RPTR WARREN

EDTR HOFSTAD

IMPACT OF COVID IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Monday, June 15, 2020

U.S. House of Representatives,

Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence,

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 12:05 p.m., via Webex, the Honorable Adam Schiff (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Schiff, Himes, Sewell, Quigley, Swalwell, Castro, Heck, Welch, Maloney, Demings, and Krishnamoorthi.

The Chairman. Welcome, everyone.

This is the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence's first remote hearing. Before we proceed to our topic today, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa, I want to address some housekeeping matters.

First, today's session will be conducted entirely on an unclassified basis. All participants are cautioned to refrain from discussing any classified or other information protected from public disclosure.

Second, the committee is conducting this virtual hearing in compliance with House Resolution 965 and the regulations for remote committee proceedings. It is being broadcast live on the committee's website.

Like many of you, I would have much preferred to hold this hearing in person in Washington, D.C. However, because the threat posed by COVID-19 remains serious and widespread, we are proceeding remotely in order to ensure the safety of our witnesses, members, staff, and the public.

I had hoped that today's hearing would be a bipartisan one; unfortunately, our Republican colleagues have decided not to participate. I hope that they will join us for future hearings. Whether conducted remotely or in person, these hearings are official business, and I am committed to continuing our work notwithstanding the pandemic. And members on both sides of the aisle should expect a busy schedule in the coming weeks and months.

I want to remind members of a few procedures to help you navigate this new platform.

First, consistent with regulations, the committee will keep microphones muted to limit background noise. Members are responsible for unmuting themselves when they seek recognition or when recognized for their 5 minutes. Because there are sometimes

delays when muting and unmuting microphones, I would ask that members and witnesses allow sufficient time before speaking to ensure the last speaker has finished talking.

Second, members and witnesses must have their cameras on at all times. If you need to step away from the proceeding, please leave your camera on.

Third, if you encounter technical difficulties, please contact technical support through the channels established prior to the hearing. Our technical staff will work to get you back up and running as soon as possible.

Finally, consistent with past practice, I will at the appropriate time recognize members for their 5 minutes in order of seniority, starting with those who were present at the commencement of this hearing.

I thank you all for your patience as we navigate this new technology in order to continue serving our country in this unprecedented time.

And, with that, I will now turn to the topic of today's hearing.

As part of its oversight work, the committee is conducting a review of the Intelligence Community's role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, examining first how the IC is postured to collect, analyze, and disseminate intelligence on global health threats generally and pandemic disease in particular; and, second, a detailed review of the past 8 months.

As I have said on several occasions, the Intelligence Community is one element of the Nation's pandemic preparedness infrastructure, but it is by no means the only one, nor is it, in fact, in the lead. Nevertheless, there are likely things that can be done to enable the IC to better warn policymakers and other elements across the government of outbreaks of disease.

The threat from pandemics has been featured in the IC's annual Worldwide Threat

Assessment for several years running and is forecast to become worse through the climate change and increased human encroachment on wilderness areas.

Congress and the American people have been rightly focused on the effects of COVID-19 here at home. Nearly 115,000, 120,000 of our fellow citizens have lost their lives. Tens of millions of Americans are out of work. Our children, who should be winding up the school year and preparing for summer, have been stuck at home for months. And in many States across the country, cases are rising and hospitalizations are up.

But COVID-19 is a worldwide pandemic, and it has spread to almost every corner of the globe, from Asia to Europe, to North America, to Latin America, to South Asia and Africa.

While some countries and regions have already withstood the first wave of cases and are now on the downward slope of the epidemiological curve, confirmed infections across much of Sub-Saharan Africa are growing, threatening fragile health systems ill-equipped to cope with demand for intensive medical interventions.

Across a region that is still lacking in terms of access to clean water and suffers from high rates of poverty and food insecurity, the types of measures that have been effective in curbing the spread of COVID-19 in other areas -- hand washing, social distancing, and staying home -- may not be practicable.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, COVID-19 cases have now topped 168,000, with South Africa accounting for a quarter of total African cases. Continent-wide, the case count now stands at 230,000. And the pandemic is accelerating. It took 98 days to reach -- the African continent as a whole -- to reach 100,000 cases and only 19 days to reach 200,000 cases.

Sub-Saharan Africa has suffered terribly from HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and

Ebola in recent decades and will doubtless suffer greatly from COVID-19 as well. But as tragic as the death toll will be, it is the secondary effects to African economies, political stability, and health infrastructure that concern many experts on Africa.

I am especially concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on vaccination and other preventive healthcare measures that are essential to ensuring that today's African children grow up into healthy adults and, also, the impact of the pandemic on women and girls. Yesterday's Washington Post included a story about the impact of COVID-19 on girls' education in Africa.

Many of the African countries and economies have made enormous strides in the last two decades. The continent has a youthful population, a growing middle class, and institutions, both national and regional, which are growing, albeit at an uneven pace.

While there have been improvements, governance remains an issue across Africa, and the dislocations caused by COVID-19 could lead to backsliding as governments seek to curb social unrest caused by economic dislocation and attempts to enforce social distancing.

And if young Africans sense that their governments are failing them, they are more likely to turn to violence, whether spontaneous or as part of organized groups, like AQIM, Al Shabaab, or ISIS.

For the United States, helping African states to get through the pandemic is profoundly in our interest, as well as a moral obligation. Through PEPFAR and other development programs, the United States and its partners have helped to reduce the disease burden across the continent and to improve economies. We stand to benefit from a stable, more prosperous Africa that can confront terrorism, future pandemics, and will assume increasing importance as a market for American goods and services.

Most importantly, as the U.S., Europe, and Asia are graying, Sub-Saharan's Africa

population is very young. Nearly half of Africans alive today were born after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, and that trend is expected to continue.

China understands the potential of Africa, and that is why Beijing is making a concerted effort to build economic, political, and security ties across Sub-Saharan Africa. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, the provision of smart city technology to African governments, and aggressive campaigns to provide mobile telephone infrastructure to hundreds of millions of Africans, China seeks to become the partner of choice for many on the continent. That should concern every American.

And China has been using the COVID-19 outbreak to further its soft power in Africa, including a recent pledge of $2 billion to the World Health Organization over the next 2 years to fight COVID-19 -- in sharp contrast to President Trump's announcement of an American withdrawal from the WHO.

With that, let me introduce our panel of experts who will help us better understand these and many other dimensions of the effects of COVID-19 in Africa.

I understand each of you will make remarks of 5 to 7 minutes, and then we will turn to questions.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield is a senior vice president at ASG and leads the firm's Africa practice. She joined ASG after a long and distinguished, 35-year Foreign Service career.

From 2013 to 2017, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield served as U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, where she led the development and management of U.S. policy toward Sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on economic empowerment, investment opportunities, peace and security, democracy and governance.

Prior to that appointment, she served as Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources, leading the team in charge of the State Department's

70,000 personnel.

Her Foreign Service career also included an ambassadorship to Liberia from 2008 to 2012 and postings at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Switzerland, as well as in Kenya, Nigeria, The Gambia, Pakistan, and Jamaica.

In Washington, she served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State of the State Department's Bureau of African Affairs and as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Michelle D. Gavin is a senior fellow for Africa studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. She has over 20 years of experience in international affairs in government and nonprofit roles.

She was formerly the managing director of The Africa Center, a multi-disciplinary institution dedicated to increasing understanding of contemporary Africa. From 2011 to 2014, she was the U.S. Ambassador to Botswana and served concurrently as the U.S. Representative to the Southern African Development Community, SADC.

Prior to that, Ambassador Gavin was a Special Assistant to President Obama and Senior Director for Africa at the National Security Council, where she led major policy reviews of Sudan and Somalia and helped to originate the Young African Leaders Initiative.

Before joining the Obama administration, she was an international affairs fellow and adjunct fellow for Africa at CFR. Earlier in her career, she worked in the U.S. Senate, where she was the staff director for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on African Affairs, director of international policy issues for Senator Russ Feingold, and legislative director for Senator Ken Salazar.

J. Stephen Morrison is the senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS, and director of its Global Health Policy Center. Dr. Morrison

writes widely and has directed several high-level commissions. He is a frequent commentator on U.S. foreign policy, global health, Africa, and foreign assistance.

He served in the Clinton administration, as committee staff in the House of Representatives, and taught for 12 years at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

And, finally, Judd Devermont is the director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS.

