

# Influence Without Intervention: How Serbia Shapes Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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## Executive Summary

This report looks at how Serbia influences politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina and why that influence continues. It shows that influence does not come from direct pressure or intervention. Instead, it comes from close ties between institutions, regular political contact, and shared narratives within the post-Dayton system.

This influence is strongest during legal disputes, institutional stress, or political uncertainty. In those moments, external involvement can shape outcomes without taking responsibility for governing.

The analysis shows that the impact of Serbian influence depends less on Serbia's capacity and more on internal conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Fragmented authority, multiple veto points, weak enforcement of decisions, and long-standing uncertainty over EU integration reduce the political cost of obstruction and external alignment. Under these conditions, some political actors, especially at the entity level, find it rational to rely on external political support rather than state-level governance.

Serbia does not seek direct control. Its aim is to keep a political environment in which Republika Srpska remains strong, state institutions remain disputed, and alignment with external actors continues to matter. This allows Serbia to stay influential without taking responsibility for governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Influence works through routine and legal practices which include regular contact with entity authorities, cooperation under special and parallel relations, economic and infrastructure links, shared media narratives, cultural and identity ties, and security cooperation outside state-level structures. Over time, these practices shape political behavior and reduce the authority of state institutions without changing the legal framework.

The report concludes that the problem should be addressed internally, not through confrontation. The goal is to reduce how influence translates into political power. This requires a stronger role for state institutions, fewer institutional bypasses, more transparency, and consistent enforcement of rules.

These steps do not require changes to the Dayton framework or restrictions on cross-border cooperation. They require sustained institutional discipline, clearer responsibility, and political coordination. Support for civil society and oversight bodies is also important, especially when monitoring is factual and non-confrontational.

Ultimately, resilience to external influence depends on restoring governance as the main arena of political competition in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By reinforcing institutional authority and realigning incentives, the space in which external alignment replaces domestic accountability can be reduced, while remaining consistent with the constitutional order and European integration goals.

## Introduction & Context

Bosnia and Herzegovina's political reality remains inseparable from the legacy of the 1992–1995 war and from Serbia's role in the country both during and after that period. Contemporary forms of external influence are not recent additions, layered onto an otherwise stable political system. They are the continuation of relationships and power structures that emerged during the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia and were subsequently accommodated within the post-war order. The links established between Belgrade and Bosnian Serb political elites during the war did not fade with time; they were preserved, adapted, and gradually normalized, becoming part of the background conditions of politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kamberović, 2016).

During the war itself, Serbia was not just one of several regional actors. Through sustained political coordination, logistical support, and military assistance, it played a decisive role in supporting Bosnian Serb authorities and in shaping the conditions under which Republika Srpska (RS) emerged as a distinct political and territorial entity.

The end of the war did not dismantle these relationships. As analyses of Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitutional development have shown, they were absorbed into the framework created by the Dayton Peace Agreement and translated into post-war political and institutional ties (Hadžidedić, 2019). What changed after Dayton was not the existence of influence, but the form through which it was exercised.

The Dayton Agreement confirmed Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty, yet it also institutionalized an exceptionally fragmented and decentralized system of governance. Among its most consequential features was the provision allowing entities to establish "special and parallel relations" with neighboring states. Serbia has consistently relied on this provision to keep close political, economic, and institutional cooperation

with Republika Srpska. In time, this cooperation has become routine rather than exceptional.

In recent years, this institutional reality has been reinforced by a more explicit ideological layer. The increasing use of the term "Serbian World" (Srpski svet) in Serbian political debates reflects this change. The concept is usually presented as a way of emphasizing a shared Serbian identity and historical ties across state borders. Formally, it does not question the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, its political impact is indirect. By portraying Republika Srpska as part of a wider Serbian political and cultural space, the concept reduces the role of the Bosnian state as the main focus of political loyalty and legitimacy. Instead, it shifts attention toward greater autonomy at the entity level (Popadić, 2025), a narrative that often becomes more influential during periods of institutional crisis or instability.

