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WEBINAR

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PARTICIPANTS:

MICHAEL O'HANLON (Moderator)

Director of Research, Foreign Policy; Director, Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology; Co-Director, Africa Security Initiative

HIS EXCELLENCY MINISTER GEDION TIMOTHEWOS

Ethiopian Justice Minister

HER EXCELLENCY MONICA JUMA

National Security Advisor to the President of the Republic of Kenya

JEFFREY FELTMAN

John C. Whitehead Visiting Fellow in International Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology

VANDA FELBAB-BROWN

Director, Initiative on Nonstate Armed Actors; Co-Director, Africa Security Initiative
Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy, Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology

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Michael O'Hanlon [00:00:16] Greetings from Washington, DC and the Brookings Institution.

I'm Mike O'Hanlon with the Africa Security Initiative that Vanda Felbab-Brown, my distinguished colleague, co-directs with me. And we're joined today by our colleague Jeffrey Feltman, but also by two distinguished guests from halfway around the world in two of the most promising parts and countries of Africa, here today to discuss the arc of insecurity, but also some promise in the broader region of the Horn of Africa and Northeast Africa more generally.

We are thrilled to be joined by His Excellency Minister Gideon Timothewos from Ethiopia. He is the Minister of Justice of that great country, Africa's second most populous, one of its most promising in the last decade economically, however troubled in recent times by civil conflict, but now perhaps seeing an opportunity to put some of that conflict or most of it behind the nation and try to restore its path towards growth and political development. We are also joined by Her Excellency Madam Monica Juma of Kenya, the national security adviser there to the president. She is a remarkably distinguished individual who's held five different cabinet positions in her country. Both of our panelists from the East and the Horn of Africa were educated in their home countries, but also in Europe. Both have served their countries with distinction for many years and have experience also in broader regional fora. So we are looking forward very, very much to their comments today.

I'll just say one more brief word of introduction. I think many of you know that Ethiopia, in particular, as I just alluded to, has been troubled by civil conflict in the last two years. But there has been a lot of progress in the last few weeks and months towards trying to work out some kind of a settlement on the tragic conflict that has largely centered on the region of Tigray, but also affected much of the country. So we'll hear about that today. We'll hear about Kenya's exciting political developments and its role in the broader region trying to foster stability. We'll talk about Somalia, Eritrea and other nations, including perhaps Sudan as well.

So let me just say an additional brief word about my colleagues. Jeffrey Feltman is the John Whitehead distinguished scholar in international diplomacy. His career has been remarkable in 26 years of foreign service, culminating in the job of Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East when Hillary Clinton was secretary of state, and then going to the U.N., where he was an undersecretary general for political affairs, which means that he dealt with a lot of global hotspots and crises and conflicts around the world. And in more recent times, in the first year of the Biden administration, he served as the envoy to this same region that we're discussing today. So we're

really privileged to have him. Vanda Felbab-Brown is one of the bravest and most brilliant field researchers in the history of not just Brookings, but the United States and the world more generally. I've learned so much from her over the years. She directs our Initiative on, on Nonstate Armed Actors. And also, as I mentioned, co-directs the Africa Security Initiative, works on really all major continents of the world, on issues ranging from wildlife conservation to the drug trade to other forms of illicit economy, counterinsurgency. And that may sound like just a long list, but Vanda pulls them all together in her study of international criminal networks and ways of trying to address violence in many manifestations around the world.

So the way we'll proceed today, and we have about 90 minutes, is to hear from each of our panelists with the comments they'd like to frame and put on the table to get our conversation going. And each will speak for seven or 8 minutes. So that'll be our first half hour, starting with His Excellency Minister Timothewos. And then after the four speak each of them, we will have discussion here. I'll pose some questions, they'll perhaps comment on each other's thoughts, we can be a little bit free ranging, but that will just be among the five of us. And then in the final half hour, we will look forward to your questions, which you could email if you wish to the following address, events at Brookings dot edu. Again, that's events at Brookings dot edu. Some of you have already been kind enough to send in questions beforehand and we've got those, and I will use those plus those that may come in for feeding some additional questions to our panelists that I'll pose verbally and ask them to respond to in the final half hour. So thank you again from around the world for joining us. This is truly one of the wonders of Zoom that we can have a live conversation, transcontinental, with experts from the region as well as here in the United States. And with that, Your Excellency, Minister, Timothewos. Over to you, my friend.

Gedion Timothewos [00:05:07] Thank you very much, Michael. Let me start by thanking the Brookings Institution and Ambassador Feltman for this opportunity. It's a great privilege to be part of this distinguished panel. It's true that the Horn of Africa is a region beset with multiple talents. To varying degrees, countries in the region face complex and multifaceted challenges in security and conflict compounded by drought, environmental degradation, demographic pressure, youth unemployment and extremism are to be found at the top of the long list of problems that most observers of the region are familiar with. However, this narrative of doom and gloom does not capture the whole story. By focusing on Ethiopia, I would like to argue that there is cause for optimism and a

need for a more nuanced view which takes into account progress and positive developments as well as challenges and difficulties.

In this light, I would like to briefly dwell on positive developments on the political and economic front. Let me start on the political front. Ethiopia has been ravaged by a tragic and deadly conflict in the past two years. In the interest of time, I would not go into the causes and triggers of the conflict, though I believe these are relevant for any meaningful analysis of what has transpired. For now, I want to point out the fact that the conclusion of a negotiated and permanent succession of hostilities is a significant departure in Ethiopian history. Ethiopia's long history of statehood is filled with rivalries and conflicts.

However, particularly in our recent history, one cannot find any precedent where such conflicts have been settled through negotiation. The playbook in our history has always been the settlement of political differences through violence. The commitment of both parties to resolve their differences through dialogue and constitutional means breaks new ground in our history. I believe the significance of this commitment goes beyond this particular conflict. If we handle the situation properly and implement the agreement faithfully, we can pave the way for the decline and even the end of militancy in our politics and the emergence of civil discourse as the norm in Ethiopia. This offers us an enormous opportunity to revitalize and deepen the political and institutional reform initiatives we have launched before the onset of the conflict. In particular, the national inclusive dialogue process we are about to embark on is a rare opportunity to renew our social contract and build national consensus on the institutional political issues we face as a nation, laying the foundation for enduring peace and a truly democratic Ethiopia.

On the economic front, I want to highlight the continued commitment of the government of Ethiopia to economic reform. Poverty, environmental degradation and widespread unemployment, coupled with a divisive narrative built around ethnic identity, have contributed to instability in Ethiopia. Therefore, addressing these economic and environmental challenges goes a long way in tackling insecurity. That's why, despite the conflict we have, despite the conflict, we have tried to ensure that our investment in the energy sector and other major infrastructure projects continues, including the GERD. We are also rationalizing public investment in a way that boosts efficiency and return on investment. In addition to efforts to boost agricultural output and productivity, we are diversifying the drivers of economic growth by giving due attention to tourism and mining.

