

**Historic United Nations Security Council-  
Bosnian War**

Freeze Date:- May 1, 1992

## **Introduction**

Hello Delegates,

The committee you all will be taking part in is one of the most influential ever held in the United Nations. Not only did the Security Council play an important role in the conflict itself, the decisions made defined the role of the UN for the foreseeable future. Thus, there rests an enormous responsibility on you delegates to surpass the actions of the Security Council and international community, in general.

This committee might be different from what a lot of you are used to and as you progress through the committee, the different procedures and the expectations will become clearer. Even so, delegates should be prepared for a fast-paced committee simply because of the breadth and the importance of the topics discussed. The delegates must also be ready to think of solutions and come to conclusions quickly because the situation will change rapidly and the actions of the delegates will directly influence how the committee progress. Thus, I would expect all delegates to be constantly engaged and willing to give inputs and collaborate with committee members. While research and prior preparation will play a very important role, it is important to keep in mind the fact that the situation you may have come prepared for might not be the same as the proceedings in the committee.

This committee will also require more detailed research than most other committees. Since the events take place during the middle of violent conflict, the executive board will expect the delegates to know the details of the military, economy, and the politics of several countries. This should also result in substantive and decisive actions which have specifications about how the delegates plan to achieve the goals that they have outlined in various documents.

As for the background guide, the executive board encourages you to use the background guide as simply a primer on the issues. It is not meant to capture a comprehensive picture of the Bosnian War and the various intricacies of the conflict. Furthermore, the delegates are free to differ completely from the background guide in terms of what issues they find important. This also speaks to a larger idea of the committee being completely free to progress the committee as

they see fit. The executive board is simply to guide the committee, not act as the committee itself.

Good luck in your research and hope to see you in the committee.

Satvik Aggarwal  
Chairperson

### **About the Security Council**

The Security Council is the most powerful branch of the UN and thus, is the one that can enact the most meaningful reform. The functions and powers of the Security Council can be understood as:-

1. Ensure international peace and cooperation between nations
2. Recommend adjustment of disputes to the terms of settlements
3. Formulate plans to regulate armaments
4. Prevent future conflict
5. Recommend economic sanctions and other measures
6. Take military action
7. Add new members to the Security Council

As can be seen, the Security Council can take the most decisive actions in conflicts out of the committees. However, this means that the stakes faced by the committee are also high and each situation needs to be delicately and swiftly.

An idiosyncrasy of the Security Council is the existence of the Veto power. While usually a simple majority is required for a resolution to pass in the Security Council, the five nations with veto powers can single handedly strike down any resolution. The five countries with this veto power are:-

1. People's Republic of China
2. France
3. Soviet Union
4. United Kingdom
5. United States of America

## **Powers**

This is to give you an idea of the various actions the committee can take to influence things in the world. Seeing as this is a Security Council, the committee will be constantly moving forward in time as events take place because of the committee and without the committee's actions. While I suggest you do read up on the individual formats a little bit, do not worry about the format too much because it will not only be covered at the beginning of committee, it will also not play as important a role as the substantive arguments.

**Resolutions:** This is the most important document the committee will likely release. It dictates what the UN recommends or the UN will do. One thing to remember is that because we are in the UNSC, the resolution will require that none of the P5 vote 'No' for the resolution.

**Press Release:** This committee will allow delegates to unilaterally release material to the press to state their opinions on the matter or clarify certain points. Delegates can do this alone or with other delegates.

**Directives:** These are the actions that a delegate takes and informs the executive board of. These usually include things like alliances or military movements. There are much fewer requirements to this than the other as a directive does not necessarily represent the actions of the Security Council but of individual countries. However, they need to be much more detailed with exact specifications

of things like budget and military personnel including things like where the money is coming from and which equipment and troops are being used.

I would be expecting you to make use of all the powers of the Security Council to make sure that the committee is successful and influential. Beyond the use of your direct powers, it would be helpful to remember that you all represent powerful nations, often part of more powerful alliances and this should play a part in your decisions and actions.

## **Timeline**

The following timeline will help you establish which events were important and read up in more detail about those events. There were many other events of note so do not use this timeline as the only resource but this should help you give a primer on the conflict and give a direction to your research. I have also neglected to provide specific dates for various events as I wish the background guide to paint a broader story rather than be the only source for research.

**31<sup>st</sup> January, 1946** – Yugoslavia established as a federation of six republics, with borders drawn along ethnic and historical lines: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. In addition, two autonomous provinces were established within Serbia: Vojvodina and Kosovo.

**4<sup>th</sup> May, 1980** – Yugoslavian President-for-life Josip Broz Tito died. His death, accompanied by the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, led to increasing ethnic tensions within Yugoslavia. Ethnic nationalism began to experience a renaissance in the subsequent years.

