

Conflict and Cooperation (1945-2000)

Topic 4: Bosnian War (1992-1995)

SAJC History Unit, 2024

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Learning Outcomes (from the Examination Syllabus)

Students are able to:

- evaluate causes of conflicts
- evaluate the roles of different actors in the development of conflicts over time
- evaluate the effectiveness of conflict management

Essential Questions for this topic:

- Why did conflicts occur and how did they affect the international order?
- Why do countries/ethnic groups engage in war and conflict with one another?
- Why do wars and conflicts usually remain protracted and difficult to resolve?
- What are the consequences of war and conflict for affected countries and the region at large?
- How effective were the attempts to manage these conflicts?

Guiding Questions for this topic:

- What were the historical and political contexts leading up to the Bosnian War?
- How did the breakup of Yugoslavia contribute to the outbreak of the Bosnian War?
- What were the main ethnic and religious groups involved in the conflict, and what were their respective goals?

- In what ways did economic interests play a role in the Bosnian War?
- What role did ethnic and religious nationalism play in the escalation of the Bosnian War?
- How did international actors and organisations, such as the United Nations and NATO, respond to the Bosnian War?
- What was the significance of NATO's intervention in the Bosnian War?
- How did the Dayton Agreement bring an end to the conflict, and what were its main provisions?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Dayton Accords in managing the Bosnian War?

1. Historical Context of Bosnia

- Before the Bosnian War erupted in 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina was a region characterised by its rich cultural diversity, historical significance, and complex socio-political landscape. Nestled in the heart of the Balkans, Bosnia was a melting pot of ethnicities, religions, and traditions.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina was home to three main ethnic groups: Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Serbs (Orthodox Christians), and Croats (Catholics). According to the 1991 census, Bosniaks made up about 44% of the population, Serbs around 31%, and Croats approximately 17%. The remaining population consisted of various other ethnicities, including Jews and Roma. This diverse demographic composition was both a source of cultural richness and a potential flashpoint for ethnic tensions.
- Bosnia's cultural landscape was a testament to its diverse heritage. The capital city, Sarajevo, often referred to as the "Jerusalem of Europe," was a vibrant hub where mosques, churches, and synagogues coexisted within close proximity. The city's architecture reflected this blend of influences, with Ottoman-style bazaars, Austro-Hungarian buildings, and modern structures standing side by side. Festivals, music, and cuisine in Bosnia were a fusion of Eastern and Western traditions, creating a unique cultural tapestry.
- The political landscape of Bosnia before the war was shaped by its status as one of the six republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

(SFRY). Under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia maintained a delicate balance among its diverse ethnic groups through a policy of "brotherhood and unity." However, Tito's death in 1980 and the subsequent rise of nationalist movements across Yugoslavia began to unravel this balance. In Bosnia, political parties emerged along ethnic lines, with the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) representing Bosniaks, the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) representing Serbs, and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) representing Croats.

- Economically, Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of the less developed republics within the former Yugoslavia. The economy was primarily based on agriculture, mining, and industry. The industrial sector included steel production, textiles, and machinery manufacturing. Despite its economic challenges, Bosnia had a relatively high standard of living compared to other Eastern European countries. However, regional disparities existed, with urban areas like Sarajevo being more developed than rural regions.

2. Introduction to the Bosnian War

- The Bosnian War, which took place from 1992 to 1995, was one of the most devastating conflicts in Europe since World War II. It was characterised by ethnic strife, brutal violence, and significant international intervention. To understand the complexities of this war, it is essential to delve into its causes, key events, major players, and the aftermath.
- Ethnic and religious divisions can lead to intra-state conflicts, especially in countries with diverse populations where one group feels marginalised or oppressed by another. Bosnia's multi-ethnic composition, with Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks, made it particularly vulnerable to ethnic conflict.
- The roots of the Bosnian War can be traced back to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, a multi-ethnic federation that began to unravel in the early 1990s. Yugoslavia was composed of six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. The death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, who had been the unifying leader of Yugoslavia, left a power vacuum that exacerbated ethnic tensions. Nationalist movements gained momentum, and the desire for independence grew among the republics. Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in 1991, leading to brief conflicts. However, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was far more complex due to its diverse population of Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Croats, and Serbs.

- One of the most notorious aspects of the Bosnian War was the practice of "ethnic cleansing," a term that gained international notoriety during this conflict. Ethnic cleansing involved the systematic removal of ethnic or religious groups from certain areas through terror, violence, and forced displacement. The Bosnian Serbs, with the support of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), targeted Bosniak and Croat populations, resulting in mass killings, rapes, and the destruction of homes and cultural sites. The siege of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, became a symbol of the war's brutality. The city was subjected to relentless shelling and sniper attacks by Bosnian Serb forces, leading to thousands of civilian casualties.
- The international community was initially slow to respond to the crisis in Bosnia. The United Nations (UN) imposed an arms embargo on all the former Yugoslav republics, which disproportionately affected the Bosnian government forces, as they were less well-armed compared to the Bosnian Serbs. The UN also established "safe areas" for civilians, but these zones often failed to provide adequate protection. The most infamous failure was the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, where Bosnian Serb forces overran the UN-protected enclave and killed more than 8,000 Bosniak men and boys. This atrocity was later classified as genocide by international courts. The atrocity prompted a stronger international response, including NATO's military intervention.
- NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) eventually intervened in the conflict, conducting airstrikes against Bosnian Serb positions in 1994 and 1995. The turning point came with the NATO bombing campaign in August 1995, which targeted Bosnian Serb military infrastructure. This pressure, combined with successful offensives by Bosnian and Croat forces, led to the negotiation of the Dayton Agreement in November 1995. The agreement, brokered by the United States, brought an end to the war and established a complex political structure for Bosnia and Herzegovina, dividing it into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (mainly Bosniak and Croat) and the Republika Srpska (mainly Serb).

2.1 Understanding root causes

- Intra-state conflicts, often characterised by violence within a single country, have become a significant focus of study for political scientists, historians, and international relations experts. These conflicts, which can arise from a variety of underlying issues such as ethnic tensions, political power struggles, economic inequalities, and historical grievances, pose complex challenges for both the affected nations and the international community.

- The Bosnian War, which took place from 1992 to 1995, serves as a poignant example of how these factors can interact to create a devastating conflict. By examining the root causes and implications of the Bosnian War, we can gain a deeper understanding of intra-state conflicts and develop more effective strategies for prevention and resolution. By examining the Bosnian War, one can see how these factors interact to create complex conflict situations that are often difficult to resolve.
- Intra-state conflicts like the Bosnian War are rarely confined within national borders. They often have significant regional and global implications. The Bosnian War, for example, led to massive refugee flows, with hundreds of thousands of people fleeing to neighbouring countries and beyond. This created a humanitarian crisis that required international intervention.
- Additionally, the conflict attracted the involvement of foreign powers, including NATO and the United Nations, which sought to prevent the war from destabilising the broader Balkan region. The international community's response to the Bosnian War underscores the interconnected nature of intra-state conflicts and the need for coordinated efforts to address them.

2.2 Key Issues

- **Ethnic Cleansing:** The war was marked by systematic campaigns of ethnic cleansing, particularly by Bosnian Serb forces against Bosniaks. The Srebrenica massacre, where over 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were killed, is one of the most notorious examples.
- **Human Rights Violations:** Widespread human rights abuses, including mass killings and forced displacement, characterised the conflict. These atrocities drew international condemnation and eventually led to international intervention.
- **International Intervention:** The conflict saw significant involvement from the UN and NATO, with peacekeeping missions, humanitarian aid, and eventually military intervention, culminating in the Dayton Accords, which ended the war.

