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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 Mike O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy program. And for today's purposes, also a former Peace Corps volunteer in Kikwit, Zaire, DRC, in the 1980s.

I'm joined with people with far more current expertise on Congo, and we are glad to have all of you here today to talk about the important moment in the Democratic Republic of Congo's history which is, of course, now election season, as well as everything else that's going on.

Just a brief word of introduction, I think most of you know full well where we stand in the Congo political process elections are now scheduled for December 23rd, roughly two years behind schedule, but better late than never, assuming they come off and are fair. But those are some pretty big assumptions, and we're going to talk about those assumptions today.

Many of you perhaps initially RSVP-ed in the hope that Félix Tshisekedi would be here, that was the original plan, he's one of the leading presidential candidates in the DRC, the son of the famous activist, and a family that's been very powerful in Congolese politics for a long time.

His travel plans got changed and interrupted, so we're going to discuss the issue anyway, and certainly try to involve as many of your voices early on. We wanted this to be an event that had a lot of Congolese participation, we still hope for that even though our initial plan has been partially thwarted.

So, we'll have at least half the time for audience discussion, Q&A, when we get to that part of the program.

I'm joined here by John Tomaszewski, JT, from the International Republican Institute, who has responsibility for about a third of sub-Saharan African countries, for IRI, a long-standing expert on Kenya as well as other countries, but

certainly very involved in DRC issues as well.

Next to him: Emily Renard from the Open Society Foundation who has worked in the Department of State, and the Department of Defense as well, as NGOs in the past, and has some experience in the broader Middle East region too.

And then finally Sasha Lezhnev from The Enough Project where he's the deputy director for policy, and has a long-standing background on Africa issues; has lived and worked in Uganda, worked on the Lord's Resistance Army issue there, child soldier questions, and certainly transparency in the trade of minerals involving DRC and other countries in Africa, where he's been one of the leaders in recognizing the importance of the illicit trade to fueling violence and fueling militias -- sorry -- perpetuating civil warfare because of that competition for resources.

So, a lot of expertise on Africa in general, on presidential transitions in Africa, a lot of expertise on Congo; and what we're going to do now is just begin with a conversation. I'll ask some broad questions, we'll have a little bit of back and forth up here, and get to you, as I mentioned earlier.

So, JT, if I could begin just by asking you to frame, in broad terms, where we stand in the elections, it's now just over two months away. We know that some candidates have been disqualified. We know, however, that there is supposed to be an election, and that the front runner is not perhaps, at the moment at least, according to polls, President Kabila's long-standing preference.

So, this looks like it could be a healthy field and a healthy competition, but there are a lot of concerns about potential ballot rigging, which election machine maybe used to count polls. How do you assess the overall likelihood of a free and fair election, or at least a positive step forward for Congo?

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Sure. Thanks, Michael. And it is indeed an exciting time. I think we're finally reaching a point where the world is starting to focus more readily on the Congolese election, just getting out of Zimbabwe. It seems now

we're focusing, you're seeing more people pay attention, high rise among a number of organizations on the ground in Kinshasa.

Our role for the election will be to conduct sort of a monitoring effort which we'll try to look at some technical levels of the elections, and also try to coalesce some of the information being shared by domestic observers. There is no foreign funding that's going to support the logistics of this election according President Kabila, and certainly that's a challenge.

But maybe just to talk about a few sort of factual details just to get on the same page. So, we do have presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections, of course occurring on December 23rd, this will be the first time that the Congo, certainly in recent history, has been able to hold three large elections like this on the same day.

They're saying it's published, you know, the electoral calendar, and stuck to it in some cases, and others not, and prior to the current electoral calendar it would have been published several times before that. So, certainly that has laid a ground work for the CENI, in terms of its credibility and its ability to deliver on the promises that it's making.

There are 40 million registered voters. We've got about 80,000 polling stations, 105,000 electronic voter machines, and I'm sure we'll talk a lot about that today. The special machines that have been certainly created around Washington, Europe, and a number of African countries, and every time a delegation goes through Kinshasa, they get a demonstration from the CENI about how wonderful these machines are, and what they'll produce. Again, I think it's a long debate that we can get into.

Of those 105,000 there are certainly -- there's only about 1,200 that are being used to train about 100,000 poll workers, and educate again, this large swath of registered voters. And that of course is also a major challenge.

So, when you're dealing with a population that will be doing this for the first time, with an number of machines that haven't been tested, training officials so that

they use them correctly, training the technical staff, and then of course, training voters, to make sure that you don't have large number of spoiled ballots, you don't have individuals who're confused when they go through the process, they disenfranchise them. These were all things that are major concerns as we lead up to the elections.

The CENI has not talked really clearly about how it intends to deploy all of its logistics and materials with a great deal of confidence, they exude a great deal of confidence certainly also alongside the government in terms procuring and moving election materials out to the various provinces. But of course the infrastructure challenges to doing that are massive.

MR. O'HANLON: JT, can I just ask a follow up right there, I realize you have more you want to put on the table, but this is so crucial.

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Yes.

MR. O'HANLON: And you're talking about the machines as being hard to use, you're talking about logistics being challenging, it's sort of underscoring the technical problem or sort of trial and error problems. Isn't the much great concern outright fraud? In other words, whatever number of mistakes might have been, presumably they're going to partly cancel each other out from different candidates. But the question is: will Kabila try to rig election?

Do you see the machinery that's being put in place and any election monitoring that's being done by outside groups, is likely to prevent that? Or is that number one worry?

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Well, I think the challenge of course is the lack of outside groups, currently, you know, registered to monitor, planning to monitor these elections from the international community. You know, the AU will be there, I'm still waiting to hear what the EU's plans are, plus the Carter Center is trying to put something together, and high rise initiative, although small, we do some work, but it will be hard to entire swath of the country. That's one issue.

The second issue is, we've seen on the continent, certainly the use of technology in elections as a means of tightening the electoral process. I was just in Nigeria for Osun's primary that sort of, you know, the governorship election there, and was able to see, you know, the use of the carburetor, and that technology to really help tighten up the electoral process.

But of course what we've seen this technology do, is it opens the door for other types of fraud and trickery and games that are played on the backend, while whether during results tabulation, the functioning of the machines, certain where the data goes. So it opens up a number of holes.

And if you don't have observers there watching the process. If you don't have technical specialists who actually understand how this technology works, it creates serious problems on the backend. We've seen that in Kenya, we saw it in Zimbabwe recently, so these are certainly challenges that I think that draw some serious cause.

And that is why we hear from the opposition, these concerns, from citizens as well, and civil society, and I think Emily will talk a little bit about that. But these are huge issues.

Then getting into the technical specs, there are a number of loopholes which these machines have, there's external U.S. B ports that can be used to corrupt the system, the cellular networks that they operate on, will they be reliable, 12-hour battery with a possible backup? We've seen, and the first time that Kenya used BDR, and electronic poll books in 2013, serious problems with battery operations, and things like that. So, I mean, it's just a difficult conversation to have.

So, even if it's all positive, and you say, okay we want to use these machines, what are we doing about all of these trigger points? And then the fact that there's no back up, there's no back-up solution. There are no paper ballots that are procured, so if these machines don't work, what happens?