Through the flagship Green Legacy Initiative, we are pushing forward a green and sustainable, sustainable development agenda. Our economic liberalization efforts and reform package intended to ensure macroeconomic, macroeconomic stability are still ongoing, despite the serious setbacks we have faced.

The old Ethiopian motto, quote everything to the battlefields, end of quote, has not been our mantra. While we, while we are in what we believe to be a fight for the continued existence of the state, we have managed to preserve some boundaries for our economic reform programs. According to the economic forecasts of the IMF, Ethiopia's real GDP growth for 2023 is expected to be 5.3%, well above the regional average of 3.7%. Yes, we are bedeviled by insecurity. We are not out of the woods yet and there is a long way to go before the overall picture becomes more reassuring.

However, I believe we have turned a corner. With the support of partners and friends, we can bring back our whole focus and energy to bear on our political and economic reform programs. In order for these to happen, we need to ensure that the agreement with the TPLF is properly implemented, that other hotspots of conflict are addressed, and we also need to ensure accountability facilitates reconciliation as well as economic and social rehabilitation. If we manage to get these things right, our trajectory will be more positive, will move onwards and upwards with a ripple effect that would benefit the whole Horn of Africa. Thank you very much.

Michael O'Hanlon [00:11:23] Minister, that was excellent. And just the right balance of realism and hopefulness and optimism that I know is going to be needed to take your country forward to the next level of peace and stability and growth. Dr. Ambassador Juma, we're so privileged to have you. Your career has been just remarkable. You paved the way on so many fronts and done so much already. I know Kenya is now at an important moment of transition itself, showing a lot of positive energy and movement on the political and other fronts, and is certainly watching and trying to contribute to the broader region's stability, too. So we look forward very much to your comments today, Your Excellency.

Monica Juma [00:12:04] Thank you very much. Michael, Vanda, Minister Timothewos, Jeff, participants and online audience, good afternoon. Let me add my voice to Minister Gideon's to send you warm greetings out of Nairobi and to express my delight at participating at this event that is focusing on our part of the world. It is particularly critical because the Horn of Africa today is a theater of deepening interest from policymakers at national, regional and even international level. In fact, in

the last two months, a cohort of actors, special envoys of the horn, groups of ambassadors from key countries have been convening to discuss the Horn of Africa and hopefully to map out their strategies for engaging with our region. Obviously, this is driven by a desire to respond to what is a fast changing, complex environment. But there is also a growing consensus around the imperative to engage now in an area which could easily become a global geo strategic flashpoint.

More than ever, even during the Cold War, I think our region is witness to a convergence of a complex network of interests and activities, whose interplay is generating a growing portfolio of risks in a fragile and vulnerable context, which might be the reason why this session is titled the Arc of Insecurity somewhat, or regional conflict formations. But this situation, which is historical, has been worsened by a number of factors, including collapse, domestic national consensus, international, very tentative engagement that translate in many cases to limited attention and sometimes uninformed or misinformed strategies, and also lack of commitment which has manifested in transactional activities that frankly cause more harm than good. So our region is a subject of diverse analysis, but I want to pay attention to the opportunities available to stabilize our region, which has been historically, as the minister indicated, faced a combination of dire humanitarian crises, population displacement and so forth, terrorism, ecological fragility and so forth.

In Kenya, we believe that there is an opportunity, a window of opportunity to involve everyone that can turn this geostrategic region around. And this is borne out of two convictions. First is history. We have seen that our region and our countries, when they face critical tests— and minister has just referred to this—we often forge forward drawing on some very unconventional wisdom. And I think we have seen these points across our history 1978, 91, 2005, 2011, 2019, and more recently, the Somalia transition, or even with this Ethiopian situation and with the DR Congo.

Secondly, we believe, we believe that our aspiration as a country and the administration of President William Ruto is kind of forging a moment of, a moment of opportunity in terms of focusing our foreign policy to, to focus on stabilizing the region, on deepening integration in terms of trade and investment, but also on promoting the insulation of our country's fragility through the deepening of constitutionalism and the rule of law. And let me just run through those three very quickly. We know that insecurity has been one of our challenges, and in particular, terrorism, for example, which we have seen an arc from with Somalia as the epicenter going all the way to eastern Congo to northern Mozambique and so forth. And we have also seen this linking to international terrorism. And therefore,

here is an opportunity for collective international action to the magnitude of this threat. You know, it is not a Horn of Africa threat. It is a global international threat. And I think there is an opportunity to demonstrate international solidarity for peace and security as envisaged in the U.N. charter.

We also know that weak governance has a direct impact on the level of security attained. A state that is incapable of managing its territory, its population, providing services to its citizens is likely to face insecurity more. And we have seen that when a government is capable of mining and providing security and citizen, as we have seen even in the case of Somalia, then there is a tendency for that country to even mitigate the ravaging effects of, of, of events such as pandemics, such as drought and famine and so forth. So here is an opportunity to focus on the question of state building and improving the capacity of states to deliver, to deliver security, to deliver social services, to protect population, to protect its environment, and to drive innovation. As we were talking earlier on, an estimated 18 million people in the Horn of Africa today are faced with the effects of ravaging drought, facing three four years of failed rains. The effect, the ability of our government to respond to this is limited significantly depending on how well our state institution perform. And therefore here is an opportunity in terms of helping to build the ability of states to deal with very complex challenges that we face everywhere. This is why, for us, this security has become a primary pillar, the pursuit of regional security, security within our foreign policy.

We see security as crucial in terms of providing the promise of the Kenyan mission, that we are linked to our region, and this explains why we have, over our history since independence, invested significantly in peace processes across the region, whether it was the Burundian peace process, whether it was the Uganda process, Sudan, South Sudan, whether it is in Somalia in terms of their contribution to that peace process and, and crises there, or whether it is today's, the DIA process, which has just concluded the third conclave in Nairobi today. These engagements, which constitute, I believe, the largest percentage in per capita terms anywhere in the world, are our greatest insurance to our nation. We believe, and rightfully so, that our destiny is, is inextricably linked to the stability of our region. But what is critical, in our view, is the opportunity then to anchor these processes. We must be able, partners to the Horn of Africa, must consciously come to anchor the peace processes like the minister was speaking in the case of Ethiopia or DR Congo.

These are long term processes, and it is important that partnerships are framed in a manner that enables societies to move from tentative fragile peace commitment to sustainable peace in the

region. The support of the international community, therefore, needs to be fashioned from a perspective that understands also the interlinkages of our region, that treat us as interlocked webs, so that when we are looking at terrorism, we look at the pattern of terrorism, not nation state projects, countries. I think that is part of the limitation because a lot of interventions come based on bilateral basis, on country specific programs. And this in itself is a limiting factor because we have the network, a network of, across countries across the region. It is also important to focus as an opportunity on the opportunities of this region. We have many opportunities on land and offshore and we believe a focus on modalities for unlocking this potential for the Horn of Africa would provide a resource base for its resilience, but also for its development.

