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Study Guide

Economic and Social Council

THE LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES OF THE YUGOSLAV WARS

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Table of contents:

Table of contents:	3
!!! Important notice:	3
Introduction	3
Job of ECOSOC.....	4
Historical context (The Yugoslav wars)	4
SFRJ summary.....	4
Croatian and Bosnian wars.....	5
War in Kosovo.....	6
Present day: Bosnia and Herzegovina	6
Economy.....	6
Present day: Kosovo	7
Economy.....	8
Poverty, unemployment and education.....	8
Human rights.....	9
Serb Minority and the relationship with Serbia.....	9
Question to consider during research	10
Relevant documents and treaties	10
Sources	10

!!! Important notice:

Dear reader,

If you are reading this, there is a high likelihood that you have applied to be in this council. It is very possible that you applied because you are passionate about the topic due to your family being **affected by the fallout of the collapse of Yugoslavia**. In that case we highly encourage you not to inflame interethnic tensions; for example: denying or promoting genocide or praising convicted war criminals, outside the scope of committee sessions and your countries specific policies on the matter.

We would also like to remind delegates that they should represent their countries opinion on the matter, not their own, and not to direct your anger at delegates saying things you personally do not agree with during the sessions.

We, the chairs, have had both our families hurt in the Yugoslav wars, and we are aware that for some this still is a hot topic. **If there are any fights, arguments or personal attacks as a result of one's ethnicity or opinion on the conflict, during or between sessions, all participating parties will be suspended.**

- M & K

Introduction

Dear delegate,

This is a short introduction to the workings of VičMUN 2024 ECOSOC. There will be ~20 delegates presided by two equal co-chairs - Katja Dobrišek and Maks Leon Rogelj. Every delegate represents a country on their own. All UN member states have one equal vote, there is no veto and resolutions are not legally binding. There will be two observer states,

which can debate and propose resolutions, but cannot vote: Palestine (represented by Fatah, just like in the UN) and Kosovo (which is not a member state of UN, however it will be represented as it is one of the topics).

While the broad topic is “THE LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES OF THE YUGOSLAV WARS” and any discussion on the topic is welcomed, our two main focus points on which two resolutions shall be written are: The present day situation in Bosnia in Herzegovina, with its mass emigration, corruption, poverty and ethnic separation and the status of Republika Srpska, and The present day situation in Kosovo: its lack of economic development and its relationship with Serbia and the Serb minority within its borders. Any other questions regarding the council can be sent to maks.rogelj3@gmail.com.

Job of ECOSOC

“The Economic and Social Council is at the heart of the United Nations system to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. It is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. /.../The UN Charter established ECOSOC in 1945 as one of the six main organs of the United Nations.”

(ECOSOC: *About Us*, n.d.)

[What does ECOSOC do?](#) (extended document for those interested in the specifics)

***Note that resolutions passed in ECOSOC are not legally binding and thus cannot be enforced without the involved party’s consent.**

Historical context (The Yugoslav wars)

PRELUDE: **This section is **not** intended as a fully comprehensive recollection of the causes, casualties, events or atrocities of the war, but as a **short summary**. We recommend and encourage delegates to do their own research. Please, do not take any missing details or facts as a bias for any side in the conflicts.**

SFRJ summary

After the atrocities suffered by the south slavs in the second world war, including forced germanisation, magyarization, labour camps and a concentration camp for children, the people were again united under a socialist federation led by a strongman authoritarian leader - Josip Broz Tito. His time at the helm of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia was marked by the slogan “Brotherhood and Unity” (srb-cro: “bratstvo i jedinstvo”, slo: “bratstvo in enotnost”), promoting warm interethnic relations and a shared yugoslav identity. That idea, however, seemingly died out around the same time as Tito, in the 1980s. Furthermore, the economy began stagnating due to the 70s oil crisis, failed labour and economic reforms, a deepening division between the different republics standards of living and an uncertainty about the federations continuing existence. This led to more distrust between the ethnic groups and their leaders. (*Yugoslavia | History, Map, Flag, Breakup, & Facts*, 2024)

Tito's death led to a political/succession crisis, after which a compromise was reached where each constituent republic headed the presidency of SFRJ for a period of time. This agreement, however, did nothing to solve the deepening divisions between the ethnicities on one major topic: federalisation. The Serbs, being the most populous of all the ethnic groups, wanted a strong central federal government, while other ethnicities wished for more autonomy. By the late 80s more nationalist characters came under the spotlight, such as Croatia's Franjo Tuđman and Serbia's Slobodan Milošević. The latter consolidated power in the country's presidency by appointing loyalists to four out of the eight presidency seats and started centralizing the government in Belgrade. This sparked a fear of Yugoslavia turning into "Greater Serbia" in the non-Serb majority republics. All of this came to a head at the 14th Extraordinary Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, where the Slovene and Croatian delegation staged a walkout, thus came the beginning of the end. (*The Conflicts*, n.d.; *Yugoslavia | History, Map, Flag, Breakup, & Facts*, 2024; *The Breakup of Yugoslavia, 1990–1992*, n.d.)

