

Article

## **Balancing among Superpowers: Japan-Yugoslavia Relations during the Cold War<sup>1</sup>**

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This article aims to use Japan's relations with Yugoslavia as a case in point to examine the character of Japan's development of relations with the communist countries of Eastern Europe during the Cold War. This article employs previously unused archival sources from both Japan and Yugoslavia in an attempt to reveal how Japan's development of relations with countries outside of the Western bloc represented rational pursuit of her national interests, and a tactic of balancing among superpowers. Furthermore, this article shows the character of Japan's foreign policy towards the communist countries of Eastern Europe. It also attempts to assess the relative importance of external influences, influences of the superpowers, on the development of Japan's diplomatic relations with communist countries. This article reveals the motives behind the development of relations from both sides, as well as the nature of relations and merits/demerits which arose. This study represents a valuable asset in deepening the understanding of the character of Japanese Cold War diplomatic relations with the communist countries of Eastern Europe, and its position in the broader Japanese diplomatic history. It is argued here that Japan was developing relations with the communist Yugoslavia, in spite of the differences in ideologies and economic systems, with a goal to pursue her national interests and to balance the influence of the superpowers on foreign policy.

**Keywords:** Diplomatic history, East-West relations, Cold War, Japan, Yugoslavia

### **Introduction**

During the cherry blossom season of 1968, Japan, the greatest American ally and supporter of the fight against communism in East Asia, for the very first time in her postwar history, had welcomed one communist president during a state visit. The president was President Josip Broz Tito, the leader of non-aligned, but yet communist, Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (hereafter–Yugoslavia). The visit lasted one week and was organized as a maneuver in Japanese diplomacy to demonstrate how Japan was a country that maintained friendly relations with all peace-loving countries of the world, regardless of their political ideology. The implications went further than that and showed us that Japan had used this visit to improve her image on the international and domestic level.

Japan and Yugoslavia reestablished their diplomatic relations in 1952 soon after Japan had regained her sovereignty. Yugoslavia was among the countries that had been invited, but did not participate, in the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the two countries reestablished diplomatic relations later,

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<sup>2</sup> *Nihon gaikō bunsho, heiwa jōyaku no teiketsu ni kansuru chōsho dai ichi* [Documents on Japanese foreign policy: records related to the conclusion of the [San Francisco] Peace Treaty, Vol. 1], Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2001): 30-34.

through *notes verbales* exchanged in February 1952. By the time of the reestablishment of relations, Japan and Yugoslavia found themselves with different political and economic systems and opposing ideologies, which made their relationship difficult. Their bilateral relationship was additionally influenced by the Cold War tensions and interests of the superpowers. Japan belonged to the Western bloc, which fought to contain communism; on the other hand, Yugoslavia was more an ally of the East than the West. Even though she did not belong to the Eastern bloc, in line with her political and economic system and, moreover, with her ideology, she inclined to the East.

However, in spite of all differences between them, Japan and Yugoslavia have worked on the development of their bilateral relations throughout the Cold War period. Yugoslavia was among the first communist countries to sign a trade treaty with Japan in 1959 and also to form a committee for the expansion of trade relations in 1972. In addition, on the diplomatic level, the two countries exchanged numerous visits at high levels of government, out of which certainly President Tito's visit to Japan in 1968 was of the greatest significance. Furthermore, in 1976, Yugoslavia was the first communist country in which members of the Japanese Imperial Family, the Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko, paid a visit.

This article discusses Japanese-Yugoslav bilateral relations from the Japanese perspective in an attempt to look into Japan's interests to maintain and develop relations with Yugoslavia, a country with an opposing ideology. The relationship is set within the broader context of the Cold War environment. The article begins by a brief insight into East-West relations during the Cold War, and continues with positioning Yugoslavia and Japan within it. It then examines Japanese-Yugoslav relations with a particular focus on President Tito's visit to Japan.

In order to discuss this topic, this study is guided by three research questions. First, what was the nature of Japanese-Yugoslav relations during the Cold War? Second, what was its place in Japanese foreign policy? Third, what were the implications of President Tito's visit for Japanese foreign policy? A proposed hypothesis is that Japan maintained this relationship as a part of a pursuit for achieving her national interests in order to balance her foreign policy vis-à-vis the superpowers.

With the purpose of providing an answer to the research questions, this study implements analysis of primary sources, a method usually employed in the area of diplomatic history. Primary sources used for the purposes of this study are diplomatic archival documents from the Japanese Diplomatic Archives (JDA) and Yugoslav Diplomatic Archives (currently under a new name, the Serbian Diplomatic Archives) or YDA. Additionally, the YDA are supplemented by the Yugoslav History Archives (YHA), which holds the Presidential archives of Josip Broz Tito.

