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CHALLENGES FACING THE HORN OF AFRICA

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

MR. O'HANLON: Greetings, everyone, and welcome to Brookings. What a treat to see you all in this auditorium. Thanks for coming out on this beautiful spring day. I'm Mike O'Hanlon. And along with my colleague, Vanda Felbab-Brown, we run the Africa Security Initiative.

And we're very pleased today to convene an event with your participation, as well as the audience that's watching virtually and remotely, on the Horn of Africa. And a region that, of course, is extraordinarily important, has some of the largest and most consequential countries in Africa; also, some of the countries with the greatest promise, but also the greatest difficulty. And often, in a single country, you may have both promise and peril at the same time. And I'm thinking there, perhaps, first and foremost, of Ethiopia, but hardly the only one.

Just for definitional purposes, and before I introduce our distinguished guests, and then we'll -- or featured panelists, and then hand the baton to Vanda who will conduct the main conversation for the first hour of our session. After which, we look forward to your questions, as well as virtual questions. But just to frame what we're talking about today, we are thinking of the Horn of Africa, both in a broader, and more restrictive sense.

The broader concept might be thought of as eight countries that also include not only Somalia, Ethiopia, and both Sudans, but also Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, and Uganda, which is how the African Union thinks about this in the definition of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which is where our distinguished guest, hailing from the great nation of Ethiopia, his nation of origin, and Djibouti, is -- and I will introduce Dr. Workneh in just a second with a little bit more of a full preparation and the introduction that he deserves. But that's where he's based, and that's the region that he covers.

Jeffrey Feltman took a little bit more of a specific definition in most of his travails and efforts in the Horn of Africa, focusing largely on Ethiopia and Sudan. But of course, this inner region of the Horn is often also defined as including the other Sudan,

South Sudan, and Somalia. I just wanted to frame that for you. And Vanda, of course, with her questions and conversation, will hone in on the dynamics, different relationships, and different countries within that broad block.

As I wrap up here, let me now say a couple of words about each of our panelists. Actually, let me start with Jeffrey Feltman, because he is part of the team here at Brookings. But for much of the last year, he was also President Biden's envoy for the Horn of Africa, trying to address a number of the challenges that we'll get into in conversation, including the civil conflict within Ethiopia. Which, until recently, had been one of Africa's great countries of promise. And hopefully, we'll return to that status.

And those are my words, not anybody else's on the panel. But that's how I see it from my amateur 30,000-foot perspective. But also, of course, ongoing challenges with threats to civilian rule in Sudan with ongoing civil conflict in South Sudan, and with ongoing anarchy of various sorts and flavors in Somalia.

So, it's a region that has a lot of different characteristics, a lot of different problems, but still a sense of regional connectedness in terms of diplomacy in terms of economics, in terms of some of the conflicts spilling over borders or being fueled by interstate dynamics. But also, one hopes in terms of opportunity and promise for the future.

Our distinguished guest, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu is an Ethiopian by origin. He has served as Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, as well as its Minister of Transport. He hails from the region of Oromia, but has also, of course, obviously worked on behalf of the entire country, and has distinguished himself during this period when I think Ethiopia was showing such remarkable promise throughout much of the 2010s with growth rates in GDP often approaching 10 percent a year.

Really one of the great success stories and hopeful stories of Africa. And we can only hope that he will return -- or his country will return to that kind of trajectory soon. But his responsibilities now are region-wide, and on behalf of the IGAD of the African Union. And so, it's really, Doctor, a great privilege to have you here. I should say that his education

includes a PhD in Criminology from South Africa.

Jeffrey Feltman's background includes hailing from the great Buckeye State and going to school at Ball State, winding up at Tufts University, but then spending a quarter century in the United States Foreign Service. Ultimately, Hillary Clinton's Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East. And then for six years, the Undersecretary for Political Affairs at the United Nations. And we've been pleased to have him as a colleague here at Brookings now for about four years, with the partial exception of that leave of absence to be the special envoy just recently.

So, thank you for indulging me as I tried to frame the discussion and introduce the panelists. But before I hand the baton to Vanda, maybe we could have a round of applause for our distinguished guests, Dr. Workneh, and Dr. Feltman. (Applause)

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Your Excellency, thank you so much for joining us. Ambassador Feltman, it's terrific to have you back with us to be able to have this conversation.

Your Excellency, let me start with a few questions to you about Somalia. We have just gone through the very important presidential elections in the country that put a cap on a year of an acute political crisis between former President Mohamed and his political rivals. Acute political crisis that at various times last year threatened to tip Somalia into a civil war.

But on Sunday, we have closed both the long-overdue election and the complex process of indirect selection, election, of -- ultimately, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as president. Mr. Mohamud is returning to the presidency. He was president of Somalia from 2012 to 2017.

And what we have seen in the process of the elections are the continuing complex dynamics between the Hawiye and Darod, and the sub-clans like Marehan, between political leadership contestation, between the diaspora and non-diaspora members of leadership in Somalia, and a whole set of deep, unresolved issues that continue today

regarding the distribution of power, armed forces, resources between dominant and minority clans, between the federal government in Mogadishu, and federal member states.

What is your reflection on the election, and what are the key issues that President Mohamud will need to be tackling very rapidly as he takes on the burden of leadership in Somalia again?

MR. GEBEYEHU: Thank you very much. Thank you. For all of us, good afternoon. I'm very happy to be asked this very important question. It is very fresh to our mind. And also, in fact, the issue of Somalia is an issue for a long time for any diplomat or for international security experts or the government.

As IGAD Executive Secretary, I can say this. For us, the past six, seven months after the Somalis start to compete for the election, was very volatile situation in the country -- within and from outside.

Number one, there was a furious competition, which you said it, in terms of clan or whatever it is. There is also a furious competition within the government of the President Farmaajo as well. That sometimes leads us to not only political challenge, but also, it leads to a security challenge, which we, from the outside, that always Al-Shabaab is waiting to exploit it.

So, that recent event we were monitoring, we were working with the government, with the institutions, with civil societies, as well as with international organizations on this issue. So, we were very curious about the process of the election. Having in mind, Somalia, once a collapsed city-state, all the fragility is there, security threat is there. Al-Shabaab still can take any action in the center of Somalia, including near to Villa Somalia.

With all these challenges, Somalian leadership convened their process of selecting, electing their president. So, the outcome was not for all of the practitioners, for the analysts, for the politicians, it was not the expected result in terms of the person who is president now.

But in terms of the process, in terms of all the experiences and the peacefulness of that process is a big encouragement for our region. And also, we were saying that Somalia was at the crossroad of history, whether to go back to the collapse it was before, or to go the next stage, which is going to be the election which is going to be conducted by the people of Somalia.

So, it is one of a good news which we hear from the Horn of Africa, in terms of the reason. And also, the response from the international community was also very commending. Everybody was congratulating the leadership.

And also, it is good to remind that in some African countries, it may be difficult to unseat the incumbent president with this kind of election. So, that happened in Somalia. So, it's really a very positive development. That should be consolidated in terms of peace and security and institutional building. Thank you very much.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: You mentioned Al-Shabaab and insecurity. And as Somalia was going through the complex process of changing the presidency and electing or selecting a new parliament as well, there has been another shift underway. And that is way from the African Union AMISOM mission, that for the past decade, was critical for preventing further expansion of Al-Shabaab to a new mission.