All the republics, with the exception of Serbia and Montenegro subsequently held successful independence referenda. Slovenia and Macedonia declared independence without much issue, as the serb authorities in Belgrade did not consider them of much importance due to the lack of a large serb minority. On the other hand there were many Serbs living in Croatia and Bosnia, who wished to remain in Yugoslavia, due to fearing discrimination in the new independent republics. Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia rebelled against the new republics with the military support of the central Yugoslav government. Thus began the bloody Croatian and later Bosnian Wars, followed by an Albanian uprising in Kosovo. (*Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations*, n.d.; *The Conflicts*, n.d.)

Croatian and Bosnian wars

There is little point covering the war day by day or battle by battle so we are going to be pointing out only the major events with long lasting impacts. Many cities on all sides of the conflict which were beforehand major social centers or cultural heritage sites were destroyed by sieges and shellings. These include Vukovar, Dubrovnik and Sarajevo. During the war, there was a lot of ethnic cleansing, rape, looting and other human rights violations from all sides of the conflict, however the worst - and most famous crimes against humanity were preformed by the bosnian serb forces against the muslim bosniak population. There were many ethnic cleansings, massacres and the infamous Srebrenica genocide, all of which were later ruled by the ICC as war crimes, crimes against humanity and a genocide. (*The Conflicts*, n.d.; *Genocide In Bosnia*, n.d.; *Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations*, n.d.; *Bosnia and Herzegovina | Facts, Geography, History, & Maps*, 2024)

The war lasted for three and a half years in Bosnia and four and half years in Croatia, culminating in a total of 130 000 deaths, many of them civilians. Peace came with the signing of the Dayton agreement, which created the modern state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, inhabited by three constituent peoples and comprised of two parts: Republika Srpska, a unitary serb state, and The federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a federation of ten Croatian or Bosnian (or mixed) cantons. Croatia succeeded in asserting its sovereignty and Yugoslavia became a shell of its former self - now comprising only Serbia, Montenegro and the two autonomous regions of Vojvodina and Kosovo. (*Dayton Agreement*, 1995; *Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations*, n.d.; *Genocide In Bosnia*, n.d.)

War in Kosovo

Going back in time for a bit to before the war began and after Slobodan Milošević consolidated his power in Serbia, a wave of reforms were implemented in Kosovo. Interethnic distrust was on the rise especially between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo. Tensions were inflamed by unfortunate events such as the [Đorđe Martinović incident](#). Ethnic Albanians were pushed out of public offices and replaced by Serbs. This, naturally, angered the Albanian majority populace, and soon led to the formation of armed militias with the goal of an independent Kosovo or a union with Albania. In 1998 the Kosovo Liberation Army came out in open rebellion against Yugoslav/Serbian rule, and police and army reinforcements were sent in to crush the insurgents. However the campaign, yet again, included heavy retribution against Albanian civilians. After a failed peace deal, NATO began a 78 day bombing campaign of Serbia, which resulted in Serb withdrawal from Kosovo and the creation of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

Present day: Bosnia and Herzegovina

29 years have passed since the signing of the Dayton Agreement, creating the state known as Bosnia and Herzegovina (shortened to BiH), which comprises two entities with high degrees of sovereignty: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. The former being a federation of Bosniak and Croat cantons, and the latter a unitary state for all the Serbs living in the territory of BiH. The Brčko district was also established in 2000; a self-governing administrative unit that is not a part of either entity. This was due to it being split into two parts in the agreement, causing many disputes until the interference of OSCE. Besides the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the constitutions of both Entities describe the distribution of powers between the different levels of governance. Moreover, both Entities have adopted their own laws on local self-government. (CoR - Bosnia-Herzegovina, n.d.)

