

Building the “Serbian World”

Serbia’s Impact on Security and Stability in the Western Balkans

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Summary

- Since the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbia has remained a pivotal regional actor in the Western Balkans as the largest of the post-Yugoslav states. Over the past decade, the current Serbian leadership has increasingly sought to shape regional dynamics through a broad set of political, informational, economic, cultural, and security-related instruments.
- Serbian regional engagement is increasingly framed through the political concept of the “Serbian World” (Srpski svet), which promotes the idea of a unified political, cultural, and informational space linking Serbia with Serb communities in neighbouring countries.
- Although not formally codified as a state doctrine, the concept functions as a strategic narrative that legitimises and structures Serbia’s engagement with Serb communities abroad. It builds upon long-standing regional ambitions and established foreign policy practices, particularly those related to the protection of Serbian communities and minority rights.
- Within this framework, Belgrade seeks to maintain political leverage in neighbouring countries with significant Serb populations and to influence domestic political dynamics there.
- While such engagement is often justified through legitimate concerns for minority protection and cross-border cooperation, in some cases it may contribute to slowing or complicating Euro-Atlantic integration processes, while allowing Serbian authorities to maintain plausible deniability and avoid formal violations of international law.
- Drawing on four country reports (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro) and discussions with regional and international stakeholders, the report finds that Serbian influence warrants close policy attention.
- The concern does not lie in cross-border engagement itself, but in its cumulative effects in fragile political environments, where it may contribute to:
- erosion of democratic political processes,
 - instrumentalisation of ethnic identity,
 - weakening of state sovereignty and institutional authority,
 - persistent security risks and regional instability.
- These dynamics are further amplified by internal governance weaknesses within Western Balkan states and by inconsistent engagement by the European Union.



Policy Recommendations

To mitigate the negative effects of Serbian regional influence while preserving space for legitimate cross-border cooperation and minority rights protection, the report identifies the following priority actions for EU institutions and member states:

- **Restore credible EU conditionality** by linking enlargement progress to clear benchmarks and predictable consequences, including in relation to Serbia.
- **Strengthen EU strategic communication in the Western Balkans**, prioritising sustained local engagement over reactive messaging, particularly in Serb minority communities.
- **Support state-level institutions** in countries vulnerable to Serbian influence through targeted advisory and technical assistance, especially in high-risk sectors such as energy, media, and telecommunications.
- **Promote political pluralism within minority communities**, reducing dependency on single dominant representative actors.
- **Improve alignment of international engagement** among EU member states, including V4 countries, and other key partners to avoid mixed signals and policy fragmentation.
- **Engage and further support democratic and pro-European actors in Serbia and within Serb communities across the region**, alongside civil society and independent media, through targeted financial, technical, and political assistance.
- **Define clear red lines** for all regional actors linking regional security concerns to the EU integration process.

The full set of recommendations and implementation considerations is detailed in Chapter 3.



Introduction

Serbia has emerged over the past decade as an increasingly influential regional actor in the Western Balkans. Through a combination of political, economic, informational, and sociocultural instruments, Belgrade has sought to shape political and societal dynamics in neighbouring states with significant Serb populations. While cross-border engagement and minority protection are legitimate elements of regional relations, the cumulative effects of these activities have in some contexts contributed to political polarisation, governance challenges, and increased tensions within already fragile political environments. Understanding the mechanisms and implications of Serbian regional engagement has therefore become an important task for policymakers and analysts concerned with the stability and Euro-Atlantic trajectory of the Western Balkans.

This policy paper builds on the findings of a one-year international project supported by the International Visegrad Fund, titled *“Building the Serbian World: Serbia’s Impact on Security and Stability in the Western Balkans.”* The project brought together partners from Central Europe and the Western Balkans to analyse the regional dynamics of Serbian influence and assess its implications for governance, societal resilience, and the Euro-Atlantic integration process.

The aim of this report is to synthesise the analytical findings generated within the project and translate them into a structured policy-oriented assessment. It seeks to identify the key drivers, instruments, and actors shaping Serbia’s regional engagement, as well as to evaluate their implications for democratic governance, regional stability, and the European integration prospects of Western Balkan states. The report is intended primarily for policymakers and officials in European institutions, national governments, and international organisations, as well as for civil society representatives, independent media, and analysts engaged in Western Balkan policy and regional security issues.