It is, therefore, and this is in my mind, very critical because in fact, most of our resources are both transnational and transboundary. So it is very, very important that we move away from the conventional frameworks for resource management to transnational frameworks of resource sharing. And this is crucial if we are going to drive towards a shared future, shared prosperity. And there are a number of regional mechanisms that have been created to enable this. So the opportunity is really to strengthen those regional mechanisms for investments together, for trade, expanding trade for movement of people, goods and services. So these supports to drive productivity must be framed correctly. Oftentimes, interventions in crisis situations take the format of applying models that have been seen elsewhere. I think it is important to have the sensitivity to introduce nuance in the Horn of Africa, which has layers of risks, but also opportunities. So the importance of investments being relevant, investments providing for the right technology transfer, investments creating the, responding to the right needs, jobs for the youth and so forth. So it is crucial that investment partnership is driven by the need on the ground and the reality and context of the horn and rather than being transferred from seemingly similar situations.

Thirdly is the importance of deepening constitutionalism and the rule of law. We believe in Kenya in the, that the, in the reduction of political and social economic risk, in the context of our very young democracies that are fragile, lies in the democratic dispensation defined as broadening the governance bases of society and allowing greater, not less engagement. Across our region, we have been witness in the last few years to a surge of citizen demand for participation, for accountability, for transparency. Significant in this is our youth bulge, which is characterized by young, educated men and women that are ready, able to organize. You know, they are ready, they can call international

solidarity, they are calling for demands. And I think it is crucial that our systems find ways of absorbing this and turning this to an ownership project. It is really absolutely critical. This requires, at the leadership level, the growth and deepening of an elite consensus that shepherds the nation towards increased participation, increased involvement and determination of public choices. Each of our countries are shown a measure of response to these demands. But these demands, in my view, are becoming more sophisticated and becoming firmer, and becoming urgent. And so it is a real critical thing that we are able to respond to these are systems, and we create the possibility of defining ourselves within strengthening shared norms and systems, including strengthening our own institutions, and therefore support for strengthening constitutionalism in the face of a global recession on democracy is really critical, in particularly in our context.

Of course we have our regional organizations, and they are critical in terms of norms setting, standards setting. And I think there is an opportunity here to strengthen our regional organizations. They have been like any other multilateral institutions, facing a crisis themselves. But I think they're important in terms of norm-setters, in terms of solidarity, in terms of shared values. And there is an opportunity again here to, to strengthen these actors that become first responders in the case of a crisis that become good interlocutors, and in our case, that would be great at agenda setting, especially in our region, where we are having numerous different and sometimes conflicted actors and interest really trying to shape what the Horn of Africa looks like. I think there is a big opportunity in terms of aligning the Horn of Africa states with our neighborhood, our neighborhood in terms of the Red Sea arena, our neighborhood in terms of the Middle East and our neighborhood in terms of the Indian Ocean region, to really begin to create a consensus in terms of what peace and security in our region looks like. Because of the interest that this region is attracting, I think we cannot shy away from the imperative to cohere a common vision of what the future looks like.

Finally, is the need to build an anchoring capability. Because of the complexity of this region, I think it is important that we create, consciously build an anchoring capacity that is able to cohere and then threateningly, but convincingly convene, so that we can shape a common vision for a shared future. Kenya has stepped up its commitment in this regard because we believe that an alliance of champions, champions comprising of governments that share in the future, such as the US, but also think tanks and policy institutes like the Brookings Institute, that can drive the correct nuanced analysis

as well as private capital and philanthropy can all together help to respond to the various facets of the arc, not just of risks, but of opportunities in our region. I thank you for your kind attention.

Michael O'Hanlon [00:26:58] Madam Ambassador. Thank you very much. And we'll just keep moving right along now to Ambassador Feltman.

Jeffrey Feltman [00:27:05] Thank you. And let me take this opportunity to say thank you to His Excellency, the Minister and Her Excellency, the National Security Adviser for the wisdom and the analysis that they have generously provided us today and that they generously provided me during the time that I was special envoy for the Horn of Africa. So thanks, thanks to you both for joining us and for being so helpful to me during my tenure. And I also want to salute the roles that both of them played in coming up with those Ethiopian understandings that the minister talked about. Of course, the minister himself was in South Africa, in Pretoria, as the Ethiopians were concluding the Pretoria agreement signed on November 2nd. And Her Excellency, national security adviser, of course, was supporting former Kenyan President Kenyatta, who was on the AU panel that facilitated the November 2nd Pretoria agreement between the Ethiopians, as well as, as well as the subsequent Nairobi talks that were about the implementation of that Pretoria agreement.

Let's be candid. There's been, as the minister knows very, very well, this, we've been through a sort of a rough patch in the US Ethiopian relationship over these past two years. You know, the war has had an impact on our relationship with disagreements over the conduct of the war, the humanitarian access, accountability and so forth. But now I think that Ethiopians and Americans alike are in total agreement, after the importance of good faith, full implementation of the November 2nd agreement and the subsequent Nairobi understandings. And the outside partners and friends of Ethiopia, next door, Kenya, to the Gulf States, the EU, the UN, China, the United States. You know, we may have disagreed about how to react to the fighting in Ethiopia's north over the past two years. But now I suspect we are all united. We want to see a stable, peaceful, prosperous Ethiopia again being a linchpin of stability in the Horn of Africa and beyond.

But I have to, I have to raise a question. Is Eritrea part of this consensus? And it's not just me who wonders. African Union High Representative for the Horn of Africa, former Nigerian President Obasanjo in the Tigrainian capital of Mekelle on November 24th, said, quote, no country should accept the presence of foreign countries on its land, end quote. Now, I understand that there are some signs that the Eritrean, Eritreans have pulled back from some locations in the in the heart of

Tigray. And perhaps this is the start of a virtuous trend. And I've, I've heard from Ethiopian leaders that when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia asks President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea to withdraw his troops, that he will. I hope that that's true. But even if he does, the Eritrean president has alliances, tools and proxies that, if employed, could complicate Ethiopian reconciliation. And the history of his role in the region I don't I don't find particularly encouraging.

So I mentioned earlier all those countries that are united behind the Ethiopians implementing in full the, the Pretoria agreement, Nairobi understandings. Now what should we do in order to try to deter possible would-be spoilers. You know the usual international toolkits that that that countries like the United States draw on doesn't really work with President Isaias, he doesn't really worry about sanctions and he's not particularly attracted by the promise of foreign investment, foreign assistance. So rather than focus on, today, on, on Eritrea being a potential spoiler, instead I would propose that Ethiopia's friends and partners work with the Ethiopians in five different areas.

