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Diplomacy in Southeastern Europe
Interactions during Détente

edited by
Petra Mayrhofer and Oliver Rathkolb

Boštjan Udovič
"Going International": the (Non-)Importance of Non-Aligned Countries' Markets in the Foreign Economic Relations of Yugoslavia

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Petra Mayrhofer / Oliver Rathkolb

Editorial

In November 2020, the online symposium "European Diplomacy in Southeastern Europe. Interactions during the Détente Period (1960s–1970s)" gathered international researchers for intensive discussion of Yugoslav foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s, with a focus on its intentions, its developments, its strategic advantages, and its limits in the context of (geo-) political, economic, and cultural circumstances during Cold War détente.

This issue of the journal *zeitgeschichte* presents current research findings based on that symposium. It offers a comprehensive survey of the role Tito's Yugoslavia played on the international level during the period. Generally, following his own road to communism after his break with Stalin in 1948, Tito sought to position Yugoslavia in between the ideological blocs.

In a recent publication on Yugoslavia's foreign relations during Cold War, historian Norman Naimark wrote that Tito even changed the character of postwar international affairs, not only by breaking up the bipolar East–West system, but also via Yugoslavia's hegemonial role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).[1] Indeed, Tito led and united developing countries in Africa and Asia, positioning the NAM in the bipolar world while also benefiting Yugoslavia itself.[2] As Boštjan Udovič highlights, even economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and NAM states predominantly entailed political benefits for the Balkan state with respect to its standing on the international scene.

Moreover, Tvrtko Jakovina argues that non-alignment itself was the *leitmotiv* of all Yugoslav political goals and strategies during détente. He defines it as both a foreign policy doctrine and a constitutive element of the ideology of Tito's Yugoslavia at that time. Thus, for geostrategic reasons, both the U.S.S.R. and the United States did not underestimate the role Yugoslavia played both in the

1 Norman M. Naimark, "Yugoslavia in the Cold War: Afterword," in *Breaking Down Bipolarity: Yugoslavia's Foreign Relations during the Cold War,* edited by Martin Previšić (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021), 269–78, 269.

2 Robert Niebuhr, "Nonalignment as Yugoslavia's Answer to Bloc Politics," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13 (2011) 1: 146–79.

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Balkan peninsula and as a communist state outside the Soviet sphere of influence. Effie G.H. Pedaliu's contribution goes beyond Yugoslavia and analyzes the role of the Balkans in the U.S. Cold War policy of differentiation.

One example of Yugoslav non-alignment is Belgrade's active role in the Group of Neutral and Non-aligned Countries within the Helsinki process and their institutionalized non-alignment policy in Europe. Additionally, this multilateral collaboration forum eased existing tensions between Yugoslavia and neighboring Italy and Austria. Despite a cooling period in the 1970s, the flourishing development of bilateral relations between Yugoslavia and Austria after the postwar deadlock can itself be defined as an early example of détente in Europe.[3] As a side effect of this increasing bilateral cooperation but also as a result of the steady decline of the Yugoslav economy, Yugoslav labor migration to Austria became a new political issue. Perceived as a source of temporary labor, Yugoslav workers were segregated from Austrian housing facilities and social life, lacking knowledge of German. However, these *gastarbeiterji/Gastarbeiter* remained a necessary element of the Austrian economy and began to settle with their families. Whereas Yugoslavia officially declared itself a classless society, the unqualified Yugoslav workers were regarded as members of the local underclass in Austria. Mišo Kapetanović offers a fresh account of the implications of these diverging attributions of class in the relevant policy fields on the bilateral level.

3 Maximilian Graf and Petra Mayrhofer, "Austria and Yugoslavia in the Cold War, 1945–1991: From Postwar Cold War to Détente and Dissolution," in *Breaking Down Bipolarity: Yugoslavia's Foreign Relations during the Cold War*, edited by Martin Previšić (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021), 151–70.

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Articles

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Boštjan Udovič

"Going International": the (Non-)Importance of Non-Aligned Countries' Markets in the Foreign Economic Relations of Yugoslavia

I. Introduction and research problem

In recent years, the idea, issues and *differentia specifica* of the Non-Aligned Movement (hereafter NAM)[1] have gained greater interest among researchers.[2] This can be attributed to two facts: the de-ideologization of the topic and the larger access to materials in archives, political entities and other organizations relevant for studying the phenomenon of the NAM. Regarding the first thirty years after the disintegration of the bipolar system, researchers can evaluate occurrences from a larger (investigative) distance without being labeled pro/anti-communist/capitalist. The second factor is more pragmatic, since studying past phenomena is easier if you have access to the primary sources. Both factors surely

1 The article is a result of the research programme "Slovenia and its actors in international relations and European integrations (P5-0177)". The author thanks Jure Ramšak and two anonymous reviewers for their substantial contribution to the article. The study of materials of different official institutions does not make a clear-cut distinction between the use of the following concepts: NAM countries, developing countries, countries in development, NAM and developing countries, Third World countries, etc. What comes across from the analysis is that all these concepts are mostly used as synonyms. On the basis of the official documents, I decided to use the concept of "NAM countries" to refer to all the countries (most of which were members of the NAM) that Yugoslavia understood as (economically) developing countries and with which Yugoslavia had intensive political (and in some cases economic) relations.