Serbian officials regularly state their support for "regional stability" and for the Dayton framework, and such statements have become a standard element of Serbia's official diplomatic language. In practice, however, political influence rarely works through public declarations alone. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, historical experiences, the constitutional structure, and identity-based narratives interact in ways that consistently strengthen the authority of the entities, while leaving state-level institutions weak and open to dispute. Although external engagement remains formally within legal boundaries, its cumulative effect is to preserve political fragmentation and make efforts toward institutional strengthening and consolidation more difficult. This context is important because it helps explain why Serbian influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not depend on open intervention or direct pressure. It works precisely because it fits within existing legal frameworks and connects with political divisions that have existed for a long time. The chapters that follow build on this analysis by showing how these dynamics are reflected in strategic goals, specific forms of influence, the tools used in practice, and the actors who maintain them over time.

## Strategic Objectives of Serbian Influence

Serbia's approach to Bosnia and Herzegovina can be seen as a set of political goals, not a clear strategy. These goals continue Serbia's earlier involvement, adjusted to the post-Dayton system. In this system, influence can be exercised indirectly, through legal and normalized political practices, rather than through direct intervention.

The most important strategic outcome is the preservation of Republika Srpska as a politically authoritative actor within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Research on the Dayton constitutional framework shows that the agreement created a system in which entities have broad competences and several ways to resist centralization. As a result, strong entity-level authority is a long-term feature of the system, not a temporary phase of political development (Hadžidedić, 2019). Serbian engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina consistently follows interpretations of the Dayton Agreement that emphasize this distribution of political power.

Closely linked to this is Serbia's interest in remaining politically relevant in Bosnia and Herzegovina over the long term without being responsible for the governance of the state. By acting as a key external reference point for the leadership of Republika Srpska, while remaining outside Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal decision-making structures, the Serbian government retains political flexibility. This position allows Serbia to influence the timing of political events and negotiations. At the same time, Serbia avoids responsibility for weak governance at the state level. The European Union has identified weak state governance as a serious problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina (European Commission, 2025).

Another objective is to support a fragmented view of the Bosnian state. In this view, Bosnia and Herzegovina is not seen as one unified civic state. Instead, it is seen as a state made up of separate ethno-territorial units. Analysis of political developments in the region shows that Serbian political discourse increasingly stresses identity across borders. It presents Republika Srpska as part of a wider Serbian political space, rather than as an internal political unit of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Popadić, 2025). This does not formally question the territorial integrity of the state. However, it weakens state cohesion by giving more importance to the entity than to the state.

Another strategic objective is to shape the international context in which Bosnia and Herzegovina operates. Serbia places strong emphasis on respect for the Dayton framework and presents its role as one of regional stability. This framing allows Serbia to appear constructive in international settings while indirectly challenging external efforts aimed at strengthening state-level institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Finally, Serbia seeks to influence the pace and direction of Bosnia and Herzegovina's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Although Serbia does not officially oppose Bosnia and Herzegovina's EU integration, political positions supported by the leadership of Republika Srpska have repeatedly delayed the implementation of EU reforms. These delays are most visible in areas that require coordination and cooperation at the state level. EU reports have consistently noted that this slows reform processes without causing an open institutional break, allowing influence to be maintained through delay rather than confrontation (European Commission, 2025).

Taken together, these strategic objectives show a balance between engagement and distance. The aim is not direct control over Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the preservation of a status quo in which entity authority remains strong, state consolidation remains contested, and external political alignment continues to matter. These objectives provide the context for the analysis of the concrete means, tools, and actors of Serbian influence, which are examined in the following chapters.

## Means of Influence — *What Serbia Does*

Serbia influences Bosnia and Herzegovina through several long-term and visible forms of engagement. These activities affect political behavior without formal intervention. They take place within the post-Dayton constitutional framework and rely on continuity, close institutional contact, and public political presence. Instead of short-term pressure or force, their impact comes from repetition over time. Regular interaction slowly shapes political incentives, expectations, and everyday governance practices.

The most visible form of influence is political engagement with entity-level authorities, especially in Republika Srpska. Serbian political leaders stay in regular contact with RS officials through meetings, joint public appearances, and shared political positions. This pattern has been widely noted in analyses of relations between Serbia and Republika Srpska (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2024). Such engagement places RS leadership at the center of bilateral political exchanges and gives entity-level politics greater weight in regional diplomacy. In contrast, state-level institutions in Sarajevo are less often treated as main counterparts, which creates an imbalance in political recognition.

