you could just elaborate a bit more on what you think that tells of how the discussion needs to shift; and if you could touch also on Mali when you address that question. That should be very interesting.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. Great! So, why don't we start with Karen and just work down. And don't feel free to take all the questions, whichever one most -- you feel like you have a good response to.

MS. ATTIAH: Sure. So, I think the question about, again, camps, and security. While, not too long after I was there, yeah, there was a few suicide bombings in the IDP camps, which led to, naturally, a kind of, I guess panic on both sides; of course of Boko Haram but, again, as Comfort mentioned, a fear of an overreaction on the part of, perhaps, the Nigerian forces, the Nigerian security forces.

This issue of, so cash vouchers or transfers; I mean you saw, you know, some aid groups doing the traditional food drops, and those sorts of things, and then others that were using, I think the American University of Nigeria was using innovations with, yeah, with vouchers, like using mobile phones as well, for like electronic vouchers that they could take to certain markets, and then be able to exchange for whatever provisions that they needed.

But, you know, of course I mean I think -- I'm not sure my comments are necessarily an answer or a solution, but you know, this whole sort of orientation towards dealing with kind of those who are fleeing conflict and famine with camps it's -- I'm wondering again, it's this bedrock of how the international community, organizations have dealt with the thought of war for decades and generations, and yet states that are hosting them don't want this.

We saw that, and we see that in Nigeria again when they are trying to sort of force people back to their homes. We saw Kenya's -- Dadaab's attempts to close down Dadaab, and citing the same

sort of concerns, right, that Al-Shabaab is recruiting in the camps. We can't control the activity there, and again, a sort of denial about (a) how intractable the conflicts are that they are facing. Again, Boko Haram is still active, it's still rampant, it's still an ongoing conflict, and yet trying to figure out ways to make it so that the reminders of how intractable the conflicts are, which very often are in camps.

And again, in Nigeria's case, the same thing that they don't want this permanent international presence in that sense, aid regime in their country, makes it so that it's this perpetuating cycle, I guess, of denial and also of fear and uncertainty for those who are being forced to flee, and for refugees.

So I think that’s, you know, from Nigeria to Kenya, to Uganda now they are facing restrain from South Sudanese refugees and the discretionary of the camps, I think that’s a perennial issue.

MR. O’HANLON: Could I come back. This is very interesting. I just want to make sure I'm taking in all the different points, because there are complex forces at work here, clearly. I think I hear saying, Karen, that, and maybe building on the question, that there may be situations where governments overstate threats from the camps, on the other hand, the camps may not be the best way to provide aid just on its own terms.

MS. ATTIAH: Correct. Absolutely correct! I mean, you just see -- and in the case of Nigeria specifically, there were scandals about, you know, trafficking in the camps, rape, also again, disease outbreaks. Most of the people don't want to be in the camps at all, right, but yeah, that is again the foundational sort of way, of how the international community responds.

But the camps, from both sides, right, can be easy targets both from the governments, you know, at any point, right, and then also, yes, it can be targets from the terrorist groups out there; we are finding. So, it's tricky. And I don't really know what the answer is, but I think it's a part of -- basically a part of the landscape with these conflicts.

MR. O’HANLON: A very quick aside. I was in Jordan in November, and it was striking in Jordan, far away from the part of the world we are talking about, but still dealing with a very serious problem, while with vulnerable populations, that of the more than 1 million Syrian refugees on Jordanian soil, very few are in camps.

MS. ATTIAH: Right. Mm-hmm.

MR. O'HANLON: Most of them are essentially interspersed within villages, living with cousins or what have you, and that may or may not be a replicable model in all these cases, but it's worth pondering. Please, Kristin?

MS. McKIE: Sure. I'll just respond very briefly to the question about the cash transfers and the vouchers, and (Inaudible), I take your point, I think it's exactly correct, that this is certainly not a perfect aid modality. I mean there are a lot of problems with food aid being diverted, being captured especially, like you said, with group (inaudible) within the camps and setting up, you know, almost -- governance, you know, within the camp and being able to, you know, tax the population to get their resources.

