

Security council

The question of the territorial sovereignty of the Balkan states



Forum	Security Council
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Introduction

The powder keg of Europe, the South-eastern European Peninsula, and former Yugoslavia, are all terms used to name the region we will be discussing in this report: the Balkans. The Balkan peninsula is the most eastern of the three great European peninsulas (the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, and the Balkan peninsula) and without a doubt has been the politically least stable of the three. The word 'Balkan' is a Turkish for 'wooded mountain'¹, the name is obviously a testament to the geographical features of the peninsula, which are very similar to those of Arcadia. In reality, the Balkans are irreconcilable with this idyllic fictional land. Factually, the Balkan stretches into parts of Turkey and Greece, for this report and at the conference, we will also consider these jurisdictions to be 'Balkans', as both are very much involved with the issue.

For some clarity: the countries that lie completely within the Balkan peninsula are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. The countries that do not entirely lie inside the peninsula are Croatia, Greece, Serbia, Slovenia, Romania, Turkey, and Italy. Italy, however, is, although geographically technically in the Balkans, not considered 'within the Balkans'.

This region is politically highly complex, many different countries are or have been involved in the region, ethnic differences make it that ethnic borders cross official, internationally recognized borders, and whilst some Balkan states support the United States and its allies, others take more of a liking towards Russia. Moreover, the region has been under the control of many different empires such as the Ottoman empire and the Austro-Hungarian empire, hence, the Balkan religions, languages, traditions, and so on and so forth with cultural elements. The wars in 1913, the come up

¹ Noychov. "Etymology of 'Balkans.'" *WordReference Forums*, WordReference Forums, 27 Oct. 2020, <https://forum.wordreference.com/threads/etymology-of-balkans.1058602/>.



and downfall of Yugoslavia, and communist influence, all shaped the region into what it is nowadays: a Security Council-worthy issue.

Definition of Key Terms

Balkanisation

Balkanisation is the dissolution of a larger state or republic into smaller regions. The smaller regions often are hostile to one another. The term was introduced after the First World War after the aforementioned started to happen in the Balkan region. Nowadays, the term is not only used in the context of the Balkans specifically.²

The Balkans

The Balkans is a geographical term used for the peninsula that is home to the most part of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo (not recognized by all UN member states), Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and a meager part of Turkey. Important to realise is that '*Balkans*' is not used in official UN documents due to the admitted vagueness of the term.³

Irredentism

Irredentism is a term used to describe a claim on territory made by a country. The claim would in the context of irredentism be based on historical factors or ethnic factors⁴ (e.g., a country making a claim on a part of another country because their peoples live there).

Nationalism

Nationalism is a way of thinking in which one puts the interests of its own country and peoples in front of the interests of other countries. Nationalism may also come out as supporting one's own peoples when seeking independence from another country. The key to understanding the issue is understanding the impacts of nationalism. The keynote of this research report is *nationalism*.

² Pringle, Robert W.. "Balkanization". Encyclopedia Britannica, 9 Apr. 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Balkanization>. Accessed 18 June 2022.

³ "Balkans Definition." *Balkans Definitions | What Does Balkans Mean? | Best 5 Definitions of Balkans*, <https://www.yourdictionary.com/balkans>.

⁴ Ambrosio, Thomas. "Irredentism". Encyclopedia Britannica, 27 Feb. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/irredentism>. Accessed 18 June 2022.



Separatism

Separatism is very similar to irredentism. Separatism is the public support of a separation from a larger country or jurisdiction based on factors such as, but not limited to ethnicity, religion, and historical factors. Separatists call for a separate government.⁵

Sovereignty

Britannica describes sovereignty as: ‘Sovereignty, in political theory, the ultimate overseer, or authority, in the decision-making process of the state and in the maintenance of order. The concept of sovereignty—one of the most controversial ideas in political science and international law—is closely related to the difficult concepts of state and government and of independence and democracy.’⁶ And as ‘sovereignty’ is a very abstract term this will be the definition of it we will use during the conference.

Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia was a country in the Balkan Peninsula. In 1946 it became socialist. It was a federation that later broke up into Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia.

