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MICHAEL O'HANLON, Moderator
Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

VANDA FELBAB-BROWN
Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

ALEXANDRA LAMARCHE
Advocate
Refugees International

MARK YARNELL
U.N. Liaison and Senior Advocate
Refugees International

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good afternoon, everyone and welcome to Brookings. I'm Michael O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy Program and specifically today with the Africa Security Initiative. We team up here with our friends in global economy and development who have an Africa growth initiative and work, and hold events occasionally on subjects of concern to the great continent of Africa. And my partner in such activities here at Brookings is often and in the case of today as well, Vanda Felbab-Brown just to my left who's recently back from several weeks of field research actually in a number of different countries, most recently Southeast Asia, but earlier in the winter, Nigeria.

And, similarly, my new friends Alexandra Lamarche and Mark Yarnell from Refugees International who also did fieldwork in Nigeria earlier this year, and have written a new report, *Political Pressure to Return: Putting Northeast Nigeria's Displaced Citizens at Risk*, in which they are concerned about the treatment of internally displaced and refugee populations in this area.

It's now been in the news for a long time, as you're all well aware, I'm sure, in this room. This is the area in Nigeria where Boko Haram has been a problem. It's getting to be a longstanding and sad story. There are occasional glimmers of hopefulness as, for example, with the release of the most recently kidnapped group of school girls who were released in recent weeks, and there's a little bit of hopefulness in the writings of our panelists today, I detected, but certainly they're not here to celebrate any major milestones or accomplishments just yet. I think that's a fair, overall theme to offer to you, and they can correct me if they don't like

my one sentence summary.

There's a lot of work left to do and, as noted, the IDPs and other populations in Northeastern Nigeria are still very much at risk and the area is still very much unsettled even with today's news, I think in *The Wall Street Journal*, that there are ongoing negotiations that would appear between the Nigerian government and the Islamic state of West Africa province. That's only a splinter out of Boko Haram and who knows where those negotiations will go in any event.

So, we've got a long ways to go in Africa's most populous country, a quarter of the entire population of the continent, therefore hugely important, and also a struggling but real democracy that continues to try to find its way forward. So, a country of enormous significance. One of the five or six most populous on earth. Again, far and away the most populous on the continent.

And we're here today to discuss specifically Northeast Nigeria, but in the context of the status of things overall in the country, the kinds of political challenges, economic and development challenges the country faces. So, we'll begin by my turning the floor now to Vanda who is going to frame, I think, a larger picture of the region and maybe even in the context of the whole country's current challenges, and then we'll go on to our friends from Refugee International -- Refugees International with their report and their discussion. We'll mix it up a little bit here before we go to you for your thoughts and questions in about 45 minutes. So, without further ado, Vanda, the floor is yours.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Thank you. And good afternoon, everyone. I'm delighted to see interest in Nigeria and thank you for joining us on the panel and

holding this event. Nigeria often, these days, does not get enough exposure and discussion in Washington. And it's a partially reflection that the intensity of the fighting, the intensity of the Boko Haram seems, and is, lesser than it was at its peak when Boko Haram would be killing 11,000 people a year. Nonetheless, the kidnapping of February of Dapchi, 110 schoolgirls, it shook up many including many in Nigeria where the government has, for a long time, been saying since 2015 that Boko Haram had been technically defeated. And so, people asked well, if Boko Haram is technically defeated how come attack happened again? And, of course, the reality is that, although, Boko Haram is far from anywhere at the level of its peak operational capacity, it no longer has the capacity to take on and displace, and push out entire battalions of the Nigerian military as was happening the regular basis throughout up to 2015, the Nigerian military has been stuck in, I don't want to say a stalemate, but in the typical really difficult phase of counterinsurgency, namely, the holding operation.

And the Nigerian military is deployed throughout Nigeria's 32 states. There are many other -- in 32 out of 36 states. There are very many other security issues that the military is responding, and it's partially a function of the design where states do not have their own policing forces or police forces at the federal level, deployed by Abuja -- deployed by Abuja according to specific quota. The consequence of which, however, is that it should be the military because often police forces are not available to be doing holding operations, and it's a major problem. So, we have seen areas where the military has nominally cleared Boko Haram, but it's pushed out Boko Haram with Boko Haram coming back.

Trouble along major roads in the northeast is still highly restricted and often quite risky, certainly on secondary roads which (inaudible) Boko Haram attacks is substantial, but even on major roads the military often does not allow individual travel. Boko Haram is -- sorry, the mic is not working?

MS. LAPIN: We're not hearing you very well.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Okay. Thanks for letting us know.

(Microphone issues)

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Okay. So, apologies that you haven't heard that my core point was that, although, Boko Haram is nowhere in the level operational capacity, it has up to 2015 it still remains a potent force that's still causing a lot of insecurity.

The Nigerian military struggles massively in holding territory and often Boko Haram has returned into territories from which it's been cleared. But that does not necessarily mean that it takes and holds those territories, but it conducts a variety of offensive operations. And there is, certainly, widespread fears, nominally, at local government administrations have returned to all areas of Borno State and throughout northeast. In practice, they're often very restricted in their operational capacity and they fear Boko Haram attacks. So, the situation, in many ways, is stuck a stalemate.

The issue of negotiations is not new. It's been up all many times -- it's been brought up many times. Boko Haram declared allegiance to the Islamic State and renamed itself Islamic State in West Africa from which a branch of Islamic State has then split off that calls itself the True Islamic State. I'll speak about them in a minute. They're

a fascinating contrast to the Boko Haram dominant aspect of the Islamic State.

But before I get to that, I also want to emphasize the Nigerian military and the anti-Boca Haram militia, the so-called Civilian Joint Task Force, continued to be huge sources of insecurity themselves. Although the level of abuses, extrajudicial killing, massacres of entire communities often involving hundreds of people slaughtered by the Nigerian military, or allegedly slaughtered by the Nigerian military at one time in one day, are no longer present to that same extent. A lot of the liberation operations still involve arresting or killing males in a village to without really ascertaining in any robust way whether they are Boko Haram, and anyway even if they were they should not be simply killed and dragging of women and children, and mass into detention centers.

So, there are other counterinsurgency operations that continue to be in place such as prohibiting the growth of tall crops that significantly compounds the famine that the Nigerian government has refused to call famine, but the severe food crisis that's plagued Northeast Nigeria in 2016, 2017, and is hardly over. Nigerian military operations continue to involve collecting all knives and tools from a village which means that villagers cannot go about slaughtering livestock, slaughtering chicken, providing food for themselves. And the Nigerian military has become deeply involved and controls all kinds of economic activity.

On religious defecation the Boko Haram taxes growing crops, taxes fishing, taxes transport so the Nigerian military tries to limit and prohibit the activity, but also taxes it illegally itself. So, it is now the permeation of the Nigerian military police and the CJTF, the militias into local economic environment.

My last comment then on the Islamic State, the split of branch of the Islamic State. And in the Q&A we can talk about negotiations, history of negotiations when they worked, when they haven't, why? It's that out of the three actors, the military, the state, the Boko Haram version of the Islamic State, and the split of branch, it's the split of branch that's actually by far the most discriminating actor. They have scrupulously tried to avoid civilian casualties, they do not attack Mosques, and more than just about (inaudible) actor and, certainly, in contrast to Boko Haram, they provide services.

