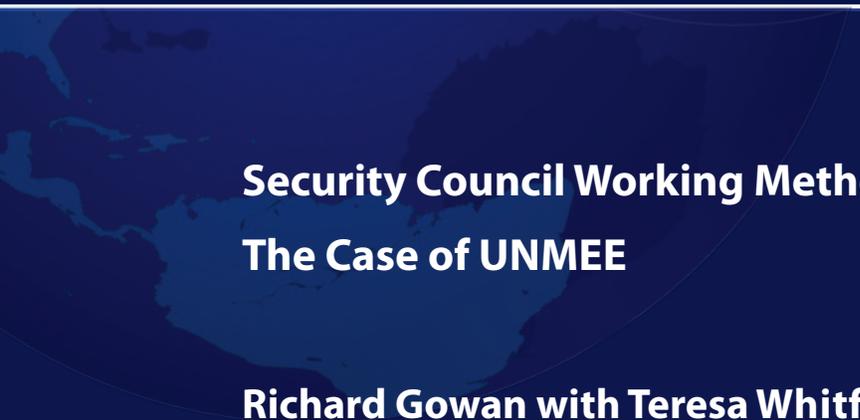




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**Security Council Working Methods and UN Peace Operations:  
The Case of UNMEE**

**Richard Gowan with Teresa Whitfield**

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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

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## Executive Summary

This paper explores the links between the Security Council's working methods and the evolution of the United Nations Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea from 2000 to 2008. Its goal is to identify broader lessons for the Council's application of its working methods to the mandating and oversight of peacekeeping operations. All UN missions are shaped by unique political and operational factors beyond the Security Council: in UNMEE's case, American support for Ethiopia was a major factor, as was Eritrea's confrontational approach to the UN. Nonetheless, the mission's story does offer lessons to the Council.

UNMEE was launched to end a bloody two-year war in 2000. The peace agreement was negotiated under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity, with the Security Council playing a limited role. Nonetheless, the Council took a **phased approach** to mandating the mission (in some ways comparable to the two-stage mandating process for new operations recommended in the Brahimi Report) and held a number of **public debates** on UNMEE's strategic situation and options in 2000 and 2001. These helped give some Western troop contributors (the Netherlands, Canada and Denmark) confidence to deploy troops in its first phase. *The Council's deliberative and open approach to launching UNMEE shows that transparency can boost mission effectiveness.*

While Norway led a successful **Security Council Mission** to Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2002 — and convened a high profile Council meeting in New York to review its findings — the situation deteriorated soon afterwards. An international **Boundary Commission**, set up as part of the 2000 peace agreement but technically separate from UNMEE, declared territory around the town of Badme should be awarded to Eritrea — a proposal that Ethiopia rejected. The Council failed to make any immediate statement in support of the Commission's decision, and Eritrea became increasingly suspicious of the UN's role.

Both Council members and UN officials were guilty of treating UNMEE as a "technical mission" — underlining the need for the Council to grasp the political aspects of missions.

Relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia deteriorated, and Eritrea began to place severe constraints on UNMEE from 2005. In that year, the Chairman of the Council's **Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations** — Kenzo Oshima of Japan — visited the region to consult both sides on behalf of the Council. Although his mission had only limited effects, it helped reduce tensions between Council members — suggesting that *the Working Group may be an under-utilized mechanism for handling missions in crisis. As a less formalized alternative, the Council should more often task individual ambassadors with communicating its views to political leaders in countries hosting peacekeepers, on a case-by-case basis.*

In this period, **Council discussions of UNMEE were held informally** — in sharp contrast to the initial phase of the operation. While the Council repeatedly urged Eritrea to back down and Ethiopia to accept the Commission's findings, the lack of public debates on this issue reduced it to a second-order concern in New York. *This suggests that an excessive reliance on informal meetings can reduce the Council's leverage over recalcitrant states.* UNMEE was barred from Eritrea and eventually closed down in 2008.

The lack of public debate by the Security Council in later years was partially off-set by the existence of the **Friends of UNMEE**, initially launched by the Netherlands as a forum for troops contributors to the mission. The Friends Group met in New York, Addis Ababa and Asmara. Diplomats in the two African capitals were both noted to side with their respective host nations, limiting the Group's effectiveness, but Norway (building on historical links to Eritrea) used it as a platform for diplomacy with Asmara. *This demonstrates that, while Friends Groups are often imperfect, strong leadership by one or two states within them can provide a useful tool to support the Council's efforts.*

By contrast, **the Council and UN Secretariat did not cooperate closely with the OAU and its successor, the African Union**, on Ethiopia and Eritrea — in spite the OAU's role in striking the 2000 peace agreement. This partially reflected the UN's desire not to let a regional organization dictate its choices, but also resulted from many African governments' ambiguous attitude to the conflict. None-

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theless, *this gap underlines that strong relations with regional organizations are a tool that the Council should not ignore.*

While UNMEE was subject to factors beyond the Council's control, this report highlights that when the Council is transparent and confers with outside actors, it may have a higher chance of sustaining a controversial mission than if it acts informally and exclusively. If the Council adopts working methods that promote as open approach as is feasible, it may be able to handle crises such as those that affected UNMEE more effectively in future.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper explores the links between two debates at the United Nations. The first concerns the working methods of the Security Council, a topic of repeated reform proposals (and some real progress) since the early 1990s.<sup>1</sup> The second concerns how the Council mandates, oversees and evaluates UN peace operations — another recurrent issue, and the focus of urgent discussions in New York in the last eighteen months.<sup>2</sup> These discussions frequently center on how Council members and Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) and other interested states share information, conduct consultations, assess the performance of missions and send clear political signals about their future. These matters relate directly to the Council's working methods: efficient, transparent and inclusive methods facilitate and promote effective discussions. In a 2009 thematic debate on peacekeeping Jean—Maurice Ripert, then Permanent Representative of France, called on his counterparts to “transcend rhetoric and change our working methods as soon as possible.”<sup>3</sup>

The link between Council working methods and the effective oversight of peace operations has long been recognized. The need for better briefings to the Council on operations and “enhanced consultations” with TCCs was highlighted in S/PRST/1994/22, one of the Council's main statements on peacekeeping in the post—Cold War period.<sup>4</sup> While the issue fell off the agenda in the later 1990s, it regained prominence with the resurgence of UN operations from 1999 onwards. In 2001, for example, Security Council Resolution 1353 laid out principles for engagement with TCCs. Nonetheless, the actual relationship between Council working methods and the conduct of peace operations has not been closely explored. Discussions of working method reform often turn on technical issues (such as ensuring a lack of repetition in speeches and seating arrangements) and repeated calls for enhanced transparency — not operational concerns. Some scholars have questioned whether debates in New York have a real impact on the day—to—day performance of operations.<sup>5</sup>

This paper sets out to evaluate the effects of Council working methods on one operation, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) from 2000 to 2008. It identifies a number of assumptions about the importance of working methods and tests whether they are borne out by UNMEE's experiences. Our goal is to point out potential improvements to the Council's methods that not only facilitate smoother discussions in New York, but also reflect the complexities of managing contemporary peace operations.

The paper falls into three parts. In the rest of this section, we briefly review the reasons for choosing UNMEE as a case—study and the assumptions about working methods we will test. In Section 2, we give a brief overview of UNMEE's evolution as the basis for our evaluation, which is set out in Section 3. We offer a set of outline recommendations for improving Council working methods on the basis of this evaluation in Section 4. Throughout the text we refer to private interviews with diplomats and officials, primarily conducted in 2010. Where there is no citation for a quotation, it is taken from one of these private discussions.