Economy

The economy suffered heavily from the Bosnian war, with over €200 billion in material damages and GDP (excluding services) reduced by 90% between 1990 and 1995. Despite some progress, such as the stabilization of its currency (the convertible mark) and improvements in the banking sector, Bosnia's economy remains fragile and heavily reliant on international aid. So far, it has not been possible to forge all the parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina into a single, integrated economic and political area. Foreign investors find the highly fragmented state structures and complex administrative system almost impenetrable. The lack of legal certainty and the corruption at all levels and in all areas is holding back economic development. Bosnia and Herzegovina ranked 108th out of 180 countries in the 2023 Corruption Perception Index compiled by Transparency International. (*2023 Corruption Perceptions Index: Explore the... - Transparency.org, 2024*)

The high unemployment rate continues to be a serious problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is around 13.5 per cent, with a much higher rate among young people. The employment rate is very low at around 42 per cent among 15- to 64-year-olds in the last quarter of 2023.

In the last three decades, due to massive emigration, BiH has lost over 24 per cent of its citizens. These are mostly young, educated, and skilled people who decided to leave their country due to poor democratic and economic conditions and low quality of life. (*Bosnia And Herzegovina Employment Rate, n.d.*)

The public sector is one of the largest employers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, employing a substantial portion of the workforce and accounting for an estimated 40% of the GDP. This includes not only government employees but also those in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and public services. It is alleged that corruption runs rampant here, where jobs in government and SOEs are often awarded based on political loyalty rather than merit. The dominance of the public sector has stifled the private sector, leaving little room for it to develop. (*Key findings on the 2023 Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina*)

Tensions and divide

The Bosnian war deteriorated inter-ethnic relations in BiH, many studies showing that areas with a higher exposure to violence tend to be less trusting towards the other ethnic groups and associate more with their ethnic political party. While this pattern is steadily declining, other factors, such as ethnically homogenous zones, history, politics and even religion being strongly tied to their ethnicity (Serbs tend to be Orthodox Christian, Croats tend to be Catholic, and Bosniaks tend to be Muslim) still lead to a lot of tension between the groups. Around 81% of the citizens of RS are Serbs, while 73% of FBiH are Bosniaks for example. The divide is especially noticeable once the question of joining the European union is raised. The FBiH is in support of joining the union, while RS has closer ties with Russia and often expresses secessionist sentiments, inhibiting the country from joining the EU. The government currently has three presidents, each representing the Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats respectively.

Present day: Kosovo

Kosovo is a partially recognised landlocked state, which Serbia claims as its own autonomous province. Although Kosovo is largely ethnic-Albanian with a small Serbian minority, Kosovo is a territory of cultural and historical significance for Serbia. It is not a United Nations member state, but it is recognised by 114 out of the 192 UN member states (*note: Kosovo will be present in the council as a non-voting UN observer state*). In 1998 an Albanian secessionist movement led a revolt with the support of NATO against the serb majority Yugoslavia. After ten years of UN and EU supervision, Kosovo officially declared itself an independent state from Serbia in 2008. However the two countries cannot come to an agreement on Kosovo's international status. Moreover, Kosovo has a small but stubborn Serb minority, which refuses to integrate into the new state, running their own parallel state institutions with the support of Serbia. Nowadays Kosovo is the poorest country in the region, with high levels of unemployment and abject poverty. The population is heavily reliant on remittances from abroad and international aid to sustain itself. Although it has functioning democratic institutions, its public sector is broken from years of underfunding and corruption. Just like BiH, Kosovo is suffering from a lot of emigration, however it has tapered off in recent years. (*Kosovo | History, Map, Flag, Population, Languages, & Capital, 2024; Fella, 2024*)

Economy

Kosovo has experienced steady economic progress since declaring independence, with a nearly 50% increase in per-capita income and a 35% reduction in the poverty rate. The country has transitioned away from high dependence on foreign aid, outperforming peer countries of similar per-capita income thanks to a steady expansion in consumption and investment, with a strong impetus from diaspora inflow (remittances), public investment in infrastructure. Kosovo has a stable fiscal stance and low inflation rates, because it uses the Euro as official legal tender and so has no control over its monetary policy. (*Kosovo Overview: Development News, Research, Data*, n.d.)

However, economic growth and productivity continue to be constrained by structural issues, including a large informal economy, reliance on remittances for consumption, and high unemployment rates among women and youth. A small but growing domestic market, limited regional integration, and continued tensions with Serbia continue to be the most significant barriers to attracting capital. The Government of Kosovo's sometimes capricious economic policies, political interference in the economy, and limited public-private dialogue also pose challenges for investors. In June 2023, the Government of Kosovo, citing security concerns, banned the entry of Serbian-origin finished goods into Kosovo. To continue to grow, will require addressing infrastructure bottlenecks, prioritizing human capital investment, and creating an environment more conducive to private sector development. (*Kosovo Overview: Development News, Research, Data*, n.d.; *Kosovo - United States Department of State*, n.d.)