Certainly that's still in place, but I do think beyond the advantages that I did mention earlier about the scaling up more quickly and, you know, being more useful to populations, the other thing that I think the cash transfers and vouchers do help with is that it is supporting local farmers, local shop owners, local suppliers. And so, you know, really trying to keep at least some semblance of the local economy going and in place that will help later on with resilience, and in rebuilding, which is something that I think that, with resilience I see a lot more talking about famine and relief.

You know, it's not just solving a problem today, but it's thinking how can we actually set networks and economies in place that can take them beyond the famine. And so, you know, I think you still need both, and probably other aid modalities as well, you know, one is not going to be the answer, but yeah, absolutely I think that's a point well taken.

MR. O'HANLON: Comfort?

MS. ERO: We tried in the three countries that we focused on, Nigeria, South Sudan and Somalia to also draw attention to the drought, the effective nature of these crises that they are not necessarily linked to the conflict themselves. And so the Horn of Africa itself is facing a real drought. In Kenya, for example, we looked at the same with the Lake Chad Basin, and South Sudan, certainly on the border with Sudan as well.

To Alexis' and the gentleman's bigger other question: where to start? I mean, one of the things that -- I mean it's interesting that at the top of the Trump agenda, as a result of a very slim-lined budget for aid, is the future of peacekeeping. And I think that depending on where you stand, it does offer

some opportunity to get the U.N. family to think about how to think more effectively about peacekeeping on the ground.

But a lot of the ideas and the ingredients of how to do this was written in the Review Panel of 2015 or '16, and even 10 years before that, by Brahimi as well. So, regardless of what the President here has put on the table, there are elements in place in terms of how to do peacekeeping or peace operations more effectively to think and to be relevant to the situation on the ground.

In Mali, was the right solution for Mali at the time, a massive peacekeeping operation? Or what was required, a special political mission that focused on the politics of the crisis? Rather than a sort of short focus on the crisis itself, but focused more on the bigger national questions on how to deal with the tensions between Bamako and the North as well.

In the DRC, our sense was that we got caught up in a numbers games, and we did not think about how to make MONUSCO fit for the political challenges that will arise come December 2017, so that it doesn’t become the target of political violence that will inevitably occur.

In South Sudan, we virtually created a mission that became a Christmas tree, a panacea to try and rebuild but never dealt with how to deal with this transformation, so it's everything else but the more difficult, political work of how you get a -- how you transform a liberation movement into a political movement as well.

And I think the concern for us in this Crisis Group, is that the U.N., whether in a form of a peacekeeping or even a special mission, never quite works out its entry strategy, and then becomes a permanent fixture, and then becomes an easy target for an entrenched leader, and/or a useful strategy for a leader that is seeking an extra instrument to protect and keep it in place as well.

And that is the dilemma we have in MONUSCO, so there are bits of the U.N. that Kabila doesn’t want, and our sense is that the conversation of the Security Council embolden him further, because it was speaking to those bits of the MONUSCO that it didn’t want.

The bit of the U.N. Mission that will hurt or could potentially hurt Kabila, is the more sharp end of the peacekeeping, or in the form of the Intervention Brigade, that is there to sort of help deal with problems on the Eastern Congo as well.

And then you have a situation in Bamako where, one year ahead of the election, neither

side has confidence in the peace process. MONUSMA has become the most perilous and the most dangerous peacekeeping mission in the world. It's at the sharp end of the counterterrorism strategy, we are seeing a high unprecedented level of casualties, and it hasn't -- and we are one month away to renewing the mandate, and the conversations cannot be about more troop deployment, because even when we did increase the troop numbers last year, they were not game-changers on the ground.

In fact, what we've seen is a mission that is hemmed in, in its banks, and it's not able to be increasingly mobile to go after the various militia groups. So, while we are seeing a real security traffic jam in Mali in the form of the French operation, the regional force, the U.N. peacekeeping and the Malians, we haven't altered the dynamics on the ground.