The findings presented in this report are grounded in a combination of analytical work and structured expert engagement conducted throughout the project period, including:

- regional analytical papers produced by partner organisations, providing detailed country-level and cross-regional insights;
- a series of expert workshops and consultations that facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogue and helped identify key patterns, challenges, and policy options;
- contributions from civil society representatives, practitioners, and subject-matter specialists representing diverse perspectives from across the region.

Rather than presenting new empirical data collection, this report synthesises the substantive outputs of the project and translates them into a coherent analytical and policy framework. The conclusions and recommendations are informed both by the analytical findings of the country reports and by the areas of consensus that emerged during project workshops and stakeholder debates.

The report is structured as follows. Chapter 1 outlines the strategic logic and broader political context of Serbia’s regional engagement, including the emergence and role of the “Serbian World” narrative. Chapter 2 examines the main instruments and actors through which Serbia exercises influence across the Western Balkans, analysing political, informational, economic, sociocultural, and security-related channels. Chapter 3 translates the analytical findings into a set of policy recommendations aimed at Western Balkan governments, the European Union and its member states, and international partners.



1 Serbian Influence in the Western Balkans: Strategic Logic and Impact

1.1 The Concept of the “Serbian World”

The concept of the “Serbian World” (Srpski svet) has emerged over the past decade as a narrative frame through which Serbia’s regional engagement is increasingly articulated. While it is not codified as an official state doctrine, the concept functions as a flexible political and strategic reference point, drawing on older nationalist ideas while adapting them to the contemporary regional and international context. In this sense, it represents an updated and operationally more ambiguous successor to the 1990s discourse of “Greater Serbia”, deliberately avoiding explicit territorial claims while advancing the idea of a shared political, cultural, and identity space encompassing Serb communities beyond Serbia’s borders.

The strength of the Serbian World lies precisely in its ambiguity. It allows Serbian political elites to promote cross-border engagement under the broadly acceptable language of cultural ties, minority protection, and regional cooperation, while simultaneously legitimising sustained involvement in the internal political dynamics of neighbouring states. As highlighted in stakeholders debates and regional analytical outputs, the concept is most frequently mobilised through aligned political actors, state-affiliated media, cultural institutions, and the Serbian Orthodox Church, rather than through formal government strategies. This enables Serbia’s leadership to benefit from its political effects while maintaining plausible deniability at the international level.

Importantly, the Serbian World narrative resonates in a regional environment marked by unresolved post-conflict legacies, contested statehoods, and identity-based politics. By framing Serbia as the primary guarantor of Serb community interests across the Western Balkans, the concept reinforces perceptions of Belgrade as both a protective centre and an indispensable political reference point, particularly in contexts where local institutions are weak or mistrusted.

1.2 Strategic Drivers of Serbian Regional Engagement

Serbia’s regional posture is shaped by a combination of internal political incentives and external strategic considerations. Domestically, the promotion of the Serbian World serves as an effective instrument of political mobilisation. National identity narratives, references to historical injustice, and claims of responsibility for Serbs outside Serbia are regularly employed to consolidate electoral support, marginalise political opposition, and divert attention from democratic backsliding, media capture, and governance deficits at home. The country reports consistently underline that unresolved regional issues – especially related to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina – play a central role in domestic political communication by the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS).

Externally, Serbia seeks to preserve and expand its influence in neighbouring states without assuming direct responsibility for governance outcomes. Rather than pursuing overt control, Belgrade focuses on maintaining influence through political relationships, institutional cooperation, and aligned political actors. Serbia generally prefers stable and predictable political environments in neighbouring countries, as these make it easier to maintain long-term influence and cooperation. In practice, this can mean political support for actors and arrangements that prioritise stability and political cooperation over rapid reforms, which can indirectly slow reform processes and EU integration in some Western Balkan countries.



A further strategic driver is Serbia's broader geopolitical positioning. While formally committed to EU accession, Serbia continues to maintain close political, economic, and security ties with Russia and China. This multi-vector foreign policy provides Belgrade with additional room for manoeuvre, as cooperation with these partners does not involve the same requirements related to rule-of-law reforms, media freedom, or alignment with EU foreign policy that accompany the EU accession process. In practice, this positioning allows Serbia to maintain a degree of political flexibility vis-à-vis the EU while promoting narratives and partnerships in the region that are not always aligned with Euro-Atlantic integration priorities. As a result, Serbia's external alignments can indirectly affect the pace and direction of reforms and integration processes in neighbouring Western Balkan countries.