Considering the limited access to diplomatic records in East European countries until recently, and with a gradually but delayed disclosing of documents at the Japanese archives, the limited body of research on Japan's relations with communist countries is understandable. New material from Soviet, East European, and Chinese archives have provided us with new information about the Cold War and have even spurred new approaches and analytical frameworks at the end of the past century.<sup>3</sup> However, availability of Japanese diplomatic records is incomplete. According to a law passed in 1976, documents from Japan's diplomatic archives that are older than 30 years can be disclosed to the public. However, in practice, the materials have been released at an uneven rate, and many are still waiting to be disclosed. During the research, upon the request of the author, a small portion of the documents regarding Yugoslavia and other Eastern European communist countries became available. However, approximately one-third of the documents regarding Eastern European countries are yet to be disclosed.

There have been a few attempts to investigate Japan's relations with East European countries during the Cold War with a focus on the trade dimension.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, none of them have considered Yugoslavia. The

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<sup>3</sup> See John Lewis Gaddis. *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Tony Smith. "New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War." *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (October 2000).

<sup>4</sup> See Yataro Terada. "The System of Trade between Japan and the East European Countries, including the Soviet Union." *Law and Contemporary Problems* (1972); Jan Stankovsky and Michel Vale. "Japan's Economic Relations with the USSR and Eastern Europe." *Soviet and Eastern European Foreign Trade* (1976).

vast amount of diplomatic (international) history literature focuses on the Cold War structure and on international relations within it. And, naturally, it focuses on the most important relations during the Cold War—the relations between the two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union (hereafter also referred to as the USSR).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, there were few works regarding bilateral relations between countries belonging to opposite blocs, and even fewer of them accounted for smaller countries' mutual relationships. The focus was usually on countries' relations with the superpowers<sup>6</sup> and only some of them were dealing with relations between countries belonging to opposite blocs.<sup>7</sup> In addition, literature regarding Japanese relations with communist countries predominantly focused on the relations with the Eastern superpower, the USSR<sup>8</sup>, and the People's Republic of China (PRC), her immediate neighbor,<sup>9</sup> with only one analytical account of Japan's relations with an Eastern European country during the Cold War (Hungary) published in the Hungarian language only.<sup>10</sup> Even the general literature regarding Japanese post-war diplomatic relations focuses predominantly on relations with the U.S. and China, as both were of utmost importance to Japan.<sup>11</sup>

This article starts a completely new chapter in the international historiography of Japan's and Yugoslavia's Cold War. Moreover, it presents new evidence on Japan's relations with communist countries from Eastern Europe during the Cold War and Yugoslavia in particular. It sheds light on Japanese Cold War foreign policy goals and how it endeavored to achieve them. Moreover, this study is an attempt to analyze bilateral relations between countries believing in opposing ideologies and belonging to opposed blocs—one communist country and one capitalist country during the Cold War. This deepens the understanding of the way smaller nations<sup>12</sup> were pursuing their national interests while attempting, at the same time, to find their place in the world within the East-West structure. Furthermore, this study contributes to our understanding of Yugoslavia and Japan's respective relationship vis-à-vis the U.S. and the USSR.

## 1. The Cold War Structure

Within a few years after the end of the World War II, events that kept occurring one after another such as a decline of the Chinese Nationalists and the rise of the Communists, the deepening division of Korea, the

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<sup>5</sup> For example, see Melvyn P. Leffler, and David S. Painter, eds. *Origins of the Cold War: An International History. Rewriting Histories*. (New York: Routledge, 2005); John Lewis Gaddis. *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War*. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989); Walter La Feber. *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-2006*. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008); Richard Crockatt. *The Fifty Years War: The United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics, 1941-1991*. (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> See Frank Costigliola. *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance since World War II*. (Twayne's International History Series. New York : Toronto, 1992); John Dumbrell. *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and after*. (Houndmills, Hampshire : New York: Macmillan ; St. Martin's Press, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> See Witold M. Góralski, ed. *Poland-Germany 1945-2007: From Confrontation to Cooperation and Partnership in Europe: Studies and Documents*. (Warsaw: The Polish Institute of International Affairs, 2007); Marcin Zaborowski. *Germany, Poland, and Europe: Conflict, Co-Operation, and Europeanization*. (Issues in German Politics. Manchester, New York, New York: Manchester University Press, distributed in the USA by Palgrave, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> See Joseph P. Ferguson, *Japanese-Russian Relations, 1907-2007*. (London: Routledge, 2011); Swearingen, Rodger. *The Soviet Union and Postwar Japan: Escalating Challenge and Response*. (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978).

