


Arsenal of the Global South: Yugoslavia's Military Aid to Nonaligned Countries and Liberation Movements

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Abstract

Yugoslavia's military internationalism was one of the most practical expressions of the country's policy of nonalignment. Beginning with Algeria in the 1950s until its demise in the 1990s, Yugoslavia was an ardent supporter of liberation movements and revolutionary governments in Africa and Asia. This article argues that Yugoslav military internationalism was at the heart of Yugoslavia's efforts to reshape the post-1945 global order and represented an extension of Yugoslav revolution abroad. Military aid was an expression of personal identification of Yugoslavia's "greatest generation" with decolonization struggle. However, Yugoslav military aid to other countries went beyond a single foreign policy issue. Yugoslav military internationalism touched upon many other issues that included problems related to finances, economic development, the acquisition and transfer of military technology, relations with the superpowers, national security, ideology and politics, and prestige and status in global affairs. By the end of the 1970s, with the departure of the World War II generation and the looming economic crisis, Yugoslav military involvement in the Global South became increasingly driven by economic reasons. Former Yugoslav republics, after a short hiatus in the 1990s during the wars for Yugoslavia's succession, are still present in the arms trade in the Global South.

Keywords: colonialism; Cold War; Yugoslavia; non-alignment

Allow me to deliver this gift that Tito sent you for the fourth anniversary of your revolution. It is a sculpture of a Yugoslav freedom fighter. It could be a symbol of an Ethiopian freedom fighter and any other fighter who, with the [red] star on his forehead, fights for freedom and socialism.¹

With these words in 1978, Vidoje Žarković, member of the Presidium of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), greeted Mariam Haile Mengistu, the Chairman of the Provisional Military Advisory Council (PMAC). This short speech—certainly not an example of rhetorical elegance—perfectly illustrated how Tito's Yugoslavia identified with the Mengistu regime and its struggle against internal and external enemies. The conflation of the Yugoslav and Ethiopian struggles for freedom and socialism also emphasized the revolutionary solidarity between non-aligned Yugoslavia and fellow progressive regimes and liberation movements around the globe. In that sense, Yugoslav aid to Mengistu was part of the broader Yugoslav military assistance efforts in the Global South that spanned the period from the 1950s until the dissolution of the Yugoslav state in 1991.

Yugoslavia's military internationalism in the Global South has been addressed only sporadically in previous research. These works also tend to describe Yugoslavia's anticolonialism and military engagements either as Belgrade's efforts to gain credibility ("the Yugoslav credit card to the Third World") or they focus on their consequences for altering the power dynamics of regional wars (Rubinstein 1970, 91; Čavoški 2010, 2). Some scholars called Yugoslavia's military aid "a lifeline" for

countries and movements in Africa and Asia (Westad 2017, 434), while others described Yugoslavia as a “relatively powerful, industrialized partner that could assist” its partners in the Global South (Byrne 2016, 204). This article builds upon these works, but also shows—through the analysis of this largely neglected aspect of Yugoslav internationalism—that Yugoslav arms transfers went beyond a single policy issue, simultaneously including questions about issues such as economic development, the acquisition and transfer of technology, relations with superpowers and regional powers, national security, ideology and politics, and prestige and status in global affairs. As one foreign policy analyst wrote, “Arms sales are foreign policy writ large” (Pierre 1982, 3). Yugoslav military involvement in the Global South provides a unique vantage point from which to observe Yugoslav global ambitions, their evolution, and their limits. This article contributes to the international literature on the Cold War by discussing the achievements and the limitations of small state activism in the context of the global conflict.

The article argues that until the end of the 1970s, Yugoslav military internationalism was at the heart of Yugoslavia’s efforts to reshape the post-1945 global order and represented an extension of the Yugoslav revolution abroad. Military aid was often an expression of personal identification of Yugoslavia’s “greatest generation” and their own struggle against foreign occupation and domestic “reactionary forces” during World War II with the anticolonial struggle. Yugoslav officials often invoked their World War II experiences in conversations and policy planning. Also, their partners in the Global South, out of conviction or flattery, identified themselves with the Yugoslav Partisans. Certain party officials interpreted Yugoslav support of anticolonialism not as a conscious (“subjective”) choice but, rather, as the core of Yugoslav revolutionary identity and historical experience (Iveković 1976, x). As Tito stated, “The policy of nonalignment is the expression of historical continuity of the Yugoslav revolution” (*Politika*, November 27, 1976). However, by the 1980s, the “greatest generation” was replaced with younger cadres with little or no memory of World War II. This generational shift signaled the increasing importance of economic factors over those that were personal and ideological. In the 1980s, military internationalism lost its political and ideological disposition and became an economic matter, with little resemblance to the programs of military aid in the 1950s. This article does not seek to provide an exhaustive account of every Yugoslav military aid program, nor a comprehensive study of the Yugoslav policy of non-alignment. Rather, its aim is to contribute to a better understanding of Yugoslav global ambitions and the limits of Yugoslavia’s global policies in the realm of military internationalism.

The article examines a number of overlapping external and internal factors that shaped Yugoslav engagement in programs of foreign military aid from the 1950s until the end of the Cold War. Moreover, it addresses how ideological and political, security, economic, and personal factors influenced Yugoslav military engagements in the Global South. The programs of foreign military aid were an expression of “a long-standing, constant foreign policy orientation of our country.”² However, the decision to provide aid or to make military sales developed as a combination of factors with various degree of importance. Yugoslav military aid was sometimes driven by pragmatic considerations related to the country’s security or economic benefits. But, sometimes, it was motivated by less tangible categories, such as ideology, psychological identification, or prestige. From the beginnings of Yugoslav military engagements in the 1950s, there were four discernible factors that influenced Belgrade’s military internationalism, and these factors worked together, overlapped, and mutually reinforced each other. Yet, their importance significantly varied at different times, depending on internal and external opportunities and constraints.

First, Yugoslav party and state leadership believed that non-aligned countries were both legally and morally obligated to help each other, although not through formal military alliances. In the Yugoslav interpretation of historical materialism, national-liberation struggles were an “objective and inevitable social process” that demanded “subjective forces” to act consciously to accelerate them (Oreščanin 1962, 433). Moreover, because of growing global interdependence, the process of national liberation (i.e., decolonization) was part of global revolution and “for this reason ... every movement striving for economic and political independence, acquires more or less international

significance and engages international forces” (Kardelj 1979, 9). Besides, various international documents—such as the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (UN General Assembly Resolution 1514), as well as resolutions and other documents of the Nonaligned Movement (NAM)—recognized the “increasingly powerful trends towards freedom” and that the “process of liberation is irresistible and irreversible,” thus providing political and legal rationale for internationalist solidarity. Finally, Yugoslav laws, including the 1963 and 1974 Constitutions, mandated international aid to the “peoples who conduct just struggle for their national independence and liberation from imperialism, colonialism and all other form of national oppression and submission” (*Službeni list SFRJ*, February 21, 1974).

Second, military aid served as an effective means for augmenting Yugoslavia’s and Tito’s prestige in the world that would facilitate Belgrade’s other foreign policy objectives. For that reason, Yugoslavia’s criteria for military assistance were flexible, and the Yugoslavs acknowledged the right to achieve socialism in accordance with each nation’s socio-historical conditions. Unlike other socialist countries, Yugoslavia did not require ideological compatibility from aid recipients, yet it generally opted for those fighting against foreign—particularly Western—rule (Rubinstein 1970, 91). Any government or liberation movement that was considered to be “progressive,” or whose struggle was considered, in the Marxist sense, “just,” was eligible for Yugoslav military assistance. This approach also validated Yugoslavia’s right to take its own road to socialism. “Ideological pluralism and the concomitant difference in the ways of building socialism cannot and must not be a hindrance to the fostering of a mutually beneficial cooperation and voluntary internationalist solidarity among the working classes,” wrote a chief Yugoslav ideologue (Grličkov 1979, 8). In return, this ideological inclusiveness made Yugoslav military aid desirable for Asian and African countries and liberation movements because it came “without any attached political conditions” (Milivojević 1990, 18).

