



Historical Security Council Study Guide



HSC

The Dayton Agreements



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Overview

In 1995, Europe is experiencing the most catastrophic conflict since World War II. Over 100,000 people have died and millions have been displaced as a result of the more than three-year-old Bosnian War. Ethnic conflict has shattered families, ruined cities, and torn entire communities apart. Some of the worst atrocities in contemporary European history have occurred during the conflict, including mass displacement, ethnic cleansing, and the deliberate targeting of civilians. The capital city of Sarajevo is in ruins as a result of the siege, and the world community has come under increasing fire for its inaction in stopping the additional carnage.

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is more than just a civil war; it is a complicated geopolitical battle with centuries-old ethnic and religious roots. The situation has become even more complex due to the involvement of neighbouring states, such as Serbia and Croatia. Numerous ceasefires have failed, and the emergence of nationalist leaders has intensified tensions. The horrific cost of inaction has been brought home by the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, in which Bosnian Serb forces killed over 8,000 Bosniak men and boys.

In order to address the dispute and create a lasting peace deal between the warring factions, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) called an emergency session. There is tremendous pressure since inaction could lead to more deaths and possibly a wider regional conflict. The world is looking to this group to develop a framework that would not only stop the carnage but also establish a long-term political settlement for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as negotiations are scheduled to take place in Dayton, Ohio.

It is your responsibility as delegates to negotiate the complex web of political tensions, territorial issues, and historical grievances in order to come up with a solution that would guarantee stability. You need to think about how to maintain the peace, ensure civilian safety, and stop violent incidents in the future. Future generations will be impacted by the choices you make here about Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Background

The roots of the Bosnian conflict extend deep into the history of the Balkans, but its immediate catalyst was the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Yugoslavia, a multi-ethnic federation formed after World War II, began to fracture along ethnic and nationalist lines following the death of its unifying leader, Josip Broz Tito, in 1980 and the end of the Cold War.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, the most ethnically diverse of Yugoslavia's republics, declared independence in 1992 following Slovenia and Croatia's secession. The republic's population consisted of three main ethnic groups:

- Bosniaks (44%): Primarily Muslim, descended from Slavs who converted during Ottoman rule
- Serbs (31%): Eastern Orthodox Christians, culturally tied to Serbia
- Croats (17%): Roman Catholics, culturally connected to Croatia

This declaration of independence, though internationally recognized, was rejected by Bosnian Serbs who had boycotted the independence referendum. With substantial military and political support from Serbia under Slobodan Milošević, they began a campaign to carve out their own state. The Bosnian Serb forces, led by Radovan Karadžić and military commander Ratko Mladić, quickly gained control of roughly 70% of Bosnia's territory.

The conflict became further complicated when initial Bosniak-Croat cooperation collapsed in 1993, leading to a "war within a war" as Croat forces, backed by neighboring Croatia, also began fighting for territorial control. This three-way conflict resulted in:

- Systematic ethnic cleansing campaigns
- Establishment of concentration camps
- Mass displacement of civilians
- Widespread use of rape as a weapon of war
- Deliberate targeting of cultural and religious sites

The international community's response was initially hesitant and ineffective. UN peacekeepers, deployed under UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force), were hampered by a limited mandate and insufficient resources. Their presence, while providing some humanitarian aid, failed to prevent major atrocities, most notably the Srebrenica massacre in 1995.

Timeline of Key Events

1991: Slovenia and Croatia declare independence from Yugoslavia, leading to armed conflicts.

March 1992: Bosnian independence referendum is boycotted by Serbs, escalating tensions.

April 1992: Bosnia and Herzegovina declares independence, triggering war as Bosnian Serbs, supported by Serbia, begin an armed campaign.

May 1992: Siege of Sarajevo begins, marking one of the longest and bloodiest sieges in modern history.

1992-1995: Ethnic cleansing, mass killings, and displacement occur across Bosnia.

1993: UN establishes safe zones in Bosnia, including Srebrenica.

February 1994: NATO conducts first airstrikes against Bosnian Serb forces following attacks on civilians.