### 1.i Why UNMEE?

We have selected UNMEE for three main reasons although, as a mission deployed to help end an *inter*—state war rather than *intra*—state conflict, it is not typical of recent UN operations. The reasons are these. First, and most importantly, it was a mission that presented the Council with a series of increasingly complex political, legal and operational problems. When UNMEE was launched in 2000, many diplomats thought that it “looked safe”, with relatively limited goals (described in Section 2 below) and a low risk of violence against UN forces. But as the mission evolved, tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea over a ruling on their border disputes (made by a specially—convened Boundary Commission) threatened a return to war. From 2005 on Eritrea placed growing constraints on the force (through tactics like banning helicopter flights and limiting the deployment of Western personnel). This forced the Council to respond to increasingly public challenges against the UN's credibility — testing its consultation processes, its use of resolutions

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and presidential statements and the utility of sending a Security Council mission to the region to consult with the parties.

Secondly, UNMEE provides a useful case—study of interaction between the Council and TCCs. Because the mission was seen as relatively safe in 2000, a number of Western countries normally not involved in the UN’s African missions (the Netherlands, Canada and Denmark) sent troops in its start—up phase. With the Dutch in the lead they formed a “Friends of UNMEE” that was active—with a changing composition—in New York, Addis Ababa and Asmara throughout the life—cycle of the force. Nonetheless, tensions between the Council and TCCs became public as pressures on the force grew in 2005 (described in Section 3). The performance of the Friends offers lessons about how best to structure Council—TCC relations around future missions, especially in periods of crisis. While most of those interviewed for this study suggested the utility of the Friends diminished over time, as we note in Section 3.ii below, the group nevertheless remained an important platform for Norway (its second chair) to conduct discreet diplomatic outreach to the Eritreans from outside the Council.

Finally, UNMEE offers some lessons on how the UN interacts with regional organizations around peace operations. UNMEE was launched on the basis of a peace deal (the Algiers Agreement) between Ethiopia and Eritrea brokered under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and witnessed by Algeria, the OAU, European Union, United States and the UN. At the time of its closure, the Security Council was developing new consultative mechanisms with the OAU’s successor, the African Union (AU). As we note in Section 3, the Security Council’s engagement with the OAU/AU in the interim was relatively limited — raising the question of whether more effective consultations at an earlier stage might have helped the mission perform better.

In addition to these main reasons for focusing on UNMEE, it should be noted that the mission’s story occasionally intersected with efforts to reform the Council’s working methods. When Eritrea began to ratchet up pressure on

UNMEE in 2005, it fell to Japan’s Permanent Representative — Kenzo Oshima — to visit the region to call for calm. Oshima went in his capacity as chair of the Council’s Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, and it has been argued that his mission gave the Group new credibility.<sup>6</sup> In 2006, Ambassador Oshima, holding the Security Council presidency, published a note with an annex on the state of play on working methods reform — the most complete Council statement on the issue in recent years.<sup>7</sup> There is no evidence of a substantial overlap between the working methods debate and UNMEE’s evolution (i.e. no specific events connected to UNMEE can be shown to have set the Council’s thinking on working methods on a new course) but it is worth keeping in mind that the Council’s thematic discussions of working methods inevitably overlap with specific debates on operations.

Conversely, it should be recognized that certain contextual factors constrained the Council over UNMEE, limiting the impact of both its decisions and its methods. The most important, emphasized by a large number of officials and diplomats interviewed for this study, was that UNMEE was perceived as “America’s business”. The mission was set up with strong U.S. support — the U.S. had been crucial to the Algiers Agreement — and the Council’s ability to influence Ethiopia was always restricted by the close alliance between Washington and Addis Ababa. While Ethiopia may have focused on Eritrea, the U.S. (like many of its allies on the Council) was more concerned by terrorism in the Horn of Africa, especially Somalia. Ethiopia was perceived as a vital partner in the counter—terrorism effort and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi — who also maintained close ties to British Prime Minister Tony Blair — as a friend and ally who should not be undermined. The Council was always likely to handle UNMEE’s problems with great caution.

Almost equally important was Eritrea’s attitude to the Council and UN more broadly. In debates on working methods reform, it is generally recognized that parties to a conflict must have full access to the Council to express their positions. But the Government of Eritrea, which feared that taking its case before the Council would weaken its position vis—à—vis Ethiopia, increasingly rejected any dialogue with the UN from 2005 onwards.

While many diplomats were sympathetic to Eritrea's legal case on its borders, the obstructive position that Eritrea assumed towards Asmara based donors, the Council and the international community more broadly strained their patience. The Council found that it could do little when one party to a conflict essentially refused to engage in Council—based diplomacy. With Eritrea essentially “doing Ethiopia's work for it,” as one diplomat put it, mistrust of the Eritreans grew. The Ethiopian government, meanwhile, lobbied for its cause effectively in New York and national capitals — as well as winning over the sizeable diplomatic corps in Addis Ababa (see Section 3.ii).

Finally, many governments and members of the UN Secretariat alike evinced little interest in UNMEE or — at times — understanding of the conflict it was meant to help resolve. Interviewees note that UNMEE was often dismissed as a “technical” mission, in contrast to the more absorbing state—building exercises of the 1990s. This underestimated the fact that demarcating the Ethiopia—Eritrea border was a very political exercise indeed, and UNMEE could not escape this reality. Even when the mission was in crisis, only a relatively small number of delegations in New York (Belgium, Greece, Italy Japan and Norway, South Africa, the UK and the US) took notice. This lack of interest again limited what the Council could do under any circumstances.

Given these limitations, a study of the Council's working methods with regard to UNMEE must focus on how the application of those methods mitigated challenges to the mission and eased periods of tension, rather than showing how they contributed to success. UNMEE, as Section 2 underlines, was not a success — at least as judged by the terms of its closure in 2008. However, warnings of renewed war during its period of deployment were not fulfilled, notably in 2005, when the Council did monitor the mission more closely. This study may thus contribute to a better understanding of how effective working methods can reduce the chances of the Council letting a mission go off the rails — no mean achievement at a time in which the credibility and sustainability of high—profile missions are under threat in Chad, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

## 1.ii Testable Assumptions

How would we expect the Council's working methods to affect the efficient oversight and implementation of a mission (in terms of both diplomacy in New York and its performance in the field)? To set the terms for our analysis of UNMEE, we turn to the corpus of existing Security Council and General Assembly documents on this issue — notably Security Council Resolution 1353 of 2001; the Small 5 (S5) draft resolution A/60/L.49 of 2005; and Security Council note S/2006/507 of 2006. Additionally, we refer to two major explanatory papers by the Security Council Report think—tank.<sup>8</sup>

Our concern is how the Council's working methods affected its interactions around (and with) UNMEE. This means that certain issues cited in these papers are not relevant to the present case. In A/60/L.49, the S5 raised the issue of how P5 members should explain vetoes cast in the Council, but this problem did not arise over UNMEE.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, in Section 3 we will focus on four sets of concerns that recur in these documents that do apply to UNMEE, and where certain underlying assumptions can be tested. These are:

- **The utility of a two—part process for mandating new peace operations:** in 2000, the *Brahimi Report* proposed that future peace operations should be mandated through a two—stage process, permitting the Secretary—General to confirm the availability of forces and resources for a mission before the Council approved it. This potentially important alteration to the working methods of the Council concerning peace operations has never been adopted formally. But as we note in Sections 2 and 3 below, the Council adopted a phased approach to the deployment of UNMEE that realized Brahimi's vision in important respects.
- **The importance of (i) public meetings of the Council, and (ii) consultations with TCCS and (iii) the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations.** Perhaps unsurprisingly, the question of the formats in which the Council meets — and their relative merits — is an overriding source of concern to analysts of its working methods.<sup>10</sup> The balance between informal

consultations, closed to outsiders, and public meetings is a source of frequent debate. There is a basic division between those Council diplomats who believe that public meetings promote transparency and those who promote informal discussions because they are more effective — although this is now complicated by the fact that even informal debates are reportedly increasingly stagnant. A further consideration is that, while the Council has frequently reaffirmed the importance of consultations with TCCs—most recently in S/PRST/2009/24 published last year—these have traditionally been closed, resulting in only very brief communiqués. Yet there have also been complaints by TCCs that these consultations have been insufficient, an issue for concern raised by S5 in 2005 that has gained urgency and which the last year’s peacekeeping debates have attempted to address.