So, is this the right formula? The weak link in all of this is a real consideration of what the politics of these countries ought to look like, and it's a more difficult task for much of these entities to get engaged. There is a conversation now taking place in Mali about how to strengthen the civilian component of MONUSMA to go more local, to sort of enable local conversations in terms of driving the peace process, but it seems as though a lot of effort has been put into Mali, and yet the dynamics on the ground haven't changed significantly.

So, this is what I mean about rethinking how we do business when you ultimately don't change the dynamics, but sometimes sort of solidify those dynamics on the ground.

MR. O'HANLON: Can we stay on this for a minute, if you don't mind?

MS. ERO: Yes.

MR. O'HANLON: Because I want to advance a provocation to see how you react, and others may -- Kristin and Karen may want to as well. Very good points; and very nuanced and persuasive, but let me just take a further step back and look at the missions we are talking about in general. It strikes me, and again, I'm going to paint with an extremely broad brush here. It strikes me that in Mali we still have a situation, that as troubled as it is, it's much better than it was a half decade ago.

MS. ERO: Sure.

MR. O'HANLON: And therefore I'm inclined to try to sort of work from within on reform of the mission, and you probably are too. In Congo, to expect the U.N. to solve the Kabila crisis would be unrealistic. That's not really what a peacekeeping mission can do. Of course we don't want to prop up

Kabila, so if somehow Kabila were only able to stay in power indefinitely because of the U.N. peacekeeping presence, then you'd have to rethink it.

But it strikes me as the first approximation, the U.N. mission that you may sustain because, you know, to the extent that it's addressing problems in the East, they are at least not as bad as they had been 10 or 15 years ago, and you've got to handle the Kabila crisis in some other way.

However, now let me turn -- And by the way, and Somalia, you know, even though things are very troubled, it's still not as bad as it had been 5, 10, 20 years ago. So, yes, we should try to keep reforming the Africa Union Mission, and helping it do better, but it's still better to have it there than not. However -- and I realize I'm just advancing a provocation, however, on South Sudan --

MS. ERO: And it's very (crosstalk).

MR. O'HANLON: Well, on South Sudan, I'm starting to worry that we are complicit in a man-made famine, that in a way we have to extend the lessons we learned in (inaudible) and in Rwanda, where the U.N. presence allowed -- or because of the tight rules of engagement, and the restrictions, essentially allowed these genocides to happen before our eyes. And we decided we are not going to do that again, we are not going to be complicit on that again.

But on South Sudan, are we maybe now doing it in a different way? That we are essentially, with all these people on the ground, things are actually getting worse before our eyes, and we are not causing it, but we are standing by and watching genocide by a different form happen before our eyes, and we ought to rethink whether we should be there at all, unless we are going to go in Chapter 7. So that's my provocation.

MS. ERO: So that's a provocation for you. So, you have reaffirmed one of the big concerns that we have, you know, and it goes back to, once the situation is good enough, then we tend to walk away. So, you set the bar too low. I mean, and who decides when it's good enough, and what is the baseline of your decision to go in, in the first place and come out? So let me put that down as the first one.

We would agree with you that MONUSCO is being left alone to sort this out. Let me also add, the International Criminal Court was left alone to sort of deliver peace in Sudan, and look at where we are today. So, let me just put that down as another mix.

But which is why we've also made it very clear that the burden of providing a political solution to this, must be taken back to the Security Council, and it must step up to the plate.

It defined a mandate, a mission, and it's left the hard task of trying to get a leader to step down of power without working out what the incentives are to help guarantee that break. Look what happened on Ivory Coast. I mean look at what happened in Ivory Coast. I mean there's a right lesson. We are potentially on the verge of an Ivory Coast trajectory here in terms of what's happened in the DRC.

Now the burden to do something currently lies with the region also because the region has come up with its own sort of template to help Kabila see his way out of power. So, much of that depends on South Africa, which is preoccupied, to a certain extent, has punched below its weight, and an increasingly frustrated and concerned Angola that is watching its border very closely as well.

