



JCC:

BOSNIAN WAR

"THOSE WHO CAN ENDURE LIFE CAN ALSO ENDURE DEATH"



SKYMUN

AIM FOR THE SKY

# **JCC: Bosnian War**

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# **1. Letter From the Secretary-General**

Dear participants,

It is my greatest pleasure to welcome you all to Sky Model United Nations conference on the 18th, 19th and 20th of August. It is my honor to have the opportunity to serve as the Secretary-General of a conference which aims for the absolute best.

First of all, I think it is my responsibility to state that both academic and organization teams worked real hard to provide you the best Model United Nations experience possible, as if they live by our motto "aim for the sky".

The world we live in today is riddled with conflicts, wars and clashes of interests. As hard as it might to hear, it has yet to become a lost cause. As educated and equipped youths, we aim to amend such problems and, together, build up a brighter future by uniting and supporting each other. Thus, through the format of Model United Nations, our goal is to further encourage the youth to take action to achieve such goals.

I would like to invite you - our most distinguished applicants - to join us on this thrilling journey.

Best regards.

Bedirhan YILDIRIM

Secretary-General of SkyMUN'23 Conference

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 Short History of Yugoslavia**

The history of Yugoslavia spans a period from the early 20th century until the early 21st century, marked by sociopolitical shifts and intermittent periods of peace and conflict. The formation and eventual dissolution of Yugoslavia were dictated by nationalistic tendencies, economic conditions, political ideologies, and ethnic tensions that greatly impacted the course of European history.

The inception of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, later known as Yugoslavia, took place in 1918 after World War I. It was an amalgamation of South Slavic regions that had formerly been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Kingdom of Serbia, and the Kingdom of Montenegro. The purpose was to unite South Slavs in a single nation-state, but the dominant influence of Serbia was a source of growing resentment.

From 1918 to 1941, the nation witnessed a turbulent period characterized by political assassinations, dictatorial rule, and regional tensions. The onset of World War II and the Axis invasion in 1941 led to Yugoslavia's fragmentation and occupation, ushering in a period of violent conflict, atrocities, and resistance movements.

In the aftermath of World War II, Josip Broz Tito, the leader of the Partisan resistance, emerged as the leader of the newly formed Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945. Tito's regime maintained a neutral position during the Cold War, helping to establish the Non-Aligned Movement.

Tito's reign was marked by a unique form of socialist self-management, which allowed republics within Yugoslavia a degree of autonomy while suppressing nationalist sentiments. The Tito regime successfully managed ethnic tensions and disputes among the constituent republics, ensuring relative peace and economic progress.

Tito's death in 1980 marked a turning point in Yugoslav history. His absence resulted in the resurgence of suppressed nationalistic sentiments and economic crises, culminating in the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s, marked by severe ethnic conflicts and atrocities.



Slovenia and Croatia were the first to declare independence in 1991, followed by Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992. Serbia and Montenegro remained together in a reduced Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until 2006 when Montenegro opted for independence, marking the final dissolution of Yugoslavia.

## **2.2 Beginning of the Bosnian War**

### **2.2.1 Internal Factors**

The Bosnian War, a brutal ethnic conflict that unfolded between 1992 and 1995, was a turning point in the region's history, leading to the loss of nearly 100,000 lives. This conflict resulted from a host of internal factors which were intricately linked and exacerbated by the socio-political climate.

The Bosnian War was not simply a consequence of the break-up of Yugoslavia, but a result of a series of deep-seated internal tensions. The richly diverse ethnic tapestry of Bosnia-Herzegovina, composed mainly of Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats, became a ground for intense conflict due to rising nationalism. Each of these groups, driven by distinct historical, cultural, and religious identities, pursued different political aspirations, resulting in growing mistrust and hostility.

Yugoslavia, under Josip Broz Tito's leadership, had managed to maintain unity among these diverse groups through a strict policy of "Brotherhood and Unity." However, after Tito's death, this delicate balance began to falter, giving rise to a power vacuum. The dissolution of communism in the Balkan states further increased instability, leading to a clamor for independence.

The rise of nationalist leaders like Slobodan Milošević added fuel to the growing fire. Milošević's manipulation of Serbian nationalist sentiment, and his assertion that Serbs were being oppressed in Kosovo, led to a surge in nationalist fervor, which ultimately led to his ascendancy to power in Serbia. His move to curtail Kosovo's autonomy in 1990, and the subsequent constitutional amendments allowing Serbia's domination over Kosovo and Vojvodina, further intensified the crisis.

