

Forum: The Historical Joint Crisis Committee

Issue: Kosovo Conflict

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Disclaimer:

Debate begins on the first public appearance of the Kosovo Liberation Army (November 28, 1997), real events that took place after this date will not be mentioned in this report as the committee decides how the crisis progresses. At any point should an event be mentioned that occurred post-November 28, it is to assist the delegates in developing a more thorough understanding; it is NOT intended to encourage delegates to follow the exact same course of action. Do keep in mind that when operating in a historical committee, the path is set by the participants and should not be a live recreation of past events. Should this start to occur, the Chairs will introduce more complexities and vet directives more carefully.

Introduction:

The Kosovo conflict escalated dramatically in the late 20th century, consisting of various political disputes and severe ethnic tensions.

In 1989 the leader of the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, initiated a policy of nonviolent protest. His actions were in response to the Serbian President, Slobodan Milošević, who revoked Kosovo's constitutional autonomy. Slobodan Milošević and the Serbian minority in Kosovo were concerned about the demographic control of the province by Muslim Albanians. This was because Kosovo, a province in southern Serbia, had a majority Albanian Muslim population but was also historically significant to Serb Orthodox Christians, being the site of key historical battles, such as the 1912 Serbian victory over the Turks.

Tensions between the ethnic Albanians and Serbs increased, and the lack of international intervention in the issue fueled frustration among the Albanians. This dissatisfaction gave rise to more extremist elements who believed that peaceful

means would not achieve their goals. As a result, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) emerged in 1990 and became publicly known by 1996.

The group claimed that they were the culprit behind the targeting and sabotaging of several Kosovo police stations. Reportedly, the KLA acquired a large quantity of arms through weapons smuggling from Albania, following a rebellion in which weapons were looted from the country's police and army posts.

The Serbian government, led by Slobodan Milošević, responded with severe violence and started military operations against the KLA and its suspected civilian members. By late 1997, it was suspected that the Serbian Government committed various international crimes in this process, including several human rights abuses and forced displacements. These reports, while gaining international attention, had not yet been fully confirmed as of the time of the crisis.



Map of Yugoslavia over the years

Start Point:

The crisis begins on the November of 28, 1997, when the KLA made its first public appearance at a funeral for an Albanian teacher (supposedly) killed by Serbian police.

This marked a major point in the crisis, as this openly challenges Serbian Authority and signals a more organised and public phase of the KLA's campaign for independence.

Definition of Key Terms:

Constitutional Autonomy: is a legal principle that makes a state university a separate department of government, not merely an agency of the executive or legislative branch

Authority: the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience

Autonomous: (of a country or region) having the freedom to govern itself or control its own affairs

Extremist: a person who holds extreme political or religious views, especially one who advocates illegal, violent, or other extreme action

Referendum: a direct vote by the electorate on a proposal, law, or political issue. This is in contrast to an issue being voted on by a representative

Political Dissent: Political dissent is a dissatisfaction with or opposition to the policies of a governing body. Expressions of dissent may take forms from vocal disagreement to civil disobedience to the use of violence

Background Information

Historical Context

Early Developments and Influences

The Albanian-Serbian conflict goes back to 1877, when Albanians were expelled from areas that were incorporated into the jurisdiction of Serbia. Estimates suggest that over 100,000 Albanians were made refugees during this period, with the mass expulsion of Muslim Albanians that resided in Sanjak of Nis (A region in Serbia that mostly consisted of Albanians) largely contributing to this number. As a result,

Albanian Refugees that migrated to Kosovo retaliated by a fierce attack on the Serbs that lived in the vicinity. The attacks became more dangerous in the 19th century, where massacres of Serbs were conducted using weapons not handed back to the Ottomans.

Tensions between both communities often caused fatalities, with conflicts taking place at a greater rate during both World Wars due to political differences. Specifically, in the Balkan Wars, it is estimated that 50,000 Albanians were massacred by Serbian Forces. This was done with the intention of manipulating population statistics before the borders of Albania were recognized, after the Conference proposed drawing the borders of Albania based on their ethnic population in neighbouring regions.

Despite the Albanian community in Kosovo insisting for unification with Albania, Kosovo was incorporated into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after World War 1. Albanian Rebels started uprisings and protests, which ended with the rebellion being crushed. Between 1918 and 1939, over 100,000 Albanians were expelled from Yugoslavia with Serb Colonists replacing them, After the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941, Albania was assigned control of Kosovo, where Albania sent hundreds of thousands of Serbians to concentration camps and expelled them from the territory.

Tito's Yugoslavia

Kosovo returned to Yugoslav control after the Second World War. The new socialist government under Josip Broz Tito established six unique republics, namely Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tito attempted to lessen the power of Serbia by establishing Autonomous Governments for the province of Kosovo and Vojvodina, which was renamed to the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo in 1968. The University of Pristina was established as an independent institution in 1970, where an agreement was struck with Albania itself to supply textbooks.

