

Committee: Historical Security Council 2001

Issue: Addressing the insurgency in FYROM (July 23rd)

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INTRODUCTION

The 2001 insurgency in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) was a conflict based on ethnic discrimination and racism. The official Macedonian forces fought against the Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA), a rebel group located in western Macedonia. The aim of the NLA was to fight for the rights and equality of the Albanian minority in Macedonia. The group started attacking Macedonian governmental forces and village populace mostly located in the north part of the country. By the end of spring of 2001, the NLA had controlled most of the Northwestern part of the country and was very close to major cities such as Tetovo and the capital Skopje. The conflict rapidly escalated during the summer - drawing attention from the international community, but specifically from the European Union and the United States of America. It is essential to understand that the ongoing conflict, the most pressing issue at hand, originates from the history of systematic racism, discrimination against the Albanian people and islamophobia in FYROM. The location of the conflict, the Balkans, is sensitive and a concerning threat to international peace, stability and security. The NLA has committed several war crimes - killing of NATO and UK soldiers is one among many. In addition to the continued violence threatening world peace, the threat to an international protectorate controlled by the United Nations, namely Kosovo, is a significant reason as to why we will be discussing the issue in the Security Council.

Any reference to the state of North Macedonia should be made with their former title - Former Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and to their citizens as Skopjans, as the Treaty of Prespa was not signed in 2001. It is important to recognize the nations with their official titles recognized by the United Nations in 2001.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Islamophobia

Islamophobia is discrimination against people who believe in Islam. Islamophobia can be expressed in ways such as but not limited to discrimination in the workplace, education sector and public institutions. Hate speech, physical violence, exaggerated fear and hostility can also be considered forms of islamophobia.

Racism

Racism is discrimination based on someone's race or and ethnicity.

Ethnic Albanian

An Ethnic Albanian is someone who comes from Albania and has a common cultural and national tradition as them. Albanian people can be found in large numbers in several Balkan nations.

Ethnic Macedonian

Ethnic Macedonian people come from FYROM and are of the Slavic descent. They speak the Slavic language and originate from the country of FYROM and other parts of the former Yugoslav countries.

Kosovar Albanian

Kosovar Albanians are Albanian people living in Kosovo. Kosovo always had a large number of Albanians and thus leading to the creation of a strong Albanian community. Kosovar Albanians have developed their own culture and dialect; however, they still retain close relations to ethnic Albanians.

The Albanian National Liberation Army

The Albanian National Liberation Army also known as NLA is a rebel group which was created in northern Macedonia. The group was originally created for the advocacy of Albanian rights in the country; however, in the current day, it is responsible for committing several war crimes.

Albanophobia

Albanophobia is the systematic discrimination and prejudice against Albanian people.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Albanian minority in Macedonia

Since its succession of Yugoslavia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had a large ethnic Albanian community. Just like other ethnic groups, Albanians were local residents to the territory and despite their large numbers, Albanians were not respected and treated equally by the Slavic majority and the Skopjan government.

Albanophobia and discrimination were built in the government and the legislation. The Albanian minority often protested and requested more representation of ethnic Albanians in several institutions, such as the police force, the army and the public sector. The Albanian language was not officially recognised, the government did not promote or support the Albanian media and the teaching of Albanian in schools. Police brutality towards ethnic Albanians happened frequently. The Albanian flag was banned from public spaces and Albanian culture was constantly repressed.

In many cases, discrimination against Albanians was connected to Islamophobia and hate against Islam. Although it can be argued not to be the main cause of discrimination, Islamophobia has played a major role in some discriminatory incidents against Muslims. There has been a history of tensions between the Orthodox church and Muslims (mostly of an Albanian origin).

Impact of the 1999 Refugee Influx

A large wave of refugees came to the FYROM in 1999 during the war in Kosovo. The majority of these refugees were Kosovar Albanians. The refugee wave had a negative impact on the developing country since it required numerous resources and attention by the government. Although the crisis did not last for long, it had great magnitude, with about 345,000 refugees seeking asylum. This massive influx of refugees did not help the integration of the Albanian people in the Slavic society. Racism against Albanians became more visible since many Skopjians feared that the large number of refugees would affect the ethnic balance of the country.