Prior to joining CSIS, he served as the National Intelligence Officer for Africa from 2015 to 2018. In this position, he led the U.S. Intelligence Community's analytic efforts on Sub-Saharan African issues and served as the DNI's personal representative at interagency policy meetings. From 2013 to 2015, he was the CIA's senior political analyst on Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Devermont also served as the NSC Director for Somalia, Nigeria, and Sahel, and the African Union from 2011 to 2013. In this role, he contributed to the "U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa," signed by President Obama in 2012, and managed the process that resulted in U.S. recognition of the Somali Government for the first time since 1991.

Mr. Devermont spent 2 years abroad, working at the U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, from 2008 to 2010.

And, with that, we will get started. And let me turn to Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield for her remarks.

STATEMENTS OF LINDA THOMAS-GREENFIELD, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, ALBRIGHT STONEBRIDGE GROUP; MICHELLE GAVIN, SENIOR FELLOW, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS; J. STEPHEN MORRISON, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR, GLOBAL HEALTH POLICY CENTER, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES; AND JUDD DEVERMONT, DIRECTOR, AFRICA PROGRAM, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

STATEMENT OF LINDA THOMAS-GREENFIELD

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. I think I am unmuted.

The Chairman. Yes, you are.

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. Good. Thank you.

Thank you, Chairman Schiff and members of the committee, and I particularly want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today on the impact of COVID-19 in Africa.

This is an important issue for many people who are watching this disease as it spreads globally. You will hear from my colleagues about the health impact of the virus and the political impact and the security impact. I would like to share with you an assessment of the socioeconomic impact of the virus.

COVID-19 is a double-edged sword for Africa. In addition to the obvious health challenges, like elsewhere, it has also had tremendous economic dimensions on the continent. And according to the World Bank, COVID-19 is likely to drive Sub-Saharan Africa into its first recession in 25 years, with growth potentially falling as low as a negative-5.1 percent in 2020.

COVID-19 was already affecting African economies even before the virus reached Africa's shores. Commodity exporters saw their revenues drop in the early days of the global crisis due to the reduced demand from China, and there was notable capital flight from key African markets in late January and February as investors adopted a wait-and-see approach and pulled their capital to safety, starving African markets of much-needed capital and liquidity.

One month of full lockdown cost Africa $65 billion, 2.5 percent of its annual GDP, signaling the urgency for countries to contain the disease. The crisis threatened jobs of 150 million Africans, a third of Africa's population. And you recognized that this is a very youthful population, and there is an extraordinarily high level of unemployment among them.

Tourism markets, which are really important to the continent's economy, were severely impacted -- Kenya, South Africa, and elsewhere.

Africa's airlines, maybe except for Ethiopian Airlines, are on the verge of collapse. Revenues, due to the oil market crisis, dwindled, bringing oversupply and reduced demand in global markets. And, in March, the price of Brent crude oil dropped below the cost of production in Nigeria, which forced the government to reassess revenue projections down by about 50 percent and to begin a budget revision process. And we have seen some of the results of that budget most recently.

There have been reduced remittances inflows into Africa. These are key contributors to the economy of the continent. The World Bank estimates that remittances to the continent are expected to fall by 23 percent this year to $37 billion from a high of $48 billion in 2019.

Once COVID-19 made landfall in Africa, governments acted swiftly to contain the virus. However, these necessary actions have highlighted the weaknesses of a heavily

informal economy and exposed the weaknesses of critical production, supply, and value chains.

Eighty-five-point-eight percent of Africans work in the informal sector, and they hustle for their daily bread on a daily basis. The informal economic structure does not gel with the necessary responses needed to flatten the curve. Actions such as social distancing and stocking up food supplies are just not possible.

In the early days, many Africans pushed back on government policies, arguing that the hunger virus would kill them before the coronavirus. Food security is becoming a major concern as reduced agricultural output and fewer imports threaten to limit supply and increase the price of staple crops. Nigeria has depleted 70 percent of its national grain reserve over the past 3 months to ensure food supply.

Unplanned healthcare spending due to the pandemic has compounded a crippling debt burden and will worsen the already-precarious fiscal positions in many African countries. Many countries will now have to run significant budget deficits in 2020 to deal with the crisis. And given current levels of debt across the continent, many experts believe widespread debt relief or even forgiveness is critical to enable African governments to boost healthcare spending and effectively manage COVID-19.

Announcements from the multilaterals, such as the G20 and Paris Club, that 40 African countries would be eligible to receive a total of $20 billion in debt service suspension until the end of the year are welcome, but current levels of direct aid to African governments are not sufficient to stave off a continent-wide economic distress.

You mentioned China, sir. China needs to step up to the plate. Reports surfaced in May that China, the continent's biggest creditor, is seriously pondering delaying repayments of some $152 billion worth of African loans. And while we see this as a positive move, it falls far short, and calls for China to forgive Africa debt must be

increased. What China has done is simply not enough to deal with the issue.

Now, if I could just spend a few of my last minutes to talk about what we should be doing here in the United States, I would like to make three recommendations, among many that you will hear from us today and many more that we won't have time to talk about.

But, first and foremost, the U.S. needs to ease internal bureaucratic bottlenecks. While we have committed more than a billion dollars to benefit the global COVID response, there are reports that much of that aid has been tied up in uncharacteristic delays nearly 3 months after the passage of the CARES Act. As a result, some key U.S. interventions are not reaching African stakeholders and communities.

Second, Africa needs debt relief to enable the continent to focus on its economic recovery. We should support international-partner efforts to enact an across-the-board debt standstill for African countries.

Financial assistance from multilateral organizations and official bilateral creditors, including temporary debt relief, will also be needed. The U.S. can use its leverage in the international financial institutions to encourage support for Africa's recovery and more sustainable debt over the medium to long term.

And, in addition, the Secretary of State will be meeting with China, I saw in the press this morning. We should use that opportunity to pressure China to also step up its efforts.

And, finally, leadership. U.S. leadership has been missing on the front lines of the global effort to fight COVID-19. And the windows of opportunity are closing for the U.S. to lead on this issue, ceding leadership to no other country but China. President Trump's decision to pull out of the World Health Organization, which has an African as its DG, has rubbed African partners the wrong way.

However, there is still room for the U.S. to reassert its global leadership and lead mobilization on a comprehensive, intergovernmental, and multisectoral response to deliver an economic support package to support Africa. Analysts estimate that the continent will need $200 billion to stave off the effects of COVID. This is where Congress could lead the way by providing increased support to the international affairs budget and also to our important humanitarian efforts.

And let me end by saying that we must support the efforts of our diplomats and our development professionals overseas. They can't be expected to do their jobs with their hands tied behind their backs and without leadership from Washington. They are on the front lines of our defense, and they should be given the tools to defend and support the country, our country, in Africa as well as in other places.

I served as a diplomat for 35 years. It was something that I am very proud of. And I know that our diplomats overseas are working to support our efforts and they are proud to be in service to the U.S. Government.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.

[The statement of Ms. Thomas-Greenfield follows:]

******** COMMITTEE INSERT ********

The Chairman. Thank you, Ambassador. Really appreciate your many years of service and your appearance today.

Let's go now to Ambassador Michelle Gavin.

Ambassador?

STATEMENT OF MICHELLE GAVIN

Ms. Gavin. Well, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you so much for inviting me to testify and for tackling this important topic.

I also want to thank your staff. I was a congressional staffer for many years, myself. I know how much work goes into preparing these hearings, so I really appreciate the work that all of you do.

And I want to start with just one caveat. Africa, of course, is vast and diverse, and the situation in Botswana is very different from the situation in Cameroon. So I will be speaking broadly, but it is really important to acknowledge that individual countries' unique economic, governance, and stability situations before this crisis affect how it impacts them.

So my colleagues are going to give you the lay of the land on the health issues. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield just talked about the serious economic consequences of the pandemic for the region. I am going to focus on the political fallout, because this pandemic is a tremendous challenge to governments and to democracy.

So a big, universal takeaway from this pandemic, right, is that, as important as the private sector is, we all need governments that work and governments that can be trusted. Public health depends upon participation. When citizens mistrust those asking them to make sacrifices or take unusual steps to protect the greater good, then

even the most thoughtful interventions are going to fail.

So, in recent years, Afrobarometer, which does really great polling in the region, found that, across 36 countries in Africa, more people expressed trust in religious and traditional leaders than in states' formal executive institutions. And levels of trust in government authority varied widely from country to country, but they were consistently tied to whether people believed an institution to be corrupt or self-serving.

And this has real-world consequences right now. So, to take one example, some religious leaders in the volatile Middle Belt of Nigeria have claimed that the virus is a hoax deployed to suppress the practice of Islam.