So, the future does rest with the region to help work this out, but it's also that the Security Council owns this process as well, and it's put the burden to deliver this on a mission that really does not have the capacity to deal with election-related violence, but so far what it has done to stem certain crisis has been important as well. So, I don't want to paint a very negative picture on MONUSCO as well.

But let me go back to what I was saying about an incentive structure as well. In all of this process we don't think about formulas in with which to induce good behavior as well. So, as difficult a pill it is to stomach, we potentially, you know, because the government in South Sudan perceives itself as having the upper hand, how can we induce certain good behavior to try and turn that perception into paving the pathway to peace.

So, the government has put down its own idea of a formula of peace. Ceasefire, you know, negotiation with armed groups, and also a national dialogue, all of this will solidify the government, something that the (inaudible) doesn’t like. But is there a way to think through, you know, tools for inducing good behavior, and what does that look like as well? You know, the soft landing of Charles Taylor has been shot out the window so nobody believes that idea.

You know, but there are other tools in which you can, you know, say to Salva Kiir, if you show commitment to your idea of this peace solution, we know that you don't have the capacity to maybe drag everybody else along to support that, but we can offer you certain processes to deliver that peace.

So, maybe the logic has to be, you know, can we encourage you, can we nudge you in

the right direction? Can we lay down incentives, structures to help you think through your way out of a crisis as well? Because these leaders are in the survival mode.

MR. O'HANLON: Kristin, and then Karen on the same general subject, if you have any thoughts. You take a pass. Okay, Karen, over to you.

MS. ATTIAH: I mean, with Sudan -- I mean, just from the sort of media perspective, I mean, just when the U.N. stood by and did nothing, and watched as people were being, you know, slaughtered. I mean it was -- you know, even just in the eyes of sort of the international media it did lead to these questions of: then what is the U.N. there for? And that's a question of strengthening the (inaudible).

And I believe the commander of that was replaced. I believe that -- but still this fundamental question of sort of peacekeeping missions in these conflicts. Really, I think that was one shining example. And then Mali, I mean, I'm sure everyone knows, but it's the most dangerous U.N. peacekeeping mission in the world as far as casualties, right. So I think you raise just a really interesting question about that.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. Let's go to another round of questions from all of you, so let's go up here in the round, row 2, both questions, and then I'll take another round later.

MS. CLEMENTS: I'm Lucy Clements. I'm with MSI. I think, Comfort, you are onto something when you say that the international community and the Security Council has to think about a formula for inducing good behavior. I'd like to point to teeny tiny Gambia, where ECOWAS and the AU, and Gambia is not an important country when you talk about strategic importance; however, the way the AU and ECOWAS manage the situation to move Jammeh out of there, as you, Comfort said, he was in survival mode.

Had he not been taken out he would have been killed, his whole family probably. But I mean, that was -- I think a lesson learned for the international community to see how the AU and ECOWAS dealt with that.

The other point I'd like to make is, you know, when we talk about, does food and security provoke conflict and peacekeeping in the (inaudible) of all of those. I read an interesting article a couple of months ago, where it talks about how we must think and draw a distinction between individual

radicalization, and extremism, and how communities respond to a breakdown of law and order in conflict.

So I think the international community, we are certainly shortsighted, you know, we look at the counterterrorism response as the be all and end all to dealing with Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and any extremist group that exists. If there is not the accompanying humanitarian response, we are just tilting at windmills.

I mean, I just left Chad two weeks ago, and I was fortunate to talk to some members of the Multinational Joint Task Force, and one of the things they said to me was, we desperately need ways to engage the population. You know, we are military guys, but if we are not able to win hearts and minds, and really understand what people need, we are ineffective.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Sir?

MR. ALBERT: Hi. My name is Ben Albert. I'm with Plan International, this is a global children's rights organization. So, what I do within Plan is engage the private sector in development, so I think unsurprisingly, my question kind of gets at what all of you have mentioned in one way or another; whether it be unconventional aid modalities, or specific examples with Turkish Air. So what are your policy advice or recommendations in terms of governments in your -- you know, the countries that we are talking about right now, in terms of engaging the private sector both locally and with multinational corporations? So, I guess, if we could dig into that a little bit further.

