
SERBIA BALANCES BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE WEST

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Good news" is what Aleksandar Vucic has said he expects from his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Tuesday.

The Kremlin's announcement about the meeting keeps the issues on the agenda vague. "The leaders will discuss issues concerning the development of the Russian-Serbian strategic partnership" in its political, economic, cultural and humanitarian facets.

But this visit also shows that Serbia is resisting pressure to choose sides as tensions between Russia and the West heat up. During a visit to Belgrade in October, US diplomat Brian Yee warned Serbia that "you cannot sit on two chairs at the same time, especially if they are so far apart." It was seen as a swipe at the country's policy of pursuing EU membership while continuing to cozy up to Moscow. According to Dimitar Bechev, a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council and the author of the book "Rival Power: Russia in Southeast Europe," Vucic is not the first Serbian leader to look both east and west. "That's been the policy by pretty much every government in Serbia."

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