
UNLIKE OTHERS, CHINA DOESN'T PRESSURE SERBIA, SAYS VUCIC

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Speaking at a panel organized by China's Communist Party ahead of the Second Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, the Serbian president stressed that cooperation between people should not be treated as a matter on the sidelines, but that this is instead the basis for building all other forms of cooperation.

At the beginning of his speech, the Serbian president told the audience that he had just had a meeting with President of China and the General Secretary of the Communist Party Xi Jinping, and that he talked with him about very important issues.

"We will continue with excellent cooperation that exists between our two countries. Serbia is a relatively small country in Southeast Europe, with seven million inhabitants, and is the largest country in the Western Balkans. I know how many more important players than Serbia there are in the international arena for China. But there is something special that binds our two countries and peoples, as well as the Communist Party and the SNS, as the two largest parties (in China and Serbia)," said Vucic.

According to him, China's policy led by President Xi has succeeded at achieving much more than anyone else in the modern world. "Today you can see that, although faced with major political challenges, pressure from political and economic competitors from the West, China not only has become increasingly powerful, but has an increasing number of friends all over the world," Vucic said.

Vucic recalled that Serbia is on its way to the EU and at the same time emphasized that there was something that particularly distinguishes China from other great powers. "When you talk to great powers of the West, there is always some sort of pressure that you face, and when you talk to China and its leaders, you are always treated with respect," Vucic emphasized.

If Beijing continues and maintains this approach toward small nations and countries, with the position of respect and mutual respect, this is something that the whole world wants to see and the country will acquire new friends and people who will support Chinese ideas, Vucic added.

He recalled that Serbia was among the first countries to sign onto the Belt and Road initiative and that in the past years, along with Chinese companies, it has done a lot.

Vucic said that Serbia implemented consolidation measures, reduced its public debt from 78 percent to 50 percent of GDP, and was ready to cooperate even more with Chinese companies on

the infrastructure agenda.

More important than that is contact between people, Vucic added, and emphasizing that in Serbia, the Chinese are not only respected and valued, but also liked. He pointed out that in the past years, Serbia has managed to double and then triple the number of Chinese tourists, and said that he hopes this number would continue to grow.

According to the president, trade has significantly increased - but he added that he was still dissatisfied, as it could continue to grow, which is why he thinks that even closer contacts between people and understanding are needed.

"When you are confronted with such a stance, that you can always count on the support of such a large country as China, then you can count on a strategic partnership in the future," Vucic said.

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