March 1994: Washington Agreement signed, ending Bosniak-Croat conflict and creating their federation

November 1994: UN War Crimes Tribunal issues first indictments for Bosnia war crimes

September 1995: Warring parties agree to basic principles for peace agreement

July 1995: Srebrenica massacre - over 8,000 Bosniak men and boys killed by Bosnian Serb forces.

August 1995: NATO launches Operation Deliberate Force, a large-scale air campaign against Bosnian Serb military targets.

Key Stakeholders

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosniak-led government): Seeks international support to maintain its sovereignty and protect its population from aggression. Faces the challenge of ensuring the safe return of refugees and rebuilding a war-torn country.

Republic of Srpska (Bosnian Serbs): Aims to secure autonomy or unification with Serbia. Led by nationalist figures who resist international intervention and push for territorial control over Serb-majority areas.

Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia (Bosnian Croats): Desires a separate Croat entity or closer ties with Croatia. Initially fought alongside the Bosniaks but later turned against them in pursuit of territorial gains.

Serbia: Supports Bosnian Serb ambitions while balancing international pressure. President Slobodan Milošević plays a key role in negotiations, facing scrutiny for Serbia's involvement in the war.

Croatia: Supports Bosnian Croats but seeks to avoid further conflict with the international community. President Franjo Tuđman aims to expand Croatian influence in Bosnia while cooperating with Western diplomats.

United States: Pressing for a negotiated settlement and actively involved in peace talks. Led by diplomats like Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. plays a central role in brokering the Dayton negotiations.

Russia: Traditionally sympathetic to the Serbs, advocating for their interests. Pushes for a resolution that does not disproportionately penalize Serbs while maintaining influence in the region.

European Union (EU) Nations: Favor peace and stability but are divided on their approaches. Some member states advocate for stronger intervention, while others hesitate to get militarily involved.

United Nations: Seeks a neutral resolution that ensures security, human rights, and humanitarian relief. The effectiveness of UN peacekeeping efforts has been widely criticized due to failures in preventing massacres like Srebrenica.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank: Critical for post-war reconstruction and economic stability

Office of the High Representative (OHR): To be established as the chief civilian peace implementation body

Comprehending the Dayton Agreement

The goal of the Dayton Agreement, which is presently under negotiation, is to bring about a comprehensive peace framework that will put an end to the Bosnian War. Among the important clauses under discussion are:

Territorial Division: Bosnia and Herzegovina will be split into two entities: the Republic of Srpska (Bosnian Serbs) will rule one, while the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosniaks and Croats) will control the other. The precise borders and governing bodies, however, are still debatable and need thorough discussion.

A Central Government: To manage national issues and maintain the delicate balance between the various entities, a central government with restricted authority will be established. The effectiveness of this arrangement is still up for debate, but members from each ethnic community will alternate in the president.

Military Restrictions: To stop the situation from getting worse, the number of armed forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be kept to a minimum. Implementation Forces (IFOR), led by NATO, will supervise disarmament and keep an eye on compliance.

Elections and Political Representation: All ethnic groups will have proportional representation under the democratic framework for governance outlined in the agreement. However, long-standing mistrust between groups could make fair elections difficult.

International Oversight: To enforce the pact and stop infractions, a force led by NATO will be sent in. There is also debate about the UN and EU's involvement in long-term peacekeeping and reconstruction.

War Crimes Tribunal: Justice for war crimes will be ensured by the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The accord might be jeopardised, though, if certain groups oppose the extradition of their leaders.

Refugee Rights: The agreement must include specific provisions for refugee return and property restitution, including mechanisms for resolving property disputes and ensuring minority rights protection.

Challenges in Achieving Peace

To obtain a peace deal, a number of significant challenges must be addressed:

Territorial Conflicts: Bosnia and Herzegovina's partition is still quite controversial. Bosniaks and Croats are afraid of losing control of important areas, while Bosnian Serbs want more autonomy.

Political Representation: Although the power-sharing arrangement in the agreement must take ethnic interests into account, a strong lack of trust amongst groups may make collaboration and governance difficult.