And one of the reasons why this transition was taking place -- African Union team that is called ATMIS, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia -- was because there was a sense among donors, international partners, as well as many Somalis, that the security situation was steadily deteriorating, that Shabab's reach became bigger and bigger. You mentioned close to Villa Somalia, in various parts of the country.

And meanwhile, AMISOM mission was repeatedly extended. It was expiring in December, yet offensive operations were not taking place. And the objective of handing security functions, offensive and defensive, to Somali forces like the Somali National Army, has been elusive. The Somali National Army still suffers from critical problems running the entire gamut from force generation to logistics to conducting even very basic defensive

operations.

Now, we are with the new mission ATMIS that's supposed to last until 2024. By which time, it's supposed to go down to zero from maybe 20,000, and hand power over and security responsibility over to Somali National Forces.

What are some of the key elements that need to take place so that we don't end up with ATMIS with the same problems that we had with AMISOM, the inability to hand over to anyone, stalemated, deteriorating battlefield, increasing power of Shabab, and frankly, a sense, last fall, that if AMISOM was simply withdrawn as it was supposed to end, we would see Somalia falling to Al-Shabaab in the same way that Afghanistan fell to the Taliban?

MR. GEBEYEHU: Yeah. Now, as I said earlier, definitely, now, also, the most important actors in Somalian political process as well as security apparatus, and also for the future, the most important actors should be the people of Somalia.

Previously, you know, I have to commend the politicians with all the difficulties, the challenges that were happened in Somalia. Finally, they agreed to make these kinds of things. And finally, all of them congratulated the president, who is now an elected president or selected president. So, that should be a political wisdom in all measurements in Africa.

So, in terms of security, still, now, for the next president, the elected president, the major challenge is going to be security. Not only security, the drought situation in the region is one of the daring situations, which, millions of the people in the region are facing food insecurity and some of them are even starvation.

In terms of ATMIS or the peacekeeping element in the region, the challenge that we were facing -- even if in some region of the country AMISOM was not popular, but generally, AMISOM and the new one, ATMIS, is also in charge of the peace and security. Even this election was conducted under the patronage of these peacekeeping forces. So, it's a very important force, which no one has replaced that force, still, now, in terms of

keeping peace and security in the region.

But when we are going to give the chance to strong the institutions of Somalia? Ultimately, the Somalian institutions are going to be in charge of their own country. And also, now, we are facing the issue of budget, as well as the issue which European Union is paying more than 90 percent of the budget of this force.

So, now, we are going to enter to the competition of resource, because, you know, the world already is now -- the issue of Ukraine is there, and a lot of resource competition, which may hamper effectively helping the Somalian institutions to take over the security by themselves.

So, still, this peacekeeping force is very important. Still, the security situation will remain under this force, but slowly but surely -- already, United Nations Security Council has decided this is going to be until 2024. So, until 2024, what we are going to do on the security institution of Somalia is the most important question, I think, if I got your question.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Indeed. And I would just sort of add here that of course, part of the problems of generating the Somali National Forces has been often a tension between Mogadishu and federal member states as they have been forming, and a sense that the Somali National Army -- mostly a conglomeration of clan-based militias -- is often as much of a threat to federal member states as it is a benefit in countering Al-Shabaab.

So, one of the issues that President Mohamud will be facing is how to assure states that the security forces generated at the national level are to their benefit and not a threat to them.

I am very glad that you mentioned the horrific situation with respect to the drought. And just to get our viewership some sense of numbers of the real challenge and potential catastrophe we are talking about, as it is right now, we have maybe 1.4 million malnourished children in Somalia. 70 percent of them are not going to school because of



the drought.

700,000 people have been displaced in Somalia because of the drought and are moving to new areas looking for basic food, basic water. In 2011, when we had another drought, 260,000 people died. And more than half of them were kids under the age of six.

What needs to be done now so we avoid, so we do not end up with such catastrophic numbers? What needs to happen on responding to the unfolding humanitarian situation right now?

MR. GEBEYEHU: Thank you very much. This is also now a very important agenda in our region. Last week, we were discussing with regional ministers of agriculture and the people who are in charge of drought resilience. All member states, the number, the figure tell us that more than 40 million people of the region at this time is food insecure. That number definitely will rise because of the challenges -- the drought is already continuing for the fourth consecutive year.

That region is facing a very acute drought. Not only that, last year and before last year -- without forgetting the challenge of COVID, which already totally changed the world -- but the peculiar for the Horn of Africa is the issue of locust and as well as flooding, which has taken significant number of the crops of the farmers. Which is still -- the region is living with it. Which, we didn't want the war against this flood and as well as the locust invasion.

The conflict situation is there in most of the countries in our region in one way or other way. There are conflicts which exacerbate the situation as well, and displacement of the people from their home to another part or somewhere outside. Which is also -- all these complications made the region the cocktail of a lot of challenges.

Despite of the world is focused on the challenges in conflict in Europe, in Ukraine, still, our region still needs the attention of the world. Otherwise, 40 million people -- we are talking about 40 million people of the region, which is a very significant amount of number in terms of persons in the region in their drought situation.

So, this is really a real challenge, which needs -- not the effort of the region. We tried to mobilize resources with all our member states as well. But the amount of the resource we mobilized and the challenge that the region is facing is like this, and we cannot compare it. even if I don't want to put it in terms of number. But that is really very scary in terms of mobilizing resources.

So, this is the situation that I was discussing, we were discussing last week with the ministers in charge of agriculture and drought situation in the region.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Ambassador Feltman, drought, locust, floods, have been all part of the terrible humanitarian situation in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia. But of course, with the very added significant challenge of the civil war there. And the difficulties of getting humanitarian aid to the Tigray Region, it was something that you were dealing with very intensely in your role as special envoy. Where are we today with the humanitarian situation in Tigray? Has there been any improvement? What are the challenges?

MR. FELTMAN: Thanks, Dr. Felbab-Brown, for the question. And let me just say, it's wonderful to be sitting next to my friend and partner from the Horn, Dr. Workneh, in this event.

There is an improvement in the humanitarian situation and the humanitarian deliveries, but it's insufficient. But in terms of the amounts of delivery, it's increased. There's a commitment of the various parties to see that the humanitarian assistance and humanitarian situation is alleviated, the humanitarian assistance moves.

And this is -- of course, it's essential for saving lives. You know, obviously, it's essential for saving lives, but it's also necessary politically. It's what gives confidence to very nascent contexts that are now taking place, as I understand it, between the government and the authorities in Tigray -- in Mekelle, the capital of Tigray.

Over the past several weeks, there has been a lot of focus on the humanitarian file on what's happening in the neighboring region of Afar. Afar is the region just next to the state of Tigray -- because that's the primary rooting for humanitarian

assistance. And there was still some Tigrayan Defense Forces, TDF, occupation of some of the Afar regions. And so, there was there was backlash in the region of Afar against delivering humanitarian assistance to Tigray.

That has been -- Prime Minister Abiy himself went to Afar to try to work on some of this. Again, there's been some improvement. It's insufficient to meet the needs, but it's certainly better than the situation was, say, a couple of months ago.