Economic factors also played a significant role. There were substantial economic disparities among the ethnic groups, primarily due to an uneven distribution of resources. For instance, the Serbs, controlling key industries and having a more substantial presence in the political and military landscape, held a disproportionate amount of economic power. Nationalist leaders exploited these disparities, using them as a tool to fan the flames of conflict.

Religious differences, although not a direct cause, became another facet of division. Each ethnic group was associated with a different religion: Bosniaks were predominantly Muslim, Serbs Orthodox Christian, and Croats Catholic. These affiliations were integral to their distinct cultural identities and were manipulated to incite further violence.

The role of media propaganda in the escalation of the war cannot be overstated. Nationalist-controlled media outlets propagated hate speech and misinformation, deepening the ethnic divisions. They played a crucial role in shaping public opinion, further accelerating the conflict.

Lastly, the recognition of independence for Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina by the European Community (now the European Union), although aimed at stabilizing the region, inadvertently added to the tension. It sparked fears among the Serbs of a loss of power and revenue, as these regions were integral to the economic and political landscape of Yugoslavia.

### **2.2.1.1 The Breakup of Yugoslavia**

The Bosnian War is often viewed as a consequence of the multifaceted processes that led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The reasons behind this fragmentation were diverse, with roots in both recent and more remote history. While the formation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the turbulent inter-ethnic and political conflicts, and genocides during the World War II had already sowed the seeds of discord, ideas advocating for Greater Albania, Greater Croatia, and Greater Serbia were gaining traction. Further exacerbating these strains were the divergent perspectives on Pan-Slavism and the unilateral recognition of the secessionist republics by a newly reunified Germany.

The powder keg that was Yugoslavia during World War II was ignited by the Axis forces' invasion. Their creation of a Croat puppet state across a large part of what is now Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina exploited already fraught tensions. The fascist and ultranationalist Ustaše movement took control of this puppet state and pursued a brutal policy against the Serbian minority, leading to widespread violence and atrocities. The repercussions of these actions were felt long after the end of the war, with a casualty count reaching an alarming 1.7 million.

Before its eventual dissolution, Yugoslavia was a beacon of industrial prowess and economic prosperity. Situated strategically between East and West, it served as a bulwark preventing the Soviet Union's access to the Mediterranean Sea. However, internal pressures were building. Rising nationalist sentiments coupled with the Communist Party's commitment to support "national self-determination" began to weaken the central government's grip on the federation.

This trend was evident in Kosovo's evolution into an autonomous region of Serbia, as prescribed by the 1974 constitution. The same constitution also undermined the central government's authority over the ethnically diverse region of Vojvodina and the primarily Albanian-populated Kosovo. This decentralization effectively converted Yugoslavia into a loosely held confederation, thereby questioning the regime's legitimacy within the federation.

Simultaneously, the gap in economic development among the various regions of Yugoslavia began to widen. The wealthier republics of Croatia and Slovenia resisted attempts to restrain their autonomy, as provided by the 1974 Constitution. Slovenia, in particular, saw its future prosperity tied to independence from Yugoslavia. However, regions like Kosovo were economically disadvantaged. By the 1980s, Kosovo's economic development was stunted, with its per capita GDP accounting for only 27% of the Yugoslav average. These economic disparities further strained the unity of the federation, paving the way for the impending war.

### **2.2.1.2 Constitution of the socialist federal republic of Yugoslavia in 1974 part 239**

*The rights and obligations of the federation and its bodies in areas of national defense are defined by this,*

*The rights and obligations of communities, autonomous territories, republics, and other socio-political commonwealths are that, in accordance with the system of national defense, each of them creates and organizes a national defense within its territory and directs territorial defense, civil defense, and other preparations for the defense of the country, and in the event of an attack on the country, organized and led a nationwide resistance. United labor organizations and other self-governing organizations and associations fulfill the rights and obligations in the field of national defense in accordance with the law, plans, and regulations of the socio-political communities, provide funds for the people's defense and perform other tasks of interest to the people's defense. These organizations and associations are responsible for the implementation of these tasks.*

## **2.2.2 External Relations and Approaches**

### **2.2.2.1 USA's Approach**

The U.S. response to Yugoslavia's disintegration was characterized by strategic avoidance of active involvement. As the Cold War ended, Yugoslavia's strategic value for Western countries and the U.S. diminished considerably. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, global focus shifted towards demilitarization and international peace, diminishing the political polarization that had marked the preceding era. However, as the Balkans would later illustrate, the end of the Cold War did not equate to global disarmament or the cessation of conflicts.

