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Serbia's PM blocks EU pact in protest over Kosovo declaration

Ian Traynor in Brussels
Thursday February 7, 2008
[The Guardian](#)

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Serbia's nationalist prime minister yesterday blocked the signing of a landmark pact between Belgrade and the EU in an attempt to delay the secession of Kosovo.

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Vojislav Kostunica's decision to veto the signing ceremony in Brussels looked likely to bring down his government only three days after a pro-European moderate, Boris Tadic, was elected Serbian president.

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The uncompromising move upset Brussels' strategy for dealing with Serbia and Kosovo as the southern province heads towards declaring independence and risked destabilising the region.

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Senior EU officials were furious that Kostunica refused to allow pro-European members of his government to travel to Brussels today to sign a pact that would lead to trade and travel liberalisation and jump start Serbia's EU membership ambitions, an aim supported by most Serbs.

Olli Rehn, the EU commissioner for enlargement, said Kostunica had broken a promise to him and quipped that politicians in Belgrade were filing for divorce between Serbia and the EU before they had even been married.

In what looks like a futile attempt to block or delay Kosovo's declaration of independence and recognition of it by most of the EU, Kostunica abandoned his Democratic party coalition allies in favour of an impromptu alliance with the extreme nationalist opposition Serbian Radical party.

Kostunica cancelled a cabinet meeting, pulled his party colleagues out of all committee meetings with Tadic's Democrats, the prime minister's coalition partner, and

organised an emergency parliament session expected next Monday.

That could be just days before Kosovo's Albanian leadership declares independence. Senior sources in Brussels said Hashem Thaci, the Kosovan prime minister, was expected to declare independence in 10 days, a day before EU foreign ministers meet in Brussels to recognise Kosovo.

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