And then the time that it takes for these machines to be used, projecting

five to six minutes for a voter, when you have, what, 600-plus at a voting stream, how does it work? How can you an election in a day?

CENI says, we'll have an election in one day, we know citizens who have been asking for two to three days because: how can you process that many people that fast?

MR. O'HANLON: CENI is the?

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: CENI is the Electoral Commission. Just really quick on the political front; so, we do have 25 individuals registered to run who, you know, try to participate in the electoral process at a cost of about \$100,000. Several of them were disqualified for various reasons, of course the CENI making that decision and not the court upfront, creates some serious questions about the impartiality and role of the CENI in terms of overstepping its boundaries.

Katumbi, Moïse Katumbi is certainly one individual who is not going to be in this race and, you know, I think that is going to create some serious questions about the credibility of the process.

The opposition is currently trying to coalesce around one or two candidates, and I think people who look at sort of the long-term game, think that if this can't happen, then the election is going to have some serious problems in terms of the outcome. It will pave the way for the majority to kind of take the lead.

The president is not running again. President Kabila will not run again, and this gentleman by the name of Emmanuel Shadary will take up the helm. And I think it's an opportunity, and certainly has opened the door for a lot of discussion about goodwill in this process. But unfortunately, it may be used to sort of overshadow some of these other technical issues with regards to how democratic these elections will be. So, maybe that's just a short summary.

MR. O'HANLON: That's awesome. Thank you. And before I go to you, Sasha, let me just say that about a year ago we had an event here on Congo, and the

Congolese ambassador participated and promised that President Kabila would not be in the presidential race. So, I want to give him credit for being true to his word. But I'm not sure that's enough reason for optimism about the overall state of the process.

So, if you could pick up where JT left off, Sasha, and tell us a little bit about how you see the elections, the prospects for a positive step forward, or the prospects for intrigue, corruption and maybe even violence, or a setback from this upcoming election?

MR. LEZHNEV: Sure. And thanks a lot for organizing this event, Mike, a very important time. We're just over two months away from this schedule elections, so it's very important, and there's a lot of opportunities to help influence the process in a positive way, so this is very important.

We really have no indication that there will be a major change in Congo at present unless some much more serious pressure is put on the government. Quite frankly there's too much money at stake for the Kabila family, and the senior advisors to President Kabila.

The Congo Research Group identified that there were 80 Kabila family companies, and we believe that number has even increased since then, \$750 million went missing from the state-owned mining company that's controlled by someone who is appointed directly by President Kabila, Albert Yuma.

Dan Gertler is trying to -- well, he's so far successfully, dodging U.S. sanctions, by receiving payments, and has had many arrangements with the Congolese government in terms of illicit payments. In fact, there's a whole prosecution that went forward against the hedge fund in New York, and Gertler is one of those who was named as paying bribes, according to sources familiar with the cases.

Just recently, the Congolese government instituted a 10 percent strategic minerals tax on cobalt, and they'll get lots and lots of money from that including, especially to that state-owned mining company, Jack Amin, who is in charge of basically

joint venture partnerships with the cobalt companies.

Moreover, Kabila's brother has been running a bank, which we followed some reports about -- and others which has been engaged in a number of illicit activities.

So, in summary, many of the technical issues that JT highlighted in terms of the lack of credibility in the electoral process, come as no surprise. We believe that Shadary is just a front for the Kabilas in order to stay in power, exactly how that occurs, I think, you know, remains to be seen.

Congo is a notoriously unpredictable place in terms of the exact scenarios but, you know, I think that we could have predicted this, where we are today with this type of scenario, generally, a couple of years ago. I was just looking at some of our old reports, and the Kabila family trying to protect their financial interests in order to maintain those contracts, maintain the generals who continue to be human rights abusers, and profiting from the conflict minerals trade, et cetera.

So, how do we have an impact on that, I think is the key question. I think it's wrong to focus on things that the Kabila entourage care least about, such as foreign aid, I think that's a great political tool and message they can use if foreigners cut off the aid, but what they really care about are those financial interests.

And in fact, U.S. and Europe have a lot of leverage on that. First of all the U.S. dollar is the king in Congo, that's the majority currency used for all major transactions. Of course there's some euros as well, so that's an important one, and of course the international banking system, right.

So, whether they're transacting in the U.S. or not is immaterial, and if someone from Singapore or Israel, or some other place is making payments in Congo, that is occurring through U.S. correspondent banks, and therefore the U.S. has leverage.

So, how can we have an impact in trying to change Kabila's calculations to actually hold a much more credible election, and also make the reforms that we all want to see happen in the next administration, such as reform of the army, or reform of

the justice system.

So, number one, is through financial pressure, particularly through, first of all, enforcing U.S. sanctions that have already been enacted, such as those against Gertler and his companies. And also maintenance tranches of derivative sanctions that we can deploy to actually have an impact on the whole networks, rather than a single individual who is a general, who was sanctioned, for example, General Mundos, who has actually been promoted; as well as General Amisi who has actually been promoted.

Like, let's go after their network of companies, let's go after the network of financial advisors, which can have a strong impact in the Global Magnitsky Act, and the corresponding executive order are great tools to be able to do that.

We don't have to rely just on the DRC executive orders anymore. We have this much more powerful tool that Congress passed and the president signed, that U.S. can designate people involved in human rights abuses and corruption for sanctions. So, that's very important.

And the second thing I would highlight is the anti-money laundering aspects. So, this, Treasury, through the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, can take certain measures under the Patriot Act, Section 314-A, Section 311 and others, to basically prevent the Kabila family and entourage from accessing the global banking system, particularly through U.S. correspondent banks.

So, there are a number of different specific measures that we can get into, that can help that, but frankly that would have a very strong impact. And we've seen the proceeds of corruption being laundered through the global financial system.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Let me also ask one follow up to make sure I understand the linkage between what you're talking about and the election. I'm going to take a step back because most people in this room know very well all the names that we're throwing around, but there are probably some who more generalists on this.

So, Mr. Shadary, the Interior minister right now, is presumed to be the

preferred pick of President Kabila, either because they have a common political agenda, in a way a vice president or a cabinet official here might. Or because they have some common financial dealings, or maybe Mr. Kabila has a Putin-Medvedev, scenario in mind, because the Congolese constitution would allow him, I think, to run again in five years. He just can't run more than two consecutive five-year terms.

So, the problem for this scenario however, as I understand it, and I'm going to ask you to comment, and correct me if I'm getting this wrong; Mr. Shadary right now is not polling that high to the extent we have any reliable polling information in Congo. And in a fair election, or even in an election that has all these problems, JT talked about at a technical level, but no outright cheating, he might very well lose.

So, I'm assuming that you're worried about some kind of rigging. Is your concern going to be outright cheating and just manufacturing of false polling results on November -- or excuse me -- December 23rd? Are you more worried about journalism and open dialogue being suppressed and more candidates being barred or imprisoned, and sort of that very heavy-handed approach towards just slanting, and tilting the deck? How do you worry about the States who are trying to skew the outcome? And how do we use sanctions to prevent that?

MR. LEZHNEV: Yes. So, I think JT highlighted. Some of these I'll just build on those. We, believe if the process stands as present, and no pressure is applied, that yeah, that the regime has the voting machines, which, and we did an investigative report on this, on the voting machines identified some major security vulnerabilities.