Third, military aid—along with elevated prestige—was directly contributing to Yugoslavia’s independence and security. Solidarity with other non-aligned and neutral countries or liberation movements expanded the number of Yugoslav allies in multilateral bodies such as the UN or the NAM. Moreover, military assistance acted as a deterrent from foreign interventions and helped toward “the diffusion of defense capabilities” (Pierre 1982, 4). With a little help from non-aligned friends, successful resistance against foreign interventions would make future interventions against other non-aligned countries less likely. The purpose of Yugoslav military aid was to enhance the defense capabilities of fellow non-aligned countries and, through military cooperation, minimize the need for the superpowers’ involvement.

Finally, the economic considerations were present from the beginning of Yugoslavia’s military engagement in the Global South. Arms transfers allowed Yugoslavia to scrap obsolete weapons; at the same time, furnishing arms and military equipment also created markets for the Yugoslav military-industrial complex and advertised the achievements of Yugoslav industries abroad. The sales of military materials and the building of military infrastructure projects served to bring chronically needed foreign currency, but also to provide avenues for more expansive trade and economic cooperation between non-aligned states in order to overcome their economic dependence. In this sense, military trade was an important element in Yugoslav efforts to address global economic and developmental issues. However, economic factors came to the fore by the 1980s, when the importance of other factors faded away with the generational change, the end of decolonization, and the country’s increasing need for hard currency in order to service its foreign debt. In 1982, Yugoslavia’s inability to pay off its creditors brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy. Financial arrangements with the United States and other creditors via the International Monetary Fund imposed neoliberal policies that emphasized the strengthening of market forces, liberalization of trade, and the necessity of cutting costs (Adamović, Lempj, and Priket 1990, 140–152). As the consequence of this externally imposed “belt tightening,” governmental and mass organizations previously in charge of the programs of military aid had to trim their programs.

Yugoslavia used a number of government institutions and mass organizations in order to facilitate military internationalism. At the center of these efforts were the Federal Secretariat for Peoples' Defense (Savezni sekretarijat za narodnu odbranu – SSNO) and the Socialist Alliance of the Working People (Savez socijalističkog radnog naroda Jugoslavije – SSRNJ). The SSNO provided weapons, military education and training, and care for the wounded, while the companies associated with the Secretariat built military infrastructure objects (ports, airfields) abroad. Although military education as a form of aid will be mentioned only in passing, its practical and symbolic importance should be emphasized. Transfer of knowledge and training increased military readiness of the recipients but also served to emphasize the merits of Yugoslav military and political doctrines and to foster the sense of commonality between trainers and trainees. To facilitate arms imports and exports, in 1949 the Yugoslav government founded a company called Jugoimport. Initially, Jugoimport was an import company, but, with the development of Yugoslavia's military-industrial complex, in 1953 Jugoimport began exporting Yugoslav weapons. Jugoimport (which in 1974 was renamed the Federal Directorate for Supply and Procurement) was in charge of both arms exports and imports, but also building objects of military infrastructure.

Yugoslavia delivered military equipment and services both through donations and through commercial agreements with other non-aligned governments and national liberation movements. The Yugoslavs usually sent donations in the form of weapons, money, and other materials to liberation movements, while they made commercial export agreements with sovereign countries. However, depending on the political and strategic necessities, Yugoslavia sent military equipment in the form of gifts to Egypt in 1967 and in 1973, to Yemen in 1975, and to Ethiopia in 1977. However, Belgrade considered military sales to be a form of aid, too, particularly if the friendly governments “could not or were afraid to obtain weapons from great powers.”³

In its commercial and noncommercial ventures, Yugoslavia faced many difficulties. Yugoslav military equipment was often uncompetitive. The country's industrial-military complex depended on foreign licenses for more sophisticated weapons that were in short supply in terms of Yugoslavia's own defense needs. Despite the occasional alignment of Yugoslav and Soviet objectives in the Global South, Yugoslav global strategy was designed to prevent superpower interference, including that of the Kremlin. Yugoslav officials constantly complained about Soviet efforts to undermine Yugoslav prestige among the nations in the Global South. Moreover, the Soviets used the weapons licensing issue as an advantage in their relations with Yugoslavia. For deliveries of Yugoslav-made, but Soviet-licensed, weapons, Yugoslavia had to receive the Kremlin's prior approval, and the Soviets often slowed or stopped their technology transfer, depending on the vicissitudes in Yugoslav–Soviet relations and Soviet foreign policy objectives. In contrast, Western licenses were too expensive, and Western countries—particularly the United States—were reluctant to approve them out of fear that the Yugoslavs would leak them to the Soviets. Yet, regardless of these and other difficulties, Yugoslav military engagements from their start in the 1950s were the most visible articulation of Yugoslav global foreign policy and its priorities. In addition, Yugoslav military internationalism provides an opportunity to observe how Yugoslav engagement with the Global South evolved over time, shifting from Yugoslavia's quest for moral and political capital to search for financial profits.

Algeria and the Early Programs of Yugoslav Military Aid

A constellation of political, economic, and strategic factors after the Soviet–Yugoslav split in 1948 made foreign military aid possible. First, in the early 1950s, in order to break relative diplomatic isolation, Yugoslavia began to orient its foreign policy toward countries in Asia and Africa. This new foreign policy course created necessary political conditions for military programs abroad. Rapid development and modernization of the military-industrial complex and U.S. military and economic aid after 1948 satisfied the country's defense needs, but also created enough military surplus to be sent abroad. The danger of a Soviet invasion disappeared after the death of Stalin in March 1953.

Moreover, the territorial dispute with Italy over Trieste was temporarily resolved in 1954, thus removing the sense of insecurity on the north-western border. The disappearance of external threats provided the Yugoslavs with an opportunity to divert some of the military equipment previously required for their own protection to their new allies in the Global South.

In 1953/1954, Yugoslavia made first commercial arrangements with Third World countries. In 1953, upon Burmese request, Yugoslavia concluded an arms trade agreement with Rangoon that included artillery pieces, mortars, explosives, and ammunition (Čavoški 2010, 32–33). The same year, the Yugoslavs explored the possibilities of “military-technical cooperation” with Egypt. Yugoslavia offered to sell various military equipment to Egypt, which the Nasser government enthusiastically accepted. In July 1954, Yugoslavia sent the first shipment of infantry weapons, explosives, and ammunition to Egypt (Životić, 2007). These commercial arrangements with Burma and Egypt in the early 1950s inaugurated Yugoslavia’s presence on the Third World arms market.

However, Yugoslav aid to the Algerian Front of National Liberation (Front de libération nationale– FLN) in 1954–1962 established a blueprint for the future Yugoslav aid to liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Support for the Algerian struggle also increased Yugoslavia’s credibility in the Global South, establishing the image of Yugoslavia as a benefactor of African nations fighting for freedom from colonial oppression. As Jeffrey Byrne noted, Yugoslavia saw Algeria as its “bridge to Africa” (Byrne 2016, 6). Lessons from Algeria were important in terms of defining the scope and the quantities of the aid. Moreover, Yugoslav experience with the FLN also made the Yugoslavs become aware of the limits and challenges of their military internationalism.

Yugoslavia and the FLN established contacts shortly after the start of the Algerian war of independence in November 1954. The Algerians approached Yugoslavia for diplomatic support, but also for money and weapons. The Yugoslavs understood that their support to Algeria was crucial for the affirmation of the new Yugoslav foreign policy orientation and the country’s revolutionary credentials in Asia and Africa. After the July 1956 meeting in Brioni between Tito, Nasser, and Nehru, Yugoslavia committed its diplomatic resources to helping the Algerian cause.