So, for example, in some villages in the alluvial plains of the northeast they have taken women, pregnant women, to a hospital, something no one has ever done. They are clearly very much differentiating themselves from Boko Haram and they are seeking to redevelop a state-like agenda and a state-like presence that often out-classes the presence of the Nigerian state. And so, in this context the humanitarian response, and I would say not just the humanitarian response, but really building up an accountable present state is crucial for countering not just immediate threat of Boko Haram, but the more insidious long-term threat of militant groups developing far greater legitimacy than the state.

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic, Vanda. Thank you. I've got a couple of follow-up questions, but I'll hold them for now and come back to those after we hear from Alexandra and Mark. I want to add a quick additional word on Alexandra. She's only recently arrived in the United States from Canada, so I feel guilty we've given her such a bad spring so far. Certainly anybody who grew up in Canada deserves a better March than Washington has delivered this year. But she's

worked for the Canadian government on issues concerning security in Africa and is both francophone and Anglophone, so has worked on a number of different countries, French-speaking and English-speaking Africa, and we're just delighted to have her, and Mark, here today. So, the floor is yours, my friend.

MS. LAMARCHE: Thank you very much. So, as Vanda said, obviously the crisis is in its ninth year and shows no signs of truly waning, while Boko Haram has been Security fluctuates and areas that were deemed to be secure in the worst-affected states of Yobe, Adamawa and Borno have now re-spiraled down into violence and this is just -- Adamawa saw large-scale returns last year and this year because of safety, and it's found itself again in a cycle of violence and targeted by attacks. Though the Nigerian military has been successful in recapturing larger towns from Boko Haram, much of the rural areas have not been reclaimed or are falling under insurgent control. Northeastern Nigeria still faces food shortages and poor service delivery. Security threats including combat operations and bombings continue to cause civilian casualties and displacement. As such, the humanitarian consequences are staggering. There are 1.6 million people who are still displaced in the northeast; 7.7 million are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance; and there are estimates that there are 930,000 people who are in hard-to-reach areas by the humanitarian community, a number which has been pretty contested by the Nigerian authorities.

So, in Borno State, obviously the epicenter of the crisis and home of Boko Haram, the Borno State hosts the majority of the displaced populations, the majority of which are found in its capital city of Maiduguri. At its height the numbers were near

a million, they're now closer to between 200 and about 300,000 people as the government forces have been able to recapture land. Many people have been leaving Maiduguri to go back to where they came from often before it's been safe to do so just because conditions in IDP camps have been terrible, if not just poor, and this is a huge concern.

So, while these returns are voluntary, we support voluntary returns, the fact that they've been sort of premature is a source of concern for the safety and well-being of these people. The humanitarian response itself suffers from the systemic weakness. The United Nations and other international aid organizations have failed to create robust mechanisms to respond to protection issues which are extremely widespread throughout the region. And without effective civilian-military coordination the humanitarian community remains divided on the question of appropriate engagement with the Nigerian military when it comes to relief efforts.

For its part the Nigerian government has been deeply disorganized. Many different agencies claim to be sort of the apex coordinating body and that they're in charge of the response. There's a huge lack of communication between these different government agencies and a lack of coordination and cooperation between them too, with many of them vying for funds.

For the displaced people themselves daily existence, obviously, remains extremely difficult. People are heavily reliant on (aid) which is, even in itself, not always great. Access to livelihood is extremely limited and food rations rarely last between monthly food distributions. As we all know, these displacement camps and settlements have been the scene of numerous suicides, or so-called suicide,

attacks or armed attacks by Boko Haram. And, as such, the government forces along with the CJTF, the Civilian Joint Task Force, which is a paramilitary group that often operates sort of parallel to the Nigerian military, has created a pass system to protect these camps. However, this pass system, in which people apply to have permission to leave the camps, has become riddled with discrimination and sexual exploitation. So, while we understand the very real imperatives and juggling between these two or balancing between the two imperatives, the wanting to protect people's lives and protect the rights and freedom of movement, this system has become fraught and, obviously, we're very concerned about the implications of permitting people to go in and out. Not to say that there are not numerous other challenges in providing aid on the basis of humanitarian principles within a context where the military is often the first responder and oversees virtually every aspect of a response. In December the governor of Borno, Governor Shettima, announced that he intended to have people leave Maiduguri and return to their areas of origin. Many of these areas were not yet safe or conducive for these large-scale returns. These returns have not yet happened, the deadline keeps being pushed back. However, there is a real sense of political urgency with an upcoming election. So, that's something that we are watching very closely and what drove us to get to, or what pushed us to go to Nigeria, northeastern Nigeria. The most publicized of these plans was to go to Bama. So, Bama used to be about 250,000 people. It was a Boko Haram stronghold from 2013 to 2015 until the Nigerian forces were able to push them out. But because of that military victory Bama holds a lot of political clout and given the upcoming election, to have people return would be an

extraordinary sort of photo opportunity to display that success. This is still a very fraught plan it's a one size fits all, that 250,000 people will somehow want to return before the end of the year seems impossible. Many people have created new lives elsewhere in Nigeria or are too scared to return given the trauma that they faced. And then the governor earlier this month made a follow-up announcement that he intended to close all displacement camps within the state of Borno before the end of May. So, that's just a few months away, effectively forcing these people to return and cutting them off from the aid that they do receive right now in these centers. These announcements are, obviously, extremely alarming, security is precarious throughout the Northeast, especially in Borno, and military campaigns are still ongoing, still cause civilian casualties and still cause massive displacement. Bama itself is not conducive for returns. We traveled there in January to assess sort of the conditions on the ground and while construction is ongoing it is not safe for returns. And as Vanda said, you know, there's very limited road access. So, you have 250,000 people that would live in a city that they'd be stuck in, it'd be hard to get the necessities, that would be hard for them even to travel to return, we ourselves had to travel by helicopter because the road is repeatedly the scene of armed attacks and explosions. It seems like a very short-sighted plan.

So, distress around these plans is compounded by that political urgency that we spoke of. The upcoming election is extremely worrying. I'm very alarmed by the fact that this is how people want to display success, would be to return people to a very dangerous setting.

MR. O'HANLON: Alexandra, thank you. An additional word of introduction on Mark. Also Canadian by origin. He came here. Taught for Madeleine Albright at Georgetown as a teaching assistant and has worked for Oxfam, the National Democratic Institute. Something of particular interest to me, he worked for Merlin, a medical relief organization in my old Peace Corps country of Democratic Republic of Congo. So, he's got a lot of experience already on various issues concerning many African states and has worked from a number of different vantage points including now Refugees International. So, Mark any further thoughts to complement your colleagues, please?

MR. YARNELL: Yeah. Thanks so much. Yeah, so I'm going to just going to, as Alexandra said, we traveled together to Northeast Nigeria earlier this year. I'm just going to touch on the top-line recommendations we're making to try to help ameliorate the current challenges to the humanitarian response, and then engage in one particularly challenging issue, and then just we'll look forward to the discussion. Certainly, first and foremost, urging the Nigerian government to refrain from carrying out large-scale premature returns given the conditions that exist now, and to make a clear plan for how it would happen in the future. And, to that end, we're calling on the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, which is responsible for coordinating the protection response for internally displaced people, to invest much more in analyzing, assessing, and understanding the true intentions for return of displaced people.

So, that we know then that the people that are interested in going home in the immediate term, maybe those who want to return in the longer term, but also there

are likely many displaced who may never want to return and we want to make sure that those rights are upheld, and that for people who have lost their livelihoods and feelings it's too insecure to go back to their home area, they have the option to integrate and reside in their current local area of displacement.

