

Kosovo War in context of Yugoslavia

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#SUMMIT26



1 PREFACE

Since you are reading this background report you are most probably facing some oncoming negotiations. When writing it I aimed to provide you with important information needed to fully understand the process of disintegration of Yugoslavia and the views of the parties involved. You are well-advised to undertake additional research and describe in detail the attitude of the country you are going to represent towards the issue to ensure that you are well prepared to play a significant role in mentioned negotiations. Make sure to pay sufficient attention to recommended additional resources and the questions for negotiation listed at the end of this paper.

2 INTRODUCTION

The Balkan region has always been a place where different religions, languages and most importantly ethnicities meet. It is for that reason that Balkan is often being referred to as a barrel of gunpowder.¹ The tension lingered on even after the Congress of Berlin in 1878 where the European powers, with efforts to stabilise the region, redraw the map of Balkan Peninsula.² In 1914 it even provided the *casus belli* starting the first world war. After the Great War, the nationalist tendencies in Yugoslavia were suppressed by the idea of a state that would unite all southern Slavs.³ Whereas, during the years

following the Second World War this perception was more and more shifting to the idea of Yugoslavia as a voluntary federation of Slavic nations. However, this idea together with its virtues and vices was not unanimously followed and it was only the question of time when enough tension builds up to create an avalanche of events causing another Balkan crisis. Now, Europe's powers have to react upon the recent wars in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and not only soften their adverse impact on the region but also draft a solution to the current war in Kosovo and prevent future instability.

3 ETHNICITIES INVOLVED IN YUGOSLAVIA

As mentioned above, Yugoslavia is very diverse in terms of nationalities, religions and languages. Specifically, three religions (Catholic and Orthodox Christians and Muslims) together with four official language groups (Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian and Albanian) and seven nationalities are located there.⁴

Slovenes and Croats are catholic Christians and strived for a more federated Yugoslavia. They mostly advocated for more independent power for individual republics and as Slovenia and Croatia were the wealthiest republics of SFRY they wanted to invest money to improve their states over pouring resources into poorer regions.⁵ "Optimization" was a widely used catchword in those republics and meant that the state should invest according to criteria of profitability and not opportunities to pursue development policy.

Serbs, Macedonians and Montenegrins are professing orthodox Christianity and were mostly centralists.⁶ Espe-

cially Serbs wanted to uplift the role of the federal government where, as the most numerous ethnic group would have the biggest power. Furthermore, all of them wanted the central government to play a crucial role in even redistribution of wealth. Minor exception became Macedonia which after the referendum on a sovereign and the independent state of Macedonia declared its independence in 1991.⁷

Bosniaks and Kosovo Albanians are remnants of Turkish rule over the region and Albanian predecessors living in the west of the Balkan Peninsula. Bosniaks are Sunni Muslims living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1991 they created about 43 percent of citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Kosovo Albanians or Kosovars are the largest ethnic group in Kosovo.⁸ Specifically, 81 percent of Kosovo's population according to the census conducted in 1991. Additionally, both of these minorities were as Muslim minorities widely suppressed in the 1990's by both the Serbs and Croats.⁹

4 HISTORY OF THE YUGOSLAVIAN REGION

Until the First World War, the Yugoslavian territory was as a part of the Balkan region affected by two neighbouring empires as well as by the Russian Empire (later the USSR). The Austro-Hungarian empire which occupied part of the soil that would belong to Yugoslavia in the future and the Ottoman empire.¹⁰ This was changed in 1919 by the Paris Peace Conference where the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (SHS) was created. And the year after that it was internationally recognised by the hesitant war-winning powers. One of the most sensitive issues discussed was

the determination of the Kingdom's borders according to the ethnic division and requirements of neighbouring states (Italy, Austria, Hungary). Wide compromises were made and it was believed that the ethnical disparities will cease after some time when the new kingdom creates its national identity.¹¹

Unfortunately, the Kingdom of SHS was politically unstable and many interior affairs divided the three original ethnic groups (Serbs, Croats, Slovenians). The division of the nation into three groups was one of the issues since