<sup>9</sup> See Christopher Howe, ed. *China and Japan: History, Trends, and Prospects*. Studies on Contemporary China. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Caroline Rose. *Interpreting History in Sino-Japanese Relations: A Case Study in Political Decision-Making*. (Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series. London ; New York: Routledge, 1998); Hanns-Günther Hilpert, and René Haak, eds. *Japan and China: Cooperation, Competition, and Conflict*. (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Ildikó Farkas, et al, eds. *Tanulmányok a Magyar-Japán Kapcsolatok Történetéből [Studies in the History of the Hungarian-Japanese Relations]*. (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Makoto See Iokibe and Robert D. Eldridge, eds. *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan*. (London ; New York: Routledge, 2011); Glenn D. Hook, et al, eds. *Japan's International Relations: Politics, Economics and Security*. (Sheffield Centre for Japanese Studies / Routledge Series. New York: Routledge, 2012); Frank Langdon. *Japan's Foreign Policy*. (Vancouver, B.C: University of British Columbia Press, 1973).

<sup>12</sup> A "smaller nations" is a term first time used in Tony Smith. "New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War."; the term "small allies" is from Keohane, Robert O. "The big influence of small allies." *Foreign Policy* 2 (1971).

Czech coup, and the Berlin blockade, created clear outlines of the Cold War. On one side of the conflict were the U.S. and “the free world”; on the other were the Soviet Union and her Eastern European satellites.

The Cold War structure was essentially characterized by the confrontation between the U.S. and the USSR, and their respective economic, political and security systems. The confrontation also extended to the countries allied with them. The intensity of confrontation varied considerably throughout the Cold War period and occasionally spilled over into ‘hot wars’ in East Asia (the Korean War 1950-1953 and the Vietnam War 1955-1975). Depending on the increase/decrease of tensions between the U.S. and the USSR, the intensity of the diplomatic and trade relations between the countries belonging to the opposite blocs varied.

The Eastern bloc was comprised of communist states<sup>13</sup> and members of the Warsaw Pact (formally, the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance) aligned with the USSR. In the region, there existed two more communist countries—Yugoslavia and Albania—which were not aligned with the USSR after 1948 and 1960, respectively. All those states, regardless if they belonged to the Soviet alliance system, had centrally planned economic systems with state-owned companies.

On the other side, the Western bloc was comprised of democratic states with capitalist economic systems gathered around the United States in the form of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Western Europe or in other forms of alliances in other parts of the world. In that regard, Japan was aligned (and still is) to the U.S. by a bilateral security treaty, first signed in 1951 in San Francisco, amended once in 1960, and with automatic extensions since 1970. In any case, the U.S. committed herself to fight against communism to contain the expansion of communism and the Soviet influence over the world.

Diplomatic relations were maintained between the blocs *de jure*, but *de facto* they were kept at low levels with various prohibitions due to distrust on both sides. Both superpowers attempted to weaken the other side, either by propaganda or by putting military capabilities on the smaller allies’ territories directed towards each other.

## 2. Yugoslavia and Japan’s Place within the Cold War Structure

In the chain of the events at the beginning of the Cold War, however, one event did not seem to fit the pattern. The Tito-Stalin rift of 1948 puzzled many. Yugoslavia found herself in an ungrateful position, stepping out of her “tribe” and reaching out to an ideological enemy. Both sides were not sure how to deal with her. President Tito was still a communist (a very orthodox one), and very loud and proud about it. However, by 1949 the Americans started throwing tens of millions of dollars to him. Military aid followed.

Yugoslavia, as the only defector from what the Americans believed to be a homogenous system of the communist bloc, became not an affectionate ally in American hearts, but rather a tool to undermine the Soviet bloc and destroy communism.<sup>14</sup> With the public announcement of the U.S.-Yugoslav agreement on military aid in 1951, defection of Yugoslavia from the Eastern bloc became apparent. Or, at least, it was apparent until it was not. Within a few years, by 1954, President Tito’s attempt to crawl back to the tribe once again bewildered everyone.

Though eagerly accepting Western military aid, President Tito systematically avoided joining NATO since he was aware that the membership would forever destroy any chance of reconciliation with the international Communist movement. Also, the Yugoslav government would inevitably fall under the U.S. control.<sup>15</sup> With these fears in mind, and due to the events of Stalin’s death in 1953 and consequent turn in

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<sup>13</sup> The socialist states, or the communist states how they are called in the West (though they themselves claimed that they have not achieved communism and therefore were socialist states), are the states that are governed by a single party adhering to the ideology of Marxist-Leninism (or some variant of it) and in which the state has control over industries and services. On this topic see more in Hans-Hermann Hoppe. *A Theory of Socialism and Capitalism: Economics, Politics, and Ethics*. (The Ludwig von Mises Institute’s Studies in Austrian Economics. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> Beatrice Heuser. *Western “Containment” Policies in the Cold War: The Yugoslav Case, 1948-53*. (London ; New York: Routledge, 1989): 215; and Lorraine M. Lees. *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War*. (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997): 227.

<sup>15</sup> Svetozar Rajak. *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Cold War: Reconciliation, Comradeship, Confrontation, 1953-57*. (Cold War History Series 26. New York: Routledge, 2011): 15.