3 Overview of Case Studies: The Bosnian War

3.1 Background

- Bosnia and Herzegovina's path to independence was particularly fraught with challenges. The republic's multi-ethnic composition made it difficult to achieve a consensus on its future. In 1991, as Croatia and Slovenia declared independence, Bosnia faced increasing pressure to decide its own fate. The Bosnian Serbs, led by Radovan Karadžić and supported by Milošević, opposed independence and sought to remain part of a Greater Serbia. On the other hand, Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats leaned towards independence.

- In March 1992, a referendum on independence was held, boycotted by the Bosnian Serbs. The majority voted in favour of independence, and Bosnia and Herzegovina declared itself a sovereign state. Despite the boycott, the referendum passed with overwhelming support from Bosniaks and Croats. On March 3, 1992, Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its independence from Yugoslavia. This declaration was met with immediate resistance from Bosnian Serb leaders, who sought to create their own separate entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina, aligned with Serbia. The Bosnian Serb leadership, under Radovan Karadžić and military commander Ratko Mladić, launched a campaign to create ethnically homogeneous territories, leading to widespread violence and atrocities.

- April 6, 1992, is often marked as the beginning of the Bosnian War due to the outbreak of violence in the capital city, Sarajevo. On this day, Bosnian Serb forces, supported by the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), began a siege of Sarajevo that would last for nearly four years. The siege was characterized by relentless shelling, sniper attacks, and a blockade that cut off essential supplies to the city's residents. The international community watched in horror as Sarajevo, once a symbol of multiculturalism and coexistence, became a battleground.

4 Causes of the Bosnian War

4.1 Political Causes: Breakup of Yugoslavia

- **Dissolution of Yugoslavia:** The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was established after World War II under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito. It was a federation composed of six republics: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. Tito's leadership was instrumental in maintaining a delicate balance among the various ethnic groups within the federation. His policies of "Brotherhood and Unity" aimed to suppress nationalist sentiments and promote a Yugoslav identity. However, Tito's death in 1980 marked the beginning of the end for this fragile unity.
- The weakening of the central Yugoslav government in the 1980s created a power vacuum that nationalist movements within the republics quickly sought to fill. Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its ethnically diverse population (Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats), was particularly vulnerable to the resulting instability. The central Yugoslav government weakened, and nationalist movements among the republics gained momentum.
- **Nationalist Agendas:** Political leaders like Radovan Karadžić (Bosnian Serb) and Franjo Tuđman (Croatian leader) pursued ethno-nationalist agendas, aiming to carve out ethnically homogeneous territories.
- Radovan Karadžić, a psychiatrist turned politician, emerged as a key figure in the Bosnian Serb nationalist movement. As the president of the self-proclaimed Republika Srpska, Karadžić sought to establish a Serb-dominated state within Bosnia and Herzegovina. His vision was rooted in the idea of Greater Serbia, a concept that aimed to unite all Serb-inhabited territories into a single nation. This ethnonationalist agenda was driven by a fear of marginalization and a desire to protect Serb identity and interests in a multi-ethnic Bosnia.
- Karadžić's pursuit of an ethnically homogeneous Serb state led to the implementation of policies that sought to alter the demographic composition of Bosnia. This included the use of ethnic cleansing, a brutal strategy aimed at removing non-Serb populations from areas claimed by Serbs. The most infamous example of this was the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, where over 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were systematically executed by Bosnian Serb forces. This atrocity, later classified as genocide by international courts,

highlighted the extreme measures taken by Karadžić and his followers to achieve their nationalist goals.

- On the other side of the conflict, Franjo Tuđman, the president of Croatia, envisioned a Greater Croatia that included parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina with significant Croat populations. His policies were driven by a desire to expand Croatian territory and influence, as well as to protect Croat communities in Bosnia. Tuđman's ambitions were evident in the establishment of the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia, a self-declared entity within Bosnia that sought to unite Croat-majority areas under Croatian control.
- Tuđman's pursuit of a Greater Croatia also involved the use of ethnic cleansing and forced displacement. Croat forces, often in collaboration with Bosnian Serb forces, targeted Bosniak communities in an effort to create ethnically homogeneous territories. The destruction of the historic city of Mostar, including the iconic Stari Most bridge, symbolised the extent of the violence and cultural devastation wrought by Tuđman's nationalist policies.
- This pursuit of nationalist goals led to the fragmentation of Bosnia, with each group—Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks—seeking dominance over different parts of the country.
- **Territorial Control:** For the Bosniaks, the primary goal was to preserve the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a multi-ethnic state. They sought to maintain the unity of the republic and prevent its fragmentation along ethnic lines. This was not only a matter of political principle but also a practical necessity, as the Bosniaks were geographically dispersed throughout the country. Any division of territory based on ethnic lines would have left many Bosniaks isolated and vulnerable.
- On the other hand, the Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs had different aspirations. The Bosnian Croats, supported by neighbouring Croatia, aimed to create a separate Croat entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina or even to annex parts of the country to Croatia. This ambition was driven by a desire to protect the Croat population and to secure territories that were historically or strategically important to them.
- Similarly, the Bosnian Serbs, backed by Serbia, sought to establish a Serb-dominated entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina or to join parts of the country

with Serbia. This goal was motivated by a combination of historical claims, strategic considerations, and a desire to create a contiguous Serb territory.

4.2 Religious and Ethnic Divides

- **Deep-Rooted Divisions:** The Bosnian War was marked by deep-seated ethnic and religious divisions, with Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox Christians), Croats (Catholics), and Bosniaks (Muslims) each vying for control. These divisions were not new but had been suppressed during the Yugoslav period. With the collapse of Yugoslavia, these tensions re-emerged with renewed intensity.
- **Nationalist Propaganda:** Nationalist leaders used propaganda to inflame these ethnic and religious divisions, portraying the conflict as a zero-sum game where the survival of one group required the elimination of the others. This rhetoric fuelled atrocities, including ethnic cleansing, mass murder, and the systematic destruction of cultural and religious sites.
- One of the most notorious examples of this propaganda was the rhetoric used by Serbian nationalist leaders, including Slobodan Milošević and Radovan Karadžić. They portrayed the Bosniaks as a threat to the Serbian people, using historical grievances and fears of Islamic fundamentalism to stoke hatred and fear. This propaganda was disseminated through state-controlled media, which played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and inciting violence. The message was clear: the survival of the Serbian people required the elimination of the Bosniaks.
- Bosniak leaders also engaged in their own forms of propaganda, although to a lesser extent. They sought to portray the conflict as a struggle for survival against aggressors who sought to annihilate them. This narrative helped to mobilise support and resistance among the Bosniak population, but it also contributed to the cycle of violence and retribution.
- **Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing:** The most horrific aspect of the Bosnian War was the genocide committed against Bosniaks, most notably in Srebrenica, where over 8,000 Muslim men and boys were killed by Bosnian Serb forces. Ethnic cleansing campaigns aimed to create ethnically homogeneous territories, resulting in the displacement and murder of thousands.

4.3 Ideological Causes

- In the Bosnian War, ideological factors were intertwined with ethnic and religious nationalism. The breakup of Yugoslavia unleashed long-suppressed nationalist sentiments, leading to a violent struggle for dominance. The war also reflected broader ideological conflicts between ethnic nationalism and the multi-ethnic vision of Bosnia, with each group trying to impose its ideology on the territory it controlled.
- Nationalist leaders used ideology to mobilise their supporters and justify their actions. For example, Serbian nationalists invoked the historical narrative of the Battle of Kosovo and the suffering of Serbs under Ottoman rule to justify their claims to Bosnian territory. Similarly, Croatian nationalists invoked the legacy of the Independent State of Croatia during World War II to legitimise their aspirations. These ideological narratives were used to dehumanise the enemy and justify acts of violence.
- The international community's response was also influenced by ideological considerations. Western powers, particularly the United States and the European Union, generally supported the preservation of Bosnia's territorial integrity and opposed ethnic partition. This stance was rooted in the belief that a multi-ethnic Bosnia was essential for regional stability and the prevention of further ethnic conflicts.
- The international community's efforts to broker peace, including the imposition of economic sanctions and the deployment of peacekeeping forces, were aimed at preserving Bosnia as a unified state. However, the international response was often criticised for being slow and ineffective, allowing the violence to continue for years.