General Overview

Throughout history, the Southeast European Peninsula has been a popular battleground for megalomaniac ethnic groups and adventurous tribes. The Greeks were the first to attempt to explore the region almost 3000 years ago⁷, unsurprising because in contrast to the present they were the farthest developed civilization in Europe and most likely the world. Since the Ionians, many other tribes travelled to and through the mountainous area. Tribes including the Goths, Huns, and primarily the Slavs eventually settled here. Posterior to this is a violent history of collisions between the

⁵ “Separatist Definition and Meaning: Collins English Dictionary.” *Separatist Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary*, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/separatist>.

⁶ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “sovereignty”. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 18 Nov. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/sovereignty>. Accessed 18 June 2022.

⁷ Cascoigne, Bamber. “HISTORY OF THE BALKANS.” *History of the Balkans*, History World, <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/plaintexthistories.asp?historyid=ac79>.



inhabitants of the peninsula. Over time religion in the region changed drastically: The Greek-Roman polytheistic creed disappeared, and the monotheistic Christian religion gained popularity, later Islam would also make an appearance. Both Christianity and Islam are to this day the prominent religions within the Southeast European area. Around 400 A.D, the Slavs, opportunistically using the fall of the Hun empire, take charge of a majority of the territory. The Slavs will separate, and different groups will experience different changes and development. Ergo the increased political complexity in the region started, impacting life there even to this day.

Balkan Wars

The Romans, the Ottomans, the Austro-Hungarians, and the Slavs, all are peoples that the Balkans have been under the ruling of. The cultural differences and more importantly the cultural amalgamation within the region is clear as day. For now, the Ottomans are the point of focus, in view of the fact that the Balkans were under their rulings when, in October 1912⁸, the *Balkan Wars* commenced.

Most of the ethnic groups were fed up with the Ottoman ruling, hence, in and around the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century nationalistic sentiment arose and caused numerous rebellions. In 1821, the Greeks were the first country on the Balkan peninsula to declare complete independence, nevertheless it took a while for them to be recognized, that happened in 1831.⁹ After a war in 1878, the independence of Montenegro, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria (semi-independent) was recognized.¹⁰ The Ottoman empire was in fact even now still present in the Balkans, and this presence caused great irritation among the independent states as they claimed the Ottoman empire still ruled over territory that belonged to them. Many people were not living in the same country as their own people, with their own religion and culture. As Serbia aspired to take the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Ottomans, the Bulgarians began building a large military to fulfil their ideology of a national unification. However, the Bulgarian army alone would never been able to win

⁸ "Balkan Wars." Edited by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1 Oct. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Balkan-Wars>.

⁹ Chrysopoulos, Philip. "Greece 1821-2022: The History of the Greek War of Independence." *GreekReporter.com*, 27 Mar. 2022, <https://greekreporter.com/2022/03/25/greek-war-of-independence-greece-revolution-1821/>.

¹⁰ "The First Balkan War - Explained in 10 Minutes." *YouTube*, YouTube, 29 May 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LvLr1UjCVw>.



in battle against the large, powerful Ottoman Empire. Bulgaria signed two treaties, one with Serbia and one with Greece, confirming military cooperation to oppose the Persian empire. Informally, Montenegro would also join the Slavic nations and would be first to declare war on the Ottoman-Turkish-speaking power. Many consider the downfall of Adrianople, a city that had been in hands of the Ottomans for over five hundred years by then, to be the end of Ottoman rule in the Balkan region.

After the fall of the Ottoman empire in the region, Albania declared independence. The treaty of London divided the Balkan as seen depicted in the illustration below, the Ottomans had lost significant territory. The treaty was signed on the 30th of May 1913 and uniformly concluded the Balkan War on the 10th of August 1913¹¹.



Borders of the Balkan states after the Treaty of London¹²

¹¹ "Treaty of London (1913)." *Military Wiki*, [https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Treaty_of_London_\(1913\)](https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Treaty_of_London_(1913)).

¹² "Treaty of London (1913)." *Military Wiki*, [https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Treaty_of_London_\(1913\)](https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Treaty_of_London_(1913)).



The falling apart of Yugoslavia

Although being aware of the situation before the second world war involving the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, for this report we will not go into detail on this period in time. Important is to know though that the Kingdom had struggles with ethnic and religious differences.

Yugoslavia or the Land of the South Slavs was a united federation that was made up of approximately most of the western side of the Balkan peninsula. The federation was united in 1946 after the second world war by Josip Broz 'Tito'¹³, a socialist, who had helped to liberate the region of Nazi ruling in the years before. Once again, as seen in the Balkan War already, ethnic, and religious differences caused the necessary contest within Yugoslavia, as one might have expected by now. But what caused the falling apart of Yugoslavia?

