

Serbia, Russia sign energy cooperation agreement

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Global Research Editor's Note

This agreement goes far beyond energy cooperation, it has broad strategic and geopolitical implications. It goes against US interests in the Balkans. It pertains in a very direct way to the proposed unilateral independence of Kosovo, which is supported by the European Union and the US.

Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, Serbian President Boris Tadic and Russian President Vladimir Putin attended today in Moscow the signing of the Agreement on energy cooperation between Serbia and Russia.

The agreement was signed by Minister of Infrastructure Velimir Ilic on behalf of the Serbian government and by Minister of Industry and Energy Victor Khristenko on behalf of the Russian government.

Kostunica stressed that with this agreement, as well as with the Protocol on the basic terms for the sale of the Serbian oil industry Naftna Industrija Srbije, Serbia and Russia have established strategic cooperation to the benefit of the economy and all Serbian citizens.

He also recalled that Russia and Serbia have led a joint policy in defending Serbia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as safeguarding international law and order and the founding principles they are based on - the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty.

By striving to retain Kosovo within Serbia, Russia and Serbia are merely defending the foundations of international law and order, such as stability, safety and peace, stressed Kostunica and added that Russia's principled and brotherly support is extremely important for Serbia.

However, he added that certain countries advocate the disrespect of international law.

The current threats to Serbia are unilateral declaration of Kosovo-Metohija's independence and the support of this illegal and false state on Serbia's territory by several countries. Therefore, the act for which the EU is preparing itself is very dangerous, that is, to send its civil mission to Kosovo-Metohija, thus directly breaching the UN Security Council Resolution 1244, warned the Prime Minister.

According to him, this is more than just acknowledging unilateral independence - it is direct participation in the creation of an illegal state.

Kostunica said that they agreed at the meeting that Serbia and Russia will continue with cooperation regarding the talks on the southern Serbian province which were halted.

It is of great importance that Russia acknowledges Serbia with its current and internationally recognised borders, that is, with Kosovo-Metohija as its constituent part, concluded the Prime Minister.

Speaking about Kosovo-Metohija, Tadic stressed that Serbia defends its interests and integrity in Kosovo in a very principled way and in accordance with international law.

He stressed that it is very well-known that Serbia highly appreciates Russia's position regarding the future status of Kosovo and pointed out that without such a Russian stance, Serbia's capacity to defend its legitimate interests and territorial integrity in Kosovo would be greatly diminished.

The Serbian President expressed gratitude for the reception and said he completely agrees with Putin that the scope of bilateral and economic relations between the two countries has grown and noted that today's signing of the Agreement opens up new possibilities for cooperation.

This strategic partnership will be useful both for Serbia and Russia, Tadic explained and noted that since 2000 trade between the two countries has risen to \$2.7 billion.

He also said that there are close friendly, religious and cultural ties between Russia and Serbia which contribute to strengthening economic relations between the two countries. All this should be used to further cooperation, both bilateral and with third countries.

At the meeting with representatives of Serbia, the Russian President said that the fact that a high-ranking Serbian delegation came to Moscow in the middle of a very complex political situation in the country is proof that the signing of the energy agreement is a very important event for both Serbia and Russia.

Welcoming the Serbian delegation led by Tadic and Kostunica in the Kremlin, Putin said that relations between the two countries are developing well and that between 2000 and 2007 trade has increased sixfold.

I am convinced that this visit will also be an important event and that it will encourage further development of our economic relations, he said and added that the Serbian people can be sure that in Russia it has a reliable friend and partner.

He reiterated that Russia is categorically against the independence of Kosovo-Metohija.

According to him, Kosovo's independence would cause grave damage to the entire system of international law, bringing negative consequences to the Balkans and other regions in the world.

The Serbian government delegation also includes Minister of Energy and Mining Aleksandar Popovic and Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Jeremic.

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