Security arrangements: The maintenance of peace requires the long-term presence of international forces; however, it is unclear how long NATO and UN soldiers will stay in the area and who will be responsible for paying for them.

Justice and Accountability: Reconciliation depends on holding war criminals accountable, yet many factions are hesitant to turn over their leaders for prosecution.

Return of Refugees: The number of displaced individuals has surpassed two million. Strong legal frameworks and international assistance will be needed to enable their safe return and property recovery.

Foreign Involvement: To keep outside influence from sabotaging negotiations, the roles of Russia, the U.S., the EU, Serbia, and Croatia must be carefully regulated.

Economic Reconstruction: The massive task of rebuilding infrastructure, reviving the economy, and establishing a functional unified market system while managing competing ethnic interests.

Conclusion

There is increasing pressure to find a workable solution as the Dayton Peace Conference in Ohio approaches. Delegates must balance the divergent and conflicting interests of the parties involved while acting quickly to stop additional bloodshed. The decisions made in these negotiations will determine Bosnia and Herzegovina's future, thus your participation in this session is crucial to the region's stability going forward.

The Dayton Peace Conference represents a pivotal moment in post-Cold War European history. As delegates gather in Ohio, they face the monumental task of not just ending a war, but rebuilding a nation. The challenges are immense: over 100,000 dead, two million displaced, an economy in ruins, and deep ethnic divisions that have been further inflamed by years of violence.

Success at Dayton will require more than just stopping the fighting. Delegates must craft an agreement that addresses immediate security concerns while building a foundation for lasting peace. This means balancing competing demands for territory and autonomy, establishing mechanisms for justice and reconciliation, and creating governance structures that can survive in a deeply divided society.

The stakes extend far beyond Bosnia's borders. The success or failure of these negotiations will:

- Set precedents for resolving ethnic conflicts in the post-Cold War era
- Test the international community's ability to enforce peace agreements
- Determine the stability of the entire Balkan region
- Shape the future role of NATO and the UN in peacekeeping operations
- Influence how future generations view international intervention in civil conflicts

As delegates, your decisions will not only impact the immediate cessation of hostilities but will shape the lives of millions of Bosnians for generations to come. The framework you establish must be robust enough to prevent renewed conflict while flexible enough to allow for societal healing and reconciliation. This is more than a peace treaty - it is an attempt to prove that multiethnic democracy can survive even after the most brutal of conflicts.



The eyes of the world are on Dayton, and history will judge the outcomes of these negotiations. The challenge before you is to transform a fragile ceasefire into a durable peace, and a divided society into a functional state. The future of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and potentially the post-Cold War international order itself, hangs in the balance.

Extra Resources:

→ **Full Text of the Dayton Agreement:** Access the Dayton Agreement, which outlines the peace accords that ended the Bosnian War.

[osce.org](https://www.osce.org)

→ **UN Security Council Resolution 1031:** This resolution, adopted on December 15, 1995, discusses the implementation of the Dayton Agreement and the establishment of a multinational implementation force.

[unscr.com](https://www.unscr.com)

→ **Office of the High Representative (OHR):** The OHR oversees the civilian implementation of the Dayton Agreement. Annex 10 details the OHR's mandate and responsibilities.

[ohr.int](https://www.ohr.int)

Key UN Resolutions:

[UN Security Council Resolution 713 \(1991\) - Arms embargo on Yugoslavia](#)

[UN Security Council Resolution 743 \(1992\) - Established UNPROFOR](#)

[UN Security Council Resolution 819 \(1993\) - Declared Srebrenica a "safe area"](#)

[UN Security Council Resolution 824 \(1993\) - Extended safe areas to other towns](#)

UN Security Council Resolution 1031 (1995) - Authorized NATO implementation force (linked above)

Other Key Documents and Agreements:

[Washington Agreement \(1994\) - Created the Bosniak-Croat Federation](#)

[UN Secretary-General's Report on the Fall of Srebrenica \(1999\)](#)

[ICTY \(International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia\) Statute](#)