**15<sup>th</sup> May, 1986** — Slobodan Milošević was elected to the position of president of the League of Communists of Serbia.

**July, 1988- March 1989** — Milošević orchestrated the Anti-bureaucratic revolution, a series of protests in Serbia and Montenegro, to put his supporters in SAP Vojvodina, SAP Kosovo, and the Socialist Republic of Montenegro (SR

Montenegro) to power as he sought to oust his rivals. In addition to Serbia itself, Milošević could now install representatives of the two provinces and SR Montenegro in the Yugoslav Presidency Council. Thus, in the eight-member Presidency, Milošević could count on a minimum of four votes – SR Montenegro (following local events), his own through SR Serbia, and now SAP Vojvodina and SAP Kosovo as well. This led to Serbia wielding significant influence in the Yugoslav presidency.

**January 1990** — The extraordinary 14th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was convened. The Serbians demanded a policy of "one person, one vote" in the party membership, which would empower the largest party ethnic group, the Serbs. On the other hand, the Croats and Slovenes sought to reform Yugoslavia by delegating even more power to six republics, but were voted down in every motion and attempt to force the party to adopt the new voting system.

Thus, the member states were unable to come to a consensus on political issues. As a result, the Slovene and Croatian delegates left the Congress, effectively dissolving the all- Yugoslav party.

**February, 1990**— Jovan Rašković founded the Serb Democratic Party which aimed to carve out a part of Croatia to align with the interest of ethnic Serbs.

**August, 1990**— An unrecognised mono-ethnic referendum was held in regions with a substantial Serb population which would come to be known as the Republic of Serbian Krajina to further Serb sovereignty. The Croatian government sent police forces to Serb- populated areas to seize their weapons which came to be known as the Log Revolution.

**August, 1990** — The first of several “Serb Autonomous Regions” was established in the Yugoslav Republics of Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina because of the possibility of secession.

**November 1990** – Individual member states began organizing multi-party elections. In the first multi-party election in Bosnia and Herzegovina, votes were cast largely according to ethnicity, leading to the success of the Bosniak Party of

Democratic Action, the Serbian Democratic Party and the Croatian Democratic Union.

**November 1990** – A tripartite coalition government was formed, with the Bosniak politician Alija Izetbegović leading a joint presidency. Growing tensions both inside and outside Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, made cooperation with the Serb Democratic Party, led by Radovan Karadžić, increasingly difficult.

**November 1990** – Parties divided the power along the national lines so that the President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina was a Bosniak, president of the Parliament was a Bosnian Serb, and the prime minister a Croat.

**23 December, 1990**— Slovenia held a referendum, which passed with 88.5% of overall electorate supporting independence. Slovenes instantly became aware that the Yugoslav army would try to prevent any kind of independence and they instantly tried to mobilise their army for a war which came to be known as the 10-day war.

Slovenia and Croatia held independence referendums and consequently, declared their independence from Yugoslavia. This led to a short armed conflict in Slovenia called the Ten-Day War, and an all-out war in Croatia (the Croatian War of Independence) in areas with a substantial ethnic Serb population

**April, 1991**— Serbs in Croatia decided to secede to the territory which was partially motivated due to the new Milosevic government. This led to around 200 incidents of bombings in the previous 8 months which motivated the Croatians to start building up their army.

**19 May, 1991**— The Croatians held a referendum on independence to decide if Croatia was to become a separate entity from Yugoslavia.

**25 June, 1991**— The government of Croatia declared Croatia's independence and dissolved its association with Yugoslavia.

**June, 1991** — Representatives of Bosnian Muslims (Party of Democratic Action, SDA) and Bosnian Serbs (Serb Democratic Party, SDS) met to discuss the future status of SR Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Yugoslav crisis. On behalf of SDA president Alija Izetbegović, Adil Zulfikarpašić and Muhamed Filipović met with SDS president Radovan Karadžić, Nikola Koljević and Momčilo Krajišnik. The two sides reached an agreement that Bosnia and Herzegovina was to be sovereign and undivided, remaining in a Yugoslav confederation with Serbia and Montenegro, in exchange for certain concessions, such as increased representation in the military command structure, etc. Zulfikarpašić received the consent of Serbian President Slobodan Milošević as well. However, Izetbegović, who initially supported it, abandoned the agreement.

**July, 1991** — Yugoslavia stopped attacks on the Slovenes, likely due to the fact that the population of Slovenia was homogenous.

**July, 1991** — By July, Milosevic had taken over control of the Yugoslav People's Army and his nationalistic and jingoistic beliefs only led to more aggressive tactics by the Yugoslavian army.

**July, 1991**— The Yugoslavian army started operations in Croatia in desperation to keep what was left of Yugoslavia together. This resulted in attacks on nearby towns and villages which led to the Croatian army also responding to these attacks.