And then, finally, I mean, it can be a tricky issue in a context of donor fatigue, but the funding last year made a difference despite the challenges in allowing the responses to scale up and prevent the potential for famine. And so, maintaining robust funding through 2018 is essential and, fortunately, we had some good news out of Congress in terms of the Omnibus resolution and the amount of humanitarian funding that was maintained.

Just on one issue that that my colleague Alexandra brought up, and I'm happy to engage on more, is compared to any context in sub-Saharan Africa where I've visited with Refugees International over the past six years, I've never encountered a military that so -- has such an impact in controlling key aspects of the humanitarian response, and that's an issue that humanitarian agencies are grappling with in terms of how to engage the military appropriately, but how to maintain a level of neutrality and independence to be able to respond based on need, not just based on directions from the military. To get access to sites of internal displacement run by the government, you need the military to approve that access. For us to take the helicopter trip to Bama required military authorization. Once you're in Bama, moving around requires military authorization. So, that reality exists, but what we didn't see was clear guidelines of how civilian humanitarian organizations can

engage the military in an appropriate way while maintaining the ability to operate under humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.

So, that's something that that there's a great deal of division exists amongst (eight) organizations and something that we address in our report, and hope can be rectified in terms of having some more coordination.

So, I'll leave it there, but look forward to the discussion.

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Thank you. Thank you, all. So, what I want to do now is really pose two main questions to the panelists before we go to you. First, I want to sort of zoom out and then I want to zoom back in. And when I say "zoom out" I'd like to -- for those of us who are not Northeast Nigeria specialists and who partly view this problem in broader global terms, and who remember when Boko Haram was one of the big affiliates when Isis seemed on the move and on the March, and that was three or four years ago -- I'd like to sort of understand where we are in the path towards progress because, again, they are elements, and what I heard from all of you that are, at least, somewhat hopeful or, at least, reflect the situation of today may not be as bad as it had been. And, again, if you dispute that characterization feel free in a second to correct me. But, Vanda, you said Boko Haram is not quite as powerful as it was three or four years ago and, Alexandra and Mark, you're talking about the opportunity now to go back home and maybe it's just being seized upon too quickly, but there is an opportunity that wasn't even there previously.

So, in this sense one does get a feel for a gradual movement in the right direction. So, the question is, first of all, is that a correct way to look at the big picture, you

know, in grand historic terms? Is the overall trend line sort of in the right direction? But, secondly, and I guess more importantly, more to the point, is that direction likely to continue irrespective of the specific things you're talking about today? In other words, are the forces of history enough on government side that it's probably going to, you know, gradually get to where we all would like to see it? And the real question is how many people suffer along the way? Which is important, but it's also largely a local humanitarian question. Or is the whole strategic problem still up for grabs, that Boko Haram could make a big comeback, that the region could deteriorate into more widespread violence again and maybe even civil warfare? Is that risk still there?

So, I hope that was a clear enough question. But if you could, you know, how much progress have we made and do you see that progress likely to continue or is that what we're talking about today, that this progress is fragile, it's up for grabs, and it could still be reversed, if a lot of what you three are proposing is not adopted by Nigeria and the broader international community? If I could start with you, Vanda.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, Mike, whether you are an optimist or pessimist in life depends on where you set your baselines. If the baseline is 2011-2012, we are clearly in a much better situation, you know, at the height of the insurgency efforts, the presence of the Nigerian military, and government was extremely limited, Boko Haram controlled very large areas which was extraordinary brutal, controlled Maiduguri and we were seeing death rates at the level of 10,000, 11,000, 8,000 a year. Now, for about two or three years we are seeing death rates

at about 3,500 a year. That's not insignificant. You and I know Afghanistan very well those are quite common numbers in another country in Afghanistan. However, the progress that was accomplished from about 2015-2016, in my view, has already got stuck. I don't necessarily envision that we would end up in a situation where we have a whole repeat of Boko Haram retaking large portions of State. What I fear very much is that we'll end up in a situation where we are in the protracted morass for very many years to come. While the split of branch of Islamic State is building up power and building up legitimacy in a way that Boko Haram, fortunately, failed to do. And I fear that the deeper issue that Nigeria, as a country, needs to struggle, not just the Northeast, the issue of a state that is present, that is accountable, that stops being a state, that's neglectful and abusive, an extraordinary exclusionary is not corrected. And in that case we will simply see the mutation of one form, of militancy into another.

There is a major bomb threat or time bomb, right now in Northeast Nigeria that we have not really explicitly mentioned, which is the militias, the CJTF. The CJTF self-assesses that it has 25,000 to 27,000 members. There's no verification by anyone what the actual numbers are. The CJTF is now stratified in two or three layers. One layer that the government, the smallest, has armed and pays. Another layer that the government has armed, but doesn't pay, and the vast majority that doesn't get paid or has not been armed by the Nigerian military by the government. They are very restless, very unhappy. There is a lot of frustrations. The second layer wants to be paid just like the first layer, and third layer wants to be armed and wants to be paid.

I interviewed a number of the commanders and soldiers and they were pretty -- or combatants, they were fighters. They were pretty explicit that when, as one of the sector commanders put it to me. If we don't end up on a systematic government payroll, who's to say that we cannot start rising up against the state. He put it in more straightforward terms than I have just translating the statement. He essentially said look, we can rise up as well. And they are a major factor in the elections. The CJTF is one of the gatekeepers to the IDP camps and they are being used to generate votes in IDP camps. They are a principal source of who gets arrested, often arrests of entire villages take place on the basis of some CJTF member saying this is Boko Haram, this is not Boko Haram, this is Boko Haram. And people are dragged off to detention for months and years still continually today simply on the hearsay from CJTF. And that is already effort to politicize CJTF for the 2019 elections. Politicians in the northeast are picking commanders, starting to deliver goods to them to use them as mechanism to get votes.

One other caveat that I -- or another -- but on the context that I want to put in is, of course, that this is hardly the sole conflict happening in Nigeria. There are many sources of conflict throughout the country, one of which is the conflict between the farmers and herders, not just in the northeast and not just in the Middle Belt, but also now very much seeping into the south and, in complex ways, interacting across the different conflicts that used to be quite isolated. And last year that conflict, perhaps, caused more casualties than Boko Haram. I say "perhaps." The numbers are quite tight.

But so, all of that paints a picture that's hardly just a steady march toward progress in Nigeria. In my view, by far the most fundamental issue is to really bring far more accountability to government institutions that Nigeria has systematically experienced.

MR. O'HANLON: Yep. Good. Thank you. Alexandra, I'm not sure if you want to address the question the way I phrased it or not, but feel free, I mean, to take whatever segments of it or slice that you wish. I'm just curious for how you placed today's moment in historical perspective for Nigeria and if you see the path forward as -- and, again, the recommendations of your report -- as largely sort of improving the humanitarian milieu along the path that, hopefully, will continue to be positive or do you see that path itself as being up for grabs and uncertain things could be reversed, the situation could still dramatically deteriorate?

MS. LAMARCHE: With regards to the humanitarian aspects of the situation, there's definitely been an improvement. I mean, our colleague was there in 2016 and there was barely any humanitarian architecture. So, there is a vast improvement.

