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EXAMINING THE HEALTH OF DEMOCRACY ACROSS AFRICA

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**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Keynote Address:**

THE HONORABLE CHRIS COONS (D-DE)  
U.S. Senate

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good morning everyone. Welcome to Brookings. I'm Michael O'Hanlon with the Africa Security Initiative of the Foreign Policy program. We're delighted to have Senator Chris Coons from Delaware here today, as well as to be working with our friends and colleagues from St. Lawrence University, who often team with us on Africa Security Initiative events, and Lauren Blanchard as well from the Congressional Research Service.

I will introduce the others when we go to Phase 2 of this in about an hour, which will be our panel discussion, but first I have the privilege of giving a brief introduction for Senator Coons, who then will give some brief remarks of his own, and then Matt Carotenuto and I will join him on stage for a little discussion followed by your questions. That's the basic -- that's the basic lay of the land and the agenda for the morning.

We want to talk today about the state of democracy in Africa and how that relates to security and more generally the state of the continent. And so, the scope is big. We've got 54 countries in all or 48 if you want to focus on sub-Saharan Africa more or less. So, we've got a lot to talk about and we're going to let your questions drive a lot of where we focus specifically. But I thought that very briefly I would just explain the rationale for this event today. I think there are two main dimensions to it; first of all, in terms of the Senator Coons dimension, he is one of the leading figures in Washington today on all matters concerning Africa, as well as many other subjects in our public policy discourse, but he has a nice relationship with St. Lawrence University. He went to Amherst College, but he took a semester and spent it in Nairobi through a St. Lawrence University program. And so it is a great opportunity to team. So, that's part of our very personal and selfish reason here at Brookings in St. Lawrence for wanting to do this

event.

But also, in terms of the subject matter of the state of democracy, we know that today we hear a lot of talk about the slippage of democracy worldwide. And normally, this conversation starts in regard to Russia or Turkey. It talks about Hungary and Poland and then other movements in Europe and then sometimes people bring the United States into the conversation and certainly Venezuela in this hemisphere, the Philippines. These are among the countries that are mentioned most frequently, but often this conversation does not extend to discuss the state of democracy in Africa. And maybe because it's a more complex picture, there's no easy soundbite.

In front, when you walked in you had an opportunity to pick up a map of Africa, Freedom House's map, which shows the number of countries that are evaluated as free, partly free and not free. And let me just add one more word before I introduce Senator Coons and then turn the podium over to him. Today, Freedom House says that of the 48 countries or so that's it's looking at in sub-Saharan Africa, about 10 are free and about 20 are partly free. In fact, let me get the specific numbers. It's 10 that are free, 21 partly free and 23 that are not free. That's a little bit disturbing compared to where things were a decade ago or 12 years ago. It's sort of the high-water mark in African and global democracy trends, just like in Europe, just like in the Americas and the Philippines and elsewhere we've seen some slippage, at least by this data, because in 2006 there was one more country evaluated as free, 11 than 10 and there were 24 versus 21 today as partly free. So, we've seen slippage in both those categories and in 2006 only 19 countries were evaluated as completely not free, today it's 23.

So that's bad news, but let me also remind you of the broader historical sweep. In 1990, as the Cold War had just begun to wind down and the Berlin Wall was falling in Europe, only four countries in Africa were evaluated as free, 19 as partly free

and 29 as not free. So, we've seen historically continued progress, but we've also seen certainly a plateau and some slippage in the last decade or so.

Now, to Senator Coons. He was in Africa in the late 1980s in some of his early work. He was involved in the divestiture initiatives in regard to South Africa, working actually in the building next door to Brookings or part of Brookings, in fact, in the late 1980s after he had graduated from Amherst College with that semester in Nairobi through St. Lawrence. He then spent time on the ground with The Council of Churches in South Africa working on the anti-apartheid cause and continued that passion as he went to law school at Yale. He also got a Masters in Divinity and Ethics from the Yale Divinity School and I think probably you saw continued concern for human rights throughout that part of his life. He continues to be a champion of human rights with the Human Rights Caucus on Capitol Hill today and he's also importantly on the subcommittee on Africa for the Senate Formulations Committee, as well as the relevant Appropriations Subcommittee. And so this is a person who's got a great deal of influence in all matters Africa today. Also, well known for his bipartisan cooperation across the aisle at a time when we certainly could use more of both ethics and bipartisanship in Washington. And so it's a great privilege for me to present to you today Senator Chris Coons of Delaware. (Applause)

SENATOR COONS: Well, thank you Michael. Good morning everybody.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

SENATOR COONS: Oh good morning, come on.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

SENATOR COONS: Good morning. One of the things I enjoy is a great morning opportunity to talk about one of my favorite subjects, which is the trajectory

of U.S.-Africa relations. And to Michael and everybody here at Brookings, thank you for hosting, for convening and to what I know will be a substantive and engaging and positive panel. So first you're going to have endure a few quick remarks by United States Senator, where hopefully I will add a little bit of something to the ground on which then this great panel will work with you on an exploration of the trajectory of democracy on the continent of Africa. Just as a framing comment, I'll say that we have long understood in this country or hoped or imagined that development and security and democracy would advance on similar paths across a continent of 54 countries. And today, we face a competing model that suggests that you can have development; you can have security, without democracy. That they are not inextricably linked and that the linkage the United States has always fought for and advocated for between human rights and free and open societies and democracy, the linkage between those concepts and economic development and opportunity and security, we face competing models, not just in Africa, but around the world that suggest an alternative frame, that you can actually achieve development and achieve security while not providing free and open and fair and regular elections, respect for human rights, a vibrant press, an independent judiciary and we need to step up to this challenge. And there is no place in the world I think where this challenge is more squarely presented than on the continent of Africa and no place where our leadership is more sorely lacking right now than on the continent of Africa.

Let me start by just recognizing the recent passing of a good friend and advisor and someone who is a real leader in America's diplomatic engagement with Africa, Princeton Lyman, an American diplomat who just passed away in late August, who will be deeply missed. I knew him as a skilled and thoughtful American ambassador. He testified before the Foreign Relations Committee, the Africa Subcommittee in particular when I chaired it, briefed me repeatedly on the complexities of Sudan, South

Sudan and recently interrogated me on panels at the U.S. Institute of Peace and I urge all of us to continue his legacy of working tirelessly to promote peace and diplomatic solutions throughout the continent and the world.

I also, as you know, continue to mourn the passing of Senator McCain, a personal friend, but someone who saw human rights and the advocacy for democracy in human rights as absolutely essential to the advocacy of America's security interests in the world. I want to thank the members of the St. Lawrence University faculty here, Matthew and Kristin. It was a remarkable chapter in my own life as you heard in the introduction. We won't go into the ways it led to a dramatic transformation in my political views, but exposure to six months in Kenya, the leadership of Paul Robinson who was a terrific director of the St. Lawrence University program, lifelong American in Africa who's remained a friend and an advisor in the decade since. And the folks who were both part of my class and then the families with whom we lived in the communities in which we learned really challenged and changed my views of the world.

If I were to summarize it briefly, it'd be this; that I encountered radical hospitality, that I met with and lived with and stayed with friends and families who, though enduring genuinely terrible circumstances, material circumstances, yet remained focused on spirit, on faith, on heart, on welcoming strangers and on family in ways I have never seen in this country and a number of experiences left lasting impressions on me as Laura, one of my classmates and I were volunteering with Maendeleo Ya Wanawake, we went to I think Kakamega to do a presentation in a village. And afterwards the family that was hosting us for the day served up a fairly nice and boozy stew and we learned on our way home that they literally had slaughtered and served their last goat just as a gesture of hospitality and kindness to a visiting group of Americans, which just to me was a stunning gesture of kindness and hospitality. Later, when I volunteered for the South

African Council of Churches I was working with Reverend Paul Verryn, who later became Bishop of Johannesburg and we were in Dobbinsville, an informal settlement where the apartheid regime had bulldozed the homes of about 150 families. And I remember being left utterly unaware of what I was supposed to do with dozens and dozens of families as Paul ran back to get more supplies and to, you know, these were emergency tents and these were folks who literally had physically nothing at this point. And in a casual conversation one of the guys I was standing with started asking me about my children. I said children, I have no children and he looks at me and he says, "No children. A man of your age, no family," and I said, yeah, yeah, that's right, thinking to myself has my mother been calling you, like what is this about. And he starts gathering everyone together and says, come, come, come, come, come, we have a crisis. (Laughter) And we hold hands so that he can pray over me for five minutes about the tragedy of my absence of any children or spouse. And I'm thinking to myself quietly, you don't have anything, you don't have a house or food or clothes and yet here we are praying for me because of the tragedy of the lack of a family.

It was challenging, but it was also transformative for me to recognize that I was surrounded by people who knew what really mattered and what really lasted, not the things that are ephemeral and temporal. It doesn't mean we shouldn't fight for the things that matter in the daily lives, clean water, better access to health care, electricity, reliable housing. But it was a challenge to me having come from a society that focused so relentlessly on the material and ignored the familial, to be surrounded by people who had their priorities right even in the most difficult moment of their lives. So, let me get on if I could to the status of U.S. Africa relations and democracy in the continent. I hope you don't mind a little trip down memory lane about the ways in which Africa deeply touched my heart, moved me, changed me and continues to challenge and engage me even,

even this week.

As was mentioned in the introduction, it's pretty tough to give a quick overview of 54 countries and the status of democracy on the continent. But there is no shortage of news on this front, coming out of the continent. Both challenging and hopeful, I'm frankly skeptical of the recent peace deal in South Sudan. I doubt that the December elections in the DRC will be both free and fair. I am appalled by ongoing oppression of the members of Parliament in Uganda. The flawed election in Zimbabwe frustrated the hopes of many of its citizens in the world that a new opening towards democracy and democratic space by Emerson in Ngawha would actually be translated into a real electoral opportunity. And the South African economy, despite the progress they're making has recently dipped into recession. I was struck how four American soldiers were killed in Niger and on governed spaces and saw how it continued to pose challenges for policymakers. I was struck by the fact that as I was talking to my colleagues in the Senate, very few of them had heard of or could identify the nation of Niger, a place where we, among many others are actively engaged in the work to provide stability.