1.3 Why Serbian Influence Raises Policy Concerns

The analysis emerging from stakeholders debates and regional analytical reports converges on the assessment that Serbian influence becomes a policy concern not because of cross-border engagement as such, but because of its cumulative potentially destabilising effects in specific political and institutional contexts. In environments characterised by fragile governance, polarised societies, and limited trust in public institutions, Serbia's engagement has contributed to sustained pressures on democratic institutions, the instrumentalisation of ethnic identity, and constraints on effective state governance.

Rather than supporting inclusive minority integration, Serbian involvement has frequently reinforced parallel structures, patronage networks, and political monopolies within Serb communities. This dynamic is particularly visible where political representation is channelled through single, Belgrade-aligned actors, limiting pluralism and reducing accountability to local institutions. Over time, such arrangements weaken the capacity of states to exercise authority evenly across their territory and complicate reform processes linked to EU accession.

From a security perspective, the persistence of unresolved disputes - most notably between Serbia and Kosovo, but also within Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro - creates a permissive environment for escalation. The country reports document how periods of institutional crisis, electoral contestation, or international disengagement increase the risk that political tensions translate into security incidents. While Serbia does not seek open confrontation, its ability to shape narratives and mobilise aligned actors contributes to a climate of chronic instability.

1.4 Country-Specific Patterns of Serbian Influence

Although Serbia's regional engagement follows a broadly consistent logic, its manifestations vary significantly across countries.

In Serbia itself, the dominance of the SNS Political party since 2012 has enabled the consolidation of a hybrid political system marked by state capture, constrained media pluralism, and the instrumentalisation of nationalism. Regional engagement, including the promotion of the Serbian World narrative, is closely intertwined with regime maintenance and domestic legitimacy.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbian influence is embedded within the Dayton framework and exercised primarily through Republika Srpska, the Serb-dominated autonomous entity. Belgrade's engagement reinforces entity-level authority, weakens state-level institutions, and sustains a fragmented political order. Influence is exerted through routine political coordination, special and parallel relations, economic interdependence, and shared media narratives, rather than direct intervention.

In Kosovo, Serbia retains substantial leverage through financial support to the Serb minority community, parallel institutions, and political structures such as Srpska Lista. While Belgrade has at times facilitated the integration of Kosovo Serbs



into Kosovo institutions, it has also enabled obstruction and, in moments of heightened tension, destabilisation. The unresolved status dispute remains a central driver of insecurity.

In Montenegro, Serbian engagement focuses on identity, language, religion, and historical narratives amid an ongoing dispute over the substance of Montenegrin political identity. The Serbian Orthodox Church plays a particularly prominent role, supported by aligned political actors and media ecosystems. These dynamics have contributed to polarisation, contested sovereignty narratives, and delays in EU-oriented reforms.

Taken together, these patterns illustrate that Serbian influence in the Western Balkans is not uniform or static. It adapts to local vulnerabilities and political opportunities, producing differentiated but cumulatively significant effects on governance, regional stability, and the Euro-Atlantic integration process.

2 Instruments and Actors of Serbia's Regional Influence

2.1 Overview: From Discrete Engagement to Systemic Presence

Serbia's regional influence in the Western Balkans is not exercised through a single channel or coherent policy instrument. Rather, it is best understood as a layered and adaptive system of engagement that combines formal state-to-state relations with informal networks, aligned non-state actors, and long-term societal linkages. Findings from the project consistently underline that the effectiveness of this influence lies less in any individual tool than in their cumulative and mutually reinforcing use across political, informational, economic, sociocultural, and security domains.

This system allows Serbia to remain continuously present in the political life of neighbouring states while avoiding overt intervention. Engagement is typically framed in legitimate and broadly accepted terms – such as minority protection, cultural cooperation, economic development, or regional stability – yet its practical effects frequently extend beyond these declared objectives. The result is a form of influence that is resilient, difficult to attribute, and well adapted to the fragmented institutional environments characteristic of the Western Balkans.

2.2 Political and Institutional Channels

Political influence remains the core pillar of Serbia's regional engagement. Rather than operating primarily through formal diplomatic pressure, Belgrade relies on sustained relationships with aligned political actors, parties, and institutions in neighbouring countries. These relationships are maintained through regular high-level contacts, symbolic joint appearances, and coordination on politically sensitive issues. In the context of internally divided Western Balkan states, such engagement privileges sub-state or entity-level actors over central institutions, thereby reinforcing fragmented governance structures.