But to add to what Vanda said, that Nigeria in politics have been very exclusionary and the troubles in the northeast predate this conflict. It has been systematically ignored and that needs to be addressed. And with regards to the military aspect of it, I mean, yes, Boko Haram has been weakened, but the military is also very tired. I mean, they've been there for years and years and years without a switch-up, without funds without, you know, proper, you know -- there's a huge discrepancy and terrible lines of communication between the field level to Maiduguri to Abuja.

So, it's very, very hard to sort of fully understand what the extent of success and/or weaknesses are. And with regards to Boko Haram, even calling it Boko Haram at this point in time seems troublesome because it has separated, it is multiple factions. Barnawi has a very different method of operation than Shekau does, and that needs to be taken in consideration when figuring how to move forward. And I just feel, yes, there's an improvement on many sides of it, but some of these problems that have been addressed have been sort of replaced with new problems now.

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Thank you. Mark, over to you for the same question.

MR. YARNELL: Yeah, just a build on that. I mean, in the immediate term, I mean, we've seen in very recent history seen the government and the military in a position to recapture cities that have been controlled by Boko Haram and to begin serious efforts at rebuilding. I think that's why it's quite discouraging that that the progress that's being made in terms of stability and rebuilding could be disrupted by large-scale premature returns to areas that are not yet fully secured and reconstructed.

So, in the town of Bama, the second largest city in Borno State, there's neighborhoods beginning to be rebuilt. The government -- the military has a small five-kilometer radius of control, but it has that which it didn't have as of a couple of years ago. But military officers, with whom we spoke, were very candid that it's still difficult for them to expand that perimeter of security more in the current context and that if you bring in many, many more IDP returns it makes it even more difficult for

them to maintain security in the area. So, just balancing those practical realities with this political imperative, that to demonstrate success and stability that may actually disrupt that very stability.

MR. O'HANLON: So, I said I wanted to zoom back in. Let me do that and then we'll go to the audience for their thoughts and questions. I wanted to ask each of you to maybe expand a little on some of the recommendations that you've got in your writings, and in what you've already said today. And not to go through them comprehensively, but to build on maybe one or two each and let you choose what you want to talk about in more detail. For example, Vanda, I know you've been concerned about the basic counterinsurgency tactics of the Nigerian military and collective punishment as one of their tools of trying to gain information and also deter, you know, harboring of Boko Haram or other extremist groups. And, obviously, the title of your report speaks for itself, that you don't want to see premature or forced returns, but above and beyond that you may want to comment on some of the preconditions that need to be improved so that those returns could happen down the road.

So, anyway, open for discussion to the three of you just to add a couple more points and, again, maybe we can start with Vanda and just work down the row again on, you know, one or two things that you would like to see the Nigerian government do specifically in the short-term, as well as the international community.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: I would say that a crucial element that if that could be resolved would help across several dimensions, is improving holding capacity. A lot of the existing problems with mass arrests, prolonged detentions,

and awful conditions that easily become themselves sources of radicalization where boys as young as 9, 10, 11 are kept with adult men in very small crowded cells with often problematic access to food, water, hygiene, and shoved across many centers, often stuck there for years before they are released. A lot of that today is a function of not being able to effectively hold territories.

So, what the Nigerian military does in these days and engages in liberating operation often is to move people out. They don't feel confident in being able to screen people in-field. They often insist that the in-field screening does not allow for effective gathering of intelligence or whether people are Boko Haram or not, and so they try to move everyone out into detention and other conditions. That, itself, generates tremendous displacement and further complicates the issues of return any kind of sustainability of communities.

So, if the United States, the international community could help work with Nigeria to develop better holding capacity, we would get away from policies that alienate people, that are easily sources of radicalization, that are deeply inconsistent with human rights, often violates human rights in massive scale in an egregious manner, and that are counterproductive across an entire range of issues such as IDP, such as returns of communities, such as rebuilding of communities.

The one caveat -- well, one addition that I want to bring in that we haven't really spoken about and it's very important for the Nigerian context. Mark, you spoke about how Nigeria is different in the role of military in the humanitarian dimension. What strikes me about Nigeria, in the context of war settings in Africa and beyond

Africa, is the tremendous level of hostility and rejection between those who were displaced toward those who remain under Boko Haram rule.

So, the sense that many people in the northeast and beyond essentially differentiate between good victims and bad victims. The good victims are those who ended up in IDP camps, who ran away. The bad victims are people who stayed under Boko Haram rule, who were enslaved by Boko Haram. There is tremendous bad blood between those two set of actors, between those set of populations. That already complicates defectors programs, rehabilitation efforts, or integration efforts will complicate in a severe manner humanitarian efforts and rebuilding. And there is real need to focus on healing among communities of getting away from the notion that just because you lived under Boko Haram rule you have become, quote, "bastardized." You have become brainwashed. This level of societal distrust and resentment toward each other is a major concerning issue that can really spiral out of control in very dramatic ways.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank You. Alexandra, the same question to you, please.

MS. LAMARCHE: Just to add a little bit. I mean, that stigma is -- you can see it everywhere, and you don't necessarily see it when it's on the large scale. So, we'll talk about the Chibok girls and the Dapchi girls, and it's not the same sort of stigma that's attached to these girls and women. Whereas a woman who will go, you know, was abducted for two years and managed to flee, if she goes back to a camp she's stigmatized for the rest of her life. Like she is disadvantaged in terms of food distributions, and that severely hinders people's ability to reintegrate

and also just, I mean, the personal psychological trauma that these women endure is completely neglected, and that's something that we saw repeatedly. So, just to add to that point.

But, with regards to a recommendation, the lack of accountability and transparency of the Nigerian government is extremely worrying and that's why in our report we do call for there to be a clear public comprehensive plan. The Nigerian government has been completely quiet about how it intends to shut these camps down, how it intends to remove -- or move all these people back to their areas of origin. So, it's very, very hard to hold the government accountable to a specific standard or a timeline or, you know, a phased relocation when it's not giving any public information on how it's going to be done. So, that's what my number one recommendation would be.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Mark.

MR. YARNELL: Sure. And just, first, for anyone standing in the back there's a handful of seats in the front. You can join us up here. Anyways, and just I think what -- yeah, as Alexandra says, we want to want to see a clear plan for returns and at the same time, within that plan, have very clear acknowledgment by the government that many people, if they have their own voluntary interest, are able to live by their own voluntary interest, will not return home and do not wish to return to their home area, and will remain in urban centers. And we know this from trends of displacement throughout history and over the past many decades. Once the situation becomes protracted past a few years that that -- that many people will never be able to return to their home area.

And so, the need to acknowledge that reality and orient programming, as much as you can, away from the kind of care and maintenance, humanitarian response, and more towards urban planning that facilitates integration and access to local services. And the sooner that can happen, the better. And I know the bank has been engaged, and we just hope that the government can itself link up those kinds of policies for people who remain integrated in cities.

MR. O'HANLON: Just one more question to tie this together before we bring you in. I want to link everything on the Northeast Nigeria issue to the broader reality of Nigeria today in a nutshell, really quickly, and invite anybody else to comment if they want to add a point. I mentioned in my introduction that Nigeria, of course, is about a quarter of Africa's population, still a very fast population growth rate, as I recall. Not so fast of a GDP growth rate, partly because Nigeria is dependent on oil exports and it's one of the many countries, therefore, that's seen its revenues plateau or drop in recent times, as oil has been at an historic low for several years.

