

# VIENNA MUN CLUB



## HISTORICAL MUN SESSION TOPIC: KOSOVO CONFLICT JANUARY 2013 STUDY GUIDE



It is the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 1999. The Security Council is discussing, how to deal with the conflict in Kosovo after the peace talks of the Rambouillet Conference have failed.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Kosovo is located in southern Serbia. Its population is mixed of various ethnic groups. The majority of the population are Albanians. Until 1989, the region enjoyed a high degree of autonomy within Yugoslavia. The Serbian president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro since its inception in April 1992) Slobodan Milosevic altered the status of the region, removing its autonomy and bringing it under the direct control of Belgrade, the Serbian capital. The Kosovar Albanians opposed this move forcefully.

During 1998, the open conflict between Serbian military and police forces and Kosovar Albanian forces resulted in the deaths of over 1,500 Kosovar Albanians and forced 400,000 people, to flee from their homes. The international community got gravely concerned about the escalating conflict, because of its humanitarian consequences, and the risk of it spreading to other countries. Furthermore, President Milosevic's disregard for diplomatic efforts aimed at peacefully resolving the crisis and the destabilising role of militant Kosovar Albanian forces were worrying aspects of the conflict.

After its autonomy was quashed, Kosovo was faced with state organized oppression: since the early 1990s, the Albanian radio and television were restricted, the newspapers were closed whereas Kosovo Albanians were fired in large numbers from public enterprises and institutions, including banks, hospitals, the post office and schools.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK) was founded by Kosovar Albanians in 1996, who started an insurgency against Belgrade. The UÇK fought against oppression violently and was regarded as being a terrorist group by the US until 1998. At that time, it was recognized as political actor and the US and NATO started a diplomatic relationship with the UÇK.

- ✓ 1989: Milosevic starts to remove Kosovo's rights of autonomy.
- ✓ July 1990: Ethnic Albanian legislators in the province declare Kosovo independent from Serbia.
- ✓ 1991: Albania recognises Kosovo as an independent nation.
- ✓ After 1996, the situation is starting to escalate and armed hostilities start to occur more often.
- ✓ September 24th 1998: Nato issues ultimatum to Milosevic to stop crackdown on Kosovo Albanians or face air strikes.

## PREVIOUS ACTIONS AND UN INVOLVEMENT

During the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the United Nations Security Council adopted various resolutions condemning the violence and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. Nonetheless, the UN Security Council failed to prevent immense atrocities such as the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995. The conflict in the region continued to dominate the Security Council's session. In 1998 the conflict in Kosovo started to cause major concern to the international community.

On **31 March 1998**, acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter ("peace-enforcement"), the Security Council adopted **Resolution 1160** (<http://www.un.org/peace/kosovo/98sc1160.htm>), which condemned the persistent violence by Serbian police forces as well as by the Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK), and urged them to maintain a ceasefire and to return to negotiations in order to seek a peaceful political solution to the conflict. Furthermore, the Security Council imposed an arms embargo and additional economic sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The resolution was approved nearly unanimously by 14 votes, with China abstaining since it regarded the conflict as an internal matter of a sovereign state.

On the **23 September 1998**, acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter the Security Council adopted **Resolution 1199** (<http://www.un.org/peace/kosovo/98sc1199.htm>) due to ongoing fighting in Kosovo and the indiscriminate use of force by the Serbian security forces and Yugoslav Army, which inevitably resulted in a displacement of more than 230,000 people. In this Resolution, the Security Council expressed deep concern about the excessive use of force by Serbian security forces and the Yugoslav army, and called for a cease-fire by both parties to the conflict. In the spirit of the UNSCR, limits were set on the number of Serbian forces in Kosovo, and on the scope of their operations, following a separate agreement with Generals Naumann and Clark. The Security Council reiterated that the status of Kosovo could include greater autonomy and efficient self-administration. China abstained on the resolution 1199.

