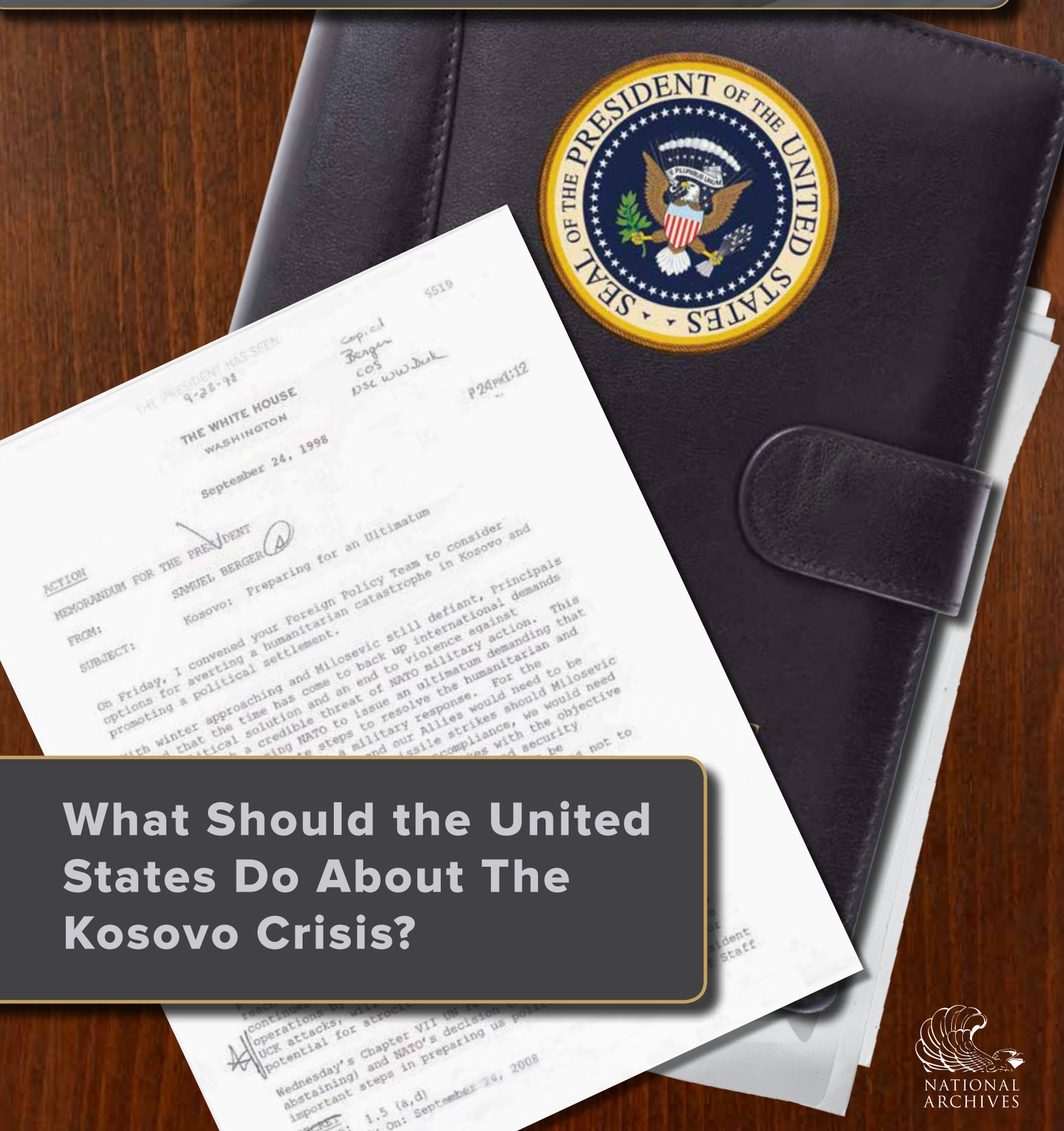
# Advise the President:

# WILLIAM J. CLINTON




## What Should the United States Do About The Kosovo Crisis?

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

# Advise the President:
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## What Should the United States Do About The Kosovo Crisis?