Soviet foreign policy towards Yugoslavia, President Tito decided to reconcile with the USSR and to take a step back from progressing an alliance with the West. As a result, the country's relations with the West and particularly with the U.S. deteriorated.

Since already by 1956 it became evident that Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation had not turned out to be what President Tito expected, and Yugoslavia severely damaged relations with the West for the sake of that reconciliation, he initiated a new Yugoslav foreign policy framework—cooperation with other unsettled and powerless countries— with countries of the Third World. A meeting among the Egyptian President Nasser, Indian Prime Minister Nehru and President Tito at the Yugoslav island of Brioni in 1956 was later regarded as the most important meeting in the formation of the non-aligned movement (NAM). Since its first official conference in Belgrade in 1961, the course of Yugoslav foreign policy definitely took a new turn and Yugoslavia obtained a new, respectable and powerful position within the developing countries in Africa and Asia, and a stronger balancing position vis-à-vis the East and West blocs.

On the other side during the first part of the Cold War, Japan herself obtained a respectable amount of power within the international environment through her miraculous economic development. She became the second leading (free-world) economy within less than twenty years from regaining sovereignty in 1952.

By the time Japan regained her sovereignty in 1952, the Cold War confrontation had already started and Japan became a member of the Western bloc. Moreover, she was heavily dependent on the U.S. defense umbrella, and thus her foreign policy was influenced by U.S. interests. The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, first signed in 1951, is the longest lasting treaty between two great powers since the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. Japan was the greatest supporter of the U.S.'s containment strategy in the Asia-Pacific during the Cold War.

Setting security interests and political ideology aside, Japan realized that she could only grow stronger through economic recovery and development, setting economic development as one of the main goals of her foreign policy.<sup>16</sup> The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 coincided with this Japanese goal. Procurement for U.S. needs during the Korean War boosted the Japanese economy sooner than had expected. Additionally, the Korean War pointed out the geostrategic significance of Japan for U.S. interests in Asia. That is how Japanese security interests and political beliefs coincided with her economic interests. But soon after the end of the Korean War, it became clear that further expansion and diversification of foreign trade was necessary.

According to the Diplomatic Bluebook, the other important goals of Japan's foreign policy at the time were improving relations with South East Asian (SEA) countries and balancing relations with the U.S.<sup>17</sup> In line with economic diplomacy and improving relations with SEA countries, Japan was promoting relations regardless of other SEA countries' political systems. At the time, Japan was active in promoting relations with Eastern European countries as well.

### 3. Japan's Relations with Communist Countries

Due to the circumstances of the Cold War in South-East Asia, and her position within, Japan could not openly cooperate with communist countries. However, regardless of ideology, Japanese leaders tried to pursue Japan's interests. In pursuit of economic development, Japan first explored opportunities in SEA markets. Additionally, Japan explored options of pursuing trade with communist countries, not only the ones in Asia, but she went even further to Europe. As stated in the Diplomatic Bluebook from 1957, Japan needed to improve her foreign trade exchange in order to develop her economy.<sup>18</sup> The principle was to expand trade relations with any country, no matter the political system.<sup>19</sup>

Regarding Japan-PRC relations, though normalization of relations was not agreed upon until 1972, and the official peace treaty was not signed until 1978, the two countries developed cooperation earlier, mostly in trade. The cooperation was predominantly at the private sector level, and to some extent at the governmental level, based on Japanese *seikei bunri* (the separation of trade from politics) policy. In recent years after World

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<sup>16</sup> *Gaikō seisho* [Diplomatic Bluebook] 1957, *Sōsetsu* [General topics]. (Tokyo. Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Terada, 429.

War II, and even after regaining her sovereignty, Japan had her trade with PRC closely watched over by the U.S. Moreover, it was inhibited by the U.S. policy to tighten control over communist markets. By the NSC 48/2, Americans imposed export control on Japan, especially by controlling exports toward PRC, North Korea, the USSR and her satellites.<sup>20</sup>

Japan restored diplomatic relations with the communist countries of Eastern Europe by the end of the 1950s. This was not possible earlier since Japan had not established diplomatic relations with the USSR until mid-1950. Japan and the USSR, although they had never signed a peace treaty, signed a joint declaration in 1956, thus reestablishing diplomatic relations. This was followed by signing a Protocol for developing a MFN (most-favored-nation) treatment agreement and Fishery Agreement. In fact, Japan and the USSR conducted trade regardless of their diplomatic frictions regarding territorial claims, the issue that lay at the heart of their disagreements until the present. In the following year, Japan signed Joint Declarations for the restoration of diplomatic relations with Czechoslovakia and Poland.<sup>21</sup> By the beginning of the 1960s, Japan had signed Commerce and Navigation Agreements with all Eastern European countries, including Yugoslavia.

#### 4. Japan-Yugoslavia Relations: the Beginnings

Though the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Poland had participated in the San Francisco Peace Conference, they refused to sign the peace treaty, therefore, Yugoslavia became the first communist country to terminate the state of war and reestablish diplomatic relations with Japan in 1952.