And first and most important, help the government of Ethiopia and the Tigrayans build as much momentum into this process as quickly as possible, including the rapid acceleration of, of lifesaving humanitarian assistance. We basically make it clear that there will be a high cost to whomever might disrupt the November 2nd agreement. And move forward decisively so Ethiopia is strengthened by implementation of these agreements, Tigray and DDR, rather than allowing Ethiopia to be weakened by outside interference. But our tangible support, those of us on the outside, our tangible support for this process will become easier if the Ethiopians themselves are a little bit more receptive to greater involvement in the implementation of these accords by the EU, the UN, the World Bank, the United States and others to augment, not replace, to augment the AU lead. And having worked on a number of post-conflict processes during the six years I was at the United Nations, I would also encourage the Ethiopians to find ways to strengthen the monitoring and verification mechanisms in these agreements, because sufficient monitoring can successfully build trust and deter backsliding and call out would-be spoilers.

Second, we should support a credible Ethiopian process to resolve the tensions arising elsewhere in the country, including in the most populous state, Oromia, because basic questions despite this war's end, we hope it's the end, basic political questions such as decentralized versus regional power still need to be addressed peacefully and inclusively by the Ethiopians themselves.

And we can encourage the Ethiopians to build on the Pretoria Nairobi talks, to have a truly national process that addresses tensions that outsiders might otherwise exploit.

Third, I would suggest that it's finally time for all of us to endorse the Eritrean-Ethiopian border, as defined by the 2009 arbitration process that placed the town of Badme inside Eritrea. Because eliminating border ambiguity removes one tool that President Isaias of Eritrea uses to justify indefinite national military service, hostility toward the parts, parts of Ethiopia, and his suffocation of domestic, political and civil life. And fourth, picking up on saying that the, that national security advisor Juma said about the regional and several of these organizations, I would argue that we should find ways to help strengthen EGAD, the subregional organization of the Horn of Africa. The President Isaias, I think would like to see EGAD be irrelevant. But countries like Kenya and Ethiopia can reinforce EGAD as a source of regional stability and cooperation that's responsive to those demands that that Monica Juma mentioned by the citizens of the Horn for civilian participation in inclusive government. And I think we saw an example of this yesterday with the signing of the framework agreement in Khartoum.

Fifth, I think we should all encourage Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt to conclude understandings on the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, because the last thing this region needs is another source of conflict and tensions that would-be spoilers would be all too happy to exploit. Finally, in closing, I'd like to note that the understandings between AUs and Mekelle, the understandings that came out of Pretoria and Nairobi, will ideally lead to greater detail on accountability. Accountability not only for war crimes that were committed by belligerents from all parties in this two-year catastrophic conflict, but also for human rights abuses and problems that preceded this particular war and preceded even the rise of the Prosperity Party and Prime Minister Abiy.

You know, I am no longer serving inside the US government, and I cannot speak for Washington, but I truly believe that the implementation of the Pretoria agreement of November 2nd that the Minister did so much to bring about, combined with, with credible accountability arrangements, will not only strengthen Ethiopia, promote Ethiopia's reconciliation, but will restore the positive US-Ethiopian bilateral relationship.

Michael O'Hanlon [00:34:45] Thank you, Ambassador Feltman. And over to you, Dr. Felbab-Brown.

Vanda Felbab-Brown [00:34:50] Oh, thank you very much. It's an honor to join the panel today to talk about security dimensions in the Horn of Africa. My task is to focus on Somalia, a country that has suffered from many of the issues that Her Excellency Juma spoke about, immense underdevelopment, persistent conflict, catastrophic environmental conditions. And over the past several months, we have seen really two key dynamics taking place in Somalia. One is, unfortunately, a dramatic food insecurity that has not yet been officially designated famine. But for all practical purposes, approaches famine. The second is the emergence of anti-Shabab clan uprisings in the summer and continuously taking place through the summer and the fall, as communities in some parts of Somalia are pushing back against the very potent, very entrenched jihadi terrorist insurgency, al-Shabab.

In the context of the new government of President Hassan Sheikh Mohammad, who returned to power as a result of elections in June after two years of a protracted and dangerous crisis amidst complex and, frankly, explosive relations between Mogadishu and federal member states. Let me focus a bit now on these two dynamics. First, the food insecurity. 6.7 million people in Somalia face acute food insecurity. 6.7 million. That's more than a third or just, of the 18 million in the region that Her Excellency Juma spoke about. 300,000 people are likely going to be in famine this spring. As of now, 500,000 children are severely malnourished. The famine has emerged because four seasons of rains have failed and the current fifth seasons that's taking place is weaker than had been hoped. There are rains, but they are not as robust as one has hoped. And of course, this prolonged crisis, driven by climate change, as well as compounded by various policies and insecurity in Shabab's control, has contributed to a catastrophic humanitarian situation in the country. Already 1 million people have been displaced. Many are located primarily around Baidoa, it's one of the regions very severely hit by the crisis. Some humanitarian aid is flowing there. But there are vast territories controlled by Shabab where aid is not coming to. For several reasons, one is the fear of retaliation and attacks by al-Shabab.

But a second is also the threat of legal prosecution by countries perhaps such as the United States, that might want to use existing laws against material support for terrorist groups who punish anyone whose material resources, including humanitarian aid, would be leaking to militant groups. This same threat of legal sanctions during the Obama administration critically hampered the delivery of humanitarian aid as humanitarian NGOs were deeply discouraged from providing the aid. And I

very much hope that the large numbers of that that we saw as a result of the legal uncertainty and limbo will not be replicated, and there will very clearly be defined terms that allow the delivery of humanitarian aid even to al-Shabab territories. The many dimensions of the crisis go far beyond the immediate human impact. 3 million livestock in Somalia are dead. That's over three quarters of all livestock in Somalia. This has profound implications for the food security or insecurity of households, but it also has dramatic implications for the economy of Somalia, which is so dependent on the export of livestock.

So as this dramatic crisis was unfolding in the summer, al-Shabab resorted to its typical brutal behavior of increasing taxes and extortions during periods of economic stress. They made the same brutal mistake during the 2011 famine. And it was this pressure on community to pay greater taxes amidst much shrunk resources for household and communities that caused some of the key factors that brought about al-Shabab's downturn at the time and allowed the international community, with the vestiges of the Somali government, to take Mogadishu away from Shabab and expand through the country. When communities this summer refused to pay the extortion taxes to al-Shabab, Shabab resorted with brutal response to communities, including poisoning well and killing remaining livestock. And this has triggered a set of uprisings, the first in the Hiran and Hirshabelle region of Somalia, but today, after months of it, have expanded to other parts, such as the state of Galmudug. Fortunately, the new government of President Hassan Sheikh Mohammad realized the importance and opportunity of the militia uprising and has been determined to support them. Yet, despite the enthusiasm and willingness of communities to risk their lives in taking on Shabab, many challenges persist.