4.4 Rise of Ultra-Nationalist Leaders

- Central to the outbreak and escalation of this war was the rise of ultra-nationalist leaders, particularly Slobodan Milošević, whose actions and policies significantly contributed to the conflict. Milošević exacerbated the rise of ethnic nationalism and triggered the war.
- Slobodan Milošević emerged as a prominent political figure in the late 1980s, capitalising on the growing sense of Serbian nationalism. His rise to power was marked by his ability to tap into the fears and aspirations of the

Serbian population, who felt marginalised within the multi-ethnic Yugoslav federation. Milošević's rhetoric and policies were deeply rooted in the idea of protecting and promoting Serbian interests, which he argued were under threat from other ethnic groups within Yugoslavia.

- Milošević's ascent to power was characterised by his skillful manipulation of nationalist sentiments. He positioned himself as the defender of Serbs, not just within Serbia but across the entire Yugoslav federation. This stance resonated with many Serbs who felt that their rights and territories were being encroached upon by other ethnic groups. Milošević's speeches and public appearances often emphasized the historical grievances and perceived injustices suffered by Serbs, further fueling ethnic nationalism.
- One of the key moments in Milošević's rise was his election as President of Serbia in 1989. He used his position to consolidate power and promote his nationalist agenda. Milošević argued that Serbs had the right to their land, which he defined as any territory where Serbs were the majority. This definition was highly contentious and laid the groundwork for future conflicts, as it implied that Serbian territories extended beyond the borders of Serbia itself.
- Milošević's nationalist policies and rhetoric exacerbated ethnic tensions within Yugoslavia. His insistence on the rights of Serbs to their land and his opposition to any moves towards greater autonomy or independence by other ethnic groups created a highly volatile situation. The rise of ethnic nationalism, fueled by Milošević's actions, set the stage for the eventual disintegration of Yugoslavia and the outbreak of war.
- The situation reached a critical point in June 1991 when Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia. Milošević vehemently opposed this move, viewing it as a threat to the unity of Yugoslavia and the rights of Serbs living in Croatia. In response, he sent the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) to crush the independence movement. This military intervention marked the beginning of a series of conflicts that would eventually engulf the entire region.
- Milošević's actions in Croatia set a dangerous precedent for the use of military force to achieve political objectives. His willingness to deploy the JNA to suppress independence movements demonstrated his commitment to maintaining Serbian dominance within Yugoslavia, even at the cost of violent conflict. This approach would later be mirrored in Bosnia and Herzegovina when it sought independence in 1992.

- The declaration of independence by Bosnia and Herzegovina was met with fierce opposition from Milošević and other Serbian leaders. They viewed the move as a direct threat to the Serbian population within Bosnia and Herzegovina and to the territorial integrity of what remained of Yugoslavia. In response, Milošević provided military support to Bosnian Serb forces, who launched a brutal campaign against Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) and Croat populations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- The military support provided by Milošević to Bosnian Serb forces was instrumental in the escalation of the conflict. It enabled the Bosnian Serbs to carry out a campaign of ethnic cleansing, aimed at creating ethnically homogeneous territories under Serbian control. This campaign involved mass killings, forced displacement, and widespread atrocities, leading to a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented proportions.
- Milošević's actions before and during the Bosnian War set a dangerous precedent for the use of ethnic nationalism and military force to achieve political objectives. His policies and rhetoric not only exacerbated ethnic tensions but also provided the justification for violent actions against other ethnic groups. The war in BiH was a direct consequence of the rise of ultra-nationalist leaders like Milošević, whose actions and policies created a climate of fear, hatred, and violence.

4.5 Economic Disparities

- **Economic Inequalities:** Economic disparities among Bosnia's ethnic groups exacerbated existing tensions. During the socialist period, resources and industries were distributed unevenly, with some regions and ethnic groups benefiting more than others.
- Areas with a higher concentration of ethnic Serbs or Croats might have seen more industrial growth and infrastructure development compared to regions predominantly inhabited by Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). This irregular distribution of resources created economic imbalances that sowed seeds of discontent among the different ethnic communities.
- Ethnic groups that found themselves in less developed regions faced higher unemployment rates, lower wages, and poorer living conditions. This economic marginalisation contributed to a sense of injustice and resentment, as these

communities felt they were being systematically disadvantaged compared to their neighbours.

- This created underlying resentment, which was exploited by nationalist leaders during the war. They used the existing economic disparities to stoke ethnic tensions and rally support for their causes. By framing the economic inequalities as a deliberate attempt by one ethnic group to dominate and oppress the others, these leaders were able to galvanise their followers and deepen the divisions within Bosnian society.

- **Control Over Key Economic Areas:** Control over economically vital areas, such as Sarajevo, which was an industrial and cultural hub, became a key objective for all parties in the conflict. The siege of Sarajevo and battles over other strategic areas were driven not only by ethnic nationalism but also by the desire to control economic assets.

- The city of Sarajevo held immense strategic importance during the Bosnian War. As the capital, it was the administrative center of Bosnia and Herzegovina and housed key government institutions. Its industrial base included manufacturing plants, factories, and other economic infrastructures that were crucial for the country's economy. Additionally, Sarajevo was a cultural melting pot, home to Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats, and other ethnic groups, making it a microcosm of the broader ethnic diversity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Control over Sarajevo meant not only a significant economic advantage but also a symbolic victory in the ethnic struggle that characterized the war.

- The economic dimension of the conflict extended beyond Sarajevo. Other strategically important areas, such as the Posavina Corridor, the Neretva Valley, and the city of Mostar, were also fiercely contested. The Posavina Corridor, for instance, was a narrow strip of land that connected the eastern and western parts of the Republika Srpska, the self-declared Serb entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Control over this corridor was vital for the Bosnian Serbs to maintain territorial continuity and ensure the flow of goods and resources. Similarly, the Neretva Valley, with its hydroelectric plants and fertile agricultural land, was a key economic asset that both Bosniak and Croat forces sought to control.

- **Destruction of Infrastructure:** One of the most immediate and visible impacts of the Bosnian War was the widespread destruction of infrastructure. Roads, bridges, railways, and communication networks were systematically targeted and destroyed by warring factions. This destruction not only disrupted

daily life but also crippled the economy by making it difficult to transport goods and services.

- The lack of infrastructure made it nearly impossible for businesses to operate, leading to widespread unemployment and economic stagnation. The destruction of infrastructure also hindered humanitarian efforts, making it difficult to deliver aid to those in need and exacerbating the suffering of the civilian population.
- In addition to the destruction of infrastructure, the Bosnian War also led to the collapse of key industries. Factories and industrial facilities were often targeted in the conflict, either through direct attacks or as collateral damage. The loss of these industries had a devastating impact on the economy, as they were major sources of employment and revenue.
- The collapse of industries also meant that there were fewer goods available for both domestic consumption and export, leading to shortages and further economic decline. The loss of industrial capacity made it difficult for Bosnia to generate the revenue needed to rebuild and recover from the war, prolonging the economic crisis.
- The war also had a significant impact on housing and property. Homes were destroyed or damaged in the fighting, leaving many people homeless or living in substandard conditions. The economic collapse deepened ethnic divisions and prolonged the conflict, as each group struggled to rebuild in a war-torn environment.

5 Domestic Actors

5.1 Key Domestic Actors

Slobodan Milošević

- **President of Serbia:** Slobodan Milošević's ascent to power began in the late 1980s, a period marked by rising nationalism and ethnic tensions in Yugoslavia. Initially a banker and a member of the Communist Party, Milošević's political career took a decisive turn when he became the leader of the Serbian Communist Party in 1986. He quickly capitalized on the growing discontent among Serbs, particularly in Kosovo, where they felt marginalised

by the Albanian majority. Milošević's famous speech at Gazimestan in 1989, commemorating the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, was a turning point. He invoked Serbian nationalism and promised to protect Serbian interests, which resonated deeply with many Serbs.

