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US-Yugoslav Relations under Kissinger

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Summary

The relationship between the U.S. and Yugoslavia is traditionally interpreted as having been at its pinnacle during the years of President John F. Kennedy and his successor Lyndon B. Johnson. However, on a substantial level, Kennedy, Johnson and their Administrations did not excel at maintaining relations with the Yugoslav leadership despite recommendations from the State Department that saw the relationship as an important geopolitical element. In contrast, the Nixon and Ford Administrations with Henry A. Kissinger as their chief foreign policy strategist, are usually interpreted as having reduced interest for ties with Yugoslavia. However, the Nixon-Ford Administrations made substantial efforts to maintain relations at a constant, following the State Department line emphasizing the relationship with Yugoslavia. Their efforts with Yugoslavia should also be viewed in light of their other geopolitical goals, such as the rapprochement with China and the détente with USSR. Furthermore, despite Yugoslavia's repeated “balancing acts” of anti-American rhetoric and even action (the Cypriot assassination plot, Yom Kipur War, etc.), there were notable improvements such as Nixon's visit to Yugoslavia, the first U.S. President to do so. The constancy was due to Nixon-Ford Administrations' adherence to policy set by Helmut Sonnenfeldt and Art Hartman – under Kissinger's tenure.

Keywords: International Relations History, U.S. Foreign Policy, Yugoslavia, Diplomatic Strategy, Henry A. Kissinger

Introduction

The relationship of the United States of America and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is a widely debated topic in the history of the U.S. – Eastern European political relations ever since the establishment of Yugoslavia. The leadership of the United States has, in general, successfully collaborated with the Yugoslav regime

under Marshall Josip Broz Tito. Yugoslavia was initially given economic support and loans in an effort to support its further independence from the influence of the Soviet Union. A more comprehensive U.S. strategy towards Yugoslavia, beyond keeping it (economically) “afloat” so as not to succumb to Soviet influence, was outlined in a document published by the National Security Council of the United States in early 1954 (Foreign Relations, 1955: 239/629). The strategy outlined the following key goals: patience, [economic] aid and diplomacy, connecting Yugoslavia closer to the West and U.S., impeding extension of Soviet influence to the Mediterranean and Southeast Europe and promoting Yugoslavia’s model as an example of a “different” socialist country. While there were efforts to include other goals in this strategy, such as leveraging Yugoslavia’s influence in third world countries or using Yugoslavia as a model for other communist satellites, the mainstay of U.S. policy towards Yugoslavia was based on the goals outlined in 1954. The relationship between the Yugoslav leader, Marshall Tito and the U.S. Presidents before Richard Nixon was generally productive in terms of the outlined goals. Yugoslavia kept its role as a military power in Europe that prevented Soviet access to the Mediterranean and was an ideological challenge to Soviet influence in Eastern Europe; the very reasons Harry Truman helped Tito and Yugoslavia in 1948.

The U.S. – SFRY relationship should be considered a constant one with periods of internally or externally induced crises rather than one of decline that, in some interpretations, happened during Nixon’s presidency. President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger did not have a favorable opinion of Yugoslavia, especially after initial efforts to improve relations with high-level visits did not yield expected results. However, this did not significantly reflect on relations with Yugoslavia since, for the most part, they were influenced by advisors connected with the State Department. Although the State Department was notably marginalized during Henry Kissinger’s White House tenure as National Security Advisor, the State Department’s recommendations were still pursued regarding Yugoslavia as neither Kissinger nor Nixon attached enough importance to the relationship with Yugoslavia to pursue their own doubts about the cooperation. Furthermore, the key personnel from the State Department that advocated for the maintenance of relations with Yugoslavia under previously established goals (keeping it “afloat” and independent) either transferred to the National Security Council to high positions (Helmut Sonnenfeldt) or were involved in the circle of people regularly consulted on the issue of Yugoslavia (Art Hartman and Brent Scowcroft). Understanding how these men effectively steered the policy decisions Kissinger made and recommended to Nixon clarifies how the relationship with Yugoslavia was maintained stable with only occasional oscillations and did not decline. There were periods of crisis and high tensions such as the Yom Kippur War, The Cyprus crisis and the “Sonnenfeldt Doctrine”, but most were

neutralized by the NSC and State Department staff that sought to sustain relations with Yugoslavia by following the long-established recipe of high-level public visits and economic cooperation. Thus, almost all crises were resolved through high-level visits and neutralization of public confrontation combined with economic cooperation. Finally, the relationship with Yugoslavia under President Nixon, with Henry Kissinger and State Department staff counsel, should be interpreted in comparison with the following: the relationship with Yugoslavia that U.S. Presidents preceding Nixon pursued and the relationship with Yugoslavia in comparison with other European allies that were of larger size and population or greater military strength than Yugoslavia. These lines of comparison might offer an insight into the veracity of claims that the lessened political will of the Nixon Administration for cooperation with Yugoslavia was reflected in the actual U.S. policy towards Yugoslavia and further confirm the relationship was more constant than in decline.