In 1974, Kosovo was declared a province and gained the powers of a full republic, a seat on the federal presidency and its own assembly, police force and national bank. Student Demonstrations continued throughout the 1970s, and the political and administrative changes of the province resulted in Kosovo Albanians gaining more control over the province resulting in stronger ties between Kosovo and Albania.

Post Tito

Following the death of Josip Broz Tito on May 4, 1980, Yugoslavia faced countless political troubles, aggravated by severe economic difficulties and increasingly nationalist sentiment across the nation. The League of Communists of Kosovo still held power within Kosovo, though the power seemed to be largely dominated by ethnic-Albanian communists. The first major incident took place in Pristina—the capital of Kosovo—when students at the University of Pristina protested against food shortages in their canteen. By March and April 1981, this protest swelled into an all-provincial big demonstration, also known as the 1981 protests in Kosovo. The Yugoslav government responded by declaring a state of emergency, sending in riot police and the army, killing and wounding many demonstrators in the process.

In April 1987, Slobodan Milošević visited Kosovo and gave an famous speech in Kosovo Polje where he promised the Serbian crowd, "No one will beat you again." In many ways, this represented something of a watershed moment in his career, because from this point forward, he began his rise to power riding on Serbian nationalism. By May 1989, Milošević had become President of the Presidency of Serbia, and in November 1988, the head of Kosovo's provincial committee was arrested, which served as a message that Serbian control over Kosovo was being evermore tightened.



Student Demonstrations in Pristina, Kosovo

Constitutional Amendments

In early 1989, the Serbian Assembly issued several amendments that changed Article 72, which removed "Socialist" from the name of the republic; provided for multi-party elections; and gave direct control over the Kosovo Autonomous Region to Serbia, renaming it as the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija. Kosovo Albanians reacted very negatively to such actions, with mass protests leading to a halt in industrial production. On March 3, 1989, the Yugoslav federal government imposed special measures on Kosovo, putting public security under federal control.

Despite the widespread opposition from Albanians, strong pressure obliged the Kosovo Assembly to accept the amendments on 23rd March. Most Albanian delegates abstained in that vote. The situation continued to go downhill, with Serbia dissolving Kosovo's provincial institutions, taking direct control, and restricting Albanian-language media.

The Albanians declared Kosovo an independent republic of Yugoslavia on July 2, 1990—a declaration Serbia refused to recognize and thus they disbanded the Kosovo Assembly.

Tensions kept rising, leading to an unofficial referendum in September 1991, where Kosovar Albanians overwhelmingly voted for independence. In May 1992, unofficial elections saw Ibrahim Rugova elected as president of the self-declared Republic of Kosovo.

Current Situation

As of November 28, 1997 with the first public appearance of the Kosovo Liberation Army

Political landscape and rising tensions

The current political landscape in Kosovo as of late November 1997 is extremely volatile. The first public appearance of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) marks a significant shift in the dynamics of the conflict. The KLA's speech at the funeral voiced the KLA's position and main objectives: The establishment of a Greater Albania. This constituted of secession from Serbia and unification of the lands that the Albanians considered to form their national homeland which included small parts of Montenegro and Macedonia.

KLA insurgency

Initially, in the early 1990s, the KLA operated as a loosely organised group, conducting small-scale attacks against Serbian police and military targets. Their tactics included ambushes, sabotage, and hit-and-run operations, capitalising on the local mountainous terrain of Kosovo.

However, by 1996, the KLA's insurgency gained momentum, initiating their first military campaign in response to the stubbornness of Serbian leadership under Slobodan Milošević and ongoing human rights violations. Moreover, the idea that Kosovo was excluded from the Dayton Peace Agreement upset many Albanian Kosovars who felt their own situation had been overlooked by the international

community furthering the KLA's cause (The Dayton Peace Agreement, signed in December 1995, ended the Bosnian War by establishing a framework for peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, dividing the country into two entities with a central government) .This led to the group beginning to receive increasing support and funding from the ethnic Albanian population causing increasingly frequent attacks on Serbian police stations, military outposts, and administrative buildings. This insurgency rapidly escalated, with significant actions taking place throughout 1996 and 1997, marking the KLA's presence as a formidable force fighting for the independence of Kosovo.

Serbian retaliation

In response to the escalating insurgency by the KLA, the Serbian government, led by Slobodan Milošević, adopted a series of aggressive countermeasures aimed at quelling the uprising. These operations were characterised by a heavy-handed approach, with Serbian forces targeting not only KLA members but also the broader Albanian civilian population suspected of dissidence by supporting or sympathising with the insurgents.