The first significant challenge is really the lack of holding forces. Even the Somali national army forces such as Gorgor, those by, trained by Turkey and Danab, the Special Operations Forces trained by the United States have been focused primarily on clearing. There is still an acute lack of holding forces in Somalia, acute lack that provides key opportunities for Shabab to come back and that also will be growing only more significant if we see any expansion of the community uprisings. Relying on the clan militia forces themselves to hold territories comes with many problems, one of which that already many of the clan forces are the acutely spent. They have run out of energy, resources and capacities. Many of them are hanging on in the situations that they managed to wrest out of al-Shabab's hands. But they need support.

The second typical problem with militia uprisings in Somalia is that the various clan militias tend to turn on each other and they resort to deep conflicts over resources, clan domination and conflicts that al-Shabab takes, take advantage of. We have seen al-Shabab replicating already the policies it had adopted in similar settings. We have had other clan uprisings in Somalia, though they have perhaps not been as large as the current ones. But there has been a set of them. And Shabab tends to do several things. It tends to pull back; it tends to watch the clans resort to clan conflict and then insert itself on behalf of the weaker conflict. It has, Al-Shabab is enormously adroit in exploiting clan rivalries. So the issue how we prevent the clan militias from abusing communities, turning on the rival clans remains a major one.

Second, al-Shabab tends to wait until the clan militias spend themselves, again we are approaching that situation now. How are we going to deliver back up and holding forces that are lacking? And the third is that Shabab tends to negotiate even with the clans that have turned against it. And again, we are seeing that negotiating outreach to clan elders very intensively by Shabab. The Somali government is aware of the issue of lacking holding forces, something that has pervaded post-2011 issues, security issues in Somalia. And apparently it is looking for new actors to provide training specifically United Arab Emirates seem to have promised the very significant training of both police and army forces, perhaps some 3000 Somalis are already being trained under that agreement.

But while that training might make sense from the perspective of trying to address the holding force crisis, it also means that it really violates fundamentally the 2017 security architecture framework that was established for Somalia and that focused very much on finding a balance between the interest of Mogadishu, the federal government, and those of the federal member states that have been formed. Among them, the issues of resources and resources and allocation, economic resources and allocation of security resources remains private conflict. So apparently President Hassan Sheikh Mohammed is hoping that one way to get a buy in from federal member states for extending the size of the Somali national army and Somali national police by significant numbers, perhaps doubling them, is to allow that elections do not take place in federal member states by two years, extending the rule of federal member presidents, of presidents of federal member states. That comes with many challenges, of course, that might be liked by the federal member presidents, the member state presidents, but it raises profound issues of accountability in the races, profound issues

of clan rivalries, which are playing out at the supplemental level. In Somaliland, we are already in an explosive situation as a result of significant delay of elections.

Finally, there is some very significant debate and discussion that's highly fraught about when and how one should be negotiating with al-Shabab. Some NGOs and thinktanks, such as the International Crisis Group, have been urging very strongly to start negotiations with al-Shabab, arguing that there is little prospect for al-Shabab's defeat. Other actors, such as the United States, have not liked the idea of negotiations with al-Shabab, perhaps still scarred by the outcome of negotiations with the Taliban and the Taliban coming to power. Shabab itself has shown little interest in negotiations, but that might be changing as it feels on the back foot, at least to some extent. And the Somali government is somewhere between the position of understanding maybe that at one point negotiations might need to take place, but being very wary of agreeing to even very preliminary, very informal background talks as of now. But it's an issue that will continue spanning the conflict, as there is, in my view, little prospect that we would, in fact see a robust defeat of al-Shabab. And yet there is a narrative that's being put forth.

And I'll conclude with that. A narrative has now emerged that argues that al-Shabab is, quote, only a mafia, that it no longer has any ideology, that its primary objective is to extort economic resources from communities, cities, businessmen in Mogadishu, that the emergence of the militias, of the clan militias is the beginning of end of al-Shabab that cannot fight a multi-front war with multiple forces. I would posit that I have heard this narrative several times before. The war in Somalia on a smaller scale. But I have also heard this narrative in 2014 in Afghanistan, where a much wider and geographically larger set of anti-Taliban uprisings took place. It took two years, the Taliban crushed the uprisings and several years later, the Taliban is in power in Afghanistan, brutalizing the country. And so I would urge us that we do not fold trap into some of those narratives. And that we think very carefully about what really needs to take place on the battleground, that is in the political sphere to make sure that the community bravery is anchored. And that means not just reconciling communities, clans, but it also means working on the very difficult and stalled agenda of Mogadishu's relations with member states. Thank you.

Michael O'Hanlon [00:48:27] Vanda, thank you very much. And what I'd like to do now is give you each a chance to just say what's on your mind having heard your fellow panelists, I'll go in the same order, but I want to add one question from myself. Then we'll do that round, and then we'll go to

audience questions, which are numerous, and cover issues like Sudan, as well as the U.N. and A.U. efforts at peacekeeping in Somalia, and a number of other specific aspects of the general subjects you've already addressed. But let me let me add my one question for this round, which is specifically motivated by what Jeff Feltman said, but I'd like to hear all of you please comment. And if I heard you right, Jeff, Ambassador Feltman, you talked about certainly the challenge of implementing the Pretoria Nairobi agreements and dealing with the Eritrea dimension. But as I've studied the problem and read about it and I don't know it nearly as well as the four of you, but I also realize that the ceasefire itself seems very fragile, even in terms of internal Ethiopian dynamics, because there still is the question of, for example, how to build a stable federal presence within Tigray and how to perhaps help the Tigray and regional government evolve in the direction that's been sort of sketched out, but not yet fleshed out in the understandings from Pretoria and, and from Nairobi.

So I wondered if you could comment on the prospects for further internal meeting of minds on these issues of federalism within Tigray, regional governance within Tigray, and how you view that and I could start if I could, Mr., Minister Timothewos with you, then go to Dr. Juma, then back to Ambassador Feltman and then Dr. Felbab-Brown. But please feel free to comment more generally on anything else you've heard this morning as well, this morning, afternoon so far. Over to you, Your Excellency.

Gedion Timothewos [00:50:28] So let me start by commenting on the issue you raised. Now, as far as the prospect of the implementation of the Pretoria agreement, I think there has been substantial progress. There has been the implementation on a meeting between senior commanders in Nairobi, which has concluded successfully. There has been a follow up meeting in Shire, a town in Tigray recently. That meeting has also been concluded successfully between the security and military personnel of both sides. So while we have been able to consolidate the meeting of minds on the security issues, when it comes to the political issues such as federalism, the principles, the normative framework that has been set out in the agreement clearly stipulates that the federal constitution would provide the framework.