Chain of Command for Yugoslav Affairs

At the outset, it is necessary to consider the position President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger had towards Yugoslavia throughout their terms in office. In this matter, the opinion of Henry Kissinger matters primarily due to his influence in shaping President Nixon's position – as Nixon and Kissinger “had reached an understanding: they alone would conceive, command, and control clandestine operations” (Weiner, 2007: 293). Already in October of 1969, in a National Security Council Review Group on Cuba meeting, Kissinger said “Tito's foreign policy was not very helpful to the U.S. except when he fears Soviet attack” (Davis, 1969: 7-9). However, Kissinger knew the U.S. needed productive relations with Yugoslavia for it to remain “non-aligned” (Washington Post, 1971: 1, 7). Kissinger was aware of the traditional U.S. foreign policy of treating Tito and Yugoslavia with “deference” that would reduce the possibility of extended influence from the Soviet bloc (Lampe, 2000: 323). Kissinger's – and consequently Nixon's – practical approach to foreign policy should be the framework for their thinking about Yugoslavia. In Kissinger's memorandum for the President ahead of Nixon's visit to Yugoslavia (September 21, 1970), Kissinger outlined his thoughts on Yugoslavia. Kissinger believed that Tito's effort to preserve his Communist credentials, an important integrationist element in Yugoslavia, was responsible for his public anti-American statements. At the same time, Kissinger thought Tito consciously relied on Western aid that took various forms and knew that his defiance of Moscow “largely rested on [the U.S.] holding up our end of the basic power balance” (NSC Files, 1970: Box 468). He also recognized that Tito introduced economic, political, administrative, and cultural patterns and practices from the West, deeming it a positive development in line with his observations of typical Titoist policies considered in the case of Cuba (NSC Files,

1970: Box 468). The goals Kissinger set out for Nixon in their visit to Yugoslavia that took place between September 30 and October 2 of 1970 were “indicating U.S. interest in Yugoslavia’s progress while accepting its idiosyncratic position”, voicing U.S. opposition to the Brezhnev doctrine of “spheres-of-influence” and conveying Nixon’s interest in an evolution and normalization of relations with Eastern Europe (NSC Files, 1970: Box 468). Furthermore, Kissinger warned Nixon against any questioning of Yugoslavia’s non-aligned role with a note: “they know, and we know, that this is in part a luxury that depends on American power” (Foreign Relations, 1969–1976: Volume XXIX). Kissinger’s view of Yugoslavia’s non-aligned position as largely depending on U.S. willingness might have somewhat, at that moment, disregarded the great U.S. interest of keeping Yugoslavia “non-aligned” since it prevented USSR’s direct access to the Mediterranean. Kissinger’s ambitions for Yugoslavia at the beginning of his and Nixon’s term were best described during his conversation with Chinese Foreign Minister Quia Guanhua at the United Nations in September of 1975. Kissinger described his goals for Yugoslavia in his *Years of Renewal* as follows: “to weaken Soviet influence in Central Europe by presidential visits and by developing military relations with the Yugoslavs” (Foreign Relations, 1969–1976: Volume XXIX). Kissinger noted a “Japanese observer’s” comment of his policy as appearing to “acquiesce in the status quo in order to change the status quo” (Kissinger, 1999: 865). However, with the cessation of military aid to Yugoslavia in 1960, replaced by loan demands instead of aid, the U.S. lost one of its greatest means of leverage on Yugoslavia (Lampe, Prickett, and Adamović, 1990: 56). Military relations did not improve even after President Nixon’s visit, the first U.S. Presidential visit to Yugoslavia, as Tito continued to pursue his policy of non-alignment and balancing between the U.S. and the USSR, or as this was described, “having bread buttered on both sides” (Lončar, 2012). Due to recurring unsatisfactory harvests, paradoxically, the only form of aid Yugoslavia continued to receive from the U.S. was bread grain (Foreign Relations Of The United States, 1961–1963: Document 97).

Richard Nixon’s perspective of Yugoslavia was initially neutral but became unfavorable later in his term due to international crises and events that went against U.S. policy and in which Yugoslavia was involved. Still, the defining element of Nixon’s perspective towards Yugoslavia was, it can be argued, his limited interest in it compared to his larger geopolitical goals like the détente with the USSR and the rapprochement with China. Richard Nixon dedicated the majority of his memoirs, a work of over a thousand pages, to the Watergate affair. The interesting aspect is that in his memoirs, Yugoslavia, Tito or any other Yugoslav politician weren’t mentioned even once, or in any context. His European tour, during which he met the Pope, a communist (Tito), a fascist leader and the Queen of Britain, deserved only one short

sentence – that on September 27, he went on a trip to Europe (Nixon, 1978: 488). As a matter of reference, Cuba received three mentions, Korea and France five, Vietnam understandably got ninety-five while Italy and Britain were mentioned twice. Even Austria received two mentions (Nixon, 1978). Yugoslavia clearly did not play a big role in Nixon's geopolitical agenda and he played a largely ceremonial role in the U.S. policy towards it. William Leonhart, appointed U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia in June of 1969 (serving until October 1971), told Tito during his credentials presentation that he would “spare no efforts in seeking to maintain and widen... areas of mutual understanding and collaboration” and shared a message from President Nixon who saw great promise in the further development of relations between Yugoslavia and the U.S., based on “mutual friendship and understanding and full respect for the principles of freedom and independence” (Department of State, 1969: Box 2842). These statements, although shared with Tito, reiterated the perspective of the U.S. relationship with Yugoslavia as a “privileged one” that Kissinger sought to further at the beginning of Nixon's term. However, Nixon's personal interest in Yugoslavia was limited and the policy towards Tito and Yugoslavia, on Nixon's part, largely relied on Kissinger's decisions.

