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WHAT ELECTIONS IN KENYA MEAN
FOR THE COUNTRY, THE CONTINENT, AND THE WORLD

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good morning everyone and welcome to Brookings. I'm Michael O'Hanlon with the Africa Security Initiative in the Foreign Policy program, and we're delighted today to have a discussion on the upcoming elections in Kenya, which as you undoubtedly know, are only a couple of weeks away. August 8th, I believe is the looming date. So, a very important election obviously for Kenya's future, and I'm joined by a fantastic panel of scholars and experts, all with experience in Kenya, and we know there are others here in the room, including Kenyans, who will want to have a voice in the conversation as well. So, we will get to you for sure in the course of the next hour and a half.

The way we are going to proceed after I introduce these distinguished panelists, is to have a bit of a discussion up here for about the first half of the 90 minutes, and then go to you for your thoughts. Normally we say, just your questions, but in this particular case, I think it's important to let people also voice a concern or an opinion or a view, and so as long as we can keep things moving, I'll invite you to do that. We'll get to that in just a moment.

Immediately to my left, Professor Matt Carotenuto of St. Lawrence University. St. Lawrence University has a Nairobi campus. Matt has spent a good deal of time there. He has also spent a good deal of time doing field research on Kenya, throughout his academic career. He's a native of New York and spent a lot of time up there at St. Lawrence University, but also spent a lot of time in Kenya. His recent book is "Obama and Kenya: Contested Histories and the Politics of Belonging." So, you know, I'm still holding out a little bit of hope that President Obama himself, will feel the need to come in today and make a surprise appearance to comment on the book and/or the elections, but I won't get my hopes too high just yet.

Immediately to Matt's left, is Lauren Blanchard, who started the IRI, The International Republican Institute field office back 15 years ago in Kenya, but has for the last decade been at the congressional research service, covering a wide range of issues and countries in Africa, one of our nations real experts now on the subjects, that are of interest to us today, and again, with a great deal of field experience in Kenya itself. Also, a broader prospective on U.S. policy towards Africa, which is clearly part of the discussion today as well.

We're looking first and foremost to understand the elections, the stakes, and what they

mean for Kenya, but obviously we want to think about what Kenya means for the United States, and what potential influence to the extent that appropriate the United States may have on Kenya's future as well.

So, understanding the various interactions, the various interlinkages, in both directions will be important, and Lauren can help us a great deal with that, as can the final panelist John Tomaszewski, also of IRI.

He is essentially in a sense succeeded where Lauren left off, although I guess there was a gap in between. He spent about three years in the Nairobi-East Africa office of IRI, up until just a couple of years ago, and is now based in Washington, where he has a responsibility for a number of countries in Africa from the point of view of IRI, which as many of you know, is an organization like the National Democratic Institute, which is involved in strengthening political parties, trying to help encourage various elements of democracy in countries around the world, from the point of view, not of picking sides, not of picking favorites, but of trying to strengthen various organizations, trying to support electoral reforms, trying to get more voices into various democratic debates around the world including, most importantly today in Kenya.

Just one more word before I then go to Matt and start the conversation. I think you're all aware of the importance of Kenya. It's a country that we all think a lot about when we think about Africa and the United States, but let me just frame a couple of points to remind those of you who may not be specialists.

Kenya is I think the sixth most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa, and that makes it one of the biggies, one of the pivotal states, along with Tanzania which I think is just narrowly ahead of it in population. It is the largest, most populous country in East Africa and only Nigeria and South Africa, DRC, and Ethiopia are larger in population. Kenya is pivotal for the security role it plays in East Africa. It of course is right next to Somalia. It is very close to a number of other countries in the region that are afflicted by various kinds of conflict and challenges, including of course, the two Sudan's and it has its own major challenges, but Kenya has a lot of promise.

Kenya has been growing economically pretty well for quite a while. Kenya has shown a great deal of ability to diversify its economy, to strengthen its economy. It has a very vibrant young population. Very full of promise.

So, at this juncture, remembering that a decade ago the last time we saw a big election cycle in Kenya of this magnitude, there were a lot of problems, and quite a bit of violence and more than a thousand people ultimately killed and perhaps some major setbacks in some areas of Kenyan democracy. We know this moment has a lot of promise, but also some peril, and that's why we're here today.

So, without further ado, I thought I would turn to Matt first, to ask him to do a little better job than I just did of situating this moment in the history of Kenya and trying to just understand how Kenya has come through recent decades in the evolution of its democracy and its political system since independence and just how he sees the magnitude and importance of the elections today. Matt, over to you.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Thanks Mike, and thank you all for coming this morning. So, as a historian, I definitely would you know, echo some of Mike's points about Kenya being a regional center of political and economic activity in East Africa. It has its rivals. In terms of competing for that status in the region, but it is an important, kind of strategic and economic partner with the U.S., the UK, the European Union and increasingly China, and so those are issues that are all at play in the sort of kind of broader significance of this.

From the historical prospective, you know 2017 is also the 60th anniversary of Kenya's National Electoral Process. Really from the first kind of national election in 1957, all the way up until the last elections in 2013, we've seen kind of Kenya's democracy evolve in with some key trends at play.

One, if you think about it from the prospective of independence from 1963 to 2002, it's important to remember that Kenya was ruled by one political party for that entire time, and only two presidents. So, that time was kind of marked by really a period of autocratic rule that set a precedence, moving forward, thinking about kind of national level politics, and elite politicians controlling the national scene through kind of the politics of regionalism and perhaps the politics of identity or ethnicity.

So, also that 40-year period in Kenya's early history kind of set a tone for the power of the presidency in Kenya, which has been a very contested political issue and is certainly at play with this election. What role, how much power, what centrality to the political process is the office of the president.

It is the sixth election in 2017 since the re-introduction of multi-party politics in 1991 which

was sparked by local protests and international pressure where the government was forced to return and open up a de facto to ensure a one-party state in 1991. Three of these elections 1992, 1997, and as Mike mentioned, 2007, have seen electoral related violence with 2007 and 2008, seeing the most extreme levels of that, with over a thousand-people killed and 600,000 internally displaced. And that election is very much on the minds of Kenyan's today and the lived experience of that. There are still internally displaced people within the country, that have not returned to their homes and not been fully re-integrated into their own communities. So, there's very much at play both the memory of it, but also the lived experience to that.

What we know about this kind of electoral violence, is that it is well organized, it is often state sponsored and it is fueled by regional and historical claims of inequality, whether it's on development issues, whether it's on access to land, on equal distribution of resources, which really date all the way back to the colonial period and many of those issues have been unresolved up until the present; and so Kenyan elections, and particularly this election, are both kind of referendums on the present and the future, but also ways to debate and still contest issues from the past.

Other elections in 2002 and 2013, were relatively peaceful, but were still dogged by claims of voter intimidation, voter suppression, and electoral manipulation. And so those are also issues that Kenyans are talking about and wanting to think more about; 2017 is also the second election since the new constitution was passed in 2010, by a national referendum, and support for this document was principally aimed I think at checking the supremacy of the power of the presidency and distributing much of the power, or attempting to distribute much of the centralized power of the central government into 47 new counties, which replaced really the outdated colonial infrastructure of the provincial administration, where Kenyans really weren't voting for their, you know, regional representatives in the national government. Those were being appointed by the Office of the President.

So, Kenyans are voting for new positions for the second time, and I'm sure we'll talk more about the implications of that particularly on the local level, and if you think broadly, just briefly about the candidates themselves, I mean Uhuru Kenyatta, the incumbent, and Raila Odinga the challenger are both well known in the political scene. These are kind of scions of political dynasties in Kenya. Sons of both the first president and vice president of the country. They're known throughout the country. None of the

candidates are new in the political scene, even though Uhuru Kenyatta I believe is 16 years younger than Raila Odinga, and they both lead coalitions, regionally based coalitions across the country, are in a tight race.

Uhuru Kenyatta is running on his record as a president, which is attempting to deliver on sort of big development projects, focusing on that economic growth, focusing on regional security issues.

Raila Odinga is positioning himself as a candidate for change, although he's been in government for quite some time, and thinking about government accountability and really trying to make this a referendum on the 2010 constitution and its efforts to really implement that fully. So that's kind of the broader stake, I see it as a very brief introduction from the perspective of a historian.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. May I ask a follow-up before we go Lauren.

So, President Kenyatta has now been in office for 15ish years, ballpark?

MR. CAROTENUTO: I mean he was elected in 2013, but he's been around since 2002, really in electoral politics.