Comparable to why the Balkan War started, nationalism once again posed a huge issue. As a result of Tito's efforts to promote unity, which were nothing but outrageously effective, Yugoslavia, for a while, had a period of relative order. Nationalism re-entered the political theatre, however, once Tito succumbed to medical issues aged eighty-eight. Prior to Tito's death, some regions in Yugoslavia were more economically favoured than others. And after his death, Yugoslavia became financially weaker and weaker in every region due to an oil crisis and stagnating trade with the western countries due to trade barrier issues. Unfortunately, challenging economic times create division, especially in a country where there are already such abounding and contrasting opinions.

When Yugoslavia eventually was divided, in six independent republics, the tensions continued. The opportunity to end the disputes once and for all was not taken and many ethnic groups were once more driven apart by the new borders. This sparked, as seen before, nationalism among all the different ethnic groups. In Serbia, two autonomous provinces were created: Vojvodina and Kosovo. Unsurprisingly, this birthed even more controversy and complexity within the area. This marks the beginning of the conflict between the Serbs and the Albanians. Additionally, the Kosovans

¹³ Lampe, John R. and Allcock, John B.. "Yugoslavia". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 5 Nov. 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Yugoslavia-former-federated-nation-1929-2003>. Accessed 16 June 2022.



demanded to become the seventh independent republic in the region. Despite the efforts of the former president of Yugoslavia to unite the nation, the Serbs kept seeing the actions of the Kosovans as the root of the conflict. This resulted in a huge division: from now on the Serbs were up against the Albanians, Kosovans, Croats, Slovenians, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Politically the republicans tried to resolve the issue, but this ended in the communists losing power in most areas, simultaneous with the decline of the USSR, and a rise of nationalism.

Following was a war known as the Yugoslav war; after which both Slovenia and Croatia



declared independence, and soon after Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina issued their declarations of independence likewise. Montenegro was the last country to leave the Yugoslavian republic in 2006¹⁴. Kosovo and Albania will be discussed later in this report in more detail. Concluding, ethnic division was the primary factor for the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Map of the Ethnic spread in Yugoslavia¹⁵

¹⁴ Asaturov, Sergey, and Andrei Martynov. "The Resurgence of Nationalism: The Breakup of Yugoslavia - Researchgate." *Researchgate.net*, Oct. 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346253174_THE_RESURGENCE_OF_NATIONALISM_THE_BREAKUP_OF_YUGOSLAVIA.

¹⁵ "Ethnic Groups in Yugoslavia," in World History Commons, <https://worldhistorycommons.org/ethnic-groups-yugoslavia> [accessed June 16, 2022]

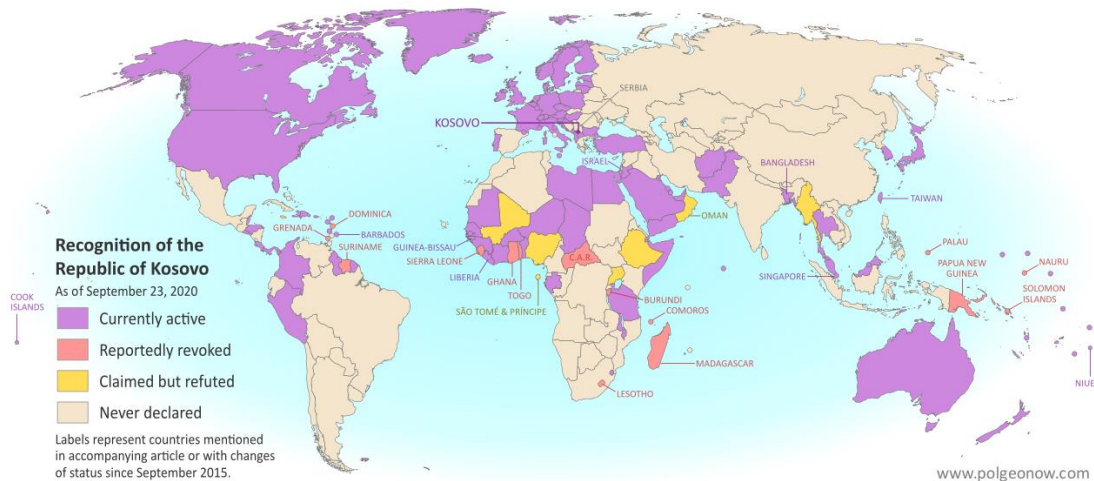


Disputes between Countries

Kosovo has been mentioned a few times before in this report and it has been disclaimed that not all countries actually recognize Kosovo as an independent state. Serbia (obviously), China, and Russia are the three most important UN member states that have not recognized Kosovo after the 2008 Kosovo Declaration of independence.