These factors are of interest in the case of UNMEE, as we will note that (i) it was necessary to address the concerns of TCCs over the safety of their troops as the mission situation deteriorated; and (ii) there was a tendency towards informal consultations on UNMEE, eventually almost to the exclusion of public meetings, that arguably reduced pressure on Ethiopia and Eritrea to compromise. Was the balance of public and private meetings — and the way they were prepared and handled — detrimental or beneficial to the performance of the mission? In asking this question we also analyze the issue, raised in most documents on working methods, of ensuring timely and effective Secretariat briefing to the Council.

Note 507 also highlights the utility of engaging with TCCs through the Security Council’s subsidiary Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations — we will note that was temporarily “operationalized” in 2005 when its chair, Ambassador Oshima, visited Ethiopia and Eritrea for consultations. Established under S/PRST/2001/3 in the wake of the Brahimi Report, the Working Group was tasked with dealing not only with “generic peacekeeping issues” but “technical aspects” of individual operations.<sup>11</sup> Oshima’s mission put this to the test, and we will consider whether it implied the Working Group should play a stronger role.

- **The utility of Friends mechanisms.** As noted above, a “Friends of UNMEE” was formed on the initiative of the Dutch in 2000, mainly consisting of TCCs in the first instance. Although this was unusual in focusing on a mission rather than a country or countries, it was nonetheless symptomatic of a general tendency towards the use of Friends Groups at the UN.<sup>12</sup> References to Friends Groups in formal documents on Security Council working methods are relatively rare, although a 1999 note by the Canadian presidency of the Council welcomed “contributions by members of groups of friends” aimed at “the settlement of particular crisis situations.”<sup>13</sup> Note 507 of 2006 mentioned the potential for engagement with Friends during the drafting of new resolutions. The basic assumption underpinning these references is that Friends Groups may offer flexible discussion forums that the Council cannot, and in the case of UNMEE this overlaps directly with the question of how to engage effectively with TCCs. However reservations about the extent to which some groups of Friends may also usurp the authority of the Security Council have also surfaced. In the 22 April 2010 debate, for example, Costa Rica noted that “some very sensitive issues are somehow removed from the Council’s purview and essentially defined by the permanent members, other States that are not members of the Council and the so—called groups of friends.”<sup>14</sup>

- **Relations with regional organizations.** The OAU was present at the creation of UNMEE, but it was largely excluded from its evolution. While the Security Council has recognized the importance of dealing with regional organizations frequently over the last decade — and it was recognized explicitly in note 507 — there has only been significant progress in devising new formats to make this possible since 2007, when the Council launched regular informal meetings with the AU Peace and Security Council. While UNMEE was raised in UN—AU discussions at this time, most of the mission’s story predates these innovations. We will, however, briefly test the assumption that the lack of more effective coordination with the OAU/hindered the Council over UNMEE.

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While these are the four main elements of this paper, a number of other topics relevant to Council working methods came up in our interviews and research. For example, previous documents on working methods have emphasized that new Council members should be prepared for membership, for example by having access to Council debates in the run—up to taking their seat or receiving detailed briefing packets from the Secretariat.<sup>15</sup> But one interviewee noted that the Japanese delegation was particularly well—prepared for the 2005 crisis because it had sent a working—level official to visit UNMEE prior to its Council membership. Most other delegations had not. This indicates one simple and useful option for new Council members to prepare themselves.

## 2. A Brief History of UNMEE

The Ethiopia—Eritrea war was ended — and the basic terms of UNMEE’s deployment were agreed — through talks in Algiers overseen by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) with a significant input from the United States. Although UNMEE deployed rapidly, and appeared to be a success in its early years, its position began to unravel when Ethiopia rejected a decision by an international boundary commission awarding disputed border areas to Eritrea. From 2005 onwards, Eritrea embarked on a series of maneuvers — such as blocking helicopter flights and demanding the expulsion of Western personnel — designed to undermine UNMEE in protest at Ethiopia’s stance. The Security Council found itself locked in a losing battle to sustain to UNMEE’s credibility. Yet the issue was rarely the Council’s main priority: by 2006, the United States and France favored cutting back the mission to free up resources for the larger UN mission in Côte d’Ivoire.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.i Deploying UNMEE: A Phased Approach

UNMEE was born in Algiers not New York. On 18 June 2000, proximity talks between Ethiopia and Eritrea hosted by the Algerian government (holding the OAU’s rotating presidency) resulted in an agreement to cease hostilities after just over two years of war. In the preceding two years, the Security Council had paid fitful attention to the war, sparked over control over the town of Badme, one

of a number of disputed areas. In a series of resolutions and presidential statements, the Council had urged the two sides to commit to OAU—led peace—making efforts, which were closely coordinated with the United States. The Council’s decision to back the OAU was not entirely unproblematic: whereas the Council did not comment on the rights and wrongs of the fighting, the OAU favored Ethiopia’s claim to Badme, lowering the chances that Eritrea would choose peace.<sup>17</sup> But the OAU and U.S. tabled proposals for a cessation of hostilities in 1998 — including references to international observers — which remained the basis for all talks.

Council ambassadors made two significant direct interventions in the crisis in early May 2000. They agreed an arms embargo on the combatants.<sup>18</sup> A group of seven Council ambassadors broke off from a mission to the Great Lakes (itself an unprecedented “first”) to meet with the Ethiopian and Eritrean presidents. There was a lull in hostilities at this time, but the OAU—led talks had broken down and an Ethiopian offensive was looming.

The mission had limited impact: shortly afterwards, Ethiopia launched its offensive, a bloody success. The offensive’s success set the stage for the renewed proximity talks in Algiers, which concluded in the 18 June agreement. This document set the stage for UNMEE, but contained a number of complications. It declared that “a Peacekeeping Mission will be deployed by the United Nations under the auspices of the OAU” to monitor a redeployment of Ethiopian forces and a “temporary security zone”.<sup>19</sup>

The document committed the OAU and UN to guarantee the cessation of hostilities, not only through the presence of the peacekeeping mission, but also “measures to be taken by the international community should one or both of the Parties violate this commitment, including appropriate measures to be taken under Chapter VII of the United Nations by the United Nations Security Council”.<sup>20</sup> While the agreement was rather precise about what the peacekeepers should do, its direction that it should “be deployed by the United Nations under the auspices of the OAU” was vague — and contained the potential for controversy. The approach the Council took to this issue is described in Section 3.iii.

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The Security Council took a phased approach to mandating, planning and deploying UNMEE, described in Section 3.i below. On 15 September, the Security Council passed Resolution 1320, authorizing a force of 4,200 personnel. The Netherlands, Canada and Denmark deployed troops through SHIRBRIG for the first six months of the mission. This permitted a rapid deployment: by mid-March 2001, 98% of the authorized force strength was in place.<sup>21</sup>

## **2.ii UNMEE Adrift: 2001—2005**

In December 2000, Ethiopia and Eritrea agreed that a Boundary Commission — consisting of lawyers chosen by the two sides — should rule on the status of Badme and other disputed border areas. The Security Council repeatedly stated that the future of UNMEE, including its eventual drawdown, must be linked to the commission's decisions. The Council thus effectively surrendered a significant degree of control over the future of the mission. The Boundary Commission took until 13 April 2002 to announce its opinion, after some relatively brief delays.<sup>22</sup> The Security Council made one significant intervention in the interim, sending a mission consisting of representatives from all fifteen members to Ethiopia and Eritrea from 21—25 February 2002 (see Section 3.ii).

The Boundary Commission went on to shock Ethiopia by declaring Badme Eritrean soil (although UN officials had foreseen in 2001 that this was the likely outcome). Ethiopia was simply unprepared to accept the loss of territory it had expended a great deal of blood for — it would call the Commission's decision “manifestly unjust and illegal.”<sup>23</sup> It also refused to withdraw its forces from Badme. The Council mission was well-intentioned and may have alerted the parties to the fact that they were under international scrutiny, but it could not alter their basic interests and views on the border.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan and a variety of other interlocutors attempted to work out a final Ethiopian—Eritrean agreement. The Security Council supported these initiatives rhetorically, but in March 2004 it directed Annan to look into streamlining UNMEE. Annan raised objections, but the force was reduced, leaving it unable to monitor

the temporary security zone efficiently.<sup>24</sup> This period of drift set the stage for a greater test.

