

THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

The Ogaden War and Struggle for Regional Peace



STUDY GUIDE
JB MUN 2025

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR :

Dear Delegates,

I am currently studying in grade ten at the J.B Petit High School. I am honoured to be your Director for the United Nations Security Council at JBMUN 2025.

In the Historical UNSC on The Ogaden War (1977–1978), delegates are expected to analyze how a regional dispute between Somalia and Ethiopia escalated into a Cold War confrontation, balancing the principles of self-determination and territorial integrity while addressing the impact of foreign intervention and the humanitarian crisis that followed. The agenda is complex because it intertwines legal, political, and ideological tensions, pitting national sovereignty against ethnic claims and exposing how superpower rivalries can turn local conflicts into global crises, challenging the Council to find a balanced and lasting path to peace.

Looking back MUN has been the highlight of the school years, from attending my first Mock Mun in my school to giving my first GSL speech in an external MUN. From those first nervous speeches, to the unforgettable moments of table-banging applause, to the bittersweet satisfaction of closing ceremonies.

In my free time, I love reading a book or listening to a Gracie Abrams album. I have a deep interest in global crisis and politics. I enjoy exploring complex global issues, challenging myself with new perspectives, and contributing to discussions that are both thought-provoking and impactful. Outside of committee you'll usually find me binge watching Gossip Girls or sleeping most of the time.

To end with, your creativity, diplomacy, and understanding of global politics will be key to producing a meaningful resolution. Remember that every clause you write, every alliance you form, and every argument you make in this room represents the future of global governance in the face of rapid technological change.

I look forward to engaging discussions, thoughtful debate, and the collaborative spirit that defines Model UN.

Best regards,
Delishaa Saudagar
Director,
Historic United Nations Security Council, 1977

LETTER FROM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR :

Dear Delegate,

It is my distinct honour to welcome you to the United Nations Security Council at the JB Model United Nations. This specialized committee will discuss the ongoing conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia over the Ogaden region in 1977, a war shaped by Cold War politics, regional ambitions, and ethnic tensions.

For decades, the Horn of Africa has been a region of strategic significance, caught between colonial legacies and emerging post-independence nation-states. Somalia, under the Somali Democratic Republic, has sought to unify all Somali-speaking territories, while Ethiopia, under the Derg regime, faces internal challenges from reformist movements, regional rebellions, and ethnic divisions. The Ogaden region, largely inhabited by ethnic Somalis, has become the center of this struggle, drawing in external actors with competing Cold War interests.

In July 1977, Somalia launched a full-scale invasion of the Ogaden, aiming to seize control of the territory. Ethiopia's response, initially hampered by internal instability and prior military purges, has grown stronger, and the situation remains fragile. The involvement of external powers, including Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other Cold War allies, has increased the stakes, turning what might have been a regional dispute into a broader international crisis. Civilians have been severely affected, with refugee movements, humanitarian difficulties, and reports of human rights violations complicating the conflict.

As delegates, you must examine these tensions and evaluate not only military strategy but also humanitarian concerns, the legality of actions under international law, and the influence of regional and global powers. Your decisions and resolutions will require careful attention to historical grievances, political ambitions, and the balance of power in the Horn of Africa as of

22nd November 1977.

Until November,

Zaara Chinoy

Assistant Director

Historic United Nations Security Council, 1977

LETTER FROM ASSISTANT DIRECTORS:

Dear Delegates,

It's my absolute pleasure to welcome you to the Historical United Nations Security Council at JBMUN 2025, where we'll be diving into the Ogaden War. As Kanye once said, "no one man should have all that power", and in HUNSC, that power lies in your hands as delegates, where every word, alliance, and decision can change the course of history.

I'm currently in the tenth grade at Bombay International School, pursuing the IGCSE curriculum. I enjoy exploring complex global issues, challenging myself with new perspectives, and contributing to discussions that are both thought-provoking and impactful. When I say "expect the unexpected," I mean it. It won't just be your research that will be tested, but also your creativity, adaptability, and willingness to think beyond the obvious. My expectations from all of you would be to delve deeply into the various complexities of the Ogaden war, defend the stance of your country, and embrace the crises as opportunities to demonstrate quick thinking and originality.

Outside these sessions, I am devoted to seeing Liverpool dominate European football (YNWA), listening to Kanye West or Drake, or proving to my friends time and again why I am the GOAT of Clash Royale Triple Draft. Inside these sessions, I want to see the same competitive spirit from all of you, not just playing to win, but playing with style, boldness, and passion. HUNSC won't be easy, but it will be unforgettable. Bring energy, creativity, and courage to the table because that's what will make this committee stand out. The Ogaden War itself was a conflict shaped by bold decisions, shifting alliances, and superpower involvement, the very elements that will make our debates intense and dynamic.

