

*Patrick Fine:* Welcome to all our new and returning listeners. I'm Patrick Fine, CEO of FHI 360, and you're listening to *A Deeper Look* podcast.

Before we get started, I'd like to remind you to subscribe to this podcast on SoundCloud, iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts, and please leave a review. We'd love to hear from you.

This year we're taking a deeper look at humanitarian crisis and emergency response, and in this episode, we're going to discuss U.S. and international policy governing humanitarian assistance.

I'm very fortunate to have joining me today one of America's most experienced and respected actors in the realm of international development and humanitarian assistance, Prof. Andrew Natsios.

Andrew, welcome to the podcast.

*Andrew Natsios:* Patrick, it's nice to see you again.

*Patrick Fine:* Listeners who follow U.S. foreign policy will be very familiar with Andrew Natsios. He's been a major force shaping American ideas and initiatives in international development for more than 30 years in senior positions in academia, government and the nonprofit sector.

Currently Andrew is an executive professor at the Bush School of Government and Public Service and director of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs at Texas A&M [University]. Go Aggies.

Prof. Natsios was the Republican representative in the very blue state of Massachusetts. Andrew served in the first Bush administration as the head of the Office of [U.S.] Foreign Disaster Assistance. Following a stint at World Vision, the U.S.'s largest private, faith-based development organization, Andrew returned to Massachusetts. He gained a reputation as a turnaround specialist for rescuing the U.S.'s largest-ever infrastructure project, Boston's Big Dig, which by the way is now a marvelous piece of architecture in the Northeast.

*Andrew Natsios:* At \$15 billion, it should be.

*Patrick Fine:* Well, it's become iconic.

*Andrew Natsios:* Yes, it has. Yes, it has.

He returned to government as the USAID administrator, the head of USAID, in Pres. George W. Bush's administration, where he held the post for five years, one of the longest-serving heads of USAID.

I recall when I was at USAID, Andrew used to describe himself as a career politician, and the USAID career staff would say, "You may be a politician, but your heart and your head is in development," which was a fitting recognition to Andrew's commitment and savvy in dealing with U.S. foreign policy and the U.S. development mission.

Dr. Natsios later served as special envoy to Sudan, where he was instrumental in negotiating the agreement that led to an independent South Sudan. He spent 23 years in the Army Reserve, achieving the rank of lieutenant colonel, and is a veteran of the Gulf War.

He is the author of three books and numerous influential articles on international development, and he is the perfect person to share insight and perspective on America's approach to humanitarian assistance and emergency response.

Andrew, I think it's fair to say that we're in a period of profound change and transition in the world, and in how the U.S. sees its role in the world. Do you agree, and what does it mean for U.S. policy on development and humanitarian assistance?

*Andrew Natsios:*

I think there are three critical periods since 1940 or since the Second World War. One was the immediate aftermath of the war when the international system and the global economy was created, basically by Harry Truman; Sen. Arthur Vandenberg from Michigan, a Republican; and George Marshall, when they designed NATO, the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and made a commitment to free trade and an open trading system that was rule-based.

The second period was when the Soviet Union collapsed.

*Patrick Fine:*

And that was in 1989.

*Andrew Natsios:*

That's correct. And then the third period we're going through now, and I have to say I am very troubled by what I see. And I think people personalize this, and they see this embodied in President

Trump. But President Trump is simply responding to what he sees as trends that are going through all of the Western democracies now in a very unhelpful way.

And there are four trends in the United States which are very dangerous, because the last time we saw these at this level of intensity is in the 1930s, and it led to the Second World War. No one intended that, but that's what happened.

The first is ultra-nationalism. Nationalism and love of country and patriotism is fine. I'm a patriot.

*Patrick Fine:* So am I.

*Andrew Natsios:* And I love America. However, when you get carried away with it, you have what happened in Europe in the 1930s.

Two, you have protectionism. Now we've had protectionism with the labor unions on the left and the right. The far right and the far left have always been protectionist. However, now we're seeing it in policy.

*Patrick Fine:* And we've seen just in January this year the imposition of new tariffs.

*Andrew Natsios:* Tariffs, exactly. If we start having trade wars, that's very dangerous because it'll collapse the global trading system.