MR. O'HANLON: As you say, Odinga has been on the national scene now for 15 to 20 years.

Could I just ask you to explain a little more about -- you mentioned that Odinga would like to frame this as a referendum on the constitution of 2010, presumably on, as you say, democratic accountability and you know, everything that's gone on in Kenya for better and for worse.

Can you sharpen that a little bit more, or give some more detail as to what are going to be -- to the extent there are issues, that influence the outcome of this election and of course, we know as Americans it's not always just the issues that intervene in a vote, but to the extent that issues are on people's minds, how are Kenyan's thinking about the choice?

MR. CAROTENUTO: I think the word devolution is key in this. So this is a phrase that was often talked about with the 2010 constitution and has been a major political sort of buzz word in Kenya ever since devolving power from the presidency and particularly devolving the control of local resources from the national government level, to the county level and then even the local level; and these are things that both candidates have said they're committed to, although I think Raila Odinga is sort of claiming that Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto are not delivering on that, and that he says that he will

deliver on that.

So, there's that kind of push back at least from the opposition that the ruling government right now is not as committed to that as they say, in rhetoric, and ruling government has delivered on certain issues, right. Access to civil service has improved at the local level. They have completed some major development projects, the Standard Gate Railway, improvement from Owosso to Nairobi is their kind of key signature development project right now.

Although projects like that are also dogged with claims of corruption or claims of cost over runs and issues of efficiency in government, and so I think this idea of who's in control of the National Resources, whether it's going to be the president, whether it's going to be the checks and balances at the local level are key kind of issues that are framing this debate.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent, and so Lauren if I could go to you and just pick up in the same place, just ask you to explain what you see as the most important stakes in this election, the most important drivers of the you know, choices being presented to the Kenyan voter, and you know, as well as the national level and presidential level vote, how you see the importance of the devolution process.

MS. BLANCHARD: So, I think as Matt described, politics in Kenya have historically been identity politics. Politics based largely on ethnicity, where you're from, who your people are, and you'll often hear in the context of Kenyan politics a phrase called, it's our turn to eat. That is largely how many Kenyan politicians particularly on the opposition side, try to frame sort of campaigns; and when you think about, as Matt was describing, the period of one party rule, this was largely a period controlled by the ethnic constituencies of the two presidents.

The original president Kenyatta, who was a Kikuyu and his successor of his former vice president, Daniel arap Moi, who was a Kalenjin. Right now, those two ethnic groups are represented in the ruling party, the Jubilee Party. The younger President Kenyatta and his deputy president William Ruto, who is a Kalenjin.

So, what the opposition is broadly trying to do in addition to a number of its other campaign approaches, is to suggest that these two groups have largely controlled much of the piece of the pie, in terms of Kenyan resources and that it's another group's turn to eat. And you see what the opposition, which is now called NASA, you'll see that political parties changes their names, particularly in

the aftermath of the 2002 elections, when we really opened up to proactive multi-party politics.

So, you find ethnically based parties that come together in coalitions, because you don't have one ethnic group that can actually sort of win the vote on its own, and these coalitions they change over time, so you will see people move in and out. Deputy President Ruto, again, as I mentioned a Kalenjin, was in the 2007 elections, in the same party as Raila Odinga, who is now running against him.

So, you see these sort of changing, shifting sands among communities in Kenya. So, what is at stake; for the ethnic groups represented in the NASA coalition, is they want their turn at controlling power.

Now devolution introduces an interesting dynamic and there's an argument to be made about the sort of slow, transition away from what they call zero sum politics. Basically, the groups who have control of governments, the ruling party, their home areas get more investment, have more opportunity for senior government jobs, senior civil service jobs, government contracts.

You are probably all aware there is a great sort of legacy of large scale corruption in Kenya. It has largely been under unaddressed. You have many cases outstanding. The 90's through the 2000's that sort of continue in terms of procurement and really implicating individuals who have been in and out of government in both of the main coalitions right now.

So, I think what this election will be ultimately, is to some extent, you will see people voting along identity lines. It will also be interesting to see to what extent their voting along, how they feel that the economy is doing for that matter. How they feel their community is fairing right now in Kenya.

As Matt mentioned a number of major infrastructure projects including this new railway, there are a number of new roads. Nairobi, the capitol has been transformed in the last 10 years; but to what extent do your average Kenyan voters feel that they are benefiting from that, how many of them can ride on the railway. How many of them, who live outside Nairobi and off of these main highways are benefiting from these new infrastructure projects.

How many people feel that unemployment is a bigger problem now than it was then and to what extent do they feel that the Jubilee Administration has done things to merely solved their problems. We've seen food prices rising over the course of this year. That may play out in the election in ways that I think people who assume that people will vote strictly along ethnic lines could end up being

surprised in this election.

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah, that's a great sideway to JT, but before I do ask him the comment and then he's got some polling information in know he wants to share as well.

Lauren, I wanted to ask you about your overall take on Kenya's economy over the last 10 or 15 years from a very, very, broad 30,000-foot view, some people would say, it's done pretty well, right? That's it's actually had a fairly steady, five, six, seven percent growth, along with Ethiopia and a number of other African countries, it's had you know, a lot better last decade or two than it did let's say in the years when I was in Africa in the Peace Corp in the 80's and most of the continent was just struggling to get by with one and two percent growth.

So, you have that, but a you just pointed out, you also have a situation where the benefits have been uneven and where there's still a big problem with corruption.

How would you describe, if you were going to you know, assess the net effect of Kenya's economic trajectory, where things are today?

MS. BLANCHARD: I think that's difficult, Kenya is I think right now, the fifth largest economy in Sub-Saharan, Africa, it was forth, but was recently overtaken by Ethiopia. I think that stings a little bit; but the Kenyan economy is one of the most diverse, arguably maybe the most diverse on the continent. It's not a resource based economy. Multiple administrations have done, I think a really excellent job of encouraging the service sector.

There's a very impressive and vibrant technology sector in Kenya. Kenya really pioneered mobile banking. So, there is a lot going for Kenya, and those things have trickled down I think to the Kenyan population. Mobile banking in particular. So, I think that there are a number of ways in which Kenyan's are better off economically today than they were. The question is, do they see it, I comparison to sort of where they think they should be, and also in comparison to other people. Do they feel that the rich are getting richer while they are, sort of by comparison not sort of advancing as quickly?

MR. O'HANLON: Go ahead Matt.

MR. CAROTENUTO: I'd just add something very briefly. I agree with what Lauren was saying completely, and you know, this from a very sort of minute detail if the average person is dealing with in terms of you know, high rates of inflation, it's 10 percent right now, and that's been a historic

average for quite some time, or close to that.

And just in this past year, you know Flour Unga, one of the staple goods that people eat has been rising at 30 percent, and that's you know, people are spending most of their income on food at the local level, and so a 30 percent rise on a daily commodity is going to have a major impact on people's lives, and so we can't over-estimate how that might play out.

MR. O'HANLON: And the demographic issue is -- I mean Kenya is not immune from the demographic boom that we're seeing on the continent right now. About 60 percent of the population is under the age of 24. Unemployment for youth is about 40 percent, it's higher than Ethiopia, it's higher than Uganda, it's higher than Tanzania. These are huge issues.

Successive governments have come up with schemes everywhere from a national youth type fund to National Youth Service to youth schemes on procurement. Some of these things work, some of them don't. Government isn't always the best solution to these problems because government has a corruption issue, and inefficiency issue.

So, those things also play into it. I also think that when you look at Kenya's economy and where it's going, it is the commercial gateway to East Africa, and if you had a bad election in Kenya, everyone in East Africa will get sick. Every other economy will get sick. Why? Because goods enter through the Port of Embassa, they are transported throughout that country.

In 2013, you saw prices of shipping go up immensely, for goods into Uganda, Rwanda. These are threats that exist and that's why it's very important that a stable election occurs.

We also have a very substantial U.S. assistance program into Kenya. I believe upwards of half a billion dollars a year, excuse me. One of the largest recipients on the continent, and also, in trade terms, does anybody have a good gauge -- I'm sorry to just add this one question before we go back to your political analysis but a rough sense of Kenya's importance, compared to other African countries for the American economy? In terms of trade, this has been one of the major focal points for the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act going back a number of years and other such efforts; is it fair to say this has sort of been a centerpiece of U.S. economic policy towards Africa?