Initial Yugoslav support was chiefly diplomatic, in order to avoid direct confrontation with France (Rubinstein 1970, 86). The Yugoslavs reminded the Algerians that Belgrade’s recognition of the German Democratic Republic in 1957 led to the disruption of diplomatic relations with Bonn, and that they could not afford to repeat the same in the case of Algeria and France. Moreover, Tito was concerned that premature recognition would destroy the “European equilibrium” and diminish France’s ability to keep West Germany in check (Dimić 2014, 279). However, Yugoslavia supported the Algerian struggle at the UN, and also tried to influence Guy Mollet’s cabinet (1956–1957) to grant Algeria independence (Milošević 2013, 18). Yet, Yugoslavia’s reluctance to officially recognize the Algerian Provisional Government (Gouvernement provisoire de la République Algérienne – GPRA) made the Algerians suspicious about Yugoslav willingness to confront France and threatened to diminish Yugoslavia’s “political capital” in Algeria (Milošević 2013, 17). In June 1959, a high-ranking delegation of the Provisional Government visited Belgrade. Led by the President of the GPRA, Ferhat Abbas, the delegation requested money and weapons, but also asked for official recognition from Yugoslavia. Although the Yugoslavs accepted the request to send money and weapons, they rejected the formal recognition of the GPRA, as “[i]t would weaken our position ... and formal recognition wouldn’t be neither in our, or in their [Algerian] interest,” a Yugoslav official said (Arhiv Jugoslavije 2014, 11). The Yugoslavs, however, sustained the FLN’s war efforts by accepting hundreds of wounded guerillas in Yugoslav hospitals and rehabilitation centers (Rubinstein 1970, 88). In addition, the Yugoslav Red Cross opened a field hospital in Tunisia for the same purpose. Internal reports underlined the political importance of this aid and its military significance for the FLN. However, Algeria did give Yugoslavia an opportunity to gain recognition in the Global South. Yugoslavia transferred large quantities of light infantry weapons, and some of them—such as a Yugoslav replica of the German *Machinengewehr 42*—were so effective and popular among the Algerians that they were nicknamed “the kings of mujahedeen war” (Pečar 1966, 113). Additional deliveries of heavier weapons were arranged at the meeting between Tito and the

GPRA on Tito's yacht, *Galeb*, in April 1961. In an obvious effort to boost his credentials before the first summit of the NAM in Belgrade, Tito promised to send various heavy weaponry to Algeria. Moreover, the GPRA contacts with the Soviet Union and China threatened to increase their ideological influence and steer Algeria away from non-alignment (Milošević 2013, 131). These factors led to the increase in Yugoslavia's military aid and soon after the meeting on the *Galeb*, the Algerians received 12 mountain guns (so-called the Tito guns) and 12 anti-aircraft guns with thousands of pieces of ammunition. Moreover, the Yugoslavs also sent dozens of trucks and all-terrain vehicles made in factories in Maribor and Kragujevac (Pečar 1967, 599).

The Algerian episode revealed another aspect of Yugoslav military internationalism: a deep emotional identification on the part of Yugoslav leadership with liberation movements and revolutionary governments. As one author noted: "Through the FLN, the Yugoslav leaders vicariously recaptured their finest hours" (Rubinstein 1970, 87). In 1959, during the talks with the Algerian delegation, a Yugoslav functionary and a Spanish civil war veteran, Veljko Vlahović, compared Algerian efforts for international recognition with the Yugoslav People's Liberation Movement in 1943. Tito returned to this theme in a 1964 interview for *Borba*, stating that the Yugoslav peoples sympathized with the Algerian liberation struggle because they—in their recent past—had to go through an equivalent ordeal in their fight for national liberation and independence. This identification between the two liberation struggles acquired an almost mystical dimension in a letter that the Algerian Prime Minister, Ahmed Ben Bella, sent to Tito in 1963, stating that "Yugoslavia re-lived its recent past through our liberation war" (Arhiv Jugoslavije 2014, 31). Moreover, an Algerian commander told a Yugoslav journalist that "for mujahedeem—Algerian partisans—Tito was an illustrious example of a fighter and a warrior" (Pečar 1966, 109). Even the lower echelons of the Yugoslav government and observers of the Algerian War perceived and interpreted the war through the lens of their own partisan World War II experience. A journalist and a future diplomat, Zdravko Pečar, who chronicled the Algerian struggle for independence, described the quantities of Yugoslav military aid through images of the Yugoslav partisan struggle (Pečar 1967, 599). Yugoslavs, even those without direct experience related to World War II, unmistakably recognized the similarity between the Yugoslav liberation struggle in World War II and the decolonization wars. A Yugoslav nurse who went in 1959 to the Moroccan port of Tangier as an escort to Algerian patients wrote that the Algerian liberation struggle provided her with the opportunity to reenact the World War II struggle that she missed because of her young age. "As a young girl I did not understand the course and development of our liberation struggle, but I read about suffering, difficulties, about heroism and self-sacrifice, and our soldiers' endeavors, and I was able to identify with them," she wrote. Meeting with the FLN guerrillas, the nurse said, "made my imagination about our struggle come to life.... I admired those people who, like we did, stood up against colonialism, in the name of freedom."⁴ These and similar tropes persisted in Yugoslav descriptions of liberation movements beyond Algeria when Yugoslav aid was extended to others.

However, the involvement in Algeria revealed some limitations of Yugoslav military internationalism. Tito said that certain powers had put Yugoslavia in an "awkward position" because of the country's "principled policy" toward Algeria (Broz 1960, 73). If aid to the FLN provided political and moral credibility in the Global South, French hostility—which resulted in the recall of the Yugoslav Ambassador in 1962—made the Yugoslavs aware of the negative diplomatic consequences of their military internationalism. Furthermore, Algeria revealed the logistical and material limits of Yugoslav military engagement. The French navy was constantly intercepting and harassing Yugoslav ships with weapons for the FLN (Milošević 2013, 25). Pečar recorded 50 of these intercepts. Additionally, the Algerian plea for hard currency that would allow them to buy food and weapons could not be fulfilled because of Yugoslavia's "current situation and ... the fact that we ourselves are looking for loans everywhere" (Arhiv Jugoslavije 2014, 11). Similar political, logistical, and financial issues would follow Yugoslavia's military internationalism until the end of the Cold War.

Yet, the benefits of military internationalism were too significant to be passed up. In addition to Algeria, Yugoslavia enlarged its moral and political capital in Africa and Asia by participating in the UN peacekeeping missions in the Sinai Peninsula (1956–1967) and Yemen (1963–1964). Yugoslav participation in the missions enhanced the country's own security and underscored Yugoslavia's dedication to the UN, but also increased Yugoslavia's credibility in the Global South (Rubinstein 1970, 138; Životić 2011, 79). In addition to these UN-sponsored missions, Yugoslavia continued its support for recently decolonized countries and movements fighting foreign domination. Yugoslavia sent symbolic amounts of money to a number of liberation movements in sub-Saharan Africa and, in 1966, a small cache of weapons to the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde – PAIGC).⁵ In 1967, during the Six Day War, Yugoslavia with the USSR and other Eastern European countries sent military aid to Egypt and Syria. Yugoslavia also opened its airspace for Soviet airplanes that were delivering aid to the Arabs. In the aftermath of the war, Yugoslavia offered to donate and sell under favorable conditions weapons to Egypt and Syria to offset losses that these states suffered during the war. As an expression of general solidarity with the Arabs, the Yugoslav government called its citizens to collect and donate food, clothing, and medical material for the victims of the Israeli aggression. On June 17, 1967, the Federal Executive Council announced the aid package that included 30,000 tons of corn, 10,000 tons of sugar, and various other foodstuffs. Moreover, on August 9, 1967, at the meeting between Tito and the members of the Yugoslav People's Army, it was decided to send military equipment from the Yugoslav stocks to Egypt and Syria free of charge.⁶ After Tito's visit to Cairo in August 1967, Yugoslavia also offered favorable loans for the purchases of Yugoslav military equipment that included anti-aircraft guns, armored vehicles, rocket launchers, ammunition, and explosives (Bogetić and Životić 2010). In 1973, during the October War, Yugoslavia sent another package of aid that included anti-tank rockets and 120 T-55 tanks that were taken out from the regular units of the Yugoslav Army.⁷

Egypt's humiliating defeat in June 1967, the escalation of U.S. intervention in Vietnam, and the Soviet-led intervention in Czechoslovakia convinced the Yugoslavs that military internationalist solidarity was as necessary as ever. These events had demonstrated the inadequacy of the reliance on superpowers and the importance of solidarity among non-aligned countries and movements. Moreover, the Biafran War (1967–1970) provided yet another example of the harmful influence of great power politics on internal affairs of small states. The introduction of the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine presented an existential threat to the regime in Belgrade. Superpowers' interventions further emphasized the need for strengthening political and military networks between non-aligned governments and revolutionary movements that would serve to discourage imperialist interventions. These global events led to the proliferation of Yugoslavia's military aid in the last decade of Tito's life.