See you in committee,
Div Kothari
Assistant Director,
Historic United Nations Security Council, 197

Dear Delegate's,

It's an honor to welcome you to the Historical United Nations Security Council (HUNSC) at JBMUN 2025, where we'll be taking a deep dive into the Ogaden War. This conflict, though often overlooked, was a defining moment in the Horn of Africa, where local rivalries were entangled with global Cold War politics, creating a complex web of diplomacy, strategy, and high-stakes decision-making.

I am currently in the eleventh grade pursuing the rigorous and rewarding IB DP Program at Hill Spring International School, with a focus on Economics and International Politics. Outside of the committee, you'll usually find me watching "Oversimplified" videos on everything from the Emu War to the French Revolution, reading about the rise and fall of economies, or unwinding by playing squash. I'm also a huge Microsoft Flight Simulator enthusiast — if I had the time, I'd happily get lost in it for hours, navigating the skies in search of the perfect landing. And yes, I do have the rare skill of being able to fall asleep pretty much anywhere, much to my friends' disbelief.

As delegates, you'll have the unique challenge of rewriting history. The Ogaden War isn't just a static historical event; it's a living scenario where every speech, alliance, and crisis response will shift the balance of power. My hope is that you engage with this agenda not only through research and preparation but also with creativity, adaptability, and boldness, thinking beyond the

obvious to craft strategies that reflect the complexity of the real world.

Personally, what excites me most about this committee is how deeply it ties into my own interests. In college, I'd love to take a course in African Studies to better understand the region's history and the economic and political forces that have shaped it. The Ogaden War represents a fascinating intersection of these forces, making this agenda particularly meaningful to me — and

I hope, by the end of the conference, meaningful to you as well. I look forward to seeing each of you bring passion, insight, and originality to the table as we navigate this pivotal moment in history together.

See you in committee,

Yuvraj Tejnani

Assistant Director, HUNSC

Historic United Nations Security Council, 1977

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INTRODUCTION TO COMMITTEE

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), tasked with maintaining international peace and security under the UN Charter, faces a complex crisis in November 1977, the Ogaden War. This conflict, fought between the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia (the Derg) and the Somali Democratic Republic, brings together post-colonial territorial disputes, ethnic nationalism, humanitarian disaster, and Cold War rivalry. The war's roots lie in the contested Ogaden region, a large, dry plateau in eastern Ethiopia mainly inhabited by ethnic Somalis. Their cultural and clan connections reach deep into Somalia, Kenya, and Djibouti. For Somalia, under

President Mohamed Siad Barre, the invasion of Ethiopia in July 1977 aimed to realize the long-held dream of a "Greater Somalia." This vision seeks to unite all Somali-inhabited lands divided by colonial boundaries. For Ethiopia, led by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam's Derg regime, it was a fight for sovereignty and territorial integrity against foreign aggression, amid internal strife, Marxist reorganization, and multiple insurgencies in Eritrea, Tigray, and Bale.

By November 22, 1977, the committee's freeze date, Somali forces, allied with the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), had captured nearly 90% of the Ogaden, including key towns like Gode and Jijiga. However, Ethiopia, receiving a large influx of Soviet arms, Cuban military advisors, and support from the Eastern Bloc, was gearing up for a significant counteroffensive.

The military situation has been accompanied by a severe humanitarian crisis: bombings, executions, and destruction of pastoral infrastructure have forced over 700,000 civilians to flee, with more than 400,000 seeking refuge in Somalia. Entire Somali communities in Ethiopia have been labeled traitors, facing collective punishment and forced relocation. Relief agencies like the ICRC and UNHCR have struggled to provide aid, hindered by military restrictions, propaganda manipulation, and mistrust from both governments. Camps in Somalia are overcrowded and filled with disease, while famine threatens the drought-stricken Ogaden.

The Ogaden War has also reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the Horn of Africa. The Soviet Union's shift from Somalia to Ethiopia and the subsequent deployment of Cuban troops represent a significant realignment during the Cold War. The United States, cautious yet strategic, starts to engage with Somalia as a counterbalance to Soviet expansion in the Red Sea corridor.

Meanwhile, Arab League states and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) express concern about the regional instability. The war challenges the fundamental principles that post-colonial Africa was built on, particularly *uti possidetis juris*, which holds colonial borders as sacred. Somalia's aspirations threaten to disrupt these borders, risking a surge of ethnic secessionist conflicts across the continent.