Now, it is important to note, this met with pushback from other Muslim authorities alarmed about the risks of this kind of conspiracy theory. But the theory had some traction because it fit with existing narratives of Muslim disenfranchisement, narratives of the powerful using threats like Boko Haram simply to enrich themselves rather than provide security and stability for citizens.

So you add that to longstanding skepticism of public health interventions, and one sees that the disruption brought by COVID is being fit into existing ideas about the state abusing its citizens.

In Ethiopia, which has been undergoing a major political transformation and experiencing significant instability, the pandemic has forced the postponement of elections that had been scheduled for August essentially until the time of the current government's choosing.

Now, the delay may make practical sense, but it is fodder for those who distrust the intent of the federal government. If you are expecting a power grab and expecting to be disenfranchised, this looks like what you were expecting, regardless of the actual intent. And the consequence may be more instability. An imploding Ethiopia is very

dangerous indeed.

Just looking at elections alone, it is more than just Ethiopia. The delays can certainly appear self-serving to incumbents, but for those willing to forge ahead with polls despite the public health risks, like leaders in Guinea and the late President of Burundi, it has forced opponents to choose between either asking their supporters to engage in a risky exercise or declining to participate. And it provides an opportunity to avoid the scrutiny of observers. In almost every scenario, democratic legitimacy suffers.

There is some truth to the idea that COVID-19 is a gift to authoritarians, because the draconian social controls that may be required to respond to highly contagious infectious disease can be used as cover to justify crackdowns on opposition politicians; manipulation of vital humanitarian assistance, especially food aid; and the emergency overriding of mechanisms meant to prohibit private gain at the public's expense.

These are all trends one can find in Zimbabwe, for example, where opposition protests have led to arrests for violating lockdown orders, where the ruling party maneuvers to distribute food aid under its banner, where the government was recently compelled to cancel inflated contracts with a medical supplier allegedly linked to the President's son.

Or, while the crisis can provide convenient pretext to authoritarians, it can also expose the gaps between the way the state is supposed to function in service to its citizens and reality in practice. A global health and economic crisis can't be intimidated out of existence by a strongman. And where security forces have killed civilians in the course of operations intended to enforce disease-control measures, as has happened in Kenya and Uganda and in South Africa, they feed resentment of state authority.

I want to flag particularly for this committee that these issues of trust and how they play out are tremendously illuminating. The reaction to COVID-19 can tell us a

great deal at a fairly granular level about who is trusted, who is not, and where voices of authority are found in different societies. Whether it is popular musicians putting public health messages to music, community radio stations busting myths about the virus, or religious leaders guiding behavior change, this moment helps to map out authentic influence, and that helps us understand these places a lot better.

And the reaction also points to where societies are especially vulnerable to misinformation and manipulation. Social media is a major source of information about COVID-19 on the continent. It is ahead of radio and television in recent polling in South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya. And in these societies, just like in ours, social media can fuel the spread of inaccurate information, stoke grievances, and create flashpoints in a charged environment.

Longstanding concerns about Africans being used as unwitting experimental subjects for medical science, or the target of shadowy agendas aimed at covertly suppressing the population growth, can be activated and harnessed to other agendas in a time of crisis, when trust is in short supply, and it is worth paying close attention.

So when I look at what all of this means for the future of U.S.-Africa relations and U.S. interests, I come away with four broad, interrelated conclusions that have implications for U.S. policy. And I will just go through them very clearly.

First, there can be no doubt that the United States' credibility, the appeal of our own governance model, and the perception of our capacity for global leadership have been tarnished.

Our own shambolic response to the pandemic has created a sense, as one very respected civil society leader in East Africa said to me, of "a state in decline." All of our flaws are on global display. And this of course has only been compounded by the horrific instances of police brutality in America and the realities of systematic racism that

they expose.

So the United States has a lot of work to do to reassert some leadership in pursuit of a more just and stable world. And you will hear great recommendations about what we should be doing to assist with debt, to assist with urgent health needs, to play to our strengths on food security, but it is also important that we speak frankly about what has gone right and what has gone wrong in our own country, and model what transparency and accountability can bring to the table.

Second, the United States should work to support the forces protecting democracy and the rule of law. And that means working with civil society to help them fight abusive emergency powers, track COVID assistance spending, and ensure that accurate and reliable information is available.

We should deploy meaningful resources to focus on conflict prevention and track indicators of increasing unrest where the pandemic has stoked suspicion and tension.

And we should work with other partners to push for inclusive political dialogues that can provide a framework to move societies toward revised electoral calendars.

Third, our obsession with pinning the blame for the pandemic on China is self-defeating in the African context. It is absolutely true that China is going for broke in asserting its leadership, but our dire warnings merely look self-serving. And abandoning organizations like the WHO only cede the field to Beijing.

And, finally, the assertive leadership coming from Africa that is unified, specific, savvy, and direct about African interests will probably outlast the pandemic, and this is to be welcomed. The United States will need to find some ways to reorient its policy and practices to meet this kind of assertive leadership, identify some lessons learned from the crisis, and pursue reforms to international institutions to operationalize that learning. And this will mean creating more space for African equities in the institutional

architecture, but it also means more meaningful and fruitful partnerships with Africans.

Thanks so much for the opportunity.

[The statement of Ms. Gavin follows:]

******** COMMITTEE INSERT ********

The Chairman. Thank you, Ambassador.

Mr. Morrison?

Mr. Morrison, you may need to unmute.

Mr. Morrison? Steve, are you muted?

You are still muted, so -- actually, you don't appear to be muted. I am not sure why. I will see if I can summon some help on my end.

Well, why don't we try to go to Mr. Devermont in the interim, and we will try to figure out Steve's acoustics while we do.

STATEMENT OF JUDD DEVERMONT

Mr. Devermont. Can you hear me, sir?

The Chairman. Yes. Is that you, Judd?

Mr. Devermont. Yes.

The Chairman. Yes. Go ahead.

Mr. Devermont. Okay.

Chairman Schiff and distinguished members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, thank you for the invitation to speak on the importance of COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a health, economic, political, and security crisis unfolding in a period of heightened geopolitical competition. It presents significant risks to the U.S. and to African countries.

I plan to focus my opening remarks on the security and geopolitical dimensions of the disease, but I would like to briefly echo some of my colleagues' insights on the economic and political ramifications.

The COVID-19 pandemic is throttling African economies, erasing the gains made during the region's slow and steady recovery from the global economic slowdown in 2014 and 2015. And while I have been impressed with the rapid expansion of social welfare programs -- arguably the most significant unfurling of social safety nets and worker protections since the early post-independence period -- it has been insufficient to quell unrest stemming from the disease.

While crime is down, reports of domestic abuse are up. There have been protests and riots related to COVID-19 -- at least 567 instances between February 19 and May 16, 2020, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Database, also known

as ACLED.

The pandemic is also straining the region's democracies and potentially strengthening the region's autocracies. While there is a range of responses across 49 countries, the region's governments face, really, three distinct tests on governance, leadership, and democratic practices. How these governments will meet the challenges will shape their short-term stability and their long-term trajectory.

First, how do you deliver basic services, sustain livelihoods, and enforce lockdowns during a pandemic? The region's democracies have actually managed quite well, but they are still under fire. South African President Ramaphosa, who I believe has done an exemplary job, has still had to apologize for missteps and appoint an ombudsman to investigate allegations of police abuse.

Second, how do you showcase effective leadership when your political class is uniquely vulnerable to this disease? Twenty-one out of 49 African heads of state are over 65 years old and, therefore, at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19. At least 19 cabinet ministers, 3 of South Sudan's 5 vice presidents, and several legislators and governors have tested positive.

Burundi's President Pierre Nkurunziza, who died last week allegedly of a heart attack, almost certainly died, or at least many observers believe he died, from COVID-19, and that has plunged the country into a constitutional crisis.

Finally, how do you balance the tradeoffs between democracy and public health? As Ambassador Gavin noted, there is a number of elections still on the books for the rest of this year, including in Malawi next week, and the COVID-19 outbreak presents an opportunity for leaders to strengthen their grip on power, exploiting health restrictions to suppress turnout or even delay voting.

In March, Guinea's President Alpha Conde proceeded with a controversial

referendum to secure a third term in office despite boycotts and the absence of observers.

Shifting to the security landscape, African extremist groups are outmaneuvering distracted and overstressed domestic and foreign security services. If these trends continue, Sub-Saharan Africa is at risk of losing ground, following years of CT advances alongside regional and international security partners.