Expansion and Decline of Yugoslav Military Aid in the 1970s

The quantity and scope of Yugoslav aid proliferated in the 1970s. Various movements and governments, from Cambodia to the Cape of Good Hope, received Yugoslav financial and military assistance during that time. In many ways, Yugoslavia participated in a global phenomenon of increasing arms transfers to the developing world in the 1970s. By the end of the 1970s, the countries in the Global South accounted for over three-quarters of the world's total arms purchases (Pierre 1982, 13). Yet, Yugoslavia had four particular reasons for increasing its military engagements with the Global South. First, Nasser's defeat demonstrated the need for more expansive military cooperation between non-aligned states. Second, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 led Yugoslavia to diversify its foreign policy and to strengthen its political position in global affairs. Third, with the rising détente and stabilization in Europe, the Yugoslavs assumed that the United States and the USSR would focus on the Global South, thus making Yugoslav engagement there a matter of urgency. Finally, as the Portuguese colonies sought independence, Yugoslavia saw an

opportunity to expand its influence in sub-Saharan Africa, with little political risk of colliding with the big powers.

In order to facilitate better distribution of this aid, in 1969—under the umbrella of the SSRNJ—the Yugoslavs established two bodies, (1) the Fund for Aid to Victims of Aggression and Colonial Domination and (2) the Coordination Committee for Aid to the People of Vietnam-Indochina, both of which served to collect and distribute aid. Yugoslav criteria for the forms and quantity of military aid were based on several factors. Those factors included the role and the importance of liberation movements, ideological and political orientation (how “progressive” they were), their dedication to non-alignment, how independent they were from “foreign factors,” and the level of bilateral relations with Yugoslav institutions and organizations. Although Yugoslavia maintained political ties with the Liberation Committee of the Organization of African Unity, as one of few non-African states to support it, Belgrade preferred bilateral relations with individual liberation movements. The Committee of the OAU received only symbolic aid (chiefly in money) because the SSRNJ was concerned about the Committee being susceptible to various influences and its inefficiency.⁸

In the early 1970s, the majority of Yugoslav military aid went to the movements fighting Portuguese colonialism. The largest recipient of this aid was the MPLA, followed by the PAIGC and FRELIMO (Lazić 2019). Belgrade considered Angola one of the strategically most important countries in Africa. Furthermore, the Yugoslavs believed that the MPLA’s struggle in many ways resembled the struggle of the Yugoslav Partisans during World War II: just like Tito’s Partisans, the MPLA was simultaneously fighting foreign oppressors and domestic “reaction.” Even some foreign observers made this analogy between the Yugoslav liberation struggle and the Angolan decolonization war. British journalist Basil Davidson, who spent some time with the Yugoslav Partisans during World War II, wrote that the MPLA assumed the same tactics like the Yugoslav Partisans, while their chief competitor, the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola – FNLA), “revealed a striking parallel with other ‘Holdenites’ [after the FNLA’s leader Roberto Holden], of the Second World War, notably the Serbian monarchists of occupied Yugoslavia” (Davidson 1972, 222). As one of the leaders of the MPLA stated, “Our liberation movement is in many respects similar to your peoples’ liberation movement, and that was certainly one of the reasons why we found friends in the Yugoslav people and its leaders” (*NIN*, September 21, 1975).

Since 1961, Yugoslavia was supporting the movement. Yet, before 1968, Yugoslav aid to the MPLA was chiefly symbolic.⁹ The quantity and quality of aid significantly increased from 1968. Until Angolan independence in November 1975, Yugoslavia donated money, weapons, and military materials to the MPLA that were worth U.S. \$2 million.¹⁰ MPLA officials—including the movement’s leader and the first president of independent Angola, Agostinho Neto—often visited Yugoslavia to request money and weapons (*Borba*, February 22, 1973). Another aspect of aid that was particularly important for the Angolans was military training in Yugoslav military schools. The MPLA believed that the Yugoslavs, with their unique guerrilla experience in World War II, were able to provide a necessary training for their military cadres. In 1970, a high-ranking functionary of the MPLA and the future Angolan defense minister, Henrique (Iko) Teles Carreira, went on a three-week-long visit to Yugoslavia to learn about Yugoslav partisan experiences that “could be useful to them and applied to their situation.”¹¹ In August 1971, six Angolans arrived for a four-month-long training in the Yugoslav People’s Army Infantry School in Sarajevo to learn about guerilla and diversionary tactics, and about Partisan experiences in organizing supply lines behind the frontline.¹²

Yugoslavia furnished the MPLA with light infantry weapons, vehicles, artillery, and anti-aircraft weapons, but also communication equipment (Čavoški 2019). Moreover, Yugoslavia also sponsored the MPLA’s information bureau in Belgrade that served as an informal embassy and provided a number of scholarships and stipends for MPLA cadres. Yugoslav aid came at a critical moment for the MPLA, and according to some Angolan officials, it played an important role in sustaining the movement’s fighting capabilities (Gleijeses 2003, 348–349). Yugoslavia showed its dedication to Neto by supporting the MPLA even when other countries—including the USSR—suspended their

aid in 1974 due to the so-called “Eastern Revolt” led by a faction within the movement (Sellstrom 1999, 17). An Angolan official said that, “Until August 1975, the country that helped the MPLA the most was Yugoslavia” (Gleijeses 2003, 349). The delegation of the MPLA that visited Yugoslavia in September 1975 said that Yugoslav aid in the critical months of 1975 served as an example to “some other friends [Cuba and the USSR] of the MPLA who, after that, became more engaged.”¹³ However, despite repeated request for additional aid, the Yugoslav coffers were empty.