I think that what's important is that the initiation of more humanitarian goods seems to symbolize, at least to me, my analysis, that we're in a different stage now in terms of the conflict in Ethiopia. Where for so long, the focus internationally, for the right reasons, was on Northern Ethiopia, was on the situation in Tigray. That's where the hot war was.

But it tended to distract Ethiopian government officials, first and foremost, but all of us, from what was happening elsewhere in Ethiopia: from problems in Oromia, your home state, from the problems between different ethnic groups in Ethiopia that's not between the Tigrayans and the central government.

I mean, during the time that I had the honor to serve this administration as special envoy for the Horn of Africa, the purpose of my job was to try to promote peace and prosperity in the Horn of Africa. I was the first person to have held this. This administration was the first administration to create the position of the special envoy for the Horn of Africa.

And the idea was that we needed to focus on rather than country by country, but on the region as a whole, and to look for partnerships in the region and beyond to promote peace and prosperity, to promote the transitions in Somalia and Sudan to Ethiopia, et cetera. But in practice, I did spend much of my time on Ethiopia, because you cannot have a successful Horn of Africa if you do not have a successful Ethiopia.

You know, Ethiopia is a country of 110, 115 million people, one of the larger contributors to UN Peacekeeping and other peacekeeping forces. So, you need to have a successful Ethiopia if you're going to have a successful Horn of Africa. There are other things you need as well.

But challenges in Ethiopia are more than just the war in the north. It's the drought that Dr. Workneh talked about. Which, some people say, is the worst in seven years. You know, the other ethnic challenges.

And I guess to borrow a phrase from the African Union, I saw as my primary purpose, when I looked at Ethiopia during the time I had that position, was to try to find a way to silence the guns. The Ethiopians themselves are going to have to deal with the fundamental questions of how Ethiopia should be governed.

The sort of the fundamental differences they have about the central authorities versus the federal state authorities, those are not questions for the outside. But if the outside world can help in silencing the guns, that creates the space for the Ethiopians to have the type of national dialogue that's been announced. It's moving slowly toward national dialogue in a time when emotions aren't so high because humanitarian assistance has not been delivered, because people are being killed by violence.

So, I really looked at my job as trying to silence the guns. And right now, I think we are at a turning point where the war in the north is in a much, much different spot. Again, nascent contacts between the government and the Tigrayans, I think there's a realization that there's a shared interest on the part of the authorities in Mekelle, the capital of the regional state of Tigray, and in Addis, about the external threats from Eritrea, and about the need to prevent the disintegration of the state.

So, I don't want to overstate the case, because there's still a lot of problems that have to be worked out. But I'm more optimistic than I would have been a couple of months ago that the delivery of the humanitarian assistance symbolizes that the war in the north is slowing down, allowing the Ethiopians to address the problems elsewhere in the country.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Speaking of silencing the guns -- and a very heroic job you've been doing on that -- just so our viewers and interlocutors are up to date, there have been two ceasefires unilaterally announced in March: one by the government of

Ethiopia, and subsequently, also by the TPLF. The Tigray political leadership and its forces withdrew from Afar, about which you were speaking.

National reconciliation or national dialogue as a start to national reconciliation is often critical precursor for translating that ceasefire into more permanently silencing the guns. And that has had many challenges. One of which was that Prime Minister Abiy had, at first, at least, rejecting engaging the TPLF in the dialogue. From your remarks, I get the sense that there is perhaps a sense that there is more openness now that the TPLF might be brought into the dialogue.

There are several other really difficult issues. DDR, demobilization, disarmament of non-federal forces, especially as the prime minister also mobilized militias across the country that are very strongly ethnically biased, not paid, are already engaging in criminality and new forms of violence that we are seeing, as well as any kind of accountability for the very significant atrocities and human rights abuses that were committed.

What are your reflections, Mr. Ambassador, on how to start tackling those issues? What kind of support can the international community provide to work through both the issues of power distribution between Addis and other regions, but also those issues specifically?

MR. FELTMAN: I mean, the fundamental issues that led to the outbreak of the war in the north, the war between the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front that, you know, had governed Ethiopia for 27 years, and the central government, those fundamental issues about power and governance are not issues that we outside are going to be able to resolve.

The issues between the Amhara and the Oromo, the two largest ethnic groups, are not ones that we're going to solve. The fundamental issues that led to the conflict are not ones where we have answers. It's going to have to be Ethiopians who have answers.

But I don't think Ethiopians are going to be able to sit down and roll up their

sleeves and have a genuine, transparent, national dialogue the way that the Prime Minister has said that he wants to see while there's active fighting going on.

So, to the extent that the African Union facilitation, the rest of us playing supportive roles, you know, the United States, et cetera, can find ways to open channels between these groups that lower the tensions, that lower the amount of fighting. It creates the atmosphere by which the Ethiopians will have a better chance of successfully addressing these issues.

And I really do have the sense that there is a realization -- both in Mekelle, you know, the capital of the regional state of Tigray, and in Addis, the prime minister and his advisors -- of a shared interest in, as I said earlier, preventing the disintegration of the state, that allows them to think more creatively despite the horrors of the past 18 months, about how they might be able -- cooperate might be too big of a word, but how they might find common cause in preserving the Ethiopian state and in addressing the issues of criminality going forward.

Accountability is going to be a big issue, because there have been abuses committed by all sides. And I think that what the Ethiopian people are going to want to see is some sense of -- to feel some sense of dignity, some sense that they've had their grievances addressed. And I don't know what the what the answer is on accountability.

But all of these issues can be addressed much more constructively if there is humanitarian assistance being delivered and people aren't starving -- and the humanitarian assistance has to include those areas so affected by the drought, not just the north -- and if the active fighting has wound down.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: And just two days ago or a few days ago, the World Bank announced a 300 million package for Ethiopia for reconstruction in places like Tigray, Afar, and Amhara, but also elsewhere in other places, Oromia and elsewhere, where other forms of violence, insecurity have also been taking place.

MR. FELTMAN: Yeah, because if you if you solve the problem between

Tigray and Addis, that doesn't solve the problem of Ethiopia. You know, you can't look at that in isolation.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Let me ask you the next question before going back to His Excellency, and that's Sudan. That was another very significant part of your portfolio. And we have, of course, seen the coup d'état in the fall. And since then, suppression of protests, often quite brutally with significant use of sexual violence. We have seen very limited progress toward any kind of easing.

But nonetheless, in recent weeks, there is the promise that the emergency decree, the state of emergency, will be suspended. Few people have been released from prison. And the United States imposed significant sanctions on Sudan. And unlike in the case of Ethiopia where many of the sanctions were quite tailored, in the case of Sudan, they're very blanket sanctions, compounding really very difficult economic situation in the country with massive inflation, massive spike in prices of basic fuel, basic food.

What else can be done by the international community to encourage the junta to move toward more substantive liberalization?

MR. FELTMAN: I think there's several tasks that the international community has when it comes to Sudan. You've described the situation, you know, accurately in terms of my understanding as well. But one thing that needs to happen, and needs to happen quickly, is for the United States and the rest of the international community to figure out how to address the humanitarian needs in the country.

You mentioned sanctions. In fact, the sanctions on Sudan are just the central police. That's the only sanctions. But you're right in raising this, because what the United States did do is pause the assistance. It's not sanctions, and it's and it's not cancellation. It's a pause. And the reason why it was a pause was the idea that if the coup could be reversed quickly, then the assistance could flow again quite quickly, rather than going through congressional notification and reprogramming funds and all of that.