Another important form of influence is institutional cooperation based on special and parallel relations. Serbian ministries and public institutions work directly with their counterparts in Republika Srpska in areas such as education, infrastructure, social policy, and public administration. Research on the Dayton constitutional system shows that these arrangements allow broad cross-border cooperation at the entity level while remaining

formally consistent with Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitutional structure (Hadžidedić, 2019). Over time, this cooperation shapes administrative practices and policy direction without changing formal legal competences.

Economic relations are also a key area of influence. Serbia is an important economic partner for Republika Srpska through trade, investment, financial support, and joint development projects, particularly in sectors such as energy and transport. Strong economic ties increase the political weight of bilateral relations. They make reforms more difficult when state-level coordination is needed. Economic influence does not rely on clear conditions, but on long-term interdependence.

Economic relations are also supported by infrastructure cooperation. Energy supply, transport links, and large projects tie political relations to real, physical systems. These projects increase functional dependence and reduce incentives to seek alternative external partners. Although they are usually presented as development projects, their combined effect is to strengthen the strategic role of bilateral ties in domestic political decision-making.

Serbia also exercises influence through cultural, social, and identity-based engagement. It supports cultural institutions, commemorations, and educational cooperation that emphasize shared history and identity among Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Studies on identity and citizenship in divided societies show that such practices strengthen ethnic and territorial political identification and weaken attachment to state-level civic belonging, especially during periods of political tension (Mujkić, 2017).

The media environment is another important area. Media content from Serbia is widely present in Republika Srpska because the language is the same and audiences overlap. Political events in Bosnia and Herzegovina are often explained in similar ways in Serbian and RS media. These reports frequently focus on weak institutions and outside pressure. This shared way of reporting shapes public opinion without direct coordination or the use of false information. RTRS, the public broadcaster of Republika Srpska, is almost every year sanctioned by the Communications Regulatory Agency (RAK) and is frequently

identified among broadcasters with the highest levels of disinformation or fake news content.

In the area of security and rule of law, Serbian influence works through formal cooperation, not direct action. Serbian and Republika Srpska authorities cooperate through agreements, joint frameworks, and coordination between interior ministries and police institutions. Recent arrangements focus on aligning legal approaches and professional standards in policing. These forms of cooperation strengthen institutional closeness in internal security while operating alongside, rather than through, state-level law-enforcement bodies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. European Union assessments note that decentralized security cooperation and resistance to stronger state-level competences make reform more difficult and weaken unified oversight in sensitive governance areas (European Commission, 2025).

In practice, these areas define Serbia's engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbia focuses on entity-level political relations, maintains institutional cooperation through formal arrangements, embeds political alignment in economic and infrastructure ties, reinforces identity-based narratives, participates actively in the shared media space, and develops security cooperation mainly at the entity level.

## **Tools of Influence — *How Serbia Does It***

Serbia turns political closeness and institutional presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina into influence through regular and visible patterns of interaction. These tools are predictable and public. They rely on symbolic signals and the use of legal and political ambiguity, not secrecy or force. Their

effects are strongest during moments of institutional pressure, when authority is questioned and political incentives change.

One important tool is elite alignment through long-term political support. Serbian political leaders keep close and regular relations with aligned actors in Republika Srpska. This support helps strengthen their political position during legal or institutional challenges. When accountability measures are applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina, reactions from Serbia often present these actions as politically motivated or destabilizing. In this way, domestic legal issues are turned into wider political disputes. This pattern has been visible in recent political crises involving Republika Srpska leadership, where external political support helped maintain political relevance even without formal office (Associated Press, 2025).

Closely related to this is symbolic legitimization. Serbian authorities continue to treat Republika Srpska political leaders as key interlocutors, regardless of changes in their formal institutional status. High-level meetings, public appearances, and ceremonial events signal continued political recognition. This weakens the effect of institutional sanctions by separating political authority from legal accountability. Similar dynamics have been noted in international reporting on governance disputes in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Reuters, 2025b).