The Security Council finds itself at a pivotal point. It must decide if Somalia's actions represent legitimate self-determination for an oppressed ethnic group or a breach of international law due to aggression against a sovereign state. It must also address the humanitarian crisis expanding across the Horn, weighing the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention against the moral duty to protect civilians. As Cold War powers compete for influence, the Ogaden War has become more than a regional issue—it mirrors the global struggle between conflicting ideologies, tests the Council's resolve, and marks a significant moment for international diplomacy. The situation in the Ogaden compels the world to confront the lasting tension between national ambition, ethnic identity, and human survival. It challenges the Security Council to take decisive action before the region falls further into chaos.

PAST ACTION



This is the map of Somalia (south) and Ethiopia (north) in 1977. The Ogaden plateau was predominantly inhabited by ethnic Somalis and was occupied by Somali forces during the early phase of the war.

Ethnic Somalis were divided by colonial boundaries after World War II, leaving large Somali populations in Ethiopia's Ogaden as well as in Djibouti and Kenya's Northern Frontier. The independence of Somalia and its secular socialist government followed the ideology to develop a "Greater Somalia." Its capital, Mogadishu, had long sponsored insurgencies in the Ogaden. By 1977, the Ogaden had been reorganised under Somali backing, with control of the majority of the lowland

Ogaden. Somalis presented their actions as the liberation of "kinsmen" from Ethiopian occupation, and Ethiopia asserted that the Ogaden was integral to its sovereign state since decolonisation. The collision of these assertions, based on colonial borders and nationalist ideologies, laid the groundwork for the war.

In Ethiopia, Emperor Haile Selassie's imperial government collapsed in 1974 amidst famine and unrest. A Marxist military junta, the Derg, took power but was destroyed by factional infighting.

Eritrean separatists and several ethnic insurgencies erupted, keeping the army occupied. The failure of the Derg to assert its dominance left Ethiopia politically unstable and militarily stretched. On the other hand, Somalia was relatively stable and highly nationalistic. Somali President Barre's regime exploited Ethiopia's instability, labelling Addis Ababa as a "Black Colonialist" power and upping support to the WSLF in the Ogaden. Ethiopia's weakness in Mogadishu's view created a window for Somalia to fulfil its irredentist goals. From Addis Ababa's perspective, however, the country was itself defending its territorial integrity from an external attack.

The Horn of Africa was a Cold War battleground. Before 1974, Ethiopia and the United States of America were strongly allied, as it hosted a major American base at Kagnew with a large amount of military aid. Simultaneously, Somalia was allied with the USSR, hosting Soviet bases and in return receiving extensive arms. The Ogaden conflict radically upended this when Somalia invaded Ethiopia in July 1977, the Soviet Union defected from its Somali client and poured support into Ethiopia. By early 1978, the USSR had flown in some 100,000 tons of military equipment and 1,500 advisors to Ethiopia, and Cuba had sent roughly 17,000 combat troops. This giant intervention turned the war around. In Washington, however, U.S. policymakers were split. The Carter administration issued a mere "reprimand" to Somalia's aggression, not wanting to offend Barre but not trusting his expansionism. In late 1977, the Somalis expelled Soviet advisers in anticipation of U.S. support, but Congress was hesitant to arm Barre without firm assurances. As one American official quipped, Somalis would not quit "the national dream" of Greater Somalia for guns. The bottom line was that neither superpower pushed for an early settlement, and both prepared for extended conflict.

The Western Somali Liberation Front insurgency had overrun much of the Ogaden lowlands by mid-1977, leading Barre's regime to mobilise for an all-encompassing armed conflict. In July that year, the Soviet-supplied Somali National Army attacked Ethiopia with the help of mechanised divisions and air support. Many Ethiopian garrisons were weakened by poor supplies and by internal purging and collapsed or mutinied as the Somali forces advanced across the unprotected desert. Somali army columns advanced some 700 kilometres, taking main towns like Jijiga. Mogadishu commanders predicted an immediate dissolution of Ethiopian resistance and hoped even for diplomatic recognition of a newly achieved status quo. At the same time, the Soviet Union, sensing an opportunity, increased its outreach to Mengistu's Derg. Soviet aid, airlifted by sea and air, began arriving in significant amounts in late 1977. After Barre expelled Soviet advisers from Mogadishu in November, many of those Ethiopian-educated ex-Somali officers immediately moved to Addis Ababa, sharing intelligence on the Somali army. (the following needs to be used for reference and has occurred post/during the freeze date) Cuba completed its troop deployments in November 1977. The combined Ethiopian-Cuban force established positions around Harar and along the front. As invasion was a primary concern, the Ethiopian government promoted policies for national unity and launched mass mobilisation. Around 100,00 to 300,000 civilian militiamen joined the army, vowing to defend the homeland.