The Albanian National Liberation Army

The Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) is a rebel group that was assembled in the western part of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and is associated with the Kosovo Liberation Army.

The rebel group first attacked Skopjia security forces in January of 2001. Minor attacks against local police and security forces continued during spring which shocked both the Macedonian government and the international community. These attacks mostly include gun attacks against police forces in mostly Albanian villages. The group was not heavily armed; however, it had several weapons under its possession. By the beginning of March, the group seized control of territories in the northwestern part of the nation. Most of the attacks were carried out in small towns and villages, but larger cities such as Tetovo were always targeted. Despite the group's endless efforts, they were unable to reach the city of Tetovo. However, all the territories around it were under the organization's influence and control.

The group's initial cause was supported by Albania and other Albanian communities in the Balkan Peninsula and found allies in the ethnic Albanian people of FYROM and Kosovo Albanians. The Kosovo Liberation Army was a very strong and loyal ally to the NLA since it provided the group with weapons and soldiers.

The Skopjia government labelled the group as a terrorist organisation. Nations such as Bulgaria and Ukraine were also opposed to the activities and actions of the group and both nations provided arms to the Macedonian government to combat the NLA.

In terms of war crimes committed, the NLA was accused of torturing unarmed civilians and repeatedly attacking unarmed ethnic Macedonian people. The NLA also cut the water supply in the village of Kumanovo, one of their many strongholds.

The battle in Tetovo

The conflict in Tetovo is one of the most important battles to understand the insurgency in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Tetovo is a very large city with one of the largest Albanian communities in the country. As previously mentioned, the rebel group had

a number of small villages under its control around Tetovo and attempted to invade the city, which, however, failed.

One of the reasons why understanding the conflict in Tetovo is very important is because, post this battle, the Skopjain government and the NLA agreed to communicate for the first time. Although the government refused to negotiate directly with the so-called terrorist group, they collaborated with Albanian political groups and parties in order to find a solution.

Dialogue between the two parties occurred on several occasions; however, the tensions were high with the NLA still patrolling the territories around Tetovo. In April, the alleged killing of eight Skopjain officers was conducted by the NLA. Due to this attack, the Skopjain population organised riots and protests to voice the lack of safety and the inertia of the government. These riots and protests lead to the government of The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia declaring a state of war, which in the longer-run gave them the opportunity to fight the NLA with a range of methods which would not have been possible without the declaration of a state of war.

Examples of methods equipped by the Macedonian government and the international community to fight the NLA

The National Liberation Army is a guerrilla group that attacked without a specific pattern and strategy. The Macedonian government was not prepared to face the group and did not have an organised military force to face the rebel group. This is why in order to defend the Skopjain people, FYROM received arms and weapons by Bulgaria and Ukraine, two countries that supported the Macedonian government throughout the conflict.

When the attacks first started the government did not retaliate immediately and instead tried to negotiate with political Albanian parties. Despite its efforts, the rebel group did not want to reach an agreement and in order to ensure the nation's security, the Skopjain government approved the launch of an organised military attack/offensive against the group. As the clashes became more frequent, the Skopjain government used helicopters and armed vehicles against the group. The government launched offensives in major battles, such as the ones in Kumanovo, Tetovo and villages around Skopje. The battle in Arcanovo stands out because the military used bombs in order to take control of the villages under the group's influence.

General Ceasefire

On the 5th of July, a general ceasefire was signed in an attempt to end the conflict. The idea of a ceasefire was first introduced by the North Atlantic Treaty Association and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The agreement ordered the creation of a demilitarized zone between Kosovo and the territory around Tetovo. The agreement required the Skopjan forces to move from the city of Tetovo and several villages around it to the border of Kosovo. The ceasefire mentioned that when a Skopjan soldier felt threatened, he/she could fire at any member of the NLA. The North Atlantic Treaty Association deployed a large number of troops in order to monitor and control the situation at the border.