MR. O'HANLON: Good. And I'll take a couple more, because that -- let's go to the two gentlemen, one in the red tie, and one in the blue shirt, so I will big round here, and see how we do with divvying up the answers.

MR. PATERNO: Thank you very much. My name is Steve Paterno. I'm with the South Sudanese Embassy here in D.C. In terms of solution to South Sudan, I tend to agree with Comfort, that the conflict nowadays is being localized. Can that be supported? Can that be the way now to achieve conflict? Because all this time, the talk in Addis, the talk in Tanzania, were focused on the leaders who are not irrelevant, they are out of the fight. And the fight now is localized. Can there be a solution?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And then one more.

SPEAKER: Hi. My name Gustav (Inaudible), with the Committee for Free and Democratic Equatorial Guinea. My question is: where is the role of the African Union, in all of this? You

never hear about the African Union. We know that, for example, the Chinese spent $20 million building a new facility out there, and you have to wonder whether or not they've been co-opted by the Chinese, and what role China is playing in all this chaos. The hidden hand.

But I'm wondering, with regard to peacekeeping, famine, stability issues, what can be done to restructure the African Union, other than it being looked upon as being a dictator's club?

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. So, why don't we -- Karen, do you want to start, and then we'll just flick our way down the row, and hopefully we'll get to sort of one or two questions per person, if it works it out that way.

MS. ATTIAH: Sure. So, on the issue of the military, I mean, again, particularly in the case of Nigeria, and Comfort brought this up. When you look at death tolls, often you see for instance the death toll in the war against Boko Haram, that also includes, I think, casualties inflicted by the military and civilian populations.

You know, even my experience with traveling even with the military to deliver aid, and you made that point, that again so much of this response is being delivered by the military that also doesn't have the trust of the people who they not only need for delivering aid, but also for intelligence, right?

Very often it's a part of the issue of surveillance and intelligence capabilities is that these communities don't have the trust of the military to be able to provide them with, you know, advanced notice of when it's actually going to happen, just to put that out there. But again, the response to Boko Haram has been very much a militarized one of course. The government has authorized the sale of attack helicopters, war planes, which reinforces -- some would say, you know, would reinforce Buhari's approach of a heavily militarized tact to Boko Haram.

But, you know, of course I think all of us agree with you, and it's interesting to hear that in Chad, you know, one of the partners in the fight up against Boko Haram, they are realizing, I think governments will realize that a military solution will not be the only solution. It needs to come with development; it needs to come with rebuilding infrastructure.

I mean, still you go to some of these areas, at least a year ago, and you find there's no presence of the government. People are rebuilding roads themselves that have been bombed out by

Boko Haram. And this is that the thought of, you know, again there are other partners, could we imagine a situation where the Chinese come in say, you know, we'll offer to help you rebuild, you know, a post-conflict support?

Could we imagine a world order where that is the norm, if the West, and if the U.S. and if the U.S. decide to step back, who would fill that vacuum? And maybe if you would see some European countries in -- again, response to their own migration crisis, seeing the effects of Africa's crises at their doorstep, all of a sudden saying, well, I guess we should invest in development in some of these countries so that their employment opportunities, so that these people aren't coming to our borders and causing, you know, political problems. This question of the AU, I mean --

MS. McKIE: Where to start.

MS. ATTIAH: I mean, at least in Gambia, the Gambia situation, and ECOWAS, that was stunning, and that was in a sense an example of, you know, these regional blocks, I think that was Ghana, or Nigeria, these regional heads really taking leadership of this situation, and urging a positive outcome. I guess you could say, you know, he did loot his way out. So, you know, and perhaps sometimes offering golden parachutes does have perverse incentives, but it did avert a regional crisis.

So, for the African Union, yeah, this perception that the African Union (inaudible) rhetoric about respecting the general rule of law, constitutions, protecting civilians that it has failed in so many instances, to be able to either -- conflict prevention or, you know, being able to arouse enough political support in the case of DRC, I think it's been a serious failure already. And I'm sure my panelists have more to say about the African Union, but it's (crosstalk).