Unlike their brethren in Europe, ISIS branches, al-Qa'ida affiliates, and Boko Haram are not pausing operations or practicing social distancing. Indeed, there has been an uptick in attacks. According to ACLED, there has been a 28.5-percent increase in violent extremist events in the region between mid-March and early May.

For example, in March, insurgents kidnapped Malian opposition leader Soumaila Cisse, Boko Haram killed 92 Chadian forces, and ISIS-linked militants conducted simultaneous attacks in 2 district capitals in northern Mozambique.

Just this past week, ISIS-West Africa has been on a rampage, attacking key towns across northeast Nigeria and killing over 100 people. In Cote d'Ivoire, at least 10 soldiers were killed during an attack on a military post near the border with Burkina Faso.

While African security forces and international partners are not retreating, as evidenced by the recent death of AQIM leader Droukdel, it is true that domestic forces are busy dealing with lockdowns.

Some international partners are already repatriating their peacekeepers, as we have seen Ireland do in Mali, or they are just dealing with COVID-19 outbreaks within their own security forces. Four soldiers within France's Operation Barkhane and 30 Ugandan troops assigned to the peacekeeping deployment in Somalia have tested positive.

These combined stresses are unfolding during a period of heightened geopolitical

rivalry in Sub-Saharan Africa. The U.S., China, and other external actors are responding for altruistic and global health reasons, but, as the committee knows, they are also doing so to advance their strategic interests in the region.

The U.S. is mainly focused on financial contributions, whereas China, through Jack Ma and Chinese companies, has mainly focused on supplies -- masks, test kits, MPVs.

It is uncertain whether either country's approach is having the desired geopolitical effect. African leaders have expressed deep dissatisfaction with both the U.S. and China.

Nigerian and Ghanaian officials have dressed down Chinese diplomats for racist treatment of Africans in Guangzhou. While they have welcomed Jack Ma's donations, African legislators and officials are asking hard questions about Chinese corruption, investment, and presence in African countries.

For the U.S., African leaders have slammed President Donald Trump for his statements about WHO Director-General and former Ethiopian governor and minister Dr. Tedros. And, across the continent, there has been an uproar over the murder of George Floyd by police officers in Minnesota.

While this is far from unprecedented, African admonishments of foreign partners have rarely been as forceful, sustained, or public. African officials are probably becoming more confrontational in part because they fear a failure to push back and deflect attention from the current crisis will heighten domestic public anger in the wake of the disease's mounting death toll and economic devastation.

I believe this new assertiveness is unlikely to fade. As Ivoirian President Alassane Ouattara declared, "There has been a selfishness on the part of industrial nations for decades."

There is limited scope for this to trigger a major overhaul of bilateral relations.

That is because of deep structural economic and security ties. But I do believe the region is going to prioritize partnerships with countries that they judge to be responsive, respectful, and competitive.

Let me just end with five key recommendations for the U.S. to help their African partners as well as restore our leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa.

First, as my colleagues have mentioned, we need to be in charge of the -- we need to lead the global response. Our failure to lead has undercut coordination and fueled a wasteful war of words between the U.S. and China which has tainted the image of both countries.

It is not too late to step up. This kind of multilateral approach, led by the U.S., was the hallmark of our response to Ebola in West Africa.

Two, we need to collaborate on economic relief. The U.S. should commit itself to working with public and private lenders to address the region's economic woes. As Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said, the U.S. needs to press China to do more, to grant some debt relief, in coordination with other donors.

There is a variety of other options on the table: low interest rates; special drawing rights at the IMF; something akin to a Brady bond, where the eurobonds are swapped for concessional debt. The key here is that the U.S. cannot be cast as the main obstacle to a solution.

Three, we could do more to talk up our private-sector and our foundational contributions to address COVID-19. That is actually what China is doing. According to one study, only 50 percent of its aid globally is the Chinese Government. The rest are through foundations and private companies. I have been delighted to see that the U.S. has started to do this through its "All-of-America" campaign.

Four, we need to applaud and learn from African successes. The United States

should be doing more to hail African positive responses to the pandemic. There is an opportunity to champion African leaders in government, ministries, and multilateral institutions who are doing the right thing and doing it quite well. This is an open approach which privileges dialogue and mutual respect and has the potential to take the sting out of past insults and derogatory U.S. rhetoric.

And, finally, this is an opportunity to refresh our policy. The COVID-19 pandemic is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine U.S. policies, programs, and public diplomacy. The disease's urban profile underlines that we should rebalance our investments towards African cities. The U.S. military engagement on the front lines of fighting COVID is a reminder that our security partnerships are more than just about counterterrorism. And creative embassy public service announcement videos and Zoom townhalls are a tantalizing preview of what a modern and inclusive public diplomacy program could look like.

Thank you so much.

[The statement of Mr. Devermont follows:]

******** COMMITTEE INSERT ********

The Chairman. Thank you very much.

Mr. Morrison, why don't we try it again and see if we can get your audio working.

Steve?

Well, we still can't hear you for some reason. Your mike doesn't show that it is muted on our end. You have a blue mike in front of you.

We still can't hear you.

Well, hmm. I wonder if we should try having you sign in again, or, if worst comes to worst, we could have you call in, rather than use the video link, and we could probably hear you by dialing in.

So why don't we do that. I am going to let my staff interact with you directly, and we will, in the meantime, begin with some questions. My apologies, Mr. Morrison, but we will get this worked out.

All right. Let me start, if I could.

For any of our witnesses who can be heard: The current pandemic began in China. It is certainly possible that the next pandemic may begin somewhere else.

If a pandemic were to begin or a virus were to begin spreading in Africa, what level of confidence do you have in our ability to identify that taking place? What kind of transparency do you think we would find? How country-dependent is that, given that there was not much transparency out of China in some very critical early days and weeks?

So how would you assess the threat of a pandemic coming from the Africa continent?

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. Can I start?

The Chairman. Sure.

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. You know, I am very confident that, should such a pandemic start in Africa, we would have tremendous cooperation.

I look back on the situation with Ebola in West Africa, where we were on the verge of a pandemic, with three countries being affected and concerns that it could impact the entire globe, but because of strong efforts by those governments, as well as cooperation by the international community and leadership by the United States, we were able to bring that under control in a very short period of time. And while more people lost their lives than should have in this crisis, fewer lost their lives than could have had there not been an effort, a partnership with the international community.

A couple of things came out of that that I think are important. One, the Africa CDC that was already in development actually became much stronger. And we have seen the Africa CDC be extraordinarily responsive in this current effort.

And African countries have been responsive. I happened to be in Liberia in early March, and when I arrived in Liberia on March 3, my temperature was taken at the airport. Hand-washing stations were in front of every single public building that I visited. And that was long before the crisis was declared a pandemic.

So I think we can be confident in Africa, despite their limited infrastructure, their budgetary challenges, their capacity challenges, that they would be extraordinarily supportive and cooperative in an effort to stem a pandemic that might start on the continent.

The Chairman. This pandemic is expected to make the response to other health imperatives much more difficult. What do you think the pandemic will do to the malaria response or the HIV response? Is Africa likely to lose more people from malaria because the healthcare response to malaria is impacted by COVID?

Anyone?

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. I will start, since no one else -- I think we did see some backsliding in terms of healthcare across the continent because of the requirements for

COVID, but we also saw that in the United States as well.

So I do think that people were not going to hospitals when they had malaria, or they were treating themselves, self-treating themselves for malaria when they had a fever, when they might have gone to the hospital for COVID. Many people were unable to get their antiviral drugs for HIV because of COVID.

So I do believe there was a negative impact. We saw that across the continent. And I think it is something that we have to be watchful of in the future.

The Chairman. Okay. Thank you, Ambassador.

Let me move to Mr. Himes. We are still working on Mr. Morrison. I think we may have a workaround. If Mr. Morrison is able to keep his video on but, nonetheless, call in on his cell phone, we might be able to get audio through his cell phone.

But, in the interim, Mr. Himes.

Mr. Himes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to all of our witnesses this afternoon.

I just have one question, and I am not quite sure who to direct it to, but it relates to something that a couple of you have touched on, which is: likely scenarios with respect to sovereign debt in the various African countries.

It looks like, you know, if you look at the literature a year ago, people were worrying about a sovereign debt crisis a year ago, pre-COVID. And now, obviously, hard currency availability and all sorts of other things have gone dramatically south.

So my question is -- a lot of the debt is owed to the private sector, so it is not necessarily multilateral or owed to other countries.

