

International Scenario: Kosovo Conflict (1998 - 1999)

The Kosovo War was a conflict that took place in the Balkans from 1998 to 1999, primarily between the Yugoslav government and the ethnic Albanian rebels of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The conflict was characterized by widespread violence against civilians, ethnic cleansing, and human rights abuses.



Source: United Nations

Before the Conflict

The causes of the conflict can be traced back to the dissolution of the country of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, which created a situation with no strong leadership and unleashed long-standing ethnic tensions. The Kosovo region had a majority Albanian population and had been under Serbian control since 1912. The Serbian government, led by Slobodan Milošević, sought to maintain control over Kosovo, while the KLA demanded independence. Negotiations between the two sides failed to produce a resolution, leading to the outbreak of violence.

Fighting Begins & International Organizations Get Involved

The actual war involved a series of escalating clashes between the Yugoslav army and the KLA. The Yugoslav government responded with a brutal crackdown, including using paramilitary units accused of war crimes. NATO intervened in 1999, launching an air campaign against Yugoslav military targets. The air campaign lasted for 78 days and resulted in the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo, followed by establishing a UN-led administration and deploying NATO peacekeeping troops.

Impact of the War

The consequences of the Kosovo War were significant. The conflict resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians and the deaths of thousands of people. The war also had a broader impact on the region, as it intensified nationalist sentiments and strained relations between neighboring countries. Kosovo declared independence in 2008, but its status remains contested, with Serbia and several other countries refusing to recognize its independence.

Role of the United States

The United States played a significant role in the Kosovo War, providing diplomatic, humanitarian, and military support to NATO allies. President Bill Clinton authorized the air campaign, which was the first time NATO had used military force against a sovereign state without a UN Security Council mandate. The U.S. also provided intelligence, logistical support, and special operations forces to NATO during the conflict. The U.S.'s role in the conflict was controversial, with critics arguing that the intervention violated international law and contributed to regional instability. However, supporters of the intervention maintain that it was necessary to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. During and after the Kosovo War, NATO worked with Kosovo forces to undertake a range of humanitarian, peacekeeping, and military actions to help resolve the conflict. Here are some examples:



Humanitarian Actions:

- Launched a massive humanitarian relief effort to assist refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who had fled the conflict. NATO airlifted tons of humanitarian aid to the region to help those affected by the war, including food, medicine and other supplies.
- Established safe zones and protected convoys to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and medical assistance to civilians in need.
- Helped to rebuild infrastructure and essential services, including hospitals, schools, and water treatment facilities.

Peacekeeping Actions:

- Kosovo Force (KFOR) was established as a peacekeeping force to help stabilize the situation in Kosovo and prevent further violence. KFOR troops were responsible for maintaining security, disarming the KLA, and supporting establishing a civil administration in the region.

Military Actions:

- NATO launched a sustained air campaign against Yugoslav military targets, with the goal of forcing a withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo. KFOR engaged in limited ground operations to seize strategic points and establish control over key areas.

Image Credits:

“[U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright greets boy holding sign that reads: We want back home to Kosova.](#)”

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Kosovo maps from the [United Nations](#)

Adapted from the following sources:

<https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Kosovo/312029> https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48818.htm

<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmik>

<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/ks.htm>