While Japan belonged to Asia, aligning with the West and particularly with the U.S., Yugoslavia belonged to East Europe and maintained good relations with the U.S. In the mid-1950s, when Japan and Yugoslavia initiated their relations, Yugoslavia was in a particularly difficult period, with a deteriorated relationship with both superpowers. Thus, she welcomed development of relations with Japan, especially expanding trade and related Japanese investments and loans. According to the YDA, throughout the 1950s Japan provided investment loans for construction and development of Yugoslav plants. The first investment loan of 12 million USD for the Viscose plant was provided in 1954, for buying equipment from Mitsubishi Company, and was provided by the Export-Import Bank of Japan.<sup>22</sup>

For Japan these relations aligned with her *seikei bunri* policy, principles that avoided direct government-to-government agreements and negotiations. Although loans for investments in the Yugoslav industry were coming from the Japanese Export-Import Bank, Japanese private trading companies were guarantors and leaders in these endeavors. Therefore, even though the funds were coming from the Japanese government, this system enabled the Japanese government to distance herself from the Yugoslav government. As Yugoslav officials observed, this was a way to avoid potential complications regarding the collision of Japanese politics with communist politics.<sup>23</sup>

After a few initial years of trade, Japan and Yugoslavia signed the Trade and Maritime Transport Agreement in 1959, giving MFN status to each other. This agreement had more of a political effect on their respective foreign policies, than it had actually on boosting the trade. At the time, both countries were still struggling with their economic development. For Yugoslavia this agreement was part of the policy to lessen dependence on both the U.S. and USSR, especially after the difficult period in the mid-1950s when relations with both superpowers seriously deteriorated. Yugoslavia needed alternative markets and trading partners if she wanted to succeed. At the same time, out of necessity, Yugoslavia started to diversify her diplomatic and trade relations with many countries other than Japan as well. President Tito saw an opportunity to make alliances with

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<sup>20</sup> Yoko Yasuhara. "Japan, Communist China, and Export Controls in Asia, 1948-52." *Diplomatic History* 10, no. 1 (January 1986): 81-83.

<sup>21</sup> Gaikō seisho [Diplomatic Bluebook] 1957, *Kakusetsu/wagakuni to kaku chiiki to no ma no shomondai/Sorenoyobi tō kankei* [Various topics/ Issues between Japan and various regions/ The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe]. (Tokyo. Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

<sup>22</sup> [Y]ugoslav [D]iplomatic [A]rchives, 1956, [B]ox 42 [F]older 14 [F]ile 44520, *Informacija* [Information note], 08.02.1956.

<sup>23</sup> YDA, 1959, B56F41F430741, *Zapis iz razgovora Soica i Konoa* [Note from the conversation between Soic [Yugoslav Embassy] and Kono [Business department of Export-Import Bank Japan]], 22.10.1959.

Third World countries in order to obtain some political power within East-West relations.

As for Japan, through the 1950s, and especially after Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, Japanese prime ministers started to focus on rebuilding relations with Asian countries. This was also an attempt to diversify trade markets, but also for the purpose of Japan to obtain support from the regional countries, and to strengthen her position vis-à-vis the U.S.

The trade volumes increased on both sides, as indicated in Table 1, but those numbers still represent a very small part of the overall trade between Japan and Yugoslavia. Also, it is obvious that the agreement was more beneficial to Japan than to Yugoslavia, having caused an imbalance between the exports and imports. Moreover, the agreement appeared to have more impact on developing friendly relations between the two distant countries. Both Japan and Yugoslavia needed trading partners in order to pursue more balanced politics vis-à-vis the superpowers, upon which they were dependent.

Table 1: Japan and Yugoslavia trade in 1959 -1960.

<b>Japan's exports (in millions of USD)</b>	<b>1958</b>	<b>1959</b>	<b>1960</b>
In total	2876.80	3456.50	4054.50
Yugoslavia	1.18	9.92	5.84
<b>Japan's imports (in millions of USD)</b>	<b>1958</b>	<b>1959</b>	<b>1960</b>
In total	3033.40	3599.80	4491.50
Yugoslavia	0.003	0.68	2.80

Data adapted from: White Paper on International Economy and Trade, Ministry of International Trade and Industry 1961, New International Division of Labor, Tables: 2-33 and 2-34, and Detailed Exposition, Tables: 3-176 and 3-177.

Although the bilateral trade volume was not significant to boost of their respective economies, their cooperation represented a step forward to independence from their dependence on the superpowers. Initial years of developing relations during the 1950s set up a base for further development in the 1960s.

## 5. Tito's Visit to Japan 1968

The decade of the 1960s was important for both Yugoslavia and Japan. Yugoslavia finally found her own place and stopped depending on the interests of the superpowers. She participated in the creation of a third non-aligned bloc. This provided her with more power vis-à-vis the superpowers and enabled her independence.

