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The Serbia-Kosovo Agreement Is a Result of the Israel-UAE Agreement

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The US-brokered Israel-UAE normalization agreement was swiftly followed by a similar agreement between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as an Israel-Bahrain agreement. The Trump administration has momentum as it continues to work toward a reformulation of formerly combative relationships. The Israel vs. Arab perception is rapidly changing to an Israel-Arab vs. Iran perception, and that dynamic will create further new alliances on both sides.

On September 4, 2020, President Donald Trump hosted Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic and Kosovo PM Avdullah Hoti at the White House to sign an economic normalization agreement that will lead to the establishment of air, rail, and motorway links between Serbia's capital, Belgrade, and Kosovo's capital, Pristina. Twenty-one years ago, Serbia and Kosovo engaged in a bloody war after Serbia cracked down on ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, a conflict that ended in NATO action against Serbia and Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008.

The Trump administration is gathering remarkable momentum on the foreign policy and diplomacy fronts. Washington announced the Serbia-Kosovo normalization agreement only 22 days after it announced the groundbreaking Israel-UAE normalization agreement, and an Israel-Bahrain normalization agreement was announced shortly after the Serbia-Kosovo news.

Belgrade and Pristina have both vowed to establish relationships with Israel. They plan to open embassies in Jerusalem by 2021, which will make them the first European countries to do so (rather than in Tel Aviv). This step could ultimately lead to international recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Significantly, Pristina's will be the first embassy of a Muslim-majority state in Israel. The EU is now reconsidering the possibility that [Kosovo](#) might join the Union, and

Serbia and its Russian and Chinese allies will likely recognize Kosovo's independence.

Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the agreement, [commenting](#), "I thank my friend the president of Serbia for the decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to transfer his embassy there," and he thanked President Trump for his contribution to achieving the agreement. He [added](#), "Kosovo is the first country with a Muslim majority to open an embassy in Jerusalem. As I have said in recent days, the circle of peace and recognition of Israel is widening, and other nations are expected to join it."

Kosovo's normalization with Israel makes it the fifth Muslim country [to normalize or sign](#) a peace agreement with Israel following the peace agreements with Egypt in 1977, Jordan in 1994, Lebanon in 1983 after the Israeli invasion the previous year, and the UAE in 2020—and since the announcement they have been joined by a sixth, the Gulf State of Bahrain. Oman, Sudan, and Morocco are expected to follow suit.

A major shift is swiftly occurring in the Middle East as former enemies reconstitute their relationships and join together to create a front against common foes. The Israel vs. Arab perception is changing to an Israeli-Arab vs. Iran perception, and other new alliances are cropping up according to that new formulation (such as Turkey, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Qatar). More countries are likely to join both sides of this emerging new polarity.

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