CASE STUDY 1

1. Introduction

By late 1977, the Ogaden War had turned into one of the worst conflicts in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia and Somalia, both newly socialist countries, fought over the Ogaden, a large semi-arid plateau covering about 350,000 square kilometers. The region had over 1.5 million residents, mostly ethnic Somali, linked by clan networks that crossed colonial boundaries. When Somalia's President Siad Barre began an offensive in July 1977, the conflict shifted from a proxy insurgency via the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) to a direct war between nations. By November, much of the Ogaden was under Somali control, leaving civilians trapped amid airstrikes, forced displacement, and famine. The humanitarian and ethnic aspects of the war were tightly linked, as both governments used identity to wield power.

2. Ethnic Dynamics in the Conflict

The Ogaden population was nearly all ethnic Somali, primarily from the Ogaden clan of the larger Darod family. These kinship connections extended deep into Somalia, where clans like the Marehan and Dolbahante held sway in Siad Barre's government. For Barre, protecting the Ogadeni Somali was seen as an ethnic responsibility, while Ethiopia's Derg viewed these same groups as potential traitors.

By August 1977, the Derg issued "security orders" that required all Somali-speaking people to register with local militias. Those who didn't comply were often labeled as "bandits" or "collaborators" and arrested. Refugee testimonies later noted that entire groups of men from villages like Qabri Dehar and Gode were detained. Detainees ended up in makeshift camps where torture, beatings, and executions were common.

3. Clan Dynamics

Clan loyalties became weapons in the conflict. The WSLF mostly recruited within the Ogaden clan, while Somali army officers from the Marehan, Barre's own clan, led front-line units. In response, the Derg armed non-Somali groups like the Oromo and Afar militias, which further deepened ethnic divides. These conflicts shattered mixed communities; reports from Harar Province showed that by October, inter-ethnic trading between Somali herders and highland merchants had almost stopped.

By November 1977, observers estimated that one in three adult men in the Ogaden had been enlisted, either voluntarily or under pressure, by one side or another. Traditional elders, once respected mediators, lost their authority as younger fighters took control over access to food and safety. Clan feuds resurfaced under the banner of nationalism, and the distinction between ethnic loyalty and military duty blurred.

4. Humanitarian Situation (as of November 22 1977).

Mass displacement began in July 1977 and peaked in October. UNHCR missions from Berbera and Mogadishu noted about 470,000 refugees in Somalia by mid-November, with another 400,000 to 450,000 internally displaced persons still within Ethiopia. The largest cities in the Ogaden -Jijiga, Gode, Degeh Bur, and Kebri Dahar saw their populations shrink by more than half. Herds of livestock were abandoned as families fled westward from advancing troops. The war severely disrupted the pastoral economy. Grazing areas were mined or burned; over 70 percent of cereal yield was lost compared to 1976. Drought worsened the situation. Relief workers estimated livestock losses at over 40 percent, amounting to more than 1.2 million sheep and goats, 70,000 camels, and 30,000 cattle. Market activity collapsed as trade routes from Harar and Dire Dawa were cut off. Families sold their animals at a fraction of their worth, leading to widespread poverty.

At least 120 wells and boreholes were damaged, poisoned, or made unusable, often intentionally during military retreats. Daily access to clean water fell to under 10 liters per person in most areas. The few hospitals still operating, like those in Dire Dawa and Harar, reported that 60 percent of their patients were civilians, mainly children suffering from shrapnel wounds or severe dehydration. Cholera and measles outbreaks were confirmed in areas receiving refugees along the Somali border.

Schools and administrative buildings were turned into military barracks or destroyed. UNICEF field agents noted that by November 1977, 90 percent of schools in the Ogaden had closed. The breakdown of governance created a generation with no access to education or healthcare, leading to long-term instability.

5. Civilian Impact and Human Rights Violation

The Ethiopian Air Force increased its bombing runs as Somali forces made advances. Between August and November 1977, it carried out over 600 missions using MiG-17 fighters and Il-28 bombers. Towns like Jijiga, Wardere, and Gode were repeatedly bombed, especially on market days. Independent estimates suggested civilian deaths from these strikes ranged from 2,000 to 3,000 by the time of the ceasefire. Ground operations were equally ruthless. The Derg's "Pacification Program," led by Major

Mengistu Haile Mariam's security officers, allowed for the destruction of villages suspected of helping rebels. Accounts from refugees in Luuq and Hargeisa told of soldiers rounding up men for execution and burning entire settlements, forcing women and children to flee into the desert. In occupied areas, Somali troops retaliated against Ethiopian officials and Amhara settlers, executing prisoners in public. On the other hand, Ethiopian security forces arrested thousands of Somali civilians, many of whom vanished. A secret ICRC memo from October 1977 estimated 10,000 to 15,000 civilians detained in military camps under "security vetting." Few were ever released.