“We are not about to permit a multiparty system into this country, but we want to have democracy,” explained Prime Minister Mika Špiljak to a journalist

the Montenegrins, Muslims, and Macedonians were perceived to be entities historically belonging to one of the original groups, although they perceived themselves as an ethnic group on its own. Therefore, not belonging to Slovenian, Croat and not even the Serbian ethnic group. At that time, only the communists recognised them as another ethnic group and most importantly an equal nation to the others.¹² Another

friction areas often appeared between the pro centralised government Serbs and nationalistic Croats which was reflected when was decided if the country will be centralised or a federation.¹³

The domestic crisis culminated in 1928 after a shootout during a heated debate in parliament. King Alexander, who was a member of Serbian Karadjordjevic dynasty, declared the state of emergency and in 1929 assumed executive power, banned political parties and got rid of the constitution. With the aim to suppress nationalist tendencies, he introduced a new administrative structure of *banovinas* with its borders and territory more in line with ethnic distribution compared to the former regions. Furthermore, he changed the name of the kingdom to Yugoslavia. Overall his actions stabilised the current situation, but in a longer term caused that everyone alienated from the idea of unity even more.¹⁴

During the Second World War, Yugoslavia was torn apart into various territories occupied by the Axis powers and extremist tendencies were widely supported by Nazis. Croatia even broke away and became a fascist puppet state. In the lead of this state was fascist organisation Ustaše which became a pretext for Serbs to call Croats radicals and

fascists when they disagreed with them in the future.¹⁵ The communist resistance led by Josip Broz Tito and the royalist group Yugoslav Army in the Homeland fought against the Nazis and because of the differences in their ideologies they were fighting against each other as well. Despite all of that Communist partisans freed the country only with minor help from Soviets resulting in the Soviet Union having considerably lower influence over Yugoslav territory after the war ended.¹⁶



Figure 1: Ethnic map of Yugoslavia³⁹

When the second world war ended elections were held in Yugoslavia and communist-led national front with no counter candidates won all seats in the parliament. This marks the beginnings of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY)¹⁷ which initially was pro soviet but soon it accepted neutrality as an official policy and became the founding member of the non-aligned movement. The state



Figure 2: The historical boundaries of Yugoslavia from 1919 to 1992. (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.)

consisted of 6 republics and 2 autonomous provinces situated in Serbia (Kosovo, Vojvodina).¹⁸

In 1963 the state changed its name to Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) with Tito as a president for life since the year 1974. During his presidency, he promoted brotherhood, unity and shared values. Furthermore,

the country prospered also economically.¹⁹ Over time the Yugoslav system was to take over some of the capitalist elements and become slightly democratic as well. “We are not about to permit a multiparty system into this country, but we want to have democracy,” explained Prime Minister Mika Špiljak to a journalist.²⁰

5 DISINTEGRATION OF YUGOSLAVIA

Following Tito's death in 1980, the country found itself in the middle of an economic recession and the Federal Presidency Council has become operational.²¹ It was a collective presidency of eight members composed of representatives from the six republics and the two autonomous provinces. With time both the central government and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (the communist party) were slowly losing its power and soon the nationalists came to power in most of the republics.²²

This is when Serbian communist leader Slobodan Milošević comes to the spotlight with the aim to restore Serbia's former strong position in Yugoslavia.²³ He reduced the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina which allowed him to use their votes in the presidency council and after that, with the support of loyal Montenegro Milošević held four votes which soon appeared to be crucial to control the Yugoslav Federal Army.²⁴

The last attempt to solve the oncoming crisis was the 14th Congress of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1990 where Milošević who led the Serbian delegation argued with Slovenian delegation supported by the Croatian one about the state of relations between individual republics. Once again Slovenes defended the idea of more independence for the republics contrary to Serbs who were seeking ways of empowering Serbia. In the end, Slovenes were outvoted and they left the congress together with Croatian delegation. This marks the end of the Congress and of the Yugoslav all communist party which was later dissolved.²⁵

What followed were only further steps towards the wars of independence in those states that asked for more freedom. In those states were referendums conducted and radicalised groups gained momentum to play a significant role during the oncoming wars.