- **Nationalist and Ethnic Agenda:** Milošević's ideas were deeply rooted in Serbian nationalism. He believed in the concept of a Greater Serbia, a vision that sought to unite all Serbs within a single state. This ideology was not new; it had historical precedents dating back to the 19th century. However, Milošević's interpretation was particularly aggressive and exclusionary. He viewed the multi-ethnic composition of Yugoslavia as a threat to Serbian identity and sovereignty. This perspective led him to adopt policies that prioritised Serbian dominance, often at the expense of other ethnic groups.
- The disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s provided Milošević with an opportunity to pursue his nationalist agenda. As Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in 1991, Milošević supported the Serb minorities in these republics who opposed secession. The Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), under Milošević's influence, intervened in Croatia, leading to a brutal conflict. The international community's response was largely ineffective, and the violence soon spread to Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Milošević's involvement in the Bosnian War was multifaceted. He provided political, military, and financial support to the Bosnian Serbs. The JNA, rebranded as the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS), played a crucial role in the conflict. Milošević's regime supplied arms, logistics, and personnel to the VRS, enabling them to carry out their military campaigns. The infamous siege of Sarajevo and the massacre at Srebrenica were among the war's most horrific events, and Milošević's support was instrumental in these atrocities.
- Milošević justified his actions by framing the conflict as a struggle for Serbian survival. He portrayed the Bosniaks and Croats as existential threats to the Serbs, invoking historical grievances and fears of genocide. This narrative was propagated through state-controlled media, which played a crucial role in mobilising public support for the war. Milošević's rhetoric dehumanised the enemy and legitimised the use of extreme violence.

Radovan Karadžić

- **Leader of Bosnian Serbs:** Radovan Karadžić was the political leader of the Bosnian Serbs during the Bosnian War and the head of the self-proclaimed Republika Srpska, the Bosnian Serb entity. Karadžić's nationalist ideology was rooted in the desire to create an ethnically homogeneous Serb state within Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would ultimately seek union with Serbia.
- **Nationalist and Ethnic Agenda:** Karadžić's agenda was driven by a combination of ethnic nationalism and the belief in the superiority of the Serbian nation. He opposed the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina from Yugoslavia, fearing that Serbs would become a minority in a multi-ethnic Bosnian state. His rhetoric and policies fuelled ethnic hatred and justified the violent campaign of ethnic cleansing against Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) and Croats.
- **War Crimes and Genocide:** Under Karadžić's leadership, Bosnian Serb forces carried out some of the most horrific atrocities of the Bosnian War, including the siege of Sarajevo and the Srebrenica massacre, where over 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were systematically murdered. Karadžić was later indicted and convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

Alija Izetbegović

- **Leader of the Bosniaks:** Alija Izetbegović was the President of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the political leader of the Bosniaks during the war. He was a key figure in the country's declaration of independence from Yugoslavia in 1992, which led to the outbreak of the conflict. Izetbegović's political ideology was centred on maintaining the unity of Bosnia as a multi-ethnic state, despite the rising tide of ethnic nationalism.
- **Struggle for a Unified Bosnia:** Izetbegović faced immense challenges in maintaining the unity of Bosnia and protecting the Bosniak population from aggression by Serb and Croat forces. His leadership was marked by efforts to garner international support for Bosnia's independence and to secure humanitarian aid and military assistance for the besieged Bosniak population.
- **Complex Role and Legacy:** Izetbegović's role in the conflict was complex, as he navigated between the pressures of defending Bosniak interests and the

need to preserve Bosnia as a multi-ethnic state. While he is remembered by many Bosniaks as a symbol of resistance and survival, his leadership was also criticized by some for perceived shortcomings in military strategy and political negotiations. Nonetheless, he played a crucial role in the Dayton Accords, which eventually brought an end to the war.

5.2 Interaction Between Domestic Actors and the Conflict Dynamics

- In Bosnia, the nationalist agendas of Karadžić and Izetbegović were diametrically opposed, with Karadžić seeking to partition Bosnia along ethnic lines and Izetbegović fighting to preserve a unified, multi-ethnic state. Their actions were driven by a desire to achieve ethnic dominance, often through brutal means. These conflicting visions fuelled the violence and made peace efforts extraordinarily difficult. The war became a battleground not only for territorial control but also for the very identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The actions of these leaders were driven by deeply ingrained ethnic and religious motivations, which were further inflamed by nationalist propaganda and historical grievances.

6 International Intervention

- The Bosnian War's destabilising effects in Southeastern Europe threatened broader regional security. The fragmentation of Yugoslavia and ensuing violence had the potential to spark conflicts in neighbouring countries, drawing them into a prolonged and wider war. International stability and peace, particularly in Europe, were at stake, compelling entities like the United Nations and NATO to consider intervention not just as a moral imperative but as a strategic necessity for global security.

6.1 Role of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

6.1.1. Enforcement of No-Fly Zones

- In response to the escalating violence and humanitarian crisis, NATO was tasked by the United Nations to enforce a no-fly zone over Bosnia and Herzegovina through Operation Deny Flight, which began in April 1993.

- This mission aimed to curtail the bloodshed and stabilise the region by preventing military aircraft from engaging in combat operations, thereby limiting the capacity for aerial bombardment and surveillance. It also aimed to prevent the Bosnian Serb forces from using airpower against Bosnian Muslim and Croat civilians.
- The operation represented a significant moment in NATO history as it was one of the first instances of the organisation being involved in direct conflict management outside of its traditional territorial defense role. NATO aircrafts conducted patrols and engaged in air strikes against violators of the no-fly zone, marking the first time NATO conducted military operations since its formation.
- Beyond enforcing the no-fly zone, NATO aircrafts engaged in direct confrontations with Serb forces on several occasions, when violations were detected, compelling a robust military response.
- The humanitarian dimension was also crucial. By establishing air superiority, NATO aimed to provide a safer environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the besieged civilian populations, who were suffering from severe shortages and widespread displacement. The enforcement of the no-fly zone under Operation Deny Flight was a notable effort to adhere to the UN mandate and alleviate the humanitarian crisis.

6.1.2. Air Strikes and Military Intervention

- As the conflict in the former Yugoslavia escalated and atrocities mounted, NATO found itself compelled to expand its involvement. By 1994, the situation had become dire, prompting NATO to conduct air strikes against Bosnian Serb positions. These limited air strikes were a direct response to attacks on UN-designated safe areas and humanitarian convoys, which highlighted the urgent need for international intervention to protect civilians and prevent further humanitarian crises.
- The turning point in NATO's military engagement came in 1995 with Operation Deliberate Force. This significant military intervention was triggered by the horrific shelling of the Sarajevo marketplace by Bosnian Serb forces, an act that underscored the severe and indiscriminate violence of the conflict. In response, NATO initiated a sustained bombing campaign targeting Bosnian Serb military positions. This robust and decisive action aimed to diminish the

military capabilities of the Bosnian Serb forces and was instrumental in pressuring them to engage in peace negotiations. The operation not only weakened the Bosnian Serb military but also demonstrated NATO's commitment to restoring peace and stability in the region, ultimately contributing to the signing of the Dayton Agreement and the end of the conflict.