**25 September, 1991**— The war in Croatia led to UN Security Council Resolution 713 which caused an arms embargo to Yugoslavia and encouraged measures taken by the European community.

**September-November, 1991**— The SDS organised the creation of six "Serb Autonomous Regions" (SAOs). This was in response to the Bosniaks' steps towards seceding from Yugoslavia. The SDS made it clear that if independence was declared, Serbs would secede as it was their right to exercise self-determination.

**October 24, 1991** — The Serb political representatives proclaimed the Assembly of the Serb People of Bosnia and declared that the Serb people wished to remain in Yugoslavia.

**November, 1991** — The Croatians in the country soon followed suit and set up 2 autonomous regions within the country, claiming they would recognise the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina as long as it remained independent from Yugoslavia.

**27 November, 1991**— Successful passage of UN Security Council Resolution 721 which encouraged the Secretary General to establish a peacekeeping mission but not much came out of the resolution in actuality.

**December, 1991**— The European Community (EC) invited Bosnia and Herzegovina to apply for recognition as independent state, having already recognised Slovenia and Croatia as such.

**8 January, 1992**— UN Security Council 727 was passed which established a monitoring mission to support the maintenance of a ceasefire in Sarajevo.

**9 January, 1992** — The Bosnian Serbs proclaimed the "Republic of the Serbian People in Bosnia-Herzegovina", but did not officially declare independence. The Arbitration Commission of the Peace Conference on Yugoslavia in its 11 January 1992 Opinion No. 4 on Bosnia and Herzegovina stated that the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina should not be recognised because the country had not yet held a referendum on independence.

**25 January 1992**— An hour after the session of parliament was adjourned, the parliament called for referendums on independence on 29 February and 1 March. The Bosnian Serb assembly members advised Serbs to boycott the referendums and Karadžić's party obstructed voting in most Serb-populated regions.

**February, 1992**— An EC Peace Conference was held to prevent Bosnia and Herzegovina from sliding into all-out war. It was referred to as the Lisbon Agreement or the Carrington–Cutileiro peace plan. It proposed ethnic power-sharing on all administrative levels and the devolution of central government to local ethnic communities. However, all Bosnia-Herzegovina's districts would be

classified as Bosniak, Serb or Croat under the plan, even where no ethnic majority was evident. In later negotiations, there were compromises about changing district borders.

**21 February, 1992**— UN Security Council Resolution 743 was passed to form a peacekeeping mission which came to be known as the United Nations Protection Force.

**3 March, 1992** — Almost everyone who voted in the referendum voted for independence and President Izetbegović was officially declared as President. This was partly due to the fact that Bosnian Serbs were encouraged to not vote in the referendum as part of a protest.

**28 March, 1992**— After a meeting with US ambassador to Yugoslavia Warren Zimmermann in Sarajevo, Izetbegović withdrew his signature and declared his opposition to any division of Bosnia.

**April 6, 1992**— Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence was recognised by the US and the EC. This day marked the beginning of the Bosnian War.

**April 6, 1992**— Bosnian Serb paramilitary forces immediately began firing on Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the artillery bombardment of the city by Bosnian Serb units of the Yugoslav army began soon thereafter. By mid-April, all of Bosnia was engaged in war. Serbian forces surrounded Sarajevo with about 13,000 troops. The Bosnian troops was underprepared and under equipped and was overwhelmed by Serb forces which not only attacked Sarajevo but nearby towns and villages as well.

**April, 1992**— Many of the towns in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina with large Bosniak populations, such as Zvornik, Foča, and Višegrad, were attacked by a combination of paramilitary forces and Yugoslav army units. Most of the local Bosniak population was expelled from these areas, the first victims in the country of a process described as ethnic cleansing. Although Bosniaks were the primary victims and Serbs the primary perpetrators, Croats were also among the victims and perpetrators. Within six weeks a coordinated offensive by the Yugoslav army,

paramilitary groups, and local Bosnian Serb forces brought roughly two-thirds of Bosnian territory under Serb control.

**April 7, 1992**— War breaks out and Serbs, under the leadership of Radovan Karadzic, lay siege to capital Sarajevo. They occupy 70 percent of the country, killing and persecuting Muslims and Croats to carve out a Serb Republic.

## **Key Issues**

### **Ethnicity**

Ethnic conflict was one of the primary reasons for the Bosnian War as there was a lot of division between the various ethnicities and the power struggle between them. The new Yugoslavian state consisted of various groups such as Serbians, Slovenians, Croatians, and Bosniaks. Even before the formation of the Federation, there was already underlying hostility, as Croatia and Slovenia allied with Germany during the First World War while Serbia fought alongside the allies.

This and other problems came to a boil with the rise of Milosevic, a Serbian nationalist, in 1985. Named the “Butcher of the Balkans”, he sowed discontent between the various ethnic groups and inspired many Serbians to want a “Greater Serbia”, a country of only Serbs. The tensions only rose when Bosnia declared independence in 1992 as Bosnian Serbs wanted to stay in Yugoslavia and form a country solely for Serbs.