MS. BLANCHARD: Increasing trade opportunities has. Kenya hasn't taken advantage as much as I think many people argue that it could, and it's you know, it's not one of the

largest trading partners for the U.S. on the continent. But, to put Kenya in the context of sort of, U.S. strategic interests, it is one of the most strategic partners on the continent, a longtime ally, it is the home to the largest U.S. diplomatic presence on the continent and that's including North Africa and Cairo.

So, you have a very large diplomatic mission, a very large U.S. aid mission. It is one of, if not, the largest recipients of U.S. foreign assistance on the continent. And in parallel, it is one of the two largest recipients in Sub-Saharan Africa of U.S. security assistance. It is a very, very important counter-terrorism partner. Very, very important partner in terms of being sort of an anchor state in an incredibly volatile region.

Obviously, you've got Somalia to the north, South Sudan, New Sudan, and Kenya is a regional hub for transportation and finance, and in the context of the upcoming election, and in sort of, keeping in mind the violence that followed the 2007 elections, excuse me.

When the violence happened in Kenya, it happened along sort of the major transit corridors into Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and those economies took a major hit because goods were not able to transit from the Port in Embassa, and that violence went on for months.

MR. CAROTENUTO: And then just to add the China factor. I mean we've talked about Kenya's trading out, but also trading in. I mean, China is at 5.9 billion in trade with Kenya. But Kenyans are only exporting to China in 99 million, so that's a huge trade deficit. It's a huge market where the United States could do some real serious business, and it's not just about agriculture, it's about services. We've talked about tech. So, I think it's a place where the U.S. could grow serious businesses in the future.

Of course, with a good government, creating a business-friendly environment, and that's always an issue to in that region.

MR. O'HANLON: So back to the politics and the elections, JT. If you could frame things as you see them, including the polling data that you've got, and also if you could say a word perhaps on IRI and other American agencies of various types and international groups that are trying to help Kenyans strengthen and develop their civil society and their democracy.

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Maybe I'll start there first. So, there are a number of organizations. I mean, the UN Headquarters of course are in Nairobi, Kenya. The only big headquarters

in the southern hemisphere, and there are a number of organizations.

So, you have the whole ned families there and national (inaudible) for democracy family sype solidarity, NDI, IRI, you have a huge organization, IFIS, which is carrying out huge elections assistance project, funded by USAID. The state department also actively funds a number of big projects countering violent extremism, there's a number of pieces of programming ongoing. Very helpful. Everything from working with police to really dealing with some of the divisions within society along the coast and recruitment of youth.

There's a lot of economic empowerment work done through U.S. assistance where everything from -- they used to have this group, the National Youth Bungay Association. Yes, youth can. And, that was a huge program where youth were essentially organized at a very local level and given skills about how to make businesses, how to be good citizens and you know in Kenya. It has had a very important impact in terms of stability and improving the way that youth take up issues and challenges in society.

So, the U.S. assistance is really important and there's a number of organizations. IRI has done everything. While there, we've been there for about 20 years if not, probably longer off and on, since 92.

It is true that Lauren helped open the office there, but during my time there, I worked largely on civic education. We had worked with political parties in the past. I mean William Ruto used to come to our office and look at polls and Uhuru Kenyatta would come to trainings and learn about you know, party building Raila Odinga has you know done a lot of work with us about election observations on the continent. NDI will be leading a very important election observation mission as well as the Carter Center, so both of them will be very important U.S. institutions will be looking at the vote, commenting on the vote, and providing good observation. Both of them have sound histories in the country.

In terms of the dynamics and the politics of the election, a lot of people will try to handicap this race and have already said you know, Uhuru will get it, if he doesn't get it in the first round, he'll get it in the second round. There has also been a lot of shaming and sort of contradicting of polls; but just to put a little information out there, you know, a poll that just came out looks at sort of the end of May poll that was done. Raila has closed the gap on Kenyatta, 47 to 42. That's puts Kenyatta down from

January at the end of such poll about 17 percent.

Strategic, on May 6, had a poll that sort of looked at Kenyatta at a favorable rating of 45 percent, versus Odinga, 37 percent, Zogby poll released just recently, puts Raila ahead 47 percent, and Uhuru 46 percent. That's pretty much a dead heat.

Presidential elections are very competitive in Kenya. Of course, for Zogby it's important to note that Raila employs them, but we know that they work very well; and that's the other point of this.

There's a lot of western consultants, Cambridge, Analytics, you know, they're all there. They're all working. Sometimes they're not even liked. So, while you hear the message of anti-western sentiment and neocolonialism, trust me, there are British and American consulting firms feeding that message out the door. So, let's not read too much into what's being said in the press.

The media is very important. We see a lot of this playing out in the media and the media will have an important role to play in how this election takes shape and it played an important role in 2007-2008. In 2013, we saw sort of a well moderated media, there was a lot of peace messaging, and a lot of self-censorship. There's been some interesting media reforms since that last election that will impact, you know how free journalists feel they and be in terms of reporting specific issues as they arise. This is a very important issue that has to be looked at I think as this election goes forward. There are a number of organizations watching, media monitoring at the moment, and I think that will be something that will take shape.

We've talked a little bit about the county level of races, so 47 counties, one of the big things that IRI did was after the 2013 elections, you have literally 47 new governments out of nowhere. They didn't exist before. There were local authorities poorly funded, highly corrupt, didn't have a lot of fiscal authority. Overnight, they were given a budget, and this is not like the local government. This is literally like a state. Not federal, but certainly they would get minimum 15 percent, national revenue would be split up between 47 counties.

On Average in Kenya since devolution, that has not happened, it has actually been higher, 25, 30. Looking at the Finance Build of Uhuru Kenyatta recently signed, it's about 46-47 percent next fiscal year. Huge amounts of money that have now gone down to the county level. You have a county assembly.

Many officials who had never been assembly members, never worked in government were immediately taught how to deal with budgets, development planning, figuring out how to staff up county assemblies. Governors were elected didn't have offices to go into.

I was once Lamru after the elections and the county assembly was meeting in the constituency development hall, right next store to the governor's office with holes in the windows and everything, and it's been extensive because they've had to build all of these buildings, they've had to hire all the staff and the public wage makes devolution very expensive, and thus, brings back full circle into the politics of the election.

How much devolution do we want? Well, the constitution says do it as far as you can go. It's created to Senate, it's created these county governments, but there's been a lot of debate over this time. Have we gone too fast, should we slow down?

There's this interesting body following the 2010 constitution and really was active after the 2013 elections called the Transition Authority. This Authority was supposed to be like the body that you know, brought everyone into the county governments devolution, looking at properties, looking at certain ways in which the local authorities would adapt to the counties. These were big technical issues and as a result, you saw governors and county level people trying to fight for more functions, more authority.

Kenya's constitution lays out a group of functions. Agriculture, education. These types of functions Kenyan's wanted more of it at the local level and there's been a big fight since the 2013 election about getting more of that down to the ground, but are Kenyan's ready for it? As a result of healthcare going down to the county level, you have doctors saying there not paid and nurses saying you know they're not being treated well, and they want to be paid by the central government instead.

So, these tugs and pulls I think, will have an important role to play as people make decisions about what they want in this election. And, Raila Odinga has been you know, generally classified as someone who's a big push for devolution and of course the opposition lodges that Ruto and Kenyatta are holding back on devolution. I think it's a tough debate though. Some of it's more rhetoric than it is reality.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. So, I just have one more big question, a two-part question

for all of you, and then we'll just bring others in as well.

I guess, I'll put it this way, just in the broadest terms for somebody like me who was Peace Corp Zaire, and we've had a lot of events here over the years on DRC, this sounds like a fairly good set of problems to have in the scheme of things.

I mean, obviously tragically Kenya got to the head of the newspaper headlines 10 years ago, when it had a very tough election, but the country you're describing sounds to me more hopeful and promising, and the election itself sounds more hopeful and promising than perilous. Although I realize it's a little bit of both; and so, I wanted to just put that proposition before you and see how you'd react, but to the extent that there obviously are concerns and that Kenya does have a long way to go, I also wonder if you want to comment, if you wish.

It may be easier for some of you than others, given your jobs, on U.S. policy options that we ought to be considering, to what extent are there things we can do more or less of or do differently that might either before or after the election improve the prospects for Kenya.

That's a very big question, so it invites speculation, but you can also feel free to ignore it, if you prefer. Matt, why don't we start with you.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Yeah, I mean that's an important question. I think part of the some of the things that we've been talking about this morning, I think are a direct response to maybe the ways that Kenya has been portrayed globally, particularly in media circles since 2007.