Another important tool is the reframing of institutional conflict. Disputes over court rulings, budget decisions, or reform obligations are often presented as threats to collective rights rather than procedural disagreements. This framing turns institutional disputes into issues of group protection. As a result, space for political compromise becomes smaller. Such narratives fit well within Bosnia and Herzegovina's post-Dayton system, where governance conflicts are often linked to questions of group identity and legitimacy.

This reframing is strengthened by shared interpretation in the media environment. After politically important events, similar narratives quickly appear in Serbian political statements, Republika Srpska institutions, and aligned media outlets. This does not require central coordination. Instead, it reflects shared political frames within a

common language and media space. Over time, this reinforces distrust toward state-level institutions and international oversight (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2024).

Economic and infrastructure ties also function as long-term tools of influence. Trade relations, energy cooperation, and infrastructure connections increase the political cost of moving away from alignment. This happens without direct pressure.

Legal and administrative cooperation provides additional leverage. Frameworks created under special and parallel relations allow Serbian and Republika Srpska institutions to work directly together in many policy areas. This embeds influence in routine administrative practices. While formally consistent with the constitutional order, this form of cooperation makes political alignment stable and difficult to challenge.

In the area of security, tools remain indirect. Serbian political engagement supports interpretations of the constitutional framework that argue against stronger centralized security competences. Although this does not involve direct involvement in law enforcement, it limits agreement on integrated security coordination and shapes the broader governance environment.

Taken together, these tools show how Serbian influence works in practice. It relies on elite support during periods of pressure, symbolic recognition beyond formal office, reframing of institutional disputes, shared political narratives, long-term economic ties, legal cooperation, and the use of governance weaknesses. Their impact comes from repeated use within Bosnia and Herzegovina's fragmented political system.

## Key Actors Involved — *Who*

Serbian influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina is carried by a clear group of political, institutional, and social actors. Their roles are not hierarchical, but depend on the situation. Influence does not

operate through direct command. Instead, it appears through patterns of interaction that become visible when political authority, legal responsibility, or institutional arrangements in Bosnia and Herzegovina are challenged.

At the external political level, the Serbian state leadership acts as a source of political signaling and external support for aligned actors in Republika Srpska. The President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, plays a central role as the most visible representative of continuity in Serbia's engagement with Republika Srpska, especially during periods of political or legal pressure on RS authorities. When institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina take action against key political figures in Republika Srpska, reactions from Belgrade often describe these actions as wider political issues. In this way, legal issues inside the country turn into political issues. International reporting has noted this pattern during recent political crises involving RS leadership, where support from Serbia helped keep political influence even without formal office (Associated Press, 2025).

Operational continuity is provided by Serbian state institutions and line ministries, including those responsible for foreign affairs, energy, infrastructure, internal affairs, education, and culture. These institutions work regularly with their counterparts in Republika Srpska through agreements and joint mechanisms under special and parallel relations. Their role is mainly administrative. They turn political closeness into everyday governance practices that continue regardless of changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal political situation.

Within Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska political leadership and entity institutions act as the main domestic channels of influence. Milorad Dodik, as the most prominent political figure linked to Republika Srpska over the past decade, illustrates this role, although it goes beyond any single individual. RS authorities often use outside political support to challenge decisions at the state level. They question the courts and frame disputes as political issues. This dynamic has remained visible even when formal institutional positions were legally limited, showing how external recognition can sustain political authority beyond office-holding (Reuters, 2025b).

Political parties and party-linked networks in Republika Srpska also play an important role, especially the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD). Through control of entity institutions, coordination in the parliament, and consistent public messaging, party structures maintain stable positions toward state-level governance and international actors. These networks provide continuity across elections and reduce the impact of leadership changes or short-term institutional crises.

The media environment functions as a channel for spreading narratives rather than as a system of direct control. Public broadcasters, private television stations, and online portals in Republika Srpska often reflect interpretations similar to those found in Serbian political discourse. This happens because of shared language, overlapping audiences, and informal editorial alignment, not because of centralized direction. Research on Serbia–RS relations shows that this convergence helps normalize distrust toward state-level institutions and international oversight during periods of political conflict (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2024).

