

The Serbia-Kosovo Treaty: a Servile Acquiescence to US Imperialism

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The “historic” treaty recently signed by Serbia and Kosovo under the auspices of the US president, will prove very useful to American (and western) imperialism in the Balkans, as well as to Israel, its main bulwark in the Middle East. The document should not be viewed as an historic rapprochement between Serbs and Albanians, but rather as a confirmation of the peripheral and quasi-colonial position of both Serbia and Kosovo as territories fought over by various imperialist powers.

The text of the Serbia-Kosovo treaty is [entitled](#) “Economic Normalization”. Translated into its concrete provisions, this “economic normalization” presupposes that the US will play a(n even) larger role in determining the economic decisions of the two (ostensibly) independent states – from the involvement of the US International Development Finance Corporation ([DFC](#)) in the construction of infrastructure projects in the two countries (the construction of the Belgrade-Priština highway, as well as various railroads), to US credits for small and mid-sized companies, to the opening of a permanent DFC office in Belgrade. What’s more, the US Department of Energy and other leading bodies of the US government will be directly involved in the decision-making processes regarding the use of hydro and energy resources of Lake Gazivode and American surveillance and tracking technology will become part of Serbia’s and Kosovo’s security arsenals.

Considering the treaty envisages Kosovo’s entry into the so-called “Little Schengen” – after an open refusal of Kosovo’s political elite to join this “conciliatory” market initiative of Serbia, Macedonia and Albania – American imperialism looks to reap rich rewards. The “Little Schengen” is supposed to turn the “Western Balkans” into a broader, uniformly regulated market, in order to make it easier for the US and the EU to extract surplus value from it and dictate the credit-dependent “development” in the Balkans. Since the DFC was established as a counter to the expansion of Chinese imperialism through the [Belt and Road Initiative](#), it is clear that Trump seeks to plant a few more US flags in the ongoing trade war between the US and China in time for the upcoming November election. This can help us to better understand a clause in the treaty which prohibits both Serbia and Kosovo from using “5G equipment supplied by untrusted vendors” and demands the removal of such equipment from localities where it has already been installed. This, of course, refers to the equipment provided by the Chinese [Huawei](#), a company that has been on the receiving end of a US-orchestrated smear campaign aimed at securing the West’s dominance in supplying the world with 5G equipment.

However, the flags Trump is seeking to plant in order to secure a second term come November are not only technological and economic. He’s also looking to score in the field of diplomacy and geopolitics – something he desperately needs after the setbacks and defeats of [American foreign policy](#) in the Middle East (the most recent examples being the implicit admission of [defeat in Afghanistan](#), after almost 20 years of senseless war started by a US invasion, as well as giving Turkey [free rein in northeastern Syria](#), further fuelling a conflict which had already led to millions being killed, injured and displaced).

The biggest potential triumph of US foreign policy would be the adoption of the catastrophic “peace treaty” between Israel and Palestine, which enshrines the continuation of the colonial land grab in historical Palestine and further entrenches the Israeli apartheid regime. To this end, Serbia and Kosovo play the role of useful token countries: Kosovo as the first Muslim-majority country and Serbia as the first European country (obviously, in the American worldview, “Muslim-majority” and “Europe” are mutually exclusive terms!) that recognise Jerusalem (and not Tel Aviv) as the capital of Israel. Apart from the US and Guatemala, whose former president and Trump’s [close collaborator](#) Jimmy Morales was the only world leader to follow suit in 2017 when the US president moved his country’s embassy to Jerusalem, Serbia and Kosovo are now the only other countries on the planet that recognise occupied East Jerusalem (mostly inhabited by Palestinians) as a legitimate part of Israel.

Israel has clearly stated the symbolic importance of this recognition, albeit using its standard Orwellian terms. Gilad Erdan, the Israeli ambassador to the UN and a member of Netanyahu’s Likud party (whose long and varied ministerial career is comparable to, say, that of Serbia’s Rasim Ljajić), [tweeted](#) last night that “after the UAE & Kosovo, I believe more Muslim & Arab states will *opt for peace, leaving the Palestinians isolated*” and that this would “perhaps convince future Palestinian leaders to make concessions for peace”. A supposed peace founded on a systematic exclusion, silencing and blackmail of one of the sides in the conflict can be little else than a continuation of a one-sided, warmongering policy by other means.

Yesterday evening, the representatives of Serbia and Kosovo decided to become complicit in this policy. Moreover, several months ago Vučić had already hinted at the possibility of a change of course regarding Israel by announcing the opening of an office of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia in Jerusalem and the purchase of a significant package of Israeli arms, as well as the preparedness of Serbia to abstain from voting on “anti-Israel resolutions” in the UN. Given the UN Human Rights Council’s [conclusion](#) that Israel has committed crimes against humanity in Gaza and the efforts invested into putting those responsible for organising and executing those crimes on trial, as well as the decision of the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in the Hague to charge Israel with war crimes – to which the US responded only two days ago by [sanctioning](#) the woman in question – we can expect Serbia to maintain a neutral or even pro-Israel position on these issues when they’re discussed in the UN.

Despite the fact that Richard Grenell, the man appointed by Trump to handle the question of Serbia-Kosovo relations, denied the allegations that these two countries actually signed bilateral treaties with the US and not with one another, at its core the treaty *represents* the acceptance of the governments of Serbia and Kosovo of conditions dictated by US imperialism. The latter has been trying to further entrench its presence in the Balkans for decades: from helping found Kosovo not as an independent country, but as a NATO protectorate, to integrating one Balkan country after another in NATO and the EU, western imperialism’s leading alliances, but also to overseeing the signing of treaties such as this one that increase the economic and political presence and influence of the US on the decision-making processes in countries prevented from pursuing a sovereign policy.

Breaking free from the vicious circle of the Balkans’ quasi-colonial dependence on imperialist powers scrambling over it lies not in the strengthening of local nationalisms as false shortcuts to true sovereignty, but in forging stronger bonds between the working classes of various Balkan countries. Balkan unity is not achieved through “little Schengens” and similar market-oriented unions which mostly benefit precisely those imperialist powers – be it EU and NATO, Russia or China – that oversee the founding of these unions, but through a recognition of the common interest of the workers of the Balkans and the merging of their nationally divided struggles into a single, internationalist, pan-Balkan workers’ struggle. Only such an agreement would truly deserve to be called “historic”.

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P.S.

This article was originally published in Serbo-Croatian on the [website of the organization Marks 21](#) on September 5, the day after Serbia and Kosovo signed a treaty that international media have labeled “historic.”