And the humanitarian assistance continues. The purely humanitarian

assistance continues. But a lot of what was considered to be development assistance, whether it was the World Bank or bilateral, went through the government and ultimately benefited families. That's the part that's been suspended, that's been paused by the World Bank or by bilateral donors.

And there need to be found mechanisms, similar to what people are looking at for Afghanistan, you could say, by which you can take what was development assistance that ultimately benefited families and went through ministries for family support programs and things like that and put them through other mechanisms to get them to the families.

And there's an urgency here. There's an urgency not only because the humanitarian needs are great and growing because of food prices, escalation because of poor harvest and the drought, but also because a significant amount of money going through the World Bank's IDA program, the highly indebted poor country program, will expire at the end of June -- will be reprogrammed at the end of June. And that can't be a mechanism.

So, one thing we have to do is not -- and I'll get to your question. One thing that we need to do collectively is find the mechanisms that can channel some of that suspended assistance back to people in need through humanitarian means. And it's bureaucratically complicated, but it needs to happen.

In terms of the pressure on, as you described, the junta, the pressure on the generals, I don't know, Vanda. It was something that, you know, haunted me during the last few months that I had this job, because we were using the tools that we had. And it was not having the impact that we would have liked to have seen.

Now, there's been some improvement lately. The violence against the protesters, while it still happens, is not as bad as it was. Of course, the protests are also not as large as they were. There's been -- I think it's 60-some people released recently. I think there's still over a hundred that are still in prison. The state of emergency has been decreed.

There's been some improvement in the political situation. Dr. Workneh and



IGAD have a representative that's part of sort of a trilateral facilitation mechanism. It's UN, African Union, IGAD, that are talking to the various political parties, religious groups, civil groups, the resistance committees, and the military, to try to map out where there are overlaps in ideas on how to move forward to try to, you know, eventually come up with a, you know, Sudanese roadmap to get back.

But I think we're going to have to be fairly patient, because I don't think -- I think the generals are fairly well dug-in at this point.

You know, it's interesting. The last time I was in Sudan -- I'm going to be honest, last time I was in Sudan was October 24th. It was the day before the coup. And I met with the then prime minister, as well as General Hemeti and General Burhan -- General Burhan, being, you know, the head of the Sovereignty Council, that's sort of the presidency of Sudan -- to talk about mechanisms to try to address the concerns that were then plaguing the transition.

And one of the things that the generals were complaining about was how the civilians aren't united. Well, I think all of us who are Americans can look out across our country and say, you know, in democratic political debate, citizens often aren't united. This is not unique.

One of the things that I find interesting is, at times, you get a little glimpse that the military is also not united. It's not simply that the civilians aren't united, you see some differences. And is there a way that those differences can be used to build different alliances to move forward?

I mean, it's not going to be realistic -- the civilians aren't going to like to hear me say this -- to completely sideline the military in the short term. But how do you get the military comfortable with the idea that Sudan is going to be a democracy for the people, elect their leaders, and that the leaders are accountable to the people? How do you get to that point when the starting point is now that there's been a coup and entrenched interests from the military?

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Your Excellency, I very much welcome your thoughts on the situation in Sudan. But let me add another dimension, which is the recurrence of attacks that we are now seeing by the Janjaweed or today, the Rapid Support Force in Darfur.

And just to remind everyone, almost two decades ago -- two decades ago, in 2003, when the conflict in Darfur started with Arab militias attacking more indigenous Black African populations, we ended up with over 300,000 people that -- and it's a region of Darfur that's very rich in variety of resources, including gold.

And the extraction of gold, including linked to international actors like Russia, has become a very significant source of conflict in Africa, in Northern Nigeria, in Mali, in various other parts. It's playing out in the current Darfur situation as well. How can institutions like IGAD help look at the situation in Southern Sudan, in Darfur, to make sure that we do not see an escalation of violence there?

MR. GEBEYEHU: Thank you very much. Thank you, Jeff, for the service when we were there. Even if we did not resolve our initial issues, but still, we are, you know, working on it. And definitely, it is not going to be resolved, some of the things.

So, before I go to Sudan, I have to say something about my own country, Ethiopia. It is not easy for me to jump into Sudan before I -- definitely, Jeff has said some of his points. But for me, as an Ethiopian citizen, as a father of boys, I want to see Ethiopia, a peaceful Ethiopia. A country which, in fact, long history, civilization, very hardworking people, who really can resolve their own issues by their own terms and conditions, but unfortunately, for a long time, have a history of conflict.

Unfortunately, the challenge that we were facing for the last years in this transition to the democracy that would have been resolved peacefully. As IGAD, we were very clear on that thing, first and foremost. We're wanting the government and the authority in Tigray, that we should commend -- the first step of humanitarian truce that Jeff was talking was one step ahead.

Even if it is not sufficient enough, you know, getting humanitarian assistance toward the farmers, the poor people in the region, is really a very important aspect that may save the life of so many children as well as the people who need these things.

Ultimately, the solution is what the government of Prime Minister Abiy has laid out: all-inclusive dialogue, discussion. Genuine, all-inclusive discussion. That will be the time that Ethiopians should show to the world that they really can resolve their own things by discussing on all issues, all aspects, and come to the consensus on -- not all. Definitely, there will be differences. But to deal with the situations in this very inclusive way, that will be the most important point that already that commission has established.

Some of the opposition leaders are saying that it is not going to work, because of these reasons. But the most important thing is making a genuine discussion and resolving the challenge that we are facing. This is a point that I want to make about Ethiopia.

The Sudan issue, in spite of what Jeff said, I was there before, two months, to analyze, at least to finding the fact what is really a best way to deal with the situation and the challenge that the Sudanese are facing, to help the Sudanese people and the politicians there.

One thing that we were very clear was the opposition themselves were deeply divided. Some of them, they cannot sit under the same roof to discuss the challenges that they are facing. The gap between the military council and the opposition is very big.

With all these challenges, the multilateral institutions, in spite of all member states, including the United States and others, the African Union and the neighboring countries that are pushing towards peace in Sudan, now, the very visible platform is the tripartite effort to bring together the parties, to bring a civilian government in Sudan. In fact, that process is not very fast process. That is full of challenges.

Last week, we have started the first Sudanese-to-Sudanese dialogue under

this tripartite platform. This is one aspect. But the most important thing, what we have said is that we should not punish Sudanese, but we have to praise Sudanese to bring back to what they were before one year. Very important, which was celebrated by international community, the civilian government which was leading Sudanese to the democratic process for democracy.

So, we, international community, the regional reps, including IGAD, what we are doing is, number one, working with the authorities, the political forces in Sudan, to resolve that. To bring them together, at least, to the resolution. The second one is pressurizing all the parties to bring to resolve, not to go back to the time of the previous government.

But still, the leadership in Sudan, the military, they have the moral obligation to bring back Sudanese to their aspiration; the aspiration which they paid for in the streets of Khartoum.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: I want to be sure that we have enough time for our audience. And I'm tempted to ask a myriad of questions to our very distinguished and knowledgeable guests about what's happening in the Horn. But I'll satisfy myself with a question to each of you, and then hand over to Mike and all of you for continuing the discussion.