A recurring pattern identified across the region is the use of political representation mechanisms that concentrate influence within a narrow circle of actors claiming to speak on behalf of Serb communities. While often justified as a means of ensuring minority rights and political inclusion, this approach can limit pluralism within those communities and reduce accountability to domestic institutions. Over time, political loyalty to Belgrade-linked actors becomes intertwined with access to employment, social benefits, or informal protection networks, further entrenching dependency relationships.



2.3 Media, Information and Narrative Shaping

The information domain constitutes one of the most effective vectors of Serbian regional influence. The absence of language barriers allows media content produced in Belgrade to circulate widely across the Western Balkans and shape public discourse beyond Serbia's borders. This is reinforced through retransmission agreements, media partnerships, and the role of telecommunications operators that distribute Serbian television channels and online content across neighbouring countries.

Regional analytical reports also point to the role of specific Serbia-based and locally aligned media outlets that contribute to a shared Serbian-language information space across the region. Frequently cited examples include Kosovo Online and Belgrade-based television channels such as Happy, Pink, and Informer TV, as well as locally broadcast outlets such as TV Most in Serb-majority areas of Kosovo; RTRS in Republika Srpska; and IN4S and Borba in Montenegro.

Rather than relying primarily on disinformation, this media ecosystem often operates through narrative framing. Common narratives emphasise Serbian victimhood, question Western policies, relativise past conflicts, and portray Euro-Atlantic integration as externally imposed. Over time, these narratives contribute to political polarisation and make compromise on politically sensitive issues more difficult.

2.4 Economic Leverage and Structural Dependencies

Economic instruments play a supporting but strategically important role in Serbia's regional engagement. Investments, trade links, infrastructure projects, and energy cooperation are presented as mutually beneficial development initiatives. However, local stakeholders during the discussions repeatedly noted that such economic ties can also generate structural dependencies, particularly in sectors of strategic importance such as energy, transport, telecommunications, and public utilities.

State-owned or state-linked companies are central to this dimension of influence. Their regional expansion strengthens Serbia's economic footprint while simultaneously creating channels through which political considerations may intersect with commercial decision-making. In contexts where regulatory oversight is weak and transparency limited, economic engagement may reinforce patronage networks and constrain the policy autonomy of host states.

2.5 Sociocultural and Religious Dimensions

Sociocultural instruments provide the normative and emotional underpinning of Serbia's regional presence. The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) occupies a particularly prominent position in this regard, enjoying high levels of trust among Serb communities across the Western Balkans. Through its institutional infrastructure, symbolic authority, and involvement in education, heritage protection, and community life, the SOC functions as a key transmitter of identity narratives aligned with the broader Serbian World concept.

Cultural organisations, educational programmes, commemorative practices, and diaspora networks further reinforce these ties. While such activities are not inherently problematic, regional analytical outputs emphasize that their political salience increases in polarised environments, where questions of language, history, and identity are closely linked to debates about statehood and geopolitical orientation. In these contexts, sociocultural engagement may contribute to the politicisation of identity and the marginalisation of civic, inclusive narratives.



2.6 Security-Related and Informal Pressure Mechanisms

Finally, Serbia's regional influence also operates through security-related cooperation and informal pressure mechanisms. Formal cooperation between security institutions, including police and interior ministries, is a legitimate and common feature of regional relations. However, local stakeholders highlighted concerns regarding the opacity of certain security interactions, particularly where they intersect with political objectives or operate outside robust institutional oversight.

In addition to formal channels, influence may be exercised through indirect or informal actors operating in the grey zone between politics, security, and organised crime. These connections are rarely explicit and are characterised by a high degree of deniability. Their impact is most visible during periods of heightened political tension, when intimidation, selective law enforcement, or ambiguous security incidents contribute to a climate of uncertainty without crossing the threshold of open confrontation.

2.7 Key Actors

Across all domains, a relatively consistent set of actors emerges from the analytical material. At the centre is Serbia's executive leadership and the ruling Serbian Progressive Party, which provides strategic direction and political cover for Serbia's regional engagement. State institutions, including relevant ministries and state-owned enterprises, play an enabling role through formal cooperation and economic presence. While formally a non-state actor, the Serbian Orthodox Church plays a critical role, as it is closely aligned with Serbia's political leadership and possesses significant capacities to advance the regional political agenda.