## **2.iii 2005: Handling Eritrea**

In October 2005 Eritrea, increasingly dissatisfied with the UN's inability to persuade or penalize Ethiopia to give up Badme, announced a ban on all UNMEE helicopter flights. The International Crisis Group noted that this came “without warning or explanation”, and had a “dramatic operational impact.”<sup>25</sup> UNMEE had to close over half its posts along the disputed border, leaving it half-blind to military maneuvers from either side. With the mission under pressure, the Security Council divided over how to react to the crisis.

As in 2000, Annan (approaching the end of his tenure) initiated the Council's discussions, going in person to raise the alarm about the risks for UNMEE on 3 October. Council members were split over whether to focus on Eritrea's provocation or Ethiopia's continued rejection of the Boundary Commission's decision on Badme. The case raised the problem of whether the Security Council should now take the option of Chapter VII sanctions to make Eritrea back off, in line with the Algiers agreement.

While the Council was slow to decide on its response — and eschewed public meetings on the matter — it dispatched Japan's Ambassador, Kenzo Oshima, on a mission to discuss UNMEE's position with the Ethiopian and Eritrean leaderships (see Section 3.i). Following Oshima's mission, the Security Council agreed Resolution 1640 on 23 November, which threatened to penalize the Eritreans if they continued to obstruct the mission (see also Section 3.i). It did not, however, refer to Chapter VII (instead referencing Article 41). Nor did it impress the Eritreans sufficiently to change their behavior: in December they called for all North American, Russian and other European personnel to leave the mission (these added up to fewer than 200 individuals). The Council condemned this demand, but eventually conceded to it. In early 2006, the Council stepped back from its brief political lead, as the U.S. dispatched its assistant Secretary of State for African affairs to Ethiopia (although she was barred from Eritrea).

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While Resolution 1640 also demanded that Ethiopia respect the Boundary Commission's decision, there is a consensus among most observers that "Eritrea's (unwise and counter—productive) behavior has allowed the Security Council to be distracted from the main issue, the acceptance of the binding decision of the Boundary Commission and the demarcation of the boundary".<sup>26</sup> In other words, UNMEE had gone from being part of the solution to *the* main problem from the Council in dealing with the Ethiopian—Eritrean crisis — which meant that the Council could not focus on the root—causes of the problem.

### **2.iv UNMEE: A Long Time Dying**

After the brief paroxysm of Council activity around UNMEE in late 2005, the Council's focus shifted away from Ethiopia and Eritrea as 2006 advanced. Other crises — Darfur, Timor—Leste and above all Lebanon — took the Council's attention. Ethiopia invaded Somalia in July 2006 to fight increasingly powerful Islamists, making it unlikely that the U.S. would countenance any serious penalization of Addis Ababa. The Council did, however, adopt a new strategy towards Ethiopia and Eritrea — one doomed to fail.

On 14 March 2006, the Council passed Resolution 1661, which extended UNMEE for only one month. It demanded that Eritrea and Ethiopia meet their respective requirements under Resolution 1640 — with an implicit threat that UNMEE would be withdrawn if they did not.<sup>27</sup> One month later, it mandated another month of operations, but now stated explicitly that it would consider reducing UNMEE to an observer mission (a proposal mooted by Ban Ki—moon on 3 January) unless the two countries cooperated.

On 31 May, the Council called for the mission to be downsized from its then strength of 3,277 personnel to 2,300. The U.S. and France would have accepted an even greater reduction, in part to free up resources and personnel for Côte d'Ivoire, but other Council members opposed this. The decision to cut back UNMEE was presented by some as penalizing both Ethiopia and Eritrea for their intransigence (and Ethiopia did express concern about the idea of slashing UNMEE down too much). Yet in

retrospect, it is hard to see exactly how this penalization was meant to work. Ethiopia had shown no inclination to accept the Boundary Commission's decision on Badme — in spite a series of meetings convened by the Commission in the first half of 2006. Eritrea had made it exceedingly plain that it was ready to undercut UNMEE to win international attention. So the presumption that either side could be coerced in this way was optimistic at best.

In September 2006, the Council warned that UNMEE would be reconfigured further if there was no political progress by 31 January 2007.<sup>28</sup> When no progress followed, the Council decided to shrink UNMEE to 1,700.<sup>29</sup> The reduced UNMEE entered its terminal crisis in November 2007. That month, the Boundary Commission dissolved itself. Eritrea set new constraints on UNMEE (including a fuel cut—off) and sent troops into the temporary security zone. Ban Ki—moon decided to evacuate all UNMEE personnel to Ethiopia.<sup>30</sup> Various alternatives to UNMEE—including a military observer mission in Ethiopia only or some sort of political mission—were put forward by the Secretary—General. But Ethiopia had now also lost patience with the process.<sup>31</sup> On 30 July 2008, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1827, giving UNMEE a much—delayed burial.

## **3. Evaluating the impact of Security Council working methods**

In this section we analyze the impact of the Security Council's working methods on the evolution of UNMEE, following the order set out in Section 1. We review (i) the phased deployment that made the mission's first phase a success; (ii) the Council's approach to meetings and consultations over the mission and the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations; (iii) the role of the Friends of UNMEE; (iv) relations with the OAU and AU, and their impact on the way the mission was deployed, sustained and closed down.

### **3.i A phased deployment?**

At the same time that the Council was deciding how to follow up on the Algiers agreement, the Brahimi Panel on UN peacekeeping was considering how to improve

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mandating procedures. One of its recommendations would be that the Council should adopt a two—phase approach to mandating new missions. This would involve drafting a resolution calling for a force of a specific size and composition—but not passing it until the Secretary—General confirmed that sufficient forces were available. The Council did not follow this procedure for UNMEE, but its actions did amount to a two—phase approach. The first phase of the mission is thus of interest as model for mission start—ups.

On 30 June 2000, Kofi Annan delivered a report to the council summarizing the Algiers agreement. He noted that the OAU would shortly oversee a second round of talks in Algiers to find a solution to the border demarcation issue. In the meantime, he set out his proposals for the first phase of peacekeeping. He would send liaison officers to Addis Ababa and Asmara, in addition to a “reconnaissance mission” to ascertain the operational conditions at the border.<sup>32</sup> He further requested the Council’s authorization for up to one hundred UN military observers “to be gradually deployed to each country over the next two months”, prior to the establishment of a larger peace operation. On 31 July, the Security Council mandated the deployment of the initial one hundred observers, and requested the Secretary—General to continue planning for the larger mission.<sup>33</sup> In the interim SHIRBRIG had deployed its own assessment mission, creating the conditions, opening the way for it to deploy in response to a formal request from DPKO.<sup>34</sup>

On 14 August, the Council held an initial public meeting with the Under—Secretary General for Peacekeeping, Bernard Miyet, to discuss the prospects of the force.<sup>35</sup> As we discuss in Section 3.ii (immediately below), this created a precedent for public discussions of UNMEE’s strategic context and terms of deployment. On 15 September, the Security Council passed Resolution 1320, authorizing a force of 4,200 personnel. It is striking that the Council had (i) given the Secretary—General leeway to deploy small initial packages of personnel to prepare for the mission, and (ii) conducted a public debate of how the mission would work. These decisions paved the way for the deployment of high—quality troops from SHIRBRIG in the

first phase of the mission. Although this process emerged largely by default, it nonetheless provides useful evidence that—through giving the Secretariat time to plan a mission and potential TCCs more time to consider their options—a phased mandating—process can maximize the chance of a mission conducting its first phase successfully.