The U.S. interest in the Balkans predates these developments, tracing back to strategic plans formulated in the 1980s. Under the veil of "sensitive confidentiality," the United States Policy on Yugoslavia took shape in the National Security Resolution Directive of 1984. This directive elucidated the strategic intent of the U.S. to integrate the Balkans and Yugoslavia into the global free market system. The U.S. sought to draw Yugoslavia closer to the West, a goal explicitly stated in the 1984 directive. From a geopolitical perspective, a stable, militarily robust Yugoslavia could pose a significant deterrent to any adversarial power, including the USSR. Thus, keeping the Yugoslavian federation intact was in the U.S.'s strategic interest.

However, Yugoslavia's struggling economy was perceived as a vulnerability. To mitigate this, the U.S. planned to provide military and especially economic support, foreseeing that a gradual integration into the free-market economy could provide a long-term solution. Military aid was emphasized given Yugoslavia's key position against USSR expansion, and the U.S. pledged to provide necessary resources.

Despite its seemingly passive stance during the disintegration process, the U.S. maintained a keen awareness of the situation in Yugoslavia. The 1990 visit by Eagleburger, who subsequently reported back to the U.S., is testament to this attention. Eagleburger, having served as an ambassador in the region, was deeply familiar with its complexities.

The U.S. did not adopt an active role in the Yugoslavian conflict until 1991. Several factors influenced this stance:

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, diverted the U.S.'s attention to the Middle East, effectively sidelining the Yugoslavian crisis.

The U.S. was also engaged in intense diplomatic interactions with the USSR, particularly in the wake of its disintegration. The U.S. prioritized its relationship with the USSR and later Russia, viewing the Yugoslavian issue as peripheral.

Lastly, the U.S. did not believe the situation in Yugoslavia warranted military intervention. As suggested by Foreign Minister James Baker in a 1991 report, the U.S. had time to consider military intervention and preferred to keep a watchful distance.

In conclusion, the U.S. adopted a cautious, non-interventionist stance during Yugoslavia's breakup. However, this does not imply total disengagement. Rather, the U.S. navigated its relationship with Yugoslavia based on its strategic interests and geopolitical considerations. Despite its inactive role in the

process, labeling the U.S. as a solely unifying or separating force in Yugoslavia's breakup is overly simplistic.

#### **2.2.2.2 Relations with USSR**

The Balkans have always held a central place in Russia's socio-cultural and geopolitical strategies, positioning the region as an integral component of Russian politics. However, with the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, the newly formed Russian Federation struggled to actively intervene in the process of Yugoslavia's disintegration. Instead of direct involvement, Russia generally acted in conjunction with international organizations.

The Yugoslav issue was perceived by Russia as a hindrance to its aspirations of joining the "civilized world". The USSR government in 1990 adopted a cautious approach to the unfolding crises in Yugoslavia, mirroring the U.S.'s policy to a certain extent (Lo, 2003).

However, while the U.S. demonstrated slightly more activity, the USSR was comparably passive. As the crisis intensified in 1991, and the Yugoslav republics embarked on the path towards independence, the USSR endorsed the territorial unity of the Yugoslav Federation but fell short of taking proactive measures to uphold it. The USSR's stance remained fundamentally aligned with preservation of Yugoslavia's territorial integrity, but it refrained from any substantial interventions to enforce this position.

### **2.3 First Phase of the War**

The fragmentation of the Federal Yugoslavia initiated with Slovenia and Croatia was a harbinger of challenges for Bosnia, raising questions about its future statehood. Contrary to Belgrade's Federal Government's assertions that Slovenia and Croatia merely seceded from the Yugoslav Federation, it was clear that both republics were among several successor states of Federal Yugoslavia.

Next in line to assert independence from the Yugoslav Federation was Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1990, the republic elected Alija Izetbegović as its president following its inaugural party elections. Izetbegović, a man who endured imprisonment for political dissent during Tito's rule, championed a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Bosnia-Herzegovina as vital for the country's survival. On the brink of war in 1992, he persisted in advocating for political solutions rather than military interventions.

The federal government, meanwhile, was predominantly staffed by former communists. Serbia's president, Milošević, who later became the Yugoslav President, effectively held sway over the Federal State. Initially a communist, Milošević shifted towards nationalism as communism waned in popularity, a move intended to maintain popular support.