If you see an article about the Kenyan election, it intends to be about ethnic arithmetic or "tribal violence," and people are growing tired of that. But it's also not very nuanced, and I'll take an example of the violence that has been happening in like Hyypia County, in the central part of Kenya, bordering the northern kid of range land region. That's a very deeply historical issue.

It's been portrayed as you know, a colonial attacking white farms in Zimbabwe to style fashion and that's just not correct. These are patterns of violence, patterns related to historic drought. Patterns related to politicalizing land claims at around election time. Not having access to historic grazing grounds. Fencing in the region. So, it's very complex., and I think we lose some of that complexity of it.

If we think about the kind of context of the Kenya elections moving forward, I mean, one of the things is that you know, an incumbent has never lost an election, at a presidential level. So, that

has pushed people to kind of already say that Uhuru and Ruto are going to win re-election.

JT brings up some interesting stuff at the county level, when you look at the primaries that have happened. You see long-term very famous politicians; you know, the brother of Raila Odinga losing a primary in his home area. Other, you know, sitting incumbents who you would have thought would have been a shoe-in for re-election, 15 years ago are losing out those seats. So, it's very interesting that you're voting for a governor in 2013 for the first time, but 2017 is the time when you're really putting a referendum on that.

Now we understand what a governor is supposed to deliver to you and we think you haven't done it, or we are looking for a different kind of candidate.

So, in terms of kind of the growth of a democratic levels, I think the really exciting stuff and the things to watch for are not necessarily always at the national level and they can be at the local level.

In terms of U.S. policy, I mean we haven't talked a lot about strategic partnerships. I think those have grown, particularly since 1998, when the Embassy was bombed by Al Qaeda. But then in recent years with the Al-Shabab issue and Somalia crossing over into Kenya, and then Kenya military actions beginning in 2011 into Southern Somalia. I think the U.S. is supporting that, but what has been happening is there is a lot of issues in the north-eastern areas of Kenya that have been overlooked.

In terms of the, not just the election, but extra judicial violence, insecurity. And the old adage that people used to say in going to north eastern Kenya is still really at play. There are several cities in north eastern Kenya, Wajir, Mandera, where you go there and people ask you how's Kenya, as if you were leaving a different country; and so that inclusivity issue kind of moving forward I think, has to be a priority of any you know bilateral relations or eight packages, or strategic security initiatives, whether it's in Somalia, but not at the stake of the Kenya Somali population. There are hundreds of thousands of refugees regionally in Kenya still. I mean, there has been talk of closing the Dadaab Camp for quite some time. That population has shrunk, but there are still hundreds of thousands of people in that camp, and well over a hundred thousand more, and I think I had the figures from -- it's almost 500,000 from UNHCR in June, end of June. Almost 250,000 in Dadaab, another 180,000 in Kikkimon, the northern part, so the regional security aspect has to be a part of that when things go bad in South

Sudan, refugees come to Kenya.

When things are not well in Somalia, refugees are coming to Kenya. The same could be said about Northern Uganda 15 or 20 years ago. There were drought issues in Ethiopia. So, these are questions that have to have a regional context I think to put out.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. Lauren?

MS. BLANCHARD: You have a really complex picture when you're looking at Kenya. You have in many ways so many things that Kenya has going for it. It has arguably the most aggressive constitution on the continent, maybe one of the most progressive in the world. It has arguably the most vibrant civil society on the continent.

It has in comparison to certainly every other country in East Africa and arguably in a large part of the continent, one of the freest media on the continent. But, there are butts.

This is a tight race, and this is a race in which at the highest levels on both sides the rhetoric is at a level that it's about 99 percent. The opposition claims that already the ruling party is rigging the election, and they repeat these claims again and again, publicly and in rallies.

The Jubilee Party by comparison suggests that the opposition is fermenting chaos, and that a vote for NASA will be a vote for violence. There are some really sort of scary advertisements that are floating around on social media.

There has been an increasing use of hate speech. One MP arrested I think just today on allegations of hate speech, and that's happening both at the national level and in terms of local races, you've seen a lot of hate speech in the context of the violence that Matt was talking about up in like Hyypia.

You have security situations in parts of the country, particularly in the upper northeast area, along the Somali boarder, where you have the Kenya military deployed internally.

There are some questions about how that's going to affect people's ability to vote. The election commission right now is having trouble staffing the polls in Lamu County, which is again, in an area where you've seen an uptick in potential Al-Shabab activity.

You also have the Kenyan military deployed in like Hyypia. So, these internal military deployments sort of add to some of the concerns that have been raised about the role and security forces

in the elections.

Back in the 2007 election, post-election violence, the Kenyan police were attributed to I think having killed as many as 400 people and wounded many more in the context of sort of dealing with some of the violence and going beyond.

The Kenyan police unfortunately have accrued a bit of a track record of allegations of ex-judicial killings. That's not to say that there haven't been incredible improvements. I think going back to the 2010 constitution, you know, Kenyans I think really have come quite far. The 2010 constitution, referendum on that was incredibly important and I think water shed moment.

The peaceful nature of the 2013 elections is also worth keeping in mind. You know, we talk about the 2007 post- election violence, but it's not the most recent election that Kenya has had. Kenya has held a peaceful election since then, and I think you have to acknowledge a number of the advances that the election commission has made and the new commissions.

You have a National Cohesion and Integration Commission that tracks hate speech, and has really worked to mitigate some local tensions in various parts of the country.

So, you know, I think in many ways, Kenya is, and continues to be to some extent a good news story in terms of democracy, and I think the Kenyan government and the opposition really want to sort of continue that progress. A peaceful and smooth election is very, very important to Kenya's continued economic progress and to continue to attract investment.

So, you know, I think again, the stakes are high. It would be quite helpful if both parties would in the coming weeks, ratchet down the rhetoric and sort of really highlight you know, talk of peace and acknowledging that if you know, these elections are credible, that they will sort of go through the court systems and that you will have both a peaceful and a credible election.

But, that has somehow those two elements, peaceful and credible have somehow, at least in the public narrative, been sort of put in contrast if you don't have -- you know, there's focus on a peaceful election, versus focus on a credible election.

So, I think as the United States and other donor countries and those who are involved in monitoring the election are looking at this period and what may happen afterwards. Focusing on both of those elements. Peaceful and credible election I think is very critical, keeping in mind the role that this

election plays, not just in Kenya and in terms of Kenya's democratic trajectory, but what it means for the region. This is a region, East Africa, where you've had a lot of democratic backsliding and you've had democratic backsliding in a number of other areas on the continent.

If we look to Nigeria which had a very successful transition of power, from a ruling party presidential candidate to an opposition candidate back in 2015, that was a very critical moment, not just for Nigeria, but for the broader region. So, I think that that's what people will be looking at when they look to the (inaudible)

MR. O'HANLON: Before going to JT, just a quick follow-up Lauren. I want to make sure I understand this is sort of a nuanced point, but you talked about hate speech, you talked about allegations of vote rigging, you talked about some of these kinds of concerns and we know about the history of how some of the violence has occurred in Kenya and also the way in which ethnicity has played a role.

Please tell me if you think I'm getting this wrong, but it sounds to me like that the hate speech, the vote rigging, this is more at the level of individual politicians, but there may be ethnic echoes.

In other words, it's not fundamentally about one ethnic group attacking another, it's about political competition among individuals that may then have implications at the ethnic level if it's not properly handled. Is that a fair --

MS. BLANCHARD: Yes, and the challenge with the hate speech is that there are a lot of historic grievances. Many of them ethnically based in Kenya. Communally based.

You had in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 violence, a truth justice and reconciliation which put together an incredible report you know with allegations. And there have been numerous commissions that have done similar exercises. Numerous exercises where they have talked about the grievances of these various communities.

In the north east, in the Rift Valley, every community has its issues. Some of them you know sort of more recent in terms of the 2007-2008 violence.

I think one of the challenges is that many Kenyans don't feel that these grievances have been addressed. Not by politicians, not in the courts, and I think that that is an undertone of these elections that comes out in terms of land competition and it comes out in sort of a number of different

ways. You're seeing it play out in like Hyypia, among other areas. You're seeing it play out in the coast, overlaid with the threat of Al-Shabab.

MR. CAROTENUTO: A real quick follow-up. You know, I think that there's a little nuance to the narratives of peace that you have to be careful of.

So, this notion of sort of peace outweighing everything, including justice, is something that people have been complaining about and I think there has been some critiques that the narrative, at least from the government about peace has sort of quashed any sort of criticism of protest. Peaceful protests have been met with police violence.