**Place: the Situation Room, the White House**
**Time: March 1999**

It is 1999 and President Bill Clinton must decide what the United States should do about the Kosovo crisis. Since 1989, the President of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević, has used political and military power to assert Serbian supremacy over the ethnic Albanian majority in the province of Kosovo. Since 1997 a campaign by Serbian police and military forces has driven 800,000 ethnic Albanians from their homes. Thousands of Albanians have been killed in a relentless campaign of ethnic genocide.

Moving forward President Clinton must make a critical decision that could shape the second half of his Presidency and have a major impact on the United States' strategic alliances. Before deciding how to act, President Clinton must meet with his Cabinet and team of National Security Advisors—including you—to consider the nation's moral values and strategic interests.

## STEP INTO THE OVAL OFFICE.

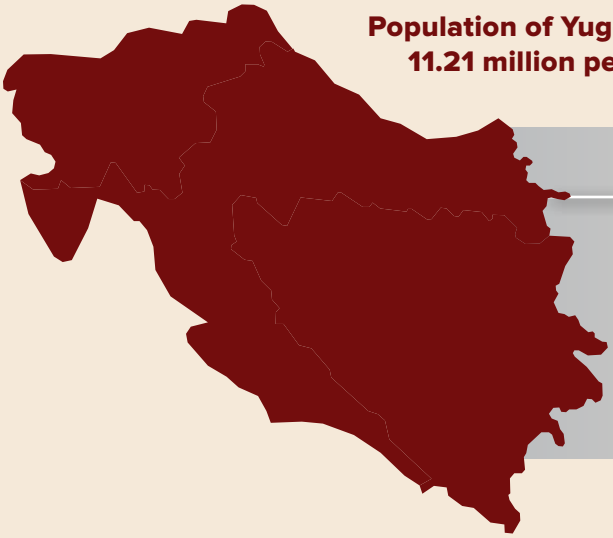
## THE PRESIDENT IS EXPECTING YOU.

# Background



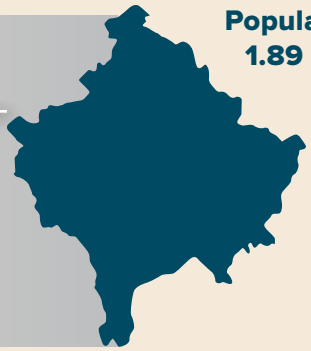
*President Clinton converses with President Slobodan Milošević in Paris, France, December 14, 1995.*

Serbia is the dominant political power in what remains of Yugoslavia. In 1989, Slobodan Milošević came to power in Belgrade, the capital and largest city in Serbia, by promoting Serbian nationalism and supporting the grievances of Serbians throughout Yugoslavia. Most of the Serbian people are Orthodox Christians of South Slavic ethnicity, while the Kosovar people are mostly Muslim of Albanian ethnicity. Serbians in Kosovo claimed they were being mistreated by the Albanian population, and in reaction Milošević took control of the previously autonomous region of Kosovo, brought the province under direct rule from Belgrade, and fired most of the ethnic Albanian state employees, who were later replaced by Serbians.



**Population of Yugoslavia: 11.21 million people**

| Religion | | Ethnicity | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 65 % | Orthodox Christian | 63 % | Serbian |
| 19 % | Muslim | 14 % | Albanian |
| 4 % | Roman Catholic | 6 % | Montenegrin |
| 1 % | Protestant | 4 % | Hungarian |
| 11 % | Other | 13 % | Other |