Henry Kissinger's interest in managing Yugoslavia as a strategic foreign policy goal was also limited, in spite of his thoughts on the merit of the relationship. The most notable evidence of the limited interest of Kissinger in Yugoslavia was the fact that Kissinger's National Security Council produced only one strategy document that outlined U.S. policy on Yugoslavia, limiting policy on Yugoslavia to briefing and policy recommendations from the State Department, Ambassadors and impromptu advice of Kissinger's associates at the NSC (National Security Study Memoranda, 1969-1974). The only strategy document on Yugoslavia, out of 206 National Security Study Memoranda and 264 National Security Decision Memoranda written during Kissinger's tenure, was the National Security Study Memoranda 129, the 1971 “U.S. Policy and Post-Tito Yugoslavia” that was written following Nixon's interest in the much-speculated possible developments in Yugoslavia post-Tito (National Security Study Memoranda, 1971: 129). Further indication of Kissinger's relatively limited personal interest in Yugoslav affairs (and Tito as their central element) can be found in his conversations with Hamilton Fish Armstrong, managing editor of *Foreign Policy*, after the Nixon trip to Yugoslavia. In it, Armstrong indicated his great respect for Tito (as a former U.S. diplomat stationed in Serbia) and argued at length how he was a man of substance with still a lot of “bounce” in contrast with Kissinger's reserved impression of Tito (Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, 1970: E.O. 12958 – 10.55). In another conversation with a White House correspondent John Carroll, Kissinger indicated he did not attach great meaning to Tito's recommendations on future U.S. policy for Middle East af-

ter Nasser's death (Tito recommended Arafat) (Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, 1970: E.O. 12958 – 11.56). Finally, a trip Kissinger undertook in 1975 throughout Europe indicated how much “operational” importance (beyond the high-level publicity visits) Kissinger attached to Yugoslavia. Out of fifteen nations he visited during his trip, Yugoslavia was the ninth and only added to the list “last-minute” in response to President Tito's accusations that the CIA and NATO organized the coup on Cyprus in July 1974 (The American Presidency Project, 1974). Thus, for decisions on Yugoslavia, Kissinger largely relied on the recommendations of several trustworthy associates at the NSC and in the State Department.

Policy Goals for U.S. – Yugoslav Relations

Kissinger's associates that worked on issues related to Yugoslavia largely agreed with the political “current” present in the Department of State that pursued maintenance of positive (or minimally neutral) relations and supply of economic aid or loans to Yugoslavia as a means of keeping it “afloat” and preventing Soviet access to the Mediterranean and Southeastern Europe. The existence of such a “current” in State Department was also noted by Yugoslav foreign officers, stating it usually took precedence over other views of the relationship with Yugoslavia that questioned the level of cooperation and economic support (Lončar, 2012). This policy was, among other documents, outlined in a 1973 policy paper by the Department of State and the Department of Defense. The policy paper stated the following (major) policy goals in relation to U.S. – Yugoslav cooperation in the context of military supply requests from Yugoslavia:

- (A) The U.S. has an important stake in the survival of an independent and non-aligned Yugoslavia, threatened realistically in the next ten to fifteen years only by the Soviet Union. This U.S. interest was affirmed explicitly by President Nixon in the Joint Statement issued by the President and Tito in October 1971.
- (B) The location of Yugoslavia in southeastern Europe with a border on the Adriatic bears strongly on major U.S. strategic interests in the Mediterranean region, in protecting the southern flank of NATO, and in protecting the territorial integrity of our NATO partners in central Europe. An independent Yugoslavia has led the way among the communist countries of eastern Europe in remaining outside the Soviet bloc since 1948, in seeking closer relations with the U.S., and in evolving moderated policies aimed at a decentralized government and a market-oriented economy.
- (C) A Yugoslavia territory free of Soviet bases serves important U.S. strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. As long as Yugoslavia is able to maintain its political independence of Moscow and its own economic prosperity, it has an excellent chance of maintaining an independent, “non-aligned” nation-

al policy. If the U.S. and the West can offer Yugoslavia alternate sources of military supplies, the traditional Yugoslav independent outlook is enhanced, further promoting U.S. interests (Department of State, 2008: E.O. 12958).

The main objectives of U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia – supporting independence from Moscow, fostering Yugoslav relation with the West and providing support for economic reforms in Yugoslavia, remained a policy effectively pursued by the Nixon Administration through the influence of the State Department and NSC staff that shared this view. This was summarized by the U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Charles Elbrick, in February of 1969 in a policy assessment: “US interest in Yugoslavia’s sovereignty and independence is likely in the future, as in the recent past, to encourage the Yugoslav will to resist Soviet domination” (Central Foreign Policy Files, 1969: 59 – 2845 – A83). A conclusion reflecting these priorities was reiterated in the joint statement after President Nixon’s visit to Yugoslavia (Nixon, 1971).