On the positive side of the ledger, in Liberia, they experienced their first transfer of power from one democratically elected president to another in 70 years. As President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, America's -- excuse me -- Africa's first female president respected the constitution to step down after two terms as Liberia's president. The people of The Gambia, a country I visited in August of 2017, took a very positive step forward by electing President Barrow and then when Yahya Jammeh, the longtime dictator refused to respect the democratic election. A regional effort successfully compelled him to respect the will of the people of the Gambia. And in February, as you know the South African people demanded change and rejected President Jacob Zuma



after a series of steps in particular by the constitutional court demonstrated how a free press and an independent judiciary in the face of nine years of rule marred by corruption, scandals and fiscal mismanagement could end up having a turn towards a more hopeful future. African governments in Burkina Faso and Senegal, we've visited in the last few years are embracing the health of their citizens as a top priority and have made huge strides. Burkina Faso, for example, cut its HIV prevalence rate by 65 percent, the greatest drop in the continent. In Senegal under five mortalities dropped by nearly 60 percent in the last decade. We could repeat statistics like this in dozens of countries in terms of health and education progress; progress and access to electricity; progress and access to clean water; progress in economic opportunity. There's more I think positive news on this front than we have time for, but it bears repeating. There is broadly across the continent positive news.

In terms of politics we're seeing striking reforms by the new Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and steps towards peace with neighboring Eritrea in resolving a frozen conflict of decades and I'm happy to discuss all of these trends more thoroughly in the Q and A session.

More broadly, I think Africa is growing middle class by global standards are bringing tens of millions, hundreds of millions of people out of abject poverty and Africa now has the fastest growing middle class in the world by IMF standards. Africa's own tech revolution is bringing opportunities for innovation. They are changing the face and future of the continent through mobile banking, telecom and dozens of other start-ups and new innovations in countries and in cities like Lagos and Johannesburg and in Nairobi we are seeing really compelling developments.

So, let me just make a few broad points if I could. The United States and the world must pay more attention to Africa. Africa is a continent of huge opportunity.

Our business leaders have to strongly consider investments in the continent and our diplomats have to redouble our efforts to build and sustain long lasting partnerships and we have to find mechanisms to make real the promise that democracy and development and security can march forward hand-in-hand. Second, as recent think tank scholars and former officials have noted the rest of the world is stepping up their relationship, deepening their ties to Africa at a stunning pace at exactly the moment that the United States is standing still or slipping backwards. And I think we risk relinquishing or abandoning our historic role in spearheading growth and prosperity alongside democracy if we stay on the sidelines. And third, to give one brief positive bit of news from the U.S. Congress. The Congress has always played a strikingly bipartisan role in sustaining the U.S. Africa relationship and I'll give a quick review of that, but the legislative branch must take this moment of opportunity to send a strong signal of support for deepening our ties with Africa and expanding our investment and engagement. So, let me first talk about that first point. The United States and the world has to pay more attention to Africa, a continent with enormous untapped resources and potential as I think this room knows better than any, the population growth trans globally project for Africa the youngest, most vibrant workforce in population on the global stage in the coming decades. Its population is rapidly becoming more connected, more educated and more urban. Africa also has three non-permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and their status on the U.N. Security Council matters in Sub-Saharan and Africa is the largest and most unified voting bloc in the General Assembly, which I expect we will see deployed more and more frequently in advancement of Africa's interests. At 200 million hectares, Sub Sahara and Africa's home to half, half of the world's uncultivated arable land and obviously the astonishing natural resources of continent in every possible way are matched or exceeded by their astonishing human resources. The continent's not without its

challenges, it is home to eight U.N. peacekeeping operations, more than any continent. A recent report by the former Chairs of the 911 Commission, Governor Tom Kane and Congressman Lee Hamilton, classify 13 Sub-Saharan and African states as fragile, facing regular terrorist attacks. Six African states have territory where terrorists essentially govern a significant portion of the population and another statistic that struck me in passing the other day was that 26 nations have sent military troops to Mali in a sustained, but so far not fully successful effort to stabilize Mali and move it in a better direction. Yet, I remain optimistic about this continent, a continent of immense opportunity and potential because of its people. The Pan African survey project known as Afro Barometer is about to publish results from its most recent polling data that shows the amazing spirit, resiliency and determination of the African people. Support for democracy in Africa remains strong and consistent over the last decade. While Europe and even in some ways the United States is demonstrating its skepticism or its lack of firm faith and commitment in democracy, the people of Africa continue to yearn for it, believe in it and work for it. So, I think it's critical that the United States, a country that despite our challenges, is literally defined as a democracy, that the ideals of our declaration and constitution have spoken to or challenged or inspired generations around the world. We have to build deeper ties with a continent of 1.3 billion people yearning for progress and democracy and increasingly becoming urban interconnected and integrated.

To my second point, we are failing to take advantage of this moment, precisely at the time when our competitors around the world are seeing the promise of Africa, including those that don't share our core values and our belief in the centrality of respect for free and fair elections, open societies, independent journalists and fundamental freedoms. As think tanks go Judd Devermont points out, African countries

are no longer relying principally in the United States. They are rapidly and actively reaching out to engaging and making arrangements with other governments and diversifying their partnerships. I'm concerned other countries are putting principal priority on Africa at a time when we are sliding away from a leadership role. And the numbers on this are just stunning.

China, of course, is the principal non-African country engaged in the continent today. And its engagement is soaring, but its impact and its reputation are mixed. While it is building vitally needed infrastructure literally all over the continent, in every one of the 29 countries I visited on the continent, there was a significant and growing Chinese presence and investment. But it hasn't always applied the highest international standards of openness, transparency, inclusivity, and governance. The statistics on trade are simply eye-popping.

U.S. trade with Africa from the year I came to Washington as a Senator, 2010 to today has dropped by half, from roughly 80 billion to below 40 billion. And over that same time period, Chinese trade with Africa has more than doubled and is today about 165 billion. So, China today has four times the trade with Africa as United States. It was just a decade ago that the United States was the principal trading partner with the continent of Africa. Those lines crossed and have now accelerated to the point where China's influence dramatically outstrips ours.

But it's not just China, as our former ambassador, American Ambassador of the African Union, Reuben Brigety, pointed out in a recent article. Bilateral trade between India and Africa went from five billion in 2011 to over 70 billion in 2013, more than India's bilateral trade with the United States. Turkey's trade with Africa has increased six-fold and the Turkish government has just opened 16 new diplomatic posts across the continent and Cutter has opened a dozen.

You must have followed the recent trip of Prime Minister Theresa May from the United Kingdom to South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria, the first visit by a UK Prime Minister in five years. Next week, Prime Minister May will host an event at the U.N. General Assembly on youth engagement across the continent. Germany has unveiled a marshal plan with Africa to address mass migration after Chancellor Angela Merkel hosted 10 African Heads of State at the G20 in Berlin last year.

So, at a time when other countries are stepping up, the United States and Congress has to do more to build new partnerships. American influence across the continent can and should be positive and can and should focus on democracy. And as I mentioned, the Congress has always played a strong and mostly bipartisan role in U.S.-Africa relations. Near the end of the Clinton Administration, Congress passed the African Growth and Opportunity Act bill that provided the foundation for growing trade between United States and Africa on a quota-free duty-free basis for most African nations. And in 2015, Republican Senator Johnny Isakson of Georgia and I worked tirelessly together and in a bipartisan and ultimately bicameral effort to strengthen AGOA and to ensure that we're doing more to help remove barriers to trade and strengthen trade capacity.

In the Bush Administration, Congress on a bipartisan basis, developed and passed the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief, PEPFAR, the Millennium Challenge Corporation. During President Obama's term, a bipartisan group of us worked to pass the Electrify Africa Act to support and authorize Power Africa, the Global Food Security Act to support the Feed the Future Initiative and we have on a bipartisan basis sustained the funding and authorization for the Young African Leaders Initiative, an important program connecting the best and brightest of the continent to American universities and the best of America.

The Trump Administration does not yet have a signature Africa Policy

Initiative and sadly dragged its feet for far too long in naming relevant ambassadors and an assistant secretary. Today, though, I think there is real promise across all these fronts. There is a strong new assistant secretary in place and just today, we have been working tirelessly -- thank you, again, to Tom Mancinelli, on the BUILD Act. The BUILD Act which was crafted by Senator Corker and myself, in the Senate by Congressman Yoho and Congressman Smith in the House and has made it through the House, made it through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is ready for action on the floor of the Senate, and hangs by just a thread of opposition by a few Senators not interested in modernizing our development finance tools.

I suspect most of you know this, but the BUILD Act would literally double the lending capacity of America's Development Finance Institution. OPEC is 40 years out of date, constrained, cramped and narrow in its tools not able to really partner with our allies, DFIs. If we get the BUILD Act through, it will significantly strengthen our role in the developing world and it enjoys the strong support of the Trump Administration, as well as the one campaign, the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. I have to say it has been a delight to work on something that is directly relevant to our role on the continent of Africa and that it's such a strong bipartisan coalition.

I'm also optimistic that Congress will take up and pass a number of other bipartisan bills. I'll just mention the Global Fragility and Violence Reduction Act that Senators Rubio and Graham and Young have worked on with me and other democrats to provide structure and framework for sustained investment in fragile nations on the continent that would partner development, diplomacy, democracy with security. And that would require a consistent bipartisan strategy over a decade to prevent countries in Africa from slipping into being the next Syria and to advance democracy and

development alongside security.

So, I think with these two pieces of legislation and with funding that would help support them, it is entirely possible for the Trump Administration and its representatives to travel to the continent; to champion these new initiatives; to demonstrate our respect for and engagement with the people of the continent; and to push for democracy in countries that right now are on that tipping point, according to Freedom House, between becoming wholly free or less free.

We've got a challenging year ahead of us for democracy on the continent of Africa and I'm grateful for a chance to answer your questions and to be with you. And I'm particularly thankful for Lauren and Kristin and Matthew, who I know will make a far more skilled presentation about the prospects for the growth of democracy on the continent of Africa than I have been able to in my few short remarks. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. O'HANLON: Senator, that was amazing. I don't know how you covered so much so quickly.

SENATOR COONS: (Laughs)

MR. O'HANLON: You've got a lot on the table. I just want to ask one follow-up question, I think Matt may have one or two, and then we'll go to the audience for the next half hour or so. And the question I wanted to ask, even though I recognize that AFRICOM is DOD and it's a different Committee and so forth, I know you've thought about --

SENATOR COONS: Sure.

MR. O'HANLON: -- the role of AFRICOM and more generally about DOD security assistance to the continent. You talked a lot about democracy, a lot about economics. I wondered about your overall take on the U.S. engagement towards Africa

in terms of security cooperation.