**Population of Kosovo: 1.89 million people**

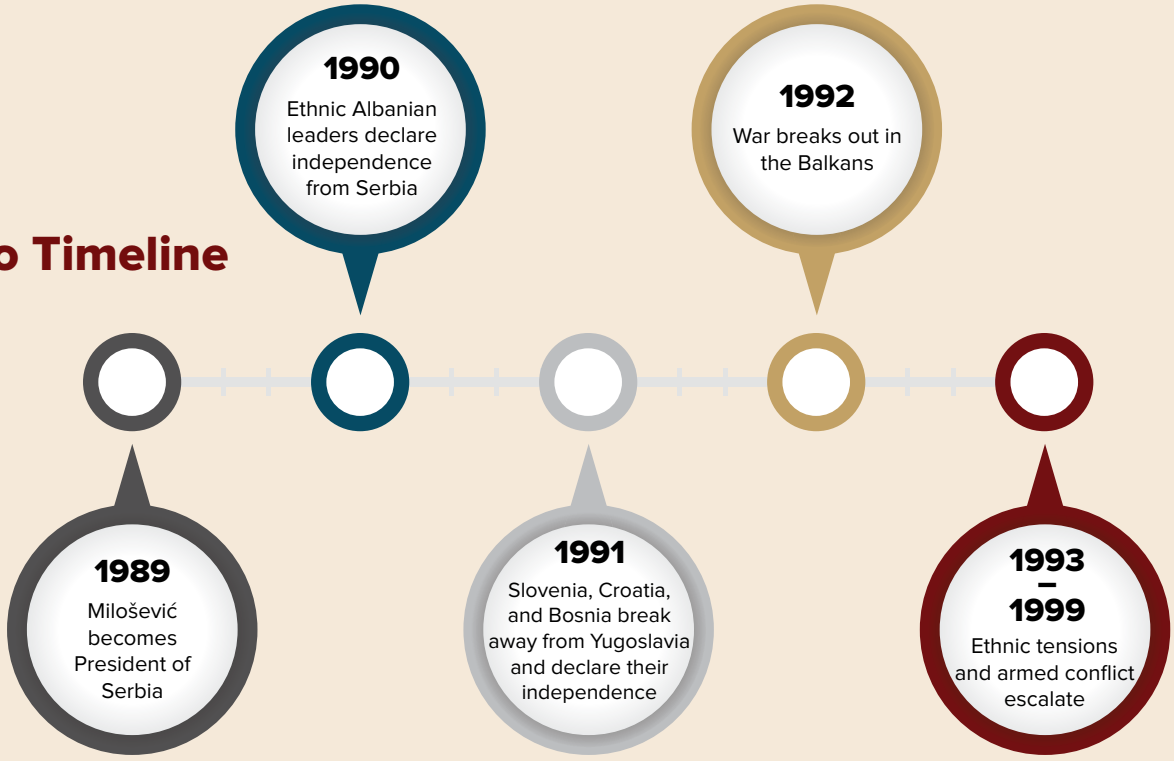
| Religion | | Ethnicity | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 81 % | Muslims | 86.5 % | Albanian |
| 10 % | Orthodox Christian | 1.5 % | Turks |
| 9 % | Roman Catholics | 10 % | Serbian |
| | | 3 % | Roma |

In the early 1990s, Kosovar Albanians, led by Ibrahim Rugova, began a peaceful resistance movement hoping to gain international assistance and recognition for an independent Kosovo. Rugova's group established a parallel government funded mainly by members of the Albanian community living in other parts of the world. The failure of the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords to address the tensions in Kosovo deepened frustrations between Serbian and Albanian populations. In 1997, Kosovars dissatisfied with Rugova's passive strategy formed an armed resistance movement called the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

The KLA sought to achieve independence for Kosovo and, in response to the continued repression of the Albanian population, began attacking Serbian police and military facilities. In 1998, Milošević responded to KLA action with a brutal police and military campaign, which included widespread atrocities against civilians. In an effort to reclaim land for Serbia, Miloševic forced over 800,000 ethnic Kosovar Albanians from their homes and killed thousands in a campaign of ethnic genocide.

On February 6, 1999, member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) brought Serbians and Kosovar Albanians together at the Rambouillet Castle in France in hopes of negotiating a settlement to reduce violence between the parties. The Rambouillet Accords called for the presence of a NATO peacekeeping force in Kosovo and an opportunity for the citizens of Kosovo to determine the future of their homeland. Miloševic found these conditions unacceptable and rejected the proposed settlement. At this point, additional decisions have to be made regarding the crisis in Kosovo.