Sonnenfeldt, Hartman and the Yugoslav Strategists

The men in the NSC and the State Department that effectively steered U.S. policy on Yugoslavia and were instrumental in maintaining relations with Yugoslavia were for the most part from the above described current in the State Department (or shared their view). Kissinger’s closest ally and advisor on Yugoslavia as well as in general, sometimes also referred to as “Kissinger’s Kissinger”, was Helmut Sonnenfeldt (Washington Post, 2012). The other key individual in the framing of U.S. policy towards Yugoslavia under both Nixon and Ford was another State Department official, Art Hartman. The importance of Hartman and Sonnenfeldt in shaping U.S. policy towards Yugoslavia is evident from several documents. During Kissinger’s visit to Yugoslavia in November of 1974, Kissinger, then both Secretary of State and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, met with Džemal Bijedić, Prime Minister of Yugoslavia accompanied by the Yugoslav Ambassador to U.S. Toma Granfil and the two highest-ranking Yugoslav Foreign Affairs officials. Kissinger was, indicatively, with only two officials from the U.S.: Helmut Sonnenfeldt, then Counselor at the Department of State, and Art Hartman, then Assistant Secretary for European Affairs (Department of State, 1974: E.O. 12958).¹ Hartman and Sonnenfeldt were also the only two to accompany Kissinger to his meeting with Marshall Tito during the same visit to Belgrade, and Sonnenfeldt was the only NSC Staff member during Nixon’s visit to Yugoslavia (Department of State, 1974: E.O. 12958; Foreign Relations, 1970: Volume XXIX). The importance of Sonnenfeldt and Hartman is also evident from the Department of State document “Yugoslav

¹ Ambassador Malcom Toon, U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia was by nature of the meeting also present.

Contingency Study for Soviet Invasion” that Kissinger appointed only Hartman and Sonnenfeldt to review, notably leaving out the Department of Defense (Department of State, 2008: E.O. 12958). Sonnenfeldt and Hartman had great influence over U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia, largely due to Kissinger’s average lack of interest to personally formulate a strategy towards Yugoslavia. Their interventions and influence over Kissinger on Yugoslavia resulted in a period of relations with Yugoslavia that were, in spite of the public appearance of a decrease in cooperation, in fact steady with only the occasional crisis they sought to ameliorate.

The influence of Sonnenfeldt on U.S. and Kissinger’s policy towards Yugoslavia was evident numerous times when moments of “disagreement” or crisis broke out. Sonnenfeldt served in the U.S. Department of State as a member and Director of the Office of Research on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from 1952 till 1969. After Kissinger’s appointment, he was recruited to the National Security Council as a senior staff member where he served from 1969 till 1974 (*The New York Times*, 2012). Sonnenfeldt argued for military aid and sale of American arms to Yugoslavia, against Kissinger’s and Nixon’s initial intentions, and was an important advocate of the appointment of Malcolm Toon, a highly capable officer from the Department of State as Ambassador to Yugoslavia who was previously closely considered for the Ambassadorial post to Soviet Union (indicating the importance Sonnenfeldt attached to Yugoslav relations) (White House Central Files, 1975: Box 22; National Security Council Files, 1971: Vol. III, Box 734). Furthermore, Sonnenfeldt was instrumental in lobbying with Kissinger and arranging Nixon’s visit to Yugoslavia, considering the maintenance of high-level relations of the utmost importance for a sustained, neutral relationship with Yugoslavia (National Security Council Files, 1969: Vol. I – Box 733). He was also backing proposals for the provision of economic and agricultural aid and credit to Yugoslavia (National Security Council Files, 1969: Vol. III – Box 734). In September of 1974, Tito accused the U.S., namely the CIA and NATO, of organizing a coup in Cyprus and an assassination attempt of Cypriot leader Makarios (White House Central Files, 1974: Box 22). While Kissinger’s initial reaction was to cancel his trip to Yugoslavia and to publish a sharpest condemnation of Tito’s statements, Sonnenfeldt delegated the mission of protesting to Art Hartman while talking Kissinger out of canceling his trip and presenting Tito’s statements as the “usual balancing act” (Department of State, 1974: 200102979; White House Central Files, 1975: Box 22). Thus, Sonnenfeldt managed to steer Kissinger away from his usual power-politics approach towards Yugoslavia that would have likely upset Yugoslavia’s delicate position between the U.S. and Soviet influence spheres.

Kissinger’s and U.S. policy towards Yugoslavia under both Nixon and Ford was also influenced by Art Hartman of the State Department and Brent Scowcroft,