On the other hand, for the first time, Japan in the 1960s, recorded a surplus in foreign trade and became the world's third largest economy (after the U.S. and USSR). This put Japan in a long-desired respected position in the international community. Yet this respected position did not remove fears of Western European countries regarding Japan's (un)fair trade. Either way, both Japan and Yugoslavia achieved a certain status and certain amount of power in the world during this decade. Mutual relations were also blooming with intensified high-level state visits.

Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito, during his diplomatic travels around the world, visited Japan in April 1968. He was accompanied by a large delegation which included Secretary General Popovic Koca, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Nikezic Marko, various Members of the Council of the Federation, and his spouse, Broz Jovanka. Tito and his associates stayed in Japan for one week (April 8-15, 1968). This was the first visit by one president of a communist country to Japan, and Tito was the first communist leader to be welcomed by the Japanese Emperor. During this one-week visit, Tito and his associates visited "sites of economic interest, cultural and historic places in the cities of Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto, which offered them an opportunity to get directly acquainted with the progress of the people of Japan in the economic and social fields, as well as with their cultural traditions."<sup>24</sup>

During their visit, Yugoslav representatives had numerous meetings with representatives from the

<sup>24</sup> Y[ugoslav] H[istory] A[rchives] –P[residential] A[rchives], KPR I-2/38-1, *Put J. B. Tita u Japan, 8-15.IV 1968, Zajednicko saopštenje, Komunique* [J. B. Tito's trip to Japan, 8-15.04.1968/ Joint statement/ Joint Communiqué].

Japanese government, business circles, and non-governmental organizations. Moreover, Tito had meetings with representatives of Keidanren, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Trade Association and the Japan-Yugoslavia Association. They discussed various international problems and matters of common interest, and exchanged views.<sup>25</sup> One of the peculiarities of the visits was that the Japanese Emperor and the Empress hosted a reception in their honor. Not only was it unusual for one monarch to welcome one anti-monarchist and communist, but also this was the first occasion to do so. Tito was the first leader from a European communist country to meet the Japanese Emperor.

Tito and Japanese Prime Minister Sato Eisaku met several times during the visit: When Sato first went to welcome Tito, during three receptions (one at the Imperial Palace, one at the Prime Minister Sato's residence and one organized by President Tito), and during the official talks.<sup>26</sup> Prime Minister Sato was not unfamiliar with Yugoslavia and her domestic and foreign policies, as he had actually visited Yugoslavia once before in an official capacity as head of the Science and Technology Agency in 1964. Although according to the plan of his visit at that time, Prime Minister Sato was not scheduled to meet with President Tito, he expressed his wishes to do so. Unfortunately, this meeting was not possible at the time due to Tito's absence from the country.<sup>27</sup>

Later on, when Sato became prime minister of Japan, on several occasions Sato expressed his interest regarding Tito's diplomacy. On one such occasion during the meeting with the Yugoslav ambassador to Japan, Vladimir Rolovic, where the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (JMOFA) deputy director for Eastern Europe and socialist countries was also present, Sato officially invited Tito to visit Japan. This invitation came as a surprise for JMOFA officials.<sup>28</sup>

For the official meeting, President Tito and Prime Minister Sato met on April 9, 1968. They exchanged opinions regarding the world's most important issues and expressed their respective foreign policy goals, in which they found their common basis to be endeavors towards world peace. Both leaders considered that maintaining world peace occupied top priority.<sup>29</sup> The two leaders paid special attention to the problem in Vietnam, the crisis in the Middle East, disarmament, and the economic situation of developing countries. Furthermore, they discussed the efficiency of the United Nations and agreed to cooperate on endeavors for its improvement.<sup>30</sup> Finally, President Tito and Prime Minister Sato agreed to continue to join efforts to promote world peace, international cooperation, economic stability and progress in developing countries, and nuclear non-proliferation.<sup>31</sup>

In general, the visit of President Tito and his associates contributed to a better understanding between the two countries and for the advancement of future cooperation in politics, economy and culture.<sup>32</sup> The two countries were at such a distance from each other that their bilateral relationship was additionally inhibited with a lack of information regarding each other, even though the developments in improving cooperation and

<sup>25</sup> [J]apanese [D]iplomatic [A]rchives, A'-0403, *Ōshū shokoku daitōryō honpō hōmon kankei zakken, chitō yūgōsuravu-ia daitōryō kankei/ ippan* [Visits to Japan's Prime Minister from Europe; Yugoslav President Tito/ General information], 1968.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> YHA, KPR I-2/38-1, *Put J. B. Tita u Japan, 8-15.IV 1968 / Dokumentacija o Pripremi posete/ Kako su tekli razgovori sa japanskom vladom o poseti druga predsednika Japanu* [J. B. Tito's trip to Japan, 8-15.04.1968/ Documentation regarding the visit preparations/ Conversations with Japanese government regarding the prospects for the visit], by ambassador Rolovic, 1966.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> JDA, A'-0403, *Ōshū shokoku daitōryō honpō hōmon kankei zakken, chitō yūgōsuravu-ia daitōryō kankei/ kaidan kankei* [Visits to Japan's Prime Minister from Europe; Yugoslav President Tito/ The talks], 1968