## Kosovo Timeline



# Map of the Balkans

The Balkans is a region of southeastern Europe that gets its name from the Balkan Mountains. The region is about 160 miles east of Italy and about 70 miles north of Greece. For centuries, religious and ethnic identities have played a major role in the conflicts that continue to plague this region.

Prior to 1991, the country of Yugoslavia contained the six republics of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Macedonia. Except for Bosnia, each of the republics represented a distinct ethnic group. Yugoslavia also encompassed two autonomous regions, Kosovo and Vojvodina, which had a considerable amount of control in their local affairs.

Between 1991 and 1992, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Bosnia declared their independence from Yugoslavia, beginning four years of warfare between the new countries and the forces of the remaining republics of Yugoslavia—Serbia and Montenegro. The 1995 Dayton Peace Accords temporarily quieted the conflict in the region.




## Key Words:

**Ethnic genocide—** a policy designed by one ethnic group to violently and systematically eliminate a population of another ethnic group.

**Peacekeeping forces—** a neutral party that monitors a post-conflict area to ensure that the peace agreement is followed and that the civilian population is safe.

**Economic sanctions—** actions of one group to harm the economy of another group in order to force a political change (for example, freezing financial assets or enacting trade embargos).

# Overview of Main U.S. Decision-Makers



## President Bill Clinton

**Commander in Chief**
Shapes defense policy and uses the nation's Army and Navy to ensure our security when needed.

**Chief Diplomat**
Decides what is communicated to other governments.

**Chief Executive/Administrator**
Head of the Executive Branch.



## Sandy Berger

**National Security Advisor**
Chief adviser to the President of the United States on national security issues. The member of the National Security Council within the Executive Office of the President.



## Madeleine Albright

**Secretary of State**
Head of the United States Department of State, responsible for foreign affairs. A member of the Cabinet and the highest-ranking cabinet secretary.



## William Cohen

**Secretary of Defense**
Head and chief executive officer of the Department of Defense. A member of the Cabinet.

# Diplomatic Pressure, Military Action, or a Hands Off Approach: What Should the United States Do About The Kosovo Crisis?

**The Clinton Administration must review several options designed to address the events in Kosovo. The Cabinet and National Security Advisors must weigh the possible consequences of any U.S. response. The team must be ready to provide sound advice to President Clinton before he makes a final decision on a specific course of action.**

## POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION

**OPTION ONE: PROMOTE DIPLOMATIC RESOLUTION**
Use diplomacy to focus on crafting a peace agreement between Kosovar Albanians and Serbian leaders to end the violence.

**OPTION TWO: USE MILITARY FORCE**
Commit the U.S. Armed Forces to a military mission against Serbian forces in Yugoslavia to end ethnic genocide in Kosovo.

**OPTION THREE: FOCUS U.S. RESOURCES AT HOME**
Denounce the violence, but stay out of the conflict; concentrate on more important U.S. interests at home.

# OPTION ONE: PROMOTE DIPLOMATIC RESOLUTION

We should use diplomacy to focus on crafting a peace agreement between Kosovar Albanians and Serbian leaders to end the violence and ethnic genocide in Kosovo. Diplomacy uses the tools of mediation and economic sanctions to move a conflict toward resolution. American citizens often support diplomacy because it offers the promise of resolving conflicts without the drawback of putting the military in harms way or endangering the lives of civilians. For Example, the 1995 Balkan Peace Agreement, a mediated agreement, put an end to three-and-a-half years of war in Bosnia and demonstrated how diplomatic resolutions can peacefully end disputes.

Before making a decision on a course of action in Kosovo, President Clinton considers previous international action. In 1993 peace talks resumed between Britain and Northern Ireland after President Clinton decided to open dialogue with Sinn Féin, the party generally recognized as the political voice of the Irish Republican Army (IRA). This diplomatic move by President Clinton gave credibility to the IRA's previously announced cease-fire. On April 7, 1998, just two days before the prearranged deadline for concluding the peace talks, the U.S. envoy, George Mitchell, produced a detailed outline for the peace agreement. On Friday, April 10, 1998, the British and Irish governments, agreed to the Northern Ireland Peace Agreement, also known as the Good Friday Agreement. The agreement stands as one of the Clinton administration's major foreign policy successes.

