



**Massachusetts  
Institute of  
Technology**

**Model United Nations  
Conference**

**Background Guide**



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## Letter from the Secretary Generals

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pride and excitement that we formally invite you to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's 16th annual Model United Nations Conference!

MITMUNC is a premier Model UN conference in which students from all over the world come together to solve the most pressing issues facing society today. This year's conference will be held during the weekend of Friday, February 9th through Sunday, February 11th, 2024, in-person.

At its core, MITMUNC is planned, organized, and directed by a passionate and ambitious team of MIT students that collectively form a diverse family of academic backgrounds and experiences. Our chairs and staff coordinate MITMUNC's committees from the ground up, posing questions and controversies that even the most experienced delegates will find challenging. Our dedicated Secretariat members complement the chairs and staff by overseeing all conference preparations, months in advance of the conference in order to ensure that our delegates walk away with one of the greatest experiences of their lives.

In previous years, MITMUNC delegates grappled with complicated human rights, economic, and environmental topics such as the Syrian Refugee crisis, argued the pros and cons of nuclear energy in the International Atomic Energy Agency, and even reacted to a flurry of assassinations witnessed in the Historical Committee! Attendees also enjoyed inspiring keynote addresses by Nazli Choucri, Professor of Political Science at MIT and leading researcher in international relations and cyber politics, as well as Richard B. Freeman, Faculty co-Director of the Labor and Worklife Program at the Harvard Law School. Delegates also enjoyed a well-deserved respite at the Delegate Dance social night.

We pride ourselves in hosting smaller committee sizes. This allows our attendees more freedom to contribute and distinguish themselves in their individual committee sessions. MITMUNC offers its attendees a truly unique opportunity to immerse themselves in a demanding intellectual environment, exposed to the ideas of others and tasked to employ the art of negotiation to pass meaningful resolutions.

Having experienced MITMUNC as chairs, then as Secretariat members and Secretaries-General, we are both humbled and thrilled to guide MITMUNC into its best conference yet. I now invite you to explore our brand new website to learn more about our conference. Do not hesitate in contacting us should you encounter any doubts along the way. Best of luck in the path ahead!

Sincerely,

Your Secretary Generals: Jad Abou Ali and Maya Abiram

For further inquiries, do not hesitate to contact us at [sg-mitmunc@mit.edu](mailto:sg-mitmunc@mit.edu).

#### **MITMUNC XVI 2024**



## Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to MITMUNC XVI! We are the chairs of the historic committee, a committee, with delegates representing countries, or sometimes delegates of a faction, debating around a topic, and resolving it through a resolution. Our goal as a committee is to allow you to learn about a historic event and tackle issues in a different way.

I'm Evan, a third year at MIT from Southern Illinois. I participated as a delegate in Model United Nations when I was in high school, so I'm very excited to continue as a chair this time! As for hobbies, I enjoy reading, cycling, and traveling.

I'm Malhaar, a senior at MIT from New York City. I am a newcomer to Model United Nations, having mostly been a delegate for Model Congress in high school, but I am excited to be here with all of you! As hobbies, I enjoy reading the news, playing with my dogs and listening to podcasts

This weekend, you'll take part in a major international conference from the late 20th century: the Dayton Accords. If you have any questions, please feel free to email us at malhaar@mit.edu and eewing@mit.edu

Have fun and best of luck!

Sincerely,

Your Chairs: Evan Ewing & Malhaar Agrawal

For further inquiries, do not hesitate to contact us at [historic-mitmunc-2024@mit.edu](mailto:historic-mitmunc-2024@mit.edu).

**MITMUNC XVI 2024**



# History



**Figure 1.** Map showing the areas of conflict.

## Historical Roots of the Bosnian Conflict

The Bosnian War, a devastating conflict that ravaged the heart of Europe from 1992 to 1995, stands as a stark reminder of the fragility of peace and the complexity of ethnic and nationalistic tensions. This war, part of the broader Yugoslav Wars that followed the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, was characterized by its ethnic dimension, involving primarily Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Croats, and Serbs.

## The Complex Tapestry of the Balkans

The roots of the Bosnian War, a conflict that erupted in the early 1990s, can be traced back through centuries of complex and often turbulent history in the Balkans. This region, known for its ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, has been a crossroads of empires and a mosaic of peoples, including Slavs, Turks, and Austro-Hungarians, among others.

## Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Influence

From the 15th to the 19th centuries, much of the Balkans, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, was under Ottoman rule. This period introduced a significant Muslim presence in Bosnia, as many Bosnians converted to Islam. In the late 19th century, following the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Bosnia and Herzegovina came under Austro-Hungarian administration, bringing a new layer of cultural and political influence.