The National Liberation Army did not follow the terms of the ceasefire, something that meant that the ceasefire failed to maintain peace. The group attacked the Skopjan authorities numerous times and the forces often retaliated. New clashes of the NLA were spotted in Tetovo and the demilitarized zone was never formed. Since the city did not have a strong military presence, the NLA was able to attack several more villages near Tetovo and take them under its control in addition to its strongholds near Tetovo. Skopjan forces were unable to defend the civilians due to the ceasefire and the people of FYROM had to retaliate themselves by using weapons provided by the authorities. The absence of Skopjan troops that is stated in the ceasefire, gave the rebel group the ability to retaliate. In general the ceasefire was not effective, because it did not restrict the National Liberation Army and only the Skopjan forces followed the terms of the ceasefire.

NATO took some controversial actions by entering the Macedonian airspace and dropping off two containers with arms, which were later obtained by the NLA. NATO claimed that the helicopters dropped off the containers for the Kosovo security force. This move raised questions about NATO supporting the NLA, something that was denied by the official sources. In the next few days, the NLA started obtaining control of more territory, which led to the involvement of the FYROM Army in the conflict on the 23rd of July.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (F.Y.R.O.M)

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is argued to be most affected by the insurgency. The government labelled the organisation as a terrorist group and used its security forces and army to forcefully drive the organisation out of the country.

The Skopjian government was very vocal about the limited action that the international community took to resolve the conflict and was worried that the NLA would attempt to detach Skopjian territory from the country and claim it as Albanian. The international community eventually helped the Balkan country, with countries such as Bulgaria and Ukraine offering arms support and NATO deploying German and American troops to the border with Kosovo. The conflict impacted the nation negatively in many ways since it hindered its economic growth and affected its trade relations with Serbia and Montenegro, two of its main trade partners. The conflict also caused commotion and instability in the country itself resulting in the closure of several businesses and citizens trying to flee the country.

The United States of America

The United States of America has always been an ally to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The US has supported the FYROM in order to maintain stability, peace and encourage economic prosperity in the Balkans. The US has stated that they are against the actions of the National Liberation Army and characterised the group as extremist. The US helped the Skopjian government by offering arms support through NATO and by constantly trying to resolve the conflict. Despite the US not agreeing with the actions taken by the National Liberation Army, it constantly pushed for governmental reforms, in order to ensure peace in Macedonia. Equality for the ethnic Albanian minority was seen as a priority for the US and encouraged collaboration and dialogue between the Macedonian authorities and Albanian political figures in the country. The US also played a very important role, since it had a large number of troops in Kosovo and this is why the US had major involvement in the general situation of the Balkans.

NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Association was immediately involved in the conflict since it already played a major role in retaining peace in the Kosovo war. FYROM notified NATO when the situation started to escalate and asked for assistance in order to prevent further conflict and retain peace. NATO encouraged a political dialogue and discussion amongst the two parties. However, when the situation got out of hand NATO started an operation entitled Essential Harvest. The goal of this operation was to demilitarize the NLA. The final approval for the operation was given to the organisation on June 29th of 2001. NATO also had numerous troops in Kosovo, something that prevented the full collaboration of the Albanian and Kosovo Liberation Armies.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1945-1990	During this time the territory known as North Macedonia today was part of Yugoslavia.
1991	A referendum was held in order to see if Macedonia would still be a part of Yugoslavia. 74% of the population wanted to leave from Yugoslavia.
1992	In 1992 Macedonia got full independence from Yugoslavia and became an independent nation.
1993	The situation escalated and the conflict in Kosovo became a threat to the stability of Macedonia. The United Nations deployed 1,000 troops in order to support the nation.
1994	This year was very important because the United Nations established diplomatic relations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
1999	Throughout the whole year, refugees from Kosovo fled to FYROM.