Sexual violence was widespread yet poorly recorded. Reports from Somali Red Crescent workers at the Qoryoley camp indicated that one in five female refugees interviewed had faced or witnessed assaults by soldiers or militias. Such attacks were intended to intimidate, breaking down community bonds and resulting in further displacement.

Both sides used infrastructure as leverage. The Ethiopian military destroyed wells and granaries during retreats, while Somali fighters mined roads and sabotaged bridges to obstruct counterattacks. Relief convoys faced frequent assaults. By November 1977, the Red Cross halted overland food deliveries to Gode after ambushes destroyed three vehicles.

6. Refugee Crisis and Regional Humanitarian Response

By November 1977, Somalia had the largest refugee population in Africa. UNHCR and Somali government figures counted 470,000 registered refugees, along with another 200,000 unregistered nomads crossing the border. Camps were set up at Luuq (90,000 residents), Qoryoley (60,000), Hargeisa (45,000), and in Doolow, Beledweyne, and Bur Hakaba, each housing thousands more. The demographics showed that 75 percent of the population were women and children, as most adult men remained in combat.

Shelter and sanitation facilities were dangerously inadequate. Refugees lived in makeshift huts of twigs and cloth, with only one latrine for every 300 people in certain camps. Daily food rations averaged 1,200 kilocalories, which was half the minimum needed for survival. Mortality rates in September and October reached 3 to 5 deaths per 1,000 individuals each week, mainly due to malnutrition, dysentery, and malaria. Medical facilities broke down under pressure.

. The International Medical Corps and Somali Red

Crescent set up temporary clinics, but the doctor-to-patient ratio was more than 1 to 20,000.

Vaccination rates were below 10 percent. Malnutrition surveys revealed that over 35 percent of children were suffering from acute underweight.

7. Humanitarian Access and Funding

Somalia's weak logistics forced a reliance on air deliveries from Mogadishu and Berbera. The UN World Food Programme provided about 6,000 tons of cereals each month, falling short of the needed 10,000 tons. By November 1977, funding gaps exceeded \$12 million. Aid agencies reported political interference: the Somali government prioritized camps near military zones to assist WSLF recruitment. Relief workers faced pressure to provide "dual-use" supplies, compromising humanitarian principles.

Neighboring countries showed concern but provided little support. Kenya, anxious about its own Somali population, tightened border controls. The Arab League offered emergency funds but tied assistance to political support for Somalia's goals. Western donors were hesitant, impacted by Cold War politics- Somalia had been a Soviet ally until July, while Ethiopia had become a new client for Moscow. As a result, humanitarian efforts faltered, leaving civilians in dire conditions comparable to famine zones.

8. Conclusion

By November 22, 1977, the Ogaden War stood as a tragic blend of ethnic strife and human suffering. Ethiopia's Derg viewed Somali ethnicity as betrayal, while Somalia exploited ethnic unity for territorial gain. The result was one of Africa's first modern wars where civilian casualties outnumbered those of soldiers. The intentional destruction of wells, markets, and livestock, alongside mass killings and sexual violence, breached every humanitarian principle. The refugee camps in Somalia, once thought to be safe places, turned into militarized areas that mirrored the region's geopolitical struggles. The Ogaden situation serves as a stark reminder of how politicized ethnic identity can tear societies apart and create crises that persist long after the fighting stops.

CASE STUDY 2

legal Concerns

Introduction

The Ogaden War broke out in July 1977 when Somali forces invaded Ethiopia's Ogaden region. The war raised a series of legal questions under current international law based frameworks. At the core lies the inherent legality of Somalia's cross-border use of force, the legal status of territories captured by its army, the treatment of civilians and prisoners of war, and the responsibilities of states supporting or directing non-state groups such as the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF)

Each of these issues was framed within existing treaty law, primarily the United Nations Charter, the Hague Regulations of 1907, and the Geneva Conventions of 1949, as well as by customary international law and scholarly interpretations of the specific conflict.

This study guide structures the legal concerns into four main categories: (1) jus ad bellum (The legality of Somalia's use of force), (2) occupation law (Rules on belligerent occupation and prohibition of annexation), (3) jus in bello, (Conduct of hostilities and civilian protection), and (4) state responsibility and attribution, (Somalia's use of the WSLF and foreign involvement).

1. Jus ad Bellum: The Legality of Somalia's Use of Force

Somalia's cross-border offensive in July 1977 engaged Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. The direct participation of Somali National Army (SNA) units established this as interstate force, regardless of Mogadishu's argument that it was assisting the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF). UNGA Resolution 3314 (1974), Article 3(a), defines invasion or attack by the armed forces of a state as an act of aggression, removing legal ambiguity once regular Somali troops were identified in combat.