6.1.3. Supporting the Dayton Accords

- NATO's military pressure played a crucial role in setting the stage for the Dayton Peace Accords, which were negotiated in November 1995 to formally end the Bosnian War. Persistent military actions, including air campaigns and ground operations, effectively compelled warring factions to consider peace negotiations. These operations highlighted the futility of continued conflict and underscored the international community's commitment to resolving the crisis.
- Following the successful negotiation of the Dayton Accords, NATO deployed the Implementation Force (IFOR) to ensure the accord's terms were honored. IFOR's primary responsibilities involved monitoring the withdrawal of the various armed factions and overseeing the disarmament of heavy weaponry. This multinational peacekeeping force was tasked with enforcing compliance with the Accords' military provisions, significantly contributing to stabilising the region.
- In 1996, IFOR was replaced by the Stabilisation Force (SFOR), which continued to uphold peace and maintain order in Bosnia and Herzegovina. SFOR's presence ensured a sustained international commitment to the region's stability and helped to facilitate the country's post-war recovery efforts. This stabilization mission lasted until 2004, when the European Union Force (EUFOR) took over the peacekeeping responsibilities, marking a transition from NATO-led operations to a broader European initiative aimed at long-term stabilisation and integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into European structures.

6.1.4. Long Term Security and Stability

- NATO's involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina extended well beyond the Stabilisation Force (SFOR), reflecting a long-term commitment to ensuring the country's stability and its integration into broader European and transatlantic frameworks. After the SFOR mission, which was crucial in implementing the military aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement, NATO shifted its focus

towards supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina in reforming its security sector and modernising its armed forces.

- One of the major areas where NATO contributed was the restructuring and professionalisation of the Bosnian military. This involved implementing stringent reforms to ensure that the military operated under effective civilian control, adhered to democratic principles, and maintained interoperability with NATO forces. These reforms were essential for transforming Bosnia and Herzegovina's military into a modern, professional force that could contribute to international peacekeeping missions and work alongside NATO troops.
- NATO's support also extended to the broader security sector, which included police forces, intelligence services, and other critical institutions. These efforts aimed to create a coherent and efficient security apparatus capable of ensuring internal stability and upholding the rule of law. By fostering collaboration among different security agencies and promoting transparency and accountability, NATO helped Bosnia and Herzegovina build a more resilient security infrastructure.
- Additionally, NATO played a significant role in aiding Bosnia and Herzegovina's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. One of the key initiatives in this regard was the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, which Bosnia joined in 2006. The PfP serves as a framework for cooperation between NATO and non-member countries, focusing on areas such as defense planning, civil-military relations, and crisis management. Through this program, Bosnia and Herzegovina received valuable technical assistance, training, and opportunities to participate in joint exercises with NATO forces, thus enhancing its operational capabilities and fostering interoperability.
- Furthermore, NATO has been involved in confidence-building measures and political dialogue, working closely with Bosnian authorities to address regional security challenges and promote stability in the Western Balkans. This ongoing engagement has helped Bosnia and Herzegovina to gradually align its policies and practices with those of NATO and the European Union, paving the way for deeper integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

6.2 Role of United Nations

6.2.1. Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Aid

- The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) stands as a significant chapter in the history of the United Nations' peacekeeping missions, particularly regarding its operations in Bosnia during the Yugoslav Wars. Initially, when the conflict escalated in 1992, the UN deployed UNPROFOR with the primary objective of ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid to affected populations and protecting civilians from the hostilities that engulfed the region.
- UNPROFOR's role initially focused on facilitating the distribution of essential supplies, such as food and medical aid, to the beleaguered populations in Bosnia. The dire humanitarian crisis demanded robust international intervention, and the UN aimed to mitigate the suffering and ensure that basic human needs were met amidst the chaos of war. The force's responsibilities included providing security for aid convoys and establishing conditions that would allow humanitarian activities to be carried out in a relatively safe environment.
- As the conflict intensified and the atrocities against civilians became more egregious, the scope of UNPROFOR's mandate expanded. Recognizing the particular vulnerability of Bosnian Muslims, the UN declared several "safe areas" in 1993, including Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde. These safe areas were intended to be sanctuaries for civilians seeking refuge from the violence perpetrated by Bosnian Serb forces. UNPROFOR was tasked with protecting these enclaves to prevent further ethnic cleansing and massacres.
- However, the efficacy of these designated safe areas was gravely compromised, most notably in Srebrenica. Despite being declared a UN-protected zone and housing thousands of Bosniak refugees, Srebrenica became the site of one of the most horrific massacres in European history post-World War II. In July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces overwhelmed the limited and under-equipped UN contingent stationed in Srebrenica. Consequently, approximately 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were brutally executed, and the enclave was ethnically cleansed.
- The failure of UNPROFOR to prevent the Srebrenica massacre raised serious questions about the robustness of UN peacekeeping operations and the adequacy of their mandates. The troops on the ground were ill-equipped,

inadequately supported, and faced with overly restrictive rules of engagement, which hindered their ability to prevent the Bosnian Serb forces' advance and protect the civilians under their charge.

- This tragic failure highlighted the limitations of the international community's response to complex and dynamic conflict settings. It underscored the need for more robust and firmer mandates, better resources, and clearer rules of engagement for peacekeeping forces to truly fulfill their protective roles.

6.2.2. Resolutions and Sanctions

- The United Nations (UN) played a significant role in the efforts aimed at mitigating and eventually ending the conflict. Early in the war, the UN imposed economic sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro, countries that were deemed to be supporters of the Bosnian Serbs, who were one of the main belligerent groups in the conflict. These sanctions were intended to weaken the capacity of Serbia and Montenegro to supply and support the Bosnian Serb forces, thereby reducing their influence and encouraging a move towards peace negotiations.
- The UN also took on an active role in facilitating peace talks and negotiations. Several key diplomatic conferences and peace plans were proposed under the auspices of the UN, including the Vance-Owen Plan and later the Contact Group Plan. While these initiatives were critical in bringing international attention to the conflict and providing frameworks for potential peace agreements, they often faced significant hurdles.
- The Vance-Owen Plan was introduced in January 1993 as a comprehensive proposal to end the conflict. The plan envisioned the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina into ten semi-autonomous provinces, each with a high degree of self-governance. These provinces were to be drawn along ethnic lines to reflect the demographic distribution of the population. The idea was to create a decentralised state structure that would accommodate the interests of the three main ethnic groups while preserving the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- One of the key components of the Vance-Owen Plan was the establishment of a central government with limited powers. This government would be responsible for foreign affairs, defense, and monetary policy, while the provinces would have control over most other aspects of governance, including

education, health care, and policing. The plan also called for the demilitarisation of the warring factions and the deployment of international peacekeeping forces to oversee the implementation of the agreement.

- One of the main obstacles to the success of the Vance-Owen Plan was the lack of trust among the warring parties. Years of ethnic violence and atrocities had deepened animosities and made it difficult for the parties to commit to a negotiated settlement. Additionally, the plan's reliance on the cooperation of local leaders, many of whom were implicated in war crimes, further complicated its prospects. The Vance-Owen Plan ultimately failed to gain the necessary support from all parties involved. The Serb leadership's outright rejection of the plan and their continued military offensives undermined its viability. The Bosniak and Croat leaders, facing pressure from their constituencies and skeptical of the plan's effectiveness, also withdrew their support.
- In 1994, the Contact Group, comprising representatives from the United States, Russia, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, was formed to coordinate international efforts to end the conflict. The Contact Group proposed a peace plan that called for the division of Bosnia into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (comprising Bosniaks and Croats) and the Republika Srpska (comprising Serbs). This plan gained more traction than previous efforts, as it was backed by the major powers and provided a more balanced approach to territorial division.

6.2.3. War Crimes Tribunal

- The Yugoslav Wars, which erupted in the early 1990s following the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, were marked by widespread violence, ethnic cleansing, and gross human rights violations. The international community was horrified by the reports of mass killings, systematic rape, and other atrocities committed during the conflict. In response to these grave violations of international humanitarian law, the United Nations Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on May 25, 1993, through Resolution 827. The tribunal was tasked with prosecuting individuals responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991.