Let me just stay with you, Your Excellency, and ask about Kenya. Kenya is a very important country in the Horn of Africa, and it's a very important country in Africa and internationally. And it's facing very important elections -- presidential elections this August.

It's been struggling, like much of the region, with difficult economic situation, have very high inflation, battered by debt, battered by COVID and its consequences for decline in tourism, its consequences for biodiversity, poaching protection.

But these elections are very interesting. They're fascinating, because for the first time in Kenyan history, the top candidates for the presidential position are not a Kikuyu. Even though they both have -- it's a Luo, Mr. Odinga, and a Kalenjin, Mr. Ruto,

even though they both have Kikuyu vice-presidential candidates. It's fascinating because Mr. Odinga has been endorsed by his longtime rival, Mr. Kenyatta, for the presidency. Very unusual alliance there.

What is your sense of the elections? What are you looking for? Are there risks that we could see repeats of violence like in 2007? Are the elections a source of promise and perhaps optimism because what the makeup of the top candidates looks like? Your thoughts on that.

MR. GEBEYEHU: The political dynamism in Kenya at this very particular time clearly stipulates that Kenya is now in full election mode. Everything that you can see in the feeling of competition that all the contenders, without any kind of security challenges, problems, conflicts, at this stage, things like going on the right direction to the Kenyan people are working.

Of course, last week there was a major development that you have mentioned. The people of Kenya were waiting -- who is really going to be the deputies for the candidates for presidency? That was one of the very important question for the electorate of Kenya. That is already answered.

Now, Kenya is a country, one of democratically -- we can call it an example for the region. And in spite of all the challenges, without saying this is Kikuyu or this is Luo, the dynamism looks like that things are going all-out competition in very vibrant media. Campaign from all sides, this all shows that things look like from inside, healthy.

But still, the security organs, especially the leaders of the society, all should, you know, should have a responsibility not to lead this kind of very healthy competition which leads to a real democratic outcome of elections, not lead to any another form.

For now, I am very optimistic that things are going very well. I'm not expecting, and I'm not seeing, at this particular time, things are going to go to 2007. But always, we should be very cautious. Election is -- most of the time, it's all about emotion. So, that emotion should be handled very well. So, the Kenyan election process will be one

of a litmus test for our region, how democracy evolved in our region.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: And emotions are certainly already very much part of the campaign. There is significant amount of disinformation taking place in various platforms and media in Kenya. This has become unfortunately so much part and parcel of politics and electoral competitions around the world. And significant amount of highly emotions, bordering on perhaps very inflammatory language also taking place.

My last question, Ambassador Feltman, to you. In your very distinguished diplomatic career, you have dealt with a much wider portfolio than the Horn of Africa. You had a global portfolio, in fact, in your role at the United Nations. And I want to ask you geopolitical questions and its implications for the Horn of Africa, for Africa.

Ukraine has put an end to the post-cold war era. It has put an end to the post-9/11 era. There is no more international agreement that non-state armed actors are to be countered. In fact, in my view, we are back to your terrorist is my freedom fighter, and vice versa.

But even before Ukraine visibly put an end to this, we have seen highly conflictual regional rivalries playing out in various parts of Africa, embracing certain government actors or rival politicians, embracing certain militias.

And we have also seen Russia policy in Africa being directly geared towards simply countering the United States, almost irrespective of the substance. Whatever the U.S. was doing, we will do the opposite. Often using groups like Wagner Group in places like Mali, promising authoritarian governments that whatever they do, regardless of human rights abuses, Russia will support them.

What are your reflection on how this new geopolitical era -- we will be able to achieve what your primary goals were: safety, peace, and prosperity in the Horn of Africa or beyond? How can we deal with the new geopolitics?

MR. FELTMAN: Well, I'm glad you raised the question, because it's something we haven't talked about, Workneh, is the role of the outsiders inside the Horn of

Africa. The extensive role that outsiders play in the Horn of Africa, it's probably something we neglected before in this audience.

I remember, for example, on one of my trips, where I was in Doha and Dubai and Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, Cairo, you know, talking to these countries to try to see where we could work together to promote, you know, stability in the Horn of Africa.

And there was somebody who went on Twitter and said, you know, the U.S. envoy in the Horn of Africa is in Dubai and Riyadh and Cairo. Has he looked at the map? And it's like, yeah, we've looked at the geopolitical map, you know, that these outside countries are the ones that were playing a significant -- in some cases, decisive role inside the Horn of Africa.

I mean, you can't talk about what happens -- you can't talk about moving forward in Sudan if you aren't also talking with the Emiratis and the Saudis and the Turks and, you know, the Israelis.

In terms of Russia, I mean, we saw very nefarious Russian influence, particularly in Sudan. Ethiopia, less so. But in Sudan, very definitely. You know, the Russians trying to basically disrupt a civilian transition. So, one of the challenges was, how do you build a coalition to insulate the transition against the encouragement of the Russians to the military to just move against the civilians?

I found the Chinese position sort of interesting, because it makes me wonder if there is a potential that I certainly didn't have the diplomatic talent to realize. But if there's a potential of some cooperation with China when it comes to places like Ethiopia. Because China's concern about Ethiopia, from our discussion with Chinese officials, was clearly Ethiopia stability.

You know, given the exposure -- the financial exposure that China has in Ethiopia, given the amount of money that Ethiopia owes China, China does not want to see an implosion of Ethiopia. Neither do we. We don't want to see the implosion of Ethiopia. And obviously, the Ethiopians don't want to see an implosion of their country. So, you know,

is there a way to work with China? I don't think the same potential exists with Russia. I think Russia is just a spoiler.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you all for that fascinating first hour. And now, we got about a half hour of discussion, as Vanda said. What I'm going to do now is play the role of moderator. And now, Vanda can put on the hat of a panelist as well as joining the other two. And we'll invite your questions in just a minute.

I'm going to begin, however, with a round from the remote audience that we've already received. And I'm just going to combine and conflate a couple of them for the panel as a whole. People can respond to any one or two. I've got about three questions for the group. And then, please be prepared with your questions right after that.

And we'll still be -- for those of you out in virtual space, hello again. Thanks for staying with us. And if you still would like to email in questions at this point to [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu). We'll try to maybe get a couple more of those through my colleagues who are monitoring the email in just a second.

But let me begin with the ones we've already received previously from the virtual audience. And I'm going to target one specifically, Vanda, towards you, and then the, you know, other questions for anybody who wants to take them.

Vanda, you just asked about non-state actors in regards to Ukraine and elsewhere. I wondered if you could say a word about non-state actors in the Horn. You're the director of our initiative. You're the founding director of our initiative at Brookings, and I wondered where you see the most important dynamics.

You've already mentioned -- in passing, at least -- the Janjaweed. We know about Somalia and the various clans and militias. But if there's any other dynamic that's really caught your attention recently, I wondered if you might want to comment on that.

And then for Ambassador Feltman and His Excellency, Dr. Workneh, the questions from the audience sort of coalesced into your thoughts on longer-term vision for the region. And Jeff, you just touched on this a bit, with thinking about the whole broader



region. But maybe if you could -- most of the questions we got sort of focused in on one country or another, and specifically on Somalia and Ethiopia most of all.