### ***3.ii Meetings of the Council, consultations with TCCs and the Working Group***

As noted in Section 1, there is a perennial debate about the optimal balance between public meetings and informal consultations in Council deliberations. The Council’s approach to discussing UNMEE changed drastically over the course of the mission. In 2000 and 2001, when hopes for the new operation were still relatively high, meetings were typically held in public. As noted above, the Council held an initial public meeting on 14 August to discuss the prospects of the force.<sup>36</sup> It held a second public meeting with Secretary—General Annan and Dutch Foreign Minister Josias van Aartsen on 17 November 2000. These meetings arguably contributed to the decision by the Netherlands and (to a lesser extent) Canada, both then on the Council, to deploy through SHIRBRIG, as they gave them a chance to air concerns on the mission and publicize their role.

At the 14 August discussion, Dutch ambassador Peter Van Walsum set out a number of priorities for the mission, such as good relations with humanitarian agencies.<sup>37</sup> On 17 November, Foreign Minister van Aartsen used a public meeting to both propose the Friends of UNMEE and set out five confidence—building measures for the Ethiopians and Eritreans.<sup>38</sup> It is arguable that, shortly after the cessation of hostilities, public meetings were able to (i) increase the chances for sustained peace by signaling scrutiny of both sides, and (ii) reinforce the Western TCC’s political stake in the mission’s initial phase.

On 19 April 2001, the new Under—Secretary General for Peacekeeping, Jean—Marie Guéhenno briefed the Council on developments in UNMEE’s operational area at a public meeting.<sup>39</sup> However, this was the last time that such a briefing was held in public. Thereafter, meetings with the

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Council, TCCs, SRSG and senior DPKO officials were held in the standard closed format (in additions to meetings of the Friends of UNMEE, discussed below). While detailed information on UNMEE's operational situation was still available to the TCCs and through the Secretary—General's reports, it was no longer given the same amount of high—level attention within the UN diplomatic community.

Indeed, from early 2001 onwards, the Council all but gave up on public debates on UNMEE. The signal exception came on 6 March 2002, following the Security Council Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea led by Norway's Ambassador Peter Ole Kolby. Representatives from all fifteen Council members went to Ethiopia and Eritrea from 21—25 February 2002. The goal of this was to make clear to both sides "the monumental importance" the international community placed on their acceptance of the Boundary Commission's decision (then expected in March).<sup>40</sup> The ensuing public Council debate was chaired by the Norwegian Foreign Minister, ensuring a higher level of interest in Kolby's report. A number of those present, including the U.S. ambassador, took the opportunity to raise their concerns about the parties' political and technical readiness for the Boundary Commission's decision.<sup>41</sup> Norway's decision not only to lead the Council mission but also to promote its report in this way briefly refocused attention on UNMEE.

The Council soon let its attention wander. On 15 March, with the Boundary Commission decision delayed, the Council met to renew UNMEE's mandate and declared its "satisfaction and anticipation" that a legal settlement was approaching. No additional statements were made at this meeting, presumably because all present felt that they had said their piece too recently to repeat it. More strikingly, the Council did not meet after the Boundary Commission published its ruling on 13 April 2002 — in spite the significant concerns they had raised after the Council mission. The Council did not meet again on UNMEE until 14 August, when it adjusted the mission's mandate and published a press release reminding Ethiopia and Eritrea that they had agreed that the Commission's decision would be "final and binding".<sup>42</sup> Some Council members attributed this cautious approach to the U.S., which wanted a low—key approach to the boundary issue,

and presided over the Council that August. The Council reconvened in September to renew UNMEE's mandate for six months, but again there was no public debate on the wider situation. It would not hold another public meeting on Ethiopia—Eritrea until March 2003.

Late 2002 and early 2003 were a hectic time for the Council and UN as a whole, overshadowed by the breakdown in Iraq. While the Council continued to publish clear calls for Ethiopia and Eritrea to respect the Boundary Commission's decision, there is a strong sense of the Council detaching itself from UNMEE's strategic and political situation in this period. UN officials working on Ethiopia and Eritrea at this time affirm that there was very little interest from Council members about the state of the operation.

In September 2003, the Council's ability to affect the situation was tested when Meles Zenawi wrote to the Council to ask that it set up an alternate mechanism to demarcate the contested parts of the border. Eritrea categorically refused to accept any alternatives to the Boundary Commission — a position consistent with the terms of the peace agreement reached between the two countries. In an attempt to overcome the impasse, and concerned that the situation could deteriorate into war, the Secretary—General appointed Lloyd Axworthy, a former Foreign Minister of Canada, as his Special Envoy to Ethiopia and Eritrea. But Eritrea saw his appointment as the "alternative" it rejected and would not even allow Axworthy into the country when he traveled to the region in February 2004, a decision which the Council called on it to reverse in Resolution 1560 of March 2005.<sup>43</sup>

While the Council supported the Secretary—General's decisions, and frequently reiterated its support for the Boundary Commission's decision, it now found itself in a complex position. If it did not engage with the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, it could well deteriorate further. But if it did engage publicly, it would be perceived as throwing the legal decision of the Commission open to political negotiations. This was an inherent flaw in the UN strategy, and arguably militated against the Council conducting public discussions of UNMEE, especially as the Boundary Commission was still active.

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The Council's preference for not discussing UNMEE in public continued up to and during the 2005 crisis. On 3 October 2005, Kofi Annan took the initiative in warning Council members that Ethiopia and Eritrea might be heading back to war, and that the Eritreans were putting UNMEE under pressure. The Council formally met the next day, and the President released a statement calling for Eritrea to cease its actions.<sup>44</sup> Jean—Marie Guéhenno addressed a closed meeting with TCCs a fortnight later. Although this meeting was closed, important elements of the discussion — including appeals by the Indian and Jordanian ambassadors to the Council to send strong messages to Eritrea — were publicized in a letter from Kofi Annan to the Council president shortly afterwards.<sup>45</sup> There was no public debate.

The Council's ability to respond to the unfolding situation was complicated by differences among its members on how firm to be with both Ethiopia and Eritrea. Council members repeatedly appealed to the original witnesses of the Algiers agreement — and the US in particular — to exert leverage on Ethiopia to accept the ruling of the Boundary Commission. But no real pressure was ever applied. While non—US Council diplomats understood that US counter—terrorist imperative prevailed, some also questioned whether the conduct of discussions largely at the expert level offered the best opportunity to grapple with difficult questions of policy and principle. They suspected that some of their colleagues were wary of taking risky positions on such a complex crisis. A public debate at this moment might have had the positive effect of pushing senior diplomats to address their differences — but might also have made those differences public.

Nonetheless, the divided Council did grope towards a strategy to deal with the crisis — even if it was not a fully intentional one. Interviewees give Greece, coordinating the informal discussions, some credit for this. On the one hand, messages spread that the Council was at least discussing a draft resolution threatening Eritrea with penalties for its behavior. On the other, the Council dispatched Japan's Ambassador, Kenzo Oshima, on a mission to discuss UNMEE's position with the Ethiopian and Eritrean leaderships.

Oshima was a natural choice for the mission. Not only was he an active chairman of the Council's Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, but as a former Under—secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs he had previous experience in the Horn of Africa. He initially insisted that his mission was solely concerned with UNMEE, but soon after arriving in Ethiopia the Ambassador was clearly engaging in the wider political situation. He told reporters that the Ethiopian government had assured him that it would not be “the first to fire” in initiating a new war.<sup>46</sup> He also reported conversations with senior Ethiopian and Eritrean officials concerning the Boundary Commission's decision.<sup>47</sup> He worked closely with the SRSO during his trip, and met diplomats based in the region.

Whatever Oshima said in private to both sides, he was deliberately even—handed in his public criticisms.<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting that, while he traveled to the region in his capacity as chair of the Working Group — an unprecedented gesture — his approach on the ground was very much that of an individual, politically—savvy envoy. In other words, his chairmanship gave him a clear locus to deal with UNMEE, but no special leverage on the ground. His access to the Eritrean leadership was limited. He returned from the region with no clear diplomatic success to report — but this was arguably useful in itself, as it seems to have set the stage for all Council members to accept some pressure on Asmara.