Yugoslavia’s inability to continue with its support to the MPLA, provided Cuba with an opportunity to assume Yugoslavia’s place in Angola. The 1975 Cuban intervention in Angola dislodged the Yugoslavs and disrupted one of the most expansive military solidarity efforts. In June 1976, a correspondent of the Yugoslav news agency reported from Luanda that “hardly anyone [here] talks about Yugoslavia anymore.”¹⁴ A year later, the CIA reported that Yugoslavia’s presence in Angola was limited to some economic aid that the Yugoslavs sent to Luanda.¹⁵ The Cuban challenge set up another obstacle for Yugoslav military internationalism. Since the Algerian War, Yugoslav military assistance was a diplomatically and politically sensitive issue in Yugoslavia’s relations with the larger powers. The U.S. was annoyed by Yugoslav anti-imperialist rhetoric, and U.S. diplomats kept reminding the Yugoslav government that it could not expect further U.S. support if it continued attacking the U.S. and its allies. The Yugoslavs were aware of the risk, and although their anti-American rhetoric continued unabated, they kept military aid a clandestine affair “in order to avoid negative implications on credit and financial relations with the USA.”¹⁶

Moreover, “limited economic-technical capabilities of Yugoslavia’s military industries” led to Yugoslavia’s relative dependence on Soviet military technology (Milivojević 1990, 24–25). Faced with the Soviet threat after the 1948 Yugoslav–Soviet split, Yugoslavia relied on Western military aid for its defense. Although in the 1950s Yugoslav military industries were able to produce less advanced and largely outdated infantry and artillery pieces, for sophisticated weapons such as jets, missiles, and tanks Yugoslavia was dependent on Western deliveries. In the 1950s, as Ivan Laković and Dmitar Tasić noted, “The Western military assistance program was the only source of strategic modernization of the Yugoslav armed forces” (2016, 157). The end of Western military aid in the late 1950s and normalization of Yugoslav–Soviet relations led to Yugoslavia’s increasing reliance of the Soviet military technology but also efforts to build its own jets using foreign components (Jandrić 2013). However, the majority of sophisticated weapons and equipment that included jets, electronically guided missiles, tanks, and radars came from the Soviet Union in the 1960s because, as Tito admitted to Egyptian president Anwar el-Sadat, these were cheaper than Western equipment.¹⁷ In the late 1970s, in an attempt to diversify its supply of technologically advanced weapons such as guided anti-tank missiles, torpedoes, and communication equipment, Yugoslavia reached out to the United States. The Carter administration was willing to expand military cooperation with Yugoslavia but with “emphasis on political impact,” that is, to establish connections with the Yugoslav military that was, in Washington’s view, crucial for securing Yugoslavia’s cohesion and independence after Tito.¹⁸ Nonetheless, Western military equipment remained prohibitively expensive. This led to the continuous reliance on the Soviet military technology that was cheaper. Besides, the Soviets were less reluctant to transfer their most modern technology. Although the Soviets provided licensing for their tank T-72 (for U.S. \$38 million), they did not approve a Yugoslav request for more advanced technology, such as producing MIG-21 fighters, explaining that the production process was “too complex” for the Yugoslavs.¹⁹ Moreover, every shipment of weapons produced under Soviet licenses required prior approval from the Kremlin. Therefore, the structure of Yugoslav military production and technological dependence somewhat dictated its policy making because Moscow approved weapons deliveries only to “friendly nations.”

Yugoslavia’s technological dependence was not the only obstacle for its expansive programs of military aid. Yugoslavia’s chronic shortage of hard currency stymied many of its foreign policy initiatives. Political decisions to expand the programs of foreign aid in the late 1960s and early 1970s often did not have adequate financial backing. The Fund and the Committee did not have a permanent source of financial support. Leftover money collected in solidarity with the Arabs in

1967, which the SSRNJ redirected to military assistance programs, had run out already in 1971. Commitments for 1972 could not be fulfilled, and the SSRNJ complained that this hindrance threatened to jeopardize the entire Yugoslav strategy in the Global South. “Still unresolved issue of the continuous financing ... gradually is growing into a large political problem for Yugoslav foreign policy ... certain [L]iberation[M]ovements are suspicions about Yugoslavia’s sincerity,” a report stated.²⁰ Only at the urging of the SSRNJ and the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs did the Federal Executive Council eventually approve additional funds by means of “dipping” into its foreign-exchange reserves.²¹ Similar problems occurred just three years later. In 1975, Yugoslavia increased the quantity of aid, but the federal government did not have enough money to reallocate funds to the SSRNJ, which caused delays in delivering the aid.²²

Another domestic problem was caused by the unwillingness of the Yugoslav merchant marine and the ports in the Adriatic Sea to provide ships for transport or to load the equipment. In 1974, the SSNO urged the Socialist Alliance to obtain a written permission from the Federal Secretariat of Interior that would grant the Port of Rijeka the right to load dangerous materials. Without that permission, the port refused to load weapons intended for the PAIGC.²³ This and other examples showed that economic subjects had considerable autonomy from the Federal government. The U.S. Consulate in Zagreb reported about the “energetic, non-political management” of the Port of Koper and its refusal to toe the Party line. During the 1967 June War, on orders from the local trade union and Party officials, dock workers refused to unload ships with Israeli citrus fruit. The port management threatened to cut wages and even fire dock workers if the contract with the Israelis was cancelled. “Since then Israeli citrus fruit cargoes continue to be handled by the port without difficulty,” a report noted.²⁴ Displaying a similar degree of autonomy, the Yugoslav merchant marine, for economic reasons, avoided arms shipments or waited until they could find additional merchandise that would make their voyage profitable. Because of this practice, military aid for the PAIGC was several months late, and arrived only after Guinea-Bissau had already declared independence in September 1974. The Yugoslav Red Cross grumbled about how medications that had been donated to the Liberation Committee of the OAU and the PAIGC were waiting in Rijeka and likely to expire because Yugoslav shipping companies did not have a direct line to Conakry, and did not want to sail there. The attempts to lease a long-range airplane from Yugoslav civil aviation companies to transport ammunition to Angola and Mozambique also failed because the civil aviation could not provide a plane without breaking international aviation laws that prohibited the use of civilian airplanes for military purposes.²⁵ Yugoslav companies who conducted business in Africa sometimes dictated the distribution of aid. After the 1970 Portuguese attack on Guinea, Yugoslavia promised to send medical aid to Conakry. When the airplane with aid arrived, Yugoslav embassy staff found out, to their great embarrassment, that their government, instead of the promised 500 kg, sent only 183 kg of antibiotics.²⁶ The quantity of aid was downsized in order to make more room for goods for a duty free shop in Conakry that was run by Yugoslav companies.

The Yugoslavs admitted that, by the middle of the 1970s, China and the Soviet Union (and also North Korea and Romania) had outmatched them in military donations to liberation movements. Moreover, Swedish and other Western European social-democratic parties sent considerable nonmilitary aid to these movements that further threatened Yugoslavia’s status in Africa (Sellstrom 1999, 424). “Today [1974], with an exception of aid that we deliver to the MPLA of Angola, we are far behind these countries,” a report noted.²⁷ In this unfavorable atmosphere of increasing competition with the other communist countries in the Global South, Yugoslavia focused on Ethiopia, where the revolution of 1974 temporarily disrupted Addis Ababa’s connections with the superpowers.

Although President Tito cultivated a cordial relationship with Haile Selassie, Belgrade quickly embraced the PMAC. Belgrade realized that the revolution presented the Yugoslavs with the opportunity to extend their influence in Ethiopia before other countries swooped in—particularly the USSR, the U.S., China, and their proxies. The new regime had to fight on several fronts: against counter-revolution forces, against separatist groups in Eritrea, and against Somali insurgents in

Ogaden. For the besieged PMAC, foreign military aid “was an urgent matter of survival,” but until the spring of 1977, the Kremlin had been unwilling to support the PMAC (Yordanov 2016, 119–120). Therefore, Yugoslav assistance was crucial for the stabilization of the new regime. As Tito’s own domino theory stated: If Ethiopia falls, the entirety of Africa will follow.²⁸

In a conversation with the Yugoslav Ambassador Aleksandar Vojinović, Ethiopian Defense Minister Ayalew Mandefro expressed his desire to ease Ethiopian dependence on U.S. weapons by arranging Yugoslav military deliveries and building military-industrial capacities with Yugoslav assistance. Mandefro said that the Ethiopians did not want to bind themselves to China or the Warsaw Pact, and that is why they selected Yugoslavia “as a sincere and ideologically the most suitable friend.”²⁹ Belgrade was also aware that the Ethiopians were equipped with U.S. weapons, and that their replacement with arms from the USSR or China would be impractical and politically dangerous because it would require larger involvement of Soviet and Chinese trainers, which could then lead to their political domination. In order to sustain the new government, from 1974 until 1976, Yugoslavia sent various economic, humanitarian, and military aid worth U.S. \$5 million.³⁰

During his visit to Ethiopia in January 1977, Yugoslav Foreign Secretary Miloš Minić promised the expansion of military cooperation, “all to the extent that you [Ethiopians] feel comfortable with.”³¹ And in February 1977, the Vice President of the PMAC returned the visit. He arranged a generous arms deal with the Yugoslav Secretariat of Defense. The Secretariat provided a low-interest loan of U.S. \$2 million for the purchase of Yugoslav military equipment and furnished 22,500 Yugoslav-made bolt-action rifles with over 7 million pieces of ammunition. However, the most important part of the agreement had been the Yugoslav promise to deliver 145 U.S. M-47 Patton tanks. Furthermore, the SSNO pledged to send Yugoslav military instructors to Ethiopia. Although these weapons were mostly outdated, they complemented the existing Ethiopian weapons systems quite well.