And so, you put together the different pieces of stresses in Northeast Nigeria, other security problems that Vanda referred, flat or declining oil revenue, rapidly growing population which has some advantages, but also, of course, some drains and strains on an economy. And you put that all in the context of an impressive young democracy that's trying to make its way through early elections in the sense that, you know, we're only a few cycles of democratically elected presidents in Nigeria's history in which elections have been reasonably well regarded, but that's a pretty

good accomplishment. And I think President Buhari is running for re-election and the elections would be next year.

And so, anything you want to add to tie the issues we're talking about today to this broader picture of where Nigeria finds itself. One very concrete question is to the extent that resources are needed for any of the initiatives that you're proposing, it looks to me like it would be relatively difficult to expect the government to come up with a lot of them on its own given its, you know, stressed budgetary situation. So, does that mean the international community needs to help?

Mark, you referred to the greater amount of humanitarian aid last year, but is there also an argument for a development boost, a boost in the development budgets to help northeastern Nigeria and other parts of the country, you know, with some of the more enduring challenges and problems? So, that's one question on my mind, but anything else you each may want to add to sort of painting this big broad picture of where Nigeria finds itself today? Any further comments, Vanda?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, Mike, one of the constraints that you did not mention and that continues to be dominating Nigeria is, of course, massive corruption. So, with all the stress of economic decline corruption continues to be pervasive. President Buhari early on in his administration indicted the former national security advisor for President Goodluck Jonathan for massive theft of anti-Boko Haram resources. Several other indictments have taken place. But, unfortunately, perhaps not surprisingly, this has hardly resulted in systemic cleaning of Nigerian institution. It still deeply patronage and clientelism greed in society and corruption is massive and debilitates, and undermines both delivery of services, but

also legitimacy of the state. And that's the original use of Mohammed narrative and the narrative of justice still resonates very strongly in Northeast Nigeria and in other parts of Nigeria as well.

And that context is important to understand in the context of civil society, young technocratic society, that's often enormously impressive. There are young, not just young, people in Nigeria who are enormously admirable and enormously inspiring. Yet, again, that's something that we have encountered together in Afghanistan. Yet, those very enormously impressive people have not been able to change the system, and is it just a matter of time or do other elements need to click into place? And, clearly, one of the element is that the international community is Nigeria's partners, people who are committed, countries who are committed to Nigeria, such as the United States, demand accountability.

Nigeria has failed, the Nigerian society has often failed to demand accountability and when it has asked for it, it's not been given it. We need to support those who ask for accountability and ask systemic accountability of our partners, of our counterparts in delivering humanitarian aid, and develop the delivering (inaudible) many, tremendous amount of development aid is going into Northeast Nigeria. The budgets are very large, but the constant fear is how will that aid actually be used and what levels of oversight. The same when we cooperated in the Nigerian military, we need to demand accountability and draw lines that some levels of egregious human rights violations will simply not be tolerated.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Alexandra, any thoughts?

MS. LAMARCHE: Mine was sort of similar, but obviously more about humanitarian aid, and even -- so, the week before Secretary Tillerson traveled to Nigeria and ultimately then resigned, when he announced the funds that he allocated --

MR. YARNELL: He was fired. He was fired.

MS. LAMARCHE: Well, yeah. Anyways, he announced that aid should always -- no. That good governance should be incentivized by aid, and that's something that is crucial with this. This is basic bad governance, and this is not something that is only true in northeastern Nigeria. It is true around Nigeria as a whole. But this is something that we all need to do, and it's not just donor governments, it's also donor institutions and making sure that none of their funds are being used for harmful policies. And the issue of corruption falls into that category. It happens on every single level of a humanitarian response with regards to the government or other organizations as well. And you see a lot of skimming off the top of food distributions.

We've heard multiple allegations that certain bodies that were being given large sums of Nigerian government money, it was just a, you know, it was a present for someone who was about to retire, that they created a new organization and it was just a gift, and then that money went nowhere and no one knows where it's been. And my question is if Nigeria, I mean, you said that Nigeria doesn't have the funds to sort of help itself, and if it has the funds to pay off all these people with corrupt bribes then it probably has the funds to do a much better job than it's been doing so far.

MR. O'HANLON: Good point. Thank you. Mark.

MR. YARNELL: Yeah. I mean, just in terms of longer term development efforts and U.S. interest to promote accountability leveraging the significant investment the U.S. has already made it didn't help that the Secretary of State was fired while he was on his trip to Africa, just after having met with Nigerian leaders.

So, something needs to change in terms of U.S. orientation towards Africa if we're going to development -- or if we're going to demonstrate that kind of, I think, what is the actual commitment of the U.S. policy towards Africa.

MR. O'HANLON: Do we only have an acting assistant secretary for Africa now as well?

MR. YARNELL: Correct.

SPEAKER: (Off mic)

MR. YARNELL: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. So, let's go to you. Please wait for a microphone and please identify yourself when you get it, and we'll have three questions or so at a time. I'm going to start in about the seventh row, my friends here, there are two hands up. So, we'll begin with both of those questions in about the seventh row, and then we'll come up here for one more before coming back to the panel.

SPEAKER: Sure. Hi. My name is (inaudible), And I'm an Associate Fellow in the Democracy program at the Carnegie Endowment. And my question is mainly for Vanda, but also for the others, perhaps, to chime in. You mentioned that

there's a huge need to restore government presence and government services in Northeast Nigeria because there's a real gap there at the moment. And I was wondering if you could comment on the state of current efforts to return local government, in particular, in those areas especially given that the fact that local government in many ways is dysfunctional across Nigeria, not just in the Northeast. So, what do these efforts look like and also international support for those efforts?

MR. MORGAN: Good afternoon. I'm Scott Morgan with Red Eagle Enterprises. I have a quick two-part question. First, for Vanda and Alexandra. With the problems in Cameroon, along that border, did you see any evidence of spillover rather than Nigerians going across the border to assist in Cameroon or the Cameroonians coming across to fight (inaudible) Boko Haram because we've had heard reports of Boko Haram fighters actually speaking French? And then and, you know, have you seen any other spillover, not just from that and from (inaudible), and not just from fighters, but also weapons and other things?

And, second, talking about -- you talked about the government. Who do you think would be actually able to deliver these services better? Would it be the federal government or would it be the state governments? Because for years we have not seen a willingness of Abuja, whether it's been the Jonathan government or the current Governor President Buhari be actually engaged in these three states. Who should actually do it?

MR. O'HANLON: And let's take one more before we -- I'll come back to the panel. Okay. So, I guess we'll come up here. We'll work from back to front.

So, we'll be in the fourth row who helped us out with the microphone issue earlier. Thanks.

MS. LAPIN: My name is Deirdre LaPin. I've worked for a number of bilateral, multilateral organizations in Nigeria for the last 40 years, and lived in the country for an extended period. I was last in the northeast doing a health project for the ministry four years ago. So, that was before the last push of Boko Haram. I have a couple of questions. One is, are there a lot of interesting parallels between the Boko Haram insurgency and the militancy in the Niger Delta? And, as you know, in 2009 there was an amnesty program that was put in place and there's been a lot of discussion in Nigeria about repeating that experience in the north. I wondered if you had any views on the idea of amnesty for particularly the civilian JTF and some of the Boko Haram fighters? And with respect to the civilian JTF, it would seem that a very natural opportunity for them would be to create a large government-driven program that could develop the north and do rehabilitation in the north by drawing on the labor force of the civilian JTF. Many of them have shown quite a lot of leadership in their work. So, is that a possibility in your view?