<sup>30</sup> YHA, KPR I-2/38-1, *Put J. B. Tita u Japan, 8-15.IV 1968/ Komunike* [J. B. Tito's trip to Japan, 8-15.04.1968/ Joint Communiqué], 15.04.1968; JDA, A'-0403, *Ōshū shokoku daitōryō honpō hōmon kankei zakken, chitō yūgōsuravu-ia daitōryō kankei/ kyōdō komyunike* [Visits to Japan's Prime Minister from Europe; Yugoslav President Tito/ Joint Communiqué], 15.04.1968.

<sup>31</sup> Gaikō seisho [Diplomatic Bluebook] 1969, *Kakusetsu/ wagakuni to kakkoku to no shomondai/ Soren Tōō chiiki/ yōjin oyobi shisetsu-dan no rainichi/ yūgōsuravu-ia no chito daitōryō* [Various topics/ Issues between Japan and other countries/ Soviet Union and Eastern Europe/ Foreign dignitaries and delegations in Japan/ Yugoslav President Tito]. (Tokyo. Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

<sup>32</sup> Joint Communiqué, 15.04.1968

relations in general existed, considering the difference in socio-political systems. However, beyond the broad goals and benefits to the visit such as the exchange of information and improvement of bilateral relations, lay more specific goals and interests of the Japanese government and the prime minister. Good organization of the visit and great media coverage in Japan indicated the great interest of the Japanese government regarding this visit. The Japanese government had many interests to carry out during this visit as well, foremost to show an independent foreign policy. During the mandate of Prime Minister Sato, Japan initiated the pursuit of a more independent foreign policy from the U.S. After obtaining significant economic power in the international system, Japan was ready to take a step further to pursue political power as well. Maintaining and further developing good relations with Yugoslavia, which became an influential country in Eastern Europe and among Third World countries, showed that Japan was ready to handle Western and Eastern bloc countries equally by stepping out of her U.S.-protected shell.

Furthermore, Japan aimed at improving her image within Third World countries (especially in the South-East Asian region) in order to better pursue her role of a bridge between Asia and the West. Also, by improving relations with countries of the region, Japan would gain more power vis-à-vis the U.S. Since Yugoslavia was a leader of Third World nations, and had especially good relations with South East Asian countries, she could help improve the Japanese position in the region.

An additional advantage of the visit was on a domestic level. The government was hoping to gain support from opposition parties and non-governmental organizations (NGO), the Socialist Party of Japan (SPJ) and the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan (*Nihon rōdō kumiai sōhyō gikai* or SOHYO). Both the SPJ and SOHYO cooperated with their respective counterparts in Yugoslavia. Thus developing diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia at high levels of government provided greater support to the Japanese government within the SPJ and SOHYO.

This visit aligned with Tito's foreign policy goals as well. At the time, he was travelling around the world in pursuit of building friendly relations with as many countries as possible in order to strengthen his position within the non-aligned movement so as to strengthen the movement's position vis-à-vis the blocs.

## 6. Further Developments

Starting from the late 1960s, once Japan grew economically stronger, she started promoting friendly relations with all the countries of the world who shared similar perceptions and goals. That included socialist countries as well, since "they live in the same international society although their political, economic and social systems are different".<sup>33</sup> The goal of this policy was to "make it possible for Japan to have more options and to act more flexibly to promote her national interests."<sup>34</sup>

Japan created committees for improving trade relations with the communist countries of Eastern Europe. The first committee which was established was the Japanese-Soviet Economic Committee in 1965. Members of this committee were representatives from economic institutions and social organizations, which differed depending on the country with which Japan was dealing. Usually the committees were comprised of the Keidanren (the Federation of Economic Organizations), the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and various civil organizations. Committees with other Eastern European countries were established in 1971 (East Germany and Hungary) and in 1972 (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Poland and Yugoslavia).<sup>35</sup> The Yugoslav side welcomed this initiative very much, since it meant improving trade relations and possibly resolving the huge deficit in Yugoslav side, which was a characteristic of the bilateral trade since the beginning.

One more peculiarity of the bilateral relationship development was that the Japanese Crown Prince and Princess paid a visit to Yugoslavia in 1976. Yugoslavia was the first communist country to be visited by members of the Japanese Royal family. Only a few years later, in 1979, the Crown Prince and Princess visited Romania and Bulgaria.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Gaikō seisho [Diplomatic Bluebook] 1972, *Waga gaikō no kichō/ sho gaikoku to no kankei no zōshin* [The basics of our diplomacy/ Promotion of relations with foreign countries]. (Tokyo. Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Terada, 437-440.