My question is, what should we look out for in terms of the intersection of debt that is not likely to be serviceable, and, therefore, you know, a country is going to need a restructuring, with all of the potential turmoil that that might entail, with -- what is the

intersection of that intensity with likelihood of political instability and likelihood that political instability could generate more extremist violence? What are the hotspots we should keep an eye on?

And inasmuch as anybody wants to speculate, what are things we could do, knowing that a lot of that debt is owed to the private sector and to China, to try to alleviate that challenge?

Mr. Devermont. Sir, I will try to answer that question.

I do think the debt problem right now is severe and serious and deserves attention and engagement from the U.S., in part because, if the African countries are able to pause the servicing of their debt or even have some relief, they can direct that money towards the things that would be stress-relievers to the outcomes that you are talking about -- getting better for-ex, getting food at a lower price or subsidizing it, and addressing some of the social welfare programming that they need to do right now, as the rest of the world does.

I think one of the challenges right now on commercial debt is that the Africans are pressing for debt but they don't want it to affect their credit. And so there is a real, I think, conundrum here. Even if we got the commercial sector or the private sector to relieve some of their debt, Africans are very concerned that their sovereign rating would go down.

So it is going to take a number of creative collaborations between the U.S. and the private sector to try to find a way around this so that their debt is relieved or at least suspended with not affecting their credit rating, which we, as a government, have been encouraging them for a very long time to actually build on.

I am less worried about how the debt is going affect insecurity as much as I am, sort of, the downstream effects on it -- what kind of cost-cutting they have to do on other

issues, like food prices. And food prices often is a corollary to unrest, whether we are talking about the 1979 rice riots in Liberia or the more recent case of spiking bread prices in Sudan that has led to public unrest.

Thank you.

Mr. Himes. Thank you for that.

Do any of the witnesses want to answer the other part of that question, which is: Are there particular hotspots, particular countries, where you could see an intersection of a debt crisis with political instability? Any countries we should keep an eye on?

Ms. Gavin. I would take a stab and just -- you know, Judd finished with Sudan. I would keep a really close eye on Sudan, where they were already squeezed with a really limited, kind of, fiscal space, right, for a new transitional government to deliver any kind of relief to the population that rose up to oust the odious regime that was there before. And this crisis and the, kind of, overall economic environment only makes that worse.

It is an incredibly fragile transition. And if civilians can't demonstrate that they can improve quality of life for people, it really does give the military actors in that, kind of, not-so-happy arranged marriage of a transitional government the upper hand. And that is something that I would be very concerned about.

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. And if I could add, I would add Ethiopia. Ethiopia was on the precipice of reform, with a very reform-minded government. We saw some of the reforms taking place. They were on the verge of an election, and that election was delayed.

So I worry, with the -- and Michelle mentioned that in her remarks -- with the delay of the election, the uncertainty of what is coming next politically in the country, that Ethiopia is a country also that we should keep a very, very close and watchful eye on.

Mr. Himes. Thank you very much.

I am out of time.

The Chairman. I think we have a workaround with Mr. Morrison, who will be speaking over his phone, but you will be able to view him. You may need to use the grid view, though, to see him, as the Webex may not pick up his audio.

Mr. Morrison?

STATEMENT OF J. STEPHEN MORRISON

Mr. Morrison. Thank you. Can you hear me?

The Chairman. Yes, we can.

Mr. Morrison. Great. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thanks for the chance to be here today.

And, Chairman, thank you so much, also, for your prior help to us, your leadership on combating misinformation campaigns against vaccines, and the support you have given us to the CSIS Commission on Strengthening America's Health Security. These issues around misinformation, weaponized social media, are front and center in this particular crisis, both at home, Africa, and elsewhere. It is huge problem we are going to have to face.

In the interest of time, I am going to skip ahead and cover some of the key recommendations that we have developed here.

First, while I am not here to lobby for specific provisions, I do wish to urge that the next emergency pandemic measure moved by Congress address urgent international concerns of issue here today.

There is a white paper that was assembled by the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, InterAction, and the ONE Campaign which called for at least a $12 billion commitment to meet emergency humanitarian needs and the health response needs to the virus and associated operational costs in Africa and other low-income countries. These are very urgent needs, and they have only grown since that original commitment.

In addition, there is a stark need to begin early to bring forward U.S. commitments to cover a significant share of the costs of production and distribution of a vaccine in Africa and in other low-income countries once that becomes available. Advocates have

called upon the U.S. to make an early forward commitment at upwards of $15 billion. The estimated cost, in aggregate, for global distribution is somewhere between $25 billion and $65 billion, and we need to make action early on that.

I also want to press that the U.S. should take up trying to forge an international agreement that 5 percent of the first doses of the vaccine be reserved for healthcare workers, frontline workers, migrant populations, and those whose health is acutely fragile across all countries in the world. Experts estimate that would require 250 million to 350 million doses.

The second recommendation is the U.S. not lose sight of the ongoing need to sustain U.S. commitments, both bilateral and multilateral, in HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, polio, reproductive health, family planning, immunizations.

Bipartisan congressional support for these programs has been essential over the past two decades, and it remains essential. The pandemic has already disrupted many of these programs. Globally, over 80 million children have gone unimmunized, and we are seeing a resurgence of measles, yellow fever, and vaccine-derived polio.

We have heard that the administration needs to expedite the delivery of the $1.6 billion in emergency assistance. We know that there needs to be concerted action to lift the export restrictions on protective equipment, test kits, and ventilators. We need to see greater action in the G7 and G20 for an expansion of debt relief and forgiveness.

And the U.S., which has been absent from some of the most promising initiatives, including the ACT Accelerator, which brings together the EU, industry, WHO, the World Bank, major foundations around bringing equity and access for vaccines, therapies, diagnostics -- that most promising effort we should be joining.

Fourth, it makes no sense to defund WHO and terminate U.S. membership. That

recklessness will damage WHO, it will damage U.S. health and scientific partnerships and U.S. standing in the world, and ultimately play into the hands of the Chinese.

I appeal to Congress to use its powers to preserve the U.S. relationship with the WHO and urge the administration to put its full support behind the independent review of the international response, including WHO, that was just recently approved by an overwhelming vote at the World Health Assembly.

My fifth recommendation has to do with intelligence. WHO, we have seen, has no powers to inspect and no independent intelligence capacity. That greatly limits its ability to know when a country is cheating, is concealing an outbreak, and to hold that country to account. Much more serious consideration needs to be given by the United States and like-minded countries, including perhaps even the Chinese, for what new forms of systematic sharing of intelligence can support the WHO Secretariat.

African states greatly resent their vulnerability to bad choices made last year and earlier this year by China. I expect many African states will welcome an effort to strengthen the WHO's grasp of what is happening around the world in new outbreaks and new threats.

Last, in the midst of this emergency, we need to take a long view. Now is a choice moment to restore the Directorate for Global Health Security and Biodefense at the National Security Council and to create a strong, authoritative mechanism, perhaps modeled after PEPFAR, that establishes health diplomacy leadership at the State Department and a unity of purpose around health security. It would bring great benefit to Africa.

Thank you very much.

[The statement of Mr. Morrison follows:]

******** COMMITTEE INSERT ********

RPTR DEAN

EDTR HOFSTAD

[1:04 p.m.]

The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Morrison.

Let me see if I can hear you without the phone really quick, see if that is working.

Mr. Morrison. Can you hear me?

The Chairman. I can, but I can't tell whether that is from the phone or not. Well, in any event, we could hear you loud and clear in your testimony, so thank you very much.

Let me go to Terri Sewell for her questions.

Ms. Sewell. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank all of our panelists.

The pandemic has really posed a threat to various security assistance efforts, such as the U.N. peacekeeping as well as fighting counterterrorism. And I wanted to understand how violent extremist groups have been using this pandemic as an opportunity to seek advantage and what your thoughts were about what we can do about it and whether or not they have been able to maintain or will be able to maintain these advantages accrued during the pandemic going forward.

I open that up to any panelist who would like to discuss. But the intersection between the pandemic and ongoing security efforts in the region, especially in fighting counterterrorism.

Mr. Devermont. I will try to answer that.

Yes, there is an intersection between extremism and COVID-19 in a couple of ways.

I mentioned in my testimony we are seeing a surge in the way many of the

extremist groups, particularly JNIM in the Sahel, ISIS-West Africa, and Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin and the group in northern Mozambique, are operating. It is part of their trajectory that they have been able to do these things, but I think we can't discount that many of the security forces are now on double duty, both addressing the lockdown measures as well as doing counterterrorism fighting.