Kissinger's Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security. Art Hartman, who held the posts of State Department's Deputy Director for Coordination (1969-1972), Deputy Chief of Mission to the EC in Brussels (1972-1974) and Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (1974-1977), was a key representative of the State Department's view of Yugoslavia as a strategic country to maintain the status quo relations with and was delegated appeasement missions by Sonnenfeldt (like in Cyprus' case). He also took on the role of countering and steering Kissinger's policy thoughts as well as his initial reactions to Yugoslav "balancing acts" that often provoked retaliatory thoughts in Kissinger. Again in 1974, Hartman talked Kissinger out of canceling his meeting with the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Miloš Minić, arguing Kissinger should first attempt to find out what the Yugoslav intentions behind such public, anti-U.S., rhetoric was rather than dismissing relations with them (Department of State, 1974: SC 257). Scowcroft, initially Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security and then taking Kissinger's post under President Ford, was less of a partisan advisor to Kissinger compared to Sonnenfeldt and Hartman but was, it can be argued, also a believer in the benefits of maintaining status quo through economic aid and high-level relations rather than Kissinger's occasional initial thoughts on reducing support to Yugoslavia. Ahead of Kissinger's visit to Yugoslavia, he advised Kissinger that the "visit to Belgrade [...] added importance for the Yugoslavs in the wake of their recent difficulties with the Soviets and their recognition that the 'trust' relationship with the USSR has been shattered anew" (White House Central Files, 1974: Box 59). Scowcroft also advised Kissinger about the importance of an appearance of full U.S. support in the face of a Cominformist plot backed by Soviet-leaning elements within Yugoslavia that evidenced "increasing Soviet pressure in the area" (New York Times, 1974). He also saw the increased pressure of the USSR as an opportunity to strengthen, rather than expand, U.S. relations with Yugoslavia. Scowcroft also suggested to Kissinger that he might be given an implicit request for Western credit and weaponry and to present a favorable U.S. perspective towards those requests (White House Central Files, 1974: Box 59). Finally, an important factor that indicated, and at times shaped, U.S. policy towards Yugoslavia was the appointment of U.S. Ambassadors in Yugoslavia. The role of Ambassador to Yugoslavia became a significant indicator of U.S. policy towards Yugoslavia since George Kennan held the post. Kennan's appointment to the post of Ambassador to Yugoslavia under Kennedy, following his previous post of Ambassador to Soviet Union, was an indication of the great emphasis President Kennedy and subsequently Johnson placed on U.S. relations with Yugoslavia. While during the first two years of Nixon's term, the Ambassador to Yugoslavia was William Leonhart, a man who before his appointment to Yugoslavia indicatively served as Ambassador to Tanzania, only weeks before Nixon's first visit he was replaced (United States Department of State. William Leonhart). The appointment of Mal-

colm Toon as U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia was indicative of a push within the White House and State Department, potentially partly on Kissinger's behalf, to attempt the desired improvement in relations with Yugoslavia (New York Times, 1975: 4). Toon was a keen commentator of Yugoslav affairs during his appointment and, during the Cominformist plot, wrote that, although paranoid at first, the extreme sensitivity to "external threats [was a] fact of Yugoslav political life" (White House Central Files, 1974: Box 22). In 1975, Toon was reposted as Ambassador to Israel due to a period of high tensions at the time. Another reason for his reassignment was that the two high-level visits and initiatives, although maintaining relations, did not improve them to the levels desired by Kissinger; thus, efforts in U.S. relations with Yugoslavia were returned to the previous level with the appointment of Laurence Silberman as the new Ambassador to Yugoslavia (1975-1977). Although some historians argue that the appointment of Silberman indicated a decline in Belgrade's relations with Washington since Silberman was inexperienced in terms of foreign affairs, he was an established officer within Washington and under President Ford, serving as Deputy Attorney General and even Acting Attorney General before his Ambassadorial appointment. Furthermore, Ford also appointed Silberman as Presidential Special Envoy for International Labor Organization Affairs. Although Silberman's role in a significant crisis in the relations between Yugoslavia and U.S. was a major one, arguably causing commentary of his inexperience indicative of Yugoslavia's lessened importance for U.S., this cannot be concluded from the available data regarding his appointment.

Eisenhower-Kennedy-Johnson – Yugoslavia Track Record

In the context of main factors and individuals that steered and influenced U.S. policy towards Yugoslavia, it is necessary to consider relations with Yugoslavia under Presidents Nixon and Ford in comparison to their predecessors. It has been argued that U.S. relations with Yugoslavia were at an all-time high under President Kennedy who, during his term as congressman, visited Tito in Belgrade in 1951 and was a notable public supporter of strong U.S. – Yugoslav relations (Department of State, 1961-1963: Volume IX, Section 15). The importance Kennedy saw in strong relations with Yugoslavia was, as previously mentioned, evidenced by his appointment of George F. Kennan, one of the authors of the "containment policy", as the U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia (Lukacs, 2007: 140; Paterson, 1989: 15-16). However, Kennedy's record with Yugoslavia was not as stellar as it might appear. During Kennedy's presidency, the perception of Yugoslavia in the U.S. Congress deteriorated (largely because of reports by Kennan, whom Kennedy appointed), resulting in an amendment to Section 231 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 "which would have had the effect of denying Most Favored Nation" (MFN) status to Yugoslavia