Beyond the state level, Serbian influence is frequently channelled through aligned political actors and patronage-based networks in neighbouring states, which serve as intermediaries between Belgrade and local political contexts. Project findings highlight, among others, the role of Srpska Lista in Kosovo as the dominant political representative of the Kosovo Serb community; the sustained political alignment between the leadership of Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Milorad Dodik, and authorities in Belgrade; and, in Montenegro, the influence of pro-Serbian political parties and leaders closely linked to Belgrade, supported by aligned media ecosystems and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Alongside these actors, specific media outlets, cultural and educational organisations, religious institutions, and informal political and business networks act as force multipliers, translating strategic narratives into local political and societal contexts. This includes, for example, Serbia-based and locally aligned media outlets, organisations linked to the Serbian Orthodox Church, cultural associations, and political and business networks connected to Belgrade. While configurations vary by country, their combined effect is to reinforce political loyalty, limit political pluralism within Serbian communities, and amplify narratives associated with the broader "Serbian World" framework.



2.8 Summary Table: Instruments and Actors of Serbian Influence

Domain	Instruments and Mechanisms	Typical Channels	Key Actors / Examples
Political	Political coordination, patronage networks, influence through minority political representation, cooperation with sub-state institutions	Aligned political parties, entity-level institutions, Serb minority political structures	Government of Serbia, Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), Srpska Lista (Kosovo), leadership of Republika Srpska including Milorad Dodik, pro-Serbian political parties in Montenegro
Media & Information	Media retransmission, shared Serbian-language information space, narrative framing through local and Serbia-linked media	Television retransmission, online portals, local Serbian-language media ecosystems	Kosovo Online, Happy, Pink, and Informer TV, IN4S, Borba, RTRS
Economic	Economic cooperation, investment, infrastructure projects, telecommunications presence	State-linked companies, infrastructure and telecommunications sectors	Serbian state-linked companies and business networks operating in telecommunications and infrastructure sectors in the Western Balkans
Sociocultural & Religious	Identity narratives, religious networks, cultural and educational cooperation	Serbian Orthodox Church structures, cultural organisations, education and heritage institutions	Serbian Orthodox Church and church-linked organisations and cultural associations across the Western Balkans
Security & Informal	Security cooperation, parallel governance structures, informal political and security networks	Police and security cooperation, local Serb institutional structures	Serbian security institutions, local Serb political and institutional structures in Kosovo and Republika Srpska



3 Detailed Policy Recommendations

This chapter translates the analytical findings of the report into concrete, actionable policy recommendations. The aim is not to propose abstract principles, but to identify realistic entry points for mitigating negative effects of Serbian regional influence while preserving space for legitimate cross-border cooperation, minority protection, and regional dialogue. Recommendations are structured across three levels: Western Balkan governments, the European Union and its member states, and international and regional partners, including V4 countries and civil society actors.

3.1 Recommendations for Western Balkan Governments

Strengthen state-level institutional authority while preserving minority autonomy

Western Balkan governments should prioritise the strengthening of state-level institutions, particularly in areas where parallel arrangements and informal governance structures persist. This includes consistent enforcement of existing legislation, clearer allocation of competences between central and sub-state levels, and improved inter-institutional coordination. The focus should be on closing implementation gaps that allow external influence to substitute for domestic accountability, while fully safeguarding constitutionally guaranteed minority rights and local self-governance.

Promote political pluralism within minority communities

Minority representation frameworks should be reviewed to prevent political monopolisation. Electoral rules, access to public funding, and media visibility should enable pluralistic representation rather than reinforcing single-party dominance. Encouraging independent candidates, local civic initiatives, and issue-based platforms can reduce reliance on external political sponsorship while strengthening minority inclusion.

Increase transparency in public finance, procurement, and strategic sectors

Governments should strengthen transparency and oversight in public procurement, political party financing, and state-owned enterprises, with particular attention to high-risk sectors such as energy, infrastructure, telecommunications, and transport. Publicly accessible registers of beneficial ownership and procurement contracts should become standard practice.

Invest in media resilience and regulatory independence

Independent media regulators must be equipped with adequate mandates and resources to ensure transparency of media ownership, fair distribution of state advertising, and protection against political interference. Governments should avoid discretionary funding practices and instead support independent journalism through competitive, arm's-length mechanisms.

Address identity-related issues through inclusive and preventive approaches

Language policy, education, cultural heritage, and religious issues should be managed through inclusive, consultative processes involving minority representatives, independent experts, and international partners. Preventive engagement can reduce the likelihood that identity-related disputes are externalised or instrumentalised.



3.2 Recommendations for the European Union and EU Member States

Reinforce the credibility of the EU integration process

EU enlargement policy should be anchored in clear, measurable benchmarks related to rule of law, media freedom, and democratic governance. Progress and regression should be linked to predictable incentives and consequences, including the temporary suspension or reprogramming of EU funds where necessary. This conditionality should apply consistently across all Western Balkan partners, including Serbia.