And their international partners are doing as much as they can, but the U.N. has stalled rotations for its peacekeeping missions. There has been some xenophobic attacks on peacekeepers, not in CT areas, not in areas of terrorism, but in South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

What I didn't mention in my testimony is how the extremist groups are using this as a propaganda opportunity, talking about how the measures of the Nigerian Government, for example, are against Muslims and how, if you join Boko Haram, you will be free from coronavirus; or doing work in terms of building goodwill amongst the population. Just this week, Al Shabaab has opened up a clinic, which is a tactic they used in the 2014-2015 famine to gain goodwill.

I think that there is a number of measures that we could be doing alongside our African partners to address this. First is, as we have seen in Somalia and Kenya, employing religious leaders to counter these narratives, as Ambassador Gavin mentioned.

Second, there may be some purposeful opportunities to use contact tracing, border closures, and other methods we are using for the health to actually deal with counterterrorism.

So it is a challenge right now, but I think that there are opportunities to stem their growth during this period where governments are doing a number of other things.

Ms. Sewell. My other question is, how have other nations, former colonial powers such as Russia, China, the Gulf states, Turkey, India, have been using the

pandemic to enhance their influence in the region, and how effective has that been?

Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield?

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. You know, I think that many of them see the opportunity to move into Africa. They don't have a colonial history, none of them, but I would kind of put them in the neocolonial category of relationships with Africa. And they see an opportunity -- an opportunity to push their agendas; an opportunity to criticize us, as they see what is happening here in the United States and how we are responding. And they are using that narrative to encourage closer relationships with Africans.

We were seeing the Russians move in, even before corona, to Central African Republic, providing security there. The Turks are making a lot of efforts in Somalia and, I think, increasing those efforts.

And I think all of these things bear watching, but, more than watching, they require a proactive response from us and others in the international community. And that response is not there for the moment.

Ms. Sewell. Ms. Gavin, do you want to add -- Ambassador Gavin?

Ms. Gavin. Sure. Well, I completely agree with what Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield has said.

I think that, you know, we do see a number of these actors playing up donations of PPE and medical supplies, right, seizing the moment, essentially, to present themselves as critical alternative partners. And I think one of things that I see is that playing this kind of transactional game is a real loser for the United States, right?

We have created a scenario where the world has watched us involved in, you know, bidding against ourselves for access to equipment, not participating in major multilateral fora about ensuring adequate access to vaccines.

And what that does is create a situation where it is sort of an everyone-for-himself, you know, who-has-something-on offer-today, very ad-hoc, transactional way of building relationships. And it is not in our interest, because it doesn't play to any of the U.S.'s strengths.

So I think it is a really important question to ask, but what it reveals, also, is the leadership gap that Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield and Judd and others have spoken to.

Ms. Sewell. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Quigley.

Mr. Quigley. Thank you.

Thank you all for participating.

Let me ask you, in a manner of a deeper dive -- you touched on this, but we have a country where I would say a majority are very, very skeptical of foreign aid. And if we can't appeal to their hearts, how do we appeal to the American people's minds? When Upton Sinclair wrote "The Jungle," he said, "I appeal to their hearts, and I hit a little lower."

You know, how would you message this to a skeptical townhall, of why it is in the American people's interest to deal with the capabilities of addressing the virus in these areas of Africa?

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. Hi. Thank you for that question.

The way I used to answer that question before this virus and before the changes in our own environment here was that Americans care, and because we care, we are out there supporting people.

I am less convinced that we care, certainly as we look at our policies toward Africa

right now. But I actually do still feel strongly that Americans care.

When you look at the proactive activities of missionary groups in Africa and some of the work that they are doing, when you look at what our NGOs and other international humanitarian organizations are doing, they are making a difference on the continent, and they are winning hearts and minds.

And for that reason, I think we have to stay in the game. But, also, we are no longer in a world where we are isolated. And when you see a virus happen in China or anyplace else in the world, you know, because of the connectedness of world, that you are going to see that happen here in the United States. And the only way to deal with it is to be out there in front of it, to ensure that the U.S. is protected.

And if we are not out there in front of it, by providing the financial support to international aid programs, to our diplomacy, then we are not going to be able to curtail these things from entering the United States.

Mr. Quigley. Michelle, I saw you nodding your head during part of that. Your thoughts?

Ms. Gavin. Well, I couldn't agree more. I think, you know, there is almost nothing better than infectious disease to explain to a skeptic why you can't really write off big swaths of the globe as just not mattering to you or imagine that what happens there can never affect you and your own sense of security.

But I also think, you know, a lot of Americans maybe haven't wrapped their minds around the fact that in, you know, 2034, right, one in every four people on the globe will be African, right? There is a huge demographic shift underway.

And so there are the downside risks, right, if you don't pay attention. There is the risk of infectious disease, of instability that sort of metastasizes into organizations that have global reach and threaten our interests.

But there is the upside as well. These are new partners. These are new markets. There is no way to address major global challenges like climate change without African partners. There is no way to do it.

So I do think kind of a reset in imagining that Africa is incredibly remote, but also reminding people that there is a lot to be gained from a peaceful and prosperous set of African partners.

Mr. Quigley. Thank you.

I yield back.

The Chairman. Mr. Swalwell.

Mr. Swalwell. Thank you, Chairman.

And, first, I was hoping that perhaps Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield could address whether COVID has slowed down China's One Belt, One Road initiatives as it looks to Africa.

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. Absolutely, it has slowed it down. It hasn't stopped it, but it has certainly slowed down, because China is dealing with its own crisis internally and domestically. And there are lots of questions inside of China about whether China should be expending the kind of resources that it is expending on the Belt and Road Initiative when they have problems at home.

But, that said, the initiative is moving forward, just much slower than in the past, and it is having impact. When you look at the infrastructure under Belt and Road that is now on the continent of Africa -- the railway system in Kenya, in Ethiopia, with Djibouti, their work on ports -- it is making a difference.

And I think the Chinese clearly see that it is making a difference, so I don't see them stopping that. They just may not be able to deliver as rapidly as they intended to deliver, which gives us time, also, to look at what we might do to support Africa on

rebuilding their -- or building from scratch their infrastructure.

Mr. Swalwell. And as we look at China's efforts to export 5G, does this crisis give us any leverage to go back to some of our African-country allies and just talk about the risks of giving so much information over to the Chinese?

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. You know, I think Africans are concerned about giving information over to the Chinese. They are concerned about giving information over to us. So I think this does provide us an opportunity to help Africans have the capacity, technical capacity, to deal with the issues of 5G and begin to question their relationships with China.

But we can't just approach it with pointing our fingers at the Africans and telling them, "Thou shalt not." We have to approach it in a much more strategic way, with giving them the data and the technology that they need to respond so that they can respond in a way that benefits them but is also in our national interest.

Mr. Swalwell. Great.

And can anyone speak to the African countries' ability to distribute a vaccine and what role we could play once a vaccine is found and mass-produced? How could we, you know, just leverage our innovation to enable that?

Mr. Morrison. I would like to take a cut at that.

The Chairman. Please go ahead, Mr. Morrison.

Mr. Morrison. There is a lot of action underway right now, Congressman, to try to win agreement, win consensus, across governments, international bodies, implementers, industry, around the norms of distribution so that low-income countries have affordable access, equity, and transparency.

The most significant initiative in that area has been led by the EU and the WHO and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, something called the ACT Accelerator. That

group grew out of a G7 initiative. It had a very successful pledging action May 4 that raised $7.5 billion to get field trials for the major vaccine candidates completed.

And now it is campaigning hard around making sure that those big bets on the vaccine developers -- which are now about 10, 10 that are in human field trials -- that there is consensus around dedicating certain portions to low-income countries.

And there has been big progress made lately in getting an agreement, for instance, with AstraZeneca, which is proposing to produce 2 billion doses of its vaccine, and having those apportioned around the world and setting up manufacturing sites that are distributed around the country.

So it is quite amazing to me, the level of open sharing and dialogue that has happened in the last 2 or 3 months around these issues.

The United States has been largely absent from that. China has made symbolic appearances here or there. But the drivers of this are Bill and Melinda Gates, the Wellcome Trust, WHO, the European Union, and the major industry folks that are developing these vaccines. The door is open for participation by others.