By the way, these machines are not new, they've been used in other context, and found to be very problematic from Argentina to Iraq, and other places. So, that's number one.

Number two, the opposition is being prevented from holding rallies, the people are getting beat up, candidates are not being allowed in, or they try to register and they're disallowed. And then there's this issue of 17 percent of people have been

registered but don't have fingerprints, right, and those are, you know, in Kabila popular areas.

So, there's number of ways that we believe the regime is going to stay in power, to basically elect Shadary, and then Kabila manipulate things behind the scenes, and/or come to power in five years, as you said.

There's also a possibility that they may delay things to continue to stay in power, because people may outcry that this is an unfair process.

So, I think my general point is that, look, those technical aspects can be influenced for the good. The opposition candidates can be led in, they can go to paper ballots as far as I understand from technical experts, and there's still time to do that, it's a limited time, but I think there is still time to do that.

There's obviously a political decision to allow, you know, opposition and civil society groups to organize themselves. So, I think what we need to see, is some actual financial pressure to squeeze the regime, to enable those things to happen.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Emily, over to you; and I'd love to get your broad take on the electoral process, but also the role of civil society, the role of media if you wish, just how you would, you know, complete the picture that we're painting here this morning?

MS. RENARD: Sure. I'm afraid it might not be the optimistic picture; so heads-up. Just as a quick, you know, I wish that I could channel my colleagues to really live and breathe this space in Kinshasa, we have an office in Kinshasa, and our significant donor is the civil society, and that's one of the reasons, why I'm up here. So, I'm really channeling them, so I hope I don't fail them miserably.

But I wanted to say, you know, I think -- the struggle, we've talked about kind of this election scenario, right, it's two scenarios, it will or it won't happen. The challenge I think for civil society is that there is this narrow path of how do you make this election more credible, because the alternatives are really, really troubling.

And from a security perspective, from a stability perspective, and from of course the longer term democracy-building perspective. And I think that struggle for those actors who are facing, as my colleagues here have laid out, really significant challenges to make this process more credible, are operating in such a way that they're dealing with constricted resources in the electoral space in a deeply corrupt system.

On top of, as Sasha kind of alluded, I think really restricted space, and I don't think you can underestimate, and understate frankly the way that some people have faced personal threats, face threats to their family, there are legitimate security concern for people doing this work. And I want to underscore that because, there are a lot of conversations that I think happen.

There's a rumor mill in Congo, there are a lot of conversations behind closed doors, and part of this is because there are perceptions of fear that are very, very real. And I think that that is also amplified by things that we kind of lose sight of in the context of election of very problematic civic space laws, NGO laws, CT law, things that are focused on restricting civil space from a legislative perspective in addition to the threats people face on the security front, and again, on a personal level.

So, there are a number of attacks coming at them from many ways, while at the same they're kind of shouldering this enormous burden without a significant observer effort from the international community, and some of those other actors, to help make this space more credible.

And it's a heavy lift, it's no small task. I think that there are a lot of really great people doing that work, and trying hard, and my one, I guess my one ask of all of us here. As you know I think, as a donor community and as advocates, it's really incumbent upon us to strengthen them, and amplify them, and protect them as much as they can, because they're the ones who are championing that democratic transition.

And really, as much as we're talking about Kabila, or Shadary, or opposition figures, you know, my hope, and I think the way we see it, is this is about the

future of Congo, this is about the future of democracy in Congo.

And yes, this election matters, absolutely, but it matters so much because the next election matters, and the next election matters, it's that democratic transition and institutional process that we are so deeply committed to, and that's why we're invested in this space heavily.

And I would just say, you know, I think -- I've heard people say, especially at the U.S. -- the preferred candidate in this case is not -- there isn't a preferred candidate, it's really the process that is the candidate.

And we all know elections, there's this tension between elections being an event or a process, and I would just I think if nothing else, given the struggles to even get to where we are now to have an election, hopefully by December 23rd, I hope that there is a very strong lesson being learned there, that if you want to fundamentally change the democratic trajectory of Congo, you need to invest early, and you need to invest consistently in building up civil society, and building up their capacity.

Building up political parties, strengthening that space, because otherwise political competition goes back to the kind of corruption, and high stakes kind of personal politics as opposed to actual institutional and party politics.

And that's a very dangerous -- that the Congo has a very dangerous and violent history on that front, of where political competition is done through other means. And so I think that that's, I just wanted to say, like, I think that supporting civil society in their effort to get to a more credible election, as heavy of a lift that that is, as high of a mountain that is to climb, I think it's worth doing all we can in that space now, again with an eye toward to where we need to be in the next election round.

MR. O'HANLON: Awesome. I just want to ask one more broad question, of everybody, starting with you, Emily, and then we'll go to the audience. You were just mentioning all the other issues that Congo has to address, and we are talking a lot about the horse race dynamics which is what happens with any election, in any

country, but of course what's really at stake as you say, is the wellbeing of the Congolese people.

The Gates Foundation just issued this report a couple weeks ago, identifying DRC as one of the most vulnerable countries in the world, certainly one of the poorest now, but also one of the most vulnerable going forward, in terms of people living in extreme poverty, the fraction of the population likely to do that.

We know there's an ongoing unrest in the east, now compounded by another Ebola outbreak. We know that the U.N. peacekeeping mission has been in Congo many years, still more than 15,000 troops I believe, and on the one hand, the good news is the violence isn't as bad as it once was.

The bad news is, there's no end in sight to this conflict and this mission. And the Congolese military doesn't really seem to be up to the task at the moment of inheriting more of the job from the U.N., which is why we originally build this event with Mr. Ashishi Kadi's request as -- about the professionalization of the Congolese military.

Anyway, all I'm trying to do is put military reform, traditional reform, and economic reform and progress on the table, and ask each of you to comment.

To what extent are any of the candidates talking about these issues? To what extent is there anything meaningful that we could hope that this election would produce by way of new initiatives? Obviously, if you reduce corruption, you increase the resources available for the state to do everything else that it should be doing.

So, in that sense we've already been talking about the policy agenda. But is there anything else that the candidates are talking about, or should be talking about, or will you hope that you could see some modest step forward in the policy realm, coming out of this political process, even if Kabila rigs the election, and his candidate wins? Is there any way in which this could still be a hopeful moment in Congo? And let me start with you, Emily.

MS. RENARD: I'm always hopeful that there could be that moment. I

guess I would say, you know, we've definitely -- let me take it from a Washington perspective. In that, I feel like I have heard from a number of different oppositions and government representatives, what those platforms are. What is interesting to me, is when I talk to my colleagues in Kinshasa, and our partners, I'm always struck that I feel like I'm more of their target audience for their platforms than the people of Congo.

So, I hear things, I've heard different candidates talk about educational reform, dealing with the security issues, dealing with corruption and fraud, and my concern is just a core level that that's not what anyone is running on in Congo and that the platforms just aren't there.

I mean, it's that JT, can speak to this in a much more sophisticated way, I'm sure, but the -- you know, that's not what the platforms of these parties, it's not what people are running on, it's not what people are voting on. And it's certainly not what the people of Congo are being told to vote on, are told that is the core reason to vote for them, at least it's from what I've seen.