Clearly distinguish legitimate engagement from destabilising practices

While maintaining diplomatic balance in public communication, EU institutions should develop and apply internal analytical frameworks that clearly distinguish between legitimate cross-border engagement and actions by specific actors that systematically undermine reform processes, institutional functionality, or regional security. This analytical clarity should inform diplomatic engagement, programming priorities, and political signalling.

Define and apply clear red lines linked to security and accession

Where activities by state or non-state actors undermine regional security, democratic processes, or the integrity of the EU integration framework, the EU and its member states should be prepared to respond with targeted, proportionate measures. Such red lines should be clearly linked both to security considerations and to Serbia's EU accession process, ensuring that destabilising behaviour carries predictable political consequences.

Strengthen EU strategic communication (STRATCOM) in the Western Balkans

The EU should significantly enhance its strategic communication (StratCom) capacity in the region, moving beyond reactive rebuttals toward sustained engagement. This includes explaining EU decisions and accession-related trade-offs, highlighting tangible benefits of EU-supported projects, and empowering trusted local messengers such as journalists, educators, and civil society leaders.

Expand advisory support to state-level institutions

EU support should include reinforced advisory and technical assistance to state-level institutions responsible for regulation, oversight, and coordination. This is particularly important in areas where institutional capacity gaps persist and where fragmented governance creates openings for external leverage, such as the energy, infrastructure or media sectors.

Reduce vulnerability in high-risk and strategic sectors

The EU should prioritise diversification and regulatory strengthening in sectors most exposed to external leverage, particularly energy, transport, telecommunications, and digital infrastructure. Investment support should be conditional on governance reforms that enhance transparency, regulatory independence, and accountability.



3.3 Role of V4 Countries, International Partners and Civil Society

Align international engagement and policy messaging

V4 countries, together with other EU member states and international partners, should better align their policies and messaging towards Western Balkan countries. Coordinated engagement reduces the risk of mixed signals and limits opportunities for external actors to exploit policy inconsistencies.

Strengthen regional cooperation and professional networks

Support should be provided for regional cooperation formats that bring together regulators, policymakers, journalists, and civil society actors. Practical cooperation in areas such as media standards, regulatory oversight, energy governance, and crisis management can reduce the space for unilateral external influence.

Use civil society as a platform for regional dialogue

Long-term support for civil society organisations and independent media should prioritise their role as platforms for cross-border dialogue and confidence-building. Funding mechanisms should favour sustainability and regional cooperation over short-term, isolated projects.

Engage democratic and pro-European actors in Serbia

International partners should maintain structured dialogue not only with Serbian authorities but also with pro-European opposition parties, reform-oriented political actors, independent experts, and civil society organisations. Broadening engagement beyond executive channels reduces overreliance on incumbents and signals sustained support for democratic pluralism.

Engage religious actors in support of stability, where appropriate

Where relevant and appropriate, engagement with religious leaders, including the Serbian Orthodox Church, can contribute to de-escalation, community dialogue, and the protection of minority rights. Such engagement should be transparent, inclusive, and complementary to – rather than a substitute for – democratic institutions.



3.4 Summary Table: Policy Recommendations

Level	Priority Area	Concrete Actions	Intended Effect
WB Govern-ments	State governance	Enforce laws, reduce parallel structures, improve coordination	Stronger institutional authority
WB Govern-ments	Minority representa-tion	Reform electoral and funding rules, support pluralism	Reduced political mo-nopolies
WB Govern-ments	Transparency & me-dia	Transparent procure-ment, independent regu-lators	More resilient infor-mation space
EU & Member States	EU integration	Clear benchmarks, con-sistent conditionality	Credible reform incen-tives
EU & Member States	Analytical clarity	Distinguish legitimate en-gagement from destabi-lising actions	More effective political signalling
EU & Member States	Strategic communi-cation	Strengthened StratCom, local messengers	Reduced narrative vul-nerability
EU & Member States	Advisory support	Targeted institutional as-sistance	Reduced capacity gaps
EU & Member States	Red lines	Security- and accession-linked responses	Predictable conse-quences
V4 & Partners	Policy alignment	Coordinated engagement and messaging	Reduced external exploi-tation
V4 & CSOs	Regional cooperation	Cross-border platforms and networks	Increased regional resili-ence
International actors	Serbia engagement	Dialogue with pro-Euro-pean opposition and CSOs	Broader democratic en-gagement



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