The former president of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, and former vice-president of the US Joe Biden holding Kosovo's declaration of independence¹⁶



A map showing countries' stance on the recognition of Kosovo¹⁷

¹⁶ "2008 Kosovo Declaration of Independence." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 18 June 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Kosovo_declaration_of_independence.

¹⁷ "Map & Analysis: Which Countries Recognize Kosovo in 2020?" *Political Geography Now*, PolGeo, 23 Sept. 2020, <https://www.polgeonow.com/2020/09/which-countries-recognize-kosovo-independence.html>.



For circa twenty years now the region of Kosovo has been fought over by Albanians and Serbians. And to understand the difference between these two groups we must, once again, look back at the past. When the Ottomans were still in power the Serbians and Albanians were both Orthodox-Christian. The Ottomans were of course Muslim and imposed strict rules on the orthodox Christians, such as extra taxes, and forcing people to join the Ottoman army. The Serbs remained opposed to the Ottomans, and through many gruesome measures made themselves unfit to go into the army. On the other hand, the Albanians gave in to the proselytist Ottomans and became Muslim. It is very imaginable how this alienated the Albanians and the Serbians from one another.

After World War Two, under Tito, a large group of Albanians migrated to the region of Kosovo to work in the mines, of which the resources were very much needed to solve the financial issues Yugoslavia was dealing with. It was mentioned before that Tito was singlehandedly responsible for unifying the ethnically diverse nation, but when he died there was no longer a supreme leader. All ethnic groups perhaps wanted to take control over the nation. As a result of this a civil war broke out which significantly weakened Serbia. In Kosovo, over time the Albanians had become an ethnic majority, and they saw the chance to become independent. Kosovo gained support from the United States, promising they would be allowed a military base (which would be close to Russia), and what also played a role was Serbia being a socialist republic, which is plainly against the US's international policy. The US started to bomb Serbia, which forced the Serbians to conclude their mission in Kosovo.

The parties in favour of Kosovan independence argue that it is paramount that the region is independent; ethnic harmony, economic stability, and a democratic future will only be possible under this condition. Parties opposed to Kosovan independence argue that the grounds for Kosovo belonging to Serbia are more viable; historically and culturally Kosovo has been Serbian, Kosovo is a progeny of Serbia.

The War in Ukraine

For a while the Balkans seemed to live in relative peace. The Russian invasion of Ukraine though sparked the flame of polarity in the Balkans. The Orthodox church in Serbia has close ties to the Orthodox church in Russia, this way the Kremlin has significant influence on Serbia, consequently making Serbia very pro-Russian and defensive of Russia's activities in the wheatfield of Europe. Albania, together with Kosovo and North Macedonia, is pro-Western and submitted a draft-resolution condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine to the security council which was vetoed by the Russian representative.



Sovereignty

As explained before, sovereignty domestically means that the government has full governing power over the country. Internationally, sovereignty confirms respect for borders and establishes equality between countries regardless of size, power, financial situation, et cetera. This means direct interference with domestic politics is off the table, but a country can, for example, impose sanctions or express their criticism of another state. On top of that when a country joins an alliance or union such as the EU a part of its sovereignty is lost because it will have to abide by EU conditions. Sovereignty has got certain limitations, genocides, ethnic cleansing, and other human rights violations could be disputed by other countries.

The concept is still very vague. There are no guidelines on who may claim sovereignty and when a group or country has the right to declare independence. Often, this is decided by violent conduct.

Major Parties Involved

The Hellenic Republic

Greece is commonly known for its membership of the European Union (EU) and its financial façades. It is located in the south of the Balkan peninsula. The relationships with other Balkan countries can be quite complicated. With Turkey they spar over the occupation of the Aegean Sea, Cyprus, and Istanbul, but this has not led to any violence. Greece's main ally in the region is Serbia since they share the same religion (Orthodox-Christian) and internationally back each other.