And even though, Jeff, you said you didn't want to start offering suggestions about internal decisions on power sharing or, you know, constitutional changes, if either one of you or any of the three of you want to talk about your vision for what Somalia could look like in 10 years that could finally begin to stabilize that country, or your vision for what Ethiopia could look like in 10 years that could get back on the path towards prosperity with a sense of consensus around how to share power between the center and the regions, those thoughts would be welcome.

So, Vanda if I could begin with you, and then I'll will just work through the panel.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, the challenge of non-state armed actors in the Horn of Africa -- and more broadly, in Africa -- remains enormous. And many states have had limited state authority, state capacity, even states that are seemingly very powerful in some of the most important countries in Africa, like in Nigeria.

Moreover, often the solution of dealing with a variety of security problems in the Horn has been raising unofficial forces. That's been a key feature of Ethiopia. And seemingly, it helped the government of Ethiopia halt the TDF expansion in the fall. But already, now, it's starting to present very significant challenge.

So, state fragmentation, state weakening, remains massive issues in Somalia. The defining security actors or insecurity actors really are non-state armed actors, militias. And certainly, even in places like Kenya, the issue of terrorism, Shabab's reach, other radical jihadi groups, as well as other non-state armed actors, remains massive.

And so, you know, I mentioned that we are in this end of post-9/11 era. It would be a grave mistake, grave analytical mistake, grave state-building mistake, to ignore the persistence of non-state armed actors and the challenges that pose, and new challenges that will come online.

One of the defining issues for the region will be the rising conflict of herders versus farmers, compounded by overuse of land, compounded by zoonotic diseases, and compounding and amplifying zoonotic diseases. And of course, climate change.

So, even as we have this highly conflictual geopolitical situation and conflictual, often regional situation, the low-scale conflict, the subnational conflict, will not have disappeared. It will simply interact in even more difficult ways with the geopolitical environment.

I would just add my comments here that in the fall, when the United States left Afghanistan and we saw the Taliban take over, a lot of my time was spent dealing with various African countries as far back as Mozambique and elsewhere. And their predominant sense was, oh, my God, the terrorists are coming over and they will take over. And there's a sense that there was not sufficient appreciation for how robust, vibrant, and growing threat of jihadi and other non-jihadi, non-state armed actors remained.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Jeff, over to you please.

MR. FELTMAN: Well, we talked about -- I mean, you know, 10 years from now with Ethiopia, for example. And of course, we have an Ethiopian citizen next to me. But go back first.

Okay. For the 27 years that the TPLF, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, dominated the Ethiopian government under Prime Minister Meles, there was a promotion of something that's called ethnic federalism, which is, you know, that there are these federal states that are based primarily -- not only, but primarily -- on the major ethnic group of that state. So, you have Oromia, or you have, you know, the Amhara region, Tigray regions, and so forth.

And Prime Minister Abiy, coming into office in 2018, had a vision of transcending that; a vision of an Ethiopian national identity that wouldn't erase the ethnic identity, but would transcend the ethnic identity.

The problem you have now -- and, you know, as Americans with our melting

pot myth and stuff, it's sort of an appealing vision, that you transcend your ethnic divisions to feel Ethiopian. The problem is that the conflicts have actually exacerbated the ethnic feelings. You know, you've got a stronger sense of being Tigrayan now and a stronger sense of being Amhara.

I think it's harder to roll back the ethnic federalism now than it was when Prime Minister Abiy was looking to do that back when he came into office in 2018. But 10 years from now, if you've stopped the fighting, if you've been able to have a successful national dialogue, maybe by then you have an Ethiopia that's not always at risk of imploding because of ethnic things.

The other thing you're going to have within 10 years from now, is surely, within 10 years, there'll be a change of leadership in Eritrea. And one hopes that Eritrea would be playing a more constructive regional role than Eritrea currently is. You know, Eritrea is playing on these differences inside Ethiopia. It's playing on the differences inside Sudan and Somalia. And I can't imagine that President Isaias is still going to be doing that 10 years from now.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Doctor --

MR. GEBEYEHU: Thank you very much. The point that we were discussing for the last one hour, and what will be the prospect of the region, I don't know for how many years, whatever. But let me put it this way. This region is the most dynamic region of our continent, number one, in terms of political dynamism. I sometimes say it needs a deep analysis and discussion on this region.

This region is really region with transition. Some countries are already transitioned. Some countries are facing the challenge of transition. Some countries are inevitably going through such kind of process that will bring exactly what you have said about the state formation, the state reformation, even deformation of the region. And also, from outside, what they have said, the foreign policy instrument of the other external forces, in whatever the agenda they have, they can shape, reshape, this regional dynamism.

So, sometimes it is very difficult to see a full picture of the region; what it looks like in a short period of time. But the most important thing here is -- and in spite of all the challenges throughout the continent, or internationally, the region will remain a very strategic region for the world that is very near to the Red Sea, which is most of the trade of international trade go in the world. The Red Sea trade, the Red Sea security, all these dynamisms will see the region as one of a very important region, which always attract the interest of the external actors.

In fact, while the internal actors are struggling within themselves, as well as struggling from the outside, while they are trying to address the aspiration of the people of the region, while that is democracy in the region.

So, it's a kind of a cocktail of different things that that region is living. Definitely, sometimes, this challenge needs a leadership. Leadership, this challenge can be changed to opportunities.

So, that's how I see this region. This region always sees the mind of the politicians, the diplomats, and the people who really define the countries who define their own national interest and national security aspect as well.

MR. O'HANLON: It's fantastic. One quick follow-up from me, and then please be prepared in your questions. And I'll take a couple at a time in just a moment. You talked about political dynamism in the region. How about relative economic dynamism and opportunity?

The Horn of Africa, your country, had some of the highest growth rates in the world for a while, but also has some of the greatest problems in places like Somalia. How do you rate -- and your job is about development. Today, how do you rate the region's economic prospects compared to the rest of Africa and the broader region?

MR. GEBEYEHU: Exactly, that is one point that should be addressed under this umbrella as well. The economic situation in our region, despite the situation that we are living in, despite the natural challenges that we are facing, the inflation because of drought --

and also, because of the conflict in Ukraine, which really changed the food chain of the region, which we get, if I'm not wrong, more than 70 percent of wheat and as well as fertilizer, gas, all these things. Already, we are feeling the heat of the conflict in Ukraine.

When I put all these things, it's very clear that this region is going to pass a very protracted economic challenge, while 60, 65 percent of the youths of the region, which they need employment, are now facing the issue of bread. That will inevitably lead them for some kind of riot that will question the status quo of the government as well.

So, there are these kind of complications that should be sorted out very clearly. But economically, really, we have a challenge. But the potential of the region is there. The potential in terms of agriculture, that region is one of the best, most fertile region. In terms of oil and other -- these mining things, I'm not going to express this.

With all the things that we have, this is a time that needs -- also the issue of social issues, which related to internal displacement, migration. And as well as the people who are, you know, migrating from their home for the better life from one place to the other, including crossing the big waters. That are the challenges that the region is facing. That should be covered by the committed leadership of the region, as well as by assistance of international -- but most importantly, from the region.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you very much. So, we got some old friends. Good to see you out in the audience. Why don't we start right here in the middle row, and maybe we'll take two. Could you please identify yourselves as you pose your question, starting right here, please?

MR. BROOKS: Thank you. Great to be back.

MR. O'HANLON: Good to see you, man.