So in terms of federalism, in terms of decentralization, what should be the rule and what should be the standard? I think there is an adequate meeting of minds, of course, through further political dialogue and engagement, we need to flesh it out, particularly in relation to interim and transitional arrangements, that needs to be worked out through further engagement. This brings me to

some of the issues raised by Ambassador Feltman as well. I would agree with Ambassador Feltman in his desire to focus on working with both parties, working with the Ethiopians as he framed it. I think that's the most, that would be the most productive and constructive approach. The commitment of both parties is indispensable. As long as we have that commitment, as long as we have that understanding and we consolidate it, we build on it, I think we could, there could be obstacles, there could be impediments, but we can overcome those obstacles. And I am very much encouraged by the successful conclusion of both the meetings in Nairobi and the recent one in Shire.

The other issue I want to have addressed is in relation to accountability. As we have all seen in the agreement, in the deal we reached, the agreement is that there should be a credible, transparent transitional justice mechanism, and that that transitional justice mechanism should be in line with the African Union policy framework for transitional justice. So what we expect is in, in the coming months, we will have a broad consultative process regarding this issue to ensure that all stakeholders will have a say, will have an opportunity to craft our approach to transitional justice, and there will be credible and comprehensive accountability to ensure that there would not be impunity in any shape and form. So that's also something that has been agreed upon by both sides.

Now be it in relation to this particular conflict or other conflicts in the region or in Ethiopia, I think one, one important principle that we should underline, on the outside, outsiders, partners should also reinforce and support, is that political violence should not pay. There should be ample opportunity for all communities, for all political formations and groups to have their voices heard. To be, to be included in governments, to have a democratic process where they could contest for power, where they could have their voices heard. At the same time, it should be a duty incumbent on everyone to ensure that political violence should not, should not pay, should not, should not have dividends. As long as political violence results in deals that are sweeter than what you would get through dialogue and peaceful engagement, then there will be the incentive to resort to violence. At the same time, the, on the other side, we should also ensure that there is an opportunity for legitimate political contestation, participation and dialogue. This was also the point that I wanted to raise. Thank you very much.

Michael O'Hanlon [00:56:13] Thank you, Your Excellency. And Ambassador Juma, over to you, please.

Monica Juma [00:56:18] Thank you very much. And let me begin by really thanking all the panelists for those very insightful comments. Now, let, let me just begin by making an observation. Are there risks to the agreement? Is it watertight? Are there risks? Yes, there are. And it would be it would be difficult not to have, because people give, it was a give and take type of process. So they are, there are risks. And that is why we have to be a lot in supporting the implementation of these, of this agreement. Now, the first thing to really commend is that the ceasefire, which was the first step, is holding. It is holding. And I think that is not a mean achievement. And this has got to be really commended, both ways. Secondly is the question around the technical details and steps that need to be taken now. The importance of standing, the monitoring and verification mechanism cannot be overstated. It is urgent. I think that is important, and I think there is a room there to support the African Union, to stand a robust mechanism, because this is really going to make the difference around the military side of things all the way to the DDR processes.

So I think here is an important, is an important element. Secondly is the importance around messaging. We've got a lot of conversation about is the AU capable and this linked to the opportunity I spoke about in terms of strengthening regional mechanisms. These are very, very important even when they are fragile. And so support to the African Union so that it can provide the technical support, it can, to do the military process, the technical support to the political process, because it is a process and also to the accountability mechanisms that are going to be set up so that we have the right mechanisms, I think is crucial. So what then for is the role of the international community? I think, one, it is to support the agreement and to keep encouraging by the right messages at the right point, all to keep working on this part, which might be difficult. It is going to, to, to, people have to make difficult choices. People have to give. People have to take sometimes. But number two, supporting this process must also be accompanied by efforts to insulate it from spoilers, really from spoilers. And these spoilers are not just Ethiopians, they are not just local. They are not just regional. So I think spoilers, how we insulate this process from spoilers will also determine the speed at which it evolves, but also the degree of success that we are going to achieve.

Michael O'Hanlon [00:59:32] Thank you. And over to you, Ambassador Feltman.

Jeffrey Feltman [00:59:36] Thanks and thanks for the comments from, from the other, from the other panelists. It seems to me that ideally one would see almost three circles of talks regarding Ethiopia in the region. The first is already happening, as described by Prime Minister Gideon, the fact

that you had middle talks in Nairobi followed by talks in Shire to flesh out the details of implementation of the November 2nd, November 2nd Pretoria permanent cessation of hostilities agreement. And those need to continue, at least the discussions between the federal government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, the people that were at the table in Pretoria about implementation and as, and as Dr. Juma pointed out, the fact that the cessation of hostilities has held is promising. But all of us have witnessed peace processes that, that look promising for a while and then collapse, and we want to see forward momentum on this, which I think the parties so far have demonstrated they want to see, too.

But these talks need to go, need to go into, into more detail on some of the issues that the minister raised, like accountability. I would second Dr. Juma's comment about robust monitoring verification, which we've seen elsewhere, provides the type of, of trust that is needed to move a process forward. And also within the, there's a second layer of negotiations that I believe from my previous discussions with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed that he wants to see happen, which is to, which is to use the calm in the north, the fact that emotions can, will no longer be as, as raw as the fighting stops to move into a national process. And now these two, these two circles, the process between the federal government of Ethiopia and the TPLF and the process of a national, of national talks in Ethiopia, those are Ethiopian processes. The outsiders, we can be supportive, we can share best practices, we can share lessons learned from other processes, but these are Ethiopian processes. And we we need to recognize that the Ethiopian ownership is important.

But the third part is, the third circle, I would inversion would be more of a regional discussion, more of a regional discussion about what are the security arrangements for the Horn and beyond. This is a strategically important region, not only for those who are living in the horn, but for those across the Red Sea, in the, in the Gulf, for those that depend on the \$10 billion of trade that goes to the Red Sea every day. So, so again, I would, I would see ideally three circles of talks, one between the federal government of Ethiopia and Tigrayans, that's happening, we should encourage it. The second as, as calm prevails in the north, move in, encourage the Ethiopians to move into a national process, to deal with some of the constitutional issues, power sharing issues that are on the table. And third, we should encourage a broader regional discussion to promote stability in the horn and beyond.

Michael O'Hanlon [01:02:52] Jeff, I want to stay with you just for one quick second because of your experience in so many peace processes and as you say, you've watched many succeed and many fail. I know it's dangerous to make predictions, especially about the future, but what does your gut tell you about how well this is going and how promising it looks right now? Because I really can't tell. I mean, I, I'm very encouraged, but I don't know the region well enough to really be able to gauge whether this first step is, was probably the hardest one and obviously not guaranteeing a complete success or a stabilization of the situation, but, you know, showing a very promising future in all likelihood, or is it just one of many steps that has to happen and we're just sort of getting started?

