

## Ethiopia and Eritrea

The year 2006 saw Eritrea and Ethiopia roll back from a return to war over their disputed border. With no progress on the border's demarcation and the disregard of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) throughout the year, the Security Council reduced the mission's size and scope, limiting its ability to observe a possible military buildup in the temporary security zone (TSZ). Meanwhile, fears of greater instability throughout the Horn of Africa grew, as it became clear that conflict in Somalia could directly involve Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Ethiopia and Eritrea went to war in 1998 over disputed border territory around the town of Badme. In the course of the conflict, Ethiopian troops retook Badme and penetrated deep into Eritrean territory. The Algiers peace agreement of 2000 provided for their withdrawal, and for the separation of forces by a TSZ along the Eritrean side of the border. The Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission was created to rule on the disputed territory.

UNMEE was mandated under Chapter VI of the UN Charter to monitor the force withdrawal from the TSZ, chair a joint military commission, and coordinate mine clearance. The 6,000-strong mission has carried out these tasks largely successfully. However, the wider peace process has since stalled over border demarcation. In 2003 the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission clarified that its 2002 ruling would cede Badme to Eritrea—a decision that Ethiopia regards as illegal and has refused to implement. Because Eritrea sees the ruling as final, the government has opposed attempts at further dialogue and the appointment of a UN Special Envoy. Meanwhile, Eritrea increasingly regards UNMEE as an

imposition on Eritrean sovereignty.

At the end of 2005, the stalemate looked set to escalate into crisis. In October, Eritrea abruptly announced a ban on UNMEE helicopter flights that left UNMEE unable to monitor some 60 percent of its area of responsibility. There followed reports of illegal military activity in the TSZ, which Eritrea claimed were the movements of militia and nonregular Ethiopian military elements. Ethiopian troops massed along the border in November and made several incursions into the TSZ. On 23 November, Security Council Resolution 1640 called on both sides to de-escalate the situation through an immediate return to 2004 levels of deployment, a reversal of Eritrea's restrictions on UNMEE, and immediate steps by Ethiopia to demarcate the border in line with the Boundary Commission decision.

Although Ethiopian troops did pull back, reducing the immediate threat of military clashes, the other provisions of Resolution 1640 were not implemented. In December 2005, Eritrea demanded the withdrawal of US, Canadian, European, and Russian staff from UNMEE. The Secretary-General condemned the request, but "in the interests of the safety and security of UNMEE staff," redeployed about 140 mission personnel from Asmara to Addis Ababa. In January 2006, he advised that the position of UNMEE was becoming "increasingly untenable" and outlined options for downsizing or withdrawal if progress were not made.

On 10 March 2006, the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission met with the parties in London to discuss arrangements for the resumption of demarcation negotiations that had been halted since 2003. UNMEE's mandate

was extended for one month on 14 March, and then for a further thirty days until 15 May. On that latter day, the Council gave Ethiopia and Eritrea a final two weeks to comply with Resolution 1640. On 31 May, in the absence of substantive progress on border demarcation or UNMEE's status, the Council authorized the reconfiguration of UNMEE's military component and reduced its authorized strength by about a thousand troops, to 2,300. In September 2006, the existing mandate was extended until 31 January 2007, despite the failure of

both parties to attend scheduled meetings of the boundary commission in June and August of 2006.

Of the menu of options for the future of UNMEE, the 31 May decision represented a cautious choice, allowing the mission to continue to monitor the TSZ as far as is possible within the restrictions laid down by Eritrea. UNMEE conducts land patrols, humanitarian activities, and demining over the accessible 40 percent of the TSZ. Regular reports throughout June and July described the TSZ as "stable but

#### Box 4.8.1 Somalia

Soon after his election in October 2004 as president of Somalia's new Transitional Federal Institutions (TFI), Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed appealed to the international community for a multinational peacekeeping force of up to 20,000 troops to help restore security in Somalia and enable his government's return from exile. The request initially met a lukewarm reception, but in January 2005 the African Union accepted the idea of a mission "in principle." The Security Council expressed its support, and regional states, notably Ethiopia, offered to contribute. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), sponsor of the peace talks, agreed to take the lead in establishing a peace support mission, which was approved by the AU on 7 February 2005.

