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NATO

Mitigating future conflicts in the Balkans after the interventions in Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo

ABSTRACT

The Balkan region has been profoundly shaped by the turbulence of war with its geopolitical landscape and security dynamics significantly impacted by historical and recent conflicts. NATO's involvement has been pivotal in addressing the aftermath of these conflicts aiming to stabilize the region and foster peace. This synthesis provides a comprehensive overview of the interplay between war, regional dynamics and NATO's influence.

Bosnian war intervention

NATO intervened in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Bosnian War 1992-1995 to address widespread violence and human rights abuses. The intervention began with air strikes against Bosnian Serb forces in 1995. It also played a key role in enforcing the Dayton Agreement which led to the end of the war and established a framework for peace and reconstruction. The alliance's involvement helped stabilize the region.



Figure 1

What went wrong?

Delayed Intervention: NATO's involvement came late, after significant suffering and violence had occurred. Initial international responses were slow and insufficient to prevent early atrocities.

Complex Political Environment: The intervention did not fully address the complex ethnic and political divisions in Bosnia leading to continued instability and challenges.

Limited Enforcement: Despite military success NATO struggled with the political complexities of enforcing the peace agreement leading to ongoing tensions.

The Purpose of NATO

Collective Defense, Protecting member states from external aggression.

Crisis Management, Responding to crises and conflicts that threaten international stability.

Cooperative Security, Engaging in partnerships and collaborations with non-member countries and international organizations to address global security challenges.



Figure 2

War intervention in Kosovo

NATO intervened in Kosovo in 1999 with a 78-day air campaign aimed at stopping the humanitarian crisis and ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Serbian forces against ethnic Albanians. The intervention was prompted by the failure of diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. NATO's airstrikes successfully pressured Serbia to withdraw its forces from Kosovo. KFOR was subsequently deployed to serve as a peacekeeping force.



Figure 3

Problems faced

Lack of UN Authorization: NATO's air campaign was conducted without explicit UN Security Council authorization, which led to debates about the legality and legitimacy of the intervention.

Humanitarian Impact: The airstrikes, while aimed at ending ethnic cleansing, caused civilian casualties and infrastructure damage.

Long-term Stability: The aftermath of NATO's intervention saw ongoing tensions between ethnic groups in Kosovo and Serbia and the region has continued to face political and security challenges.