But I have heard speeches and seen platforms, you know, seen those comments here in D.C., and I'm very, very concerned that the people of Congo don't, you know, for a number reasons, the opposition rallies are very difficult to hold, et cetera, but there isn't -- the people in government and in the opposition, the way the system is built, they're not necessarily focused on: how do I sell what I can do for you, as a reason to vote for me. And that again, that just gets to the core issue, I think, of what we're dealing with.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Sasha, any comment on that same broad issue?

MR. LEZHNEV: Sure. Thanks. Great question, Mike! And actually I think this is a very important topic, I mean, obviously we are in this urgent time, now, but I think the Kabila government has had a very deliberate strategy regarding the Military to help keep him in power. And that is trying to prevent a coup, by keeping -- I mean,

leaders in Congo, up until now, have all been replaced by force, essentially, from one angle or another.

And so to prevent something like that, either from the inside, or if you were being paid from the outside, et cetera, you know, he's got to keep his loyalists happy, he's got to keep the military generals making money, either through soccer teams, or the gold trade, or however that can happen, and keep those units that are so-called integrated into the Congolese Army actually intact and together, so that they won't cause further rebellion.

So, you have this patchwork military right now made up of many different factions, whether they be former rebel groups or simply factions within the army, and so that you're seeing right now, for example, that Kabila is promoting some of the worst human rights abusers, and some of those who are former Mai-Mai generals.

So, you know, Mundos is now in charge of a big gold area, South Kivu; General Amisi who is under U.S. sanctions and was busted for distributing weapons and ammunition to rebel groups, he's now the deputy chief of staff of the Army, et cetera.

So, you know, what does the next administration need to do? First of all they need to have some accountability, some high-level accountability for people like that. That's very important.

Second, reforming the payment system, so that the military units are not incentivized to go and feed off the population. If you go to a FARDC barracks -- I'm sorry FARDC -- I'm trying to use acronyms; the Congolese Army, they live in squalor essentially, right, so they're forced to then feed off the backs of the local population and then, you know, many people in rural areas in Congo will say that actually the Congolese Army is more abusive than the local rebel group, to my mind.

Thirdly, you know, this integration process actually needs to happen, not simply the name of integration, which actually incentivizes further the creation of further rebel groups. And then lastly, you know, really reforming some of the mining issues.

So, for example, the Congolese government has one of the highest gold rate taxes in the world, and so therefore the legal gold trade is almost impossible to facilitate, and so therefore the illegal conflict gold trade is perpetuated.

So, we are going to release a report about this, hopefully next week. So, I think some of those key reforms are really necessary. Will the next political leader have the political will to do so? We will certainly push, and I know many, many Congolese activists deeply care about that. I know there are some great Congolese think tanks and activists who care a lot about this.

MR. O'HANLON: Awesome! Thank you. And JT, same question to you, please?

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Yeah. I mean, you've got a country where you have 700 political parties approximately, so the place in which those ideas should be occurring is there, that would be the ideal situation.

But clearly, as we've seen in a number of countries, parties aren't necessarily based on ideas, maybe they have it written in their constitutions, but when it comes to elections, these are election vehicles, these are political vehicles for different reasons, and, you know, that requires generational, political reform that will take time.

I think where there's an opportunity in this election is not to necessarily obsess so much at the presidential level. While I acknowledge that's very important, you also have a lot of other elections going on, right?

You have these provincial elections, you have legislative elections. And that's where you can see, hopefully, individuals come together with some good ideas. The future, perhaps the next president maybe 10 years, 20 years down the line, will come out of this crop of leaders who are elected, through this election.

And there needs to be an investment in them during this process in terms of engaging them on what the issues are, and I think that's where civil society comes in to sort of ask those questions.

And then I think after the election there needs to be a severe investment, a very heavy investment in helping to bring newly-elected leaders on board. I mean, it's important to note that women continue to be the losers in this game, well under 15, 12 percent I think, the number I've seen, of candidates in this election are women. That is not acceptable, and it's certainly doesn't bode well.

And frankly, it's the 700 political parties, and the electoral process that creates the largest barriers for them, and for youth to participate.

So, if you're going to open up the process you need political reform. Of course that doesn't come until you have a credible government in place, you need to have a credible election. Of course security should be top of the mind, but also the justice side of the issue.

So, you have a lot arrests, you have a lot of things that have happened, people being killed, and that needs to be answered for, or else you're just not going to ever move forward, so these are some of the big things I would talk about.

MR. O'HANLON: Just one follow-up for you, and then I will finally go to the audience. Thank you for your patience, and again, thank you for being here.

You and I have talked several times on this stage, or next door about Kenya, a country where you lived, and you've done a lot of work there, and we've had a lot of important contested elections in that country in recent years. This may be an impossible question to answer, but how do you compare the two?

In the sense that when I've heard you talk about Kenya, you've always been concerned about what could happen in the lesson, but you've also displayed a real hopefulness, partly when you talk about the local elections, the local party-building, the Kenyans, a lot of politics, I remember you discussing and just how they would talk about the issues to some extent at least.

And I assume that because Congo is so much bigger, has had so much violence in the modern era, is so much more chaotic than Kenya, that it's probably not as

far advanced but I'd love to hear your perspective on, if you ever compare these two countries, or if you somehow analogize between Congo and other places like Kenya?

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: I mean, certainly for the benefit of the Congolese in the room, I wouldn't dare try to compare the two directly. But I would say that the lesson that can be learned certainly from this crowd, and the lens in which we look into it, which is from an international lens, you know, don't be fooled by the tragedy.

There's opportunity there. You have millions of Congolese diaspora, and improved political situation could see a change in terms of their investment, going home, bringing money home, bringing certainly a lot of skills and brain into the process. You also have a number of functional local governments.

Now, certainly they're resource strapped, undermined by corrupt policies, and other issues, but this is where you can get into the connective tissue and make some changes.

I think this is where you've seen change in Kenya. By investing and evolving power, and putting significant resources into the local governments, into those sorts of counties, you've been able to see a change. You've seen women rise up, while still woefully below what it needs to be, even from a constitutional perspective, you've seen them through the process.

You've seen youth come through the process, and you've seen a marginal change in terms of the ethnic politics that dominate Kenya's landscape, certainly in the urban areas.

So, hopefully, maybe that's a piece of hope for some trends that can be focused on. If it were me, and I was going to put my small, meager resources that IRI has, I would bet heavily on the provincial and lower levels in terms of building capacity there, because while this game is being played up top, you know, it's the underbelly that really could use and benefit from the investment, and you could see some change long term.

MR. O'HANLON: Awesome. So we would like to bring you into this. Please get my attention, and wait for a microphone, identify yourself once you get it, and we'll take two or three at a time. We'll start up here in the front row, please, and work back a little bit.

QUESTIONER: Hello. My name Chris Delhapy, I'm originally from Cameroon, but I'm an American citizen. I've done my education in the United States. I've been living and working in the Congo since 2006. So, I've seen the first election, the second election, and I'm witnessing the third election.

One, I've listened with great attention while you have been discussing. I don't have a particular preference among Congolese actors, but what I can say, we're not giving enough credit to the Congolese people. They've come a long way. This is a country that has been at war for 30 years, since Mobutu, Mobutu left. When I came to Kinshasa there was just what they call the boulevard, of the term Du Juin, was just too lanes, now it's about 10 lanes.