(National Security Files, 1962: Box 210). The denial of MFN status for Yugoslavia resulted in double tariffs on over half of Yugoslav export products to the U.S (National Security Files, 1962: Box 210). While Kennan attempted to lobby Congress out of passing the bill, President Kennedy did not involve himself significantly with the issue (in spite of his traditional high profile media presence on numerous issues) (Kennan, 1972: 304-306). Kennan noted Kennedy supported his efforts to overturn the bill, but was unwilling to risk his small margin in Congress for such an “unsatisfactory issue” (National Security Files, 1962: Box 210). While Marshall Tito visited the U.S. and met with Kennedy, Kennedy, unlike Nixon, never visited Yugoslavia. Tito’s high-level visit to Kennedy in Washington produced little change in bilateral cooperation between the U.S. and Yugoslavia as can be understood from the joint communiqué (Kennan, 1972: 304-306). Finally, Tito’s visit to the U.S. was marked by an assassination attempt in New York, casting another shadow of doubt about the emphasis Kennedy’s White House placed on the success of Tito’s visit (President Office Files, 1963: Box 128A). President Eisenhower also extended an invitation to Tito to visit the U.S. in 1957 but when the Catholic and emigrant Croatian communities started rallying against the visit, the White House did not engage in the domestic backlash but rather advised Tito to reconcile his issue with the Catholic Church. After a prolonged period of public attacks in U.S. press, the Yugoslav side canceled the trip. Thus, neither Eisenhower nor Kennedy excelled in their efforts to ensure visits by Tito to the U.S. were not marked by incidents (or visited Yugoslavia themselves) in spite of the importance traditional State Department strategy for Yugoslavia placed on high-level relations. In comparison, the Nixon Administration prepared for Tito’s visit with visibly more effort than the Kennedy Administration, even after the disappointing results of Nixon’s visit to Yugoslavia (*New York Times*, 1971: 16). The Nixon Administration coordinated efforts for preventing potential incidents by emigrant groups together with Dragoljub Budimovski, Yugoslav Minister of Information, who came to Washington in March of 1971 (Department of State, 1971: Box 2836). The State Department and John A. Baker Jr., Director of the State Department’s Office of Eastern European Affairs, were behind the great effort to organize the visit in highest possible honors, as well as other efforts to prevent incidents and protests against Tito and Yugoslavia, like the 1973 Croatian demonstration ban (Department of State, 1973: Box 2836). Thus, Nixon also appealed to the public to treat Tito courteously (*New York Times*, 1971: 37). Even though both visits did not yield any notable improvements in Yugoslav-American relations, the Nixon Administration (namely, the aforementioned and other staff that really steered U.S. policy on Yugoslavia) realized the importance of high-level visits for the basic U.S. goals in Yugoslav relations. With the high-level visits, the U.S. emphasized these basic objectives: underscoring U.S. interest in Yugoslavia’s independence and economic development, establishing U.S. intentions against any

“spheres of influence”, and emphasizing that the U.S. recognized the rationale behind Yugoslav policies (non-alignment). Although efforts were made to reach other goals, such goals were secondary (National Security Council Files, 1970: Box 468). Furthermore, there is record of Kissinger’s “anger” at Hartman for pushing him not to postpone the meeting with Yugoslav Foreign Minister Minić in spite of Kissinger’s personal unwillingness to meet as Kissinger thought he had nothing to say to him. Finally, Kissinger agreed to meet with Minić to maintain the tradition of high-level visits in spite of public accusations and similar tactics employed by Yugoslavia at the time, and replied to Hartman he did not care for Kissinger’s personal goals if it serves EUR goals in policy towards Yugoslavia – explicit evidence that Hartman’s and State Department’s Eastern European Affairs Office (EUR/EE) managed moments of crisis in relations with Yugoslavia by downplaying intention and responding with high-level visit reinforcement that reflected positive intentions on the part of the U.S.

A Special Relationship: Camaraderie, Crisis and Connivance

U.S. relations with Yugoslavia also have to be understood in the context of Yugoslavia’s population and military size in Europe in comparison to another, notably important American ally in Europe. Even though Yugoslavia had a population of only 20 million while Italy had a population of 55 million, Yugoslavia was one of the five countries included in Nixon’s nine day European trip, and one of only three on the Mediterranean. As Nixon noted, the purpose of the trip was to “strengthen the structure of peace [...] in the Mediterranean area which [...] has been an area of very great concern for all those interested in peace” (Barron, 2010). Nixon spent two days in Italy, one in Rome with the Pope and Italian leaders and the other at U.S. Naval Station Sigonella in Sicily, the base for the U.S. Sixth Fleet. Nixon spent the same amount of time in Yugoslavia, with a day in Belgrade and another in Zagreb and Kumrovec, Tito’s birthplace. Although half smaller in population and not even an explicit ally of NATO or the U.S. (although indirectly so through the Bled Mutual Assistance Pact with Turkey and Greece), Yugoslavia received the same amount of attention the U.K. and Italy did. This was even more surprising in light of the fact that this period was marked by a notable dissent in policy towards the USSR among European NATO-member countries (Kissinger, 1969: 237-243). Furthermore, over Nixon’s and Ford’s Presidencies, Yugoslavia was visited by two Presidents (1970 and 1975) and Kissinger, a Secretary of State (in 1974). In terms of the State Department recipe for relations with Yugoslavia that prescribed high-level publicity visits, the Nixon-Ford Administrations were more successful than any of their predecessors. The experience of the relationship on the Yugoslav side was that the Nixon and Ford years were productive. This indicates that the high-level public visit format was really consid-

ered substantive by the Yugoslav side and the Nixon-Ford years remembered as rather successful ones and not as troubled times (Lončar, 2012).