And let's try to get into the discussion about the north and counterterrorism that gets its fair share of attention, but more the sort of Sub-Saharan realm and how we're doing in helping African militaries improve, reform, strengthen their own ability to stabilize their own countries, remain at peace with each other, which, of course, is, as you alluded to with Ethiopia and Eritrea, a good news story, there are very few, if any, inner state conflicts in Africa, but there are obviously still plenty of security challenges, as you mentioned with a number of peacekeeping missions and conflicts.

So, any thoughts on the overall state of U.S. security cooperation with Africa?

SENATOR COONS: Thank you for the question. Let me just mention four things that might not leap to mind when we talk about AFRICOM and U.S. security cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa.

As you know, there was a significant challenge with piracy off the coast of Somalia that grew and grew over many years until it required a significant multilateral global effort to tamp down, contain, and ultimately reduce close to zero regular piracy actions off the coast of Somalia. But in the Gulf of Guinea, there has been a steady increase in piracy actions over many years. And this has been an opportunity for the United States Navy and for military-to-military training and facilitation equipment programs. And it has the not insignificant corollary benefit of helping tackle illegal and unregistered fishing.

So, you've got one of the richest fishing areas in the world off the west coast of Africa, where most of the countries along the coast really have very little domain awareness, very modest naval capabilities, and we've had a chance to visit several countries where there have been not just the occasional visit from a Navy frigate or not



just a quick stop-by, but investment in training, in equipment, in awareness that is designed to help promote both the security aspect of counterpiracy work, but also this -- the stability and the access to vital and needed protein sources of having indigenous fishing industries be able to secure more of the resources that are rightfully theirs. That's one partnership or cooperation.

Let me mention another. While life trafficking is a dramatically growing -- a challenge across the continent and in a dozen countries, the U.S. military and United States Fish and Wildlife Service have done a training and equipping and partnership exercises that have had a significant impact in a number of countries. It takes a whole of government engagement to strengthen judicial and law enforcement resources and ability and to strengthen the operational and the patrol capabilities of national, park, and the wildlife protection services. And in a lot of cases, that's been done across several different branches and avenues of effort by the United States government.

Why does this matter? Exactly the people who go in and out of national parks and massacre dozens and dozens of elephants or rhino, because they're taking tusks and horn, and then move those resources globally, those same pathways are being used to move drugs, to move illicitly mined materials, to move people and to move weapons. And across a number of hearings over several years, I think we've proven that these illicit networks help fund terrorism, help promote destabilization and exactly the countries where poaching has gone wildly off are the countries that are on the edge of fragility and where there's significant parts of the country that are ungoverned by the central government. So, I do think this is not what you would think of as a sort of military-to-military training and equipping mission, but this is helping sustain the legitimacy and the control of the country by a government.

Last point. One of the probably least appreciated tools of U.S. military

equipment assistant training and power projection is the State Partnership Program between state National Guards in the United States and national militaries across the continent. So, in a dozen, I think, now countries you've got a military that is, for example, flying C-130s, which is a, I think, 60-year-old air platform that the Air Guard in Delaware flies and many other states.

You're really better served having the National Guard, which is civilian soldiers, and have long tours of duty and are deeply rooted in civilian respect -- civilian control of the military building a decade-long relationship with, say, Nigeria for the training and equipment and maintenance of C-130s for the movement of troops than having, you know, regular Air Force come in and look at this antiquated platform that, you know, someone who is a promising young officer in the Air Force probably not that excited about dedicating his time to a C-130 fleet. But you've got National Guards all over the United States, Air Guards, that live and love and work with and sustain and fight for the C-130. That's just one example of dozens.

I saw this in Liberia, I've seen it in Djibouti, I've seen it in Nigeria, I've seen it in a dozen -- in half-a-dozen other countries where the relationships that are built between American National Guard units and their partner national militaries are much more relevant because the national military tends to do disaster response, road repair and construction, sustainment of water supplies, as well as internal security and peacekeeping. And I have fought for the reauthorization of that program and the more robust funding of that program. Sorry to take a long detour, but --

MR. O'HANLON: It's okay.

SENATOR COONS: -- awareness and control, fighting and combating illicit fishing, wildlife trafficking in the State Partnership Program are areas that may not be widely understood, but that I think are actually really making a difference in addition to

the counterterrorism work that's being done through Africa.

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic answer, especially because you had no idea that question was coming. (Laughter)

SENATOR COONS: That's correct. (Laughter)

MR. O'HANLON: Let me now pass the baton to a good friend of Brookings, Professor Matt Carotenuto of St. Lawrence U.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Thank you, Senator. It was inspiring remarks and nice to hear from you and we share a connection and roots in Kenya, so maybe I'll follow-up with a question related to security, but also kind of maybe taking East Africa as an example.

SENATOR COONS: I thought you were going to say, "I'll follow-up with a question IN (inaudible)."

MR. CAROTENUTO: Yeah, no, no. (Laughter) So, if we think about the security concerns, you know, East Africa's a good example. You brought up Somalia. There is a regional effort there with the Amazon Mission. The U.S. is supportive of that. But how do you balance that strategic partnership with as we look at the Freedom House numbers, you know, East Africa has seen a backslide in some way, shape, or form in a number of states. And a number of those states are strategic partners with United States, so how do you balance, how does the U.S. balance those concerns with local calls for democratic reform?

SENATOR COONS: That is a genuine and sustained challenge for us, globally. I mean, I'll put a name on it. Tanzania has seen some dramatic backsliding recently. That's very worrisome. Uganda -- a bipartisan group of senators just released a statement denouncing the ways in which members of parliament, journalists, advocates for reform are being harassed and abused and assaulted.

I had a meeting with President Museveni now quite a few years ago where the then ambassador asked me maybe half an hour before I went in to talk with him whether I would deliver a very harsh message about Leahy vetting and the importance of holding accountable military leaders within the Ugandan armed forces who were believed to have committed human rights abuses. It was a memorable session of conversation with President Museveni.

The reason this is relevant to the Somalia situation for those who maybe haven't followed it as closely is that the Ugandans have been terrific partners to the United States in a counter-LRA mission for a number of years the hunt for Joseph Kony and his core supporters in the LRA and in the Somalia mission where Ugandans have often been recognized as the toughest, most capable fighters of a multinational coalition. No disrespect to Kenyans, who have also fought bravely.

Here's what I think is compelling about the Amazon mission in Somalia. It is African staffed, African led, African equipped. These are troops from between five and six nations at different points from both the region and the continent that are engaged in stabilizing a country that had be -- had failed to be a country for 20 years of no effective central government. And there have been steady gains in stability and in pushing back against Al-Shabaab. There is difficult and unfinished work and one of the key pieces of unfinished work is not just clearing territory from Al-Shabaab control, but then rebuilding civil society, rebuilding economic opportunity.

And this is exactly the sort of situation that often puts the United States in a challenge. Because we have to be willing to stand up to and look in the eyes our partners in Uganda and Tanzania and elsewhere and say, "We disagree over how you're treating journalists, how you're treating minority party parliamentarians." At the same time, we are saying, "And we welcome a partnership in security, regionally. But we can't

trade one for the other."

And one of the aspects of the Leahy vetting law is that it says where there are specific units that have engaged in human rights abuses, we have to cut them off from support and training and assistance and equipment. And in countries where there's coup, we have to have a significant change in our security relationship. This has caused great difficulty for us in a number of countries across the continent and it's a regular conversation.

One of the things I will most miss about having Senator McCain as a colleague and a leader in the Senate as the Chairman of Armed Services was, he was someone who would more often than not raise and push the question, traveling to other countries or in confirmation or in appropriations or in Committee hearings, to insist that we not abandon our commitment to human rights and democracy in critical moments of security.

Obviously, the United States does not have a perfect record on this. We can all cite examples over the last decades. But compared to competitor nations that walk in the door saying, "We're not asking any questions about your internal affairs. We're not asking any difficult questions about how you treat journalists or human rights advocates or the minority party. Whatever elections you choose to have and however you run them, that's your business." That is a profoundly different model and a competing model, and we have to continue to have awkward, challenging conversations with our partners and show that we will invest in and support and grow our relationship with the countries that take real risks for democracy.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic. Well, I think now we'll go to you and please wait for a microphone. I think we'll take a couple of questions at a time. Is that okay?

And then --

SENATOR COONS: Sure.

MR. O'HANLON: So, why don't we begin with the two gentlemen here in rows two and three and then we'll come back to the Senator and then have a second round.

MR. HARBISON: Senator.

MR. O'HANLON: Please identify yourself, too.

MR. HARBISON: I'm John Harbison. I have a connection with SEIS and with George Washington.

Senator, at the outset, you mentioned this model of development without democracy. And there are only really two models of that in Africa, as you know, Rwanda and Ethiopia. Now, I think Ethiopia proved pretty definitively the flawed -- how flawed that model is and so you have to go back and revisit the whole -- what the connections between democracy, development and security really are. Would you agree?

SENATOR COONS: Do you have a question? What's the -- what -- help me with what the question is.

MR. HARBISON: Do you agree with what I just now said?

MR. O'HANLON: Great. And should we take one more and then --

SENATOR COONS: Sure.

MR. O'HANLON: Right here in the second row, please.

MR. GAMAKALI: Mondone Gamakali, I'm a professor and researcher. In December, the Cold War, the (inaudible) Cold War, the number two hold elections and the government has quickly (inaudible) the condition which prevents (inaudible) totality to form participating in with that process. I'm wondering what do you think government is doing to try to have (inaudible) candidates to participate in this process.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

MR. GAMAKALI: One of them is kept inside in Europe and then the other one is within Europe, so they cannot go to compete. So, what can the U.S. government do? Thank you.

SENATOR COONS: Great questions. And I can't believe we've gotten this far without talking about Cameroon, as well, but -- so, to the -- your first question, let me just make sure I get the premise. Ethiopia had been pursuing a path that -- for lack of a better word, I'll say -- put the Chinese model ahead of an American model and was pursuing rapid growth and development, but at the expense of anything resembling a free and open society.

And as a result, there was significant internal dissent, turmoil, demonstrations of a change in leadership and, I'm very optimistic today, a change in approach. And I am hopeful that we will begin to see in Ethiopia freer, fair, more open society elections, discussions, and a lessening of complete government control over communications and development opportunities. I'd say we're not out of the woods yet --

MR. GAMAKALI SPEAKER: We're sure not.

SENATOR COONS: -- to use a perhaps awkward metaphor in the context of Ethiopia.