Just days after the meeting in Belgrade, Mengistu’s faction staged a coup against their opponents in the Derg. A major shootout in the former royal palace eliminated a majority of Mengistu’s opponents. The coup of February 1977 led Yugoslavia to believe that their aid to the Mengistu regime was more important than ever because “the latest events objectively weakened Ethiopia’s international position.”³² Ambassador Vojinović in particular advocated strongly for Yugoslav involvement, and he urged his superiors in Belgrade to accelerate shipments and to increase the quantity of military aid being sent to Ethiopia. “Any reluctance to deliver the equipment could be interpreted in a wrong way,” Vojinović warned.³³

The largest impediment to the Yugoslav aid program to Ethiopia, however, was imposed by Washington. The United States claimed that the tanks had been unlawfully sent to Ethiopia and that Yugoslavia, by delivering them to Mengistu, had breached the 1951 Mutual Defense Aid Program (MDAP), under the provisions of which Yugoslavia had received weapons from the United States in the 1950s. Under the provisions of the MDAP, Yugoslavia was not allowed to transfer American weapons to third parties. National Security Council deputy, David Aaron, told the Yugoslav Ambassador in Washington, Dimče Belovski, that the Yugoslav delivery of U.S. tanks had “perturbed the administration, but also Carter [personally].” Aaron continued: “The main problem here is ... uncertainty if the Yugoslav deliveries had been made with Soviet knowledge and in collaboration with them.”³⁴ Secretary Minić tried to minimize the damage and said to the U.S. ambassador Lawrence Eagleburger that some officials in Belgrade applied the MDAP too “liberally.” “We [should] not allow a bunch of old iron fit only for a military museum to spoil our relations,” Minić said to Eagleburger.³⁵

Despite American protests, Vojinović urged his superiors to send the remaining tanks. Moreover, Vojinović noted how, during the Ogaden War, Mengistu—“with great bitterness”—had complained about Soviet attempts to “pay their debt to Somalia” with Ethiopian territories. “And because of that situation and their disappointment with big powers, we believe that we should give them total assistance ... because that is, in our opinion, our debt toward one honest, although pretty radical and rigid revolution,” Vojinović concluded.³⁶ However, despite Vojinović’s and

Mengistu's pleas, the tanks from Yugoslavia never arrived. Scolded by the State Department, Belgrade had to abort the operation.

Washington's pressure on Belgrade to stop the transfers to Mengistu and to increase Ethiopian reliance on the Soviet aid had left Yugoslavia without its most powerful foreign policy tool in the Horn of Africa. Similar to Angola two years earlier, Yugoslavia's influence in Ethiopia was rapidly waning under Soviet pressure. "Ethiopia's ever-increasing dependence on the Soviets is a limiting factor in our bilateral relations ... and as a consequence of Soviet arms' deliveries, Ethiopian interest in developing military cooperation and collaboration with our security organs has diminished," a Yugoslav report stated.³⁷

Soviet presence went directly against Yugoslav interests in the Horn, first and foremost because Yugoslavia was always uneasy when the Kremlin interfered in the affairs of non-aligned countries—a situation that threatened to create a dangerous precedent for Soviet meddling in Yugoslavia. "If you wish to export revolution, then counterrevolution can be exported, too ... the Americans will find their own Cuba," said Yugoslavian Secretary Minić to Guyana's foreign minister. "We have to resist Sovietization of the Non-Aligned Movement," Minić concluded.³⁸ Also, with the Kremlin now present in the Horn, Belgrade was anxious about Castro's influence in the region as well, particularly in the context of the Tito–Castro competition for primacy in the NAM. Castro's recklessness and revolutionary zeal threatened to render obsolete Yugoslavia's more flexible, less dogmatic approach to non-alignment, and to subsequently divide the NAM. Together with Angola several years earlier, Ethiopia was a testing ground for these two concepts of non-alignment that would ultimately come to a final showdown during the 6th Conference of the NAM in Havana in 1979, just months before Tito's death.

From Solidarity to Markets: Yugoslav Military Internationalism in the 1980s

Economic interests became an ever-present feature of Yugoslav military internationalism. One of the first Yugoslav military dealings with the Global South included a commercial agreement with Burma in late 1953 to sell Yugoslav guns to the Burmese Army (Čavoški 2010, 32–33). Selling weapons to fellow non-aligned or neutral countries did not contradict Yugoslav objectives, nor was it morally problematic, because the Yugoslavs perceived it to be a form of aid that would increase the defense capabilities of other non-aligned countries and decrease their dependence on superpowers for military-technical assistance, as the cases of Yugoslavia's military sales to Egypt demonstrated. Moreover, the Yugoslavs hoped to translate their donations to liberation movements serving as instruments for elevating political and moral credibility in the Global South into commercial agreements once these countries gained independence.

However, by the end of 1970s, Yugoslavia's military internationalism gradually lost its ideological and political attributes and became almost exclusively economic in nature. Several factors contributed to this shift. First, with the process of decolonization ending, Yugoslavia had few liberation movements left to furnish with weapons. In the 1980s, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the Front Polisario, and the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) of Namibia received some monetary and material support. However, assistance to these organizations never reached the level of support that other liberation movements had received in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, a generational change and Tito's departure in 1980 meant that Yugoslavia's presence in the Global South lost its vigor and its charismatic figure who had enjoyed so much respect. A former Yugoslav ambassador in Algeria noted that a "generational shift" occurred in the early 1980s: "The war generation, former fighters, as they would say good diplomats ... we were supposed to give space to younger [cadres]" (Zorić 2011, 545).

Although the new generation of Yugoslav diplomats continued to pay lip service to non-alignment, due to the economic crisis and personnel problems, Yugoslavia had to significantly reduce its diplomatic presence in Africa, particularly below the Equator.³⁹ Moreover, between 1982 and 1985, none of the members of the Presidium of the SFRY, the Executive Council, or the Foreign

Secretary had even visited Sub-Saharan Africa. The economic recession triggered by the second oil crisis in 1979, as well as Yugoslavia's inability to service foreign debt, forced the country to assume a more market-oriented approach toward its partners in the Global South. Yugoslavia shifted from donations to commercial agreements, but also from insolvent partners to oil-rich countries that were able to provide money for purchases. In the late 1970s, Yugoslavia donated certain small quantities of military equipment to Tanzania, the Cape Verde, and Zimbabwe; however, by the beginning of the 1980s, this practice had ceased.

After the 1979 Soviet invasion of non-aligned Afghanistan, and with Tito effectively disabled, the Yugoslavs learned that the policy of international solidarity yielded very little in terms of security and political support. Moreover, Cuban revolutionary activism made Yugoslavia's more cautious attitude look less attractive in comparison. In the joint emergency meeting of the Presidencies of the SFRY and the League of Communists just days after the Soviet invasion of Kabul, the Yugoslav collective leadership painted a gloomy picture of Yugoslavia's position in Africa: "The most striking point is that almost the entire black Africa is silent [on the issue of Afghanistan] ... if we make a list of the countries where the Cubans are present ... and where the Soviet Union is present ... that list is very long. The situation is very difficult."⁴⁰ Although a majority of non-aligned African and Asian states condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Yugoslavia's "traditional" allies, such as Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique, supported the intervention. Fearing for its own security, Yugoslavia realized that its military aid yielded little in return.