In 1992, Bosnia-Herzegovina divided into two factions - the Serbs, and a coalition of Croats and Muslims. Following Bosnia-Herzegovina's declaration of independence in March, the Bosnian capital Sarajevo was also split into Serbian Sarajevo and Sarajevo. Within Bosnia, the formation of Republika Srpska, backed by the Yugoslav People's Army, further accentuated these divisions.

Dependent on Milošević, Radovan Karadžić ascended as the president of the republic. VRS chief of staff, Ratko Mladić, notorious as a war criminal, was heavily reliant on the Yugoslav People's Army for supplies.

Comprising mainly local Bosnian Serbs and Yugoslav Army conscript units, supplemented by volunteers, the Serbian Army launched operations to seize territories in Bosnia-Herzegovina, driven by the conviction that these lands rightfully belonged to them. Nationalist rhetoric fueled the belief that wherever a Serb resides, that territory is Serbia. Minority populations in Republika Srpska were frequently expelled or killed, and concentration camps established for Croats and Muslims, all in pursuit of a homogenously Serbian homeland.

By late 1992, the Serbian Army occupied approximately 70% of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina's territory. Despite maintaining a government in Sarajevo, the republic effectively controlled only 30% of its nominal territory.

### **3. Croatian War of Independence - Overview**

In the shadow of the Ten-Day War in Slovenia, the Croatian War of Independence commenced, spanning the years from 1991 to 1995. This conflict primarily pitted Croatian forces against the Serb-controlled Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and local Serb forces. The war was typically referred to by the Croats as the "Domovinski rat" or "Homeland War."

A strong desire for sovereignty and secession from Yugoslavia permeated many Croats, a sentiment fiercely opposed by the majority of ethnic Serbs, backed by Serbia, who declared their own secession from Croatia.

Initiated by the Log Revolution, Serb forces established the self-declared Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK) within Croatia, in reaction to the JNA's failed attempts to maintain Croatia within Yugoslavia by achieving full occupation. Following a ceasefire in January 1992 and the subsequent international recognition of the Republic of Croatia as an independent state, the front lines were solidified. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was deployed, leading to a significant reduction in hostilities over the following three years. During this period, the RSK controlled over a quarter of Croatia's territory.

Significantly, the Croatian War of Independence unfolded concurrently with the Bosnian War, effectively placing the Croats on two separate battlegrounds.

### **4. Chronology -**

#### **1992 April**

On April 5, Bosnia declared its independence from Yugoslavia. This was strongly resisted by Bosnia's Serbs, who, under the leadership of Radovan Karadzic (backed by Milošević), threatened bloodshed in response to this proclamation.

On April 6, the European Community recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent state.

On April 7, the war started with an assault on Bosanski Brod, launched by Bosnian Serbs.

On April 12, Bosnian Serb forces laid siege to Sarajevo.

On April 27, the United Nations Security Council established the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to oversee the conflict.

#### **May**

On May 22, the Bosnian Serb Republic, known as Republika Srpska, was declared.

On May 30, Bosnian Serbs seized Prijedor, leading to the start of a campaign of ethnic cleansing.

#### **June**



On June 3, Bosnian government forces recaptured Zvornik.

On June 9, Bosnian Serbs launched an artillery attack on the town of Tuzla.

On June 13, Bosnian Serb forces seized Višegrad, resulting in mass killings and ethnic cleansing.

On June 20, the UN declared Sarajevo a safe area.

On June 26, the UN established the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

## **July**

On July 6, Bosnian Serbs launched an offensive on the town of Srebrenica. By July 11, the Srebrenica massacre had begun, leading to the killing of thousands of Bosniaks.

On July 27, Bosnian Serbs captured Foča, sparking further ethnic cleansing.

## **August**

On August 18, a ceasefire was brokered in Sarajevo, but it was short-lived.

On August 30, the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia was established through the signing of the Washington Agreement between the Bosnian government and Bosnian Croat forces.

## **September**

On September 9, Bosnian Serbs laid siege to the town of Jajce, eventually capturing it.

On September 14, an Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation was signed between the Bosnian government and Bosnian Croats.

## **October**

On October 2, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) enforced an arms embargo on all states involved in the conflict.

On October 15, Bosnian Serb forces captured Kupres, reinforcing their control over western Bosnia.

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