

Forum: Historic Security

Issue: The Yugoslav War

Student Officer: Ansh Uchil

Position: President Chair

Introduction

The Yugoslav Wars were a series of conflicts that took place in the former Yugoslavia, a country in Southeastern Europe, during the 1990s. The wars resulted in the breakup of Yugoslavia and the emergence of several independent states. The main conflicts within this period were the Croatian War of Independence (1991-1995), the Bosnian War (1992-1995), and the Kosovo War (1998-1999). The roots of the Yugoslav Wars can be traced back to the complex historical, ethnic, and political dynamics of the region. Yugoslavia was created after World War I and consisted of six republics: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. Additionally, it included two autonomous provinces within Serbia: Kosovo and Vojvodina. The country was characterized by a diverse population with various ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Albanians, and others. The unraveling of Yugoslavia began in the late 1980s when political and economic tensions escalated, leading to the rise of nationalist sentiments. The leadership in some of the republics sought greater autonomy and independence, particularly Slovenia and Croatia. In 1991, both Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from Yugoslavia, triggering the Croatian War of Independence. The conflict involved fighting between Croatian forces and Serbian militias, supported by the Yugoslav People's Army. Soon after, Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its independence in 1992, leading to the Bosnian War. The war was marked by brutal ethnic cleansing campaigns, widespread atrocities, and the siege of cities, most notably Sarajevo. The conflict involved not only Serbs and Croats but also Bosniaks, resulting in a complex and devastating war. In 1995, the

Dayton Agreement brought an end to the Bosnian War, establishing the country as a federal state with two entities: the Bosniak-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska. The Kosovo War unfolded in 1998-1999, as tensions between the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo and the Yugoslav government, led by Slobodan Milošević, escalated. NATO intervened in 1999, conducting airstrikes to halt the Yugoslav military's actions in Kosovo. The conflict ultimately led to the establishment of the United Nations administration in Kosovo. The Yugoslav Wars left a lasting impact on the region, with significant human suffering, displacement, and a complex legacy of unresolved issues. The breakup of Yugoslavia resulted in the emergence of independent states, each facing the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation.

Definition of Key Terms

Yugoslav Wars

A series of ethnic, political, and territorial conflicts that occurred in the 1990s on the territory of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, leading to the breakup of the country into several independent nations.

Dissolution of Yugoslavia

The gradual disintegration of the Yugoslav federation into multiple independent states, including Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia, between 1991 and 1992.

Ethnic Cleansing

The deliberate and systematic removal or extermination of a particular ethnic, religious, or racial group from a specific geographic area, often involving violence and human rights abuses.

Bosnian War

A conflict that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995, characterized by intense fighting, ethnic violence, and war crimes.

Croatian War of Independence

A war fought from 1991 to 1995 between Croatia and the Yugoslav People's Army, along with Serb-dominated Yugoslav forces, resulting in Croatia's independence.

Kosovo War

A conflict that occurred in Kosovo between 1998 and 1999, marked by ethnic tensions between Albanian and Serbian populations, leading to NATO intervention and the eventual establishment of United Nations administration in Kosovo.

Srebrenica Massacre

A mass killing that took place in July 1995 in the Bosnian town of Srebrenica, where Bosnian Serb forces killed thousands of Bosnian Muslim men and boys in an act of genocide.

International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)

A United Nations court established in 1993 to prosecute individuals responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide committed during the Yugoslav Wars.

Dayton Agreement

A peace agreement reached in Dayton, Ohio, in 1995, which ended the Bosnian War and established the framework for the governance of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

NATO Intervention

A series of airstrikes conducted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against Yugoslav military targets in 1999, aimed at stopping the ethnic cleansing and violence in Kosovo.

Key Issues

Breakup of Yugoslavia:

The breakup of Yugoslavia was a complex process involving the secession of various republics, particularly Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovenia. Each sought independence, triggering armed conflicts. The territorial disputes and power struggles that ensued reflected historical tensions and nationalist sentiments. The secession process was marked by the use of military force, leading to the Croatian War of Independence and the Bosnian War. The breakup ultimately resulted in the emergence of several independent states, but the process left a legacy of unresolved issues, territorial disputes, and strained relations.

War Crimes and Human Rights Abuses:

The Yugoslav Wars were marred by widespread and systematic war crimes. Ethnic cleansing, mass killings, sexual violence, and forced displacement of populations were prevalent. These atrocities were committed by various factions involved in the conflicts, leading to significant human suffering. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was established by the United Nations to prosecute individuals responsible for these crimes. The tribunal played a crucial role in holding war criminals accountable, contributing to the development of international humanitarian law and justice.