MR. GAMAKALI: Mm-hmm.

SENATOR COONS: You know, I think the initial signs about the direction the Ethiopian government is taking are very encouraging. And I think as a country, we should be doing everything we can to support, recognize, celebrate, encourage the truly unexpected and brave moves to reconcile with Eritrea, to address internal issues, to make some movement towards resolving some long-lasting internal largely ethnic tensions.

But, you know, there's a long way to go. This is a country where the security services had gotten quite aggressive and quite embedded. And as, you know, one of the challenges of development is that it creates -- this is our view -- a demand for democracy. And that demand for democracy begins to take off and there's a point where leaders who have not grown up used to the idea that you work for the people, not the way around, put the brakes on.

Congo, DRC Congo is a truly challenging case, as Kabila, you know, has intensely resisted any movement to compel or encourage elections. And, you know, you can't speak of the United States as a unitary government. Congress and elements within government and the Administration, elements within the Administration have varying levels of intensity of focus on DRC. On a bipartisan basis, a group of us have had meetings, have sent letters, have sent -- have passed resolutions urging a free and fair, incredible and open election.

And the processes by which certain candidates are being barred from candidacy are certainly open to questioning and to challenge. But it -- it's also difficult for the United States to say, "This candidate must be allowed to compete and this candidate shouldn't be allowed to compete." I hesitate for us as a country, to the extent we have any unitary approach to DRC, to be misperceived as picking winners and losers.

So, what at least I have been doing is advocating for as free and open an electoral process as is possible. In a country the size of all of Western Europe with a real lack of a unitary national electoral system or culture, these next elections will be critical to there being any confidence in the role of elections, in securing opportunity and prosperity for the people of the Congo.

Could we have two or three more questions?

MR. O'HANLON: Yes. So, we got -- we'll take the second row here, the



woman in the white shirt, and then right behind her.

MS. BENJAMIN: Good morning. My name is Christina Benjamin. I am with Global Financial Integrity.

I was formally with the South Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so I have this special interest in the current South Sudanese Peace Deal. I know you mentioned that you were skeptical, which is understandable, but I wanted to ask you to elaborate a little bit. Why are you skeptical and what do you think should be the next steps that the South Sudanese government takes?

SENATOR COONS: Great --

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

SENATOR COONS: I'm sorry, I'm --

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah, go ahead.

SENATOR COONS: Great question to which I don't have a great answer. I'll tell you just that I've only met Salva Kiir in Juba once, but it was, again, a truly memorable conversation. And, you know, the relationship between Kiir and Machar, the negotiations, the path towards the current agreement, you have to remain hopeful that this is a sustainable structure. But the number of times it's been attempted and fallen apart and attempted and fallen apart and the truly tragic and despicable tools being used by players in particular the government, to stir up conflict and to -- I -- this was the difficulty in the conversation.

I was alleging that the SPLA was engaged in depraved activity that was causing widespread famine and dislocation. And, you know, the President initially denied that anything was wrong, that there was anything going on. And I had just come from Unity State and seeing human conditions that were just terrible. No, I'm wrong. I went to Unity State after the meeting with Kiir, right. But I allege that I was about to see, right,

and did, in fact, see. I had just come from a refugee camp in northern Uganda where I had met with dozens of women and children who had just crossed into Uganda after dislocation.

The other concern was the attacks against relief workers as a tool of ongoing dislocation internally. I've advocated for sanctions against both sides and leaders that have taken advantage of the dislocation and the circumstances in South Sudan. I think there's blame -- plenty of blame to go around here. This is not meant to be just a diatribe against Salva Kiir and the government. And I think both Riek Machar and Salva Kiir and their lieutenants and folks in the field have failed to serve the people of South Sudan well.

So, I'll remain optimistic and prayerfully hopeful. I just meant that the regional engagement and support and American engagement and support has not yet produced a sustainable piece.

MR. O'HANLON: And time for one last question or --

SENATOR COONS: Certainly.

MR. O'HANLON: So, the --

SENATOR COONS: I'll take two.

MR. O'HANLON: Oh, good. Good.

SENATOR COONS: Unless you tell me I have to --

MR. O'HANLON: So, we'll start here in the third row and then slide over here to the woman in the yellow sweater and then that may be it, I'm afraid.

MS. LOWERY-DERRYCK: Thank you. Good morning, Senator.

SENATOR COONS: Good morning.

MS. LOWERY DERRYCK: My name is Vivian Lowery-Derryck. I'm with the Bridges Institute, which is an NGO that helps to strengthen African governance and

democracy. My question is about the Saho, Mali, and the Security Governance Initiative specifically. Because I always look at it as an initiative that engages civil society and citizens' insecurity and that ultimately that benefits the country and democracy.

So, but as you were speaking, I was thinking about different -- other actors that could become involved in the Security Governance Initiative, traditional leaders. And when you mentioned National Guards, I'm wondering if there is room to expand that initiative if you think that it's being useful, and what do you see its prospects for continued funding? Thank you.

SENATOR COONS: If I heard you right, your question is principally about the G5 and the Security Governance Initiative and the Saho. And, you know, this - - the State Partnership with National Guards that I referenced is relatively modest in scope in the Saho. There are a few nations that have partners and they are principally focused on military-to-military support, with some civilian benefits. But I'll talk more directly about the G5 and the SGI.

My most recent visit to the region was to both Burkina and Niger. And I have to say I was genuinely encouraged by meetings with both presidents, with opposition leaders, with NGOs, and with our ambassadors and representatives. And the purpose -- I took a group of five Senators and the purpose of our visit was really to advocate for development and democracy to be at least as strong as our emphasis on defense. Because just the dynamics of the American government and society, we tend to see a -- we tend to see an instability challenge and militarize it and think that a military response is sufficient.

And I think that's particularly not true in Mali and I think that is less true across this region than almost anywhere in the world. Because of some of the historic challenges of governance, of engagement, of opportunity, if we don't significantly

increase not just our investment, but our partner's investment in development and a development then can lead to sustainable governance, we'll never solve the security problem. I think the former drives the latter, not the other way around.

And if you look at Mali and the Tuareg and the ways in which there's a generational governance challenge and inclusion and opportunity challenge, that -- challenges like that play out across the entire region. Typically, north to south, but not exclusively. And you've got issues that are long unresolved in terms of land tenure, roles in the national government, access to natural resources, legitimacy of governance and the role of traditional leaders is essential. In central governments, distributing power, demonstrating that they can listen and engaging entire countries, not just capital regions in the potential here of a regional partnership with the United States.

MR. O'HANLON: So, after this last question and the Senator's response, I'll ask you to join me in thanking him as we do a seamless transition to the panel, bring out another chair, and do all that --

SENATOR COONS: Yeah.

MR. O'HANLON: -- without giving you a coffee break, with our apologies --

SENATOR COONS: Mm-hmm.

MR. O'HANLON: -- as we're trying to compress a lot into this great morning. So, please, over to you, my friend.

MS. OKARU-BISANT: Yes, hi. Valentina Okaru-Bisant. I'm a professor at Catholic University of America. I wanted to ask a question. You mentioned earlier about Rwanda and Ethiopia, the fact that they had development without democracy, right? Or there was a time when I think there was a question another --

SENATOR COONS: Yes.

MS. OKARU-BISANT: -- fellow professor --

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MS. OKARU-BISANT: -- had mentioned that. But anyway, I wanted to sort of ask, what criteria -- given the subject matter of this forum, what criteria are we, meaning the U.S., using to gauge or measure what a healthy democratic system is in Africa? As you know, the -- we've had, you know, some countries that have gone in and out of it. In other words, it's almost, like, rhetorical, but I really have been brainstorming about this for quite a while. Are we looking, are we pursuing -- he mentioned development, democracy, but there's also that question of stability. Is the --

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MS. OKARU-BISANT: -- goal stability or is it having a democratic system beyond having fair elections --

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MS. OKARU-BISANT: -- engagement -- you mentioned traditional rulers, engaging --

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MS. OKARU-BISANT: -- communities.

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MS. OKARU-BISANT: When the U.S. is looking from a foreign policy standpoint, given the Arab Spring, given what went on in Venezuela and all whatnot, are we looking at -- what is the -- what's the objective?

SENATOR COONS: Okay. Again, it's very difficult to speak of there being a unitary objective. I would argue the Trump Administration and some of us in Congress have different views. But broadly speaking, if you're looking for a broad answer, I think the American theory of the case is that elections are critical, but not

adequate. Free, fair, and regular elections are an absolutely critical part of democracy, but an election alone, it's not a talisman, they're not magic.

Just because you had an election doesn't mean you've got anything resembling a democracy. And at times, our efforts focus too much on the mechanics of an election and the run-up to an election and demanding election. And if you aren't also paying attention to and building the connective tissue that leads to a genuinely open society, then elections become these markers without meaning.

What leads to a genuinely open society? Free and fair access to the elected officials by citizens and journalists, human rights advocates, the minority party, to demand accountability. So, one of the underpinnings of democracy is a vision that the elected work for the governed, not the other way around. And that tension is clear.

If your goal is stability, there's two paths. One path is the suppression of all dissent, clarifying that there are no routes for accountability and holding sham elections. And I would argue that is a competing model that we reject. The other route towards stability is gradually building the circle of those who are winners, who are included, who have opportunity. And that is a difficult process.

Obviously, the United States is not a perfect democracy. But we are closer in recent decades to having an electorate that has the opportunity to participate free and fairly and fully and we are closer to having a robust national political debate, independent judiciary, devolution of power from a unitary government to a federal system, and the things that make for social mobility, educational opportunity, regional movement and opportunity, and the removal of barriers that are based on traditional status discrimination.

Now, on every one of these fronts, you could say today we are worse off than we were two or five or 10 years ago and we could have a robust debate about that.

But I think over the long haul, the United States, at least over my lifetime, has gradually become a more perfect Union and is gradually becoming more free, fair, open, and democratic society than it was when I was born. If we are to continue to be held up as an example or looked to as an example around the world, we have to be transparent about our own failings and weaknesses.

In a recent visit to South Africa, a group of five Senators, the same ones who went to the Saho, we went to South African Zimbabwe. We had just a remarkable hour visit with the Constitutional Court. And I've got a copy of the South African Constitution here that I've been reading at night. You know, it bears repeating that there are countries across the continent that have really impressive constitutional structures, that have strong courts, that have strong press, that have, minority parties and regular elections, but where the mechanism of democracy isn't yet fully functioning.