Yes, there are corruption, yes there are all what you just said, but I think the underlining problem in Congo is not about politics, it's about investment. I own a company in Congo, I created the American Chamber of Commerce in Congo, because there was no discussion, we were having a business roundtable at the Ambassador's residence every month, and it was just a complaint platform.

I have never met Kabila, but I know his people, I know the opposition people as well. I think we don't engage the Congolese government to change their business investment climate, and bring American companies on the ground, we will be talking about this issue for the next 30 years.

I'm don't even care if Shadary wins the election, or if it's even rigged. Even if these machines are used for the private purposes, I still believe that it's an improvement from where we are. I live there, I live with them. I employ Congolese.

What they want is not politics, they want business. You spoke about

Kenya earlier. I've been to Kenya three times for AMCHAM African Summit. They have Pizza Hut in Kenya. From Kenya to Kinshasa is a two-hour flight, they have Pizza Hut in -- I think in Uganda, if I'm not mistaken.

SPEAKER: In Kenya now?

QUESTIONER: In Kenya, yes. So, look at Congo as a Francophone country, not necessarily as an Anglophone country. English people get it faster than everybody else, and if you look even at the map of the problem in Africa, the hot spots are in the French -- former French colonist countries, what is happening in Cameroon is going to happen the Congo in the next 60 days.

They had election last Sunday, but they still don't have a result. Now, consensus is that the president have the election, what they need in Congo -- just to close my intervention -- what we need in Congo is to engage the -- what Sasha said earlier -- reform of the banking system, reform of the education system, the military is a touchy issue because these warlords getting together, and get the new President to actually engage more American investment on the ground.

Otherwise, we will be now -- 10 years from now we'll be talking about the Chinese, the Jibudish scenario in Congo.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. Thank you. Since we've heard from a lot of Americans, and now a Cameroon, so let's see if we have any Congolese in the room who want to get into the first round, and I'll come back to others in the second round, unless we don't have any. Okay, the gentlemen in the seventh row there, yes, please?

QUESTIONER: My name is Giam Boco, I'm Congolese, I'm independent. What I want to say exactly is about is about Shadary. I just want to add a comment, Mike, you said earlier: why Kabila choose Shadary. Yes, for the investment, for they have to protect the family business or this body?

The main issue is, Shadary is on the list of the U.S. -- the person who killed the American and the Swedish U.N. expat in Kasai. Is the person who really did it

in Kasai? Is the challenge I think. So to protect the -- Kabila knows that if Shadary is in power he cannot deliver him. So, it's both to protect their crime of what they did in Kasai. That's the reason why he chose Shadary. Shadary, he will not win election, not at all.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Any questions, as well as these comments? The comments have been very good, but I want to make sure we have a question or two for the panelists. So, let's stay right here in the front row, and work back.

QUESTIONER: Well, I don't have a question. (Laughter)

MR. O'HANLON: That's okay. Join the fun.

QUESTIONER: I have three comments. First of all --

MR. O'HANLON: Please keep them fairly short though, or just make one.

QUESTIONER: That hasn't been the practice up to now. I think you should credit Congolese electoral behavior, as being quite sophisticated. I've written about that, but you don't seem to do that, as a group. The problem with elections in the Congo, is that they're fixed and stolen, but there where there is -- and this goes back to 1960 -- there, where there is some freedom and some actual registration of results that voters have produced, the results have been very pro-democratic, and very sophisticated.

Secondly, you've hardly mentioned rebel groups. Rebel groups today in the Congo number over 90, they control territory, and they run the gamut between criminals and Robin Hood operations. There are now supported by the British foreign aid group, fairly detailed studies of their local governance, and it seems to me that is a very important development which is worthy of comment. And they're expanding.

Now the third thing is you made -- one of you made some not very complimentary passing comment on public opinion surveys. The Congo has probably one of the most sophisticated and successful public opinion surveys, now linked with Jason Sterns at NYU. I think that is far more important to back than the sort of individual

opinions.

I was there, and I had a feeling that people, et cetera, et cetera. We have a really usable method and tool in order to gauge what the public thinks.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Let's do one more on this round, and then we will come back to the panel.

SPEAKER: I actually have a question.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. The second row here, and then back to the panel.

MR. RAKOWSKI: Hi. Good morning. I'm Stephen Rakowski, I'm a sub-Saharan Africa analyst at Stratfor. My question for the panel is, if you could assess the role of two actors in Congolese politics? The first one is the Catholic Church which is increasingly taking a role in the past several months, the second is an actor who seemingly came back from the political dead; that would be Jean-Pierre Bemba.

And I was wondering if you could comment on the role that they have had in the run up to the election, and possibly what the role for them would be in the event of a rigged election what could be possibly violent. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: So why don't we just start with Sasha and work down, and feel free to respond to either the questions, or the comments that we've heard. And thank you for all of the above in both categories.

MR. LEZHNEV: I will try to be short. There are a lot of issues, some very important ones.

MR. O'HANLON: You don't have to do everything, so let's just divvy it up a little.

MR. LEZHNEV: Sure. A couple things, I think that first of all a few of you sort of highlighted to me that we've been a little bit overly negative, I think generally, maybe just speaking for myself, about Congolese, and what they've been up to, and the types of things that they're pushing for.

In fact, there are many reformers at many different levels, in Congo, right, whether they be in the business community, whether they be in the national governments, provincial governments, et cetera, I think that -- and also very, very brave civil society activists. I'm so deeply impressed every time we meet the LUCHA or the Catholic Church activists, many of whom are in hiding now, will go.

And there's a great movie, by the way, that is going to air at the Congo in Harlem Film Festival next week. Kinshasa -- I can't remember -- it's a movie about activists, Makonda. I will get the name for you; but in any case about these brave activists who go out every day and try to, really trying to push through the democratic process.

MR. O'HANLON: The Nobel Peace Prize just awarded to a Congolese.

MR. LEZHNEV: Moreover, Dennis Mukwege, right, of course. Yeah, in credibly brave, and he went to back to Congo, of course, after so many security threats to him, and has somehow grown the Panzi Hospital since, and the whole work of the Foundation.

So, I think that the problem though, and Kabila, when he started out, just like Mobutu, when he started out actually had some positive steps, and some reforms that were helpful. I think is, it's gone very much downhill over the years.

The Congo was sort of cursed by its trillions of dollars of natural resource wealth, and many outside actors have preyed upon that and made deals, and frankly the regime and their family, and their senior advisors have been involved in those deals.

So, I think it's very important to change the business climate as you mentioned, to bring in responsible investors, although they must be transparent, and the government has to actually enact some transparent business laws and also civil society laws, et cetera.

But unfortunately the government is going backwards on all of those things, right. And so, we really need to see a change in leadership in order to make

those things happen. Many of the reforms you want to see from the justice sector, to the business climate, to the NGO laws, are all going backwards, and so we need to see something that's better.

MR. O'HANLON: Very quick.

QUESTIONER: Yes, very short. We have -- the United States and Congo have a bilateral trade agreement, we need to focus on the tools that we can use and leverage to engage them more. I think if we can just -- I'm speaking as a business owner in Congo, and I've worked with the embassy.