Religious institutions, especially the Serbian Orthodox Church, play a symbolic role. Their presence at public events and meetings with political leaders supports shared identity and makes strong entity authority more acceptable.

Finally, informal networks and diaspora-linked actors extend influence beyond formal institutions. Personal connections among political elites, business figures, cultural organizations, and media personalities support coordination outside official channels. At the same time, diaspora communities and online networks help spread narratives focused on unity, grievance, and external pressure across borders.

Together, these actors form a decentralized system of influence rather than a single command structure. Serbian political leaders provide visibility and political signals. Serbian institutions embed cooperation in everyday administration. Republika Srpska authorities apply alignment at the domestic level. Party networks ensure continuity. Media normalize key narratives. Religious institutions give symbolic legitimacy. Informal networks extend influence further.

Influence becomes most visible during periods of institutional stress, when interaction across this system intensifies and limits the space for state-level authority.

## Vulnerabilities / Enablers in the Host Country

Serbian influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina depends mainly on domestic conditions. These include political and institutional factors. These conditions create incentives for obstruction, external alignment, and avoidance of responsibility. They do not fully determine political outcomes. However, they shape how political actors calculate costs and benefits and make reliance on external political support a rational choice.

The most important enabling factor is the structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina's political system. This system allows long-term blocking of decision-making at the state level. The post-Dayton constitutional framework includes several procedural veto mechanisms, such as entity voting, quorum manipulation, and selective non-participation. These tools allow political actors, especially at the entity level, to delay or block state-level decisions. They can do this without facing immediate consequences. Research on the Dayton system shows that this structure makes obstruction a normal part of political behavior, not an exceptional tactic (Hadžidedić, 2019). In this setting, external political alignment helps actors improve their bargaining position while staying within formal rules.

These structural weaknesses are made worse by weak enforcement. Court rulings, binding administrative decisions, and international obligations are not applied consistently across all levels of government. Sanctions for non-compliance are often delayed, challenged, or blocked for political reasons. Because of this,

institutional authority has little deterrent effect. European Union reports repeatedly note that weak enforcement and uneven implementation reduce trust in state-level institutions and lead to long-term governance problems (European Commission, 2025). This situation makes it less risky to ignore state institutions and increases the value of other sources of political support.

Economic conditions also strengthen these dynamics. Bosnia and Herzegovina's economy has little diversification and depends heavily on public-sector jobs. Investment is often influenced by politics. In Republika Srpska, economic stability depends strongly on external trade, energy cooperation, and infrastructure funding. When economic ties are concentrated, dependence on external partners increases. This reduces incentives for policies that could disrupt existing support. Economic dependence does not work through direct pressure, but through caution and a preference for continuity instead of institutional change.

Social and identity-based factors also play an important role. The political system is built around ethnic representation, making identity a central part of political competition. Governance disputes are often presented as collective or existential threats. This is common during institutional conflict. Research shows that such framing reduces support for compromise and strengthens narratives of protection and continuity (Mujkić, 2017).

The media environment makes these weaknesses stronger. Media markets are divided by entities and political positions. There are few incentives for shared or cross-entity views. Media literacy levels differ, and fact-checking efforts lack strong institutional support. In this situation, similar political messages can spread widely without coordination or false information. Public opinion is shaped mainly through repetition and selective focus, not through clear lies.

Finally, uncertainty around European integration weakens an important counterweight. EU membership remains an official goal. Repeated delays and changing conditions reduce its motivating power. When reforms seem uncertain, political actors turn more easily to external partners that offer immediate support. This does not mean rejection of European integration, but adjustment

to its reduced credibility as a short- or medium-term anchor.

Collectively, these vulnerabilities do not remove domestic political choice. Instead, they reward strategies that favor political leverage over governance performance and reduce the costs of external alignment. Serbian influence operates effectively within this environment, but it does not create it. Addressing these issues therefore requires changes in domestic incentives and stronger enforcement, rather than focusing only on external actors.