MR. O'HANLON: So, why don't we go to the panel. Feel free to take whichever one or two you might want. Vanda, I think a few were directed to you. So, do you want to go first or last?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: It doesn't matter.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, we'll start with Mark, and then hopefully you guys will get some of the questions out of the way, and then make Vanda's life a

little easier here because she had about two or three. So, over to you to start, please, Mark.

MR. YARNELL: Yeah. So, thank you for that, Vanda, for taking on the bulk of the questions. I mean, I'll just touch on the issue of Cameroon. It's, again, another challenge faced by the Nigerian government, is in addition to Nigerians who have flood into Cameroon there are now Cameroonians who fled into Nigeria due to internal conflict in Cameroon.

And so, it just adds another dimension to the challenges faced by the government in addition to the those displaced by Boko Haram. And I think that it's more just to put it to -- I think that it's very easy to get focused just on what's happening in the northeast and it's just another opportunity to kind of broaden the lens in addition to the herder conflict -- or, I'm sorry, the farmer-herder conflict and what's happening in Niger Delta to understand the full complexity of what's happening in the country rather than just being focused in one area. So, I'll leave it there.

MS. LAMARCHE: Also, with regards to that. I mean, you mentioned that Boko Haram fighters were speaking French. Boko Haram is predominantly in four countries, three out of which are francophone. So, I'm not particularly surprised by that. I think that there is a lot of cross-border. And, I mean, with the rise, the ebbs and flows of sort of Lake Chad, it's probably pretty common, but I can't speak for the linguistic skills, really.

Just to answer the question about the CJTF and prospects for them within like a government plan. That is part of Governor Shettima's plan for these returns, is to have this program where they become agro rangers so that they would protect. So,

within the five-kilometer radius sort of the town would be in the middle and around would be, you know, surrounding farms and forest or whatever, with which would be protected by the CJTF.

What the prospects of that, I mean, how feasible that is or if it's actually going to happen or when it would happen is hard to tell when the conflict is still ongoing and they're still actively participating. And it's usually relied upon by the Nigerian military. I mean, I can't speak for that, but I'm just saying that this is something that someone's thinking about. I don't know how feasible it is or if it's a good idea.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Let me pick up the CJTF question. I have real concerns about this plan and I have significant concerns, also, about simply rolling CJTF in significant portions into any kind of position where they can control access. So, many people in Northeast Nigeria see CJTF as heroes. Often there was no stay presence, no military, no police, and CJTF was defending them against the military. However, CJTF has come to be a major source of human rights abuses. As I mentioned, its denunciation of who is Boko Haram and who is not are highly arbitrary. There is often motivation of economic advantage to seize property, old revenge at place or simply to get payoffs from the military for particular denunciation. CJTF has come to start challenging local government authorities as well as traditional village elders.

There is real power contestation between those set of actors. There is no clear commander to CJTF. Nominally, CJTF is under the Borno State attorney general,

in practice his control is highly questionable. And, as I mentioned, there are real efforts to politicize CJTF.

In my view, there needs to be a program that acknowledges their service to the countries that deals with crucial issues such as widows of CJTF that might be extremely vulnerable, but that at the end of the day leads to systemic demobilization and reintegration to the extent that CJTF is given any official positions in police rehabilitation, paramilitary control. The same standard of accountability that needs to be applied to Nigerian institutions need to be applied to them. They are also guilty of severe human rights violations. They often are exclusionary. We hear all about Boko Haram and cattle-rustling. Well, guess what, there's a lot of involvement in CJTF in cattle-rustling many CJTF members used to be drug addicts and drug dealers. They maintained their linkages. So, you know, to the extent we say CJTF takes on official authorities then there needs to be a real screening and weeding out of bad elements.

Thank you for the question on MINT. I think it's a very fundamental question for Nigeria. This is the 2009 deal with the Delta insurgents, and I think it has broader repercussions and broader significance beyond Nigeria. What I think was very good about the MINT deal is that the Nigerian state, the Nigerian military for the first time, really, we're willing to contemplate and adopt a non-military solution. At the end there was a negotiated deal. It was a huge breakthrough in the context of Nigeria history.

That said, I think that the deal was badly designed and is haunting us now. It was badly designed because it essentially involved blanket amnesty for anyone

associated with the insurgency, and multiple sets of insurgency, not just MINT and financial payoffs.

So, in Nigeria the MINT deal is often referred to as buying peace, and a peace that is in troubles now that the Buhari government has suspended payments we have seen uptick of violence, not necessarily from key leaders who have become prominent politicians who have also become millionaires and billionaires as a result of the deal.

So, there was an extremely problematic message that that Nigeria repeatedly resorts to. You buy your way out of troubles by paying off your opponents in the same way that one can suggest that it's problematic to pay Boko Haram for releasing its hostages. And worse, though, the underlying conditions, the issues of victims, the issues of socio-economic degradation, all the underlying grievances in the region were not at all addressed.

So, while considering amnesty lenience and negotiation issues is crucial, needs to be on the table. In many ways the MINT deal is a lesson in what not to replicate, not what to do again, in my view. And this just slides a little bit to the local government authorities, you know, you were very right to phrase the question in the restore. I would say the issues not even restored at this point because restore what? Systems that have often been problematic or collapsed?

So, the question is how does one build accountability? How does one build government interlocutors at the local level that come to represent people? And there are very interesting and very encouraging Nigerian NGO efforts to teach local communities how to identify problems, how to engage in early warning, how to set

up leadership structures and communicate with other faiths, with other aspects of government, state government, federal government, that I would love to see the Nigerian state and international community to support. So, I would not really phrase it 'bring back the LGAs or even restore them,' but rather think about how new structures of the accountability can be built at local level.

And the issue of the state federal local lack of coordination, tensions, really counter working against each other continues to be massive and present in the northeast then and well beyond.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Let's do another round of questions. I think this time we'll start over here in the fourth row, please. And we'll work around the room a little bit.

SPEAKER: Good day. My name is (inaudible). I'm a Nigerian American student at the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University. Basically my question today is about the upcoming elections in 2019, and how they're going to impact the advancement or the amount of attention being paid into the Boko Haram crisis?

Like you mentioned, the suggestion is not the same as it was a few years ago, and I feel that was because there was an election in 2015, and one of the main talking points during that election was Boko Haram (inaudible) what's happening. However, since the Buhari administration has come into power there's been a stall in the amount of investment, the amount of work the military has done. So, my question basically is with the upcoming election (inaudible) my question basically is with the outcome election in 2019, over a year away, how do you think this will

impact more investment being paid and see the crisis, and will you see a ramp-up in efforts to be able to technically or actually defeat Boko Haram? How will they impact the different areas that Boko Haram has affected? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Thanks. And then, let's see we'll go to the woman in the blue shirt, about six rows back, please. And then we'll take the question from the gentleman in that same row, and then come back.

MS. LAMPRON: hi my name is Beth Lampron. I worked at the Department of State in the Nigeria Unit. So, it's an issue near and dear to my heart. Just to answer your question, yes, there are there are members of Boko Haram, they do have camps in northern Cameroon. We've seen videos of them speaking French, talking directly to President Biya and making threats on him.
In terms of a negotiated settlement, I know that the government has been putting that out in the media recently. Has anybody thought about what it would take for either of these groups to lay down their arms and return to a normal state? It's something that people have been talking about, but since the government's now speaking about it, what are the chances and what would the conditions be in your estimation?