The third trend is nativism, anti-immigrant feeling. And look, I do think that our border area with Mexico is a huge problem, and it's not just because of immigration. It's because that's where the drugs come across. There are criminals that come across.

But there are a lot of poor people who are simply escaping violence in Central America and Mexico that are very legitimate. But they are not here legally. I understand that. We need to deal with that issue. But now we're talking about making legal immigration illegal. I wouldn't be here, and neither would you. In fact, three-quarters of the United States wouldn't be here if we had very restrictive immigration laws. I ask people often, "Do you have an iPhone?" If you have an iPhone, you are dependent on Steve Jobs' genius, who started Apple.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Andrew Natsios:* And who is Steve Jobs' father? He's a Sunni Muslim immigrant from Syria.

*Patrick Fine:* Is that right?

*Andrew Natsios:* That is correct. People do not know that because he was put up for adoption, but genetically he is half Sunni, or he was, half Sunni Muslim.

So, another thing, if you use Bose earphones, I never knew who Bose was. I thought it was an acronym. Mr. Bose is an immigrant from India who went to MIT and got a Ph.D. He employs 30,000 people in Massachusetts, my home state. Those are very important jobs. It's the finest technology for earphones, and he invented it. He's an Indian immigrant.

*Patrick Fine:* I have had Bose speakers since I was in college.

*Andrew Natsios:* Well, you can thank Mr. Bose – Dr. Bose – for that.

*Patrick Fine:* I have brand loyalty. *[Laughs]*

*Andrew Natsios:* Yes. So, we should be a little careful about talking about immigrants since that's where most of us come from. Now my family came here a hundred years ago. I did have someone in Massachusetts once say, "Why don't you go back where you came from?"

And I said, "You mean Holliston where I was brought up?"

He said, "No, Greece."

I said, "I'm third generation. We've been here a hundred years. How long do you have to be here before you're an American?"

So, there's always a nativist prejudice in the United States, but it's always been repressed, and now it's dangerous, because some of the most gifted and skilled people in the world come here, and that's what moves the economy.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Andrew Natsios:* It's created millions of jobs. So, it's very dangerous.

*Patrick Fine:* Economic dynamism.

*Andrew Natsios:* Economic dynamism is heavily dependent on immigrants, not just poor immigrants but highly educated immigrants. And the message to everyone is, "If you're a foreigner, and I don't care what degree you have, we don't want you." That is a very, very dangerous message for the American economy and for the United States.

And the fourth trend is isolationism, that we're going to withdraw from international institutions that we created and that have created a stable world order over the last 70 years. There is a book by a guy named Pinker, who wrote a book on violence, and we are living, people don't believe this, but we are living through the least violent period in the last 5,000 years of world history. And he makes a historical case. The book is a thousand pages thick, something like that, and he goes historically through evidence to show that this is the most peaceful time in world history even though people don't believe that.

And the second thing is it's the most prosperous period. This is the first time that the number of people in the middle class has massively grown since the World War II in the American system that we created. We should be very proud of what we've done, and to abandon that system now in my view is reckless and very dangerous.

*Patrick Fine:* It also points out that we're living in a period of contradictions because just as there is less absolute poverty than at any time in human history, there are also more displaced people and a greater level of disruptive humanitarian crises than at any time in human history.

*Andrew Natsios:* In history. That is correct, 65 million people. It is going up because the chaos is spreading.

*Patrick Fine:* You attribute this spreading chaos to these trends that you've just enumerated: isolationism, nativism?

*Andrew Natsios:* I do because – yes, because – well, there are other trends going on, certainly the radical Islamic threat that's destabilizing Muslim societies. I mean, in Ethiopia, the Sufi Muslims help the Christians build their churches, and the Christians help the Sufi Muslims build their mosques.

They've gotten along for a thousand years until now, and these radicals are now spreading very violent ideas which are inconsistent with modern theological teaching in Islam and are very dangerous, in my view. We didn't cause that, but it's

happening, and it's facilitating this chaos that's spreading. But the problem is, in the past the United States would step into the breach with the Europeans and Canadians, Australians, Japanese, and we would start an international organized effort to stop this. The view now is we need to violently stop, I mean using military force, which we have to do, some of these terrorist groups. However, you have to have a rebuilding effort afterwards or the chaos will just start again. You can't separate American foreign policy from the humanitarian and development component of it because that in some ways is what creates the stability.