Somalia attempted to construct a self-determination justification, citing UNGA Resolution 1514 (1960) on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and Resolution 2625 (1970) on the Friendly Relations Declaration. Its claim rested on the assertion that ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden had the right to secede from Ethiopia. Ethiopia countered with the principle of territorial integrity, which Resolution 2625 affirms alongside self-determination, and with the Organization of African Unity's 1964 Cairo Resolution, which recognized colonial borders as final (uti possidetis juris). African state practice consistently supported Ethiopia, rendering Somalia's legal justification weak.

2. Rules on Occupation and Prohibition of Annexation

By September 1977, Somali and WSLF units controlled much of the Ogaden, creating a situation of belligerent occupation as defined under Article 42 of the 1907 Hague Regulations and Articles 2 and 4 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949). Effective control of territory by hostile forces triggered obligations to administer the region without altering sovereignty, ensure public order and safety, and respect the rights of civilians. Evidence of forced displacement of non-Somali populations and reported reprisals indicated breaches of Articles 27 and 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Any annexation of the Ogaden would have violated Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and the established prohibition of territorial acquisition by force. UNGA Resolution 2625 (1970) explicitly rejects territorial changes achieved through aggression. In the African context, the OAU's 1964 Cairo Resolution reaffirmed the sanctity of colonial borders, meaning Somalia's objective of uniting "Greater Somalia" through force directly contravened regional legal norms. Even a successful Somali military campaign could not have lawfully altered sovereignty over the Ogaden.

3. Jus in Bello: Conduct of Hostilities/Civilian Protection

Both sides were accused of conduct contrary to international humanitarian law. Somali forces used artillery and aerial bombardment against urban centers such as Jijiga and Dire Dawa, raising questions of distinction and proportionality under customary law principles reflected in Articles 48 and 51 of Additional Protocol I (1977). Although Additional Protocol I was not yet universally ratified, its provisions were widely considered codifications of existing custom. Ethiopian responses included mass arrests, executions of suspected WSLF collaborators, and relocation of Somali civilian populations, contrary to Article 27 (humane treatment) and Article 33 (prohibition of collective punishment) of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions applied to all parties, prohibiting violence to life, cruel treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity. Allegations of attacks on medical units and denial of humanitarian relief further engaged obligations under Articles 16 and 23 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Both states were legally responsible for violations committed by their forces, irrespective of reciprocity.

4. State Responsibility and Attribution:

Somalia's Use of the WSLF and Foreign Involvement

The Western Somali Liberation Front operated with material, logistical, and command support from Somalia. Under the principles later codified in the International Law Commission's Draft Articles on State Responsibility, Articles 4 and 8, conduct of groups acting under the effective control or direction of a state is attributable to that state. Evidence of Somali military officers embedded within WSLF units and supply of heavy weapons suggested attribution of WSLF operations to Somalia. This transformed the Ogaden conflict from an internal rebellion into an international armed conflict initiated by Somalia.

External involvement complicated attribution further. The Soviet Union and Cuba provided military aid, advisors, and eventually combat forces to Ethiopia, framed as collective self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter following Ethiopian requests for assistance. Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq supplied Somalia and the WSLF, invoking solidarity with anti-colonial struggles. These interventions raised concerns under the principle of non-intervention (UNGA Resolution 2131 (1965)) and the prohibition of assisting unlawful uses of force. Later ICJ jurisprudence, including *Nicaragua v. United States* (1986), clarified that funding, training, and equipping insurgent forces violates international law, reflecting principles already crystallizing during the 1970s.

Bloc Positions

(foreign policy/Cold War dynamic)

During the Cold War, three main blocs shaped global politics: the NATO bloc led by the USA and its Western allies, the Warsaw Pact dominated by the USSR, and the Non-Aligned Movement of recently decolonized states that sought neutrality but were often drawn into superpower rivalries. The Ogaden War (1977–78) reflected these dynamics- while the NATO and Warsaw blocs maintained their opposing positions, the conflict revealed how Africa and the Middle East became active arenas of Cold War competition. Initially supported by the Soviets, Somalia switched to the US camp after Moscow shifted back to Ethiopia, which had turned socialist under Mengistu. The USSR and Cuba intervened militarily on Ethiopia's side, while the US and some Arab states leaned toward Somalia, showing how bloc alignments persisted but also how decolonized states were increasingly entangled in superpower struggles.

USA

The US initially played a cautious indirect role, watching developments with concern over Soviet influence in Ethiopia. While the US supplied limited covert aid to Somalia, its involvement was restrained to intelligence sharing and diplomatic moves. The US feared losing a foothold in the strategically vital Horn of Africa region, particularly the Red Sea corridor. There was hesitation to escalate military support before Soviet and Cuban forces fully intervened.