MR. BROOKS: Doug Brooks, I'm with FGI Solutions. These days, we are working in the Horn of Africa -- in Somalia, especially -- supporting the security sector reform.

My question is actually on the U.S. troops that have been announced are

going in Somalia. They've been absent for quite a while. And I'm kind of curious, was there backsliding in terms of the security situation in Somalia when the U.S. left? And what do we expect these 500 troops to do in the future?

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. Thank you. Ma'am, here in the fifth row.

Yeah, I'll take two or three first, and then we'll come back to you guys.

MS. SHINE: Yes. Hello, my name is Deborah Shine (phonetic). And IGAD has led twice -- I would like to go to Sudan, what has been described as a very unstable region. A dynamic but unstable region. I don't think anybody will argue with that. And IGAD has twice led a peace agreement in South Sudan, but the peace agreement is not moving forward. There's problems that IBA (phonetic) has not resolved for the whole issue, and they're all interconnected.

South Sudan at the moment may be teetering on another conflict. What is being done by IGAD in that area?

MR. O'HANLON: Dr. Workneh, would you like to start with either or both of those questions?

MR. GEBEYEHU: Let me go to the South Sudan issue. I'm sorry, I didn't hear the first one very accurately. So, South Sudan is another new nation in IGAD region, which we will, all of us, hope that with all the potential that that country have, and using the latecomer advantage, as a state, will come to the bigger developmental trajectory.

All of us know that the conflict in South Sudan, the political dynamism, what IGAD was doing in peace initiative, what IGAD -- bring the parties together to resolve these challenges. But that process is very long process. In this process, a lot of things has happened, damage happened. South Sudan still is a volatile country.

But the good thing, that after we implemented the peace agreement of South Sudan, the first step that -- the challenge was implementing the second chapter, that is the security arrangements chapter. That would be -- we in IGAD commended the leadership of South Sudan. They agreed, at least in the highest echelon, to share had a

power, even if it is a delicate one, that leaves another -- a positive state.

So, South Sudan issue, slowly but surely, going -- things are in the right direction. But still, we have no guarantee that South Sudanese can come back to the security challenges. So, the international community, IGAD, one of the things that we are doing is consolidating that peace process, one of very important thing that we are doing. And we are working, we have special envoy on that issue. Daily, one of the things that we are working with the Sudanese. And South Sudanese authority is about the peace process of South Sudan.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Ambassador Feltman and Dr. Felbab-Brown?

MR. FELTMAN: Well, you know, there has definitely been an erosion in the security in Somalia. But I don't know, Vanda. Do you see a causal link between the withdrawal of the U.S. troops under President Trump and that deterioration? I don't know.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: Well, there's been some deterioration that can be linked to the withdrawal of U.S. Special Operations Forces. Specifically, in the morale and capacity of the elite Somali unit, Danab, that the United States trained. So, we are seeing very similar dynamics there like in Afghanistan. Without U.S. permanent on-the-ground presence, that elite counterterrorism unit has been deteriorated.

And so, the hope is that putting a small, permanent, open-ended counterterrorism special operations force on the ground will beef up Danab. And the second effect of that is supposed to be the capacity to more effectively target Shabab drones. And that has been happening.

Airstrikes have been going on. They have picked up even before this deployment, that limits Shabab's capacity to mass, and perhaps can prevent attacks like we have seen at the beginning of May on the ATMIS base, a very dramatic Shabab success.

Finally, the third element why the Special Operations Forces are heading back is there is some sense that on-the-ground presence can provide disruption and intelligence to prevent threats by Shabab to U.S. forces in Kenya and U.S. bases elsewhere

in the region.

But I don't believe that in any fundamental way it changes the profound deterioration of security that has been really taking place in 2017. It simply slows down the rate of deterioration that we are seeing in the country. But if ATMIS did not materialize, Shabab would have been in a very easy position to take much of Somalia, south of Mogadishu, including Mogadishu. And the deployment of U.S. Special Operations Forces is not changing that. It's simply reducing the rate of deterioration.

MR. O'HANLON: So, let's take a second round. And then I'm going to come to Brad in a second for remote questions that are coming in, we understand. So, if I could go in the second row here with the two hands, please. Ma'am, you first.

SPEAKER: Thank you so much.

MR. O'HANLON: Here's a microphone.

SPEAKER: Thanks again for the presentation. I appreciate it. A couple of real questions from a real Ethiopian citizen, right? So, Alex Rondos, in 2012, saw all of this coming. He was at the Wilson Center. And he saw all of this coming, and everybody's on. I know for sure you know more than I know. Yes, yes. And you, as well.

So, the State Department currently has two bills that it's trying to work with regarding Ethiopia. The Senate and the House have bills basically asking Ethiopia to, A, stop the war, allow humanitarian aid into Tigray, stop the killings in Oromia. The Somali Region is in tatters. The locusts and the drought, everybody knew about. Somebody's turning this off. It's not nice.

So, a while back, there was a major drought. There were locusts. But you didn't get to hear about it, because the state of Ethiopia was strong enough. And you and I met before when Kassa Tekleberhan was an ambassador here. I don't think you'll remember me, because I've changed quite a bit. I had a baby.

So, here's my worry, is that it's personal for me, because it's my family. It's personal for me, and I don't even know how to be afraid anymore. I'm not scared of the



Ethiopian state, the CIA, or anyone else, because when you lose everything, you actually fear nothing. So, I am going to say this here and now, and it's being recorded. I will say the most honest answer that was provided -- and somebody's cutting it off again.

MR. O'HANLON: They're not cutting it off. Please get your question, and we got to move on. We got seven minutes.

SPEAKER: Let me do that. Okay, then. There's not even lighting. So, the most honest answer provided thus far has been Ambassador Feltman's intense blush when asked about how did it go so far, because you know you were there for how many months, and you were able to accomplish exactly zilch. There is no cessation of hostilities --

MR. O'HANLON: The question.

SPEAKER: And the question is, I want to survive as a human being on this planet as much as your child does. But my country is going to be in hell for the foreseeable future, because there's -- you know about this. IGAD's framework for the reform of Ethiopian refugee laws makes it such that there is no Ethiopian sovereignty.

There is no Ethiopian territorial integrity at the moment, because between the IOM, the UNHCR, and IGAD, everybody's agreed that Ethiopia is going to be the dystopian future slave farm for the world where we're going to be providing wheat.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay.

SPEAKER: So, my question is, will you allow your humanity to actually counteract your economic and geopolitical interest? I hope that question is very clear. I hope somebody answers. Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Over here, and then we'll go Brad, and then we'll come back to the panel for the final responses.

SPEAKER: Oh, hello. It's good to see all of you again after COVID-19. I have two questions. I hope you don't mind. My first question, I, you know, agree with the ambassador here. The Ethiopian issue is complex with different regions have different issues here.

Right now, in the Somali region, you have the Chinese there who had drilled for oil. And this oil is -- well, the report is that people are dying from a known disease. It's massive. You know, it was reported by Voice of America, by the Guardian, but no one hears about this.

And so, I spoke to the (inaudible) this morning, and they informed me they have no intention to make any trouble. They're going to abide by the 2018 agreement amnesty. But they're concerned that people are dying because the Chinese are drilling oil there. So, my question is, what is the U.S. government trying to do to counter the Chinese's sometimes negative effect in Africa, from drilling practices and all that? That's the first question.