And if we can just use the bilateral trade agreement we have, and attach some little provision with financial transparencies, and judicial reform, which, by the way, U.S. funds, judicial reform, in some capacity, we can go a long way. But if we cannot keep -- we cannot sit here and keep pointing what doesn't work, and let them keep the status quo going on.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

QUESTIONER: So, bilateral and trade agreement exists, we can use that.

MR. O'HANLON: Emily?

MS. RENARD: Yes. I'll come back to the civil society point. Just on the investment piece. I would say, you know, I think the importance of bringing investment to Congo. I think that is hugely important. I mean with Congolese colleagues and partners, you know, at the end of the day people -- people are people, right. Like you won't be able take care of your family, your kids, send your kids to school. I totally get it.

That said, you know, from the civil society perspective, which, as I said earlier, I'm not necessarily, just speaking for myself, I'm really channeling what my colleagues have asked me to put forward here today. And you cannot underestimate the importance of that civic space.

Civil society, they're the canaries in the coalmine for big business, and

big investors. If you walk into country where, like: the rule of law here looks pretty shaky, that's a significant risk.

I respect your point, I just think that you have to also look, you know, beyond just the particular agreement, and at the context more holistically, because civil society and all of the actors in that space, are important players, not just because, you know, who is investing in what and where, but that it speaks to the context and the ability to have a flourishing business environment.

And I think that that's an important part of change, and I think it's an incredibly important business and human rights kind of perspective to be bringing to the table, to Congo, that is often and easily missed in the broader conversation of the politics.

On the civil society piece, generally, as I said, you know, I'm really speaking for my partners here, so the idea that I'm putting forward, it's not, to the point of, I'm amazed at the resiliency and the capacity and the commitment of my colleagues every day who, you know, make time, in the midst of their busy work, of what they're focused on and their country to answer my questions on like what it is I think should -- you know, what we can push in different international community spaces.

And I think that their views are enormously important, and I take the point on polling. And if anything I'd say that that's part of the reason why we are amplifying the views on the elections with, for example, the voting machines.

You know, the fact that people call them the machine (inaudible), the machine volle (?), but there is a public perception issue, right. These are real important public views that need to be a part of the conversation, clearly that's the reason why the machines, beyond the specific rigging piece, there is a lack of faith in these machines.

And the views of the people, and the credibility of these elections, and then frankly any part of the government in the eyes of the Congolese people, is what matters the most, and I really just want to underscore that that's, I think what we are trying to get at, at the end of the day, and trying to kind of -- to amplify, that it is, at the

end of the day it is about them.

And then finally, I'll take the piece, a little bit just speak on Sankoh I think, and the Catholic Church. They're building up for an observational, I think that's really important and I'm happy to see them do that. One of my questions going forward, and with CEJP and some of the CLC there, I think a number of different nodes of entry points around the elections and observations.

What is going to be interesting for me is this tension going forward with the Saint Sylvester Agreement, and the fact that Sankoh was the mediator in that space, and that they're also taking on an observation role. So, I think that that is going to be an interesting tension that they're going to have to continue to work out of.

Are they bringing people around, you know, holding folks with feet to the fire with the agreement, or are they going to be a referee around the election itself commendable? I think it's an unanswered question.

MR. O'HANLON: JT?

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Yes. I mean, as I said in my early comments, quickly, don't be blinded by the tragedy of Congo, for the good story that exists on many fronts. I mean, it is without a doubt, not only a big country, but certainly a very important one, and you can that -- one way that you can see how important a country is, is when you go to other countries, and you see the role the Congolese are playing there.

And that goes back to my point, changing the political dynamics, perhaps even changing the investment climate brings people home, and makes things different. And I think that's something to keep in mind. And of course, with these panels, that's the problem with them, right? Short time, we want to get the challenges out there, because we know that many of you are here, because you follow Congo closely, and you want to get those updates.

I would say in terms of the electoral process, you know, we just had an election in Zimbabwe, and we saw a fairly sophisticated operation there, we saw voters

behave in a certain way, and the vote, actually the result that came out was, probably what the result was, according to those sample-based observation done by our local group.

But didn't make the process, the election, didn't make it credible, didn't make it democratic. You know, we at IRI, and I think, you know, larger international observer groups, will say that election is a process, so you look at all that occurs before. So, you look at displaced voters who won't have an opportunity to vote.

You look at the areas where you can vote, and you are concerned about challenges of training, civic and voter education, of women accessing the ballot, participating in the process of youth engagement.

Of ways in which presidential candidates are disqualified in how that process took place, and can compromises be made. You can actually have a very unsophisticated election, a poorly organized election. That is indeed democratic, and we've seen that also in a number of countries.

So it's important to focus on that, I think when we're looking at the CENI, and the elections aren't just about the CENI, I mean they're about the Congolese, but it's a large process that also doesn't end on election day, and goes well into the post-election period. What type of things happen in terms of accepting the result, moving forward, forming a government, bringing the opposition in.

So, I would just talk about that, and I think the final thing, you know, the politics for the way forward, really require a great deal of consensus and dialogue, and I think that's something that the international community is asking for, for all folks to be at the table, and I think when you talk about how the selection process is being negotiated, organized, put together, there is a severe deficit, with a number of voices not at the table. So, that's a challenge.

MR. O'HANLON: I'm just going to add two comments of my own before we then go to another round. First, one of the reasons that we've had Congo as a main

focus at Brookings for many years, is my own selfish, personal commitment to the Congolese people and my love for them.

You know, it's a mushy thing for a Brookings senior fellow to say, but it's just an amazing country, it just gets in your heart. I admire for living there, and continuing through the thick and thin of the difficulties, but I think I understand why you do it. It's just an amazingly appealing place.

And so, even before we had the Africa Security Initiative at Brookings, back in the day when Susan Rice was a senior fellow here, we had events with here, we had with the U.N. and the American ambassadors, and we'll always keep our eye on Congo because the Congolese people deserve better than they've gotten from their political leaders.

And a lot of the conversation is about the mistakes of the leadership, and that conversation should be tough and hard-hitting.

And I appreciated your comments, sir. I'm not going to go quite so far as to say, I admire the overall track record of Congolese democracy. Some of your other comments were a little more persuasive. But let me get to one more, and my second comment.

QUESTIONER: (Crosstalk).

MR. O'HANLON: No. But you said that there's been good news, and at a political there has not been much good news in Congo, ever, unfortunately. And it started with the Belgians, and it's continued to this day. The legacy the Congolese inherited was so weak and so poor, that it's understandable why it's taking a long time.

And I want to reiterate JT's important point that a lot of the political leadership has to grow from the grassroots, and from the provincial level. So, if this election isn't great, maybe the next one will be.

The second point, the security sector reform, and the U.N. mission. And an idea that I've sometimes been intrigued by, and try to keep alive, even though it's not

really in the policy focus of most American officials right now. Is the idea that the United States could a part of the U.N. mission in Congo, with a military contribution to help train the Congolese military when it's ready for that help.

I don't it's been ready for that help in the Kabila regime, I think there's been too much corruption, I there's been too much mismanagement, but we've built up these new devices called advise and assist brigades, through the Iraq and Afghanistan experiences, which I think could actually be very helpful at the grass roots and at the field level for helping Congolese battalions and small formations, professionalize while they're still deploying and operating in the field.