5.1 Slovenian War of Independence

Or as it is called the Ten-Day War started the day after Slovenia declared its independence from Yugoslavia on 25th June 1991.²⁶ It happened after a referendum where more than 88% of all electors voted for independence. The whole war consisted of small fights between the Serb controlled Yugoslav Federal Army (YPA) and the outnumbered Slove-

nian regional defense units (TO).²⁷ On the 26th of June, YPA was sent to the borders of Slovenia to secure them and gain access to the Ljubljana airport. After ten days of skirmishes, the war was ended by the Brioni agreement orchestrated by the predecessor of the EU, the European Community (EC). EC demanded the end of fighting and to suspend for three months the Slovenian and the Croatian declarations of independence under threat of no international recognition of their new states. The aim was to mediate negotiations about the position of the post-Yugoslav states.²⁸

5.2 The War in Croatia

Croatia declared its independence on the same day as Slovenia and was affected by the Brioni agreement as well. Croats decided to postpone their independence as Slovenians but YPA didn't leave Croatia until 1992 as it did in Slovenia. The reason why the fighting continued was Serbian minority in Croatia that refused to reconcile with the possibility of being a minority in Croatia and with the support of YPA resisted the Croat Territorial defence.²⁹ That is why

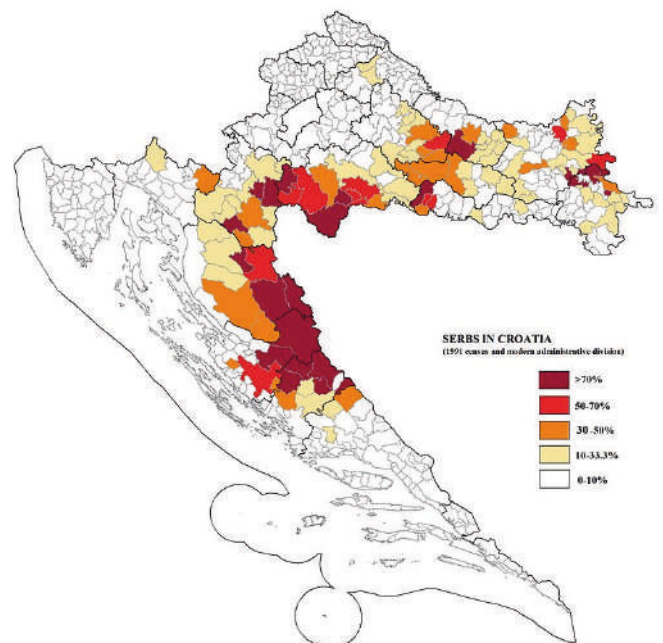


Figure 3: Serbian minority in Croatia⁴⁰

they declared Serbian Autonomous Oblast of Krajina (SAO Krajina) and strived to connect it to Serbia.

By summer 1992 the armed incidents escalated into an open war causing many civilian casualties during battles in Vukovar or Dubrovnik or even during the Ovčara massacre where more than 250 Croat soldiers and civilians were murdered. To soften the impact of war on civilians in Croatia and also in Bosnia, the UN security council established the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) by the resolution 743 in the year of 1992. Its main goal was to establish protected areas (UNPAs) for civilians and overview distribution of humanitarian aid together with further demilitarization and most importantly prevent further ethnical cleansing. In 1995 when Croats gained control over its territory and the Erdut agreement was reached the war ended and the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) was established. UNCRO was a peacekeeping mission subsequent to the UNPROFOR.³⁰

5.3 Bosnian War

Today it appears that the worst situation developed in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) where three groups of interest fought against each other. Bosniaks (Muslims), Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. Also, the independence referendum in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the most controversial of them all. Although 99 % of voters voted for, only 60 % of all citizens voted.³¹ Both the Bosnian Serbs and Croats wanted to separate from BH after the referendum and proclaimed their self-autonomous regions the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia and Republika Srpska.

The war started when Bosnian Serbs began their siege of Sarajevo in 1992. This war can be described as the most devastating war in Europe since the Second World War. Around 57 600 soldiers, 38 000 of civilians (around 31 500 were Bosniaks) died and it is estimated that 12 000 to 50

000 women were raped. Especially vicious was the genocide of Bosniaks and the Srebrenica massacre where more than 8 000 Bosniak men and boys were murdered by the Bosnian Serbs. The UNPROFOR operated during the war in Bosnia but the course of its actions was different and more controversial. This is mainly because the UNPROFOR forces were initially supposed to move to Bosnia after they had ensured the demobilisation in Croatia. However, due to the development of the situation, it needed to be accelerated. In response to the aggravated situation, the UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted in May 1992 the resolution number 757, which imposed economic sanctions on Yugoslavia to force finding a peaceful solution to the

situation. However, a by-product of sanctions was the need for distribution of humanitarian aid in the affected regions. The key to this endeavor became Sarajevo Airport, through which all humanitarian aid was sent. From June, UNPROFOR's task became to secure and supervise the airport area. UN Security Council Resolution 758 of the same day established the Sarajevo airport as a safe area, thus extending UNPROFOR's mandate to the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Together with UNPROFOR and with authorization from UNSC, NATO conducted the following operations.