My second question has to do with Somalia. As we know, a few weeks ago, the Somaliland president was here in America at the Heritage Foundation. He's seeking independence for his country. I understand that, but there's a big issue here. I've been speaking to the clan members on the ground in Somalia. The Isaaq clan dominates the government.

And so, it's one clan out of four. You have four opposing clans who are, like, we don't really want this, because independence in their mind is U.S. aid and U.S. arms to them. And so, they're not really happy about this move. And so, my question here is, sometimes, don't you think U.S. policies -- like, we have two bills: one bill in the House, and one in the Senate -- that in some way, quasily recognizes Somaliland as an independent country. And this is causing tension on the ground.

My question is, you know, is it sensible to have bills like this in Congress that might cause problems on the ground? Should we solve these problems? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And then Brad, do we have a question from the --

MR. PORTER: Yeah, two questions from the audience watching online. One is, what's the likelihood for the East African Federation to be established to mitigate

cross-border violence? Second question is really an observation that Djibouti hasn't been mentioned yet by the panel. So, if there's any observations that the panelists have about Djibouti's involvement in the region and these issues.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. So, to recap, we've got a question about Djibouti, a question about long-term vision on Ethiopia, question about China's influence in the broader region, and then also a question on Somaliland. So, if I could ask each of you to wrap up here with whatever fraction of that litany you'd like to address. And Dr. Workneh, we'll give you privilege of first response.

MR. GEBEYEHU: Thank you very much. Thank you for the very good interaction and questions as well. Let me start from the final question that is very important to my organization and for myself, the cross-border issue of the region.

Like other African countries, the region, the borders are, for us, the source of challenges as well as opportunities as well. If you go through in our region -- let me make it a regional one. Let me talk about my region. The issue of oil that my friend was talking, and other issues, most of the issues that related to these kinds of natural resources are very near to -- not to the center of the city or center of the country. It's more of -- the most of them are in the periphery areas.

The other issue is the people who are living in both side of the borders, in most of our region member states, are almost the same culturally, in terms of language, in terms of the way of living, sociologically as well. But there is also a common challenge. There is a continuous conflict in border areas, which most of the time happened because of the scarce resource -- which is not only for human beings, but for their own cattle, for the animals -- or water, which is also a main source of conflict, which is also very scarce in border areas.

So, our borders have plenty of things. But also, what IGAD is doing now, despite of all these challenges, let us nurture, let us harvest the opportunity that we have in our borders. Most of the people who are living in the border areas are most of -- they are

nomads who cross from one country to the other. The people who really doesn't care about the border of this country or that country. Only they care about their livelihood, their cattle.

So, making the things easy, that's one of the things that we are working on, is how to help them to produce wealth in cattle nurturing, and making them to improve the way how they are having their own cattle.

The other thing is water issue, that we are working to have more waters in these border and very dry areas. And at the same time is protecting, preventing the diseases -- human diseases as well as cattle diseases, which we cannot see separately because this issue of disease in border areas is inseparably connected.

So, our major intervention is borders. The trade issue also, the regional integration issues that IGAD is established. The very reason IGAD is there is one of the regional integration issue. So, one of the things is trade. So, the trade issue, harmonizing the policy of the member states, the law, and other trade courts of the member states that IGAD is doing. So, that is one of our major focus.

Ultimately, our borders are the beginning of our regional integration agenda. So, that's what I want to comment on this issue. The other point is the issue of the challenges in terms of migration. What my sister said, all the challenges that -- we have challenges, of course. The sovereignty issue is -- all sovereignty comes within, you know, from inside. Always, strength starts from inside.

So, we have to strength ourselves from inside, that reflect on outside. That is how I think. Otherwise, all countries are sovereign, for sure. Maybe they cannot be sovereign in terms of economy, but our eight member states are equally sovereign to us. One vote for one member state. So, whether the number of population is 50 million or 10 million, for us, all our members states are equal. Thank you very much.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you very much, Your Excellency. And Jeff, over to you please.

MR. FELTMAN: Just a couple quick comments. Djibouti, it came up, and of

course, where your headquarters are. The Djiboutian economy is overwhelmingly linked to Ethiopia. The trade and transit to Ethiopia -- Ethiopia is a landlocked country. The trade goes in and out of Djibouti's port. So, to the extent that Ethiopia's economy is hurt by the ongoing conflicts inside Ethiopia, Djibouti is hurt even more. So, we address Djibouti's concerns and economic development issues by helping to solve the problems inside Ethiopia.

Congressional acts. I mean, one of the things that I found interesting during the time that I was U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa was how interested so many congressional representatives were in what was going on. And it derived from Americans. It derived from Americans of Ethiopian origin, Americans of Sudanese origin.

And so, a lot of the congressional action you see is sparked by their conversations that they have with their constituents. And of course, as a separate branch of government, they were interested in hearing from me. But I certainly could not tell them, from the executive branch, what the legislative branch should do. But it really was interesting how closely many members of Congress were following the issues in the Horn of Africa, because their constituents were following those issues.

And on the issue of humanity, I mean, I really -- the reason why we want to see peace, stability, prosperity, security in the Horn of Africa is, obviously, it's in our interest. But it's also because we want to see the Ethiopians, the Sudanese, the Somalis, live in dignity, be able to -- all of them live in dignity. And that's not possible with unaddressed conflicts.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Well said. Vanda, please, to you.

MS. FELBAB-BROWN: And I would also say that it's not possible if other global actors have very strong influence. We spoke about Russia often being very willing to simply endorse any kind of dictatorship and provide it with praetorian forces like the Wagner Group to engage in any kind of suppression of opposition.

And even China, where there is certainly overlap of interest with the United

States in seeing stability and seeing an end to conflict in places like Ethiopia, often believes that this can be accomplished simply by propping up the national government and not really thinking about inclusivity, accountability, human rights issues.

And as the United States is now navigating -- and many other countries, everyone in the world, both people and countries, are navigating the new geopolitics, I would posit it would be a big mistake for the U.S. to fall into the Cold War trap of simply opposing the policies of countries like Russia and China. Rather, we should be driven by our interest, and we should be driven by our values and principles.

And that means that even if countries like Russia and China are promoting use the Wagner Group regardless of any kind of humanitarian consequences or human rights consequences, we should not lessen our commitment to stringent conditionality in how we extend our military aid and our economic aid.

And ultimately, you know, you spoke, Ambassador Feltman, about the need to silence guns to do national reconciliation. I mean, I would sort of expand that comment to suggest that there is a need in the Horn to move from politics to governance, and that governance will spend dealing with some of the very profound issues that Your Excellency, Workneh, you brought up: zoonotic diseases, which will be all the more frequent and rampant in the Horn; displacement of people and vast population movements, as we are seeing in Somalia right now, 700,000 people, due to climate, due to drought, due to land overuse.

If politics continues to dominate day-to-day activity, and there is never space for thinking about governance, the humanity that was spoken about will only more be hurting.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you very much. Thanks to all of you. My apologies, I didn't have time to get to all the questions. But I want to thank the audience here and everywhere around the world for joining in, for being part of this discussion. And thank you, especially, sir, for your visit, and my fellow colleagues at Brookings. So, best

wishes to you all, and signing off from Brookings. (Applause)

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