Following a massacre of 35 ethnic Albanian villagers in Kosovo the Security Council adopted **Resolution 1203** on **24 October 1998** (<http://www.un.org/peace/kosovo/98sc1203.htm>) under Chapter VII UN Charter. The Security Council demanded an end to all hostilities in Kosovo as well as terrorist acts and compliance with previous resolutions by all sides. It was agreed, in addition, that the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) would establish a Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) to observe compliance on the ground and that NATO would establish an aerial surveillance mission. Several non-NATO nations that participate in Partnership for Peace (PfP) agreed to contribute to the surveillance mission organised by NATO. Resolution 1203 was adopted by 13 votes, with two abstentions from China and Russia. China was against a resolution that would pressure the internal affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Russia complained that the resolution had not totally taken into account positive achievements by the Serbian government.

In support of the OSCE, NATO established a special military task force to assist with the emergency evacuation of members of the KVM, if renewed conflict should put them at risk. This task force was deployed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia under the overall direction of NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

## Current Situation

Since January 1999, the situation has worsened. The attacks from both sides got more intense and occurred more often. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, the Račak massacre took place. 45 Kosovan Albanian farmers were rounded up, led up a hill and massacred. The bodies had been discovered by OSCE monitors, but Yugoslavia denied that the massacre had happened. The Račak massacre was the culmination of the KLA attacks and Serbian reprisals that had continued throughout the winter of 1998–1999. The incident was immediately condemned as a massacre by the Western countries and the United Nations Security Council. This was one of the events that led NATO to decide that the conflict could only be settled by introducing a military peacekeeping force under the auspices of NATO, to forcibly restrain the two sides. NATO gave the power to the Secretary General of NATO, Javier Solana, to authorise air strikes against targets on FRY (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) territory to achieve a settlement of the conflict and to avoid a humanitarian crisis.

In February 1999, a conference (**Rambouillet Conference**) was organized in order to find a solution for the conflict and to guarantee peace in the area. The so-called 'Rambouillet Accords' called for granting Kosovo the status of an autonomous province, disarmament of the UÇK and the deployment of 30,000 NATO troops with an unhindered right of passage for NATO troops on Yugoslav territory. The contract was signed on **18 March 1999** by the Kosovo-Albanian, American and British delegation, but was rejected by the Serbian and Russian delegations. Albanians wanted an independent Kosovo, while the Serbs wanted to return them autonomy, but refused disarming their forces there or allowing international peacekeepers to be deployed.

The peace talks failed. How can the Security Council react now? NATO is very willing to step in. Is there a way, the international community can achieve an agreement?

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- Between March 1998 and March 1999, before NATO governments decided upon military action, over 2000 people were killed as a result of the Serb government's policies in Kosovo.
- During the summer of 1998, a quarter of a million Kosovar Albanians were forced from their homes as their houses, villages and crops were destroyed.
- In January 1999, evidence was discovered, by a United Nations humanitarian team, of the massacre of over 40 people in the village of Racak.
- The United Nations High Commission for Refugees estimated that the campaign of ethnic cleansing had resulted in 226,000 refugees in Albania, 125,000 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and 33,000 in Montenegro.

## INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

### NATO

NATO regards the peace talks as failed and does not believe any more, that peace can be achieved by negotiations only. NATO members gave power to the Secretary General of NATO to decide upon a military intervention. Its objectives in relation to the conflict in Kosovo are the following:

- an immediate ending of violence and repression;
- the stationing in Kosovo of an international military presence;
- the unconditional and safe return of all refugees and displaced persons and unhindered access to them by humanitarian aid organisations;
- the establishment of a political framework agreement for Kosovo on the basis of the Rambouillet Accords, in conformity with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Throughout the conflict, the achievement of these objectives, accompanied by measures to ensure their full implementation, has been regarded by the Alliance as the prerequisite for bringing to an end the violence and human suffering in Kosovo.