On many occasions in the last couple of years, whether it's about the electoral commission; and so, this commitment to a peaceful election is very important, but there is also a very important role that the institutions needs to play.

We saw the Supreme Court kind of weigh in in 2013. Didn't really establish themselves as a true check to the presidency in ways that I think the constitution gives them that power. And so, it will be very important as tightly contested this election is, that these Kenyan institutions that are designed to check any kind of these political claims actually come through and deliver.

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: I mean you know if you look at social media history, if you can go back to 2013 in a time machine you would see the big things that were being talked about after the election while the Supreme Court case was going on. Peace no justice, peace no justice. Half the country didn't want this president, the Supreme Court is taking forever to make a decision, it took forever for our results to come in. There's a lot of spoiled ballots. This all doesn't sound right, this all doesn't smell right, decision comes out.

Aside from ruing that Kenyatta was elected and ruling you know, that everything should move forward as is, there were some instructions in the ruling that talked about key reforms that needed to happen and some of those things happened in Kenya fashion, last minute. There was an election amendments bill, that was sort of pushed through.

This is very important going into this election because as we thought about peace, no justice, it is really in this election about peace and credibility, and justice. It's all sort of wrapped together. I think a lot of people talk about this as a re-match but really it really isn't a re-match, it's really about the

next phase of Kenya's history.

We now have devolution settling into the country. In 2013, you still had two Kenya's, clearly two Kenya's. You had Nairobi and everything else largely. Now you're starting to see tarmac road in Isiolo. The Diocese of (inaudible), no longer runs the schools fully in Tacana. You now have you know county governments stepping up and developing places that have never been developed. I think there's going to be a super highway in Kisumu, and we've just not had these types of things.

Now Jubilee government will take credit for this, and they rightly should. But, devolution should also play a key role that it's the process of allowing governments at a local level, people to make decisions about what they want in their communities through local elective leaders, and I think that's why, what's different about this election from 2013, is the level of competition is so high.

In this election, you have 14,000 plus candidates. That is unbelievable. Running for about 1,800 plus seats give or take a few seats.

So, in some constituencies, some wards you have 30 people running for one seat; you know trying to garner votes of maybe 50,000, 60,000 people. I mean that is just something that we have not seen in Kenya ever, and I think it's a liberating prospect for youth and women who largely have been marginalized. This is something the IRI has been working on at the county level.

Looking at those barriers that youth and women have really been facing in the run of two elections, and we're seeing races. I mean you have a woman on woman race in Kirinaga County. You have the iron lady, Martha Karua, former presidential candidate. Right, everyone knows Martha Karua running against Anne Waiguru former devolution administrator.

The fact that you have sort of two big heavyweights, two women, facing off in a governor's race is a big change in Kenyan politics.

So, these are things that we need to look at I think as we move forward.

MR. O'HANLON: My colleague Emily Terry showed me a ballot, and I guess they're very nicely laid out. There are six different choices each Kenyan is going to make at various levels of government.

MR. CAROTENUTO: It used to be three.

MS. BLANCHARD: It's going to take a while.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Yeah, it's going to take a while.

MR. O'HANLON: So thank you. That's an excellent introduction and explanation of what's at stake. Now I'd like to involve the audience, and a little differently than in some Brookings events where I do want to just take 10 or 15 minutes to get a number of views and questions from you.

I just will ask and plead that you be synced, but we will also invite people to voice a couple of their concerns or thoughts as well as questions, given that we have an audience with a lot of expertise.

So, I'll ask my fellow panelists up here to take notes as to whichever comments or questions they want to respond to, but now we're going to give the floor to you for 10 or 15 minutes.

So, why don't we begin here with the woman in the yellow dress and then we'll go to the gentleman in the front row, and then work our way over, and then we'll come back.

MS. SEGURO: Good morning ladies and gentleman. My name is Rosemary Seguro.

I'm a president of Hope for Tomorrow, an organization based here and in Kenya. Our organization (inaudible) in election in Kenya, and in 2007 my nephew was killed in the election because he was one of the returning officials, so he was shot dead. So, that's why I had problems of election. We hope of election protecting, focusing on conflict and violence which is hate, crime and hatred and tribal and the conflicts during the elections.

So, looking at your presentation and thank you so much for talking well about my country. Kenya now is digitalized. Kenya is one of the African countries with digital, and everybody including my old mother in a rural area is a media (inaudible) in former.

So, it's not like previously where we didn't have anybody people a quota, now INS people are doing a lot of stuff. Now, I will hear information here, and the U.S. from my mother. This is what is happening. From here I'll call somebody.

So, everybody from the rural area of Kenya up to anywhere in the world we know what is happening in Kenya. So, I think Kenya has changed looking to digitalization and actual people, we are common people because they were never informed of what is happening. Now that everybody has a cell phone and they are listening to their cell phone, getting messages, I think this election, looking at previous elections, will be a good election and looking also at the economy.

The politicians are fighting between the start of election. A very, very big conflicts and violence, it's there, but it's not as previously because of everybody dis-communicating. Everybody is talking internationally when they call people. They are calling the Congress, the ministers all over the world. So, the politicians themselves from the minute -- the presidents who are doing elections, I think they are informed from the local people and people are aware of what is happening, so I think Kenya would be a good election.

So, I thank my country Kenya, and I pray that there will be no violence, even if I'm not going to election observation. Now, if you are there we are encouraging businesses in Kenya. Kenya is the best country as you have stated and are aware.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you, thank you. And you in the front row please.

MR. KASHIRO: Thank you very much, you have a very impeccable panel, and your analysis is very clear. I really appreciate. I just wanted to --

MR. O'HANLON: Would you identify yourself please?

MR. KASHIRO: A little conflict of interest. My name is David Kashiro Deputy Chief of Mission and I serve of the pleasure of the president, so I guess there's a disclaimer there.

MR. O'HANLON: Yes.

MR. KASHIRO: I wanted to talk one point on trade. I just wanted to bring to attention to the audience that in the private sector, I think is ahead of the government.

The private sector is already there. We have two of the largest construction companies in Nairobi now. We have Bechtel, we have Oracle, we have IBM, we have the only (inaudible) headquarters in Africa and Nairobi. We have IBM, we have Dell, we have Microsoft and other companies are there.

What I would ask, is that when you go to Kenya and you want to (inaudible) where things are, it is good to contact your American companies where they are on the ground, who have a lot of information on the ground.

The other factor that I think is very, very important to notice and I'll attest to my (inaudible), the voters in Kenya now are very informed.

To your point Matthew, when you say that they're not incumbent people who are

removed at this time, the biggest fear in the beginning of the elections was voter apathy. And if there's anything there's limited voter apathy. It is the empowerment of the voter to realize that for once now, the leaders are not being imposed to them, at the vote of the unit level.

So, voters who are able to move in some counties, all the had restriction with the previous government were removed. That might still have empowered our own people. I'm not talking on the Belize side. I think the president made a conscious decision and to the people. I'm not siding with anybody. You want to choose. Choose the person you think has helped you, or has done something to you. That by itself empowered a lot of people.

So, I don't know people to appoint again at local level, of both unit, it people empowered. People are informed. People are tired violence. We want to remove this uncertainty to the elections. It's a one-day event that come and go, and it is beyond anyone present or the other. So, that's a point I wanted to address you.

The other issue of credibility, peaceful elections. They are mutually inclusive. The credibility and peaceful election are mutually inclusive, and I want to show you data. We have 5,000 people, 5,0000 observers right now and more have been credentialed right now.

We have EU observers, we have John Kerry with the Carter Institute going there. Africa is already there. Actually, they made both opposition with the government yesterday, and they are confident with IBC.

Your question as to what can you do as a panel here to build that credibility, is advocating for electoral system independence. To me, the (inaudible) thing of this issue is to mention that we all support the IBC and where it has come from. We know we have 19.6 million votes.

We know the registry is online. You can download it up to the presidential, to the local level. You can see how many votes are there for the governor of each county. It's there, it's on the system.

In terms of secure to a system, we have expert from IBM, Dell and Oracle, who are protecting the system for the integrity. The voting per each member of a party will have a representation on each polling area.

We have 40,000 polling stations in the country, and the maximum voting people in this

country is about 700 people. So, the long queues that you had employed in 2013, are not going to be there.

So, I think to me, and to your point that we might have very credible, peaceful elections in Kenya, and I think it's only fair at this point to at least showcase how much progress, the IBC has come through.

They did a very good press conference this morning, challenging the latest, and they challenge the people, what do you think could happen. But, 5,000 people in the country as observers cannot fail to miss any problem. The system, the integrated system, which (inaudible) in built of the (inaudible) in built electoral system. So, any voter body can be integrated.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent, thank you very much.