*Patrick Fine:* One of the policy directions that I hear the administration talking about now is the use of hard power. They've been pretty explicit, saying that they're for hard power, not soft power. Where do you see that taking us in terms of the U.S. providing leadership on humanitarian response?

*Andrew Natsios:* Well, we're still providing it. In fact, the OFDA Food for Peace budgets are the highest level they've been in history, actually.

Those are the offices that deal with emergency response within USAID, which is of course our foreign aid agency. But that is, that is not where OMB wants to move. OMB is cutting all those budgets, or attempting to. Congress, including the Republicans, are restoring those budgets.

The military wants a strong [US]AID. Jim Mattis said that before he was secretary of defense, and he's said it since, over and over and over again.

I just finished writing a 450-page book called *Guns Are Not Enough: Foreign Aid and the National Interest*. And I've been working on it for eight years, and now it's more appropriate than ever.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Andrew Natsios:* And it looks at how [US]AID is managed internally, why [US]AID looks like it does, why our humanitarian assistance program looks like it does. What are the internal forces within the U.S. political system that have shaped, for better or for worse, how our aid programs are run?

*Patrick Fine:* So why does our humanitarian assistance program look like it does?

- Andrew Natsios:* Well, it is the one part of our budget that has consistently grown over 30 years. When I ran the Office of [U.S.] Foreign Disaster Assistance, we were spending around \$50 million a year with 45 staff. That budget is now \$2 billion with 708 staff in OFDA.
- Patrick Fine:* Right, and even if you look [at] last year under the Trump administration when there was this move to slash the budget for foreign assistance, humanitarian assistance actually got [a] \$1 billion increase.
- Andrew Natsios:* It did. In a supplemental budget, and the president signed it. If he didn't like it, he wouldn't have signed it. So, there is a consistent support on the far right, the far left, the main establishment parties, and the American people for humanitarian assistance, and there has been for a long time.
- Patrick Fine:* But it continues to be under attack by OMB. So, I've heard that the administration's request for its fiscal year '19 budget – so that starts in October of this year – again requests a sharp decrease in funding for international development and humanitarian assistance.
- Andrew Natsios:* Yes.
- Patrick Fine:* Do you think that that consensus that you're referring to will hold in the face of repeated attempts by the administration to reduce not just the resources, but reduce America's role as a leader in humanitarian assistance?
- Andrew Natsios:* I don't know what's going to happen, but I am troubled by it because these trends, it's sort of like a wave that's gathering power. Now, in the 1930s, what led to these trends that I mentioned – these four trends – that accelerated and that led to the catastrophe of the Second World War was the Great Depression.
- We are now in the opposite position. These trends may actually be a function right now of the recession we have just come out of. In fact, I went back to American history going back to the 1790s, and we have had four or five major economic shocks in American history. And after each one of them, there were protectionist sentiments, anti-immigrant sentiments and isolationist sentiments.
- After the First World War, I mean, people don't remember how aggressive the anti-immigrant feeling was then. When the Great Depression took place, the same thing. The Smoot-Hawley Tariff and then the immigration legislation that was extremely restrictive was put in place. And that happened in the 19th century, too.

I think this could be an aftermath of that, and now that the international system is beginning to boom economically, it may be that these trends will go away.

Alexis de Tocqueville is the great French intellectual historian who lived in America, I don't know, six or eight years in the 1830s, and he wrote a famous book which kids used to read – I make my students read it – *Democracy in America*. His observations about democracy in America are the same now. All the stuff he wrote is ...

*Patrick Fine:* Still relevant.

*Andrew Natsios:* That's right. He even said our big rival would be Russia. This is in the 1830s. So, he said in his book, famously, "Democracies don't do well in foreign policy because they can't carry out a broad strategic vision over a long period of time consistently and strategically."

The one exception to that is after the Second World War, because the Soviet Union was seen as a threat by the mass of American people, that both parties said, "We can't let Stalinist communism take over after we just defeated Hitler. It's not acceptable. It's an ongoing threat." And so, we had a coherent foreign policy even though there were debates.