Operation Deliberate Force included airstrikes aimed to pressure Bosnian Serbs to stop fighting and approach the negotiation table. The operation was triggered after multiple Bosnian Serb attacks on UN-protected areas and shelling of Sarajevo. It involved around 400 aircraft, 1 023 bombs and 338 targets were destroyed. Was conducted in September 1995.

Operation Sky monitor was a NATO mission to monitor unauthorized flights in the airspace of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It started in October 1992 and lasted until it was re-

Ethnic composition before the war in BiH (1991)

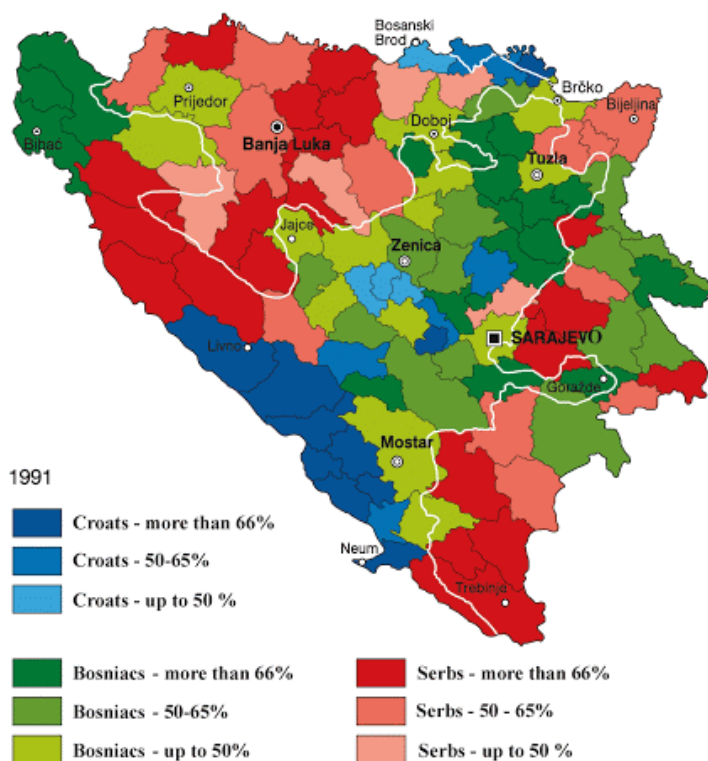


Figure 4: Map of ethnics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (White line symbols the border between Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina)³²

placed by *Operation Deny Flight* on 12 April 1993. Operation Deny Flight served as a way of enforcing the no flight-zone imposed by the UNSC over Bosnia and Herzegovina. Later the mission was expanded to provide air support for UN troops in Bosnia. The mission lasted until 20 December 1995.

Operation Maritime Monitor was a NATO operation during the Bosnian War to monitor compliance with sanctions imposed against the former Yugoslavia under UNSC resolutions 713 and 757 from the years 1991 and 1992 respectively. The operation began on July 16, 1992, and ran until November 22, 1992, when it was replaced by *Operation Maritime Guard*. This operation consisted of a naval blockade of the Adriatic sea to blockade the shipments to Yugoslavia by

NATO. It was followed by a similar *Operation Sharp Guard* which began on 15 June 1993 and it was suspended on 19 June, 1996. The operation's purpose was, through a blockade on shipments, to enforce economic sanctions and an arms embargo of weapons and military equipment against the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and rival factions in Croatia and Bosnia.³²

All these steps taken fulfilled its goal in putting pressure on Bosnian Serbs and in 1995 the war ended with the Dayton agreement that stipulated the existence of a sovereign state with name Bosnia and Herzegovina composed of two parts Republika Srpska and the Croat Bosniak Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