	Most of these refugees were Kosovar Albanians.
2000-2001	Attacks by the guerrilla group started on Macedonian authorities.
March 2001	The group attacked Tetovo, one of the largest cities in FYROM.
May 2001	Conflict between the NLA and the Macedonian government started in Kumanovo.
June 12th, 2001	The guerrilla group took control of a Kumanovo and threatened to attack the capital Skopje.
June 18th, 2001	The FYROM government decided to launch an operation to the village of Arcanovo, in order to tackle the operation launched by the NLA. The Macedonian government did not inform the international community and NATO about the operation, something that did cause commotion.
July 5th, 2001	The ceasefire agreement was signed between the NLA and FYROM.
July 7th, 2001	Only 2 days after the ceasefire was signed, the NLA attacked Macedonian security forces.
July 21st, 2001	Two NATO helicopters dropped of containers for the Kosovo security force; however, they were obtained by the NLA.
July 22nd, 2001	The Macedonian government decided to intervene with their military forces in order to stop the NLA.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- Security Council Resolution 1345 (S/RES/1345)

The Resolution 1345, which was adopted by the Security Council on March 21st, 2001, addresses the terrorist activities in the Balkan nation; however, the international community failed to address the involvement of Kosovo. The security did not focus on the ethnic differences of the conflict.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The Balkan has been one of the areas that needed peacekeeping since the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The United Nations peacekeeping forces have been in FYROM from 1993, in order to ensure that the newly created nation does not get involved in the conflict. Nevertheless, this operation stopped in 1999 after China's veto. The reason behind the veto was FYROM's recognition of Taiwan. In March of 2001, FYROM asked for the assistance of the Security Council in order to help resolve the conflict. Unfortunately, the resolution previously mentioned was not helpful since it failed to address several aspects of the issue. The resolution did not address the involvement of Kosovo in the dispute, but also overlooked the long-term issues that the Albanian minority has been facing.

In order to ensure stability in the area, the UN has deployed peacekeeping forces in Kosovo. NATO also had a number of troops deployed in order to ensure the stability of the region. NATO's troops are specifically located at the border between Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and have control over the border.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

When debating this issue, we should focus on several different aspects, such as the ethnic conflict, the discrimination against the Albanian people, but also the war crimes committed by the NLA. Another very important point is to understand the mistakes made when creating the first ceasefire and try to improve it.

The conflict with the NLA and the ensuring of peace and international security

Delegates could address the lack of military presence in major cities of the war such as Tetovo and Kumanovo. The last ceasefire did not give the Macedonian government the ability to retaliate in case any attacks take place. The NLA should voluntarily give all of its arms to the UN and cease its operations from all the villages it has under control.

It is believed that the involvement of Kosovo and other countries in the conflict has only complicated the situation. As the Security Council, we should try to control the situation in

both Kosovo and FYROM in order to prevent a larger conflict. The UN Security Council will have to try and separate the two conflicts and limit the connection between them, because of the vast geographical span the conflict could emerge into. Since several organisations such as NATO and the OSCE are involved, the conflict should be looked at from all perspectives. The UN needs to be involved because the stability of the region is very important for the future of Europe. NATO, OSCE and the European Union can also be involved in the situation; however, none of the parties above should have absolute control of the territory to secure the sovereignty of the region.

The long-term discrimination and the internal disputes

Delegates should find a solution to the discrimination that the ethnic Albanian people are facing in FYROM. The lack of educational institutions for the Albanian language and encourage the government of FYROM to create such institutions, where the Albanian language, culture and history will be taught in order for the ethnic minority to stay in touch with its roots are some of the many factors that can be addressed. The Albanian flag ban needs to be lifted since it is a sign of oppression and racism against the Albanian people of FYROM. It can be argued that the Albanian language should be recognised as co-official on a national level. Ethnic Albanians should be included in the police force so as to limit discrimination against Albanian people and increase their representation.

Islamophobia is another issue that the Albanian community is facing and is playing a major role in the division between the FYROM populace and the Albanian minority. Security should be ensured for Muslims in mosques, by organizations such as the local police force. Criticism against Muslims should be deemed pejorative and anti-racism laws should be included in the constitution. The Muslim community needs to be represented in the parliament and its values and perspective should be taken into consideration when making a decision concerning religion. More representation of minorities should be ensured in the parliament and governmental structure.

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