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

MR. NATHAN: Thank you. My name is Josh Nathan. I work with Bridge International Academies. We're a social enterprise that operates low-fee private schools and free government schools in five countries around the world including in Nigeria. We're actually very proud to be working in one school in Borno State in collaboration with the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

My question is about education and about some of what any of you have seen in terms of the really scaled rebuilding of the right sorts of services to encourage people who are IDPs to return to their communities, and also to create their right framework for those returnees to be able to live successfully, and so to gain things like in education in their communities. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. So, shall we start with Alexandra this time?

MS. LAMARCHE: Sure.

MR. O'HANLON: And then go to Vanda and Mark.

MS. LAMARCHE: I'll start with the last question just with regards to education. In Borno Governor Shettima keeps announcing that he is in the process of building mega schools all around the state where he hopes to have people return to their areas that are being built in Maiduguri. I don't know exactly how fast that's going to happen and if that's going to happen to the extent that he is announcing it. I know that a huge issue with education is the lack of identification cards.
So, people cannot access government services including health centers, you know, getting births registration or attend school if they don't have government ID cards, which is something that even before the conflict no one had, or if they did have it, they lost them in fleeing. So, that's been a huge issue, however, is a project that UNHCR is working on. So, that's something that we do call for increased funding on for them. So, that's all I can say with regards to education.

MR. O'HANLON: Vanda. Great.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: So, there's 23 mega schools that the government has announced. I visited some of them and the physical construction

of some of them is fairly close. But the issue is sort of the typical one, what does delivering education mean? Is it a building? Even a building that looks better than other buildings or is it the quality of education that's provided? Who will have access, and how? Governor Shettima justifies the building of the schools also by pointing to the fact that there are 60,000 orphans as a result of the conflict. People that children whose parents or, at least, one parent perished either as a result of Boko Haram activities or counterinsurgency.

The issue, of course, education, however, it intimately links not just to those, but to detention camps. We have many children in detention camps and children up to it from very young age up to 18. The schooling they're getting there is one of radicalization and resentment.

There is, of course, the issue of Almajiri. Those are the boys for whom parents cannot really adequately provide, so they send them to mullahs for Islamic education that may entail some sort of memorization of Quran, but that often serve as an economic labor force for the mullahs. They are sent to beg in the streets, and that's how they spend most of the day. Clearly, there needs to be some thinking, some regularization of the extent to which boys can be used for that purpose. I would say they shouldn't be used for that purpose.

So, how does one, then, deliver some economic resources to madrassas and mullahs under? Under what circumstances? So, very many issues of education that need to be resolved in northeast which other than northwest tends to have the worst human development indices. So, for example, when we hear about the issue of the Chibok girls who were sitting for their high school exam. Well, in reality many

a person who is just about to complete high school in Nigeria will probably not be literate or numerate. So, you know, again, what does literacy mean?

Thank you for the question about the negotiated settlement. This is not the first time that the current government and the previous government have spoken about negotiated settlements. There have been multiple offers to Boko Haram. Multiple times the government has announced that it has made the deal only for Boko Haram to respond with massacres as well as rejection certainly the Shekau faction - if Shekau is still alive. They can dispute in Nigeria who is Shekau. But, anyway, that faction seem to have been opposed to a negotiated deal.

A crucial problem is precisely what you identify the tendency of the Nigerian government to shroud everything in utter secrecy, so no one knows what the dimensions actually are. That also makes for very difficult negotiations. Currently there is a defectors program called Operation Safe Corridor in which people who either join Boko Haram or often just had to live under Boko Haram rule can hand themselves over to the Nigerian military and they should be eligible for leniency and support in terms of DDR.

In practice, those who run away, for example, a man who lived for five years under Boko Haram rule and finally has a chance to escape, will really have no way of knowing whether he will be killed by the military, at what point, whether he'll be killed by the CJTF. Will he, in fact, end up in the Operation Safety Corridor and, if so, whether he will be judged low risk or high risk. If he is judged high risk then he will end up in detention for a prolonged period of time, perhaps, die in detention in the really bad conditions, get lost in the system, may be had two trials. The one big

development over the past few months is that finally some trials for Boko Haram members are starting to take place. It's crucial to get the 20,000 people out of the detention camps.

Once again, we know very little about the trials. Absolute secrecy. We hear that some people are sentenced. We also hear that masses of people in the detention camps cannot be sent to trial because there is no evidence, and they would have to be let loose. Yet the government is (loathe), the military is (loathe) to let them loose. So, you have people who cannot be tried, who were tortured, on whom there is no evidence, but who cannot be released.

So, and all of this just feeds into the notion of -- and in a negotiated settlement we'll have to resolve multiple points of policy even before you get to the talking point, and multiple points of clarification of what you actually going to offer Boko Haram.

And the second huge dimension of it is, I want to come back to what I was saying before, any negotiated deal we'll need to grapple with the huge resentment polarization of society with the sense of rejection of anyone who lived under Boko Haram rule. And, if simply, the government makes the deal ala the (MINT) Delta based on financial payoffs and letting people just come back into communities, the odds are new forms of conflict will rapidly escalate and there will be huge resentment that the victims, the right victims didn't get compensation.

And the 2019 elections, in my view, complicate everything. They push for policies that are short-term policies to demonstrate big, dramatic unveiling with often very flimsy problems, and they push for politicization of processes that need to be not about politicization, but about accountability and sustainability.

MR. O'HANLON: Mark.

MR. YARNELL: Just a couple of quick things to add on the issue around elections and the promotion of certain narrative compared to what the reality is. It's just been conserving the increasing challenges we've seen, at least, anecdotally in terms of the Nigerian press being able to access areas of Northeast Nigeria that are at the epicenter of the crisis. So, that that reality can be conveyed to people throughout the rest of the country. So, as much as we can promote freedom and press access I think it's quite significant.

And then something we encountered when it relates to, not necessarily negotiated settlement, but future of Boko Haram fighters who go through demobilization. Nigerians we met with, and through our engagement with local community, there was certainly a strong interest in disarmament and demobilization to go forward, but a real kind of unwillingness to necessarily accept Boko Haram fighters back into their communities.

And so, I'd be interested -- I mean, from lessons from -- because this has been in my lane from past DDR programs, our demobilization programs, how to address that issue when -- the communities from which the fighters came are unwilling to accept them even after they're demobilized.

MS. LAMARCHE: And also the issue of providing them with services and sort of like rehabilitation and training, and then returning to a community where no one there has been offered that same sort of luxury, to a certain extent, where people haven't been able to access, you know, livelihoods and that is not going to

be good for the long-term social cohesion. So, coming up with plans that do take that into account.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: And then the issue of parity, of giving rehabilitation services, socioeconomic services to communities, not just to former militants, should have been nominally part of DDR processes for a long time. But the Nigeria case really just drives it home to me in a way that you don't see in Somalia, you don't see in Afghanistan with the level of polarization, the level of rejection. It's so intense that, clearly, the programming such a psychosocial therapy needs to go not just to people in IDP camps, not just to people accused of having association with Boko Haram, but the communities themselves. Any kind of provision of socioeconomic services will need to, if not be matched, but will need to be comparable in providing socioeconomic services to communities, engages (inaudible) and wants the community leaders, religious leaders as vectors of communication. Using these kind of broader societal reconciliation processes also to empower women.

