Kosovo Essay, Research Paper

Kosovo is a southern province of Serbia, the core of the former Yugoslavia. Slobodan Milosevic is currently president of Yugoslavia. He has been president in Serbia since 1989. In 1989, President Slobodan Milosevic stripped Kosovo of its autonomous status and declared the Albanian language unofficial. Yugoslavia came on the edge of economical collapse under his role. The crisis and war he has started with Kosovo is his third war. Last year violence broke out between Serbian police (MUP) and rebels known as the KLA, prior to that there were many years of political struggle between Albanian organizations and the government of Serbia. NATO has decided to take military action after unsuccessful peace talks with Milosevic. The goals of NATO’s attacks are to bring down Slobodan Milosevic and stop the killing of innocent Kosovars.

In response to the Kosovo Liberation Army’s guerrilla campaign for independence from Serbia, President Milosevic launched a brutal offensive against the region’s ethnic Albanian majority last summer. Serb forces attacked the civilian population, destroying villages and driving hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians from their homes. NATO countries were prompted to threaten military action against Milosevic because of civilian casualties and the mounting of refugee crisis. Under the threat of NATO air strikes, Milosevic signed a cease-fire agreement with the U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke in October.

In January the conflict in Kosovo had started up again. The western diplomats had hoped that the cease-fire and the harsh winter would give them an opportunity to press both the Serbs and the KLA into a peace deal. The massacre of 45 civilians by Serb forces in the village of Racak signaled the failure of the October cease-fire deal. In February, NATO demanded that KLA and the Serbs meet in France and sign on to a Western-authored peace deal, or face military pressure. Both the KLA and the Serbs refused to accept the peace deal into two weeks of talks at Rambouillet. In mid-March, KLA accepted the peace deal, but the Serbs refused. Milosevic then escalated the crisis by launching another large-scale offensive in Kosovo. NATO’s current air strike’s today is the principal objective in stopping and bringing down Milosevic.

“Up to a 100,000 ethnic Albanian men in Kosovo of fighting age have vanished and may have been killed by Serbian forces.” “Serbian forces have so far displaced 1.5 million ethnic Albanian men, women, and children in Kosovo”.

“The air campaign is working, but not as quickly as we hoped”. “We have conditions we have to follow…especially the need to limit civilian casualties,” and those conditions “degrade our own military campaign”. The rules the NATO military leaders were handed were: first, no casualties on our side; second, no casualties on their side; and third, do it fast—before public opinion at home collapses completely. Ground troops are precisely what it would have taken from day one to achieve the West’s premier purpose: stopping mass slaughter and mass expulsion. The alliance went for bombing. To avoid being hit, NATO’s planes flew high, killing many of the civilians they came to protect.

Ninety percent of Yugoslavia’s population is of Albanian rather than Serb origins. Kosovo enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in the old Yugoslavia. Milosevic revoked that autonomy in 1989 in keeping with his nationalist campaign for a “Greater Serbia.” Kosovo is the site of an historic defeat by the Ottoman Empire in the 14th century, so therefor it has great emotional significance to Serbian nationalists. The revoking of Kosovo’s autonomy sparked the current conflict. The Kosovo Liberation Army was founded in Pristina, Kosovo’s capital. The KLA, containing about 30,000 armed fighters, has radicalized the conflict by taking up arms and demanding full independence in the face of Serb determination to hold on to the province.

The Serbs, under Milosevic’s rule, are determined to eliminate the KLA and drive hundreds of thousands of ethnic-Albanians from their homes. The Serb’s actions will eventually create an unavoidable humanitarian catastrophe and a potential continent-wide refugee problem. The United States and NATO allies fear that the ethnic fighting in Kosovo may lead to a much larger war. The fighting could spill over into the countries of Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey.

The U.S. and its NATO allies are trying to force both sides to accept a compromise restoring Kosovo’s autonomy with the former Yugoslavia. After Slobodan Milosevic failing in Bosnia and Croatia, losing Kosovo might be a deathblow to his domestic political standing.

In March of 1999, NATO begins a bombing campaign. Yugoslav forces launch offensive attacks against KLA rebels. In January, 45 ethnic Albanians are found slain outside Racak, Kosovo. January 18, NATO declares new air strike threat in wake of the Serb massacre. The 30th of January, Serbs and Kosovars are warned to reach a peace agreement or face military air strikes. They exceed the deadline of three weeks. “Accept peace deal on the table or suffer a NATO attack”.

Kosovars who have identification cards and other documents issued before March 20th can obtain new residency cards. Hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians are left out of this. Serb forces destroyed most identity papers or the papers were left behind because they were forced to flee their homes. “It’s away to complicate the return of ethnic Albanians to their previous homes.” “It could complicate citizenship and identification. It could contaminate and pollute any kind of existing property records or election database that exists…It’s a pattern that we’ve seen in other conflicts that Milosevic was involved in”.

In Belgrade, Yugoslavia May 19th, NATO bombings caused great damage and the deaths of four people in Serbia. “Stop the Bombings and make a pause”. NATO is demanding that Milosevic withdraw his estimated 40,000 troops and special police from Kosovo. NATO demands that the 800,000 or more ethnic Albanian refugees be permitted back to their homes and is allowed the deployment of an international peacekeeping force. NATO approved plans in Brussels, Belgium to bring in a heavily armed peacekeeping force of about 50,000 soldiers in Kosovo. The U.S. is expected to provide 7,000 soldiers well armed NATO forces to serve as the core of the force, while some non-NATO nations are being asked to provide forces. “This is what I call the Teddy Roosevelt force.” “It is a force that we are designing to speak softly and carry a big stick”.

It has now been ten weeks of NATO’s bombing campaign in Yugoslavia. “It would be a bad idea to have a pause in bombing because it would let the Serbs regroup and continue attacks on Albanian Kosovars”. Unlike the U.S. and Britain, Russia opposes NATO’s bombing campaign. On Monday, June 1st, Belgrade has been said to accept five peace principles drawn up by the group of eight, which is the top industrial powers plus Russia. The G8 principles consist of an immediate end of violence in Kosovo, withdrawal of all military and other security forces, as well as others. “We will not settle for less”. “If this is not accepted and is not verifiable, then I do not think it will be possible for the alliance to come to an agreement on the suspension of bombing”. NATO vowed it would keep bombing until Serb forces pull out of Kosovo. “This alliance will not be shaken, we will not stop and we will not let up until Milosevic and his killing forces withdraw from Kosovo”.

Yugoslavia has an army of about 75,000 ground forces, 14,000-18,000 of them are deployed inside Kosovo. NATO should send in about 100,000-150,000 ground troops. For the U.S. to send in ground troops, it is a high risk to take jeopardizing the lives of American soldiers, but the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo must be stopped. NATO’s air bombing campaign to stop Milosevic and his Serb forces is killing too many innocent Albanian civilians. The air strikes are also causing a lot of damage. “Only the ground troops of NATO, together with the KLA, would convince me.” “We have no faith in the Russians because they are friends with Milosevic”. Many villages and towns in Kosovo have been razed and burned beyond recognition. Five hundred towns in all have been damaged according to the state department. NATO must send in ground troops or continue with the bombing campaign until Milosevic and his power is brought down and the Kosovo Albanians are free.