But the norms have changed for sharing/transparency of data protocols, new ideas, and planning ahead. It is going to take $25 billion to $65 billion to manufacture and distribute vaccine to reach herd immunity around the world. It may be one dose, two doses. Of the 7.8 billion people in the world, we are going to need to get to at least 5.6 billion, 5.7 billion. It is an extraordinary and unprecedented enterprise that is going to require a lot more care in order to finance and organize it.

Mr. Swalwell. Thank you.

And I yield back.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Castro.

Mr. Castro. Thank you, Chairman.

Thank you, Ambassadors and Mr. Morrison, for your testimony today.

I wanted to ask you -- I know we are talking about different nations, but with the region generally -- around the world, there have been some nations that have handled the COVID-19 response better than others. If you take South Korea, that was pretty good. And Singapore, that was pretty good. I think ours has been kind of lackluster but probably not the worst, right?

Where would you put those nations in Sub-Saharan Africa -- again, realizing that it is not just one, obviously, but the region generally -- in terms of the effectiveness of their response and also the prognosis for recovery?

Mr. Morrison. I am happy to say a few words on that.

Mr. Castro. Sure.

Mr. Morrison. First of all, I think it is important to know that, you know, we have had very low numbers until very recently, and now we are in the breakout phase where the numbers are galloping forward. But why did we have so much low numbers for such a long period of time?

One is that it is a heavily youth population, and the population is dispersed geographically in many parts of the continent.

But one of the most important things was that, in mid-March, a majority of African leaders took the step of putting in very strict lockdowns. And that was early in the point of progression of the pandemic into Africa. So they took steps not unlike in Singapore, Hong Kong, and South Korea -- states that acted very aggressively and very early in order to go into lockdown and attempt to bend the curve from that point forward.

So Africa took that step. It became unsustainable, though, for reasons that we heard, the lockdowns themselves, when you have such a large, poor population

dependent on the informal economy and very few social subsidies.

South Africa has shown exemplary action in this, but it has had problems -- with excess reliance on police and military; when they did their modeling, they weren't very transparent on some of the projections. And they have shifted their strategy now from a sort of nationwide strategy to one that is focused on the hotspots in Cape Town and elsewhere.

And I think that is what we are going to see in many countries, where the lockdowns are not sustainable and they have to move into a more nimble, focused, hotspot strategy. And we are already seeing that unfold in South Africa, and we are going to see that elsewhere.

Mr. Castro. I guess the second question I would have is, I want to ask you about the effect of George Floyd's murder and how that is being received in Sub-Saharan Africa.

I know that everybody has been on lockdown, so travel has been cut off, and you probably haven't been over there recently. But in terms of your perception, based on your expertise and what you have heard, what has it done to the image of the United States? What does this region think about the United States wrestling with systemic racism and mass protests in the United States, largely by the African-American community, about what is going on?

Mr. Devermont. I can take that, Congressman. At CSIS, we have done a couple of pieces, actually, polling key thought leaders on the continent for their thoughts on George Floyd's murder.

I would say, at the elite level, at the leadership level, there have been some extraordinarily strong statements about it, whether we are talking about the President of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, or from the AU head, Moussa Faki.

I would say, at the, sort of, thought-leader level -- elites, academics,

journalists -- you generally have three responses: first, I think, heartbroken at what happened and disappointed about the U.S. losing its stature in terms of a value-based approach towards governance. The second, sort of, response has been a feeling that any statements that the U.S. has made prior or maybe in the future about human rights are hypocritical. And then one of the most interesting developments is actually an internal look at, can African governments talk about human rights abuses when there are also them in their own country?

So you have had a variety of responses. We have seen protests in various places across the continent, from Ghana to Senegal. And we are seeing, I think, some very pointed comments to the U.S. about this, even in multilateral fora. They are going to be sponsoring an antiracism resolution in Geneva in the coming weeks.

I also think that this puts us, as I said in my testimony, in a poor place relative to China. So, earlier on, when the U.S. and others were making statements about Guangzhou and the racist treatment of Africans, it has limited our ability to talk about that now, because they can turn around and point to our own racial divides.

So it is a tough moment, but I would just say -- and I hope Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield will echo this -- some of our diplomats have done exactly the right thing: talk truthfully and honestly about the wounds in our own society. And I think that is a better approach than the Chinese, which deny, deny, deny. We have had some incredible Ambassadors speak from the heart about what that murder means to them, white or black, and what are the things we need to do to heal our society.

Mr. Morrison. Could I say a few words there?

Mr. Castro. It is at the chairman's discretion, since my time is up here.

The Chairman. Of course. Please go ahead.

Mr. Morrison. Yes, I just wanted to say that I think -- it is not exclusive to Africa,

but I think that, in many opinion circles in Africa and elsewhere, there is a sense of shock when they watch what is happening in America.

I think they are shocked at seeing that we have 2 million cases, we have 112,000 dead, 42 million unemployed, that we have not succeeded in getting control over this pandemic. We have 700 to 800 -- some days higher -- new deaths and usually 20,000-plus new cases.

And so that is shocking, and then you add on to that a social crisis rooted in racism and police brutality, in which you have turmoil and strife in over 200 cities and 60 million people under curfew at the peak.

That creates an image of crisis, multiple crises, building upon one another, in which people of color, people of poverty have been the most disadvantaged and most heavily impacted by the pandemic, by the economic crisis, and by racism and police brutality.

And so I think people look at this and they think our society is one that is not operating with much coherence or functionality, and where does this go? I think there is fear of where this may lead, and concern. A lot of solidarity for Americans, particularly those who are suffering the most in these three crises.

Thank you.

The Chairman. Mr. Heck.

Mr. Heck. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And my gratitude, as well, to the panelists for an excellent presentation today.

Dr. Morrison, I want to start with you, sir. You said something that I found very fascinating, if I heard it correctly -- namely, that African countries now deeply regret some of their transactions -- my word, not yours -- "deeply regret" was your phrase, however -- with China.

In many months and a few years of listening to reports on China's relationship with Africa, I have never heard it expressed that strongly. I have often heard it that African countries are beginning to wonder, question, would like to revisit, feel a bit captive, et cetera, but you said "deeply regret."

And I would be very interested in having you give a little color to that and be more specific, if you will, to help us understand that characterization. Name names. Which countries? What kinds of transactions? And how widespread do you think that regret is? If I heard you correctly, sir.

Mr. Morrison. My point, Congressman -- my point was that many African leaders and citizens resent what has happened in this most recent period.

And what I mean by that is that you had an unknown period of at least 6 to 7 weeks at the end of 2019 in which this virus existed and was spreading rapidly within Hubei province, Wuhan and the surrounding Hubei province, and for political reasons that news was repressed, and that it only was disclosed to the world December 31, after much critical time had lapsed, in which it could spread wildly, which it did, and that, afterwards, there were decisions taken that delayed the sharing of specimens, delayed the entry of external scientific expertise, and the like.

And those in Africa and those in neighboring nation-states and elsewhere look at this and ask themselves, where is the accountability here? If you have a country as powerful as China but which is the place where many of these dangerous pathogens originate, for reasons that we can get into -- and yet, when that happens, we have little insight or visibility into what is happening and little ability to weigh in. And yet the victims of this are those that are the weakest, with the lowest capacity to deal with this.

So African states today find themselves on the precipice of a major catastrophe with very weak defenses. That is what I was getting at, is there is no accountability and

transparency when you have these dangerous pathogens emerge for countries that choose, willfully choose, to repress that knowledge at that critical moment when it is essential to intervene very quickly and with maximum aggression to repress and contain that.

Mr. Heck. So, Dr. Morrison, perhaps I misunderstood you. I heard you say "deeply regret," not "resent," and I thought it was a reference to some of the other arrangements that had been made as China, over the past few years, has ramped up its investment and involvement in Africa. Is that not what you were suggesting?

Mr. Morrison. Well, no, I was -- I may have misspoke. I meant to say "resent." But there is regret and there are misgivings that some of our other experts here are deeply familiar with, which has to do with the terms of the compacts struck in Africa under the Belt and Road and those terms with respect to the quality of what is delivered, the debt load that comes with it, the relinquishing of sovereign control over natural resources and borders and critical decisions on infrastructure. All of those things --

Mr. Heck. Excuse me.

Mr. Morrison. -- eat away --

Mr. Heck. I have limited time; I want to make sure I understand this. Are you, then, suggesting that this awareness over those unfavorable terms and conditions for those arrangements is, in fact, growing, both in breadth and depth, in Africa vis-à-vis the relationships and transactions which China? Is it beyond --

Mr. Morrison. I think it has been growing --

Mr. Heck. Go ahead.