<sup>36</sup> "List of Abroad Visits of the Royal Family (1953 - 1988)." The Imperial Household Agency.

## 7. Conclusion

This article examined documents stored in the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the present Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia (which inherited diplomatic materials after the collapse of Yugoslavia). A careful analysis of their content provides us with important conclusions relevant for the understanding of the nature of the bilateral relations between Japan and Yugoslavia. In addition, it also provides us with an insight into the Japanese foreign policy towards communist countries of Eastern Europe during the Cold War period.

First, this article described how smaller powers pursued their national interests within the Cold War structure based on the example of Japanese-Yugoslav relations. By analyzing bilateral relations of the two countries belonging to different blocs, this article showed that the division between the blocs was not strict and that the blocs were monolithic. Japan and Yugoslavia, although they belonged to opposite ideological and socio-political systems, developed and maintained bilateral relations. Furthermore, this article showed how the countries chose national interests over ideology and superimposed the pursuit of national interests over ideological beliefs. This article also demonstrated that relations with Yugoslavia were a part of a broader foreign policy for Japan and that they also served higher interests. It was a part of Japan's broader foreign policy to expand her diplomatic and trade relations to any country in order to boost her economic development and lessen her dependence on the U.S. market. Yugoslavia was a country with which Japan maintained trade relations even though there was no significant monetary benefit to it. The significance was in increasing her political profile and strengthening her position within the international system, which was the purpose for which Tito's visit to Japan was organized.

The initial development of their relations during the 1950s was slow, but this period paved the way for further deepened relations in the 1960s. The conclusion of the Trade and Maritime Agreement in 1959 proved to be less beneficial on the economic level but more on the political level since it boosted the development of their bilateral relations. Both Japan and Yugoslavia needed additional trading and political partners in order to pursue more balanced policies vis-à-vis the superpowers upon which they were dependent.

During the decade of the 1960s, bilateral relations between Japan and Yugoslavia flourished. This was possible due to the conditions on the international stage, the respective positions of both countries and their foreign policy goals at the time. Both Japan and Yugoslavia gained better positions in the world. Yugoslavia found her place as one of the leaders of the non-aligned movement and established herself as an influential country within it. This membership helped her to decrease pressures from the superpowers and to pursue a more independent foreign policy. Japan became an economic power, surpassing the countries of Western Europe and becoming the number three economic power in the world. Along with her economic power, Japan intensified her efforts for gaining political power as well. Under these circumstances, Japan and Yugoslavia expanded their cooperation and intensified official state visits which culminated with the visit of President Tito to Japan in 1968. He was the first communist president from Eastern Europe to visit Japan. This visit was an expression of mutual interest towards the development of bilateral relations.

Yugoslavia and Japan did not hold the same position vis-à-vis Eastern and Western blocs. However, both of them worked very hard to balance their respective positions within the Cold War structure in order to pursue their respective national interests. Tito's visit was a part of that balancing policy.

This article demonstrates how, against common knowledge, the political system of one country and her ideology does not prevent her from pursuing her interests to the best of her ability. Yugoslavia's socialist/communist ideology always drew her towards the Eastern bloc and the USSR, but rationality and awareness of the consequences were also strong. Japan, on the other hand, although a democracy belonging to the free world (the West), in order to develop her economy and improve her position within the South-East and East Asian Region, cooperated with socialist/communist countries as well. Along with the pursuit for economic power, Japan was working on gaining trust and support from countries of the region, thus was acquiring power little by little. Furthermore, once it attained economic power in the international arena, Japan started to pursue

political power more confidently. Reaching out to Yugoslavia aligned with this Japan's foreign policy goals.

As it shows, Japan was developing relations with Yugoslavia as a part of her foreign policy to find an alternative for the predominance of the U.S. in her diplomatic relations. Furthermore, nurturing this bilateral relationship in times when Yugoslavia obtained power and established itself in a leadership position within the NAM served Japan's interest to reach out to regional Third World countries. Moreover, having an ally which was influential in international relations (which Yugoslavia was in the 1960s and 1970s) helped Japan to balance between the influences of the superpowers.

Ultimately, diplomatic and trade relations with Yugoslavia were not among the Japanese foreign policy priorities. They were always a part of the general Japanese national interest and served some other purpose. That purpose was to develop relations with countries outside of the U.S. bloc, and Yugoslavia among them. Relations with Yugoslavia were always connected to relations with other Eastern European communist countries, since the Yugoslav ideology and, accordingly, her socio-political system, were placing her in that group. Therefore, relations with Yugoslavia were developing or stagnating depending on whether the East-West relations in general were on good or bad terms, and additionally, were influenced by the overall Japanese Eastern Europe foreign policy. But the peculiarity of Yugoslavia's slightly changed ideology and system created better conditions for cooperation and a good point of access to information about the Eastern bloc.

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