Following Oshima's mission, the Security Council agreed Resolution 1640 on 23 November, deploring Eritrea's actions, and threatening to take measures under article 41 of the UN Charter if Eritrea did not retract them — or if either side escalated to war. But while the resolution noted the Council's appreciation to Oshima, there was no public discussion of his report as there had been for Ambassador Kolby's. The contrast between the reception of the two reports may be indicative of differing strategies of Norway and the UK (which held the Council presidency in November 2006) or reflect continuing tensions between Council members over policy towards Eritrea. The use of private, expert—level diplomacy (and the opacity over Oshima's goals) arguably gave the Council more leeway than a more public series of condemnations

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and discussion. Whereas the mission led by Kolby had aimed to create positive political momentum prior to the Boundary Commission decision, Oshima's goal had been to tamp down a growing crisis. A number of interviewees commented that Oshima's visit had a positive effect — and that his intervention smoothed diplomacy over Article 41, as Eritrea did not back down — but the fact that there was no follow-up (in the region or in the Council) weakened this.

After the 2005 crisis, the Security Council continued to utilize informal consultations to agree resolutions on Ethiopia—Eritrea as Eritrea put more and more pressure on the mission. Interviewees praised the commitment of Belgium, which took on the UNMEE coordination file from Greece, in sustaining the informal process at this time. Throughout this period — and to the end of the operation — closed meetings with troop contributors were held regularly, usually 5—7 days before the Council met to pass a new resolution affecting the mission. It has recently been argued that the Council often schedules TCC meetings too late in the day to affect its consultations.<sup>49</sup> On two occasions in 2006, the TCC meetings fell less than 48 hours before the Council announced new mandates for UNMEE, although this was not repeated in 2007—8.

By the final years of UNMEE, it was increasingly clear that Eritrea had little intention of heeding the Council's injunctions, whatever format they were debated and presented in. As noted in Section 2, the Council was drawn into a fruitless effort to pressure the Ethiopians and Eritreans into an agreement by threatening to withdraw UNMEE — with the result that keeping the operation going became an end in itself. This involved a lot of diplomatic business, but it continued to be almost entirely informal. It is questionable whether a public meeting of the Council at this stage would have had any significant effect on Eritrean or Ethiopian actions, even if it had raised awareness of the crisis.

### **3.iii The Friends of UNMEE<sup>50</sup>**

As we have noted, the "Friends of UNMEE" was launched by the Dutch Foreign Minister in a public meeting of

the Security Council in 2000. The group's initial focus was the concerns of the TCCs, yet over time it became a useful mechanism for engaging Ethiopia and in particular Eritrea. Norway, which took over chairing duties from the Netherlands in 2002, became something of a champion for UNMEE and diplomacy with the increasingly recalcitrant regime in Asmara. This was on the basis of its long history of bilateral relations with Eritrea, which assured it access to senior officials in Asmara, as well as the leading role it had assumed on the Horn of Africa while in the Security Council between 2001—2002. The evolution of the Friends is thus an important element of the UNMEE story alongside more formal diplomacy in the Council.

The primary motivation for the Netherlands in proposing the Friends group was concern over control of UN forces rooted in the Dutch experience at Srebrenica. It created a group of Friends, primarily consisting of UNMEE's major troop contributors (Canada, Denmark, India, Italy, Jordan, Kenya and Norway, together with Algeria and the United States, were its original members) with a view to ensuring close involvement in the mission's operations. A secondary motivation, and one that had been fuelled by the experience on the Netherlands on the Security Council from 1999—2000 was Dutch interest in carving out a role for the states that could be considered the "non—Security Council good guys", the UN's traditional supporters and donors for whom participation within Friends groups represented an opportunity for influence they otherwise lacked.

The Friends group had particular potential to assist the process, as it was not confined New York. From the beginning the Friends of UNMEE met in New York, but also in Ethiopia and Eritrea, where ambassadors accredited in Addis Ababa and Asmara were separately briefed by the Secretary—General's Special Representative, Joseph Legwaila and his deputies. The emphasis on troop contributors had led to the group having a relatively heterogeneous composition, which generally deterred both Secretariat officials and the more informed states from briefing it too frankly in New York. But there were occasions when the Secretariat felt able to prime the group to deliver targeted messages to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

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In the field, the membership of the two groups was more fluid, and included representatives of the five permanent members of the Security Council. The groups reflected the very different level of diplomatic presence in the two capitals; the presence was significantly greater in Ethiopia than in Eritrea. In part as a result of the small size of the diplomatic community, and difficulties within which they were working, the Friends in Asmara developed into a much more close-knit, informal and active group than the larger entity in Addis Ababa. Angela Kane, who served as Deputy SRSO in Asmara from 2003—2004 recalled the Friends as a most effective partner, with which she had been able to work closely in order to deliver coordinated messages to her Eritrean interlocutors. In Addis Legwaila mainly worked a smaller group of states including the US and Algeria — this may also have reflected the fact (common to New York, Addis and Asmara) that a number of new TCCS and other states joined the group over time, making it unwieldy.

The utility of the Friends as a mechanism to pressure Ethiopia to accept the Boundary Commission's decision was hindered by the mixed messages it transmitted. Ambassadors posted in Asmara and Addis Ababa reported widely differing views of developments in reflection of the positions of their respective hosts. "Clientitis" was particularly bad in Addis Ababa, where the government went to considerable lengths to match the efficiency of its public relations with the generosity of its hospitality. Secretariat officials urged the Friends in New York — some of whom were similarly frustrated by the reporting they received from their respective embassies — to try to get a single message out. But their admonitions did little good and they remained concerned that powerful members of the Friends in Addis encouraged Ethiopia to believe that it could maintain its opposition to the decision of the Boundary Commission without incurring any real diplomatic damage.

Nonetheless, the Friends mechanism also provided a platform for Norway — having led on UNMEE issues in the Council in 2001—2 and organized the Kolby mission — to remain engaged in the Ethiopia—Eritrea situation. The Netherlands handed over chairing the Friends in New

York to the Norwegians in 2002 — although the Dutch remained closely involved in the group's activities in Africa. The Norwegians took a highly practical approach to their role, assisting the Secretariat in getting visas for Eritrea and attempting to deliver tough but realistic messages in Asmara. This activity was facilitated by the personal involvement of senior officials — Ambassador Kolby, having stood down from his post in New York, became a roving envoy (based in Oslo) dealing with the crisis; Raymond Johansen, Norway's state secretary from 2005 on, had previously been posted in Asmara and retained access to Prime Minister Isaias Afewerki — but garnered less success than Norway would have hoped.

In the final stages of the mission, Norway worked closely with Belgium (taking a lead on the issue in the Council) and Italy (also a non-permanent member) whilst also communicating frequently with the US, UK and South Africa. Diplomats involved in this process concur that it permitted a more orderly calibration of UNMEE's actions in the field and complex Council diplomacy than would otherwise have been possible — although this could only mitigate, not resolve, the core problems.

### ***3.iv Relations with the OAU and AU***

During the period of UNMEE's existence, the Security Council's approach to relations with regional organizations — and especially the OAU/AU — changed fundamentally. In 2000, the idea of in-person consultations between the Security Council and the main political organ of a regional organization would have been deemed unacceptable. By 2007 and 2008, the Council and the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) were shifting towards regular direct meetings.<sup>51</sup> This was, however, driven by events in Sudan and Somalia, not Ethiopia and Eritrea.

It is worth noting that the Ethiopian—Eritrean situation was a particularly sensitive one for the OAU/AU, for two main reasons. First, because the OAU/AU's headquarters are in Addis Ababa, there was natural caution about offending the host nation. Second, many African leaders remained wary of the precedent posed by Eritrea's secession from Ethiopia, meaning that they were unlikely to take up

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Asmara's cause. In the early years of UNMEE's deployment, Ethiopia often turned to the OAU for support during tensions with Eritrea, while Eritrea directed complaints to the UN.