MR. O'HANLON: Good. Thank you. Kristin?

MS. McKIE: So, to pick up on the African Union topic briefly. From my looking at the African Union, you know, certainly not an expert on this, but I think part of the trouble with situations like, you know, AMISOM in Somalia, and some of the others is that, you know, to get countries to commit troops to the African Union missions, they really don't want their troops actively engaged in, you know, sort of a conflict situations.

So, in Somalia it was very much just protecting Mogadishu and you're just having that, you are not really engaging Al-Shabaab sort of in the field as much. And so, you know, it's a tough line to

walk, right? You want a force that's effective, but then you also want to make sure that countries are willing to commit troops, and it's a hard balance.

But I agree that I think that the regional groupings, ECOWAS, SADC, the East Asian -- East African community more seems to be going on there, actually, than the AU. And I think, you know, the problem with the AU that we saw I think in Côte d'Ivoire, which someone already mentioned, and in other places is that, you know, you definitely have, you know, sort of regional or just different countries disagreeing on the right strategies. Whereas, and I think the regional community is a little bit more, you know, maybe seeing eye-to-eye on some of the issues.

This is a little bit of attempting -- bringing up again the situation. We talked about this a little bit before the panel, about these golden parachutes, and how to, you know, convince; as you've said, as part of the incentives, leaders to step down.

And I think one of the hard things about that is thinking not just about the leaders themselves, but these leaders all have, you know, their networks, their political structures, all their all their founding associates, and so it's not just about creating or planning for them, it's how you actually, you know, sort of get the whole, you know, sort of, network disengaged from the presidency, and what not.

And so I think that's difficult. And it's interesting that in Gambia, you know, they were able to extract Jammeh, but you know, what has happened to his network, I don't know. Let me see if there's anything else.

MS. ATTIAH: Could I?

MS. McKIE: Yeah. Go for it. Yeah, yeah.

MS. ATTIAH: Since you are on the topic of peacekeeping, this just came to mind. Where it can be, again, problematic is where, if you have countries that are contributing peacekeeping forces, particularly I'm thinking of Burundi, in particular, where when the situation in Burundi, when Nkurunziza was going south, and the first question: well, can we sanction Burundi?

MR. O'HANLON: Right.

MS. ATTIAH: And then, no, they contribute a large number of forces to, you know, helping to fight these regional crises. And Al-Shabaab saying with, you know, Uganda, the provocateurs, D.C. is that -- Well, Uganda has been a reliable partner, has contributed forces, which means that any

solutions to whether or not the political situations in these countries go south, there's always this: yes, but they help fight our battles, you know.

MS. ERO: But I think in the case of Burundi, we've walked a little bit further along the line because we hear we avoided them using that security veto, as a reason to (crosstalk) --

MS. ATTIAH: Right. Yeah. I'm just remembering that in the initial part that was the sort of, well we can't really touch them, the U.S., we are not really wary of funding and support for their troops because, you know. So I think that’s another kind of, again, not that we have -- I know we are trying to talk about solutions, but other (inaudible) to some of these issues that, you know, we should keep in mind.

MS. ERO: But it's an important solution. Let's test it out in Burundi, this effort to use the security vetoes, an excuse to carry on. We've seen it also that the troop-contributing countries also threatening to walk away from Somalia as well.

MS. ATTIAH: Right. That’s right.

MS. ERO: I mean, in terms of how to engage the private sector let me answer it in this way. I mean, one of the things that all these countries around the Lake Chad Basin need to start thinking about is the thereafter. And the private sector then to be a part of that.

Today we have on the table, at least from the Nigerian side of the shop, what we call the -- what the government calls the Buhari Plan, and it their Marshall Plan to deal with reconstruction of the Northeast.

You know, one of the reasons why the international aid agencies, and the rest of the international instruments have struggled to help Nigeria, is because there's a sense in which there's a lot of corruption, and there's no transparency into that aid, how that aid is going to be delivered.