In Somalia, however, there was widespread opposition to the notion of a force comprising peacekeepers from neighboring countries. An initial AU assessment mission in February 2005 was met with violent protests. The Security Council cautioned that any peace support mission "would require the support of the Somali people," while IGAD promised not to include troops from Ethiopia, Kenya, or Djibouti in the proposed mission.

IGAD formally established its Peace Support Mission in Somalia (IGASOM)

in April 2005, with a robust "peace enforcement" mandate. The concept of operations was approved by the transitional parliament on 11 May and authorized by the AU on 12 May 2005. However, deployment of IGASOM was suspended, pending Security Council approval of an exemption to its arms embargo on Somalia imposed under Resolution 733 (1992). The Security Council agreed to consider an exemption, but only on the basis of an IGASOM plan that had the support of the TFI and was consistent with an agreed national security plan.

Though the Somali parliament finally adopted its national security plan on 14 June 2006, concerns emerged that unless the TFI could reach agreement with the increasingly powerful Union of Islamic Courts (UIC)—which controls Mogadishu and large sections of Somali territory—there would be no peace for IGASOM to keep. In early July the UIC made clear to a joint EU, AU, and Arab League delegation that it opposed the deployment of foreign troops.

Nevertheless, on 13 September 2006, the (African Union's) Peace and Security Council (PSC) approved the deployment plan of IGASOM. Among other things, it authorized the mission to provide security for the TFI and create an environment

conducive for dialogue and reconciliation. The PSC renewed its request to the Security Council for an exemption to the arms embargo. The IGASOM plan calls for the deployment of 8,000 troops. The UIC rejected the AU decision. The League of Arab States continued to meditate between the UIC and TFI, but tensions between the two sides persisted. The UIC accused Ethiopia of deploying troops in support of the TFI—an allegation that Ethiopia initially denied but later admitted to sending hundreds of military trainers.

On 6 December, the UN Security Council amended the arms embargo and authorized IGAD and AU states to establish a "protection and training mission" in Somalia. Neighboring states, including Ethiopia, would be prohibited from contributing troops to the mission. Matters took a dramatic turn in late December when war between the UIC and transitional government broke out. Backed by Ethiopian troops and aircraft, the TFI regained territory that had been under UIC control. With pressure on Ethiopia to withdraw, momentum to get an African peacekeeping force on the ground grew, although it was unclear which countries would provide troops.

### UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE)

• Authorization and start date	31 July 2000 (UNSC Res. 1312)
• Acting SRSG	Azouz Ennifar (Tunisia)
• Force commander	Major-General Mohammad Taisir Masadeh (Jordan)
• Budget	\$174.7 million (1 July 2006–30 June 2007)
• Strength as of 30 September 2006	Troops: 2,064 Military observers: 205 International civilian staff: 135 Local civilian staff: 187 UN volunteers: 61

*For detailed mission information see p. 296.*

tense.” Nevertheless, what Secretary-General Annan called a “pattern of hostility” toward the mission came to a head in September 2006, when the Eritrean government arrested one and ordered the expulsion of five UNMEE staff on allegations of espionage.

While the Ethiopia-Eritrea dispute ebbs toward cold war, fears have mounted of a hotter,

proxy war for influence in Somalia. Ethiopia has long been a staunch ally of President Abdullahi Yusuf, whose transitional government is sequestered in Baidoa, near the Ethiopian border. Conversely, Eritrea is sympathetic to the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), which took over administration of Mogadishu during Somalia’s civil war and emerged as a political and military force in 2006, extending its administrative control throughout the country’s south (see Box 4.8.1). The presence of Ethiopian troops in Somalia was met with threats of jihad by the UIC. Although Ethiopia continued to insist it had only military trainers in Somalia, a UN report in November accused several countries including Ethiopia and Eritrea of violating a UN arms embargo by providing support to the various belligerent groups. The end of 2006 saw the eruption of war between the UIC and the transitional government, backed by Ethiopian troops and aircraft. Despite concerns, the Somalia conflict did not lead to direct clashes between Ethiopian and Eritrean forces.