## The Formation of Yugoslavia

The aftermath of World War I saw the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, later known as Yugoslavia. This new state aimed to unite the South Slavic peoples but was challenged by significant nationalistic and ethnic tensions among its constituent groups: predominantly Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslim Bosniaks.

## World War II and Its Aftermath

World War II further exacerbated these tensions. The conflict saw the brutal occupation of the region by Axis powers and the rise of a resistance movement led by Josip Broz Tito. Tito's Partisans, a multi-ethnic resistance group, emerged victorious and established the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Tito's authoritarian but charismatic leadership managed to suppress nationalist sentiments and maintain a semblance of unity among the diverse ethnic groups.



*Figure 2. The geography of the area in 1946.*

## The Tito Era and the Seeds of Discontent

Under Tito, Yugoslavia was transformed into a socialist federation comprising six republics, including Bosnia and Herzegovina. Tito's regime promoted a policy of "Brotherhood and Unity," attempting to foster a Yugoslav identity that transcended ethnic lines. However, beneath the surface, ethnic and nationalistic sentiments simmered, exacerbated by economic disparities and political grievances among the republics.

## The Post-Tito Power Vacuum

Tito's death in 1980 left a power vacuum and a weakened federal structure. The 1980s saw a rise in nationalist rhetoric and a gradual decline in the influence of the Communist Party. Economic crises and external pressures further fueled the flames of nationalism.

## The Rise of Nationalism in the 1990s

The late 1980s and early 1990s were marked by a dramatic rise in nationalist movements within the Yugoslav republics. Leaders such as Slobodan Milošević in Serbia and Franjo Tuđman in Croatia capitalized on these sentiments, pushing for greater autonomy for their republics. The push for independence in Slovenia and Croatia, and the rise of nationalist Bosnian Serb and Croat leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina, set the stage for conflict.

## The Spark of the Bosnian War

The declaration of independence by Bosnia and Herzegovina in March 1992, following a referendum boycotted by the Bosnian Serbs, was the immediate spark that ignited the Bosnian War. The Bosnian Serbs, unwilling to remain in a state dominated by Bosniaks and Croats, and supported by Milošević's regime in Serbia, embarked on a campaign to carve out their own Serb-dominated territory, leading to a brutal and complex conflict.

## Nature of the Conflict

The war was marked by the siege of cities, most notably Sarajevo, ethnic cleansing, and atrocious war crimes, including the genocide in Srebrenica. The conflict was not only a territorial

dispute but also an ethnic conflict, as leaders from each ethnic group sought to carve out territories for their people, often through violent means.

## International Involvement

The international community was initially slow to respond effectively to the crisis. The United Nations deployed peacekeeping forces, but they were often unable to prevent violence. The conflict became a major concern for European security, leading to involvement by NATO and the European Union, and intense diplomatic efforts by major global powers, including the United States and Russia.

## Path to Peace

The path to peace was arduous and complex. The Dayton Conference of 1995, which brought leaders of the warring factions together in Dayton, Ohio, under the mediation of the United States, was a pivotal moment in the peace process. The resulting Dayton Accords created a framework for peace and set the stage for rebuilding the war-torn region.

## Topic: Dayton Accords Negotiations

### I. Introduction

The delegates will play the roles of negotiators at the Dayton Accords, deliberating over the same issues that were central to the actual Dayton Accords. These include issues such as: the political future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, how to ensure peace in the region amid the Yugoslav Wars, possible punishment for war crimes against civilians, etc. The delegates will have wide latitude to discuss any issues or questions, so long as they relate to the Dayton Accords and the wider Balkan region.

### II. Key Terms and Definitions

1. Ethnic Cleansing: A process in which a more powerful ethnic group forcibly removes a less powerful one in order to create an ethnically homogeneous region. In the context of the Bosnian War, this term refers to the atrocities committed against Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) and Croat civilians by Bosnian Serb and Yugoslav forces.

2. Siege of Sarajevo: The longest siege of a capital city in the history of modern warfare. Lasting from 1992 to 1996, it involved the Serb forces surrounding and bombarding Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3. NATO Intervention (1995): Refers to the involvement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the Bosnian War, particularly the 1995 bombing campaign against Bosnian Serb forces. This intervention was finally triggered by the continual killing of civilians in Bosnia by Serbian forces, and the inability of the UN to effectively stop such violence. NATO's heavy bombing campaign pushed the Serbs to the negotiating table, thus making it a decisive factor leading to the Dayton Accords. This was called Operation Deliberate Force.