## Policy Recommendations for Internal Mitigation

Reducing Serbian influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina requires limiting how influence works in practice. It does not require banning Serbia's formal engagement or cross-border cooperation. Since influence mostly operates through legal, institutional, and symbolic channels, mitigation should focus on strengthening state-level relevance, increasing transparency, and raising the political cost of selective external alignment.

A first priority is to strengthen the role of state-level institutions as the main point of contact for external political engagement. When regional issues, security cooperation, or international obligations are discussed, state institutions should act as the default interlocutor. This does not mean banning entity-level contacts. However, it requires regular and visible state-level participation in regional dialogue and EU-led processes. Over time, this weakens the political value of entity-focused engagement. It also reduces the ability of external actors to bypass state institutions.

Second, special and parallel relations should not be used to bypass institutions. This requires clear rules and full transparency. Agreements made by entities with external partners should be regularly reported, published, and reviewed at the state level. This is especially important in sensitive areas such as security, energy, infrastructure, and education. Making these arrangements visible does not call their legality into question. It strengthens accountability and limits their use as substitutes for coordination at the state level.

Third, state institutions should act consistently and predictably when political authority is contested. They should avoid improvised responses to

external signals. Instead, they should follow existing procedures, enforce decisions, and ensure continuity. Regular implementation of court rulings and administrative decisions reduces the space in which external recognition can take the place of domestic accountability.

Fourth, in the media sphere, the emphasis should be on transparency rather than counter-messaging. Instead of directly confronting Serbian political narratives, state institutions and independent regulators should apply clear rules on media ownership, cross-border funding, and political advertising. Supporting investigative journalism that documents institutional bypass and coordinated narratives can help shift public debate toward concrete political practices, rather than identity-based disputes.

Fifth, economic and infrastructure diversification should be treated as a tool for reducing influence, not only as a development goal. EU-supported investments, energy projects, and infrastructure funding should require state-level coordination and compliance with central regulatory rules. Over time, this reduces reliance on bilateral arrangements and increases the political importance of state institutions, without disrupting existing economic ties.

Sixth, EU conditionality should be applied more clearly to influence-related behavior. Progress reports should distinguish between technical capacity problems and deliberate political obstruction. They should also clearly identify which level of governance is responsible for delays. Clear lines of responsibility weaken narratives that shift blame outward. They also limit the protective role of external political alignment.

Finally, civil society and oversight bodies should be supported to monitor influence-related practices. This includes tracking institutional bypass, symbolic political engagement, selective non-compliance, and security cooperation outside state frameworks. Findings should be presented in a factual and non-confrontational way, so that scrutiny becomes routine rather than political.

Together, these measures seek to reduce the impact of Serbian influence, not to confront it directly. By limiting how external alignment can substitute for domestic governance, Bosnia and Herzegovina can

strengthen internal resilience while remaining within its constitutional framework and European integration goals.

## Conclusion

This report shows that Serbian influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina operates mainly through close institutional ties, political signaling, and shared narratives. It does not depend on direct intervention or coercion. Its influence is strongest during periods of institutional strain, legal disputes, or political uncertainty. In these moments, external engagement can affect domestic outcomes without assuming responsibility for governance.

The analysis also shows that the strength of this influence depends less on Serbia's actions than on internal political incentives in Bosnia and Herzegovina's post-Dayton system. Fragmented authority, multiple veto points, weak enforcement, and long-standing uncertainty over EU integration

lower the political cost of obstruction and external alignment. As a result, external influence can serve as a point of reference for some political actors, especially at the entity level, while state institutions lose authority.

The conclusion is clear: reducing this influence requires internal adjustment, not external confrontation. The focus should be on narrowing the channels through which influence becomes politically effective. This includes stronger state-level involvement in external relations, limits on institutional bypass, greater transparency in security, economic, and media cooperation, and consistent enforcement of procedures. These steps do not require changes to the Dayton framework or restrictions on cross-border cooperation, they require sustained institutional discipline and political coordination.

In the end, resilience to Serbian influence depends on restoring governance as the main arena of political competition in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By reinforcing institutional authority and realigning incentives, the space for external alignment to replace domestic accountability can be reduced—while remaining fully consistent with the constitutional order and European integration goals.

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