The People's Republic of Montenegro

Montenegro is east of Serbia. It split from former Yugoslavia and still identifies with Serbia. Montenegro recently joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and is rarely in conflict. It also has the least inhabitants of all Balkan countries.

The Republic of Albania

Albania is a former Yugoslav country and is located to the eastern side of the Balkan Peninsula. It is the only Balkan country with a seat at the table of the Security Council. Despite communist influence in the past, they still have a huge religious diverse demographic. Albania likes to imagine a great Albanian empire which would add on parts of Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia,



Kosovo, and Montenegro to their territory. They have a good relationship with Bosnia because their common enemy is Serbia. Their most stable relationship within the Balkans is with Greece.

The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The region of mass confusion or Bosnia and Herzegovina is located in the north-east of the Balkans and was once part of the Yugoslav Republic. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most diverse country in the Balkans due to various previously named former rulers throughout history. Depending on the ethnic group one would ask, Bosnia and Herzegovina could be allies with Turkey, Serbia, and/or Croatia.

The Republic of Bulgaria

Bulgaria was never part of Yugoslavia, and this excludes it from many conflicts. It is part of the EU, which is popular among their citizens but makes it easy for them to move to western countries (which happens a lot). Apart from occasionally stating North Macedonia belongs to them not much unrest is caused by the Bulgars.

The Republic of Croatia

Croatia, an ex-Yugoslav country, is located east of Bosnia in the North of the Balkans. Some remains of nationalism are still evident but does not result into any havoc. The Croats have been in several conflicts with the Serbs, but there seems to be no grudge held against them nowadays. The main partner Croatia has within the region is Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Republic of Kosovo

Kosovo has been extensively discussed in the General Overview; hence we have additional information to include in this part of the report.

The Republic of North Macedonia

North Macedonia was formerly part of Yugoslavia and is located above Greece. The name 'North Macedonia' was forced by Greece, because 'Macedonia' would imply that parts of Greece also belong to it. North Macedonia's amalgamation into the EU was prevented by Greece. Basically, all countries around North Macedonia (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia) believe North Macedonia and their people belong to them. The Serbs strive to get hold of an EU membership, but in vain.



The Republic of Serbia

Serbia is often seen as the antagonist in the region. It is located in the middle of the Balkan Peninsula. It often has disputes with Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Moreover, the Serbs try to juggle relationships with on one hand the EU and the US and on the other hand the Russian Federation, this sometimes results into difficulties for them. Their main confidant is Greece and not to forget Russia.

The Republic of Slovenia

Slovenia is the most economically advanced nation within the Balkans and has never been in any conflict involving other Balkan nations. Slovenia is part of the EU and is fairly separated from all political difficulties in the Balkans, as they present themselves as a western country.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
October 8th, 1912	Start of the Balkan War
May 30th, 1913	Signing of the Treaty of London
August 10th, 1913	End of the Balkan War
December 1 st , 1918	Creation of Yugoslavia
April 7 th , 1963	Tito is proclaimed president for life
May 4 th , 1980	Tito dies at 88 years old
June 3 rd , 2006	Montenegro is the last country to leave Yugoslavia
February 17 th , 2008	Kosovo declaration of independence
June 3 rd , 1906	Montenegro is the last country to leave Yugoslavia



UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 12 July 2002 (S/RES/1423)
- The situation in Croatia, 11 October (S/RES/1437)

Possible Solutions

It may seem self-explanatory but *the* way to create more understanding between countries is by facilitating dialogue. This way countries can understand each other's intentions and concerns, hopefully preventing unprecedented violence. Dialogue is not only important between countries, but also between ethnic groups within countries.

The next solution is more easily said than done, which is set clear borders. If clear borders are accomplished there will be less reasons for misunderstandings, controversy, and discord. The difficulty is that if it was as easy as it sounded it probably would have already been done. In addition, not all, ethnic groups, countries, states agree on what the exact borders are, throwing us into an endless loop of border disputes.

Historically we have seen that stability results, mostly, to peace. The probably most viable option would be to ensure sustainable economic stability in the region. Economic stability would ultimately lead to political stability and thus regional stability. Countries should become more autonomous and less dependent on larger powers such as Russia, China and the West, countries then would become less caught up in conflicts they have little to do with.



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