Refugee Crisis:

The wars in Yugoslavia created one of the largest refugee crises in Europe since World War II. Millions of people were forced to flee their homes due to the conflicts, resulting

in a massive displacement of populations. The refugee crisis had profound and long-lasting social, economic, and political consequences for the region. Many refugees faced challenges in rebuilding their lives and reintegrating into their societies, while host countries struggled to cope with the influx and address the humanitarian needs of the displaced populations.

Economic Devastation:

The conflicts in Yugoslavia caused widespread economic devastation. Infrastructure, industries, and agricultural sectors were heavily impacted by the wars. The destruction hindered economic development, and the process of rebuilding became a monumental task. International assistance and financial support were essential for the reconstruction efforts. The economic challenges posed by the wars persisted in the post-war period, affecting the region's overall stability and development.

Balkanization:

The fragmentation of Yugoslavia into multiple independent states reshaped the political map of the Balkans. The emergence of new nations and borders led to ongoing disputes over territory and minority rights. Nationalist sentiments remained strong, contributing to tensions and conflicts even after the wars ended. The process of Balkanization had significant geopolitical implications and influenced regional dynamics, setting the stage for ongoing challenges related to borders, identity, and minority rights.

Post-War Governance:

Establishing stable and inclusive governance structures in the newly independent states, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, proved challenging. The Dayton Agreement, signed in 1995, played a crucial role in ending the Bosnian War and establishing a framework for governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country was divided into two entities, the Bosniak-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska, each with its own government. However, issues related to power-sharing, ethnic representation, and

political divisions persisted, making the process of building effective and inclusive governance systems an ongoing challenge in the post-war period. International efforts, including those by the European Union, continued to address these governance issues and promote stability in the region.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY): This was the successor state to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and was initially composed of Serbia and Montenegro. Under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic, FRY was seen as a driving force behind many of the conflicts.

Croatia: Croatia sought independence from Yugoslavia and was recognized as an independent state in 1992. The conflict in Croatia primarily involved the Croatian government and ethnic Serb separatists, supported by the Yugoslav People's Army.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1992, leading to a complex and brutal war involving multiple parties. The conflict included Bosnian Serb forces, Bosnian Croat forces, and the Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) government.

Bosnian Serbs: Led by Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, Bosnian Serb forces sought to establish a separate Serb entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina, often with the support of FRY.

Bosnian Croats: Croatian forces in Bosnia, backed by Croatia, sought to establish a Croat entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina, leading to conflicts with both Bosnian Serbs and the Bosniak government.

Development of Issue/Timeline

Year	Event	Outcome
1980	Early Tensions	The 1980 death of Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia's longtime leader, marked the beginning of political and economic instability. Economic crisis and rising nationalism in the republics contributed to growing tensions.
1989	Crisis in Kosovo	Slobodan Milosevic, leader of Serbia, revoked the autonomous status of Kosovo, leading to protests and inter-ethnic violence.
1991	Croatia's Bid for Independence	Croatia and Slovenia both declared independence from Yugoslavia in June 1991. The Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) intervened, leading to the Ten-Day War with Slovenia. The Croatian War of Independence began as Croat

		forces sought to break away from Yugoslavia.
1992	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence, triggering a brutal war involving Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosniaks.
1992	International Recognition	Many countries recognized the independence of Croatia and Bosnia, including the United States and European nations. The Bosnian Serbs, with the support of the JNA, sought control of Bosnian territories.
1995	Srebrenica Massacre	

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Vance-Owen Peace Plan (1992):

The Vance-Owen Peace Plan, proposed by UN special envoys Cyrus Vance and David Owen in 1992, aimed to address the complex ethnic and political dynamics in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Bosnian War. The plan proposed the establishment of a confederation that would ensure the rights of the three main ethnic groups – Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. The idea was to create ethnically based provinces with a central government overseeing a loose confederation. However, the plan was met with resistance from the parties on the ground, as it failed to gain widespread support due to concerns about the proposed territorial divisions and power-sharing arrangements. The

Vance-Owen Peace Plan ultimately did not materialize into a lasting solution for the Bosnian conflict.