Now I'm not sure people understand what all the threats are, and I don't think people understand what will happen if the global trading system starts to unravel.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Andrew Natsios:* If it does, we're going to see famines because some countries that are very rich can't feed themselves unless they buy food on the international markets. If we start shutting down our food system, global food system, we cannot feed seven-and-a-half billion people by family farms. You need large farms to feed that many people with a population of that size, and you have to have a free trading system to do that.

*Patrick Fine:* You mentioned that the U.S. military is a strong supporter for the U.S. to play a leading role in both development and humanitarian response.



One of the trends that I've seen at the service-delivery level is humanitarian workers have become to be seen by some combatants as legitimate targets. So, in the past, humanitarian aid workers were seen as neutral parties, and they could deliver services to people regardless of what side of the conflict people were on.

*Andrew Natsios:* Right.

*Patrick Fine:* Now they're being targeted as combatants. How do you see that trend affecting the way the U.S. and the international community respond to humanitarian crises?

*Andrew Natsios:* Well, we have even more evidence than simply a few incidents. We tracked, when I was the [US]AID administrator, the number of [US]AID partner organization workers who were murdered – not died in accidents, not died from a disease, but were murdered – in Afghanistan and Iraq. And we lost four or five hundred in Iraq, and we've lost something like 800 in Afghanistan.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Andrew Natsios:* We've never had those kind of – in Africa, in all the civil wars and the famines, we might have lost ten or 12 people. People get killed by accident or there's some guerilla soldier who starts shooting and someone gets hit. But they didn't target aid workers in Africa, sub-Saharan Africa.

So, what we saw in Iraq and Afghanistan is a dangerous trend, but some of it comes from us integrating the three Ds: the development, defense and diplomacy, instruments of national power. Operationally in the field, when you start doing that, you have consequences, and that's one of them.

Now is that going to change the fact that any president – because this happened under President Obama more actually than under President Bush. So, this is not a function of who the president is, but how we see our instruments of national power.

I think too much of what State and DOD see in the aid programs is what I would call an instrumentalization of aid, which is it's a means toward an end instead of an end in itself.

*Patrick Fine:* And the new national security strategy actually describes that in some detail. I mean, it's very explicit that the reason the U.S. will provide international assistance and humanitarian assistance is purely as an instrument of U.S. power.

*Patrick Fine:* Right. And we have done that, but we haven't been so explicit. And that space between what we said publicly and what the reality is allowed us some independence. I'm arguing in this book that I have written, by instrumentalizing aid – in other words, making it a means to an end rather than an end in itself – we actually damage its use as an instrument of national power. It's less successful.

*Patrick Fine:* And is that going to come back also to affect that coalition of interests that support aid?

*Andrew Natsios:* Well, see, that's the problem. During the Cold War, we had a coalition of realists in foreign policy who do see aid as an instrument of national power in a parochial sense, a narrow sense, versus liberal internationalists who for the sake of just wanting to save the world – I think they got carried away in some cases by saying, "We're going to fix the whole world with American aid," which is, in my view, preposterous.

So, the left gets carried away, and the right gets carried away. But it was a coalition that supported aid.

*Patrick Fine:* And some of those sentiments cut across parties.

*Andrew Natsios:* They do. Oh, absolutely.

*Patrick Fine:* So, you had Republican members who argued – for example, faith-based organizations that argued the moral case – that we have a moral responsibility as well as a national self-interest.

*Andrew Natsios:* And so, this is a very complex situation in terms of the motivation. When you say what America does, what's the message we're sending? Well, we're a country of 320 million people. We don't send one message, particularly in a democracy with a U.S. Congress that's elected and presidents who change parties all the time and people in the administration who disagree on stuff.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Andrew Natsios:* President Bush, W., a very devout Christian, he saw the ethical dimension of this. And so, he made clear when I started, he basically said, "We are not going to use food aid as a weapon of diplomacy, end of discussion. Don't even bring it up."

Now, we have to admit, and I argue this, that for us to say that there are no political implications to our aid programs, even if

they're ends in themselves, is nonsense. I'll give you an example. There is no strategic interest in ending the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa. What effect has it had politically? It's made the U.S. very popular. George Bush is very popular in sub-Saharan Africa.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Andrew Natsios:* He is seen as stopping the pandemic. Now, does that have an effect? Yes, it does. It's easier for political leaders to ally themselves with the United States because of our humanitarian programs improving the image of the United States. Now, did we do it for that? No. Is it having that effect? Yes, it is.