President Clinton must promote peace talks and economic sanctions as a means to end the ethnic genocide in Kosovo, protect the safety of ethnic Albanians, and broker a plan for lasting peace.

## Greatest Concern

**Peacefully resolve the conflict.**
The diplomatic corps should continue actively working with Serbian and Albanian Kosovar leaders to broker a peace agreement. If necessary, the U.S. and its allies can place economic and trade restrictions on Milošević's government to convince the regime to change course. Diplomacy proves that peace need not be impractical and war need not be inevitable.

## Examples of Possible Actions

**Use diplomacy to end ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.**
Continue peace talks and use economic sanctions to seek a ceasefire agreement.

Promote ethnic reconciliation by providing the space necessary for Serbians and Albanians to negotiate a peaceful end to conflict.

Use all U.S. resources (including time, personnel, and international networks) to bring the parties to peaceful mediation of the conflict.

## Some Consequences to Consider

**If we pursue Option One, we might face these consequences or criticisms:**
While we apply diplomatic pressure, killings and forced removals of Albanians may continue.

A negotiated settlement might trade away the chance to prosecute Milošević and others in his regime for war crimes.

Mediation and economic sanctions may set a precedent for U.S. involvement in other international atrocities where U.S. resources are diminished.

# OPTION TWO: USE MILITARY FORCE

We should commit the U.S. Armed Forces to a military mission against Serbian forces to put an immediate end to ethnic genocide in Kosovo. We must be prepared to use military might to stop mass killings by a dangerous tyrant. The United States is a prominent player in the world and other nations look to us when international crises occur. U.S. military action is a force that can end human rights abuses, prevent widespread war, and restore peaceful international relations.

On September 30, 1991, a military coup under the leadership of Lieutenant General Raoul Cedras overthrew the government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the first popularly elected president in Haitian history. In response, the United Nations Security Council imposed a naval blockade on Haiti. Through the following months the administration pursued a dual strategy, planning for military intervention while hoping that the threat of a U.S. invasion would coerce the Haitian leaders to surrender power. The Clinton administration built the diplomatic foundation for the operation in the summer of 1994, working to secure a United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) authorizing the removal of the Haitian military regime. In early September planning and preparation for the invasion was completed under the code name Operation Uphold Democracy. The invasion force numbered nearly 25,000 military personnel from all services, backed by two aircraft carriers and extensive air support. The operation was scheduled for September 19. The invasion forces launched with the negotiations in progress, without any certainty whether they would make an opposed or a peaceful entry on to Haitian soil. The Haitian leadership capitulated in time to avoid bloodshed."

Military force must be the means to end ethnic genocide.

## Greatest Concern

**Stop the genocide now.**
Ethnic genocide is a barbaric practice that defies human rights and destroys entire communities. The mass killings in Kosovo must be stopped by any means necessary. The U.S. Armed Forces, working with its allies in the region, should intervene to curb bullying tactics and prevent the horrific massacres carried out by the Milošević regime.

## Examples of Possible Actions

**Take military action in Kosovo.**
Use military force to protect the people of Kosovo and end Milošević's abuse of human rights.

Use military force or the threat of additional action to pressure the Milošević regime to negotiate, rather than risk the violence expanding into neighboring territories.

Accept that the U.S. has a responsibility to directly confront atrocities around the world.

## Some Consequences to Consider

**If we pursue Option Two, we might face these consequences or criticisms:**
Military action risks a lengthy war, increased violence, and loss of lives.

Milošević may respond harshly to threats of military action and could speed up efforts to take the region by force.

Armed intervention in the Kosovo conflict may set a precedent for U.S. military involvement in other nations' struggles for independence.