The occasional rapprochements of Yugoslavia with the USSR were viewed as negative in the U.S. (Brezhnev's visit to Yugoslavia in September 1971 and Tito's visit to the USSR in 1972). It was emphasized numerous times in policy documents and discussions that these were traditional non-alignment and "balancing" acts that the U.S. understood (New York Times, 1972). The few moments of real crisis in U.S. relations with Yugoslavia were the Yom Kippur War, the Cyprus accusations and finally, the Sonnenfeldt-Silberman "affair". While the Yom Kippur War was a period of high tensions, this lasted until the spring of 1974 due to covert arms supplies from Yugoslavia to Arab forces. Paradoxically, the relations warmed again in early fall of 1974 as Tito directly accused the CIA of plotting an assassination of Cypriot leader Makarios in a letter to President Ford, to which the Ford Administration responded by including Yugoslavia on Kissinger's European trip so as to reduce the tensions and restore confidence in the relationship. The Sonnenfeldt-Silberman crisis started after a memo Sonnenfeldt wrote was leaked (Washington Post, 2002: 6). The note was interpreted as advocating "an organic union" between the USSR and Eastern Europe (Hanhimäki, 2004: 444). Although the note did not pertain to Yugoslavia's autonomy from the USSR but was a misperception, it caused an outrage in Yugoslavia and was seen as a return to Yalta agreements where the U.S. would give up on Yugoslavia for the USSR's reciprocal withdrawal elsewhere (White House Central Files, 1976: Box 60). It was, probably, overblown for internal Yugoslav purposes as well (White House Central Files, 1976: Box 22). At the same time, U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia Silberman was advocating for the release of Yugoslav-born U.S. citizen Laszlo Toth, then in prison and on trial for espionage in Yugoslavia (White House Central Files, 1976: Box 60). Silberman was surprisingly vocal in his opposition to Yugoslav authorities on the issue, warning publicly that U.S. Secretary of Treasury William Simon should skip his visit to Eastern Europe as a response to the imprisonment of Toth (White House Central Files, 1976: Box 22). Marshall Tito directly accused the Ambassador of launching a campaign against Yugoslavia and interfering in internal Yugoslav affairs. Tito declared Silberman "persona non grata" shortly thereafter (Foreign Affairs, 1979: 872-93). While Toth was eventually released, Silberman was called back from his Ambassadorial appointment because of "undiplomatic conduct" (New York Times, 1971: 1). Although this moment of crisis caused by Sonnenfeldt's memo, later termed the Sonnenfeldt Doctrine, and Silberman's undiplomatic conduct, was a major one, the tensions were soon reduced with Kissinger's visit to Tito as Secretary of State and President Ford's appeasement visit in 1975 that returned public relations, and consequently also more substantive U.S.-Yugoslav relations, to a neutral level. Furthermore, the primarily Sonnenfeldt-induced crisis in relations also indicated that it was people

other than Kissinger and Nixon who steered U.S. relations with Yugoslavia since Kissinger and Nixon also made numerous reprimanding and even directly opposing public statements to Tito and Yugoslavia throughout their terms in office that did not cause similar harsh protests from the Yugoslav side.

Another argument in the claim about deteriorating relations with Yugoslavia during President Nixon's term is the amount of economic aid, loans and military support Yugoslavia received from the U.S. Long-term loans in 1971 were more than three times bigger than in 1969 and 1970 combined. Furthermore, the loans in the following years were even approved for purchase of aircraft (DC9). Thus, although economic aid to Yugoslavia was on a decline since the Eisenhower Administration, trade, credit and scientific as well as economic cooperation were stable and regularly rising (Foreign Relations, 1971: TDCS DB-315/04377-71). Economic support and cooperation were a key component in maintaining relations with Yugoslavia and Sonnenfeldt and others advocated that it should continue (National Security Council, 1971: Box 734). However, their success was limited, especially later in Nixon's term, although support for the provision of military equipment increased in 1974/1975 under President Ford (White House Central Files, 1975: Box 22).

The real crisis in relations with Yugoslavia was the onset of the Yom Kippur War. Political relations with Yugoslavia were highly strained in the period from the discovery of Yugoslav ships that were carrying weapons to Arabs under cover of providing food and medical supplies till the spring of 1974 (White House Central Files, 1975: Box 60). The Yugoslav side claimed it had no knowledge of the arms supplies and, furthermore, emphasized in retrospect the U.S. consideration and "respect" for Yugoslav support for Palestine and other Arab "partners" of Yugoslavia in most cases (Lončar, 2012). However, the issue in the Yom Kippur War was Yugoslavia's inclination to aid Soviet attempts of supplying arms to Arabs (White House Central Files, 1975: Box 60). During his visit, President Ford raised the issue with Tito, condemning the "Yugoslav campaign against the U.S.". While the Yom Kippur War period truly was a period of decline in relations, relations returned to normal several months later with efforts to amend relations from both the Yugoslav and American side. For this reason, I argue, the Yom Kippur War should not be considered as accurately reflecting the level of the U.S. – Yugoslav relations during the whole period of the Nixon and Ford Administrations. Furthermore, a similar period of crisis occurred in the U.S. – Yugoslav relations under Kennedy as the Vietnam crisis developed. Kennan conveyed Kennedy's message to Tito, urging restraint in public messages over the "situation in Vietnam". While approaching Tito to amend his public statements was a mistake in itself, Tito replied to Kennan by saying relations with the U.S. will surely "suffer because of differences of view on world developments" (Department of State, 1965: 1/64-4/66, Box 232).