And I think our country has a lot to learn from countries on the continent where citizens have risked their lives or lost their lives, where judges have stood up at enormous personal risk, where journalists have covered and reported on a corruption and manipulation of elections, and where average citizens are speaking up empowered by the mechanics of social media for the first time. And there's a lot for the United States to learn from Africa and there's a lot for us to show in the ways in which we fight for the mechanisms, the institutions of our own democracy.

What's our metric? If I were to, in closing, try to pick one out of dozens, the way that the Millennium Challenge Corporation goes through a series of, I think, 14 major metrics and says, "How are you doing at fighting corruption? How are you doing at a free, fair, and independent court system? How are you doing at a robust media and what's the state's role in media? How are you doing at," you know, if you were to have to pick one out of dozens, that's not a bad set of questions to ask ourselves and to ask our

development partners on the continent.

So, I hope I answered your question. I hope this was a purposeful beginning to what'll be a great conversation with your panel about the state of democracy on the continent. And I hope all of us hear voices from around the world that still look to the United States as a country to invest in, to fight for, and to demonstrate what a commitment to democracy means.

Democracy is hard. It is far easier to govern without the consent of the governed. It is far easier to be in a position of power without listening to all the noise and the trouble and the difficulty. And we have to show the world we mean it when we say we are first a democracy and then a country committed to capitalism and prosperity and growth. And this is the -- this time, in the next few months and years, is when the United States in this generation will demonstrate whether we mean what we say, whether what we have fought for has lasting impact on our nation, and whether we're going to be held accountable in the court of history to what we have promised ourselves. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you, Senator. (Applause)

(Recess)

MR. O'HANLON: All right. Well, now we are being joined, Matt and I, by Lauren Blanchard from the Congressional Research Service with an extensive background at the National Endowment for Democracy and other places in sort of democracy building in Africa, a real force of nature on that continent, on Capitol Hill, and a good friend of Brookings. And Kristin McKie, like Matt, a professor at St. Lawrence who specializes in presidential powers, executive powers, and with a large focus on the Great Lakes region of Africa, but also more widely.

And so I'm going to pose to the panel the equally unfair question that we asked the Senator to address. The sort of sizing up the state of Africa today with a



specific focus on democracy, but also with an invitation to hone in on whichever aspects you would like and I think we'll begin on the far side with Kristin and work this way. And just to ask for an opening take. Obviously, not a comprehensive assessment; that would be unfair.

Let me just repeat one more word of introduction because I probably was confusing in how I threw around statistics an hour ago in my introduction of Senator Coons. I'll just remind you of what Freedom House says about the state of democracy in Africa today. The assessment is that 10 countries out of 54 continent-wide are free, 21 are partly free, and 23 are not free. I'm not saying Freedom House has the whole thing figured out and to the very good question from the professor at Catholic University, a country like Rwanda is in the not free category -- for some good reasons, but also some debatable reasons, as we were discussing earlier.

And so that's the state today: 10 free, 21 partly free, 23 not free. That's a slight fall-off from where we had been a dozen years ago, when in 2006 you had 11 assessed as free, 24 assessed as partly free, which was three more than today, and then 19 as not free. But it's still a dramatic improvement relative to 1990, if you want to take that as a, you know, measuring point since it was the end of the Cold War when we only had four free countries in all of Africa.

So, without further ado and now, Kristin, over to you to please tell us what's most striking --

MS. McKIE: Mm-hmm.

MR. O'HANLON: -- in your mind in your research about the state of democracy in Africa today, and thanks for being with us.

MS. McKIE: Thanks. Thanks for having me, Mike, and thanks, everyone, for joining us today. I think one of the things that I try to pay attention to is --

so, the -- this question of, it's hard to really trace where the slippage is coming from sometimes. It's not necessarily obvious, there's not, you know, huge violation of constitutions and whatnot and I think -- oh, thank you. (Laughter)

I think what I have observed is really the growing use of what looked to be democratic institutions on the outside that are then used towards non-democratic ends, things like Anti-Corruption Commissions. On the face of it, look like they're tackling corruption, rooting out issues, but can actually be used sometimes as political weapons to undermine opposition figures or take out, you know, people who are challenging even, you know, from within the ruling party the Administration.

Use of things like electoral commissions, setting up rules like this gentleman talked about, abandoning candidates. And certainly, every country does deserve to set rules about who can be candidates, but often those rules are then designed specifically to target certain individuals rather than thinking about the broader strokes of eligibility.

We look at things like growing bands on -- or restrictions against NGOs or civil society organizations. Oftentimes, in -- the reason being for security reasons. Right? Wanting to make sure there's internal order, you know, that protests don't get out of hand, but yet that then has a chilling effect more generally on NGOs and I see a lot of civil society organizations moving away from democracy promotion, moving more toward development because it's less politically challenged -- challenging to the Administration.

And so I think all of these things together, again, taking democratic institutions but changing how they're used, is one way that the slippage is happening. And it's having broader effects, too. If you look at AFRICOM, their data, that I think the Senator mentioned earlier, there's this growing gap between citizens' democratic values that they hold and the perceptions of the quality of democracy that they are getting from

their government. And I was just looking at results, the latest results from Uganda, and this gap has really been widening over the past five or 10 years. And the question is what happens when you have the widening gap? People wanting more democracy, but feeling their governments are not delivering. And so the question is, how does that get channeled? Does it get channeled -- are there democratic channels where that -- those desires can be attained, or not? Are those being shut off? And then what are we going to have from there?

And you also have, I think, a growing distrust of political parties as well. That's another Afrobarometer finding, that citizens are reporting that they're not trusting political parties. And that's a rose democracy in its own way. If parties are not the vehicle through elections, through working on the ground in your community, where does that lead us? And especially with the growing youth bulge, especially in places like Uganda where over 70 percent of the population is under 30 and the growing unemployment where the investment in Africa is not benefitting people on the ground. You're building a sense of -- you're getting to a point of Arab Spring countries. You have huge youth unemployment, no good channels with which direct their democratic aspirations. Again, if parties aren't providing that. And it's -- you're getting sort of a power kick situation as we're seeing in Uganda right now I think with the Bobi Wine protests.

But I do also think there are bright spots and there are ways that citizens are finding to try to carve out that democratic space. And one thing that I have been noticing especially is the growing use of opposition coalitions to try to challenge ruling parties and really create a viable alternative. I think coalitions in the past were very sporadic and not really holding together and there were a lot of electoral volatility, but we're seeing growing opposition coalitions being built even in places like Togo that I think

is a real way to try to harness -- even though parties are maybe not trusted so it's a little bit of a schizophrenic plan. But that's something that I think can try to take as a more unified opposition, a coalition that's willing to really last beyond just the election. Sort of last longer term. That that could make a difference.

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic. Thank you. Lauren, same question over to you. And thanks for joining us as well.

MS. PLOCH BLANCHARD: Oh thank you. Kristin, you've done a great job of I think teasing out some of the issues. I mean big picture, I think there is this overreliance on elections as a sort of gauge or symbol of democracy. And African governments get that with the exception of Eritrea and now South Sudan, everybody has elections. Right? Now, sometimes they're basically what appears to be sort of a check the box affair. The 99 percent elections of Sudan, you know, Bashir wins by 90 percent. So -- but everybody is going through the motions. We've seen some very positive democratic signs. Incumbents losing power. Nigeria 2015 is a great example. President Jammeh -- you've seen term limits observed in places like Sierra Leon and Liberia. And these are great models. And the whole continent looks to these places. The Kenya elections, the independence of the Supreme Court when it overturned the election result last year. That was an incredible model and people looked around the continent to Kenya.

Of course then you have the negative signs. Calling the -- in Kenya's case -- calling the judges crooks. Calling civil society evil society. There's a lot of demonizing of civil society. We're seeing right now in Uganda, the government referring to NGOs as foreign backed, as though it's this sinister thing and as though the government itself isn't heavily reliant on the same donors for funding. So -- and then we're seeing leadership transitions that aren't actually democratic. Zimbabwe is one

case. Angola is another. Where are these countries going? We're not quite sure yet. I think we're seeing worrying signs around elections. Increasing trend of governments shutting down internet and social media during elections. And so, I think there is this building frustration in many countries.

I'm going to talk a little bit about Ethiopia because for the moment I think it's a bright spot. It's a case where you had such frustration with the rule of the EPRDF, long rule of the EPRDF. And a feeling that groups were not being heard. That they weren't being consulted. And this protest movement that built and the security force crack down fueling that. Twenty-nine thousand or more people detained. That built from late 2015 until early this year when we saw this sort of amazing shift with the incoming Prime Minister Abi Ahmed talking about democracy as an existential requirement for Ethiopia. And his tone is completely different. He acknowledges that the government has tortured prisoners. He talks about how freedom of expression is critical. Now, he's dealing with an incredibly fragile situation right now. And every once in a while you see, well maybe this isn't quite working out and the internet seems to shut down in places for a little bit. Then it comes back on. They've opened up 260 something websites. Critical opposition broadcasts, ESAP from here and abroad are able to -- people are able to access them in Ethiopia now.

Earlier this week, there was a rally for the OLF. The Oromo Liberation Front which has been fighting against the EPRDF for a few decades now. They were able to peacefully gather in the capital. There was some violence and trouble afterwards, but I think that, that's an incredible sign that the government acknowledged that what it needed to do was show some more opening to opposition and public voices.

So I don't want to be all negative, but I do think Ethiopia is positive. We've got two years, a little less until elections there. We'll see what happens. We'll see

how much actually has opened up. How much has changed. There's a lot to sort of transform in that system. But I do think that we need to think farther beyond elections and be very careful about the way that elections are talked about as a panacea. I mean, talking about South Sudan and this recent peace agreement, there's this segment of the peace agreement that talks about maybe having a referendum on how many states the country has in the next eight months. This is a country with over four and a half million people displaced. Over two of them out of the country. It's a place that still is, in many pockets of the country, in conflict. Security forces throughout the country in urban areas, people have fled to the bush. People have fled to other countries. And just the idea that EGAD leaders think that a referendum is possible, that you could possibly hold one, or that you could hold elections -- President Museveni has been talking about, oh well if we just hold elections in South Sudan this year, that will fix the problem. We all know what it takes to hold an election. Can you imagine that happening in South Sudan? And so, just the fact that leaders still talk about this thing as though -- it's a check the box exercise in some cases. And I think that that's a worrying dimension of democracy in Africa.