## **Federal Republic of Yugoslavia**

Slobodan Milošević, the president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had called the bombings, an 'unlawful act of terrorism' and the 'key to colonize Yugoslavia'. The Yugoslav population also strongly opposed the bombing and showed defiance with cultural-related themes. Milošević also stated that, 'the only correct decision that could have been made was the one to reject foreign troops on our territory. The Yugoslavs who opposed Milošević also opposed the bombing, saying that it 'supports Milošević rather than attacking him.'

## **The People`s Republic of China**

The People's Republic of China deeply condemned and strongly opposed the bombing, saying this would be an act of aggression against the Yugoslav people. Jiang Zemin, the President of the country at the time, calls to stop considering airstrikes immediately and demanded peaceful negotiations.

## **India**

India had condemned the bombing. The Indian foreign ministry also stated that it 'urged all military actions to be brought to a halt' and that FR Yugoslavia be enabled to resolve its internal issues internally.

## **Albania**

Albania strongly supports the bombing campaign. This resulted in the breaking of diplomatic ties between Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, who had made claims of the Albanian government harboring UÇK insurgents and supplying them with weapons.

## **Russia**

Russia strongly condemned the campaign. President Boris Yeltsin stated that, Russia would be deeply upset if NATO should launch military action against sovereign Yugoslavia. Russia regards that as an open aggression. Russia also threatens to step in militarily if such an intervention should start.

## **UK**

As a member of the NATO, the United Kingdom had strongly supported the bombing campaign. A majority of the British population had agreed to it.

## What happened after March 18<sup>th</sup> ?

(These informations should not influence your strategy. In a Historical MUN Session, we do not need to exactly keep to the facts, about what happened in reality after the day, at which we pretend to meet)

NATO started bombing several targets in Yugoslavia on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1999. They did so, even though they did not get an UN mandate. Supporters of the intervention speak about the Kosovo war as the first humanitarian war and justify the operation by the need to help the Albanians and to avoid a humanitarian crisis.

Opponents say that NATO acted against international law, because they did not have an UN mandate. The case was brought to the UN Security Council by Russia, who wanted to pass a resolution that would affirm "that such unilateral use of force constitutes a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter". China, Namibia, and Russia voted for the resolution, the other members against, thus it failed to pass.

When NATO bombed its embassy in Belgrade on May 7, 1999, riots and mass demonstrations against the governments of the United States and Great Britain have been reported against both the attack and the operation overall.

- By the end of May 1999, over 230,000 refugees had arrived in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia , over 430,000 in Albania and some 64,000 in Montenegro. Approximately 21,500 had reached Bosnia and over 61,000 had been evacuated to other countries. Within Kosovo itself, an estimated 580,000 people had been rendered homeless.
- It is estimated that by the end of May, 1.5 million people, i.e. 90% of the population of Kosovo, had been expelled from their homes. Some 225,000 Kosovar men were believed to be missing. At least 5000 Kosvars had been executed.
- NATO forces have flown in many thousands of tons of food and equipment into the area. By the end of May 1999, over 4666 tons of food and water, 4325 tons of other goods, 2624 tons of tents and nearly 1600 tons of medical supplies had been transported to the area.

## FURTHER LINKS

[HTTP://WWW.NATO.INT/KOSOVO/HISTORY.HTM](http://www.nato.int/kosovo/history.htm)

*NATO'S role in Kosovo: Historical Overview*

[HTTP://WWW.PBS.ORG/WGBH/PAGES/FRONTLINE/SHOWS/KOSOVO/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/)

*Historical records, discussions & Multimedia*

[HTTP://NEWS.BBC.CO.UK/1/ENGLISH/STATIC/KOSOVO\\_FACT\\_FILES/DEFAULT.STM](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/English/Static/Kosovo_Fact_Files/default.stm)

*Detailed Historical records*

[HTTP://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/CHANNEL/HCr9FTGOX4X-K](http://www.youtube.com/channel/HCr9FTGOX4X-K)

*documentaries*