# OPTION THREE: FOCUS U.S. RESOURCES AT HOME

We should denounce the violence perpetrated by the Milošević regime, but stay out of the conflict and concentrate on our nation's interests at home. Americans are concerned about growing economic instability and want the Clinton administration to focus on domestic issues. U.S. Labor Secretary Alexis Herman reports with a strained economy: "Families that once could have lived comfortably on the paycheck of one earner now often require two to make ends meet, and, in a dynamic economy in which the forces of technology and international trade sometimes create job losses, worker insecurity and anxiety have remained high."

Many citizens feel that the United States cannot be the world's police force, always jumping to action when an international crisis occurs. Military action should only be used to protect our citizens and our borders, and U.S. resources should be used to directly benefit our citizens. The President should focus on creating programs and projects that improve the nation's economy and the lives of American citizens rather than trying to regulate another country's problems.

President Clinton must put America's interests first by fixing our economy, protecting our borders, and avoiding involvement in conflicts in other countries.

## Greatest Concern

**Use U.S. resources to make progress at home.**
Tragedies will continue to occur around the globe, but the U.S. cannot be the world's police force. The needs of the American people should be paramount, and the money spent on a foreign conflict could be put to better use at home. Therefore, the U.S. Government should condemn the killings in Kosovo but avoid the political, financial, and human risks inherent in any strategy designed to end a foreign conflict.



## Examples of Possible Actions

**Denounce the killings in Kosovo but stay out of the dispute.**
Focus on social programs and economic projects in the U.S.

Use the U.S. military to protect U.S. citizens and our country's borders.

Register U.S. criticisms of the Milošević regime at the United Nations and let that organization deal with Milošević.

## Some Consequences to Consider

**If we pursue Option Three, we might face these consequences or criticisms:**
Turning our backs on all but domestic issues could lead to tragedy in Kosovo resulting in a massive death toll reminiscent of the Holocaust or Rwandan Genocide.

Conflicts outside U.S. borders could escalate and threaten U.S. interests abroad.

If we empower the United Nations to take charge of the conflict in Kosovo, we may limit U.S. ability to act on its own in other atrocities around the world.

# WHAT SHOULD THE UNITED STATES DO ABOUT THE KOSOVO CRISIS?

**As an adviser to President Clinton, you have just had an in-depth discussion about the situation in Kosovo, weighing benefits and drawbacks of possible U.S. action in a foreign conflict. What are your recommendations for the President?**

**If you were the President, what choice would you make? Would you choose one of the proposed options to resolve the conflict in Kosovo, or would you have a different strategy?**

**What would be your major concern before making a final decision?**

**What might happen to you as President if you choose this course of action?**

**How might the American people react to this decision?**

**What action do you think the Kosovar people would want? What action do you think the Serbian people would want?**





*President Clinton talks on the telephone in the Oval Office separately with Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority on October 10, 2000. Advisers Sandy Berger and Dennis Ross are present during the telephone call.*



# STOP

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**Do not read this section until the forum discussion is finished.**

# PRESIDENTIAL DEBRIEF:
## How Clinton Addressed the Crisis in Kosovo

After Milošević rejected the Rambouillet Accords, President Clinton believed that all diplomatic options to end the violence in Kosovo had been exhausted. Without a political solution to the situation, Clinton worked with NATO to take military action to protect the people of Kosovo. On March 24, 1999, President Clinton initiated Operation Allied Force, the NATO air campaign against Serbia. Airstrikes were used against Serbia in an effort to force Milošević to end ethnic genocide, without risking the lives involved in a boots-on-the ground military strategy.

Initially, Milošević resisted the NATO military assault, and the conflict worsened—Serbian forces intensified ethnic genocide and stationed extra troops and tanks in the region. The NATO Alliance began its campaign by targeting the Serbian military and security infrastructure, but as Milošević increased acts of ethnic genocide, NATO expanded its attack to other targets in the region. After 78 days of NATO airstrikes that destroyed infrastructure and caused civilian casualties, Milošević finally agreed to NATO's terms. Milošević pulled his forces out of Kosovo and accepted the presence of international peacekeeping forces. Following diplomatic talks, Kosovar refugees were finally able to return to their homes. As a result of NATO's multinational intervention policy, ethnic genocide ended in Kosovo.