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic. Thank you. And Matt, over to you.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Yeah, thank you Mike. And thank you for leaving me little room to add good stuff here, but I can do nothing but agree with what Kristin and Lauren also said. As the historian on the panel, I mean, I think it's important for us to think about this in at least a somewhat relative historical context. Right? And there have been some references of that. And the reference that this is not a one size fits all issue. This is a diverse continent. Local histories, local cultural ideas, beliefs, of values matter as well as the colonial legacy. Most African states have only had their first national election in the 1950s, or sometimes even later. So this is still a relatively young process for most African states across the continent.

But African democracies have defied conventional wisdom in the sense that there's been a lot of gains in places where it doesn't meet the sweet spot in terms globally, in terms of economic middle income country kind of modeling that people do around the world. There is some vibrant effort. The senator others referred to -- when an election happens across many parts of the continent, there is a very high voter turnout rate. So there is enthusiasm. The Afrobarometer data shows that level of enthusiasm. So there's a lot to work with.

But if we go back, I think there are a few lessons that we can learn that were from the 1960s in this point of the transition from the colonial period to independence where there was this moment of optimism, euphoria that was quickly met in a lot of places with a move towards authoritarianism. And I think one of the things I'd like to add is that we can almost think of the end of the colonial period as a post conflict situation, whether there was a violent liberation struggle or not. There was a need for reconciliation. A need for justice. In most cases that did never happen. That conversation was often pushed aside in favor of "national unity."

And you see those tactics playing out. Those tactics have played out in Zimbabwe where being against Zanu-PF is almost like being against the liberation struggle. They played out in Rwanda where being against the RPF narrative of what happened during the genocide, et cetera has also been seen as almost treasonous. And in places like Kenya, where I do most of my work, you see constant efforts to try to uncover mechanisms and problems in the past, but almost never any follow through with any justice or reconciliation to be met with that.

So, if you think about this kind of context that was developed in the '60s where we had this period for almost 30 years across many parts of the continent where the Cold War backed up authoritarian regimes. And they developed into these kind of

gatekeeper states, as academics like to call it, where the access to economic resources, political power were through the very centralized, often overly through the executive branch of government. And that's a hard thing to dismantle, even when you have these reforms and progress without any sort of sense that someone was punished, or some reconciliation process happened for the wider community. So I think in a lot of places around the continent, there has obviously been places like the TRC in South Africa. You can have your comments on that, but it was a process that happened. But there are many other places on the continent where that is really an unresolved issue. And these historical notions of injustice are still kind of playing out in a contemporary framework.

MR. O'HANLON: That's awesome. I don't know how they did it to say meaningful things about 51 more countries all in four minutes each, but I'm just going to have one more question for the panel, and then we'll go to you. And I'm going to ask people to -- now having framed the problem so well -- and mentioned a few cases along the way -- to maybe bear down a little more specifically on one country. And it's your choice of which country, although -- and each person can maybe take a country, but I'm interested, among others, just as a list of suggestions in what's going to happen in DRC this fall. And whether you see any room for encouragement, any room for hopefulness, any room for U.S. policy being a little bit more forthcoming, or forward leaning.

I'm interested in what people might say also about Nigeria, which is a quarter of the continent in terms of people. And we know it's sort of in this middle and long state of democracy where it does tend to have and survive elections, but as we've been saying, elections aren't the be all and end all. And that's certainly a quarter of the continent in terms of people. And any further additional words on countries like Kenya that you study Matt, or Uganda that you mentioned Lauren, or anything else. So, let me just ask each of you to pick one country and tell us something about your view as to



whether it's going better than you hoped, or worse, and what we should do about it. And Kristin, we can start again with you if you don't mind.

MS. MCKIE: Okay. I might focus on Uganda because I have been sort of captivated recently by the protests there and -- I think -- and it seems to me it hasn't just been the detention and torture of a member of Parliament, but a couple things more recently in Uganda. The debate over and the passage of the lifting of the age limits for -- so President Museveni can run again. That was certainly very contentious within the Parliament. There was sort of physical altercations on the Parliament floor about this issue. It was very contentious.

Other things that Museveni has tried to drum up support for recently, resolving some land issues, this was an idea he floated that really went nowhere. And so, we definitely see these things building up. Fairly all of a sudden -- well, not all of a sudden, but certainly within the last year, where all of a sudden the NRM Regime seems a lot -- on more shakier ground than I think, maybe a lot of us had maybe imagined. And I think part of that -- and I mentioned this earlier, going back to the idea of this youth bulge -- I think the interim has been able to hold onto power for so long because of their narrative about being the liberators. Bring stability to Uganda. And that has had resonance for a lot of people for a long time, especially in the west, but other places.

But I think we're getting to the point where the generations coming up, they weren't born yet when the Uganda War is going on. This idea that the NRM as liberators doesn't ring true for them. Right? And so that narrative is really starting to wear off. And I think that's something that -- the administration -- that's been what they've been hanging their hats on for so long, that's not working anymore. And so now they're sort of grasping at straws I think. And trying things that are not working. And so that's been really interesting to me to see and I think too, with the opposition, even though the

opposition in Uganda hasn't really been able to fully coalesce, that we are seeing -- and this is not just Uganda, but across the continent, more funding by the private sector of opposition groups. And this is something that I think also does have a promise in terms of -- of course, traditionally, all resources flowed from the state. And that's why opposition groups, for one reason, had a hard time really challenging ruling parties. But as you see private firms develop, private wealth develop and have businesses making coalitions with opposition groups, and funding their campaigns, I think that's also going to be a growing trend that might help sort of tip the scales on some of these long term leaders. Like in Uganda. Like in Togo and other places.

MR. O'HANLON: So there's some hopefulness there I think I heard, but a fairly mixed bag.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Mm-hmm.

MR. O'HANLON: Lauren, over to you.

MS. PLOCH BLANCHARD: All right. I'm going to take Nigeria. I think you've got a bunch of East Africanists up here, but I'll still cover Nigeria and we'd all be remiss if we didn't talk about the behemoth in the room, Nigeria, Africa's biggest country, most populous country. I think it was quite striking in 2015 again when you had an incumbent peacefully hand over power to an opposition candidate. And the PDP, the ruling party long time since the return to democratic rule losing executive power.

Of course, what I think we're seeing now, of course, is that party politics is sort of a revolving door now in Nigeria. And people had been in PDP, had gone over to the opposition before the 2015 elections and had kind of moved in and out. And you've seen at breathtaking pace, people moving parties now and everybody is sort of trying to figure out who are the candidates going to be? We've got the party primaries coming up in the next couple of months. And it's anybody's guess who's going to be the PDP

candidate at this point in time. I think we probably all -- if we gamble -- placing wagers -- President Buhari seems to be the candidate for the ADC and you know, he's -- the ruling party is hemorrhaging people.

And you've got fascinating dynamics in the Nigerian Legislature. Very dramatic sometimes. All of this is interesting. It doesn't suggest a lot of health in the political party structures. And this is something we also see in Kenya where parties are less about ideology and platform than they are about who's the head of the party? And where is my ethnic group going? Where is my community going? Where's Oga going? So, I think the parties are still trying to find their footing in Nigeria right now. It makes it very interesting.

There's such an incredible amount of money being thrown around right now and will be up until the elections. And I think if we're interested in investing in democracy, there needs to be a lot more work done in opening up and making transparent that party primary structure. That's where decisions are really made before the elections. But I will say, I think there's been a lot of work done on the electoral commission in Nigeria before the 2015 elections, and before that. And having had the opportunity to go and observe one of the state bi-elections -- gubernatorial bi-elections this summer, there is a lot that can be protected with good electoral processes in terms of protecting secrecy of the ballot. I think that still the election commission in Nigeria gets a lot of high marks for that. Even though you see vote buying around the corner and the security forces are sort of looking the other way, and all of the parties are doing it. There's a lot of shenanigans in Nigeria, but I think there is something to the process being much cleaner than it is. Now, I think quite frankly, candidates are handing out money to voters because they can't hand it out to election officials as easy to fix the process.

So it's going to be a very interesting election in 2015. I have no idea where it's going. I think a lot people thought that with President Buhari with his health might not be the best candidate, he still has quite a bit of popularity, particularly in the north. I think we're seeing interestingly, and it's almost cyclical -- the issue of Boko Haram, or the Islamic State in West Africa sort of coming up again as a political issue because the breakaway faction of Boko Haram is (inaudible) -- it's got a lot of acronyms -- has really done some serious damage against Nigerian security forces, again in the north. And we're not in the same situation we were in 2014 and 2015 where Boko Haram was holding swaths of territory -- and holding is a loose word.

But again, you're talking about corruption. Nigerians are asking, why are Nigerian security forces fleeing their bases when they're getting attacked? And it's because they don't have the equipment and they're not being paid. And so they are literally running. And that is no indictment on the Nigerian Army soldier who hasn't -- isn't getting his pay, has been out there for five rotations. It's an indictment on the management. And that goes up to the political level. So I think that that's something that's going to be an issue. It's going to be interesting, I think -- well, you could just watch Nigerian politics for the next six months and be endlessly fascinated. It's dramatic.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. I'm just going to add in passing, before passing the baton to Matt, that as we all know about Nigeria, not only is it the most populous country in Africa today, like many countries in Africa, population growth rates are still very high. It's expected to roughly catch up to the United States in population by midcentury at around 400 million. And I think all of us have noticed at least the headlines, if not yet read the report from the Gates Foundation this week that estimates that by roughly midcentury DRC in Nigeria may have more than 40 percent of the world's extreme poor. Even as their economies -- or at least Nigeria's economy has made some

tiny forward motion and progress, the birth rates combined with the fact that there still is a substantial percentage of people remaining in extreme poverty, make this part of the world likely to continue to be afflicted by really extreme conditions for a long time to come. And just wanted to add those points while then handing the floor to you, my friend.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Yeah. Thank you. I'll bring us back to Kenya for a little bit. I mean, Lauren and I were on a couple Kenya election panels last fall. She mentioned this kind of watershed moment where the Supreme Court overturned the election. But right then the opposition boycotted the rerun. So there is this sort of -- the double-edged sword here. If we take Kenya as a case, since it emerged from 22 years of one-party rule in 1991, there have been six elections. National level elections. Three of which have been marked by a substantial level of violence, often state sponsored. This last round escaped this level that we saw in 1992, 1997, and, of course, the most horrific of them in 2007-2008, but still had elements of those previous kind of divide and rule tactics which are used to quash opposition.