The military response involved the deliberate targeting and destruction of infrastructure critical to the KLA's operations and the everyday life of the local population. Serbian forces destroyed roads, bridges, and communication lines to disrupt the KLA's supply routes and communication networks. Additionally, large-scale raids of villages and towns believed to be KLA strongholds were conducted while Serbia used military force to impose curfews upon Albanian civilians and residents of these areas. This not only aimed to weaken the KLA's operational capabilities but also an ethnic cleanse that displaced large numbers of ethnic Albanians trying to create a Serbian majority in areas of Kosovo.

In addition to physical force, Serbian authorities implemented psychological warfare, designed to undermine the KLA's support base and instil fear within the local population. This approach included acts of intimidation, use of propaganda,

spreading fear through targeted reprisals, and conducting operations designed to create a sense of insecurity and helplessness among civilians like arbitrary arrest and the use of excessive force which demoralised both the KLA fighters and the ethnic Albanian civilian population suspected of supporting them. The goal of the Serbian response was to break the will of the KLA and to discourage civilians from providing any form of support to the insurgents.

International view

Serbian retaliation against this movement for independence resulted in mass reports of human rights abuses emerging, detailing widespread violence against civilians, forced displacements, and the destruction of homes and businesses. The brutal nature of the Serbian military operations intensified the conflict, contributing to a cycle of retaliation and resistance that further polarised the situation and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the region.

The reports of Serbian atrocities documented by organisations such as Amnesty International began to draw international attention and condemnation; Reports detailed instances of torture, ill-treatment, and unfair trials of ethnic Albanians, as well as the use of excessive force against civilian populations. Ethnic Albanians were beaten, punched and kicked by Serbian police officers daily—as a result, in 1997, five people died in police custody (Amnesty International Report). With thousands of other human right violations reported like this, however not fully confirmed, the extent of international standards breached by the Serbian authorities garnered international attention and condemnation.

At this point, no international intervention had occurred as it was considered an internal Yugoslav conflict; however, the rising tensions and widespread reports of Serbian atrocities had prompted inquiry and diplomatic efforts on the international stage, first of which being at the Peace Implementation Council meetings (An international body charged with implementing the Dayton Peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina).

SPOTLIGHT ON HISTORY: KOSOVO AND THE ROAD TO WAR

Kosovo is a partially-recognized state in Southeastern Europe that declared independence from Serbia in 2008. Kosovo has had a long, challenging and disputed path to statehood. Here is that story, explained in brief.





93%
Ethnic
Albanian

TIMELINE

Before Albania existed as an autonomous state, Kosovo was situated within its territory. Eventually, it would become part of Serbia. Resulting in an ethnically Albanian majority within Kosovo, as Serbs left the territory for many reasons.

1945

After World War II, Kosovo is integrated into Yugoslavia as a territory under Serbia, largely because it was seen as "underdeveloped" and in need of political and structural guidance.

40's-70's

Power is largely centralized and ethnic-Albanians receive little political power and input. Serbian Special Police lead by Aleksandar Rankovic rule Kosovo with an iron-fist at the expense of many Albanians.

1974

In 1974 under Tito's Yugoslavia, republics were decentralized with a new constitution. Kosovo enjoys greater autonomy, while still not quite on equal footing with the republics. Ethnic Albanians gain control of political institutions.

1989

After Tito's death, Yugoslavia centralizes. Slobodon Milosevic rises to power in Serbia and in March 1989 amid reports that Serbs were being oppressed by the ethnic Albanian majority, Kosovo's autonomy was revoked to the pre-1974 state. Serbian institutions gain control of Kosovo, oppressing the Albanian majority.

The 1990's & start of war

In July 1990, Kosovo Albanians proclaim the existence of the Republic of Kosova, and declare it an independent state in September 1992

With the Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995, ending the Bosnian War, Kosovars realize their situation was not being resolved. By 1996, the Kosovo Liberation Army, an ethnic Albanian guerrilla paramilitary group, launched attacks against the Yugoslav Army, beginning the Kosovo War.

Timeline of Events

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

By November 1997, the situation in Kosovo had become increasingly volatile, with incidents of violence between Yugoslav forces and Kosovo Albanian groups, including the KLA. International concern was growing, but a full-scale intervention had not yet occurred. There are several main parties involved in the Kosovo Conflict - however, in the context of HJCC, this Chair Report will focus on the 5 Major Countries (the cabinets represented in the conference) and the work that the United Nations has done in response to the crisis by November 28th 1997.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia comprised of Serbia and Montenegro, was under the leadership of Slobodan Milošević. Yugoslavia strongly opposed the

independence of Kosovo, rather, The Yugoslav government was committed to maintaining its sovereignty over Kosovo and suppressing any separatist movements, including the activities of the Kosovo Liberation Army and other Albanian extremist groups. Milošević and the Serbian population considered Kosovo a region of Serbian history and culture and, therefore an integral part of Serbian territory,

Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)

The KLA, an ethnic Albanian paramilitary organisation, emerged in the mid-1990s to achieve independence for Kosovo from Yugoslav rule. By 1997, the KLA had increased its activities, engaging in attacks against Serbian police and political figures. The organisation believed that armed struggle was necessary to achieve their objectives, as peaceful protests led by leaders like Ibrahim Rugova had not resulted in meaningful change. The KLA's actions aimed to draw international attention and pressure the Yugoslav government to provide Kosovo with constitutional autonomy.