For historical and contextual reasons, therefore, UNMEE has limited lessons for the present about how the Council deals with regional organizations over peace operations. This is ironic in so much as UNMEE was, according to the Algiers Agreement, meant to be "under the auspices of the OAU" (see Section 3.i). In presenting operational options to the Council in 2000, Kofi Annan played down this dimension. He specified that "the United Nations military observer group would work closely with [ . . . ] military observers to be deployed by the OAU, who would maintain a separate identity and chain of command."<sup>53</sup> The Secretariat's reconnaissance mission consulted closely with OAU, and agreed on the need for separate operational identities. The OAU thus sent a small military observer (which only had an authorized strength of 43) mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea to operate alongside UNMEE. As Festus Aboagye, a Ghanaian officer involved in the OAU's mission, notes, "no mention is made of a lead role for the OAU" in UNMEE's mandate, although the importance of coordination is repeated.<sup>53</sup> The Council and UN Secretariat thus essentially circumvented the Algiers Agreement vague references to the OAU's "auspices", although later mandates for UNMEE stated "strong support" for the OAU mission. Aboagye argues that the OAU's position was complicated by the lack of formal agreements with the UN, but that the OAU followed "the philosophy that the OAU should not duplicate what the UN can do best".

However, these decisions early in the mission set a precedent by which the Security Council did not engage closely with either the OAU or the AU on Ethiopia—Eritrea. In June 2007, a Council mission held the first of a series of regular informal consultations with the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), a format that raises certain working methods issues beyond the scope of this report. The Mission's terms of reference included raising Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the Mission's report shows that a member of the Council did brief — or at least "inform" — the AU representatives of the Council's work in this

area.<sup>54</sup> Although a joint communiqué was issued after this meeting, it focused solely on the modalities of future consultations and UN support to the AU, not specific crises. This mission had no apparent impact on the Council's final efforts to save UNMEE, presumably low on both sides' agendas.

Many of the limitations in UN—OAU/AU relations have since been rectified, both in political and operational terms. Nonetheless, this case does point to the fact that hybrid peace operations (where separate organizations cooperate in a single theater) should be based on a clear political consensus rather than operational convenience. This in turn is relevant to the working methods adopted by the Council vis—à—vis other organizations.

In the case of UNMEE, it is arguable that greater political involvement with the OAU/AU — demonstrated through the sorts of joint consultations and communiqués that are now becoming the norm — might have helped put the mission on a firmer political footing and offered extra leverage in 2005—8. Keeping these historical developments in mind, it still seems clear that the UNMEE case demonstrates the dangers of an insufficiently—close political relationship between the Council and a regional organization in a case where both maintain responsibility for the success of a peace operation.

#### 4. UNMEE: General Lessons

In summary, our analysis of the UNMEE case points to five generic lessons concerning Security Council working methods and UN peace operations:

- **If the Council adopts a phased approach to mandating a mission, the initial deployment may be enhanced.** Although by default, the Council adopted a phased approach to mandating UNMEE that allowed more planning to take place in the field than would otherwise have been possible. This gave the Secretary—General greater freedom to outline the mission's size and structure, and potential TCCs to address their concerns and priorities for the mission in public debate. These factors created an additional

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degree of trust around the mission's start—up phase that convinced Canada, the Netherlands and Denmark to deploy. *The broad lesson of this process is that an extended, interactive and public dialogue between the Council and Secretary—General on a mission prior to its final mandating can enhance the quality of the force in its initial phase and permit it to deploy rapidly.*

- **Public meetings and public statements by the Council can give a force additional operational and political credibility.** It is notable that Council debates around UNMEE were increasingly held in private as the mission continued — apparently reflecting the political sensitivities around its mission. Yet our analysis suggests that the frequency of public Council debates and statements in the early years of the mission — including Council discussions headed by senior Dutch and Norwegian politicians — had a positive impact on the force's credibility. The increasing secrecy surrounding decision—making on the mission in later years, coupled with the failure of the Council to make any public statement on the Boundary Commission's decision, arguably reduced the UN's political leverage over Ethiopia and Eritrea. *This suggests that, even when UN operations face severe challenges and crises, public consultations by the Council can give the UN opportunities to hold the parties to an agreement to account — while simultaneously reassuring TCCs that their concerns are taken seriously.*

- **The Council's Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations has potential to act as an "advance guard" for the Council as a whole.** The role taken by Ambassador Oshima in 2005 points to the utility of the Working Group in undertaking missions on behalf of the Council as a whole, even where there are some divisions within the Council over a mission's future. *The UNMEE case suggests that the Council should explore ways to strengthen the Working Group as an "advance guard" tasked with addressing missions' problems in future. If this is considered too complex, the Council can still task individual ambassadors to represent its views directly to leaders in countries hosting peacekeepers. Ambassadors can be selected on case—by—case basis to communicate the Council's positions in person.*

- **Groups of Friends are a complex but useful political tool in support of peace operations.** Our analysis highlights the extent to which the Friends of UNMEE played an important role in defining the mission's evolution — but that this role was not always positive. Although it was useful for the Friends to caucus in both Addis Ababa and Asmara, the increasing partiality of diplomats in both capitals grew problematic. Nonetheless, this mechanism significantly increased oversight of the mission by member—states, arguably providing reassurance to TCCs. The Friends provided a useful platform for Norway to conduct outreach to Eritrea. *Our analysis indicates the utility of Friends Groups in supporting missions, but also highlights the need for individual nations to take leadership roles in these Groups — and the importance of ensuring that the Friends do not become partial.*

- **Where the Council shares responsibility for a mission or peace agreement with a regional organization, enhanced consultations are necessary.** The lack of effective consultations between the Council and the OAU/AU over UNMEE (at least after its very initial deployment) arguably reduced opportunities to put pressure on the parties — although this was compounded by the AU's own ambiguous stance towards the conflict. Had there been a stronger common front between the UN and OAU/AU, it might have been possible to gain added leverage over both sides. *This analysis points to the need for concrete consultations between the Council and regional entities on specific missions, as well as more general dialogues on generic issues of peace and security.*

## 5. Recommendations

The outcomes of individual peace operations will always be determined by a complex array of issues. These are likely to span the actions and intentions of the conflict parties, the regional environment and the interests and actions of other powers. The relevance of Security Council decision—making to these outcomes varies case—by—case, and it is dangerous to assume a direct and simple causal chain between diplomacy in New York and events

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in the field. There are limits regarding the extent to which even exemplary working methods can affect the Security Council's capacity to fulfill the complex task of overseeing a UN mission — as the case of UNMEE itself confirms.

Nonetheless, the UNMEE case — and the general lessons outlined above — does point to a series of concrete recommendations concerning working methods. With a note of caution regarding questions of causality, we nonetheless propose the following:

- **Peace operations should be launched and conducted on the basis of clear political objectives.** The detached relationship between UNMEE and the Boundary Commission allowed the Security Council and UN officials to take refuge in the notion that it was primarily a technical operation, whilst its fate was both intimately connected to the implementation of the findings of the latter, and highly political.
- **The operational benefits of public meetings of the Security Council should be considered during the establishment of a peacekeeping force.** As the public debates in 2000 indicated, public meetings concerning a force can strengthen the stake of individual countries' — and of the Council as a whole — in the force's performance. While the Council has recently aimed to improve the timing and conduct of informal consultations with TCCs, it should also review the utility of public meetings aimed at promoting the TCC and Council's stakes in a mission.
- **The chair of the Working Groups on Peacekeeping Operations can have credibility as an ambassador for the Council as a whole.** While Ambassador Oshima's mission relied as much on his personal diplomatic talents as his status as the Working Group chair, it suggested that the Working Group's mandate to handle specific mission issues as well as generic questions is a useful tool for the Council.
- **The outcomes of Security Council Missions may be enhanced through high-profile public meetings.** Whereas the Norwegian decision to hold a

debate chaired by the Foreign Minister on Ambassador Kolby's report increased its impact, the fact there was no public debate on Ambassador Oshima's or attention to follow-up may have reduced the long-term effects of his initiative. More thought should be given to the maximizing the political impact to be gained from Security Council Missions.