6 THE WAR IN KOSOVO

As the results of all these wars and given the fact that Macedonia separated peacefully in 1991³³ Yugoslavia had a new name, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and now consisted of Montenegro and Serbia including the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. From 1990 the autonomy of Kosovo suffered and Kosovar Albanians had to face wide oppressions from Serbs.³⁴ That was the reason for the separatist rebel group Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to start attacking Serbian law enforcement units and conduct many vicious terrorist attacks.³⁵ KLA acquired a significant amount of weapons from these attacks and also from weapon smuggling from Albania and by 1996 it possessed enough resources to start systematically enforcing their interests by continuing terrorist attacks.

To end this conflict, NATO proposed and submitted the Rambouillet agreement in March 1999 to involved parties.

This agreement officially known as the Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo aimed to end the violence in Kosovo and facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons. It also calls for the adoption of a new constitution for Kosovo that respects the territorial integrity of the FRY while simultaneously establishing the principles

of democratic self-government for three years until the final status of Kosovo is determined. If accepted it would also

justify NATO's peacekeeping missions presence in Serbia and Kosovo to overview the autonomous Kosovo province still as a part of FRY. However, Yugoslavia refused any external peacekeeping forces on its territory and did not sign the agreement. Therefore prevented NATO from legally entering their territory.

6.1 Current situation

The Rambouillet text, which called on Serbia to admit NATO troops throughout Yugoslavia, was a provocation, an excuse to start bombing. - Henry Kissinger³⁶

Negotiations on the Rambouillet agreement were prolonged and still happens to be without the desired result. After this diplomatic failure, NATO is determined to improve this situation and prevent further ethnical cleansing it witnessed during the Bosnian war. On January 15, 1999, happened the Račak incident where 45 civilians Kosovar Albanians were murdered³⁷ which suggests that similar incidents may occur in the near future. One of the possibilities for NATO appears to be a bombing mission that would force Serbs to accept the presence of NATO on its territory. On the other hand, this is highly controversial because large-scale civilian casualties are at risk and most importantly NATO's military intervention is so far not approved by UNSC. After all, two of its permanent members, Russia and China, believe the Kosovo problem is an internal affair of Yugoslavia which shouldn't be solved by foreign intervention.³⁸

Last hopes for resolving this situation lies in the North Atlantic Council's session taking place immediately after the refusal of Rambouillet accords in March 1999. To increase the probability of reaching a long-lasting agreement, all the interested parties were invited as observers..

„The Rambouillet text, which called on Serbia to admit NATO troops throughout Yugoslavia, was a provocation, an excuse to start bombing.“ Henry Kissinger

7 CONCLUSION

As you can see, the current crisis has deep roots and despite the issue appeared to be solved many times in history it reappeared again. It is important to immediately approach the crisis and come up with an effective solution that would be respected by all involved parties and would prevent unnecessary deaths of all but most importantly civilians and NATO personnel. Otherwise, we may occur

in the same situation next year. In other words, NATO needs a solution for the current situation to solve the crisis in a way that it will not reappear again. And since there is no perfect solution in this situation, it is up to you, the ambassadors in the North Atlantic Council, to come up with a sustainable compromise that would ensure all goals mentioned above.

8 QUESTIONS FOR NEGOTIATIONS

1. How to prevent further bloodshed in Yugoslavia?
2. What is the position of your country towards military intervention in Kosovo?
3. What should be the structure of a possible peacekeeping operation?
4. Would your country recognise Kosovo as an independent state?
5. Is your country in favour of future NATO enlargement in the Balkan region?

9 RECOMMENDED AND EXPANDING RESOURCES

- » **The Death of Yugoslavia, BBC documentary series, 1995**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDADy9b2IBM&list=PLPj9LLQiqOhPxJl2rbqkRY88OnWHzuFXT&index=6>
- » **The Breakup of Yugoslavia Explained, History Scope, 2020**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YllzdGa3E5A>
- » **Uloupené Kosovo, Václav Dvořák in cooperation with ČT, 2008**
 (When watching this document please take into consideration that it is not an objective description of the situation but an argumentation from the point of view of one of the interested parties)
- » **Vyšetřovatel - Démoni balkánské války a světská spravedlnost, Vladimír Dzuro, 2017**

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