Albania

The Albanian government sympathised with the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo because of the years of suppression they had faced by Serbians, therefore, allying with KLA, Albania provided logistical support, training, and sanctuary. Albania also sheltered ethnic Albanian refugees fleeing the violence in Kosovo, thus playing a humanitarian role in addition to its support for the KLA's military activities. Additionally, Albania declared Kosovo an independent republic of Yugoslavia on July 2, 1990.

USA

As of November 1997, the USA was becoming increasingly concerned about the escalating violence in Kosovo. While the USA had not yet taken direct military action, it was actively involved in diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. The United States

supported the idea of greater autonomy for Kosovo within the framework of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia but had not endorsed full independence. The USA, through NATO, was preparing for potential intervention to prevent further humanitarian crises seeing as they were worried about the human right violations in the Balkans, as evidenced by the airstrikes that would begin in March 1999. However, the USA didn't support the KLA, and had named it a terrorist organisation in 1997. The USA was a key player to broker peace in the region.

Russia

Russia firmly supported Yugoslav sovereignty over Kosovo. In international forums such as the United Nations, Russia consistently opposed any actions that would undermine Yugoslavia's territorial integrity, including NATO's intervention. However, Russia was also part of the Contact Group, which demanded the withdrawal of Yugoslav troops from Kosovo, the return of refugees, and unlimited access to international monitors. This contrasting approach highlighted Russia's diplomatic efforts, supporting its ally while engaging in international efforts to mitigate the conflict.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

There aren't any relevant UN resolutions on this topic before the start date of the crisis.

This is a [list](#) of UN Resolutions post the date of the crisis.

You can view future resolutions as inspiration for your directives. Please **don't copy the resolutions ideas** - that will make debate boring and the chairs will have to change the course of the crisis if they see this happening.

Possible Solutions

Security and Stability Measures:

- The presence of United Nations committees like NATO and KFOR are crucial to ensure security and stability in the region while the process for peace continues in Kosovo. Potential ideas could include regional security pacts that entail both Kosovo and Serbia to be included and attempt to ensure mutual security and cooperation against common threats.
- The establishment of a joint security force consisting of both Kosovo and Serbian personnel is another strong potential idea, where the force may be assigned the role of maintaining order in mixed-ethnicity areas, particularly trouble areas.

Human Rights and Minority Protections

- The development of international monitoring mechanisms to ensure protection of human and minority rights in both Serbia and Kosovo. This could include sending international human right monitors who are mandated to brief the UN (and OSCE) on violations of human rights (could include ethnic cleansing, forced displacements, etc).
- Adopting an inclusive governance structure inside Kosovo will help to ensure the representation and thus participation of ethnic communities in vital decision-making processes that affect them.

Negotiated Settlement and Diplomatic Engagement

- Forums that promote facilitated communication between Kosovo and Serbia, which entails international mediators from groups like: EU, UN or OSCE to help foster a good environment with trust and cooperation. More Focus should be paid to Contact Group-led negotiations through the channel including the US, UK, Germany, France, Italy, and Russia.
- Additionally, the implementation of confidence building measures would be helpful, such as joint economic projects, cultural exchanges, and equal collaboration in areas like the environment and public health. Creating joint development zones could lead to decreased tensions and the revival of several different industries such as the textile market.

Cultural and Educational Initiatives

- To construct joint initiatives to help protect and promote cultural heritage sites that hold importance to both communities, to aid in fostering a sense of respect and joint history.
- Additionally, developing educational programs that will help to promote understanding, reconciliation and resilience within the young people of Serbia and Kosovo - teaching the youth about the dangers of ethnic discrimination, hopefully preventing crises like this from occurring again.

Bibliography

Useful Links

Kosovo Profile: <://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18328859>

Filmed prior to the conflict (1997), good insight into life for Serbs/Albanians and general opinions at that period of time:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MIZ7-UnRD8>

Britannica Article: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Kosovo-conflict> (mostly contains information post date of conflict, but useful to understand perceptions of nations at the time, can help delegates understand country stances)

Works Cited

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- [Britannica \(KLA\)](#)
- [Image of Student Demonstrations](#)
- [hrw.org](#)