



RELEASE DATE
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ELECTORAL VULNERABILITY INDEX 2026-2027

COUNTRY ANALYSIS

SERBIA

EVI RISK INDEX: 48.8 | PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF ANY ELECTORAL VIOLENCE: 89.6%
REGIONAL RISK INDEX BASELINE (EU/EEA AND EU CANDIDATES, EXCL. COUNTRY): 10.2



PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: EXPECTED IN 2027

BACKGROUND

Serbia is a major outlier among European and EU-candidate contexts in the EVI dataset. Its Risk Index of 48.8 is far above the country-excluded regional Risk Index baseline. It reflects a combination of repeated contentious elections, government intimidation, weak clean-election indicators, opposition distrust, media imbalance and escalating street politics. Serbia remains formally a parliamentary democracy and an EU candidate country, but democratic institutions have been under sustained pressure.

The Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and President Aleksandar Vučić dominate the political system. Opposition parties, civic movements and independent observers have repeatedly raised concerns about media capture, pressure on public-sector employees, misuse of administrative resources, vote-buying and intimidation. International observation missions have identified irregularities and uneven campaign conditions in recent electoral cycles.

The EVI model identifies the absence of consecutive peaceful elections and a long streak of elections with at least moderate violence as key drivers. It also highlights government intimidation, other-actor violence, voting irregularities, and vote buying as risk-elevating factors. In a European context, these indicators point to a political environment where electoral competition is increasingly

connected to street mobilization and distrust in institutions.

Since late 2024 and through 2025-2026, Serbia has experienced sustained protests linked to corruption, governance, and demands for accountability following the Novi Sad railway station canopy collapse. Student-led and civic protests evolved into a broader challenge to the ruling system. Clashes, arrests and accusations of state pressure have increased polarization. Government supporters have also mobilized, creating a risk of confrontation between rival groups.

Serbia's geopolitical context adds pressure. The government balances EU accession, relations with Russia and China, and sensitive negotiations over Kosovo. Domestic actors may use these issues to frame elections as a choice between sovereignty and foreign interference, thereby heightening nationalist rhetoric and reducing room for compromise.

The protest cycle has also altered the relationship between formal opposition parties and civic society. Students and civic groups have often sought to avoid capture by established parties, while parties need broader civic legitimacy to challenge the ruling coalition. This gap may complicate negotiations over candidates, electoral boycotts, protest strategy and acceptance of institutional remedies.

UPCOMING ELECTIONS

Serbia is expected to hold presidential elections by 2027, when President Vučić's second term ends, and parliamentary elections by the end of 2027 unless called earlier. Political signals in 2025-2026 suggested that early elections remained possible as a response to protest pressure. The timing, therefore, remains a central uncertainty.

Three timing scenarios should be monitored. Early elections could serve as a negotiated institutional outlet if the minimum conditions are credible; they could also be perceived as a tactical trap if called too quickly without reforms. Conversely, refusal to call elections while protests continue could keep the political conflict on the streets and increase the likelihood of confrontation.

If presidential and parliamentary elections are held together, the campaign may become a plebiscite on the ruling system. If held separately, each contest may produce its own cycle of mobilization and dispute. The opposition is fragmented, but protest movements have created new civic energy outside traditional party structures. Whether these movements become electoral actors, support a joint candidate, or remain street-based will shape risk levels.

The electoral administration and media regulator will be closely scrutinized. Voter-list integrity, campaign-finance transparency, media access, pressure on public employees, and the role of local authorities are likely to be contested. In previous elections, allegations around organized voter transport and manipulation of local residency registration created serious distrust.

The most sensitive period may begin before the official campaign, especially if the government calls a snap election without consensus on conditions. Opponents could view a rapid timetable as an attempt to convert protest fatigue into electoral advantage. Conversely, continued refusal to hold elections could sustain demonstrations and increase confrontation between protesters, police and pro-government groups.

Belgrade and other urban centers require particular attention. Urban elections and demonstrations have previously served as focal points for allegations of manipulation and for visible confrontation between citizens and police. If national elections coincide with local disputes, the symbolic importance of the capital could amplify tensions.

POTENTIAL DRIVERS OF CONFLICT

According to the Electoral Vulnerability Index (EVI), these are the factors that contribute most to the increased potential for violence:

Protest-election interaction: Serbia's main risk is that electoral timing becomes part of an ongoing legitimacy crisis. Snap elections could either defuse or intensify protests depending on whether conditions are considered fair.

Media imbalance and disinformation: Dominant pro-government media narratives, attacks on protest leaders and claims of foreign interference could heighten hostility. Online harassment and intimidation may spill into physical confrontation during rallies.

POTENTIAL DRIVERS OF CONFLICT, CONT.

Administrative pressure and vote manipulation: Allegations of pressure on public employees, vote buying, or voter-list manipulation could trigger disputes before and after election day. Collation and certification may be particularly sensitive if margins are narrow in major cities.

Security response to demonstrations: Heavy-handed policing, mass arrests or tolerance of counter-protester violence could transform electoral grievances into broader unrest.

Opposition coordination: Fragmentation among opposition parties and civic movements may create uncertainty over whether disputes are channelled through elections, protests or boycotts. Mixed strategies can confuse supporters and increase the risk of spontaneous mobilization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ELECTORAL REFORM

- Authorities should engage opposition parties, civic groups and international partners on minimum electoral conditions before the campaign. Priority areas include voter-list transparency, media access, campaign finance and safeguards against administrative pressure.

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- The electoral commission, media regulator and judiciary should communicate decisions clearly and publish data promptly. Visible impartiality is essential in a context where institutional trust is low.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA

- Domestic observers, journalists and fact-checkers should receive protection against harassment. Independent monitoring of rallies, police behavior and online threats can reduce rumor-driven escalation.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

- The OSCE/ODIHR, EU institutions and diplomatic partners should coordinate early engagement around electoral conditions rather than waiting for election-day observation. Preventive diplomacy should focus on both rules and de-escalation of street confrontation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Republic Electoral Commission of Serbia; OSCE/ODIHR election observation reports; European Commission Serbia reports; Freedom House; V-Dem country data; ACLED; Reuters; Associated Press; Balkan Investigative Reporting Network.