There is one program, for example, that it's inspiring that's run in Maiduguri where videos, the women who are associated with Boko Haram affiliation who, for example, had Boko Haram husbands, participate in a joint vocational training, joint cooperatives with videos of CJTF. And it be very effective way in thinking about how that can be scaled up and replicated to try to bring two sets of extremely vulnerable people, often greatly resenting each other together, to be both empowered but also to start healing the divisions in the community. But that that aspect is really strong and major obstacle in Nigeria, very unique.

MR. O'HANLON: We have time for one last round of questions. So, let's do that, and then we'll wrap up here. I see three hands. So, we'll take one, two, three, and then we'll wrap.

MS. BOURBON: Hi. Thank you for this informative panel. My name Contessa Bourbon. I write for the *Wall Street Journal* and *London Times*. I'd like to ask the panelists, should foreign governments like U.S., Canada, France, and others directly support the negotiated settlement with government and Boko Haram or exert their leverage or should they support more military actions and intelligence and to combat Boko Haram militarily? What is your recommendation?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And over here, please.

MR. ALLEN: Good afternoon. Nate Allen at Johns Hopkins University. So, I think as many of us know corruption is endemic to Nigeria's governing institutions, its military. I mean, Vanda you mentioned how some members of the CJTF are kind of involved in cattle-rustling. We also know that kind of some major arms contracts have -- elements of it have gone missing, and there's also some circumstantial evidence, for example, that members of the military have sold arms to like Boko Haram insurgents.

So, kind of my question is given that there's some evidence that kind of they're -- both sides, both on the government side and on the insurgent side, benefit from the conflict, the economy? How do you see that affecting kind of the long-term prospects for peace? So, like, first of all, given that there's this benefit on both sides, is a negotiated settlement which is what the consensus seems to be is the likely solution even possible? And if it is, kind of what steps do you think that

officials need to take to kind of limit the possibilities for continued kind of corruption on both sides to kind of act as a spoiler to resolving the conflict over the long-term?

MR. O'HANLON: And last question, please.

MR. MCCASLIN: Jack McCaslin with the Council on Foreign Relations. So, you briefly mentioned NGOs as providing some -- making the situation a little bit better. Who else can people on the ground actually trust, whether it's religious leaders, community leaders, or some sort of economic leaders? And what role can those leaders play in providing opportunity, security, and community healing?

MR. O'HANLON: Mark, you want to start this round and we'll just finish up with Vanda after Alexandra. Whichever ones you like in concluding --

MR. YARNELL: Yeah, yeah. And I do think that Vanda's also going to be taking the bulk of this, but I think, though, just the last question is quite important. I think, fortunately, Nigeria does have a very robust civil society and there are a number of local aid organizations and civil society-based organizations that were around long before the broader humanitarian architecture descended in Northeast Nigeria. And so, it's essential for support to those groups to continue and for the international partners on the ground to be partnering, I think, more directly with those local organizations. Because in addition to the sort of challenges on the government side, I think that one of the good things we saw is seeing engagement by local Nigerians themselves to try to help relieve some of the stresses and challenges. So, afterwards happy to give you the names of specific groups, but it's something that I think that needs to be acknowledged as a positive side of this.

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Alexandra, to you, please.

MS. LAMARCHE: I don't think I can answer the other two questions. I think that it would be really inappropriate for me to say if the government -- if foreign governments should negotiate with Boko Haram or provide funds for them to negotiate, or provide more military. I think that's just not within - I can tell you my really unsolicited opinion about it, but it's not within my professional realm.

And with regards to corruption and the benefit from the conflict economy, I think it's, obviously, extremely prevalent. Everyone is profiting from this response, whether it be militarily -- or the military response or the humanitarian response or anything. It's definitely something that is happening.

And with regards to a negotiated settlement, what that means is -- depends what that negotiated settlement would be and what that would mean. Because I think that looking at -- I mean, I saw someone this weekend who said something, and just said that it's really dangerous when you're starting to pay your terrorists more than you pay your military, and that's a really alarming trend and there's a huge benefit right now for Boko Haram with everything that's going on in the current approach.

MR. HANLON: Thank you. Vanda.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: You know, the issue of the war economy, unfortunately, in Nigeria also intersects with the issue of the peace economy. And this goes back to the MINT deal, right? So, nominally the MINT 2009 delta deal had a robust package for the reconstruction of the Rivers State Delta, the south. In retrospect vast amount of that money was usurped for personal pockets and political or patronage networks.

In many ways any kind of injection of money, whether it's stimulated by conflict or stimulated by peace, can easily be (syphoned) of and misappropriated. And that is, you know, this issue this issue of corruption and accountable, neglectful state, and politics with the state is like mafia bazaar, with the purpose of politics being to issue exceptions from law enforcement to once click the analyst that is resolved, we will see peace negotiations producing usurpation of money and being bias, and we'll see war economies being personal enrichment rackets.

I do want to emphasize, though, that from the perspective of many of the local soldiers and units we need to have a great deal of sympathy and understanding for them. The level of five stars from higher level officers, so by the time a unit is deployed sometime to Yobe, they might not have bullets, they might not have functioning weapons, they might have extremely meager rations. What wonder is there that they will try to tax whatever moves on the roads between them, such as between Cameroon. You know, from diapers to spaghetti. It's one of those big rackets, actually, that's going on just taxing legal goods and controlling very significantly controlling who has access to legal goods and controlling, very significantly controlling who access to legal goods.

And, now, again, President Buhari needs to be commended in his early days in the presidency focusing on that. Now the question is how those individual indictments will really result in prosecutions and will take on systemic global effects, and we haven't seen that. Anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria, all too often, state simply measures of retaliation against rival politicians or previous administrations. And I have some concerns about that.

And as to the role of the U.S. the United States, of course, considers Nigeria appropriately part of government. We have extensive and robust engagement with them, and it is up to the Nigerian government to decide how it will handle its conflict. In my view, it's always important to encourage peace negotiations, often understanding, however, that the rivals may not be interested in negotiations, Boko Haram. The only negotiations with Boko Haram that have been effective so far are negotiations about payments, payments for the release of hostages, payments for other actions.

Nonetheless, in our support of the Nigerian state, whether it's support for peace negotiations or whether its support for the Nigerian military, we need to emphasize accountability, we need to never -- we can never tolerate egregious human rights violations and we should strongly warn and discourage against peace that's bought through corrupt money, and that does not resolve the basic underlying problems of governance.

So, if our overarching policy is driven by strong emphasis on good governance, on improving governance in Nigeria, and if that lens is applied, both to the military dimensions, which is necessary and crucial, as well as to the pieces I mentioned, then I think our policy will be on the right track.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, in conclusion, and before I ask you to join me in thanking the panel, let me just thank you for giving attention to such an important country. I think you know that if we look around the world there are really only four countries that are more populous than Nigeria, China, India, the United States, and Indonesia, and then you've got Brazil, Pakistan, and Nigeria sort of at that 200

million apiece level. Hugely consequential for the future of the planet, certainly for the future of Africa. We also know that, unless I'm doing my math wrong up here, that Nigeria may be the largest country on Earth and population where there are very substantial Christian and Muslim populations in the same country which means it's, obviously, very important in terms of building bridges and collaborating, and finding reliable ways to defeat extremist ideology like Boko Harams and others. And so, for all these reasons I'm just thrilled to have been part of this discussion, to have learned so much. And, again, please join me in thanking the panelists.

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