2 Cf. Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, *The Economic Struggle for Power in Tito's Yugoslavia: From World War II to Non-Alignment* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016); James Mark, Bogdan C. Iacob, Tobias Rupprecht and Ljubica Spaskovska, *1989. A Global History of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Max Trecker, *Red Money for the Global South: East–South Economic Relations in the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2020); Anna Calori, Anne-Kristin Hartmetz, Bence Kocsev, James Mark, and Jan Zofka, *Spaces of Interaction in the Globalizing Economy of the Cold War* (Oldenbourg: De Grutyer, 2019); Zvonimir Stopić, Robert Niebuhr & David Pickus, "Toward Nonalignment: The Improbable and Fateful Intersection of Yugoslavia and China in the Early Cold War, 1948–1951," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 23 (2021) 2: 269–82; Jure Ramšak, "Shades of North-South Economic Détente: Non-Aligned Yugoslavia and Neutral Austria Compared" in *Socialist Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned Movement: Social, Cultural, Political, and Economic Imaginaries*, edited by Paul Stubbs (McGill University Press, forthcoming 2022).

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influence the quality of research and also provide the opportunity to evaluate past phenomena in their time and (international) political situation.

The aim of this article is to make a modest contribution to the knowledge of relations between Yugoslavia[3] and NAM countries, which were (and in some cases still are) depicted in the historiography of ex-Yugoslavia countries as a *Sonderfall* (special case).[4] Whether Yugoslavia–NAM relations were special or Yugoslavia was special in this relationship is just a question of which "ideological glasses" a researcher puts on and when (s)he analyses the events and occurrences in these relations. Whereas Tvrtko Jakovina emphasizes that Yugoslavia's role in the NAM was perceived as essential for the movement (NAM as an end in itself),[5] Jure Ramšak argues that for Yugoslavia, the NAM was more a means to "[its] prestige, [linked to the] success of global economic reform".[6]

Ramšak's statement represents the starting point of our research. Since we know that for Yugoslavia, NAM countries were a sort of political and economic laboratory, meaning that the Yugoslav leadership decided to use decolonization around the world as an opportunity to become an important political player in the global arena, I seek to answer two research questions related to Yugoslavia–NAM relations. The first (R1) deals with Yugoslavia's relationship with NAM countries and its leverage of political prestige and economic cooperation, while the second (R2) raises the question of how Yugoslavia treated NAM countries – did Yugoslavia perceive NAM countries as partners, rivals or subdued entities?

These research questions will be answered via a combination of different research methods. Firstly, a critical analysis of primary and secondary sources (Yugoslavia's foreign economic strategies, statistical data, analysis of economic flows between Yugoslavia and NAM countries, etc.) will be employed to present the basic characteristics of Yugoslav relations with the NAM. The findings obtained by the combination of these methods will be complemented by two in-depth interviews with diplomats who worked in different posts in the system of Yugoslav foreign economic relations.

The article is composed of three parts: the introduction and the presentation of the research problem is followed by a brief presentation of the Yugoslav

3 This term is used to avoid complication and include all of the many political reformations and renamings of the country. The name refers to the state that incorporated present-day Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Montenegro. This (simplified) name has no bearing on the content of the article.

4 The term *Sonderfall* was coined by German politicians (West Germany) as part of the Hallstein doctrine. See more in Dušan Nećak "Jugoslavija kot 'poseben primer/Sonderfall' v zahodnonemški zunanji politiki," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 57 (2017) 2: 111–23.

5 Tvrtko Jakovina, "LONČAR, BUDIMIR: Mr. non-aligned i jugoslavenska politika nesvrstanosti," (n. d.) <http://www.up-underground.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/up-underground-1920-jakovina-tvrtko-loncar-budimir.pdf> (12 June 2021).

6 Ramšak, "Shades of North-South Economic Détente", n. p.

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economic particularities, forming a framework for the main part of the discussion – Yugoslav foreign economic relations with NAM countries. The article then goes on to highlight facts instrumental to understanding the economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and NAM countries and re-evaluates the propositions laid out in the introduction.

II. Prelude: a sketch of Yugoslav (economic) development(s)

Our economic analysis of Yugoslavia begins soon after the end of WWII, when political elites decided to form a country whose economic system would be a copy of the Soviet model.[7] This was also reflected in legal acts; the 1946 Constitution in article 14 established that the "means of production in the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia are either the property of the entire people, i. e., property in the hands of the state or the property of the people's cooperative organizations, or the property of private persons or legal entities"; article 15 emphasized that "the state directs the economic life and development of the country in accordance with a general economic plan"; while article 16 stated that "The property of the entire people is the mainstay of the state in the development of the national economy." What has to be noted is that foreign trade was no longer liberalized but directed and controlled by the state (article 14).[8]

Although it seemed that the copying of Soviet recipes worked quite well, the relations between Yugoslavia and Soviet Union began to cool off and cracked in June 1948 with the Cominform split, in which Yugoslavia was accused of straying from the path of Marxism–Leninism and taking an anti-Soviet stance.[9] Within a year, Yugoslavia was isolated – not only politically, but also economically. To avoid a serious economic crisis, the Yugoslav leadership pragmatically tuned from Eastern to Western frequencies. Western countries, especially the United States,[10] helped Yugoslavia with economic aid. In this period, Yugoslavia began to progressively change its economic structure – step by step, the command

7 Rudolf Bićanić, *Economic Policy in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

8 "Constitution of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia," n. d. <https://www.worldstatesmen.org/Yugoslavia_1946.txt> (12 June 2021).

9 Jože Pirjevec, *Jugoslavija: [1918–1992]: nastanek, razvoj ter razpad Karadjordjevićeve in Titove Jugoslavije* (Koper: Lipa, 1995); Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation 1918–2005* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 2006).

10 Their position if often illustrated by the phrase "Keep him afloat", attributed to British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin.

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