The US sought to support Somalia as a counterweight to Soviet expansion but did not commit substantial military resources.

UK

With historical colonial ties in Kenya and Somalia, the UK valued stability in the region but avoided direct military involvement. The British maintained naval presence in the Red Sea, ensuring maritime security. Diplomatically, the UK backed peaceful resolution initiatives but refrained from arms shipments or combat support during this period.

This stance reflected a post-colonial cautiousness towards involvement in new African conflicts.

France

France's interest centered on its former colony Djibouti, which had just gained independence in June 1977. By maintaining military bases there, France secured influence over the gateway to the Red Sea. France provided logistical support to Somalia, but avoided direct combat deployment. The priority was protecting French geopolitical and economic interests linked to access routes and ports rather than engaging militarily.

USSR

Playing a pivotal role, the Soviet Union decisively shifted support from Somalia to Ethiopia mid-1977. By November, it had delivered over \$1.5 billion in military hardware and sent approximately 1,500 military advisers to train and coordinate Ethiopian forces. The USSR's intervention was designed to ensure a socialist ally's survival, with Ethiopia considered strategically critical due to its Red Sea access and size.

The Soviets also planned and prepared Cuban troop deployments to assist Ethiopia, which began in late November shortly after this period.

China

In competition with the USSR, China supported Somalia with limited military aid worth an estimated \$20 million pre-November 1977, positioning Somalia as a counterbalance to Soviet influence. China condemned Soviet intervention and sought to use Somalia as a foothold in the Horn. Chinese aid consisted mainly of weapons and advisory support without direct troop involvement.

Ethiopia

Ethiopian forces, led by the Derg military junta under Mengistu Haile Mariam, faced a serious challenge as Somali forces launched a massive invasion in July 1977. Ethiopia's troops were initially outmatched, scattered, and under-equipped, controlling only about 10% of Ogaden as Somalia advanced rapidly, capturing major towns including Gode, Jijiga, and nearly 90% of Ogaden by late October.

Despite initial setbacks, Ethiopia mobilized 250,000 recruits by November and called for international support, laying the groundwork for the Soviet and Cuban military aid that arrived subsequently.

Somalia

The Somali National Army launched a large-scale offensive with roughly 30,000-70,000 troops and significant mechanized units, wielding about 250 tanks and over 300 armored vehicles. They aimed to unite all Somali-inhabited territories under "Greater Somalia."

Early stages saw rapid Somali victories and occupation of much of the Ogaden. However, logistics strains and overstretched supply lines began to hinder their advance by November, coinciding with the arrival of Soviet and Cuban support to Ethiopia.

Cuba

By late November 1977, Cuba began deploying up to 15,000 soldiers, including armored and mechanized units, to support Ethiopia. Prior to this, Cuba mainly provided aerial and logistical support. Cuban forces were well-trained and ideologically motivated, representing Soviet-aligned internationalist support.

Prior to deployment, Cuba was actively planning and coordinating closely with Soviet advisers during this buildup period.

Sudan

Sudan remained non-aligned and did not participate militarily. It focused on maintaining border security and regional diplomatic stability without direct engagement.

Nigeria supported African diplomatic efforts to resolve the war peacefully through the Organization of African Unity (OAU), advocating sovereignty respect, but played no direct military role.

Egypt

Egypt supported Somalia politically and militarily, offering training and arms supplies possibly totaling \$30 million. This supported Egypt's broader strategic aim to counterbalance Ethiopia, which was aligned with Soviet bloc interests.

Djibouti

Newly independent Djibouti hosted French forces guarding the strategically important Red Sea port. No direct combat role but served as a critical logistical base and regional buffer zone during the conflict.

Jordan

Limited diplomatic engagement with no military involvement reported. Close regional ties with Arab states influenced its position but kept it distant from the Horn conflict.

Libya

Libya politically backed Ethiopia due to shared socialist leanings and anti-Western policies, providing some military supply support. No significant troop deployments prior to late 1977 were documented.

People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen)

South Yemen was a Soviet-aligned socialist state offering political and limited military advisory support to Ethiopia. Active Cuban and Soviet cooperation with South Yemeni military advisers enhanced Ethiopia's capacity.

HANDLING CRISIS

In the H-UNSC at JBMUN 2025, a crisis is a fast-paced, high-stakes simulation where you, as delegates, represent historic countries that may no longer exist, such as the USSR, South Yemen, or East Germany. Unlike standard GA committees, you don't just make policy statements- you actively shape historical events in real time, navigating complex international conflicts while asserting your nation's influence and power. Success comes from balancing formal debate with strategic out-of-room actions.