*Patrick Fine:* You know, it also makes it easier for U.S. business to establish relationships in the countries that have benefited from the partnership that the U.S. has had to address HIV/AIDS.

*Andrew Natsios:* I'll tell you, our aid program has underscored the great moral principles underlying American democracy, and I think we've been a beacon of hope for the world. And our emphasis on human rights and the protection of individual life underscores our democracy. And that's a wonderful ideal around the world.

So, it means we have more influence. I'll give you another example. After the great tsunami that hit Indonesia, Aceh was destroyed. A hundred and twenty-five thousand people died in a few minutes literally because of a tidal wave from an earthquake in the ocean. This was in December of 2004. We ran a huge aid program because of the whole Indian Ocean, but particularly in Indonesia. A massive response, and we dominated it.

The U.S. military was there, [US]AID was in there, and the "USAID from the American People," the logo. Our poll ratings before the tsunami in Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, were pretty low. We had a 28 percent approval rating. Bin Laden had a 58 percent approval rating in Indonesia.

Three months later, we had a 63 percent approval rating, and Bin Laden's poll ratings collapsed to 26 percent. The CIA told me Bin Laden was extremely upset at what happened to his poll ratings in Indonesia.

*Patrick Fine:* That's a great example of doing well by doing good.

*Andrew Natsios:* That's exactly correct. So, we can't say that our programs have no implications. Now this is the argument I make. They do have

political implications. They have diplomatic implications. However, if you want an aid program, you can't subordinate it tactically/operationally in the field to the Defense Department and the State. That's why we need an independent USAID. And if you're a realist in foreign policy, that's the best position to take because the programs work better when they leave us alone and let us run the programs based on good development principles.

*Patrick Fine:* Right. And then that results in stronger relationships, more influence, more access for our businesses.

*Andrew Natsios:* And a more stable country.

*Patrick Fine:* And a more stable ... so that's the win-win scenario.

*Andrew Natsios:* Exactly correct.

*Patrick Fine:* If you look at the positions that the U.S. is taking today, applying it to humanitarian crises, where you're dealing with fragile states and with disrupted societies, do you see us pursuing that win-win strategy?

*Andrew Natsios:* No, we're not pursuing it. When you say "us," you mean the executive branch in the White House, right?

*Patrick Fine:* Well, I mean the United States.

*Andrew Natsios:* But the U.S. Congress is part of the U.S. government, and the U.S. Congress does not agree with that position.

*Patrick Fine:* Well, and there's civil society as well.

*Andrew Natsios:* Exactly, exactly.

*Patrick Fine:* So, you pointed out that we've continued to fund humanitarian response and that we continue to be the world leader in responding to complex emergencies. And there are many examples we could point to that are active today in the Sahel, in Northern Nigeria, in Yemen, Afghanistan.

*Andrew Natsios:* In South Sudan.

What we need, Patrick, in addition to the resources, we need leadership from the secretary of state and the president.

I'll just tell you one story. It's a good story.

There was a famine going on in Ethiopia in 1990, and I was negotiating with the EPLF, the rebel movement that now is in power in Eritrea, with the Mengistu government, who were basically a communist government that was killing its own people. It was a brutal regime. Mengistu was the head of it. There was risk of hundreds of thousands of deaths, and they would not let us move food into the port of Massawa. I was in charge of this aid effort. This was 28 years ago. And I was failing.

So, we sent a note to President Bush, 41, and we said, "We're failing, and these people are going to die."

President Bush called Mikhail Gorbachev and said, "Your client state, who you provide \$700 million in arms a year in Ethiopia, is stonewalling the relief effort, and all these people are going to die." He said, "Would you please call him up?"

And he did, and he threatened him. He said, "I will stop all arms shipments to Ethiopia tomorrow if you do not open those ports up to the [US]AID aid."

And he announced two weeks later, Mengistu: "For humanitarian reasons, we have decided to open the ports."

*Patrick Fine:* That is a great story, and it has real echoes to today.

*Andrew Natsios:* Yes.

*Patrick Fine:* So, just in January, you have the worst humanitarian crisis in a generation in Yemen.

*Andrew Natsios:* In order to defeat Iran, Saudi Arabia had a blockade of the ports, and it was causing starvation.