Jeffrey Feltman [01:03:36] Mike, I think I can argue either way it's that we're still early processes and the timetables that were laid out in Pretoria were certainly very, very ambitious. In some cases, some of the dates have already, already slipped. But, but on the encouraging side, there is a cessation of hostilities that's holding. The talks are continuing. Both sides are, I think, signaling to their publics that the war is over. You know, there's been terrible case of awful incitement in the social media in Ethiopia from all sides. And that seems to be, to be lowering. I'm also encouraged by the fact that those of us from the outside that may have had a disagreement about the reaction to the fighting itself are united behind these agreements so that the Ethiopians can sort of count on the fact that the differences between the U.S. and China about how, about the conduct of the war are no longer going to be a complicating factor as they look for outside, outside support.

But I am worried that in my own view that the monitoring verification process, which the Ethiopians themselves decided on, I'm not, you know, they decided on what it should look like, I think it would, it would be helpful if it were if it were somehow strengthened. I think that both sides would have an interest in having some, some third-party eyes on the ground that exceed ten persons that are listed in the agreement that, in the possibility of, of using drone cameras.

And I and I do worry about the question of Eritrea. I think, I suppose I am accusing Eritrea of being guilty before it's actually done, before it's actually spoiled these agreements. But I think that the best way to try to reduce the possibility that Eritrea could be a, could be a spoiler is, is to build momentum into the process so that becomes that much harder to slow it down and can stop it. But we, we'd have to be clear eyed that many promising post-conflict processes around the world often break, often break down. And we need to be using international lessons learned to try to help the Ethiopians make sure theirs is not one of those that falls apart.

Michael O'Hanlon [01:05:43] Thank you, Vanda, over to you for any comments at this point.

Then we'll go to audience questions.

Vanda Felbab-Brown [01:05:49] On Ethiopia, I think it's very important to preserve the ceasefire. I would suggest that it's also equally important to avoid the trip fires and pitfalls of a victor's peace. The piece did emerge because the federal forces of Ethiopia, in combination with Eritrean forces and various militia such as from the Amhara region, managed to defeat the TPLF on the battlefield. And it is tempting but dangerous to treat the deal and ceasefire as a mechanism to impose a victor's peace that creates long term instability. And the one, some of the issues to to avoid those dangers and pitfalls, includes really finding a mechanism how to give robust voice and robust governance to local people, not just in the Tigray region, but part of the broader national reconciliation project, process that Ambassador Feltman was suggesting.

Certainly working actively on reconciliation is critical. Ambassador Feltman spoke about the intense polarization in the country over the past two years and frankly, intense vilification of other ethnicities. So working with diligence, commitment by all sides to heal the nation, to get away from the [inaudible] ethnic tension is critical. And that includes being creative about how to deal with very wicked issues, such as Western Tigray, of being creative, in what kind of autonomy relations can be created in areas that are highly contested within Ethiopia.

And finally, there is the issue of militias that have been the defining feature of the conflict that emerged not just on the Tigray side and on the Amhara side, we've seen the rise of militias in Somalia and Afar areas, we've seen militias being drawn from Oromia, a place that Ambassador Feltman pointed out is a place of intense instability, a place where the Ethiopian government has designated some of the insurgents as terrorist groups. So a lot of issues that need to be addressed.

I would like to make a broader comment, though, about the theme of security and the theme of reconciliation, accountability and providing for populations in the Horn of Africa that have been historically marginalized or that feel excluded from current political processes. We are speaking today on the cusp of the U.S. Africa Leaders' Summit that will focus on issues of green economy, on good governance, on human rights, youth opportunities, many of the issues that Excellency Juma spoke about. But the issue of insecurity, persisting insecurity is also an inescapable one. And indeed, there is an arc of crisis that spans not just the horn but goes all the way down to southern Tanzania and Mozambique, where an insurgency group that calls itself al-Shabab, though it is really not connected

to Somalia's al-Shabab, has been mobilizing, imposed immense insecurity. And although the joint intervention of Sadek [phonetic] and Rwanda, or two interventions, two separate interventions, one by Sadek, one by Rwanda, against al-Shabab, suppressed al-Shabab in the northern Mozambique area, they immediately displaced it. And we see intense mobilization in southern Somalia, we see displacement and activity of Shabab in other parts of Mozambique.

And importantly, we see the same problems that have plagued Somalia, that have plagued the great lake areas, namely that have plagued many counterinsurgency and stabilization efforts, even in as faraway places as Colombia. Namely, that the clearing takes place, but the transition to holding and importantly bringing in an accountable, just effective state does not take place. And finding a mechanism to do so in those conflict areas, in the militia liberated areas in Somalia, in the peace or ceasefire negotiated deal context in Ethiopia, as well as in places like Somalia and, and Mozambique, are really critical for breaking out of the arc of insecurity.

Michael O'Hanlon [01:10:42] Very well said. So we've got just over 15 minutes to go. And that means that I could ask please each of you to comment for about 3 minutes on one of the questions I'm about to pose to the group from the audience. So please either take notes or remember the question that most strikes your fancy and they really come together into two broad categories.

There are a lot of questions about Sudan and the violence over the years in Sudan, the efforts towards peace, the separation of Sudan and South Sudan, more recently, the coup, very recently, the effort to start to create a framework for stabilizing the country that we've heard talk of just this week, and also the spillover effects of what happens in Sudan for the countries that we've been focused on so far today. So if anyone wants to touch on Sudan, any type of comment or suggestion, recommendation you'd like to offer that would be welcome and responsive to a lot of the questions we've received from the audience.

And the second big bin of questions now does come back primarily to Ethiopia and Somalia, but it involves the role of outside actors and specifically what you would like perhaps to see them do next, if anything, to contribute to a process. And there's been some discussion on this already, Ambassador Feltman talked about the role of the region and the international community and supporting the AU. But the questions that we've received concern, for example, the peacekeeping mission in Somalia, why it hasn't done better, and could it do better in the future, or should it simply be ended pretty soon? That's one set of questions. There are questions about the role of UAE, the

Wagner group from Russia, the United States in the region, and what it could constructively do, including perhaps the U.S. military. So that's the second broad category of questions. I'm not asking each of you to address all of those questions, but if each of you could perhaps home in on one sub question of each of those two broad categories in about 3 minutes, please, starting, if I could, with Your Excellency, Minister Gedion.

Gedion Timothewos [01:12:51] Thank you very much. Let me start with the last issue you raised. I think our partners and friends have a very important role to play in, in reinforcing the momentum for peace, sending the right signal, encouraging all sides to adhere to the deal. I think that could go a long way in resolving this issue and ensuring that there would be stability and reconciliation. And in particular, I think it's very important that the international community support the inclusive national dialogue process we hope to embark upon in the near future. It has not commenced yet, but it will commence soon and to address the underlying structural political issues, having that kind of national conversation is very important and the support of the international community on that issue would be very crucial.