Although the Yugoslavs still paid lip service to international solidarity, in the words of a Yugoslav official: "By this time [the 1980s], 'love' has faded" (Matović 2003, 356). The idealism of the Yugoslav greatest generation was replaced with pragmatism of the new generation of Yugoslav officials who were in awe of the luxurious lifestyle and business acumen of shady figures from international arms trade. Brigadier General Jovan Matović wrote with admiration about a Saudi-born weapons dealer Adnan Khashoggi who pampered members of the Yugoslav military-industrial complex in his residences in Monte Carlo, Baden Baden, and Marbella. According to Matović, Khashoggi offered to purchase the entire Yugoslav debt to the USSR and, in return, to receive exclusive rights to sell Soviet-licensed weapons without previous Soviet approval. Among other things, he wanted to buy Tito's resort on the island of Brioni and build a casino there. After the meetings with Khashoggi and his associates, aware of the infinite possibilities, Matović concluded: "We showed up late on the weapons market" (Matović 2003, 356). As one analyst noted, the Federal Defense Secretary was not "politically concerned about who he does business with" (Milivojević 1990, 22). This departure from ideologically driven military internationalism was clearly visible in the case of the Yugoslav arms sales to Honduras. Unlike other European socialist countries and fellow non-aligned countries who supported Nicaragua, Yugoslavia, instead, supplied neighboring Honduras, a country instrumental in the U.S. war against the Sandinistas (Milivojević 1990, 22). Although the Yugoslav government denied any association with the counterrevolutionaries in Nicaragua, the official Cuban news agency, *Prensa Latina*, reported that the Sandinistas captured thousands rounds of ammunitions and grenades made in Yugoslavia.⁴¹

From 1960 to 1972, Yugoslavia established commercial military relations with 16 Asian and African countries, with more than 40 percent of its sales going to Indonesia.⁴² In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Yugoslavia military exports to Indonesia that included infantry weapons, torpedoes, and artillery pieces reached U.S. \$180 million, thus making Yugoslavia the second largest supplier of the Indonesian army after the Soviet Union (Čavoški 2013). In the first half of the 1980s, when Yugoslav military exports reached their peak, this list included 42 countries in the Global South that had purchased Yugoslav military equipment (Matović 2003, 42–43). In the early 1980s, Yugoslav military sales were concentrated in just a few countries. Indonesia was among the largest buyers of Yugoslav armaments and services, followed by Iraq and Libya (Milivojević 1990, 20). Apparently, Yugoslavia focused its military trade in oil-exporting countries who were able to pay for their purchases. However, Yugoslav attempts to monetize its good reputation with former liberation movements it had supported never actually came to fruition. The Yugoslavs blamed the global

economic crisis and the lack of creditworthiness of African countries, but also Yugoslavia's inability to provide credits for purchases. "The majority of these countries are not in position to satisfy their financial obligations, nor they are able to provide the most essential needs for their respective populations," a report stated, concluding that these factors contributed to the abysmal levels of military cooperation with these countries.⁴³

The 1986 oil price slump led to a sharp decline of Yugoslav arms exports to the developing world (Stamatović 2001, 107). Moreover, because of the Iran–Iraq War, Baghdad was unable to make payments to arms producers and military-engineering companies. Other non-aligned countries also had difficulties making payments, and some of them—like Libya—cancelled capital military infrastructure projects that were supposed to be built by Yugoslav companies, as well as the purchase of 200 Yugoslav tanks (Matović 2003, 272). One of the problems was the insolvency of Yugoslav non-aligned partners, but the economic crisis also increased the production costs of Yugoslav weapons and services. The Cubans, who also purchased Yugoslav weapons, complained that Yugoslav guns were "a little more expensive" than weapons from Bulgaria or the German Democratic Republic (Glejjeses 2013, 176). "Your guns are considerably more expensive than similar rifles made by socialist countries, China, North Korea. The price of your rifle is 340 [U.S.] dollars, Chinese is 130, and GDR's 165 dollars," the President of Uganda, Joweri Musseveni, pointed out to his Yugoslav interlocutors.⁴⁴

Financial problems were not the only issues facing Yugoslav military internationalism. For the first time, Yugoslav military engagements with the Global South came under criticism at home. Available evidence does not suggest that inter-republican struggles or the re-emergence of nationalism and regionalism played significant roles in these charges. The military-industrial complex remained a centralized enterprise in an increasingly decentralized country. This criticism was rather a part of broader critiques in the 1980s that sought to re-examine Yugoslav political dogmas, including the policy of non-alignment. At the forefront of this critique stood Yugoslavia's young generation who rejected the apparent hypocrisy of the system, most evidently displayed in the discrepancy between the government's rhetoric and its deeds in the Global South. Titoism came under the scrutiny in other Yugoslav republics, particularly in Serbia, where, in 1987, a youth magazine *Student* published an infamous cover, "The Night of the Vampires," that ridiculed the celebration of the Youth Day (Tito's birthday). However, the center of this activity was Slovenia. In the early 1980s, a number of grass roots movements and activists created a heterogeneous alliance known as the Alternative Movement. The movement emerged from ecological activism in the early 1980s, and it was perceived by the Slovenian party and government as a form of "negative occurrences" (Repe 2001, 33). Sabrina Ramet argued that the Movement was one of the constitutive elements of the so-called Slovenian Syndrome—"the political and social departures from common practice in Yugoslavia as whole" (Ramet 1992, 206). It is unclear whether or not the Movement had any transnational connections with the peace movements that proliferated in Europe at that time, but both Repe (2001) and Ramet (1992) have suggested that before 1990, political activism of these alternative groups and individuals was not sanctioned by the official and party organs of the Republic. A Slovenian youth weekly, *Mladina*, criticized Yugoslavia's sales of weapons to Uganda and Ethiopia as an immoral act disguised by the rhetoric of solidarity. In February 1988, *Mladina*'s African correspondent, Avgust Pudgar, provided a scathing account of Yugoslav hypocrisy in Ethiopia. According to Pudgar, Yugoslavia's military-industrial complex was trying to resolve Yugoslavia's dire economic situation by selling weapons under the pretense of non-aligned solidarity to a country where more than 5 million people had already died from hunger and malnutrition. "The noise of canons, that spew death and destruction, sends a totally different message from the generally sophisticated statements about non-aligned foreign policy," Pudgar wrote (*Mladina*, February 8, 1988). A week later, *Mladina* published another rebuke of Yugoslavia's military internationalism and accused the Yugoslav Defense Secretary Branko Mamula, whom it called a "merchant of death," for "selling rifles with roses of non-alignment in the barrels and with fake smiles about non-interference in interior affairs" (Spaskovska 2017, 74). Pudgar's writings

jeopardized Yugoslav–Ethiopian bilateral relations and embarrassed the Yugoslav Party and government. The Ethiopian ambassador told his Yugoslav interlocutor that *Mladina*'s articles threatened to ruin the relationship that Belgrade and Addis Ababa had been building for decades. “*Mladina* incorrectly informed the Yugoslav youth and public [about the situation in Ethiopia],” the ambassador said, adding that he would like the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) to “as objectively as it can explain the situation in our country.”⁴⁵ Yugoslav officials tried to downplay the importance of the *Mladina* articles, describing the magazine as “marginal” and without influence among Slovenian youth.⁴⁶ Yet, they admitted that the criticism directed at the Yugoslav defense secretary and Yugoslavia’s policy toward Ethiopia was aimed at the core of Yugoslavia political system.⁴⁷ Years later, however, a manager of the chief Yugoslav arms exporter confirmed: “There were many reasons for us to go and visit Ethiopia, but the main reason was we wanted to do business” (Matović 2003, 286). Although *Mladina* stirred a controversy, it did not stop Yugoslavia from going forward with similar business endeavors. These were eventually cut short only by the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s.