*Patrick Fine:* And then suddenly Saudi Arabia announces that it's going to open humanitarian corridors. It's going to lift the blockade. It's going to open the port so that humanitarian aid can get through.

*Andrew Natsios:* Because President Trump opposed the blockade. So, the point is presidential leadership counts, and I am hoping that the president will begin to feel proud and that he will start doing that in other places and realize the greatest effort to uphold the American image in the world is our aid programs, and cutting them is not going to do that.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Andrew Natsios:* It's going to damage them. But we'll see. I am skeptical, but I'm willing to keep an open mind. We'll see how things evolve. It certainly does not appear that they're shifting their position by what OMB is proposing, and I am deeply troubled by it.

*Patrick Fine:* It still looks to me like the policy position of this administration with respect to humanitarian response is that the U.S. provides 30 percent of the total official response, not counting what Americans ...

*Andrew Natsios:* Give privately, sure.

*Patrick Fine:* ... faith-based and private organizations do, and that there needs to be more burden-sharing, that the other countries in the world need to do a larger share of supporting humanitarian response.

And what I wonder is, what role does the administration see and what is the likely role of the emerging economies like China and India and Brazil? They've all set up development agencies.

*Andrew Natsios:* Yes, they have.

*Patrick Fine:* But I don't seem them playing significant roles in humanitarian response. It looks from the outside like they're pursuing a very transactional approach to providing assistance to open markets, to secure resources.

*Andrew Natsios:* That's right. It's a business undertaking.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

There are nine schools of development that evolved since World War II as to why some countries develop and some countries don't. One of the theories is the theory of modernization, which W.W. Rostow came out with a book in 1960 I think on this, and it's still read. We now realize that he's partially right. You need infrastructure. You need roads and bridges and dams and electrical power and ports if you want to develop, but you need institutions, which are actually more important than anything else. The Chinese are only doing infrastructure, and that infrastructure is going to deteriorate unless you have institutions to maintain it.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Patrick Fine:* Do you see any effort by the international community to involve China and the other emerging powers in humanitarian response?

*Andrew Natsios:* We've tried to, and they have been uninterested. Now I have to say the exception now is if you look at the emergency response, Turkey is the second largest donor.

*Patrick Fine:* Oh, that's true, and they have the largest number of refugees, I believe.

*Andrew Natsios:* Yes, and that's why. The reason is they're caring for all these people from Syria and Iraq who are in Turkey and the Gulf States and Saudi have provided some assistance to Turkey to help pay for this.

So, it is true that some of the Arab states that are affected directly by these chaotic conditions are investing more, but that is really a parochial effort.

*Patrick Fine:* Right. I sometimes wonder if you look at efforts by the Chinese or what you were just describing, whether they simply haven't learned the lessons that the U.S. and Europe learned in the '60s and '70s, because we made a lot of those same mistakes.

*Andrew Natsios:* Absolutely correct, yes. And that is exactly what it is.

And my response has been, I would suggest you look at the history of this because you are making the same mistakes we made 50 years ago, and you're going to have to correct them or countries are going to throw you out later on."

*Patrick Fine:* Right, right. It has long – it has long-term consequences.

*Andrew Natsios:* Exactly, exactly.

*Patrick Fine:* So, we'll probably see some evolution over time.

*Andrew Natsios:* I think we will see evolution. But not talking to them is not an option. We need to talk to them and try to bring them into the system. And I have to say, we have given up on infrastructure, which was a mistake.

*Patrick Fine:* Terrible.