That being said, I think one of the interesting things about Kenya is it's discussion going against decentralization. That is, I think, a hot button topic when you think of Africa emerging from that Cold War period that we saw many very authoritarian states and then a rapid growth of democratic rule in the '90s and early 2000s. It still was very centered through the executive often and through the central government. Whereas, Kenya has been kind of fighting that for quite some time. In 2010 they passed the new constitution that really at least set the groundwork for devolving that power and that has been a sort of key point of debate. And I think those of us who study Kenya closely can talk about presidential politics a lot. And certainly be consumed and talk for many hours about the races and what not.

But, the exciting things also are what's happening at the newly

constructed 47 counties in Kenya that didn't exist before really 2013 when the Kenyan constitution was implemented. And it's those kind of races for governor, for member of county assembly, for senators, and in some cases a different kind of role of member of Parliament in this context that is -- and interesting. Are we seeing breaks? And we're seeing some cleavages where people are saying, look I might vote for a certain presidential candidate, but I'm also going to vote for somebody else when it comes to my local representation. And I'm seeing these roles as being definitely separated. And I think that's a good trend and something to watch for, at least in Kenya.

Also, I mean if you think about Kenya -- and this is something that happens in other parts of the continent -- I think we sometimes essentialize ethnicity in ways that I think is problematic. I was looking last year at some data from the 2013 election, although some problematic data perhaps about voting trends. But I think they got this basically right. If you look at the voting trends in the 2013 election, you might have seen coverage about different regional blocks voting in large numbers for one another based on the language that they speak. When you look deeper, there's also some class level cleavages that you're seeing that are quite important. So in 2013, the opposition candidate got eight of the 10 most unequal counties. Won those pretty substantially. And 68 percent of the poorest counties in the country also went to the opposition. So that's not a narrative you heard a lot in the discussion of Kenyan politics, or in Kenyan elections. That the poor, in some ways are actually somewhat voting together or those who are in those almost unequal societies are trying to address that issue. And I think that's an important piece of the question moving forward.

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Thank you. So we'll go to you now. I'm going to ask any of my colleagues that might hear me to see if we can get a little stronger air conditioning because we haven't even gotten your questions yet, but it's already getting a

little warm under the lights. (Laughter) But let's do two at a -- let's do three at a time actually and that way we'll see if there's a distribution of labor up here and we can each respond to one, or at most two. So I think I'll give the back half of the room a little bit more fair hearing this time and we'll start with the gentleman with his hand up right there. Yes, please. And then I'll take two more before we come back to the panel.

MR. ATTA MILLS: No, I have a very short question.

MR. O'HANLON: Please identify yourself though.

MR. ATTA MILLS: Yes. My name is Cadman from Ghana. I have a very short question. There seems to be a dominant feeling now emerging, which says that elections do not necessarily mean that there is democracy. We all agree, but those of us who live in Africa today cannot possibly imagine any government that can aspire to being democratic, which has not from time-to-time submit itself to validation from the population. That is both through elections of some sort so that the people can decide whether or not they can retain them or not. And my question is therefore, a very simple one. Can you indicate one country that you know of which doesn't go through elections, but is actually democratic? And what does that democracy look like? Because we think that elections are a very necessary condition to eventually moving towards democracy.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Other questions. All the way in the back. Right there.

MR. MORGAN: Good morning, I'm Scott Morgan with (Inaudible) Enterprises. It's a freelance security intelligence company. One question I have about the protection of democracy is you're starting to see certain repressive governments like (inaudible) and Cameroon hiring French mercenaries. You're starting to see Russian mercenaries act up, like in Brazzaville in 2016, and in the Central African Republic now. So how do you -- how do -- if you want to protect democracy, how do you defeat this

practice?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And then should we take one more?

Anybody else have a question? I think I had seen a hand up here in the very front row, so we'll come all the way up here. And then we may have time for another round too.

MR. ACUBE: Good morning. Thank you, Mike, for all your efforts on the African continent. My simple question, because the --

MR. O'HANLON: Please identify yourself.

MR. ACUBE: Oh, my name is Femi Acube. I'm with Magester Trade and I'm a Nigerian. My question is, does any of the panelists see the use of destructive digital technology in this African election? Such as blockchain. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Thanks. I'm going to begin this round and then we'll go this way. Because I'm just going to make one general comment in response to the first question. And others may want to tackle that as well. But I'm not going to do it in regard to Africa. I'm just going to mention another country I study, Iraq. And in Iraq in 2005, the United States made the huge mistake of equating elections with democracy. And it was seen as the exit out. And I don't blame the Bush Administration exclusively because this was sort of a Washington consensus. That if we can have an interim election, and then a constitutional validation referendum, and then a new election after that, we will create a meaningful government which will give us a way to draw down the U.S. role. The problem is that politics aligned along sectarian lines and along strongman lines. And the elections made things worse, not better.

So I totally agree with you, but I think it's important to hear the caveats. I did not hear anybody on this panel today oppose elections, but I think we need to get away from the notion that they are somehow, the main magic solution. Senator Coon's line was great, "They are necessary, but far from adequate." But now, without further



ado, to the actual panelists. Matt.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Yeah, I'll just follow up on that. I mean, I think we've been talking about this as elections maybe as a watershed moment of assessing a level of democracy. But much more attention needs to be paid on the institutions that check, particularly certain powers and principles. So, you look at the Supreme Court in Kenya. Their decision, this is a watershed moment, a wonderful thing. But what's happening now about judicial reform? About backing up, about following up with that going on in Kenya. The discussion has moved away. What about the electoral complaints about the electoral commission that the opposition and other people brought to fray? What is happening as a process so that in the next election five years from now, or four years from now, there's going to be change. And very little attention is put in those interim periods.

So I think the important thing is not to just focus on elections as that moment, but to have that sustained focus on the institutional, building the capacity for courts or civil society, the press, et cetera, to offer points of dissent. And we can talk a lot about states that have elections that are really for show. And Lauren mentioned those places where you get 99 percent of the vote. That's not really -- there's no really point in having the election other than to say that you did. So that may be a place where you might see stability from the outside, somewhere like Rwanda, but the idea of having a lot of political dissent there is very difficult.

MR. O'HANLON: Lauren.

MS. PLOCH BLANCHARD: On the issue of elections, I think we started this conversation last year with Kenya about the role of election observers. And I think that election observers in the Kenyan elections got a lot of criticism. There was sort of an oversimplification, or perception of an oversimplification of the exercise. And a lot of

quotes from election observers saying that the process on Election Day looked credible and looked free and fair. And that was a snapshot for the day. Right? I mean I was on one of those observation missions and they were saying that on Election Day, things looked pretty good. Things got a little murky in the evening and I think that election observers -- I'll highlight the IRI, NDI observation in Zimbabwe that just took place as one of these. It's a very different exercise and a very different assessment. And they've been reporting throughout -- they still don't have their final report out yet, but what they did was look at the whole process. The whole picture around the elections. And I think that was critical for U.S. policy toward Zimbabwe, whether or not this was a credible election or not, free and fair, and the whole process around it, is important for whether or not we're going to lift some of our restrictive policies on Zimbabwe.

And the IRI and NDI assessment so far has been that they didn't meet the mark. And what they did was look at the whole system. What did -- did the opposition have equal access to the press? No. What was the role of security forces, particularly in the rural areas? What was the role of traditional chiefs in terms of partisan messaging to villages and populations? The use of security forces after the elections. So it's that bigger picture.

And then of course, there is the sort of whole grading of democratic processes in between. What role does Parliament have in that sort of balance of powers? Is Parliament in a given country just a check? Do they go through the budget? Do they get it and then pass it out? Or do they conduct oversight hearings? Do they hold executive powers to account? And that doesn't happen in enough countries. And then again, we already talked about the issue of access to justice. But I think we don't talk here in the U.S. when we're talking about democracy in Africa about citizen's access to justice. And I work a lot on terrorism issues in Nigeria and in East Africa. And you will

hear a constant refrain from people in those affected areas that one of the grievances that tends to drive radicalization in some of these areas is a lack of access, or a lack of perceived access to justice.

So are we doing enough to invest in court systems? What is the -- how long does somebody sit in a jail cell in a country like Nigeria before they actually see a lawyer or a judge? These are issues that affect people day-to-day, not just every four or five years when you come to elections. And I think that that's something we need to think about in terms of the bigger democratic picture.

The role of digital tech. There's some much to say on that issue. Again, going back to Kenya and Nigeria, there is sort of the outstanding question, and I'm waiting for either one of those legislatures to do some hearings on the role of countries like Cambridge Analytica, and grabbing social media information and using social media to push out political messages. I mean, I think that's something we've focused on a lot here in the United States. But, it's happened in Africa, and it's going to probably continue to happen. In the latest generations of those companies. And again, I already mentioned sort of shutting down and banning certain websites and access and jamming technology.

Foreign mercenaries, boy that's a difficult issue to get into and of course, it's up to these countries. I mean, South Africa has taken steps to legislate on the use of foreign mercenaries. A government that is using foreign mercenaries probably is not going to legislate on the use of foreign mercenaries in its own country. We're seeing this -- there have been a lot of news stories lately about Russian mercenaries in the Central African Republic, potentially in Sudan. These countries are not exactly bastions of democracy that we can sort of talk about how they legislate that process. But, it's certainly something to be concerned about. Of course, these governments can also use their own militias. You know, Sudan before it was using -- they're still predominantly

using their own militias for things that they want to do, so I think -- it's wrapped up in that broader use of, how does the government use its security tools?

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic. Kristin.

MS. MCKIE: Sure. Yeah, so the others talked about the election question, so maybe I'll try to touch on the mercenary security question, although I must admit this is not an area of expertise for me. But I think the big thing that I see is just the question of accountability. Who are these mercenaries accountable to? Certainly not the populations. And I think that's where it becomes such a scary prospect. Their growing use.

But I think Lauren's right, that it's not necessarily just mercenaries. It's also these elite presidential guards that have been developed in lots of countries who are not accountable to the larger military structures. They're seemingly only accountable to the executive that are also -- I think have been used, like she was saying in a lot of ways that we see as problematic. I think the non-accountability is an issue and we can see times when -- the regular military that has some accountability at least, is a better option. And I think Burkina is -- Burkina Faso is one example when the (inaudible) question came up and the military -- clearly the regime wanted the military to quell the protest and the military police said, no we are also accountable to the people. This is the people's movement. And mercenaries will certainly not weigh those options and see the debate, and side with the population when the public opinion was turning. And so, absolutely a growing concern.

