

European Diplomacy in South Eastern Europe. Interactions during the Détente Period (1960s–1970s)

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What characterises Yugoslavia's diplomatic relations in the Détente Period of the 1960s and 1970s? Which (geo-)political, economical and cultural circumstances influenced its relations with neighbouring countries and with the superpowers? Along with the most recent scholarship on Yugoslavia's diplomatic standing during the Détente Period, these questions were at the heart of the discussions at the international online conference.

The conference started with a welcome by the organisers, who expressed their regret not to have been able to convene all participants in Vienna due to the current pandemic and their gratitude for everyone's interest and commitment to joining the event online. The organisers stressed the importance of continued academic exchange in this dynamic field of research that has been evolving toward new research topics and thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the Cold War Period in the sense of the New Cold War Studies.

The first conference day revolved around Yugoslavia's relations with the superpowers, its inner workings and their impact on diplomatic relations and economic strategies in South Eastern Europe.

The first session addressed the geopolitical context that set the frame for the Yugoslav developments of the time. WOLFGANG MUELLER (Vienna) gave an account of the strategic considerations behind the relations of the USSR and Yugoslavia, showing how ideology, distrust and opportunism coloured their exchanges in the light of the two regimes' diverging interests. While Yugoslavia was concerned with maintaining its good relations with Western countries and the Non-Alignment Movement, the USSR struggled to accept the Yugoslav independence of

action and started several (unsuccessful) attempts of re-establishing Soviet hegemony in the Balkans.

EFFIE PEDALIU (London) then turned towards the unforeseen repercussions of the American „détente“ and „differentiation“ policies for the South Eastern European states. In an attempt to capitalise on the geopolitical context, the region's governments had built their development and modernisation strategies on the superpowers' antagonism. With the reduced tensions between the US and the USSR threatening the region's stability, the United States adopted customised approaches in their relations with the individual states to counteract the Détente's detrimental effects on the region.

The second session offered a change of perspective. Two presentations confronted Yugoslavia's inner workings and respectively analysed Yugoslav domestic politics, its economic policies and their influences on the country's diplomatic relations of the 1960s and 1970s. BOŽO REPE (Ljubljana) examined the interactions between domestic and foreign policy, showing how Tito utilised his good relations with the USSR to maintain or regain control in the event of domestic conflicts such as the Croatian Spring. Reciprocally, Tito's handling of internal affairs served to position Yugoslavia as an intermediary between the blocs internationally.

Focusing on the divergent economic strategies and needs that emerged within Yugoslavia in the aftermath of the 1960's economic reforms, ALEKSANDAR JAKIR (Split) argued that the analysis of the interplay between economy, decentralisation, ethnic differentiation and prosperity or poverty proves helpful in understanding Yugoslavia's disintegration. He further concurred with Susan Woodward in stating that the failure of „market socialism“ preceded the failure of „decentralisation“.

The third session offered a further in-depth analysis of the economic cooperation with South Eastern Europe during the Détente Period. IVAN OBADIĆ (Zagreb) elaborated on the attempts to reach stability in the relations between SFR Yugoslavia and the EEC from the early 1950s to the signing of Yugoslav-EEC Cooperation Agreement in 1980 with a

special focus on the Yugoslav perception of the Western European integration process. In the face of intensifying trade relations between Yugoslavia and the Western countries, Obadić argued that the internal stability of Yugoslavia's economy and political landscape became increasingly dependent on its relations to the EEC.

ELITZA STANOEVA (Florence) examined the changing objectives behind and approaches to Bulgaria's relations with the UNCTAD and GATT. The coalitions Bulgarian foreign services forged through those institutions can be seen as an attempt to circumvent rising protectionism and trade discrimination of the Common Market while also speaking to the limits of socialist solidarity and ideological dogma.

On the second conference day, presenters dedicated themselves to Yugoslavia's relations away from the two superpowers while also taking a special interest in the developments the Détente Period brought about in the Alps-Adriatic region.

In the fourth session, two speakers expanded on Yugoslavia's relations with the Non-Alignment Movement and with the developing countries of the CSCE. According to TVRTKO JAKOVINA (Zagreb), Non-Alignment as the predominant doctrine of Yugoslav foreign policy was the result of Tito's political pragmatism with regard to the Third World. It allowed him to position Yugoslavia within the United Nations and on the international scene in general and generated trade opportunities that the Yugoslav economy built on.

In an attempt to offer an alternative to studies that have focused on the Superpowers' roles in the CSCE's creation, RINNA KULLAA (Vienna) then examined Yugoslavia's contributions to the Helsinki process. She identified the Mediterranean extension, the addition of development politics to the final act and the collection of economic trade-offs for the support of certain aspects of the Soviet agenda as Yugoslavia's three main lines of actions in Helsinki.

