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## Afterword: the Security Council and peace operations

The Center on International Cooperation's work on the Security Council's decision-making processes over peacekeeping in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Chad and the Central African Republic has shown how difficult it is for the Council to follow hard and fast rules of procedure. In the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Council's initial role was to approve a peacekeeping force envisaged in a peace agreement forged by African and American mediators in Algiers. When it came to Chad and the Central African Republic, the Council was engaged in discussions of a force for some time. But it eventually signed off on a proposal for a complex operation that was largely devised by France to meet the demands of Chad's government.

To some extent, both studies demonstrate the limits on the Council in guiding and shaping peace operations. It is a diplomatic forum not an operational "command post".<sup>122</sup> In almost any crisis, the fifteen members of the Council have extremely varied access to information about the country or countries involved. Council members are inevitably inclined to see trade-offs between missions and their ability to address each crisis in depth is inevitably limited. In recent years, the Council has found itself overseeing roughly thirty UN peace operations, political missions and peacebuilding offices at any one time – in addition to addressing the many urgent issues which do not involve any UN mission.

Given all these constraints, the Council will always struggle to provide rational and well-informed guidance to all missions under its purview. Equally, Council members – and especially the Permanent 5 – are inevitably wary of any steps that reduce their prerogatives. Nonetheless, the Council has recognized the need to spread the burden of overseeing missions through steps including: (i) accepting the utility of Friends Groups in cases such as Ethiopia and Eritrea; (ii) increasing interactions with troop and police-contributing countries; (iii) establishing formal relations with the African Union's Peace and Security Council; and (iv) developing a better working relationship with the Peacebuilding Commission. The Council has also moved

towards developing informal meetings of the Military Staff Committee, opening it up to all members and utilized political-military meetings in drafting and reviewing mandates.

Nonetheless, such structural improvements are sometimes of limited relevance to the immediate problems of launching a new mission in crisis conditions – or negotiating the exact terms of a mandate. Although the recently-enhanced Council consultations with troop and police contributing countries have been positive for inclusiveness and transparency, the discussions are reportedly often insubstantial.

In going step-by-step through the Council's dealings with Ethiopia/Eritrea and Chad/CAR, we have tried to show how the Council's working methods relate to actual decision-making (with the proviso that the substance of many of the discussions involved remains confidential). This has led us to reflect more generally on how the Council could better calibrate its working methods to respond to future crises. This afterword lays out three sets of proposals about how the Council should behave at different stages.

### ***1. In launching a mission, gather and share knowledge more effectively***

Our case-studies underline that many Council members and troop/police contributors have limited information about the circumstances surrounding possible new missions. While some can rely on national resources, many only learn about crises and possible response from the UN Secretariat. The Secretariat has a good deal of experience in running assessment missions prior to operations, but its reports can also be complicated by differences between departments over potential new deployments. Lack of information can create mistrust among members of the Council, and doubts among force contributors about a mission's political and strategic goals. Possible solutions to this problem include:

- Sending Council missions – probably at the expert level – to countries where a mission may be deployed before it is mandated to gain a fuller understanding of

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the situation and risks, and to allow an early discussion on the needs of such mission;

- Attaching a small number of experts (including military advisers) from Council members to Secretariat assessment missions as observers, to gain a better grasp of the resulting proposals;
- Requesting Council members' diplomatic missions (where they exist) in a country affected by conflict to offer a joint estimate of needs and options for a mission alongside the Secretariat's;
- Holding at least one Arria formula meeting during each new mandating process to allow independent experts to offer the Council their views on a missions' needs and challenges;
- Holding political "pledging conferences": open debates at which troop and police contributors can present their commitments to a new mission and discuss the political situation involved.

In some cases (as over Ethiopia and Eritrea) a multi-stage mandating process may allow for better information-sharing, but the case of Chad shows that prolonged mandating processes can also confuse matters. The mix of diplomatic options for assessing and reporting a new mission's options will in part depend on the urgency of a new deployment, and the security conditions in the deployment areas.

It is also important that Council members reacquaint themselves with mission conditions periodically, and that countries coming onto the Council are brought up to speed on the state of pre-existing operations. In this context, it may be possible to invite experts from countries joining the Council to visit a number of missions together before their term begins. Furthermore, it is important that Council missions, at whatever level, are designed to maximize information-gathering. We have noted that the Council's initial visit to Chad was very brief. It should be possible for Council members to schedule and implement missions more effectively, to ensure that participants get a full picture of a situation.

## **2. Sharing responsibilities inside and outside the Council**

However good information-sharing may be within and beyond the Council, debates about new and ongoing missions can be complicated by the perception that specific powers interests are driving decisions. In the Chad case, many Council members believed that France was making instrumental use of the UN – but French officials were concerned that Britain and the US were focusing on Darfur for their own reason while ignoring Chad's part in a regional conflict. In some cases (as over Ethiopia and Eritrea) many Council members accept that one power is in the lead and detach themselves from debates. In time, this can negatively impact on a mission's performance, as problems are not scrutinized enough.