Washington Agreement (1994):

The Washington Agreement, also known as the Washington Declaration, was signed in 1994 between Bosniak and Croat leadership. The agreement marked an attempt to create a Croat-Bosniak alliance against the Bosnian Serbs. One of the key outcomes of the Washington Agreement was the establishment of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a political and military alliance between Bosniaks and Croats. This federation, formed in 1994, aimed to counterbalance the influence of the Bosnian Serb forces. However, while the agreement addressed some immediate concerns, it did not provide a comprehensive solution to the overall governance and territorial issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Dayton Agreement (1995):

The Dayton Agreement, negotiated in Dayton, Ohio, in 1995, was a pivotal moment in the efforts to end the Bosnian War. The agreement involved intensive negotiations led by international mediators, including the U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher. It established a framework for the governance of Bosnia and Herzegovina, dividing the country into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, representing Bosniaks and Croats, and Republika Srpska, representing Bosnian Serbs. The Dayton Agreement also created a complex political structure, with a rotating presidency, a parliamentary assembly, and a constitutional court. The accord allowed for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and set the stage for the deployment of a multinational peacekeeping force.

Rambouillet Agreement (1999):

The Rambouillet Agreement aimed to resolve the Kosovo conflict between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and

Montenegro). The negotiations took place in Rambouillet, France, in early 1999. The agreement proposed an interim political settlement for Kosovo, allowing for substantial autonomy but falling short of complete independence. However, the talks ultimately failed, as the Yugoslav government, led by Slobodan Milosevic, refused to accept the presence of NATO troops on its territory. The breakdown of the Rambouillet talks paved the way for NATO intervention in Kosovo.

Kumanovo Agreement (1999):

Following the failure of the Rambouillet talks, the Kumanovo Agreement was reached in June 1999, bringing an end to the Kosovo War. The agreement was negotiated in Kumanovo, Macedonia, between NATO representatives and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It stipulated the withdrawal of Yugoslav (Serbian) forces from Kosovo and the entry of NATO-led peacekeeping forces known as KFOR (Kosovo Force). The Kumanovo Agreement marked the conclusion of the conflict, and Kosovo came under international administration, paving the way for efforts to rebuild and stabilize the region.

Possible Solutions

Negotiated Settlements:

Negotiated settlements played a crucial role in resolving conflicts and bringing an end to hostilities in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars. One prominent example is the Dayton Agreement, negotiated in 1995 to end the Bosnian War. Diplomatic negotiations, often facilitated by international mediators, aimed to address the complex ethnic and political issues that fueled the conflicts. These agreements were critical in establishing frameworks for post-conflict governance, delineating territorial boundaries, and defining the political structures of newly independent or restructured states. Encouraging dialogue and compromise among the warring parties was a key component of these diplomatic efforts, fostering an environment where conflicting parties could find common ground and work towards a sustainable peace.

Ethnic Power-Sharing:

Ethnic power-sharing arrangements were implemented in multi-ethnic regions, with the intention of providing political representation and protection for different ethnic groups. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Dayton Agreement established a power-sharing model that included a rotating presidency representing Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. This arrangement sought to ensure that no single ethnic group dominated the political landscape and that decisions were made collectively, fostering a sense of inclusivity and preventing the marginalization of any particular community. Ethnic power-sharing aimed to address historical grievances, build trust, and create a political framework that recognized the diversity of the population.

Autonomy and Decentralization:

Granting significant autonomy and decision-making powers to local entities within a country, while maintaining an overarching federal structure, was explored as a strategy to satisfy the aspirations of different regions. This approach recognizes the diversity within a nation and seeks to accommodate regional identities and preferences. In the context of the Yugoslav Wars, autonomy and decentralization were considered in attempts to address the demands of various ethnic groups. For example, the Dayton Agreement established the entities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, each with a considerable degree of self-governance. This arrangement allowed different regions to manage their own affairs while contributing to the overall stability of the country.

[Bibliography](#)

[Reference list](#)

BBC (2016). Balkans war: a brief guide. *BBC News*. [online] 18 Mar. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17632399>.

Council on Foreign Relations (2020). *Excerpt: The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*. [online] Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/excerpt-world-and-yugoslavia-wars>.

ICTY (2017). *The Conflicts | International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia*. [online] www.icty.org. Available at: <https://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts>.

Office of the Historian (2019). *Milestones: 1989–1992 - Office of the Historian*. [online] State.gov. Available at: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/breakup-yugoslavia>.

Rust, O. (2022). *US Intervention in the Balkans: The 1990s Yugoslav Wars Explained*. [online] TheCollector. Available at: <https://www.thecollector.com/1990s-yugoslav-wars-explained/>.