We have that capability in the U.S. Military, we tend never to talk about it in the context of missions in Africa, but I think we should. So, that's the second point I wanted to get on the table.

If the election result is credible enough to open up a dialogue about that kind of U.S. role, I would hope that we wouldn't have the same allergy to putting a number of U.S. Forces in Africa that we've often had in the past.

And with that, we'll go to round two. So, here in the third row, please?

QUESTIONER: Thank you for a terrific panel. James Barnett, I'm an analyst at the Critical Threats Project, at AEI next door. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about regional reactions at the election process so far, and kind of the geopolitical dimensions, and maybe try to forecast a bit.

Nothing in the Congo really happens in a vacuum. I recall that in 2006 Angola sent paratroopers or air-lifted troops after the elections. And there have been a number of regional changes that are pretty significant, Kagame is now head of the AU, we've gotten new leadership, down in the SADC in Angola, Zimbabwe, South Africa, thank you, compared to a year ago. And these are obviously countries that have a significant amount of influence in the Congo.

So I was wondering if you could talk about the regional reaction so far,

and also if you see potential possibilities, where the Congo may not be as malleable as it was 20 years ago, or coming right of the -- kind of the most intense moments of the Second Congo War. If there are possible fissures, or kind of inflexion points that might see more involvement from regional actors?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And the gentleman here, and then there was another hand. We'll take two more. Who else wanted to get on this round? Ma'am, were you raising your hand? Well, go ahead, and we'll come back to.

MR. DONAVAN: Thank you. I'm Donal Donovan, formerly of the IMF. Two quick questions; I was in Angola not long ago, and I was struck by the following. Following the end of the Dos Santos regime, the president resigned, he hand-picked a successor who was considered to be very close to him and to his family, and to the whole aspects of the regime.

But actually, somewhat to people's surprise the new president has moved very aggressively against major elements of the former regime, including against the members of the Dos Santos family, and this led to, I think, quite a lot surprise.

My question is, if Kabila favorite candidate were to win, it's that out of the question. Is this a far-fetched possibility that actually it might -- he or she might turn out to be quite an independent person, and in fact do what the current president of Angola is doing against the members of the former regime.

A second quick question; you mentioned, one of you, about the role that Western sanctions could play in terms of supporting reform. Well, I think the record of western intervention in the DRC has not been that great in terms of its ability to effectively promote reforms, and I include the efforts of my own former institution, the IMF, over the last few years. And I wonder if one could see the possibility of change there.

But in this context my question is about the role of China, because China can play, has played, and could play a very important financial role in terms of, let's say, supporting a post-Kabila government, which might or might not be consistent with the

kind of reform efforts that the Western institutions might like to see.

In other words, can China essentially keep a shaky regime, help keep in power and undermine efforts, more fundamental efforts to a reform that might be coming from other parts of the world?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. So, why don't we respond now. Emily, do you want to start with this round, and then we'll go to JT and Sasha.

MS. RENARD: Sure. Okay, so in terms being able to respond to some of the regional questions. I mean, would first say, I think that these are exactly the conversations everyone is having right now. I think we're all trying to figure who is doing what in different regional actors? In part because the history is -- I mean, to the question, right, the history of outside actors in Congo, being a huge determinant of the future of Congo is -- you know, part of the region, frankly the United States have a history in that space.

I mean that is, I think, one of the questions right now. I will say I think the Angola transition, you know, and this stuff in the news, right, that if Kabila is visiting or not. And I can just speak for what I find interesting in talking to my colleagues about this, you know, there is enormous intrigue, and I think what we are looking at is -- it speaks to how you kind of think about Congo, and a lot of people come and talk Congo, right?

They're advocates, politicians, et cetera, and I think we're looking at how do you take some of those actors, and particularly Congolese civil society, two capital in the region, two important events, having people at SADC recognizing that voices need to be heard in those kinds of conversations, right? That it isn't just big man politics at that level.

And I think it's a difficult challenge, it's hard to know what private conversations look like, but I can tell you from the civil society perspective, I think, you know, there is, speaking again to the Congolese sophistication, there is recognition from civil society and other actors, that they need to be engaging from a lot of different places

in a lot of different fronts.

In terms of the role of China, you know, we hear this a lot with Africa and a certain narrative, I mean, again from a slightly different lens, we have a number of -- people that I've met in different ways, and partners, and I find sometimes that our narrative on China, they're just this monolithic like China versus American, and their role, and how were competing for access, and what the future of certain African countries will be determined by these two actors.

And I just think that much like, you know, China as easy as it is to paint them as a monolith, I don't think that that is entirely accurate. I've known a number of people who are fighting really interesting fights who are Chinese, and anti-corruption fights, transparency fights that touch into Africa, and touch into other parts of the world.

And it's not a perfect answer, but I will just say that I think it's worth also, kind of peeling back the way we talk about that conversation. You know, Jack Ma with this investment, philanthropy on trying to engage young African entrepreneurs.

There's a tension there that I think that that are some shared values, and I think it's really important to just not kind of just perpetuate and antagonistic narrative, and to look at a variety of actors. Yeah.

MR. O'HANLON: Super! JT?

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Yeah. You know, one of the things that we're looking at really closely of course the role of the regional actors in the space that's supporting the election. You know, both South Africa and Angola have committed some resources and some technical assistance to the CENI, and there is this discussion, of course in South Africa and on the continent, frankly in (inaudible) about the role South Africa needs to play in terms of being more active and proactive in the space of democratic elections and engagement on that.

And that's been an area where they've sort of withdrawn in recent years, and to much dismay I think. And we've seen a number of examples of that in Southern

Africa, so it's certainly a challenge.

The issues of the regional bodies, I mean, the AU of course in SADC, and ECOWAS, came out with very congratulatory messages to the Congolese government after Kabila decided not to run again, and certainly that was seen as a positive, and then there was sort of a call by a number of these bodies to make sure the elections are held on time, and credible, and free and fair.

My issue with a lot of those groups is that when multilaterals like SADC and AU observe elections, and get engaged in elections, they often just look at the day, they're often compromised by interests, they just gave Cameroon a clean bill of health for an electoral process that, frankly, I mean is riddled with serious democratic concerns.

We also saw SADC give a pretty good thumbs-up to Zimbabwe's election where, despite the uneven playing field and such. So, they're involved, but I also think that, you know, they sort of play it safe, you're not going to see them pushing the limits, it's not going to be like and ECOWAS going in to tell Jammeh get the hell out, or we're going to come in with tanks, and he walks away out of Gambia.

I don't think you're going to see something like that. I don't think you're going to see as active in Angola as you saw in the past. I think once the Kabila question was taken out, Angola backed off. They obviously are calling and want that election to happen on the 23rd of December.

So, I would just look at it from those lines. And I think the EU also is very interesting, we're waiting to see their plans of what they're going to do for this upcoming election, but of course the fact that this donor basket doesn't exist. When you donate money, or are involved in the game of assisting the electoral process, you certainly are helping the process, but you also have tremendous leverage over how those resources are spent, and how things move.

So, not having that certainly changes the calculus a little bit, in terms of what the impact of what they'll do. And frankly, we've seen just a softer approach from

the Europeans for a number of reasons why. They don't have the same level of leverage as the U.S., for a lot of business concerns of course.