Conclusion

After a relative hiatus during the Yugoslav civil wars in the 1990s, the Yugoslav successor states are still present in the arms trade in the Global South. In the 1990s, a few bizarre incidents involving Yugoslav-made weapons made headlines. In June 1995, 11 workers and engineers died in an explosion in a Zemun factory that was allegedly producing rocket fuel for Iraq (*Vreme*, November 21, 2002). In 1997, a former Yugoslav People’s Army (YPA) pilot crashed the Yugoslav-made Jastreb jet in Zaire that then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia rented to Mobutu (*Večernje novosti*, May 21, 2010). Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia are still making significant profits from selling their arms to countries in the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia. Weapons from the stockpiles of the former YPA and some new weapons produced in these countries have found their way to regular armies and various paramilitary and extremist groups around the world. On October 11, 2002, NATO published on its website that the company Orao from Bijeljina (Bosnia and Herzegovina), together with Serbian Jugoimport (successor of the Directorate), broke UN sanctions by selling aircraft parts to Iraq. On November 28, 2015, the BBC revealed that guns “made by Zastava Arms Serbia” were used in the terrorist attack in Paris that claimed 130 lives (*BBC News*, November 28, 2015).

In this and other cases, “traditional ties” between the former Yugoslav military industry and countries in the Global South are often invoked. However, a claim about traditional ties requires further scrutiny. This article demonstrated that Yugoslav military internationalism was an ever-evolving concept. From the 1950s until the late 1970s, Yugoslavia engaged in arms transfers expecting little or no financial benefits. In this period, political and moral capital were currencies in much higher demand. Yugoslavia’s military aid served to enhance its own security, but also to elevate its prestige in the developing world. The post-1945 Yugoslav leadership, members of which participated in the national-liberation struggle during WWII, could identify with the anticolonial and liberation struggles in Africa and Asia. Undoubtedly, this played a central role in terms of defining the character of Yugoslav military engagements around the globe.

However, in the second half of the 1970s, Yugoslav policy in Africa and Asia was in retreat. The Partisan generation slowly departed the political scene (the chief ideologue of non-alignment, Edvard Kardelj, died in 1979, and Tito a year later), and new party and state officials did not have the same emotional and personal connections with the remaining liberation movements. Also, by the end of the decade, the international context of the Cold War had changed. Decolonization was largely over, and Yugoslavia’s donations could not effectively satisfy the defense needs of the newly independent states. Moreover, in the late 1970s, the Yugoslav position in the Global South was challenged by other more radical non-aligned countries, such as Cuba, whose revolutionary activism proved to be more appealing than Yugoslavia’s more conciliatory approach. Cuban and

Soviet presence forced Yugoslavia's retreat from Angola and Ethiopia. Tito's diplomatic victory during the 1979 Havana Non-Aligned Summit proved short-lived when the Soviets later invaded non-aligned Afghanistan. Although a majority of non-aligned states condemned the invasion, Yugoslavia felt increasingly isolated because chief Yugoslavia's allies, such as Angola and Ethiopia, toed the Soviet (and Cuban) line. In the mid-1970s, Yugoslavia's military-industrial complex began to gradually expand its commercial ties with African and Asian countries. Finally, the economic crisis in the 1980s forced Yugoslavs to embrace a pragmatic policy that emphasized financial benefits over moral and political capital.

This article also discusses the ambitions and the limits of the Yugoslav military internationalism, and the country's global policies in general. Yugoslav military aid to other countries went beyond a single foreign policy issue. Yugoslav military internationalism was intertwined with many other issues that included problems related to finances, economic development, the acquisition and transfer of military technology, relations with the superpowers and regional powers, national security, ideology and politics, prestige and status in global affairs—and, last but not least, as the case of *Mladina* demonstrated, domestic politics.

Yugoslavia's military internationalism epitomized the country's desire to play a role in global politics. Odd Arne Westad wrote that Yugoslavia's military aid "provided a lifeline for countries that feared becoming too dependent on Moscow for their defense needs" (2017, 434). This article provides more details about this unexpected role of the small Balkan state in the Cold War. However, it also shows that Yugoslavia's global ambitions were often stymied by internal and external factors. Yugoslav military solidarity—especially in its "altruistic" phase—proved to be a relatively cost-effective method for gaining political and moral credibility on the world stage. However, the changing context of the Cold War and the departure of the Partisan generation put an end to a wider project that sought to transform the global economic and political order.

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Notes

- 1 1 Arhiv Jugoslavije – Kabinet Predsednika Republike, fond 837, kutija I-5-b/29-9, hereafter AJ-KPR, f. 837, k. I-5-b/29-9.
- 2 Arhiv Jugoslavije-Savez socijalističkog radnog naroda Jugoslavije, fond 142, kutija A-226, hereafter AJ-SSRNJ, f. 142, k. A-226.
- 3 Arhiv Jugoslavije – Kabinet Predsednika Republike, fond 837, kutija I-4-a/15 hereafter AJ-KPR, f. 837, k. I-4-a/15.
- 4 Arhiv Jugoslavije-Crveni krst, fond 731, kutija 468.
- 5 AJ-SSRNJ, f. 142, k. A-226.
- 6 AJ-KPR, f. 837, k. I-5-c/86.
- 7 AJ-KPR, f. 837, k. I-5-b/117-7.
- 8 AJ-SSRNJ, f. 142, k. A-227.
- 9 AJ-SSRNJ, f. 142, k. A-226.
- 10 Arhiv Slovenije, fond 1271, kutija 6, hereafter AS, f. 1271, k. 6.
- 11 AJ-SSRNJ, f. 142, k. I-553.
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- 14 AJ–KPR, Fond 837, I–5–b/3–3.
- 15 Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, National Security Affairs, box 86, folder 6, hereafter JCPL, NSA, b. 86, f. 6.
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- 17 AJ–KPR, f. 837, k. I–3–a/121–74.
- 18 JCPL, NSA, b. 86, f. 7.
- 19 AJ–KPR, f. 837, k. I–5–b/99.
- 20 AJ–SSRNJ, f. 142, k. A–226.
- 21 AJ–SIV, f. 130, Str. Pov. 12–25, f. 1429.
- 22 AJ–SSRNJ, f. 142, k. A–227.
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- 28 AJ–KPR, f. 837, k. I–2/70–1.
- 29 AJ–KPR, f. 837, k. I–5–b/25–8.
- 30 AJ–KPR, f. 837, k. I–5–b/25–9.
- 31 DA MSP RS, Str. pov. 1977, f. 3, d. 38, s. 38.
- 32 AJ–KPR, f. 837, I–5–b/25–9.
- 33 DA MSP RS, PA 1977 Etiopija, f. 35, d. 17, s. 47469.
- 34 DA MSP RS, PA 1977 SAD, f. 125, d. 3, s. 438020.
- 35 JCPL, NSA, b. 86, f. 6.
- 36 AJ–KPR, f. 837, I–5–b/29–5.
- 37 AJ–KPR, f. 837, I–5–b/29–5.
- 38 DA MSP RS, Str. Pov. 1977, f. 5, d. 218, s. 218.
- 39 AS, f. 1271, k. 6.
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- 41 AJ–CKSKJ, f. 507, k. IX/67–277–317.
- 42 AJ–KPR, f. 837, k. I–4–a/15
- 43 AS, f. 1271, k. 6.
- 44 Arhiv Jugoslavije–Predsedništvo SFRJ, fond 803, kutija dokument Strogo poverljivo broj 325/1–87, hereafter AJ–PSFRJ, f. 803, k. 909, d. Str. pov. 325/1–87.
- 45 AJ–PSFRJ, f. 803, k. 968. d. Pov. br. 275/88.
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