Gentleman back here, and then I'm going to swing to the other side for a couple of more. Over here first.

MR. DAKIN: Okay, my name is Don Dakin and I'm a retire lawyer here in D.C.

In 1964, I went to Kenya's part of the first Peace Corp group that went to work in Kenya. We were settlement offices. We helped to re-distribute 2 million acres of land that was owned and operated by white people, mostly from the UK and South Africa, and we settled Africans on these lands, and my question is, was any of the violence, the recent violence, related to Kikuyu people being settled in the tribal lands of the other tribes, during that re-settlement process?

MR. O'HANLON: So, hold onto that question. I have a couple of more folks involved over here. The woman in the third row, and then we'll go to the second row for the last two and then back to the panel.

MS. DAMALISE: Morning. That was a very wonderful panel. I enjoyed that. Very well informed. My name is Damalise, I am a Kenyan. I am a global scholar at Brooking at the Center for Universal Education.

I want you to comment on the issue of -- on the role of (inaudible) in the coming election. Three of them. One is -- all of them may be -- Kenya has a very vibrant media, very free media, but recently there has been a lot of bitterness in Kenya because the media is spearheading public disclose about peace, peace, peace, peace, and nobody's talking about social justice.

Nobody is talking about equality, and it's one of the most unequal societies I know and so there is that kind of discord that is going on that -- why are we talking about peace and nobody's talking about all these other inequality issues that plague the Kenyan society.

Then, I wanted you to comment on the role of civil society organizations. I think you made the comment that Kenya has had very vibrant civil society, but in the last five years, I could rightly say that civil society is on its knees. Remember the evil society, discord that has been going on and I know, I work with civil society organizations.

I say that I'm a professor in Kenya, but I direct agenda institute, I think I told you in University. So, I work theoretically with civil society organizations, and I know, a lot of civil society organizations are on their knees because of the branding of evil society, and actually, there has been a lot of bad things going on there.

The last thing that of all the Churches, Kenya is a highly religious nation and I think 82 percent claim to be Christian, and Christian Church is organizing prayer at least all the time for peace, and no one is organizing prayer rallies for social justice. I just want you to comment on that.

And lastly, hate speech, yes. The National Integration Commission is working so hard and I think as an observer of the Kenyan situation, there are nuances at this time. We are not seeing so much hate speech, but if you go to the (inaudible) fair, it's like a warzone, and supporters of Uhuru Kenyatta are abusing support as of Raila Odinga and vice versa. And it's like poison, it's horrible.

I just wanted you to comment if the fact that people have the space to ventilate, is going to take away the real physical violence, now that people can scream at each other, call each other names. Do you think that that's taking away a possibility of physical violence?

Lastly, fake news. What's the role of fake news in this election?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. (inaudible) Carter and then we'll -- to the gentleman, and then will go back.

MS. BANKER: Hi, my name is Carter Banker, I'm with the International Center for Religion Diplomacy.

My question is pretty similar to the last one that she asked and it sort of touches on the role of technology that has been mentioned.

A couple of people were talking about this positive role of technology and informing people during this election. But again, we've also been talking a lot about hate speech and I'm just thinking about this recent election we've had in the United States and the role that fake news played, and in elections all over the world.

I mean you had the Gubernatorial Election in Jakarta. It's a huge phenomenon in Indonesia that they have these WhatsApp groups and people just sort of forward them. Forward information that isn't verified onto different people, and I'm sort of wondering if you could comment on the negative -- potential negative aspects of all of this access to technology in relation to hate speech and the election.

MR. O'HANLON: Right, thank you. And then last one here.

MR. RUKIN: Thanks. Hi, good morning or afternoon. I'm Steve Rukin. I'm with the State Department and recently returned from a tour at Embassy Nairobi, a short while ago.

Just a couple of quick questions. First, do any of you buy into the argument that some people have put forth that devolution could lead to increased violence during the elections because of higher expectations among the populous?

Second question would be the role of Al-Shabab. Kenya as you mentioned, has troops in Somalia and the question would be, if Al-Shabab were to be able to stage an attack, in the run ups or even during the elections, would that have a major impact on the elections in your view, or not?

And then the last question would be refugees. It seems to me at least that refugees haven't been a huge issue in the election, in the campaign, at least as big as it could have been, and what's the reason behind that, and do you expect refugees to become a major issue after the elections? The government hasn't moved lately on its recent rhetoric to close Dadaab, so do you expect a change after the elections perhaps? Thanks.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. So, we have plenty on the table. I think it's time to go back to the panel. Please don't feel obliged to cover everything, and individually please be very selective on which of the roughly 10 questions that are on the table that you choose to address.

Why don't we start with you Matt.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Okay, so technology, interesting question. I mean we talk about

Impassa and things like that where Kenya's revolutionizing global banking, that's very much transformed rural economies, connecting people.

You know, I too get text messages all the time from friends in rural areas that you know 10 years ago would never have happened, but there is a danger in that. I mean there's been some good research on the 2007 election violence, where rumors, mass text messaging, spreading both insight full hate speech, but also the kind of fake news stuff that we're seeing.

I know I'm on several Kenyan political Facebook groups for research purposes and some of the things that come across there are very alarming, and highly un-credible. Being shared again and again and again, so that access to technology is something that is quite important. You haven't seen candidates in political situations talk too much about that at least on the kind of you know big stage. Maybe privately they're talking about it, but I do think that is an issue kind of moving forward.

In terms of IEBC I mean you know, the credibility of Kenya's elections is very much going to be a referendum I think. On the you know, international elections (inaudible) commission. They don't have a good reputation right now.

I think amongst the general populous there's not a lot of faith and confidence in that institution to be free and fair. So, it remains to be seen, you know, maybe reforms have happened, but they need to be implemented and shown in this election.

I think if that happens there will be a return of level of confidence in that institution, but right now, it is at pretty low levels.

Other things, I mean the land claim issue, which was brought up is still very much a big issue. There was a land commission that was implemented in 2012 that yes, some title deeds have been given to local people who did not have you know, legal access to that land. However, lots of land claims are still at play.

In terms of the 2007 election violence, land issues were a central key to that, particularly in the Rift Valley. Those were areas where you know, migrants from other regions were sort of targeted as not being "indigenous" to that land, that goes back to the colonial period.

It also goes back to the land transfer after independence, which was primarily on a willing buyer willing seller basis, which allowed for really the middle class and upper-class Kenyans to ban

together in large buying companies and buy large tracks of land around the country, where the poor across the country did not gain access to land, even though if you look back to Kenya's transition to independence, those individuals were the ones that were risking the most to gain that access. So, that has been an issue. There has been some progress on that, but I think that is still in the question kind of moving forward.

A little bit on the social media side that's actually an interesting part. You are seeing Kenyans viewing social media to check hate speech, and to really push back. So, right in 2013 when CNN you know had their hot bed of terror questions on framing the Kenya -- or as of 2015, sorry, when Obama was preparing to visit, Kenyans attacked CNN on social media, and CNN caved right. Kenya is a big market for them. I think the vice president came to apologize. That was a moment.

There has also been several politicians who have made public hate speech, who have been immediately attacked on social media and then brought to at least public shame; but this kind of level of impunity I think is something that we haven't really talked a lot about, but there has been a culture of impunity at the highest levels, and one of the things is you know, if there is evidence of hate speech or evidence of violence, what does the Kenyan institutions have to actually prosecute at the highest levels.

We remember that Uhuru and Ruto also were put up on charges by the ICC in the past, those have been dropped; but that is still a lingering issue that has not been solved locally. I think of who is responsible for this violence going back into the past.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Lauren?

MS. BLANCHARD: I'm trying to figure out which of these to tackle. They're all important.

Let me start briefly Steve with your questions on devolution and potentially increasing the potential for violence and Al-Shabab and refugees briefly, and I have a feeling JT may have some comments on this as well.

There has been I think probably, even more so until recently the talk of post-election violence in the context of the national election. A lot of concern about the potential for violence at the local level. Obviously, these are hot elections. There is a lot at stake at every level and you know particularly for the governor's races, even for the MCA races.

I was out in Kenya a few weeks ago now and heard a lot about the increasing use of --

I'm going to call them political thugs, but every politician has their arms security --

SPEAKER: Goons, goons.

-- goons is another word, yeah. Everyone has them. At the local county assembly level, they have them.