- The ICTY was granted jurisdiction over four categories of crimes: grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, violations of the laws or customs of war, genocide, and crimes against humanity. This broad mandate allowed the tribunal to address a wide range of atrocities committed during the Yugoslav Wars. The ICTY's jurisdiction extended to individuals, regardless of their official capacity, ensuring that even high-ranking political and military leaders could be held accountable for their actions.
- This principle of individual criminal responsibility was a significant departure from previous international tribunals, which primarily focused on state responsibility. The ICTY operated under a unique legal framework that combined elements of both common law and civil law systems, ensuring a fair and efficient judicial process.
- The ICTY prosecuted numerous high-profile cases, bringing to justice some of the most notorious perpetrators of war crimes in the Balkans. One of the most significant cases was that of Slobodan Milošević, the former President of Serbia and Yugoslavia, who was charged with genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Although Milošević died before the conclusion of his trial, his prosecution sent a powerful message that even heads of state could be held accountable for their actions. Other notable cases included the convictions of Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, key figures in the Bosnian Serb leadership, for their roles in the Srebrenica massacre and the siege of Sarajevo.

6.3 Role of European Union (EU)

6.3.1. Recognition for Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty

- The European Community was one of the first international bodies to recognise the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This recognition came at a time when the former Yugoslav republics were declaring independence, leading to a series of violent conflicts. Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its independence from Yugoslavia on March 3, 1992, following a referendum that was boycotted by the Bosnian Serbs. The EC's recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence on April 6, 1992, was a significant step that underscored the international community's support for the new state's sovereignty. This move was part of a broader strategy by the EC to stabilise the region and prevent further escalation of violence.

- The recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence by the EC was not merely a symbolic gesture; it had profound implications for the region's political dynamics. The EC's decision was influenced by the desire to uphold the principles of self-determination and territorial integrity, which were seen as essential for maintaining peace and stability in Europe. However, this recognition also contributed to the intensification of the conflict, as it was perceived by the Bosnian Serbs as a threat to their interests. The Bosnian Serbs, supported by Serbia, responded with military aggression, leading to a brutal war that lasted until 1995.
- The EU led several diplomatic initiatives to broker peace in the region, including the Vance-Owen Plan and later the Contact Group Plan, though these efforts often failed to bring about a lasting resolution due to the complex dynamics of the conflict.
- In addition to diplomatic initiatives, the EU played a crucial role in addressing the humanitarian crisis caused by the Bosnian War. The conflict resulted in the displacement of millions of people and widespread suffering. The EU provided significant humanitarian aid, including food, medical supplies, and shelter, to those affected by the war. The EU's humanitarian efforts were coordinated through the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), which worked in collaboration with international organisations such as the United Nations and the International Red Cross.
- The EU also contributed to peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia. In 1992, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was established to provide security and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid. While the EU did not have its own military force at the time, several EU member states contributed troops to UNPROFOR. The EU's involvement in peacekeeping was a testament to its commitment to stabilising the region and protecting civilians.

6.3.2. Economic Sanctions and Embargoes

- The EU's decision to impose economic sanctions and arms embargoes during the Bosnian War was rooted in the belief that economic pressure could compel the warring parties to come to the negotiating table. The sanctions were aimed at crippling the economies of the belligerents, particularly Serbia, which was seen as the primary aggressor. By cutting off access to international markets and financial systems, the EU hoped to weaken Serbia's ability to sustain its military campaign. Additionally, the arms embargo was intended to

prevent the flow of weapons into the region, thereby reducing the capacity of all parties to continue fighting.

- The economic sanctions imposed by the EU targeted various sectors of the Serbian economy. These included restrictions on trade, financial transactions, and access to international markets. The goal was to create economic hardship that would pressure the Serbian government to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The sanctions were comprehensive and aimed at isolating Serbia from the global economy.
- One of the primary challenges in implementing the economic sanctions was the ability of Serbia to find alternative sources of revenue and trade partners. Despite the EU's efforts to isolate Serbia, the country was able to maintain economic ties with other nations that were not part of the sanctions regime. Additionally, the porous nature of the sanctions allowed for smuggling and black-market activities to flourish. Goods and services continued to flow into Serbia through various channels, undermining the impact of the sanctions.
- The arms embargo imposed by the EU was intended to prevent the flow of weapons into the region, thereby reducing the capacity of all parties to continue fighting. Smuggling and black-market networks played a significant role in circumventing the embargo. As a result, the warring parties were able to maintain their military capabilities and continue the conflict.

6.3.3. Post-War Reconstruction

- The war ended with the signing of the Dayton Accords in December 1995, a peace agreement brokered by the United States and supported by the European Union (EU). The Dayton Accords not only brought an end to the hostilities but also laid the groundwork for the reconstruction and stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The EU played a pivotal role in this post-war period, providing substantial financial aid, technical assistance, and political support to help rebuild the war-torn country.
- One of the EU's primary contributions to post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina was financial aid. The EU allocated substantial funds to rebuild the country's infrastructure, which had been severely damaged during the conflict. Roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and other essential facilities needed to be reconstructed to restore normalcy to the lives of the Bosnian people. The EU's financial assistance was crucial in kickstarting these reconstruction efforts,

providing the necessary resources to rebuild the physical infrastructure of the country.

- The EU provided technical assistance to help rebuild Bosnia and Herzegovina's governance institutions. The war had left the country's political and administrative structures in disarray, and there was an urgent need to establish effective governance mechanisms. The EU worked closely with local authorities to strengthen institutions such as the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, and public administration. This technical assistance aimed to promote good governance, transparency, and the rule of law, which were essential for the country's long-term stability and development.
- The Dayton Accords had created a fragile peace, and there were ongoing tensions between the different ethnic groups. The EU played a mediating role, working to foster dialogue and reconciliation among the various communities. This involved supporting initiatives aimed at promoting inter-ethnic cooperation, addressing war crimes and human rights abuses, and facilitating the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes. The EU's efforts were instrumental in building trust and fostering a sense of unity in a country deeply scarred by ethnic divisions.
- Furthermore, the EU sought to integrate Bosnia and Herzegovina into the broader European framework. The prospect of EU membership served as a powerful incentive for the country to undertake necessary reforms and align itself with European standards. The EU provided guidance and support to Bosnia and Herzegovina in areas such as democratic governance, human rights, and economic development. The EU's engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina served as a model for its approach to other countries in the region, demonstrating the benefits of European integration and cooperation. The EU's efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina were part of a broader strategy to promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the Western Balkans, with the ultimate goal of integrating the entire region into the European Union.

6.4 Challenges, Impact and Legacy

- NATO's military interventions, particularly Operation Deliberate Force, were pivotal in shifting the balance of power on the ground and creating the conditions for peace negotiations. The alliance's role in enforcing the peace agreement and stabilising the region after the war was also critical in preventing a resurgence of large-scale violence.

- The execution of Operation Deliberate Force involved a series of precision airstrikes targeting key military installations, communication networks, and supply lines of the Bosnian Serb forces. The operation was meticulously planned and executed, with NATO forces employing advanced technology and intelligence to minimise collateral damage and civilian casualties. The air campaign significantly weakened the Bosnian Serb military infrastructure, disrupting their command and control capabilities and diminishing their ability to wage war effectively.
- The impact of Operation Deliberate Force on the ground was profound. The sustained airstrikes crippled the Bosnian Serb forces, shifting the balance of power in favour of the Bosnian government and its allies. This shift created a more favourable environment for peace negotiations, as the Bosnian Serb leadership realised that their military objectives were no longer attainable. The operation demonstrated NATO's resolve and capability to intervene decisively in conflicts that threatened regional stability and international security.
- NATO's actions were not without controversy. The use of air strikes, especially in densely populated areas, raised concerns about civilian casualties and the destruction of infrastructure. Additionally, the alliance faced criticism for not intervening sooner and for initially hesitating to engage more forcefully in the conflict. Both the UN and EU faced significant challenges during the Bosnia War, including difficulties in enforcing peace agreements and protecting civilians.
- The international community's response to the Srebrenica massacre was slow and ineffective, resulting in one of the most tragic episodes of ethnic cleansing in recent history. The failures of the United Nations, NATO, major powers, and international legal mechanisms highlight the need for a more robust and coordinated approach to preventing and responding to mass atrocities.
- The legacy of involvement is complex, with both successes and failures in achieving individual objectives. Despite the challenges during the conflict, both the UN and EU have continued to play important roles in Bosnia's post-war recovery and ongoing political development.
- NATO's involvement in the Bosnian War marked a significant moment in its history, demonstrating the alliance's ability to conduct out-of-area operations and influence conflicts beyond its traditional scope. It also set a precedent for future NATO interventions in the Balkans and other regions.