In-room activity in the H-UNSC crisis committee is fast-paced and operates similarly to a General Assembly, but at a much higher speed. You participate in moderated and unmoderated caucuses, deliver speeches, negotiate with other countries, and respond to evolving events as they unfold. The goal is to assert your historic country's influence and actively address committee-wide crises, such as peacekeeping operations, sanctions, or military conflicts. While debate is ongoing, delegates are expected to draft and circulate Directives, meaning between speaking, negotiating, and writing is essential. In-room performance also includes collaboration with other delegates, the strategic timing of proposals, and the ability to respond to unexpected crises introduced by the staff.

Out-room strategy is what sets crisis committees apart. Through out-room actions, you can influence events beyond the immediate committee proceedings. This includes building secret alliances, sending backchannel communications, negotiating with external actors, or creating independent storylines that may later impact the committee. Out-room actions are usually carried out via Communiqués or Joint Action Orders (JAOs), allowing you to expand your country's influence, acquire resources, and manipulate the environment of the crisis. These activities reward creativity, strategic thinking, and foresight, as successful out-room maneuvers can significantly strengthen your position in the committee.

QARMA

1. How can the UN Security Council enforce or mediate an immediate ceasefire between Somalia and Ethiopia while respecting both nations' sovereignty?
2. What steps can be taken to guarantee safe and unhindered humanitarian access to civilians trapped in the conflict zones?
3. How can the international community manage the refugee crisis and protect displaced populations from disease, famine, and exploitation?
4. What measures can ensure the protection of ethnic Somalis in Ethiopia and prevent ethnic-based persecution or collective punishment?
5. Should the UN deploy peacekeeping forces or observers in the Ogaden region, and under what mandate and conditions?
6. How can the Council reconcile Ethiopia's territorial integrity with Somalia's claims of self-determination for ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden?
7. What actions can be taken to prevent the Ogaden War from escalating into a broader Cold War proxy conflict due to superpower involvement?
8. How can regional stability be restored in the Horn of Africa once the fighting ceases, and what long-term diplomatic measures are needed?
9. Should the UN investigate alleged war crimes and human rights violations committed by either side, and how can accountability be ensured?
10. What framework can the UN establish to support post-war reconstruction, reconciliation, and the safe repatriation of refugees?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

To maintain the high level of expertise expected in this committee, the Executive Board encourages all delegates to ensure accuracy in all references and to strictly avoid citing events that occur after the freeze date of 22nd November 1977. Delegates are expected to base all analysis on developments leading up to and including this date.

Delegates should conduct extensive research on the historical and political context of the Horn of Africa, particularly regarding Ethiopia and Somalia in the decades prior to 1977. Key topics include: the legacy of colonial borders, post-independence governance structures, ethnic dynamics in the Ogaden region, and the political ideologies of the Somali Democratic Republic and the Ethiopian Derg regime. Understanding these factors will provide essential context for interpreting current events, even if they are not directly linked to the military conflict.

Particular attention should be paid to the Somali invasion of the Ogaden in July 1977, including the strategic objectives, logistical preparations, and early military engagements. Delegates are advised to examine the Ethiopian military response, the role of local militias, and the influence of external actors prior to 22nd November 1977, including the involvement of Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other Cold War powers.

Delegates must also explore humanitarian and legal dimensions, such as the experiences of civilians, refugee flows, and allegations of violations of international law. Investigating these aspects is crucial for Case Study 1 and Case Study 2 analyses, particularly regarding ethnic tensions, humanitarian access, and the legality of cross-border interventions.

A thorough understanding of crisis management and diplomatic responses is essential. Delegates should research the efforts of regional organizations, the OAU, and relevant UN bodies in addressing the conflict up to the freeze date. Understanding how past interventions, peace initiatives, and negotiations were structured will aid in evaluating strategies for handling crisis scenarios in the committee.

Finally, delegates must be aware of the positions of major Cold War blocs and non-aligned states, as these heavily influenced both military support and diplomatic maneuvering. Comparing the interests of the Soviet Union, United States, neighboring African states, and the Organization of African Unity will help delegates accurately assess the broader geopolitical stakes of the Ogaden conflict. By conducting targeted research in these areas, delegates will be better equipped to generate informed hypotheses about the causes, escalation, and potential resolutions of the Ogaden War up to 22nd November 1977. All research should complement the pre-provided materials and committee resources, and delegates are encouraged to critically evaluate sources for reliability and perspective.

POSITION PAPERS

Position Papers are vital for delegates to make the stance of your country and foreign policy clear to the Executive Board. A position paper must be succinct and address the issue at hand, the response of your country to the issue at hand, as well as your own unique solutions that you wish to contribute to the committee.

All position papers must be in font Times New Roman, size 12.

Please note that the deadline for submission of position papers is 4th November 2025.

It must be submitted to jbmununsc2025@gmail.com in PDF format.

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