- **There is a need for the Council to "track" political events affecting a mission in its meetings and statements.** The Council's failure to respond to the Boundary Commission's decision by holding a public meeting or issuing a PRST arguably reduced the chances of Ethiopia accepting the Commission's opinion, and worryingly signaled that the Council was not closely engaged with the issue. The Council's relative distance from the fate of the Axworthy mission reinforces this point.
- **The perception that the Security Council is partial in its relations to conflict parties, despite the existence of binding agreements to the contrary, undermines the legitimacy and efficacy of its engagement.** In the case of UNMEE Council members disposition to support the findings of the Boundary Commission (in Eritrea's favor) was undermined by Eritrea's behavior, but built on an underlying bias towards Ethiopia amongst some of its most powerful members.
- **The Council would benefit from a better knowledge base and fora for critical reflection as it considered the difficulties encountered by a specific mission.** Council members may wish to consider how better to prepare experts charged with the backstopping of missions deployed into complex conflict environments (for example through familiarization trips); they may also wish to consider a creative use of some of the new formats for Security Council meetings developed in recent years to allow non-Council members access and enable concerned parties or organizations.

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These include informal interactive discussions, informal interactive dialogues, the “Kosovo model” and older methods such as Arria formula meetings.

- **Council members may wish to consider the use of Friends and other mechanisms to ensure the involvement of TCCs.** While regular consultations with TCCs by the Council are obviously key to maintaining TCC confidence in a mission, the Friends of UNMEE provided a mechanism by which TCCs could more directly be informed of, and at times engage in diplomatic efforts to resolve problems affecting UNMEE. While the risk of a group of Friends becoming too large and unwieldy to serve a useful purpose is always present (and in other cases small groups of Friends have become effectively sub—groups of the Council itself) the Council should consider this and other means to involve TCCS more creatively in its work.

- **But Council members and other states should also be wary of the risks inherent in Friends Groups.** These include the fact that Friends Groups can give the UN “reach”, but also risk “clientitis”: the fact that the Friends met in Addis and Asmara as well as New York gave them the ability to coordinate diplomatic initiatives between the capitals and Council, but this was reduced by the divergent perceptions of diplomats based in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Secondly, time and size may work against the efficacy of Friends groups. Over time, as the Friends of UNMEE grew in size and became more institutionalized, the utility of the meetings in New York diminished. Substantive discussions largely took place amongst a small number of its most interested members (Belgium, Italy, Norway, South Africa, UK and US) outside the Friends — and the Council.

- **Council members and the Secretariat officials should actively pursue opportunities to engage with states with privileged access to a particular conflict:** The role of Norway, as chair of the Friends group, but also a state in a position to engage with a recalcitrant conflict party was an interesting example of Council and Secretariat flexibility, making use of the opportunities of the Friends mechanism.

While UNMEE was subject to factors beyond the Council’s control, this report highlights that when the Council is transparent and confers with outside actors, it may have a higher chance of sustaining a controversial mission than if it acts informally and exclusively. If the Council adopts working methods that promote as open approach as is feasible, it may be able to handle crises such as those that affected UNMEE more effectively in future.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>See Security Council Report, *Special Research Report No. 1: Security Council Working Methods – a Work in Progress* (30 March 2010) and the Security Council debate on Letter dated 1 April 2010 from the President of the Security Council (S/2006/507), S/PV/6300 and S/PV/6300 Resumption 1, 22 April 2010

<sup>2</sup>See Center on International Cooperation, *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2010* (Lynne Rienner, 2010), pp7-8.

<sup>3</sup>S/PV.6178, 5 August 2009, p9.

<sup>4</sup>Security Council Report, *op.cit.*, p13.

<sup>5</sup>See Michael Lipson, "Peacekeeping: Organized Hypocrisy?"; *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp5-34.

<sup>6</sup>Interview, 17 March 2010.

<sup>7</sup>S/2006/507. An indication of the slow moving debate on reform of working methods was that this note was the subject of the Security Council debate held on 22 April 2010 referred to in note 1.

<sup>8</sup>Security Council Report, *op.cit.*; and *idem.*, *Special Research Report: Security Council Transparency, Legitimacy and Effectiveness* (18 October 2007).

<sup>9</sup>A/60/L.49, 17 March 2006, p4, paragraphs 13-14.

<sup>10</sup>Security Council Report (2010), p8.

<sup>11</sup>S/PRST/2001/3, 31 January 2001, p2.

<sup>12</sup>See Teresa Whitfield, *Friends Indeed? The United Nations, Groups of Friends and the Resolution of Conflict* (United States Institute for Peace, 2007)

<sup>13</sup>S/1999/165, 17 February 1999. See also Security Council Report (2007), p9.

<sup>14</sup>S/PV.6300 (Resumption 1), p7

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, p5, paragraphs 18-19.

<sup>16</sup>Security Council Report, *Update Report 5 June 2006* No. 2, p1.

<sup>17</sup>Christine Grey, "The Eritrea/Ethiopia Claims Commission Oversteps Its Boundaries: A Partial Award?"; *The European Journal of International Law*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (2006), p701.

<sup>18</sup>SC Res. 1298, 17 May 2000.

<sup>19</sup>S/2000/601, p2.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p3.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p5.

<sup>22</sup>See Philip White, "The Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Arbitration"; *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 29, No. 92, p345.

<sup>23</sup>International Crisis Group, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Stopping the Slide to War* (22 December 2005), p6.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p3.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p8.

<sup>26</sup>Grey, *op. cit.*, p710.

<sup>27</sup>SC Res. 1661, 14 March 2006.

<sup>28</sup>SC Res. 1710, 29 September 2006.

<sup>29</sup>SC Res. 1741, 30 January 2007.

<sup>30</sup>SCR, *Update Report 26 June 2008* No.8, p2.

<sup>31</sup>SCR, *Update Report 31 July 2008* No. 5, p1.

<sup>32</sup>S/2000/643, 27 June 2000, p2.

<sup>33</sup>SC Res. 1312, 31 July 2000.

<sup>34</sup>Joachim Koops and Johannes Varwick, "Ten Years of SHIRBRIG", GPPI, 2008, p18.

<sup>35</sup>S/PV.4187, 14 August 2000.

<sup>36</sup>S/PV.4187, 14 August 2000.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, pp9-10.

<sup>38</sup>S/PV.4227, 17 November 2000.

<sup>39</sup>S/PV.4310, 19 April 2001.

<sup>40</sup>S/2002/205, 27 February 2002, p9.

<sup>41</sup>S/PV.4885, 6 March 2002.

<sup>42</sup>See S/PV.4600 and SC Res.1430, 14 August 2002.

<sup>43</sup>SC Res. 1586, 14 March 2005, p3.

<sup>44</sup>See S/PRST/2005/47, 4 October 2005.

<sup>45</sup>S/2005/668, 25 October 2005. It is notable that correspondence

between the Secretary-General and Security Council President was rarely used as a method of publicizing the pressures placed on UNMEE. For an exception, see Ban Ki-moon's letter S/2008/66 of 1 February 2008.

<sup>46</sup>"Japan's UN Rep Raises Concerns for Ethiopia-Eritrea Conflict"; *Deutsche Press-Agentur*, 12 November 2005.

<sup>47</sup>S/2005/703, p4.

<sup>48</sup>SC Res. 1640, 23 November 2005.

<sup>49</sup>An issue addressed in S/PRST/2009/24, 5 August 2009.

<sup>50</sup>Much of this section is based on interviews by Whitfield for *Friends Indeed?* (see n.12 above) while UNMEE and the Friends were still active, although that volume ultimately had no chapter on UNMEE.

<sup>51</sup>Security Council Report, pp12-14.

<sup>52</sup>S/2000/643, p3, paragraph 16.

<sup>53</sup>Festus Aboagye, "Towards New Peacekeeping partnerships? The OAU Liaison Mission in Ethiopia-Eritrea"; *African Security Review* Vol. 10, No. 2 (2001), p6 (online version).

<sup>54</sup>S/2007/421, p9, paragraph 39, 11 July 2007.



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