Investors are attracted by Kosovo's young population, low labor costs, proximity to the EU market, and natural resources, including gold, chrome, nickel, aluminium, copper, iron metals, and lead-zinc. Kosovo also possesses the world's fifth-largest proven reserves of lignite. Kosovo's coal mines are the fuel source for over 90 percent of Kosovo's power. (*Kosovo Overview: Development News, Research, Data*, n.d.; *Kosovo - United States Department of State*, n.d.; *Kosovo - Mining and Minerals*, 2024)

Poverty, unemployment and education

Kosovo remains one of the poorest countries in Europe, with an estimated 23 % of the population living in poverty. Kosovo's GDP per capita is just one-quarter of the European Union average. Kosovo spends just 8.5 per cent of its GDP on social protection, compared to an average of 28 per cent in the EU. As a result, children's access to health, education and other social services remains limited, especially for the most disadvantaged. (*Annual Report 2021, 2022*)

33.7% of Kosovans aged 15 to 24 years are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The gender gap in labor force participation in Kosovo is significantly higher than in neighboring countries and among European Union members, with only 17.1 percent of women employed, compared to 50.8 percent of men, according to 2022 data. Improving the quality of education and aligning it with labour market needs remains a key challenge. Public spending on education was 4.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020. Kosovo fell almost to the bottom of the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test results, ranking 76th of 80 participating countries for reading, 77th for science and 74th for mathematics. (*Annual Report 2023, 2024*)

Human rights

Read: [Human rights in Kosovo Amnesty International](#)

Serb Minority and the relationship with Serbia

In the 1998 NATO bombing campaign many Serbs fled Kosovo, due to it being an active warzone. After the fact, many more fled the UN supervised territory, fearing retribution by ethnic albanians. Those who remained, however, vehemently opposed the Kosovan central government.

- In 2008, when Kosovo declared independence there were many unsuccessful attempts by Serbia to somehow regain control of the country, or at least the serb majority areas.
- In 2013, the Brussels agreement was signed by Serbia and Kosovo, a baby step towards the normalization of relations, with the goal of the countries' EU integration. This agreement gave Serb municipalities some autonomy in regards to judicial matters, policing and representation in the Kosovo parliament.
- At the 3511th meeting of the Council of Europe in 2016 a "Community/Association of Serb municipalities" was proposed: an organization with some level of autonomy from the Kosovan government to manage serb affairs. For a long time, negotiations were blocked by the Kosovo Government. Its latest draft, from 2023, is currently under consideration by the Kosovo constitutional court.
- In 2020 Kosovo and Serbia reached a deal on the normalization of economic relations brokered by United States' president Donald J. Trump.
- In 2022 tensions rose due to disagreements over car license plates, with Serbs wishing to keep their Serbian issued license plates after they were supposed to replace them with Kosovan license plates. This resulted in roads being barricaded, public unrest in Northern Kosovo, a Serb withdrawal from Kosovo government institutions and a boycott of local elections. In the end of 2023 all Serb license plates were replaced by Kosovan license plates and a mutual recognition of license plates between Serbia and Kosovo. Since then the northern Kosvo municipalities have had heavy military police presence.
- In late 2023 an "Agreement on the path to normalization between Kosovo and Serbia", was reported to have been agreed in principle by Kosovo prime minister Albin Kurti and Serbian president Aleksandar Vučić at a meeting in Brussels. Note that Kosovo is yet to legislate any part of the agreement and Serbia has already breached it by voting against Kosovo membership in the Council of Europe.
- In 2024 the Kosovan central bank proposed a ban on the Serbian dinar, to stop the Serbian state providing paralel services like pensions and healthcare to north Kosovo. (*Kosovo - United States Department of State*, n.d.; *Toward Normal Relations Between Kosovo and Serbia*, 2024; *Kosovo | History, Map, Flag, Population, Languages, & Capital*, 2024; Fella, 2024)

Question to consider during research

- What is your State's position on Kosovan independence and its relationship with Serbia? Are the recent actions of the Kosovan government justified because of the historical context?
- What is your country's position on the state of BiH? Should more power be given to the devolved governments and cantons or should it become a unitary multiethnic state? Does your country support bosnian accession to the EU?
- How does one go about normalizing relations between nations for 30 year old wounds? Which side did your country side with during the Yugoslav wars?

Relevant documents and treaties

Recommended reads:

[Kosovo | History, Map, Flag, Population, Languages, & Capital | Britannica](#)

[Bosnia and Herzegovina | Facts, Geography, History, & Maps | Britannica](#)

[Dayton Agreement](#)

[Human rights in Kosovo Amnesty International](#)

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