Another point of tension was the Bosniaks, the Muslim population of Bosnia. Before the War, the Bosniaks made up the majority of the Bosnian population. However, they were often not seen as part of the country and were the main victims of the ethnic cleansing perpetrated during the war. This ethnic cleansing that was faced by large swathes of the population is one of the key points of the committee.

As delegates, you must look to solve the problem of the various ethnic conflicts going on in the region and also the various atrocities committed against specific ethnicities.

## **Power Vacuum**

While there were always some inherent problems with the Yugoslavian Federation, the problems became obvious with the death of Tito, the one who had combined the various republics into a federation. After Tito's death and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country was in a state of political and economic crisis. This led to people being dissatisfied with their situation which sparked independence movements eventually leading to countries such as Slovenia and Croatia declaring their independence in 1991. The Serb-dominated Yugoslav army attacked the various republics in the hope that this would prevent any future uprisings. However, this only increased the dissatisfaction that people felt with the republic and led to war being officially declared.

This also forced the United Nations to intervene and try to put an end to the war. Without the lack of strong leadership, the Serbs panicked and tried to exert further authority which resulted in the ethnic cleansing of Bosniaks. This is not to say that it was the only reason for the ethnic cleansing and the civil war but it was one of the reasons for it.

The lack of leadership also resulted in an increased desire to be independent, further exacerbated by the totalitarian treatment levied on people by the Yugoslavian army.

## **Breakup of Yugoslavia**

As can be seen from the previous sections, there was a lot of inherent conflict and struggle within Yugoslavia which made the breakup essentially inevitable. However, this was further accelerated by nationalistic elements gaining a stronger foothold with the rise of leaders like Milosevic. Ironically, this gave more of a basis for leaders to leave Yugoslavia as can be evidenced from the Croatian leader, Tudman, who promised to protect Croatia from Milosevic causing secessionist beliefs in belief.

Since many Serbs were loyal to Milosevic and his vision of Serbia, many of them began to mount rebellions within countries like Croatia and Bosnia resulting in even more political and ethnic tensions.

This set off a domino effect in different countries wished to secede from Yugoslavia seeing the poor treatment of people in the country resulting in Slovenian and Bosnian independence referendums.

## **Role of International Community**

The conclusion shared internationally, with the benefit of retrospection, is that the work of the international community was wholly inadequate. This was partially due to the fact that the Bosnian conflict was hard to get involved in and it was also considered as a civil war. Even so, Europe can be said to have played an influential role in the conflict. One of the most important actions taken by the European Community was the recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina as it legitimised the referendum and also the nation as a whole.

The United Nations was also partially involved. The United Nations Protection Force was the first peacekeeping force started by the United Nations and it was done to prevent damage in the Bosnian War and to encourage peace. Another important intervention was during the siege of Sarajevo during which the UN Secretary General, on information provided by the UN Protection Force, requested the NATO to airstrike areas around Sarajevo.

Understanding the role of forces like this is integral to the proceedings of the committee as the committee encourages usage of UN resources, especially ones that already exist and are present in the committee's timeline.

## **Questions to Consider**

- How can the committee prevent Yugoslavian aggression against nations attempting to leave the Yugoslavian Republic?
- How can the committee make sure that there is a peaceful exchange of power?
- How can the committee prevent crimes against ethnic minorities?
- How can the committee prevent other war crimes like rape and torture?
- How can the committee minimise the damage that takes place during the siege of Sarajevo?
- How can the committee promote other countries providing aid to the problem?
- Contrastingly, what can the UN do to ensure that taking the help of other countries does not reduce the power of the UN?
- How can the committee promote fair and open elections for the purpose of a peaceful exchange of power?

- What military and non-military actions can the committee take to address the above problems?

**The delegates should note that this is not a comprehensive list of questions but should give you some direction into what kind of problems the committee looking to solve**

## Reading List

<https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL21644464>

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Bosnian-War>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17632399>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-20/bosnian-war-explained/9170716>

<https://www.history.com/topics/1990s/bosnian-genocide>

<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=19148459>

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/tomorrow/the-yugoslav-war-questions-and-answers- a-1100795.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/1999/11/16/world/un-details-its-failure-to-stop-95-bosnia-massacre.html>

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/ct-xpm-1993-05-06-9305070003-story.html>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17212376>

<https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/politics-or-religion-personal-impressions-on-the-causes-of-the-bosnian-war>

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/decision-to-intervene-how-the-war-in-bosnia-ended/>

<https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a280576.pdf>

<https://balkaninsight.com/2010/06/01/six-strategic-goals-of-bosnian-serbs/>

<http://publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/BP/bp374-e.htm>

<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/09418.pdf>