In the fifth session, KARLO RUZICIK-KESSLER (Bolzano) elaborated on the Italo-Yugoslav relations during the Détente Period. Addressing both internal and external dimen-

sions of Italian and Yugoslav policies during the 1970s, he showed what groundwork needed to be done to overcome the dispute over Trieste that had put both countries at odds after 1945. He further addressed the economic development in a border region and the importance of individual politicians in the Détente Period.

PETRA MAYRHOFER (Vienna) gave an account on the relations between the non-aligned Yugoslavia and neutral Austria. Both countries positioned themselves between the blocs and were committed to cooperating to set an example of European Détente. As unresolved disagreements had been kept on the margins of their relations until the 1970, the Détente Period was marked by vacillating relations, which Mayrhofer exemplified along the lines of memory politics and the regional cooperation between the Austrian region Carinthia and the then SR Slovenia.

The sixth and final session featured a first presentation on regional cooperation, open borders and social activism in the Alps-Adriatic region by BORUT KLABJAN (Koper). Following a bottom-up methodological approach, Klabjan analysed how the intense cooperation between the Italian autonomous region Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the Austrian region of Carinthia and the then SR of Slovenia and Croatia culminated in the establishment of the Alps-Adriatic Working Group. In consequence, this Working Community has to be seen as the result of local, transnational cooperation and not as the result of inter-state relations that it was commonly seen as.

Last, MIŠO KAPETANOVIĆ (St. Gallen) spoke about the contradictions between the concept of the Yugoslav classless society and the ambiguous social status of Yugoslav gastarbajteri, emerging as an Austrian working class in the context of Yugoslav labour migration between 1963 and 1978. While Yugoslav labour migrants belonged to the social strata of unqualified workers in Western Europe, their increased economic capital and material wealth conflicted with their educational background at home. The ways Yugoslav diplomats addressed this issue reveal the mechanisms behind the reproduction of class-systems in the Yugoslav context.

The conference closed with a very productive and fruitful discussion between all participants. Recognising the predominance of pragmatism in the Yugoslav approaches to international diplomacy during the Détente Period, it was also noted that future research in this field should further focus on local and civic actors. Their influence on Yugoslav politics should not be underestimated, yet, these actors still remain on the margins of historical research. Both the organisers and the participants were very satisfied with the outcomes of this dynamic online conference and the animated exchange and are looking forward to a follow-up event in Vienna in the following year.

Conference overview:

Oliver Rathkolb / Wolfgang Mueller / Petra Mayrhofer (Vienna) / Karlo Ruzicic-Kessler (Bolzano): Welcome address

Session 1: The Détente Period and its effects on diplomatic relations with South Eastern Europe

Chair: Claudia Kraft / Petra Mayrhofer (both Vienna)

Wolfgang Mueller (Vienna): The USSR and Yugoslavia in the Détente Period

Effie G. H. Pedaliu (London): South Eastern Europe between the millstones of Détente and Differentiation

Session 2: The internal situation in Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s

Chair: Jure Ramšak (Koper)

Božo Repe (Ljubljana): Effects of internal developments on Yugoslav foreign policy

Aleksandar Jakir (Split): Economic situation of Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s

Session 3: Economic cooperation with South Eastern Europe

Chair: Vladimir Unkovksi-Korica (Glasgow)

Ivan Obadić (Zagreb): In pursuit of stability: Relations between the SFR Yugoslavia and the EEC

Elitza Stanoeva (Florence): Bulgaria's diplomatic advances towards Western Europe during Détente

Session 4: Yugoslav diplomacy across the blocs

Chair: Karlo Ruzicic-Kessler (Bolzano)

Tvrtko Jakovina (Zagreb): Yugoslavia's policy in the Non-Alignment Movement

Rinna Kullaa (Vienna): The role of the state and statecraft in European security: Yugoslavia and the developing countries in the CSCE

Session 5: Bilateral relations in the Alps-Adriatic region

Chair: Maximilian Graf (Prague)

Karlo Ruzicic-Kessler (Bolzano): Bilateral relations between Italy and the SFR Yugoslavia

Petra Mayrhofer (Vienna): Bilateral relations between Austria and the SFR Yugoslavia with special emphasis on the role of Vienna

Session 6: Crossing borders in the Alps-Adriatic region

Chair: Arnold Suppan (Vienna)

Borut Klavžan (Koper): Vernacular Détente. Regional cooperation, open borders and transnational social activism in the Alps-Adriatic region

Mišo Kapetanović (St. Gallen): Yugoslav labour migration emerging as Austrian working class (1963-1978)

Concluding discussion

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