The U.S. Government provided over $1 billion in military resources and diplomatic efforts to support those affected by the conflict in Kosovo. The United States also gave an additional $162 million to the region for humanitarian aid, including food assistance, clothing, and other essential items. As the situation stabilized, U.S. assistance programs moved from emergency humanitarian aid to longer-term programs aimed at reconstructing the region. U.S. contributions provided assistance to revitalize infrastructure, strengthen the economy, hold free and fair elections, protect and promote human rights, and create a democratic state.

History is defined by those who make decisions. The success or failure of a President's actions are always debated, and the right choices often seem unclear to decision-makers in the heat of the moment. President Clinton strongly believed that the United States should use all its resources and act in concert with its allies to stop mass violence. In the immediate aftermath of the crisis in Kosovo, Clinton traveled to the region to encourage people to seek reconciliation rather than revenge. Looking back on the conflict, many in the international community felt that Clinton's willingness to go the extra mile to end genocide, even through the use of military violence, was justified to advance the cause of peace.



*President Clinton hugs and greets Kosovar refugee children and families at Stenkovic 1 Refugee Camp near Skopje, Macedonia on June 22, 1999.*

## Post-deliberation Discussion questions

1. What did you know about U.S. foreign policy at the beginning of this discussion? Did you learn something new by the end of the process? Did you change your mind about something as a result of this process?

2. What are important things a President should do before making a crucial decision?

3. Has this discussion changed your perception of the Presidency, the role of advisors in a Presidential administration, and your duty as a citizen?

4. Through this exercise, you learned that Presidents often make tough decisions about involving the United States in foreign conflicts. What are some recent examples of a Presidential response to events abroad? What happened as a result of that President's actions?

*"To all the people of Kosovo, who have suffered so much in the face of Mr. Milošević's savage campaign of ethnic cleansing, I'm happy to say that the time of return is near. The Serb forces who drove you from your homes are leaving Kosovo. All are required to leave. The NATO-led troops who will protect you are beginning to go in. Mr. Milošević has failed utterly in his efforts to erase your history, your culture, your presence from you land. Soon you will be going home.*

*Now we must make sure you can return safely. I know you're anxious to reunite with your loved ones, to find out what condition your homes are in, to reclaim you land. But before you do, we must be certain all the Serbian forces have left and see to it that international forces are in place throughout Kosovo. We must start clearing the land mines, some of which may be in your homes, in your community buildings, along roads and bridges. We need to make sure there's enough food, water, and shelter to meet your needs. And we most urgently need to reach the desperate people who have been trapped in the hills and forests of Kosovo.*

*Until all of you can return in safety, we will provide aid in Albania and Macedonia. And we will not forget the kindness of the nations that have given you shelter, or their own needs for assistance and stability.*

*As you prepare to go home, I know you have many reasons to be bitter and full of anger. But I ask you not to let Mr. Milošević have the victory of seeing your spirits broken and your hearts turn to stone. No one should do to the ethnic Serbs who live in Kosovo what their leaders did to you. Do not prove Mr. Milošević right, that people of different ethnic and religious groups are inevitably enemies.*

*No human being should ever have to experience what you have been forced to endure. We will seek effective justice through law for the perpetrators of these crimes. But we must have an end to ethnic cleansing and the beginning of a Kosovo where every child can go to school, every family can practice its faith, every community can live a normal life in peace. That is what we fought for. That is what NATO peacekeepers will help build when they go in. That is the future we now have a chance to shape together.*

*I thank you for your courage and your endurance, and I look forward to seeing you go home."*

President Clinton's videotaped address to the Kosovar refugees, June 12, 1999.




**This booklet was prepared by the National Archives and Records Administration in collaboration with the National Issues Forums Institute and the Kettering Foundation. The booklets in the *"Advise the President"* series lead participants in guided discussions based on historic Presidential decisions.**

**For information about the Presidential Libraries or to access other books in the series, visit: www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/**

**For more information about the National Issues Forums Institute, visit: www.nifi.org**

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