- Andrew Natsios:* The Chinese are filling it because we stopped doing it, and we stopped doing it for the wrong reasons, in my view.
- Patrick Fine:* So, we've talked about the fact that the world today is facing tremendous humanitarian challenges and that the number of people who are displaced is larger than ever before and that these crises go on longer than they went on in the past.
- Andrew Natsios:* Absolutely.
- Patrick Fine:* Do you think that the system, the international system, so the UN system, the combination of multilaterals and bilaterals, is up to dealing with the evolving nature of the crises we're seeing?
- Andrew Natsios:* Well, I wrote a book, my first book, in 1997 called *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, and that's from the Book of Revelations: famines, war, atrocities and then –
- Patrick Fine:* Pestilence.
- Andrew Natsios:* And pestilence, that's right. Epidemics. It was about emergency response and the U.S. system. And I reread it the other day. I was rereading, and I would say two-thirds of it is all still true, but a third of it is not true because the UN system and [US]AID have evolved.
- Patrick Fine:* And gotten better, in your view?
- Andrew Natsios:* Yeah, we've gotten much better. We just used to distribute food aid. Now we distribute money to people to buy food, which is a much more efficient system, and Congress created a whole account as a result of our efforts.
- Patrick Fine:* ... and that's one of the most important reforms over the last 20 years, in the way the U.S. has approached emergency response.
- Andrew Natsios:* Yes.
- Patrick Fine:* So, we're seeing a lot more use of direct cash transfers to refugees and displaced people. It allows them to be more self-reliant, to make decisions that are more responsive to their immediate conditions, and it's more efficient.
- Andrew Natsios:* And much faster.
- Patrick Fine:* And better use of resources.



- Andrew Natsios:* Yes, and when people buy stuff in the local markets, they're stimulating economic activity, which restores the damage done to the economy by the chaos and the civil war.
- Patrick Fine:* And contributes to stability in that place.
- Andrew Natsios:* Exactly, exactly. It makes great sense, and we now have a \$900 million account in [US]AID that Food for Peace runs, which by the way OMB ...
- Patrick Fine:* For local purchase?
- Andrew Natsios:* Yes.
- Andrew Natsios:* It's almost as big as the regular Food for Peace account.
- Patrick Fine:* Right. And we now have tools, because of the digital revolution, which makes it much easier to do direct cash transfer, to do direct purchase in local markets, with a high level of accountability.
- Andrew Natsios:* Exactly.
- Andrew Natsios:* This is not new. Herbert Hoover saved at least ten million people's lives in World War I.
- Patrick Fine:* Where?
- Andrew Natsios:* In Europe.
- Patrick Fine:* There was a U.S. humanitarian response?
- Andrew Natsios:* Massive program, ten times bigger than anything we run now.
- Patrick Fine:* Is that right?
- Andrew Natsios:* You know who the three most revered figures in Europe between the two wars? Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Herbert Hoover. Now we blame him for the Great Depression. He is the greatest humanitarian figure in the 20th century in the United States. He did the same thing in the Volga famine in the early '20s. He was secretary of commerce under President Coolidge. Lenin was still in power, and Stalin, and they started interfering in the relief effort during the Volga famine. And Hoover said, "If you keep interfering, I will withdraw everybody, and we'll take all the food and go home. And you know what will happen."

And they were so scared of what the political implications could be if the famine – it already killed a million people – got completely out of hand. They left them alone because he threatened them.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Andrew Natsios:* And the U.S. Congress appropriated the money under Calvin Coolidge to feed Russians after the communists took over. He did the same thing in Russia and Eastern Europe after the Second World War, again with appropriations from the U.S. Congress. So, we've been doing this for a hundred years, literally. It's exactly a hundred years this year.

*Patrick Fine:* Yes, 1918.

*Andrew Natsios:* We should have a ...

*Patrick Fine:* Yeah, some sort of commemoration of that.

*Andrew Natsios:* Absolutely. And so, America has a long history of this.

*Patrick Fine:* Well, and it's another illustration of how humanitarian response can create the conditions for long-term positive relationships amongst people, communities and states.

*Andrew Natsios:* Exactly, exactly.

*Patrick Fine:* Andrew, thanks very much for sharing your perspective and your experience and some great stories about the role that the U.S. has played in providing humanitarian response, some of the challenges that you see on the horizon, and your commitment and your passion to the importance of the U.S. continuing to be a leader in this area.

*Andrew Natsios:* Thank you for inviting me.

*Patrick Fine:* Great conversation.

*Patrick Fine:* Also, I'd like to thank everybody who's joined us today. If you want to share your thoughts about what we've been discussing today, or if there are questions or topics that you think that we should be addressing on this podcast, please let us know. You can add a comment on SoundCloud or iTunes.

I also invite you to listen to previous episodes of *A Deeper Look* from both this season, dealing with humanitarian crisis and emergency response, or last season, where we dealt with the sustainable development goals. Throughout this year, we'll continue to explore pressing issues related to humanitarian crises. Join us next month for another episode of *A Deeper Look*.