MR. O'HANLON: So, time for the lightning round. And this will be it. I think we have -- I saw one or two hands that were up last time. We'll see if we can include them. I've got one final question for the panel. We'll go down the row and get you out of here. But, ma'am, did you want to ask a question?

SPEAKER: My question has been covered.

MR. O'HANLON: Good. (Laughter) So we've got one about okay -- one right there. And we'll come up here for two quick additional questions. And we'll see how we do on response.

MS. HOLCOMB: Thank you all very much. I just wanted to point -- to raise the issue that one of the --

MR. O'HANLON: Please identify yourself. Sorry.

MS. HOLCOMB: I'm Bonnie Holcomb. Sorry, Bonnie Holcomb.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

MS. HOLCOMB: Yeah. At the Oromo Advocacy Alliance, Ethiopia. One of the consequences of the kind of oppression that Africa has experienced, as we've have talked about big man politics and also a consequence of poverty is a huge diaspora abroad. And for the most part, diaspora contributions to the continent are measured in remittances. But I -- recently we've seen that there's been a -- the potential of a transfer of ideas and advocacy coming from the diaspora that could possibly have impact on African democracy. And I'd like for the panelists to look at the role of the diaspora in this challenge of introducing democracy. Because a lot of diaspora has been exercising their democratic rights here and abroad. What is the impact for the continent for that engagement?

MR. O'HANLON: Super. And then we'll come here in the fourth row. Right over here please. Yes. Yes.

MS. SYDNEY: Okay. Hi, my name is Sydney. I'm from the Institute for Defense Analyses. My question is essentially between -- the tradeoff between elections, and democracy, and security. So in potentially -- or perpetually insecure environments where the people have been displaced, but there may have been a peace agreement in

place, but conflict continues, do elections have utility? When do they have utility? And what is that tradeoff between security and ending conflict or mitigating conflict and progressing democratically in places like South Sudan and Mali, for example.

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Thank you. And we will come to my friend here in the second row for a quick final question.

MR. MCCALEE: Thank you. I'm Domadan McCalee. In addition to the issue of diaspora, I suggest that you pay attention to the issue of ethnicity in the African politics. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And my final question to add and then we'll go down the road starting with Matt, finishing with Kristin. As you both have mentioned -- or Matt you mentioned just a minute ago -- we had a couple of panels here last year with several of you on Kenya. And Kenya has been discussed several times today, but I sort of would like your bottom line view as to whether we're in a somewhat hopeful place compared to where you might have anticipated before the elections even occurred. So, compare early 2017 to where we are today. Have you seen net forward movement, net negative movement? In terms of the strength of Kenyan democracy. That's my sort of bottom line question. But feel free to take that one or any other and we'll finish up here with these final responses.

MR. CAROTENUTO: I think that there is some positive movement. I'm hesitant to go one way or the other completely, given what has happened in Kenya recently with the opposition kind of falling apart, in terms of their pressure on -- as a check to the central government moving forward. And I don't think we've seen necessarily some of those calls, but I think there has been some -- why, you know I think the Kenyan population widely celebrated the Supreme Court decision. And that was a sort of good move towards giving the judicial branch confidence that the population was

going to support them if they went against the executive. Whether that is going to be followed up with sustained engagement, or future judicial inquiries, or other branches of government coming in to check is yet to be seen.

I do think the diaspora question is an important one. I don't have the figures off the top of my head, but I know that debates go on in several African countries about voting rights abroad for those members of the diaspora to literally be able to vote and be able to have their voice counted. Or even having a diaspora MP necessarily, a member of Parliament or something like that. Pushing for that given the amount of money and resources, and back and forth flow that we -- forth flow that we see with the diaspora community. So I think that is something that's going to be -- has emerged as a point of debate, and is not going away anytime soon, and probably will just continue to grow in its importance over time.

MR. O'HANLON: Super. Thank you. Lauren.

MS. PLOCH BLANCHARD: There's so much to say here. We could have a whole session on diaspora engagement, both in the politics of the countries they are living in and back in their own countries. I mean I think, sort of on that point -- Bonnie, you know this -- Ethiopian diaspora is a great example of an engaged diaspora. Here in the United States, I think it's the largest Ethiopian diaspora abroad. It's certainly very vocal. And did a great job of harnessing their voting rights here in the United States. The members who sponsored the legislation that focused on calling into account, human rights abuses and democratic backsliding in Ethiopia, those were members who had large Ethiopian diaspora constituencies. And multiple events and hearings on the hill. And really engaging their U.S. members of Congress on this legislation and on holding hearings. And that, anecdotally, put a lot of pressure on the Ethiopian government to open up. And that's sort of been credited, in part, along with the much, much bigger sort

of move from those people on the ground in the protests in this new opening. So there's an incredibly important role there.

Also, you had Ethiopian -- in the case of Ethiopia still -- broadcasts from abroad to put information in and around for a country that was closed. So there's a lot of positive. There is also negative inputs that a diaspora population can have in terms of spreading hate speech. We've seen this in a number of countries, including in South Sudan. So again, positive and negative roles, and spreading news, and amplifying voices, and then as you mentioned remittances, and contributing to campaigns. The ability of diaspora to vote varies widely on the continent. There are some cases where they can. In Zimbabwe it's a big issue because you still have a large displaced population who don't -- who haven't gone home. There's more I could say, but I'll stop there.

On the issue of elections and security. This is a complicated issue. Somalia has yet to have national sort of one person, one vote elections because of the security situation. South Sudan, another example where the concept of holding elections right now is very difficult to imagine. They had them in 2010. That was a time of peace. With this amount of displacement -- it's really sort of -- logistically can you do it? Who are you accessing and who are you leaving out? If you're holding an election in which a third of your population isn't going to be able to vote because they're displaced and you can't access them in some way, then are you really actually getting what the people's opinion is on a topic? So I think that that's a challenge, but there are a lot of ways that you can have a semi democratic system in the interim until there are conditions for elections to be held. And I am not an Afghanistan expert, but elections have been held in other places where there is ongoing conflict, but do you have a legislature that is representative of the people? Or is it chosen by the president? In South Sudan, you've had almost a



wholesale turnover of elected officials. All of the governors who were elected in 2010, I think at this point in time have been replaced by the president. Under the constitution, they were supposed to have bi-elections. They've never been held. So at this point in time, the government in South Sudan looks very little like it was when it was actually elected. And they haven't had elections since independence. So I think it's important. I think that there are other ways to do it, but often that's messy. And we're seeing a messy process right now in Somalia.

On the issue of Kenya, Kenyan politics is exhausting. Next elections are in 2022, and the campaigning has already begun. (Laughter) And so I don't know whether or not that's a positive or a negative. I think for many Kenyans, it's a negative. Again, it's exhausting. And who is the leading candidate is probably going to change many times over. I think what's worrying is the way Kenyan politics works, that also means there's going to be a lot of money and wheeling and dealing. And right now, the government is on their latest anticorruption kick. This is all well and good unless the targeting ends up looking political. And there are certainly a lot of allegations from different political leaders that it does appear political.

Interestingly, they're going for some big guns. There are a number of governors and former governors who have been investigated and in some cases charged with corruption offenses in Kenya. That's an interesting thing. I think we still have not resolved, and I'm still concerned by a number of the things I was concerned about at the beginning of this year. Yes, we had this handshake between opposition leader Raila Odinga and Uhuru Kenyatta. It's still not clear what that means. Raila Odinga seems to have an interesting sort of diplomatic presence now and sort of important person -- position in office. He was supposed to be here. Maybe he could have explained a little bit better what this all means for his constituency. But it's not clear that the people that

voted for him are getting out of this what they wanted. There's a new poll that just came out in Kenya that shows that as many as a third of Kenyans don't know where they're getting their next meal. Or worried about where they're getting -- whether they're going to get a meal for the day. And that's a large number for a country like Kenya where the country talks -- where the government talks about its economic growth. That number -- a quarter of all Kenyans goes up to a third for Nyanja, which is opposition leader Raila Odinga's home area. So there are a lot of unmet needs, I think for many Kenyans. And I'm not sure they feel like the process is actually getting them what they want other than a sort of irregular theater of things. There are a lot of questions about the railway that's been built. And big spending on infrastructure projects, and whether or not the money was transparently spent, whether it was a good use of money. And the threats to the judiciary, I'm not sure have gone away. There are a lot of concerns about budgeting for the judiciary. The budget for the judiciary has shrunk. There's this ongoing drama with the election commission. And so, a number of concerns.

The Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is currently facing corruption charges. And that's a fascinating thing. She -- if you guys follow that, she was the one who had her driver shot at in the midst of the second round drama. She was an important voice in that ruling. And now she's under fire and she interestingly has something like 20, 24 lawyers, many of whom are prominent opposition senators and MPs. But I think Kenyan politics is still sort of the drama and not necessarily as much deliverances as many people would like to see. Although, at the local level, that is a different story from county-to-county.

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Thank you. And Kristin.

MS. MCKIE: Sure. So first, just to acknowledge the question -- the comment from the front about the role of ethnicity. I think probably all of us would agree

that certainly is not -- we didn't mean to imply that that's not important. It certainly is. I think what I have been most interested in thought, about that question is kind of a divergence. Some countries where political parties are still largely formed around ethnic cleavages. And others where they're not. They're becoming more and more formed around either other cleavages, or other interests. And I think that will be an interesting trend to watch going forward.

And then finally, very quickly, the question about the tradeoff between democracy and security in places like South Sudan and Mali. Again, I think there's big debates on this. The staff in Limburg is a political scientist who has this thesis about democracy through elections. Saying that even in elections are not -- are semi flawed, they're not fully what we'd like them to be, that there's still value in people becoming regularized and going to the polls. Practicing that idea of -- the idea that we can hold leaders to account. That there's a value in that, even if the elections themselves are not perfect.

But yet, I also think there's a tipping point. Right? When are our elections flawed enough or not inclusive enough that people then become skeptical of elections? They continue to go -- going to the polls, participating in elections, and not seeing any results. And so, I think there's sort of a fine line there and I agree with Lauren in terms of who are you leaving out of the election? And are new grievances going to be built around that? Feeling like they're not part of the process. And so I think there's always a -- it's a fine line there I would say.

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic. Thank you all for being here. Please join me in thanking the panel. (Applause). Well done.

MR. CAROTENUTO: Thanks.

MR. O'HANLON: Great stuff as always. Thank you.

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