Conclusion

While it is true that the U.S. – Yugoslav relations during Nixon and Ford Administrations went through several crises, they have largely been constant rather than declining in terms of important parameters. Although President Nixon's and Kissinger's public and private positions on Yugoslavia were unfavorable, this did not reflect in the U.S. – Yugoslav relations because of the great influence of advisors and staff from the NSC and State Department that sought to ensure relations with Yugoslavia remained constant, and mostly succeeded in doing so. The interpretation of relations as declining after the initial visit of President Nixon to Yugoslavia is mistaken – rather, the visit of President Nixon, the first U.S. President to visit Yugoslavia, should be interpreted as a high point in U.S. – Yugoslav relations which ensured normalization instead of decline. In comparison, Tito's only visit to President Kennedy was a calamity (a series of anti-Yugoslav protests coupled with an assassination attempt) while Johnson's Administration "refrained from spending disproportionate time on Yugoslavia while there were more pressing international crises elsewhere", resulting in no high-level visits whatsoever (Močnik, 2008). Thus, Nixon's trip to Yugoslavia and Tito's return trip to U.S. should be viewed as an attempt to reinforce and improve relations instead of a normal state of relations that later declined. In fact, Kissinger implicitly admitted to initial efforts of improving relations with Yugoslavia in *Years of Renewal*. Furthermore, Nixon was recorded expressing (rare) personal interest in improving relations with Yugoslavia in 1970 when commenting on a report of Secretary Rogers' meeting with Tito in Addis Ababa in February 1970: "K (Kissinger) – I am very much in favor of exploiting this in Yugoslavia fully" (National Security Files, 1970: 531, Box 733). However, efforts to improve relations did not succeed and they remained constant, with occasional and necessary "balancing acts". Nixon in fact recognized this in his meeting with Tito in 1970, stating that he understood and respected Yugoslavia's non-aligned policy (although attempting to amend it in favor of U.S.). Kissinger further elaborated on this in his memoirs, *White House Years*: "We did not seek to win Yugoslavia over to our point of view. We recognized that its policy of non-alignment, like India's, reflected a cold analysis of its self-interest" (Kissinger, 2011: 920-928). Although in retrospect, this best explains that the relations during Nixon and Ford Administrations were kept at a constant after initial efforts to improve that did not give results. The definition of Yugoslavia's non-alignment prevented any improvement in relations with Yugoslavia but also gave the U.S. an incentive to maintain it as a deterrent to the USSR's expanding interest.

Moreover, relations were maintained by a set of advisors and staff sharing the view that originated in the Department of State on how to manage and maintain

relations with Yugoslavia. Under Kissinger's White House tenure, these were primarily Helmut Sonnenfeldt and Art Hartman. They were instrumental in neutralizing crises in the relationship like the Cypriot assassination accusation from Tito but were also responsible for inducing one, the so-called "Sonnenfeldt Doctrine". The response in Yugoslavia to the "Sonnenfeldt Doctrine" in a way also affirmed his importance in bilateral relations. Sonnenfeldt and others also advocated extension of loans to Yugoslavia even after the "disappointment" of initial efforts to improve relations (Foreign Relations, 1971: 1291 – Volume XXIX). In their management of relations with Yugoslavia, they relied on the Department of State recipe for Yugoslav affairs: high-level visits, economic cooperation and moderate responses to "balancing acts" that often involved attacks on U.S. policy. Of these three factors in U.S. – Yugoslav relations, high-level visits were most important from the Yugoslav perspective as they presented a key factor in the non-alignment strategy that was largely a public presentation (Lončar, 2012). Finally, the policy Presidents before Nixon and Ford pursued with Yugoslavia in comparison with their predecessors as well as the attention Yugoslavia received during Nixon and Ford Administrations compared to American NATO allies implies relations were largely stable in the 1969 to 1977 period. If the perspective of the Yugoslav side is to be trusted, high-level visits were the key indicator of relations (Lončar, 2012). Under those criteria, the Nixon-Ford-Kissinger period might easily be the most successful period of U.S. – Yugoslav collaboration. While various crises interfered with this being true, they were resolved via high-level meetings and correspondence at the urging of the staff that steered relations with Yugoslavia. This process was best summarized by George Kennan in a letter to Kissinger in 1973, stating that a personal note from someone in high position emphasizing Yugoslavia's importance in the U.S. government's eyes at the time would be of great help (White House Central Files, 1973: Box 88). The U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Charles Elbrick, described this as well in 1969, recommending "a continuation of [...] exchanges of correspondence at the Presidential level and occasional VIP visits, [that] will help sustain an atmosphere of confidence between the two governments" (Central Foreign Policy Files, 1969, Box 2845). If there was a period of real crisis, this was the Yom Kippur War, during which there was a period of tension between Washington and Belgrade but this was, with time, forgotten in favor of the benefits of continuing relations. The "Sonnenfeldt Doctrine" affair that in fact happened under President Ford was mostly a misunderstanding and not a true crisis, overblown by press coverage and to an extent exploited for the public "balancing" in Yugoslavia (White House Central Files, 1976: Box 22). However, with visits by Kissinger and Ford, this was soon amended – best proof of this being Sonnenfeldt's presence at both Ford's and Kissinger's visits to Yugoslavia. Finally, the importance of Son-

nenfeldt's influence on how U.S. foreign relations were shaped was, in Kissinger's own words, great, and although he claims they had the same position on all topics, Yugoslavia might have been an exception (Kissinger, 2012). In terms of relations with Yugoslavia, the Nixon and Ford Administrations were largely successful and managed them with a positive outcome through several crises while also organizing several historic events that marked the history of the bilateral relationship.

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