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## WHY IS AMERICA ECLIPSING THE EU IN THE BALKANS?

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By Georgi Gotev

It's very rare to witness first-hand an acceleration of history, and this is precisely what is happening in the Balkans now. In a very short time, Serbia and Kosovo took huge steps towards normalising their relations.

On 20 January, Belgrade and Pristina agreed to launch direct commercial flights after more than 20 years.

Direct flights were halted in 1998 when war broke out in Kosovo between ethnic Albanian insurgents and Serbian security forces. Serbia lost control of its former province after the NATO bombing in 1999 ended the ethnic conflict in which more than 13,000 people, mainly Kosovo Albanians, were killed.

Then, on 6 February the new Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, pledged to abolish the 100% tariffs on Serbian imports, an impediment to normalisation efforts between the two countries enforced by his hardline predecessor Ramush Haradinaj in 2018.

But there was more. On 15 February, the presidents of Serbia and Kosovo, Aleksandar Vučić and Hashim Thaçi, announced during the Munich Security Conference deals to work on building rail and road links between their capitals.

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