But this is also a Nigeria that is facing multiple threats, and one of the biggest ones is the economy. Although there are indications that the oil prices are slightly improving, but it's still a country that’s under I mean serious economic threat. And if we look at it in the lens of, this is a productive country that should be able to cope with this, we may miss an important opportunity to help deal with this problem.

So, how do bodies like The World Bank, and I think -- and they are beg to think about it;

how do they help the government deliver the Buhari Plan; the very expensive, monumental, lots of volumes to read, and to go through it? But how to deliver that plan at a national level; but how do you ensure you link it up to other efforts in the region?

So, it's not just a nationalistic plan, but it's also, you have a more joined up regional approach that deals with the Lake Chad Basin, which, regardless of Boko Haram's existence, faces underdevelopment, poverty. And there would have been another -- if it wasn't Boko Haram it would have been somebody else as well. So how do you prevent -- you know, prevent that from happening. So, I think that's something that is worth thinking about.

In terms of, you know, it's a localized solution, a response to South Sudan, I think there are multilayered solutions for South Sudan, but one of the most important things that we do need to concentrate on now, as I said, because the conflict itself had become sort of multilayered and fracturing, and more localized, how to think through the local dialogues, and how to provide incentives to help Salva Kiir?

And then the armed opposition to initiate some kind of local dialogue that is not just the use of force but it involves real dialogue and conversations about how you start to build peace from below, I think is going to be part of a struggle for both the country, the region, and the international communities. And this requires a level of intimacy that the region hasn't been able to -- that the heads of states haven't been able to deliver for South Sudan.

But can I sort of provide a different -- a slightly more different narrative on the African Union as well?

MR. O'HANLON: Yes. Let's make that the final comment, but please do.

MS. ERO: One thing that I would say is this year has been a good year for ECOWAS, after what we thought was a period of regression, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, you know, this has been a good year. And so it was good to see ECOWAS strike back in the same way. And it's been good to see how, of all the regions in Africa, this is the one region that has been very protective of democracy and democratization, and has shot down the third term debate.

So, I think it's been a good year. But that doesn't mean it hasn't also been a good year for the African Union. I mean, I think what we saw at the summit level, and it started last July, and it also

started in the context of the European Union also saying to the African Union, that we cannot continue to underwrite the future of AMISOM in this way.

And there's also a wakeup call from, because of what was happening in Europe, that we were not going to get this kind of assistance. So, the African Union has had to put on the table, quite seriously the issue of self-sufficiency and how it begins to finance itself. It started also in response to Mali, and also in response to the Central African Republic.

So we have a reform agenda on the table that was delivered by President Kagame. And we also have a peace fund on the table that was put on table by Donald Kaberuka, the former head of the Africa Development Plan. The question is, how can you can help the African Union deliver this? How can you get the member states to commit to their Union that they've always struggled to commit as well? And also, you have at the helm, potentially, we have to wait to see how Chairman Faki is going to perform.

One of the interesting things that we saw when he went to South Sudan, and also to Somalia, is that, not only did he take the Commissioner for Peace and Security, but he also took the Commissioner -- the Chairperson for Political Affairs; never done before.

So, does he understand that the solution is not just a military one, but is one of governance? So, we have to see where he's going. But it's true that the African Union faces a test in time. Again, I go back to the perfect storm for the African Union, the partnerships that it's traditionally had either with the international -- with the United States or the European, are being redefined.

And so it has to look back home, and work out what is the most efficient way to deal with peace. Just like the Gutierrez, came into the U.N. saying: prevention, prevention, prevention. You know, Faki has also recognized that it's prevention, it's conflict prevention and it's that political role.

So, we have to watch to see where it's going. It's a tough year for the Union, but it's the first time it's put, you know, on the table based on past positions, a clear roadmap. Can it deliver it, and can its member states help it deliver it? I think we have to wait and see where that conversation goes.

MR. O'HANLON: Nice to finish on a somewhat positive note. Thank you, all, for being here. Please join me in thanking the panelists. (Applause)

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