So, you have enforcers and you know, at every stage of the race. I think that it worrying. I mean we've seen, this isn't the first time that we've seen this violence play out. Before the 2013 elections you had some significant violence up in Tana River and that was over sort of jostling over sort of local political races.

So, I think that there is concern there and I think there is also the concern for that type of violence to spark. Likewise, that could happen in Nairobi if you have, you know there are various ways where violence could spread throughout the country or not, and I don't want to sort of go too far down that road.

In terms of Al-Shabab potentially playing a role in the elections, we didn't see that in the last election. There was a lot of concern that Al-Shabab might try to somehow disrupt or influence the election. It didn't happen. We've actually, I think seen some decline in Al-Shabab activity very recently. Obviously, they are historically, if you put them in context, very active during Ramadan and we had a real uptick back in May and June of attacks. There have been some prominent reported attacks in Lamu County and in response the Kenyan security forces have sort of upped their presence there, and it's not entirely clear to what extent that has anything to do with the elections.

I think the other challenge in terms of looking at Al-Shabab activity in, particularly in the coast and the upper coast. is trying to sort of figure out to what extent this is sort of organized at the top by Al-Shabab versus local.

Dating back to the attacks on the community in Picatinny. You've got a lot of local sentiment there. That attack was ascribed to Al-Shabab but seemed to have local participation and seemed to be targeting specific ethnic communities and religious communities who had settled historically you know decades back in that part of the coast. So that plays out.

Why we haven't seen sort of more movement against refugees, again it's hard to ascribe motivation to the government on sort of when these anti-refugee and sentiments sort of come and go. I think there's been a lot of international pressure on the Kenyan government to comply with its obligations under International Law.

Also, you know, the Jubilee leaders have been campaigning heavily on the coast and the north east. They want the votes, I don't think that they you know, either side feels that it can afford to lose any constituency.

This is very much going to be an election about turn out, and turning out your own constituency, trying to pull as many away from your opponent as you can, and you know, I think there's also a concern about potential suppression with the vote, and so I think in the context of Al-Shabab threats, there is a concern that an increased security presence being on the coast and north east or like Hyypia may have an impact on turnout. Even society and western influence.

In the last election, I think we saw really some very dangerous trends that I'm afraid are going to play out and I see playing out again.

There is a narrative that civil society is against the government. There is a narrative of western influence in the elections, and you know, we didn't talk about this.

The president and the deputy president faced ICC indictment, there cases have now been dismissed for their role in the 2007-2008 election violence; and that was a major issue in the 2013 election.

There were comments made by western diplomats, U.S. diplomats, and the run up to those elections that the candidates did not take favorably and they you know, used I think and were largely successful in campaigning, and part on their narrative that the west was trying to influence the election. I don't think that will play as much of a role right now, but I do see worrying comments about the potential bias, by western governments, by western election observation teams and I think that's very worrying as we go (inaudible).

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: I mean I've already mentioned the consultants, you know the ones that put out the message the west is coming, the neo-colonialists are coming. We need to pull them back. British PR firms and American consultants were actually helping push these messages, and I've met a number of them. I would say that you know when we talk about this issue of hot beds for the elections, Narok has a very interesting race going on there. I think you should look there for potential violence.

If you remember, there's been a number of cases where tribal violence, it's also a hot bed

for -- there's going to be a lot of fighting for votes between Ruto's clan, Ruto's grouping and under Jubilee and some of the (inaudible) made by NASA through Isaac Ruto who's aligned with Raila Odinga's party. So, there will be some fighting going on there.

You also have an interesting race in Casual and Casual will always have, I mean I think in this election you'll see, just like you saw in the primaries. You'll see that as an area where you'll have some violence and it's usually Lualua, ODM, on ODM and that just stems from the fact that it's a big prize. It's one of the major centers.

You know, Nakuru is another one, and that's one where we saw in 2007-2008 a real place of massive violence, but there's also very competitive elections going on there.

The level of competition is very high. Governors have a lot of money, they have a lot of influence, there are efforts to try to make governors hire more inclusively across the entire county. They get to hire a lot of their own people, which means people from their community, and that can play an interesting role in that patronage system. So, I vote for my guy, my guy or my gal, gets in and you know maybe I can get a job working somewhere in one of those government offices. There's millions of those jobs.

Al-Shabab I think you know we've seen the government has made some comments about some of the recent attacks that there may be some political reasoning behind it. Lamu is also another competitive election space and the curfew there will play an important role in possibly suppressing voter turnout, because you know, if you have a curfew and there's attacks going on, Boni Forrest is one of the sort of densely forested areas in Lamu, and that's where Al-Shabab tends to hide, along with MRC and some of the other groups that we've seen and you know, they train there, they collect themselves there. The government goes in there with soldiers, Al-Shabab runs out, they do some things and then go back in.

We talked about one of the ethnic enclaves in Picatinny. It's a Kikuyu claim. When that attack took place, it was clear that there was command control, not just happening from Mogadishu, but also inside of the country, and that's worrying, that politicians would go to that level. But those are things that are looked at very closely by the security services.

When we talk about the role that the U.S. and the UK play, I mean they have done

amazing work in helping the Kenyans improve their intelligence, improve the way in which they apprehend the suspects. They're working very closely in Somalia through Ramadan. That's why you hear a lot about drone strikes and some of the other things that the Americans are doing. They're working very closely with the Kenyan forces there.

My friend over here on hopes for tomorrow; I would just say that you know, my grandmother-in-law, she's from Nacotch, and she barely speaks a work of English. It's just (inaudible), but my wife translates for me, and she is a political animal, alright (laughing), and her cell phone is a little Nokia yellow screen thing that you know you could step on it and it wouldn't break, like my iPhone. And yes, it has transformed the way -- I mean Kenyans are already political animals. It's fun to watch. The politics of Kenya. It is a blood sport, but it is also just fun rhetoric. It's almost interesting.

I mean a lot of people don't even believe it, they just kind of laugh like ah, did you see what Raila did, do you see what Uhuru did. You know, Paulo Ruto was speaking at a Church again, he's going to say something. So, we see the theatre play out.

I think text messages, technology have opened up the way for that dialog to take place, and groups like IRI, groups NDI, groups like IFIS have all worked to sort of incorporate civic education into that.

I remember after the election result in 2013, we made sure that working with the National Gender and Equality Commission and CIC, we were pushing out text messages. Just so you know, here are the facts. The court case goes this way. This is what the constitution says about Supreme Court and this is what you know the role of the court is in this case, so that we're getting the right information to the people and bypassing the media which would be quite expensive to access.

The final thing would be just the issue of citizens and their engagement with IEBC. IEBC knew very well that they didn't handle 2013 very well at all. They've made a lot of reforms, they have a lot more work to do. I think Erich Bobos a good executive director and has done a lot of work. He's a good spokesperson. He's a lot better than Esot Kason, and he certainly has put a lot of trust into his -- the people below him to get the work done, and that's why I think you've seen advanced deployment, a lot of this technology.

We're looking at a Kenya, it's the Kenya Integrated Electoral Management System, or

KIEMS. And if you follow the election you'll know this word KIEMS, KIEMS, KIEMS, gets talked about a lot. It's essentially the bio-metric identification process. Then when you vote, it will capture the results, and it will ultimately transmit results. It's everything wrapped into one.

And they've learned their lesson from 2013, where transmission was delayed and created lots of problems. They've got satellite back-ups, they've got KIEMS systems, backed up three extra ones in each ward, and they've hired all of these tech professionals who have gone down to the ward level and are ready and able to do it. But of course, they still have to hire fully, the 362,000 poll workers. They all have to be trained, and they have to know what to do. You know, listen, when you're hiring a student or an (inaudible) who's going to come out of the village and sit at the polling booth for the day, they don't maybe have the same level of education and it's going to be a little tough to kind of comprehend all of this information. All of this technology. So, that's something to worry about.

We do hope that the training that the IEBC will do with these poll workers will be comprehensive and also that civil society and poll workers from the political parties, the polling agents, will also know the process well enough to be able to hold each other accountable, and that's the key thing here.

Raila wants to have you know five or six people, ten people at every polling station. He's only going to be able to get one in. Why? Because they only let one in per party. So, he's going to have his polling agent there. Let's hope that polling agent knows what they're doing and is able to say, hey poll worker you should have done this, or I want to you know, challenge the results here, or challenge a process, and that type of dialogue is something that we promote you know, around the continent as a key to peaceful elections.

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic. Let's do a couple other than we'll wrap up here. So, let's see. Woman in the red dress please, and then I'll take one at least from the very back of the room. The gentleman in the red and white striped shirt. Please.