MR. O'HANLON: Sasha?

MR. LEZHNEV: Just first of all I want to make a comment on your point about the SSR, Mike. I think that that is a fantastic idea if we do really see some political change. I think that if there is a political change then there's an opportunity that of course the SSR is not just a military process, it has to be a political process first.

And so if there is that change, then I think that there's a peace dividend that needs to come from that we need to invest in it. It's very, very important.

To address a couple of the issues that were raised; I see Congo as really a -- I mean, it's already a very violent place, 4.5 million people, by the way, are displaced at the moment in Congo, and that's one of the highest numbers in the world. It was the highest number in the world, and other countries have overtaken that, but I really see it as a big power keg actually in addition to the current insecurity that's taking place.

And I think the region also certainly sees that. That if indeed these elections take place and are seen to be highly rigged, and we are liable to see people in the streets, but moreover, as Professor Weiss mentioned, there are 90 rebel groups out there.

You know, where they receive funding from, et cetera, I think, and there's so much competition among those political elites, and the military. I think the region is greatly worried about that, and I would be also concerned. You know, some of you highlighted the Angolan paratrooper some time back. That's not a scenario I would say is very farfetched.

I think that no one is really talking about it, and certainly they would never talk about that in a SADC open forum or something like that. But, you know, I know Rwanda is very concerned about the buildup of troops -- a rebel group on their border, possibly supported by Congolese military elements.

So, I think that there's a lot of different powder kegs, and we need to keep a close eye on that and really coordinate with that, with the region on those issues. I would hope that we would have another special envoy to Congo, to help manage some of those regional issues, and in particular, building on that point, I would just say that I do think we have an important opportunity with U.S. leadership right at the moment, right?

We just confirmed, or the U.S. just confirmed that we, I work for The Enough Project, not the U.S. government, but the U.S. just confirmed, not only an assistant secretary of state for African affairs, the first one, who was confirmed by the Senate under this administration, as well as the U.S. ambassador, Mike Cameron, who is going to go out to Congo next week.

Also Congress is very interested in this issue, the House has introduced legislation on Congo, the senator is working on similar legislation, I believe it's called the Congo Democracy Act.

So, there's lots of opportunity, Nikki Haley who announced that she's leaving, but is still going to stay on for the end of year, went to Congo, helped get us to this process of actually likely holding elections. And I think that we're certainly hoping that she will make some important decisions and actions on Congo before she leaves. So, I think there's an opportunity there to take some action.

And just on the gentleman's point from the IMF. I do not think that Shadary will be a Jaylo as we call him -- sorry Lorenzo -- so in terms of going after the Kabila family. I think that had there been another candidate chosen by the FCC, then we may have seen some of that. I think part of reason that Shadary was chosen, is because he doesn't have the strong political base that could in theory go after Kabila.

I think if you saw other candidates, we have seen something like that. And so he was chosen very much, at the eleventh hour, right before the candidate registration deadline, so other people from the presidential majority couldn't actually run. I mean, there were many other names in the docket, Matata, and others who may have

tried to do that.

MR. O'HANLON: And I'll just add one comment on the China angle, and then we'll go to our quick round of questions and wrap up here. As I mentioned before I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Kikwit, which is about 500 kilometers east of Kinshasa.

When I was there in the early 1980s, dating myself, the road was very good. USAID had built the road I believe in the '70s, other foreign donors had been involved in road building. Mobutu had only sort of halfway accomplished his demolition of the country, and I'm sure you and I would agree that Mobutu was not a good leader for Congo, for DRC, Zaire at the time. And so you could take that road.

In the 1990s after I'd left I read stories about how it was now a week-long journey from Kinshasa to Kikwit, no more paved road, better hope your Land Rover doesn't break, and you probably got to camp out a few times along the way.

Now the road exists again, and the Chinese built it, which raises the question: is there anything good that China does in Africa? And I think the answer is yes. But what's not, and you can debate over the terms, sometimes they use too many Chinese laborers, et cetera, sometimes the quality isn't as hot.

What's not okay, is when the Chinese come in and they pay off a regime to accept a project that looks publicly like a gift from China, but really is a loan, on very unfortunate and unacceptable terms. And then down the road, the country is saddled with a debt repayment, the Chinese makes a lot of money, and the ruling regime has either passed from the scene, but in any case is getting its own pocket lined by the side payments.

That's the kind of thing we have to keep encouraging countries in Africa to expose, and not to indulge in. I think that's a worry in a place like Congo. I think it's fair to say.

We may have already run out of hands in the audience, let me see if there are one or two last ones for a final round, and otherwise we'll wrap up here.

Anybody else wants to get in on this? Okay. So what I'll do is just give one final word --

QUESTIONER: There's a rumor in Kinshasa by the way, I just one thing, it's about Shadary.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay.

QUESTIONER: Shadary is willing to, before we turn -- said to be Jaylo, this is --

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you for the rumor. Always good to get recent rumor, (speaking in foreign language), as we call it in Zaire.

QUESTIONER: (Crosstalk)

MR. O'HANLON: One last comment from each of you on the most important thing for the United States and the international community to do in these couple of months as we anticipate the election in Congo; if you want to, by way of summary and emphasis, anything you want us to come way from this with? Sasha, starting with you.

MR. LEZHNEV: Yeah. Don't wait and see. This is actually a time when we can use, you know, we talk about conflict prevention, preventive diplomacy, this is not expensive troops on the ground, this is about, you know, preventive diplomacy that in using the U.S. financial leverage which we use in many other context and national security context around the world.

Let's do the same for Africa, for Congo in particular, and I think so that the time to act on some of these measures is now before it spirals out of control, and becomes much more expensive, and cost many lives.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Emily?

MS. RENARD: Yeah. I completely agree with that, and we'd say that the groundwork for that I think has really been laid, and I think it's continuing through that. There's still a lot of tools in the tool in tool kit, and the financial leverage, the visa ban, things that have been used, and I think continuing to leverage that is important, but also

knowing that this is an opportunity.

Now with the election, and whatever happens after to continue to push for reform, and thinking about -- you know, I think what the U.S. says still matters a lot, and the statements around, you know, especially around the election, taking your time recognizing that it is important to watch what the Congolese people think and feel, and understand to be the reality of their election. And not lending legitimacy to anything that doesn't deserve it.

And I would just say that finally, I think, you know, remembering always where the threat of force truly lies in the situation, who has the greater *tour de force*, greater access to power, and greater power for corruption as things unfold will be hugely important.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And JT, last word?

MR. TOMASZEWSKI: Elections aren't an event, they are a process, it's a long process, we are just at the beginning of the starting gate for the voting part of it. And actually the campaign which starts in earnest very soon, and I think, you know, it's important at this juncture for those who've sat on the sidelines, or who've not brought to bear their full diplomatic tool kit, need to do it; hint, hint, the U.S.

And really also making sure that, you know, when we are engaging Congo, we're doing it from the perspective of not just the stick but the carrot as well. Going to the investment question, going to the important part of Nikki Haley wants elections on the 23rd of December, then the U.S. has to put its money where its mouth is.

There's been some progress there, but more could have been done. So, let's do it now.

MR. O'HANLON: Thanks to all of you for being here, for great comments and questions. Please join me in thanking the panel. (Applause)

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