At this time, NATO was composed of the following countries: US, Canada, UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Norway.

4. Peacekeeping: The use of international forces to maintain or enforce peace in a region of conflict. In the context of the Dayton Conference, it refers to the deployment of NATO-led peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### III. Countries' Positions

#### 1. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Position: Advocated for the preservation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Sought international support to end the aggression and ensure the safety and rights of all ethnic groups within its borders.

#### 2. Croatia

Position: While having earlier been a part of Yugoslavia, Croatia had time declared independence in 1991 and sought to establish itself as an independent country. Aimed to protect the interests of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina and secure its own borders. Supported the creation of a Croat entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina and sought to end the conflict with favorable terms for Croats.

#### 3. Serbia (including Montenegro)

Position: Sought to maintain influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly in areas with a significant Serb population. Aimed to avoid international isolation and sanctions while securing a favorable political solution for Bosnian Serbs.

#### 4. The United States

Position: The US had led the NATO intervention against Serbian forces in 1995. Richard Holbrooke, the assistant secretary of state, was a key player in organizing the Dayton Accords.

Focused on ending the conflict through a negotiated settlement that would ensure peace and stability in the region. Advocated for a multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina and played a leading role in pressuring parties to reach an agreement. Note that while it was deeply involved, the US refused to commit ground troops in Bosnia because of its fear of a repeat of the recent "Black Hawk Down" disaster in Somalia.

#### 5. The European Community

Position: The European Community was the precursor to the European Union, and was at this time largely composed of countries that had been allied to the US during the Cold War. Emphasized the need for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, the importance of respecting human rights, and the integration of the region into Europe. Supported humanitarian efforts and the imposition of sanctions

to pressure parties into negotiations. Note that at this time the European Community was composed of the UK, France, UK, Germany, Portugal, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Greece.

#### 6. United Kingdom

Position: The UK had been a participant in NATO's 1995 intervention. Supported a united and multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina. Advocated for a strong NATO and EU role in the peace process and the implementation of a peace agreement with a focus on stability and human rights.

#### 7. France

Position: France had been a participant in NATO's 1995 intervention. Prioritized the stability of the region and the protection of human rights. Supported strong international intervention to enforce peace and a balanced agreement that considered the interests of all ethnic groups.

#### 8. Germany

Position: During the beginning of Yugoslavia's breakup in 1991, Germany had led the charge to recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. Advocated for a peaceful resolution that would lead to the stabilization of the region and its eventual integration into the European Union. Emphasized the importance of respecting national borders and human rights.

#### 9. Bulgaria

Position: Bulgaria advocated for a peaceful resolution and supported EU and international efforts to end the conflict. In violation of UN sanctions against Serbia, Bulgaria illicitly allowed for supplies like fuel, medicine, etc., to be smuggled into Serbia from its territory. Thus, Bulgaria may not be willing to take as hard of a line against Serbia as Western countries like the US, UK, etc., might take. Interestingly, Bulgaria was the only 'South Slav' country not included in the former Yugoslavia.

#### 10. Russia

Position: Despite estrangement during the Cold War, Russia had traditionally been an ally of fellow slavic nation Serbia. At this time, Russia supported Serbian interests while advocating for a negotiated settlement. Russia opposed NATO intervention and emphasized the need for a solution that respected the rights of all ethnic groups, particularly Serbs.

#### 11. Turkey

Position: Given its status as one of the world's largest majority Muslim nations, Turkey supported Bosnian Muslims and advocated for their rights and safety. Emphasized the need for a peaceful resolution that protected the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

#### 12. Austria

Position: Concerned with regional stability and the impact of the conflict on Europe. Supported EU-led efforts for a peaceful resolution and emphasized the importance of protecting human rights and respecting international law.

#### 13. Italy

Position: Focused on achieving a stable and lasting peace in the region. Supported EU and international efforts to end the conflict and advocated for a solution that would ensure the safety and rights of all ethnic groups.

#### 14. Hungary

Position: As a neighboring country with historical and ethnic ties to the region, Hungary was primarily concerned with regional stability and the prevention of the conflict spilling over its borders. Hungary supported efforts to protect minority rights, particularly for the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries. Advocated for a peaceful resolution through diplomatic means and supported the EU and international community's efforts to end the conflict. Hungary's position also included a focus on humanitarian issues, emphasizing the need to address the refugee crisis and the humanitarian impact of the war.

## IV. Bibliography

[Dayton Accords | Bosnia Peace Agreement, 1995 | Britannica](#)