Mr. Morrison. I think it has been growing for some time, Congressman. And I think this pandemic aggravates that, further magnifies it.

Mr. Heck. Good. Thank you very much.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Morrison. Thank you.

The Chairman. Thank you.

Let's go to Mr. Welch.

Mr. Welch. Thank you very much. It has been a tremendous panel.

You know, one of the dilemmas we have is that you have laid out, I think all of you, very compelling and straightforward recommendations about how the U.S. can be a constructive force here, but it all presumes that there is an interest in the government, A, to play a role and, B, to be a constructive force.

Ms. Gavin had mentioned that playing the transactional game is a loser. And, of course, we have right now an administration where it is all about transactions, number one; number two, where there is essentially a view that government doesn't work and diplomacy doesn't work, and they set out to prove it every single day.

So I take your advice as wise and good counsel to us in Congress to do our level-best to accomplish that in policy, but I am interested in your reactions about, in the world that we have now, with our government as it is, what constructive things can we do, given what we all know are the limitations at the administration level and where the administration is so fundamental in the execution of foreign policy and the sustaining of a commitment.

So maybe we could start with Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield.

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. Thank you.

You know, interestingly, what is missing from all of this, sir -- and thank you for the question -- is interactions and diplomacy. And diplomacy goes a long way in bridging those gaps in those relationships that just need person-to-person contacts. And that has been missing in Africa. We are having very few high-level visits to the

continent.

When I look at the Chinese President going to Africa on a yearly basis and senior Chinese going to Africa, and despite all of the issues that we were discussing in the previous question, the Chinese are constantly working to engage. And we also need that kind of engagement and to show respect to African leaders by bringing them here and having discussions with them and giving them the opportunities to share with us what they see as their priority needs but also to hear from us what we can do to assist them.

And so I would, as a former diplomat -- and I am not sure you can ever become a former diplomat -- but as a former diplomat, I would start there, with diplomacy.

Mr. Welch. Thank you.

Ms. Gavin. May I jump in?

Mr. Welch. Yeah. Go ahead.

Ms. Gavin. I know you have limited time, so I will be really brief. But, if I may, one of the things that you can do is exactly what you are doing, right, which is talking about this. What happens on the Hill gets covered in Africa. The power of your voice as a Member of the U.S. Congress, right, it is not insignificant overseas.

And I think, in this time in our country, demonstrating that there are parts of our country that are still interested in transparency and accountability, that will speak honestly about what we have done wrong thus far and our own response overseas, will try to get to the heart of the matter, and will be steadfast in support for our values, democratic values, support for human rights, acknowledging the flaws in our own society, right, but keeping our true north as we try and improve conditions here and abroad, those voices are incredibly important.

Because people do understand that America is complex. There is no other way

to and make sense of, sort of, the whipsawing of our policy in recent years. So I do think there is tremendous foreign policy value and power in Congress being really assertive --

Mr. Welch. No, that makes sense.

You know, I know, Adam, you went on a number of trips with the Speaker where I think there was a big element of trying to offer reassurance that there is a nucleus within the Congress that hasn't completely lost its mind, yet.

The Chairman. Peter, you are absolutely right.

And, Ambassador, I can't tell you how much it makes us all grieve to hear you and others say in different ways how you hear from African colleagues that they view the United States as a nation in decline, that they see what is happening, they see our behavior, they see our withdrawal, they go to multi-nation donor conferences and we are not even present. I mean, it just is heartbreaking to see how our standing has declined so precipitously -- not irremediably, but, nonetheless, very precipitously.

But your thoughts and your recommendations we will very much take to heart, and hope to turn that around.

Let me go to Mr. Maloney.

Mr. Maloney. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for convening a great panel, and we appreciate the discussion very much.

Most of my questions on the primary subjects have been answered, but, you know, we are also sitting here during Pride Month, on a day when the Supreme Court has issued a historic ruling for those of us in the LGBTQ community.

So I am curious if you could say a word, all of you, on -- or each of you or any of you -- on the subject of LGBT equality in Sub-Saharan Africa. Where are we, and what is the state of play?

I mean, those of us who travel internationally and focus on these things are always

struck by the fact that there is literally nothing in the way of structure or support, legal or otherwise, nonprofit, anything, for LGBT communities in many countries around the world.

Maybe you could say a word on that today.

Ms. Thomas-Greenfield. If I may start.

You know, I think there is a lot of progress to be made, but it is not being ignored overseas. When I served as Assistant Secretary, it was always on our agenda in our discussions with African leaders. I recall, on President Obama's trip to Africa in 2016, he raised it with the Government of Kenya, he raised it in the context of his discussions at the AU.

So people on the continent and particularly the LGBT community know they have support here in the United States. I am on the board of the National Endowment for Democracy. We have funded, through that board, organizations that are looking at LGBT rights on the continent of Africa. We have encouraged and worked closely with civil society.

We are dealing with a society that is extraordinarily resistant to change and to understanding rights across the board, but I think we have made progress. And more progress needs to be made, but I think we have to give our folks on the ground a pat on the back for pushing against a very, very strong pushback and moving the rock forward.

So I want to congratulate them, but, again, I stress, a lot more needs to be done.

Mr. Maloney. Thank you.

Any of the others?

Ms. Gavin. Can I just jump in really quickly and just say that there have been some areas of genuine progress. In one of the countries I know best, in Botswana, the landmark high court case, that, for a long time, an NGO that was formed to protect the

rights of LGBT in Botswana had been denied the capacity to register as a normal organization because of legal restrictions on sexuality, and it was working its way through the courts when I was serving there. And, you know, in conversation after conversation, it was very clear to me that things were trending in the right direction.

Botswana is a tremendously conservative society in a lot of ways. It is an outlier in some ways, but that this can happen in Botswana actually gives me a lot of faith that progress is possible.

And I do think it is important that the United States continues to play a role in, kind of, pushing on this diplomatically, as the Ambassador said, but also giving our diplomats on the ground the space to know when to be very prominent and when not to be.

Because I honestly think, had we had approached it a certain way from our embassy -- we certainly didn't hide from the issue. I talked about it in a Fourth of July address, right? But if we had approached it a certain way, I think we would have slowed progress rather than sped it up.

So, you know, having some faith in our diplomats on the ground, too, to give space for a society to have the conversation it needs to have and get to the right place, that is important too.

Mr. Morrison. May I add one point to this?

The Chairman. Yes. Go ahead, Mr. Morrison, and I think Judd also wanted to comment as well.

Mr. Morrison. Shall I go ahead?

The Chairman. Yes, please.

Mr. Morrison. Okay.

You know, we have had a wave of regressive actions within Africa against the

rights of LGBTQ in recent years, and it has put enormous stress upon the U.S. programs, particularly in HIV/AIDS, where access and protection of these populations is critical to success.

And we have had some very valiant efforts by our folks on the ground managing those programs. And they have shown some results, but the struggle definitely continues. And, as Michelle indicated, we have to be very deft in the way we go about trying to maneuver.

But we are instituting, you know, a $4.5-billion-a-year program bilaterally that does give us some leverage in the way we go about spending that money. And if we see a strong deterioration of rights, it contributes to reignition of the HIV epidemic and related disease. So these things are inextricably tied to one another.

The Chairman. Judd?

Mr. Devermont. Yes, thank you, sir.

If I could just add, in addition to Botswana, the Lusophone countries, Mozambique and Angola, have done a tremendous job, I think, in terms of removing homophobic laws from their books.

But when I think about this issue, in addition to everything my colleagues have said, it is actually a leading indicator of a country that is looking to move towards an autocratic, more authoritarian government.

In anglophone countries, which have homophobic laws on the books, when we start seeing them enforced, that tends to be a sign that they are trying to distract, they are trying to, you know, find an issue that they think is populist and then be able to entrench their rule.

And in francophone countries, where those laws don't exist, they don't have a colonial legacy, when see countries start to proclamate them, that is another sign. And

we just saw that in Chad.

So a number of things come together on this issue, both vulnerability of populations but also what it tells you about a government's own view of its vulnerability and fragility and how it uses this as a wedge issue to regain its control.

Mr. Maloney. Thank you all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. Well, thank you.

I think that was our last member. Val Demings had to go to the markup at the Judiciary Committee. Raja Krishnamoorthi also had to leave.

But I want to thank all four of our witnesses for an extraordinary day of testimony. We really appreciate your many, many years of service to the country and the insights that you shared with us today, which we will certainly take to heart and act on.

So thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Thank you, members.

And this will conclude our virtual hearing. And, with that, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:45 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]