Finally, something that I failed to address earlier, on the need to strengthen the verification and monitoring mechanism, that there is an ongoing conversation on that issue. Both sides want to see a robust mechanism that would really hold us for account if there are any mischiefs or violations. So I think we'll see more, we'll see a more robust mechanism than, than some would anticipate. Thank you very much.

Michael O'Hanlon [01:14:39] Thank you very much, sir. It's been a privilege to have you with us today and wish you the very best going forward. Now, Ambassador Juma, over to you, please. I can't hear you, Ambassador. I think you might still be muted.

Monica Juma [01:14:56] I want just to reflect on a, on a broad question around the role of the international community, and that is the commitment to stay seized with this region. I think this region manifests a complexity of layering of risks and opportunities, as I've said. And if we are going to minimize or manage those risks and give prominence to the opportunities, there is need for sustained focus. I dare say almost a marshall plan really in terms of support and commitment. It has been really efforts in the chip. You know, it's very, very tentative. And that tentativeness has created more pervasiveness rather than useful support, you know.

Secondly, I think that support can also take the form of enabling us to share experiences. I think around this region, there's a lot of experience, whether it is in terms of the national question, constitution making political processes. But I think that can be helped if there is support, to enable sharing of those experiences and even utilization of expertise within the region so that we can really hone these on, on these and transfer the experiences and knowledge from relevant at least close relevance neighborhood which has the same future.

Michael O'Hanlon [01:16:34] Thank you. And again, it's been an honor to be part of this conversation with you. We certainly wish Kenya the best going forward. By the way, at Brookings, we've done a lot of events on Kenya over the years and really, you know, recognize the complexity of your politics, but been encouraged by the forward movement and the recent elections and certainly wish you the best going forward with your wonderful nation. If I could, Ambassador Feltman, over to you, please. You're also still on mute.

Jeffrey Feltman [01:17:06] Okay there. I think I got it. Thanks. You know, I mentioned in the, in the comments about Ethiopia that various friends and partners of Ethiopia had different reactions to the fighting in the north, the fighting that that the minister has done so much to bring, to bring to a close. It's similar in Ethiopia, Sudan. You know, the October 25, 2021 coup also elicited different reactions from friends and partners of Sudan. There was no unity behind how we should react to what happened on October 25th, the suspension of the civilian military partnership and the, the transitional arrangements that had been set in place. So yesterday and I mentioned that now with the case of Ethiopia, I believe that these differences that we had among the outside partners and friends are behind us and that we can come together in unity to support the Ethiopians moving forward on the implementation. Yesterday in Sudan, of course, there was the signing of the, of a, of a framework agreement and it was signed by including General Birhanu, many, many, many civilian and professional organizations, many political figures, not everybody. There were some key figures that did not sign on to the framework agreement yesterday, and some, but not all the resistance committees that have played such a courageous role since the October events also were mixed, so some signed, some didn't.

But what I think it does do, the framework agreement does do is it brings together the international community behind Sudan again, in a way where the differences that we had can be, can be overcome by supporting implementation of what's written. It's a pretty impressive document on

paper. Turning it into action in Sudan is going to be a challenge, and I think the international community being united can play an important role in turning some pretty impressive words into actual action on the, on the transition, the 24-month transition plan that's envisioned in the document that was signed in Sudan yesterday. I know you asked me earlier, Mike, whether or not I was I was optimistic or encouraged by the situation in Ethiopia. And I gave reasons why I think that there are some encouraging signs. Sudan, it's far too early to see what the reaction will be this framework agreement from yesterday, but it does bring the international community back together behind the idea of a civilian led transition in Sudan, which I think is encouraging.

Michael O'Hanlon [01:19:47] Thank you very much. And Vanda, over to you for the final word.

Vanda Felbab-Brown [01:19:51] Well, let me take on the issue of ATMIS, the African Union current force in Somalia, as well as the Wagner group. So African Union forces in Somalia in their various configurations, first AMISOM now ATMIS, has played a very important role. Yet their mandate is limited and the actions they take has also become very limited. When the AMISOM role mission was finally after multiple extensions coming to an end several months ago in 2021, there were enormous fears that the end of the mission would precipitate a substantial al-Shabab takeover of very large parts of the country, including very close to Mogadishu where Shabab is capable of operating very strong influence. ATMIS is now scheduled to be in Somalia until 2024, but its already supposed to start drawing forces down next month. Well, actually this month in December 2022. And so we are with ATMIS in the same perpetual dynamics that we were with AMISOM very short-term missions being extended, lack of clarity as to what kind of functions the forces will take on the battlefield and the tendency to end up hunkered down and bunkered up and facing these uncertain timelines.

On the positive side, we have seen ATMIS providing medevac to some of the clan militias and aided us where we have uprising against al-Shabab. It's been very important since there is no other medevac in those areas and the casualty levels are, in fact enormous, with hospitals far away from the uprising areas being full. And I think that one of the uncertainties about ATMIS' role and how long it will stay its potential draw down already, even in the context of the absence of a holding force, is perhaps one reason that has motivated President Hassan Sheikh Mohamed to work out this deal with the UAE for very large training of Somali national army and Somali police.

Let me make a few comments on Wagner, which links to Sudan. So the Wagner group has been a brutal proxy of Russia, promising various governments in Africa and other parts of the world, but in this context, in Africa, from the Central African Republic to Mali to Sudan, Libya, you go further east Syria, that they will deliver security without any constraints on brutality, without any regard for accountability and human rights. And then in those places, as well as in places such as Mozambique, will essentially become not just a counter-terrorism counter jihadi force but a praetorian force to keep governments in power.

We have also seen that in imposing this extraordinary brutality and committing severe human rights violations, Wagner has often not focused on the insurgents and instead has focused on securing access to precious resources such as gold and others. And so the glitz of Wagner is, is [inaudible]. And one of the things that I found encouraging about the Sudan framework, transition framework being accepted yesterday, is that it has taken place, despite the presence of Wagner, despite its sales pitch, that it can keep the Junta in power for however long, and Russia's potential spoiler role there. Again, as Ambassador Feltman mentioned, the framework is very impressive on paper, how much will be implemented remains to be seen. But I am encouraged that it could take place even in the context of Russia's activities and Wagner's activities in a place like Sudan. By Americans.

Michael O'Hanlon [01:24:18] Vanda, thank you. And my thanks to the entire panel, my admiration for what you do and my appreciation for the education I've benefited from today, and I know many others. And I want to thank the audience for, for being part of this discussion and for all of your excellent questions and in many of your cases, also your efforts around the world and in the region to help bring peace and stability. So signing off from Brookings with best wishes to everyone for the holiday season and the new year.