- NATO's role in the Bosnian War was characterised by a gradual escalation from enforcing UN mandates to taking decisive military action that ultimately contributed to ending the conflict.

7 Conflict Management in the Congo Crisis

7.1 NATO intervention (1995)

- **Overview:** In response to the escalating violence and the failure of diplomatic efforts, NATO decided to intervene militarily. The decision was driven by a combination of humanitarian concerns, the need to uphold international norms, and the strategic interest in stabilising the Balkans. NATO's intervention was also influenced by the recognition that the credibility of the alliance and the broader international community was at stake. The intervention aimed to halt ethnic cleansing, protect civilians, and push the warring parties towards a negotiated settlement.
- NATO's intervention in the Bosnian War demonstrated the effectiveness of coordinated military and diplomatic efforts in ending conflicts and highlighted the importance of timely and decisive action to prevent atrocities. The intervention also underscored the need for robust international mechanisms to protect civilians and uphold international norms.
- **Weakening of Bosnian Serb Forces:** The NATO airstrikes had a significant impact on the Bosnian Serb forces. By targeting key military assets, NATO effectively weakened the Bosnian Serb military capabilities. The destruction of ammunition depots, communication centers, and transportation networks disrupted the Bosnian Serb war effort and reduced their ability to sustain their campaign of ethnic cleansing and territorial expansion. The airstrikes also had a demoralising effect on the Bosnian Serb forces, who realised that they could no longer operate with impunity.
- The weakening of the Bosnian Serb forces through NATO's military intervention created a new dynamic on the ground. The balance of power shifted, and the Bosnian Serb leadership, faced with the prospect of continued NATO airstrikes and the loss of their military advantage, became more amenable to negotiations. The military pressure applied by NATO was a crucial factor in bringing the warring factions to the negotiating table.
- **Paving the Way for Peace:** NATO's role in paving the way for the Dayton Peace Accords cannot be overstated. The military intervention by NATO

created the conditions necessary for a negotiated settlement by weakening the Bosnian Serb forces and demonstrating the international community's commitment to ending the conflict. The presence of NATO forces also provided a security guarantee that helped to stabilise the situation and build confidence among the warring parties that a lasting peace was achievable.

7.2 Dayton Peace Accords (1995)

- **Overview:** The Dayton Accords, formally known as the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, marked a significant turning point in the history of the Balkans. Brokered by the United States and signed in December 1995, the agreement officially ended the Bosnian War, a brutal conflict that had raged for nearly four years. The war had resulted in the loss of approximately 100,000 lives and the displacement of over two million people.
- The key negotiators included U.S. diplomat Richard Holbrooke, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović, Serbian President Slobodan Milošević, and Croatian President Franjo Tuđman. The talks were marked by intense bargaining, with each party seeking to secure the best possible outcome for their respective ethnic groups.
- The Dayton Accords established a highly intricate political structure aimed at ensuring power-sharing among the three main ethnic groups. Bosnia and Herzegovina was divided into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, primarily composed of Bosniaks and Croats, and the Republika Srpska, predominantly inhabited by Serbs. Each entity was granted significant autonomy, with its own government and administrative structures. Additionally, the accords created a central government with a rotating presidency, comprising one representative from each ethnic group. This tripartite presidency was designed to ensure equal representation and prevent any single group from dominating the political landscape.
- The agreement also included provisions for the return of refugees and displaced persons, the establishment of a multi-ethnic police force, and the protection of human rights. The Office of the High Representative (OHR) was established to oversee the implementation of the accords and ensure compliance. The OHR was granted extensive powers, including the authority to impose laws and remove officials who obstructed the peace process.

Outcomes:

- **End of Active Conflict:** The primary achievement of the Dayton Accords was the cessation of active conflict. By bringing the warring factions—the Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs—to the negotiating table, the accords managed to stop the bloodshed that had ravaged the country for nearly four years. The agreement mandated an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of foreign forces, including the Yugoslav People's Army and various paramilitary groups. This cessation of hostilities was a significant milestone, as it allowed for the stabilisation of the region and the beginning of the reconstruction process.
- The accords also established a framework for the return of refugees and displaced persons, a critical step in addressing the humanitarian crisis that had unfolded during the war. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was tasked with overseeing this process, which aimed to facilitate the safe and voluntary return of individuals to their pre-war homes. While the implementation of this aspect of the accords has been challenging, it has nonetheless contributed to the gradual normalisation of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Despite its success in ending the violence, the Dayton Accords created a highly complex and fragmented political structure. The agreement divided Bosnia and Herzegovina into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, primarily inhabited by Bosniaks and Croats, and the Republika Srpska, predominantly populated by Serbs. Each entity was granted a significant degree of autonomy, with its own government, parliament, and president. Additionally, the accords established a weak central government, consisting of a three-member presidency, a bicameral parliament, and a Council of Ministers.
- This intricate political arrangement was designed to balance the interests of the three main ethnic groups and prevent any one group from dominating the others. However, it has also led to a highly inefficient and dysfunctional system of governance. The need for consensus among the three ethnic groups has often resulted in political gridlock, making it difficult to pass legislation and implement reforms. This has hindered the country's progress and contributed to widespread frustration among the population.
- **Long-Term Challenges:** By institutionalising ethnic representation, the accords have reinforced the notion of ethnic identity as the primary basis for political participation. This has made it challenging to build a cohesive national

identity and foster a sense of unity among the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- In the years following the signing of the Dayton Accords, nationalist parties have continued to dominate the political landscape, often exploiting ethnic tensions for political gain. This has further deepened the divisions between the Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs, making it difficult to achieve meaningful reconciliation and cooperation. The persistence of ethnic nationalism has also impeded efforts to address issues such as corruption, economic development, and social inequality, as political leaders often prioritize ethnic interests over the common good.
- The Dayton Peace Accords, while successful in ending the war, have made long-term peacebuilding difficult. The institutionalisation of ethnic divisions has created a society where ethnic identity is paramount, and inter-ethnic cooperation is limited. Efforts to promote reconciliation and build a shared national identity have been hampered by the political and social structures established by the accords. Education systems remain segregated, with children often attending schools that reinforce ethnic narratives and prejudices. This has perpetuated a cycle of mistrust and division among the younger generations.

8 Long-term Impacts of Conflict Management

- One of the most significant challenges facing Bosnia and Herzegovina is the lack of a unified national identity. The country's political structure, which emphasises ethnic divisions, has made it difficult for a sense of national unity to develop. Many Bosnians continue to identify primarily with their ethnic group rather than with the country as a whole. This lack of a unified national identity has hindered efforts to build a cohesive and inclusive society, and it has also made it difficult to implement policies that benefit all citizens, regardless of their ethnic background.
- The Dayton Agreement divided Bosnia and Herzegovina into two main entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS), along with the Brčko District, which has a special status. Each of these entities has its own government, parliament, and economic policies. The division of the country into two entities has created parallel economic systems, which has led to inefficiencies and hindered economic development. High

unemployment rates, widespread corruption, and a lack of foreign investment are some of the economic challenges that Bosnia continues to face.