MS. OMYA: My name is Edna Omya, and I just recently moved back from Ethiopia. I was working for the Pan African Chamber of Commerce, and I was wondering what your opinions on this -- how are Kenya's Congress and democracy effected or influenced it's neighboring countries that aren't exactly democratic, and particularly in the case of Ethiopia, what does it say about -- this is just your

opinion, if you have any, about the democracy before development argument, and to my brothers and sisters in Kenya, I know we've surpassed you in economic development, but you're always beating us in athletics so you can't win everything (laughing).

SPEAKER: That's debatable.

MR. MUNOLAY: Hello, my name is Isaac Munolay. I'm also Kenyan, but I'm a student in (inaudible) Maryland College Park.

My question or my comment. First of all, I think devolution has really had a very good impact in Kenya, and I think it sort of, it's had the impact of easing some of the pressure from the (inaudible) at the national level. So, I think that helps.

The second thing that I'd really like to reference is that I think the U.S. government needs to do more work as far as strengthening the institutions in Kenya. The reason why people go on the streets or why people protest or why there's violence is because people do not trust that the institutions are going to act properly. So, the U.S. government needs to do more concerning the judiciary and security services, even doing more work on the civil service. As far as civil service is concerned, I think there is need for them to be seen as being neutral and that they need to be partners and governors and not as opponents. And, that's what they are currently seeing us. Yeah, that's it.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay, thank you. I guess we have time for one last question, so we'll go to the far back of the room, the gentleman in the hat, if we could and then we'll have to conclude there.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much. My name is (inaudible) with United States of Africa 2017, for the task force. I am 74 years old. The only time I get involved with African politics is during election time.

Everything you've said most far is interesting. But really, not that relevant to the real crucial issue of the people. After the Bible, Coran, but the people in Africa, including Kenya, is the ballot, one ballot.

So, you talk all this time, you're not talking about how the people see themselves and what is there concern. Their concern is their vote should not be tampered with, on all sides. And once you start focusing on that, and see how you make sure that is correct you will not have violence during the elections.

MR. O'HANLON: Since that was a comment, and not a question, we will go to the

women here in the green sweater to finish, and then we'll go to you folks for final thoughts.

MS. EJ: Thank you. My name is EJ and with John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

My question, could you expand the bill about the 47 counties and devolution. Are these 47 counties predominately political units or were they designed with some sort of physical or economic sustainable factors in mind. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay, and let's just go down the panel. Actually, we'll start with JT this time and work the other way.

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Yeah, I'll talk about that one, the last question.

Devolution is an aggressive form of decentralization, to transfer specific authorities, administrative, fiscal and political. These units, 47 counties were sort of, in some way, predetermined in the constitution, but the boundaries within these units are determined by the Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission, so they'll look at the wards, they'll look at the constituencies. But it does also try to take into account some of the issues of economic development and some of the traditional make-up of the country.

There are border issues in these counties and we've seen it in places like (inaudible) and Nandi and a Wazig issue. You know, potatoes are packaged here, then they go over here, and you know, there's a lot of commercial issues, ethnic issues, the Marabou are always having some issues with their neighbors, southern Turkana and in some of those different counties have border problems that have to be addressed.

From Munene, I would say that in talking about what the U.S. needs to do more of, the U.S. is doing a lot and certainly does need to do more. I mean I've been pretty open about my thoughts about U.S. assistance. I think it should be more long term and more strategic. When you release the key electoral assistance program, 18 months to elections, that's not enough time.

When you're having a hottie contract that you could do a contractor which is the big devolution package from USAID. What does it get you when it's solely based on really providing commodities and not getting enough training and engagement?

So, we would like to see more engagement of institutions where civil society is being

strengthened. Where, we are trying to get civil servants to learn not just about their jobs, but also their role in this new government; and those are things that I think Congress is looking at, all the way up from the Appropriations and Lauren could probably talk a little bit more about that.

You know, on down to this community as we talk about Kenya. Kenya is important, and certainly the development work we do there, we need to do more of it.

I would say finally in terms of you know, the electoral process overall, you know, we still have a credibility issue with the way in which the media has handled the selection and you know, it's something that I want to continue talking about and something I think we haven't addressed a lot here.

The media and what's happened. Some of these other technologies have really you know, had an impact on the way in which messages ride by politicians and it's something that we should be looking at.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Lauren?

MS. BLANCHARD: I'm going to start with Isaacs comment on the U.S. strengthening institutions and personally, I couldn't agree with you more. The United States has invested a lot over the years and Kenyan citizen society and Kenyan media; and I think that's important, but also investing in the institutions that the civil society groups are trying to hold accountable.

I think the U.S. and other donors have tried to make end roads in that front, particularly in the context of devolution. You know, working on the institutional capacity particularly of these new county assemblies, these governor's offices, this is going to be critical, but also at the national level. There is a lot to do in terms of, you mentioned the judiciary (inaudible).

Absolutely, absolutely more to be done. We talk a lot here in the west and Kenyans talk about it as well. This problem with impunity and the lack of accountability and the lack of progress on accountability for political violence, police abuse, corruption you know, across the board. What is critical of course is strengthening the power of the judiciary to hold people accountable, and with the new 2010 constitution you have I think, a greater ability to do that because you have a more independent judiciary.

In terms of Kenya's influence in the region. This is a great question. I had a conversation the other day, maybe a couple of weeks ago now, with a top Kenyan diplomat and we were talking about South Sudan, and I think you know, this speaks to Kenya's role in the region and its

democratic evolution.

There is a debate right now about the possibility of elections being held in South Sudan next year. I think many of you are aware, South Sudan has been in a civil war now for several years. The country has been torn apart. I think over a third of the population is displaced. Over half the population is in need of extreme food, and right now. And the idea that elections could be held next year in Kenya is farcical; and yet you have several leaders in the region pushing for the idea and of course the government in Juba pushing for the idea.

This senior diplomat said to me, there's no way, there's no way. Elections are not a box-checking exercise, and this is something that is understood across the country. Particularly in the context of the post-election violence in 2007.

An election that is challenged, an election that is not credible is not a stabilizing factor, it is a destabilizing factor. So, I think you know, that says a lot.

Kenyan's play an outsize role in the region we talked about. The strength of their civil society organizations and civil society actors. You see Kenyan civil society leaders in positions, in senior positions at the UN, (inaudible), who's a former UN special rapporteur on peaceful assembly. He's got a very long title I think, but now he's back in Kenya.

You see Kenyan civil society leaders cycle in and out, in international institutions of AU institutions. They play an outsized role in AU offices, you know AU commission on, commission of inquiry of South Sudan, UN Human Rights Commissions. You see Kenyan judges everywhere. So, I think the role that Kenya and the model that Kenya expects for the region is very important.

I'm going to avoid your question on democracy and (laughing) plus I stray too much into an Ethiopia conversation.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Yeah, I mean in terms of development just to say something as a historian, I'm kind of thinking ahead. You know the 47 counties issues is very interesting in terms of devolution of development funds.

We still see young people today, if they want to go to an urban area and get a job, where are they going, they're going to Nairobi. But the county levels are setting up, maybe these smaller urban areas or smaller towns that now have some sort of impetus to get things off the ground. I mean, I went to

Kitale in 2013 and I saw some of that happening already. Whether that's going to maintain itself is an interesting thing to follow.

In terms of you know the kind of progress of the election right, in 1992 you had election related violence, 1997, you had widespread election related violence. Okay, 2002, is a watershed moment. People celebrated that election both for its transition, the first time the opposition ever won an election in Kenya, and thinking that it was all over, like everything is going to move forward in a wonderful way; 2007 was a major setback; 2013 the narrative of peace outweighed I think some issues that were still at stake in that election.

So, that narrative of peace needs to happen, and to be brutally honest, I mean, I work in an institution that has had a program in Kenya based in Nairobi since 1974. We have 17 full-time employees, Kenyan employees.

We want peace and stability, right. But for Kenya to move forward, I think there has to be sometimes a messy process where some of those checks and balances get put into play and people are held accountable.

And maybe some local elections or other elections are overturned and challenged in the court system and that is really what I'm looking for, is the test in these institutions that were put in place, changed reformed, particularly in the 2010 constitution, and how they will stand up to this particular election and then those moving forward for progress.

MR. O'HANLON: Well certainly in two and a half weeks we all wish the Kenyan people well in this important milestone in their development.

I want to thank all of you for being here and please join me in thanking the panel.

(Applause)

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