What steps can be taken to avoid these challenges? One option would be for Permanent Members of the Council to share responsibility for **drafting mandates** ("pen-holding") with other Council members. At present, the P5 typically hold the pen in peacekeeping mandate-making processes – although there are exceptions, with Japan taking the role for Timor-Leste.<sup>123</sup> It has been suggested that this be reversed, so that the elected members take the lead in drafting – then again, elected members of the Council may have national interests of their own at stake in a given mission or simply lack in expertise.

A third option would be for permanent and non-permanent members to "twin" and share responsibilities for pen-holding in drafting new mandates. The U.S. and Uruguay previously teamed up in this way on Haiti. The combination of a permanent and non-permanent member of the Council leading each mandating process could raise transparency and trust (it is also good practice for pen-holders to share draft mandates with Council members from a relevant region, as France did with African countries on Chad).

In practical terms, it is also important for Council members to make best use of the support offered by **Groups of Friends and other inter-governmental contact groups**. In the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea, the existence of a Group

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of Friends dedicated to the UN mission helped both get the operation going and sustain political dialogues over its future in difficult periods. This was, in part, because of the proactive role of the Netherlands and later Norway in leading the Group. Not all Groups of Friends are so successful (the Friends of Georgia was long notorious for its internal divisions, for example) but the Council should actively encourage the creation of such contact groups to support missions. Where a Friends Group or other contact group already exists prior to a mission's deployment, the Council should work with its members – involving them in Council debates as necessary – to help make a mission work.

It is also necessary to structure relations with **regional organizations** more effectively. In recent years, the Council has created new mechanisms for dealing with the African Peace and Security Council, as noted above, but relations with other organizations tend to be channeled through secretariats or managed at the field level. This is often the most efficient approach but it may be possible to improve cooperation with other organizations on specific missions. Opportunities for doing so could involve;

- Building on current dialogues, the Council could send missions (not necessarily involving all members at once) to hold dialogues on operations with regional organizations, especially in cases where a mandate is up for renewal and there are options to build stronger partnerships. Such an approach could have resolved confusions with the EU Council over Chad in 2007-2008;
- Leaders of co-deployed missions (such as EUFOR Chad/RCA and MINURCAT) could give joint video briefings to the Security Council and other political bodies (such as the EU Council or AU PSC) simultaneously, to consolidate common understandings of the problems involved. Such briefings could be kept separate from debates to avoid complications over actual prerogatives;
- The Council should encourage regional organizations to have representatives on Groups of Friends involved

with peace operations, as the EU has been involved in some Friends in the past.

### **3. Exit strategies, peacebuilding and lessons learned**

Peace operations often suffer particular problems during their drawdown phases – and the Council has particular problems addressing these. We have noted that the final stages of UN operations in both Ethiopia/Eritrea and Chad/CAR, the withdrawal of consent by host governments undercut the peacekeepers. In both cases, the Council reacted by holding more and more informal consultations and fewer public meetings. This approach failed to save either mission, in spite of concerted diplomacy. However, in both cases, the Council held no follow-on debates on the situations in the affected areas – implying that once the mission had closed, the Council conducted no after action review of its role.

The Council has also recently been criticized for failing to grasp the full complexity of **peacebuilding challenges** – which inevitably involve developmental and economic tools beyond the Council's control. Colin Keating, a former Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the UN and the founder of Security Council Report, a think-tank, has emphasized this problem.<sup>124</sup> He suggests that the Council has made incremental steps towards improving ties with the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for example inviting the chairs of PBC country-specific configurations to attend informal interactive dialogues and formal meetings on the country they cover. However, these representatives of the PBC are not involved in the Council's private consultations, which means that they are still excluded from important talks.

Ambassador Keating argues that the Council could go further, developing informal mechanisms for addressing specific country issues through informal "partnership configurations" with the UN Development Program and other parts of the UN: "the tool box for the partnership configurations could include regular visits by the relevant chairperson to the region, demarches, reinforcement of SRSR and Secretariat 'good offices', interaction with

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regional or sub regional parties, coordination of bilateral demarches by member states with influence, closed or open meetings and creation of integrative effect by exercising oversight – including on the contribution of the UN country team.<sup>125</sup> But this bold reappraisal of the Security Council's status vis-à-vis other parts of the UN might create many tensions.

However, the Council can at least take some steps to demonstrate the importance it places on effective peacebuilding activities both while an operation is deployed and (in particular) after it has withdrawn:

- As a matter of course, the Council should request chairs of the PBC's country-specific configurations to participate in consultations on the countries in question;
- When it appears probable that a mission is entering its final phase, the Council should convene at least one Arria formula meeting at which civil society representatives from the affected country or countries can express their views and concerns about possible future developments;
- In closing a mission, the Council should agree that it will hold one or more debates on the situation in the area where the peacekeepers deployed – even if there is no specific Peacebuilding Office or UN political mission left behind – to monitor post-peacekeeping events.

In addition to monitoring events in the post-peacekeeping environment, the Council should actively attempt to learn lessons from a closed mission. One option would be for the Council's Informal Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations to conduct a lessons learned exercise in each case, in cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations' own experts and outside scholars.

No one innovation in working methods can overcome the obstacles to effective oversight of peace operations by the Security Council. But some of the options set out here would at least clarify debates over how operations are run,

improve Council relations with other actors and increase the quality of the political support that the Council can offer missions – and the countries and peoples that they assist.