- The lack of a unified economic policy has resulted in inefficiencies and difficulties in implementing comprehensive economic reforms. For instance, the existence of multiple tax systems and regulatory frameworks creates barriers to business operations and investment, as companies must navigate a complex and often contradictory set of rules.
- The primary achievement of the Dayton Accords was the cessation of hostilities. The agreement established a ceasefire and created a framework for the political and territorial organisation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, while the Dayton Accords succeeded in ending the violence, they did not fully address the underlying ethnic and political issues that led to the conflict.
- One of the main criticisms of the accords is that they entrenched ethnic divisions rather than promoting integration and reconciliation. By creating a political structure based on ethnic quotas and territorial divisions, the accords reinforced the notion of ethnic separation. This has made it difficult for Bosnia to develop a cohesive national identity and has perpetuated ethnic tensions.

9 Lessons Learned

9.1 Role of International Organisations

9.1.1. UN's Involvement:

- The United Nations played a significant role in both the Bosnian War. The Bosnian War exposed the limitations of traditional peacekeeping missions. The UN deployed peacekeepers to Bosnia with the mandate to protect humanitarian aid deliveries and create "safe areas" for civilians. However, these peacekeepers were often under-equipped and lacked the authority to use force effectively. The massacre at Srebrenica, despite the presence of UN peacekeepers, highlighted the inadequacy of the UN's mandate and resources. This tragedy underscored the need for robust mandates and adequate resources for peacekeeping missions to be effective.
- The effectiveness of international intervention is heavily dependent on the political will of the international community. During the Bosnian War, the UN's actions were often constrained by the conflicting interests of its member

states. The lack of a unified stance and decisive action allowed the conflict to escalate and prolonged the suffering of civilians.

9.1.2. NATO's Involvement:

- In the early stages of the Bosnian War, NATO was hesitant to intervene. The organisation was primarily focused on its traditional role of defending member states from external threats, and the conflict in Bosnia was seen as a civil war rather than an international crisis. This initial hesitation allowed the violence to escalate, leading to widespread atrocities and a humanitarian disaster. NATO's delayed response highlighted the need for a more proactive approach in addressing emerging crises.
- When NATO finally decided to intervene, one of the primary tools at its disposal was air power. Operation Deliberate Force, launched in 1995, involved a series of airstrikes against Bosnian Serb forces. These airstrikes played a crucial role in weakening the military capabilities of the Bosnian Serbs and ultimately contributed to the signing of the Dayton Agreement, which brought an end to the war. The success of Operation Deliberate Force demonstrated the effectiveness of air power in modern warfare. However, it also underscored the limitations of airstrikes in achieving long-term peace and stability.
- In the Bosnian War, NATO's intervention was crucial in weakening Bosnian Serb forces and pushing for a peace settlement. The success of NATO's involvement underscored the importance of military capability in enforcing peace agreements but also raised questions about the timing and scope of interventions. NATO's intervention in Bosnia was a multilateral effort, involving contributions from numerous member states and coordination with other international organisations such as the United Nations. This multilateral approach was essential in ensuring the legitimacy and effectiveness of the intervention.
- **Lessons:** The Bosnian War was a tragic and complex conflict that left a lasting impact on the region and the world. The international community's response to the war was marked by delays and inadequacies, but it also provided valuable lessons for future interventions. The importance of early intervention, coordinated international efforts, and comprehensive post-conflict reconstruction are critical takeaways from the Bosnian experience. The war also highlighted the challenges of addressing ethnic conflicts, the role of media coverage, the importance of justice and accountability, and the need for regional cooperation and international diplomacy. By learning from the lessons

of the Bosnian War, the international community can better respond to future conflicts and work towards a more peaceful and just world.

10 Reflection on Conflict Management

Balancing Peace and Justice

Dilemma:

- **Peace vs. Justice:** In post-conflict societies, there is often a tension between the desire to achieve peace and the need to ensure justice for war crimes. In Bosnia, the pursuit of justice through the ICTY was essential for addressing the atrocities committed during the war, but it also complicated peace efforts by exacerbating tensions between ethnic groups.
- **Key Issue:** Balancing these two objectives is a key challenge in post-conflict settings. Ensuring that justice is served without jeopardizing the fragile peace is critical for long-term stability.

Need for Sustainable Solutions

- **Temporary vs. Long-Term Peace:**
 - **Temporary Peace Agreements:** Temporary peace agreements, such as the Dayton Accords, can be effective in halting immediate violence but may not address the deeper issues that led to the conflict. In Bosnia, the accords ended the war but left the country deeply divided, with ongoing political and ethnic tensions.
 - **Addressing Root Causes:** For peace to be sustainable, it is essential to address the root causes of the conflict, such as economic inequalities, ethnic divisions, and political instability. Long-term peace requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond the cessation of hostilities to include reconciliation, governance reform, and economic development.

11 Conclusion and Food for Thought

- The aftermath of the Bosnian War left deep scars on the country and its people. The conflict resulted in the deaths of an estimated 100,000 people and the displacement of over two million. The war also left a legacy of war crimes, with numerous individuals being prosecuted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). High-profile figures such

as Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić were eventually captured and convicted of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

- Rebuilding Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a challenging process. The Dayton Agreement created a highly decentralised political system, which has often led to political gridlock and inefficiency. Ethnic divisions remain pronounced, and the country continues to struggle with issues of national identity and reconciliation. Economic recovery has been slow, with high unemployment rates and widespread poverty. Despite these challenges, there have been efforts to promote peace and reconciliation, including initiatives to foster inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation.
- First and foremost, the Bosnian War highlighted the destructive power of ethnic nationalism and the fragility of multi-ethnic societies. The disintegration of Yugoslavia unleashed long-simmering ethnic tensions, leading to a brutal conflict primarily between Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. The war demonstrated how political leaders could manipulate ethnic identities to mobilize support and justify violence, resulting in widespread atrocities, including ethnic cleansing and genocide. This underscores the need for vigilance against the rise of ethnic nationalism and the importance of promoting inclusive, multi-ethnic societies.
- The international community's response to the Bosnian War was marked by a mix of hesitation, intervention, and eventual resolution. Initially, the world was slow to react to the unfolding crisis, with the United Nations and European powers struggling to formulate a coherent strategy. The failure to prevent atrocities such as the Srebrenica massacre remains a stark reminder of the limitations of international diplomacy and peacekeeping efforts. However, the eventual NATO intervention and the Dayton Accords of 1995 demonstrated that concerted international action could bring about peace, albeit belatedly. This highlights the necessity for timely and decisive international intervention in the face of humanitarian crises.
- The international community has played a significant role in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Office of the High Representative (OHR) was established to oversee the implementation of the Dayton Agreement and has the authority to impose laws and remove officials who obstruct the peace process. The European Union (EU) and other international organisations have provided substantial aid and support for reconstruction and development. Bosnia and Herzegovina's aspiration to join the EU has been a driving force for reforms, although progress has been slow and fraught with obstacles.

- The war also underscored the importance of justice and reconciliation in post-conflict societies. The establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was a significant step towards holding perpetrators accountable and delivering justice to victims. The tribunal's work, though not without controversy, set important precedents for international law and the prosecution of war crimes. However, the process of reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains ongoing, with deep-seated ethnic divisions and political challenges persisting. This illustrates the long-term nature of post-conflict recovery and the need for sustained efforts to build trust and unity.
- Economically and socially, the Bosnian War left a profound impact on the region. The destruction of infrastructure, displacement of populations, and loss of life had long-lasting effects on Bosnia and Herzegovina's development. Rebuilding the country required significant international aid and cooperation, and while progress has been made, the scars of war are still evident. This emphasises the importance of comprehensive post-conflict reconstruction efforts that address both physical and social dimensions of recovery.
- The Bosnian War also serves as a poignant reminder of the human cost of conflict. The stories of survivors, the memories of those lost, and the resilience of communities in the face of unimaginable hardship are testaments to the enduring human spirit. These narratives are crucial for ensuring that the lessons of the Bosnian War are not forgotten and that future generations understand the importance of peace, tolerance, and coexistence.