# Serbia’s Vučić visits Ukraine but resists tougher sanctions on Russia amid EU bid



Serbia’s President Aleksandar Vučić made headlines with his unexpected visit to Ukraine this past Wednesday, which marked his first foray into the war-torn nation since taking office over a decade ago. He attended a summit in Odesa aimed at enhancing European support for Ukraine amid its ongoing conflict with Russia. However, despite the significant backdrop of the event, Vučić notably abstained from signing a joint declaration that called for tougher sanctions against Moscow, a decision that underscores Serbia's complicated geopolitical stance.

The summit saw participation from leaders across 12 Southeast European nations, offering Vučić a platform to showcase Serbia's aspirations towards European Union membership. He declared that joining the EU remains a priority, yet his reluctance to endorse the anti-Russian measures sought by other attendees reveals the complex relationship Serbia maintains with Russia. This relationship is characterised by dependence, particularly in energy supplies, and highlighted by Vučić's participation in a Victory Day parade in Moscow just a month prior, an act that drew significant condemnation from EU officials.

During his visit, Vučić remarked that signing the declaration was "not easy and simple for us," especially referring to its content regarding sanctions. He did, however, express gratitude towards Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for the hospitality extended to him during his visit. This diplomatic balancing act is further complicated by recent allegations from Russia accusing Serbia of covertly supplying arms to Ukraine, a charge that Belgrade has neither confirmed nor denied. Instead, Serbia has promised to investigate the claims, which Russia alleges involve NATO intermediaries.

Western diplomats have been watching Serbia's manoeuvering closely, particularly as EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas has stressed the necessity for Serbia to choose between deepening ties with the EU or continuing its partnership with Russia and China. Following Vučić's earlier visit to Moscow, where he met with both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, concerns within the EU have intensified regarding Serbia's commitment to reforms vital for EU integration.

Yet, despite these complexities, the dynamics during the summit appeared cautiously optimistic. Ukrainian officials, including President Zelenskyy, refrained from confronting Vučić directly about his diplomatic hesitations. They acknowledged the importance of Serbia’s nominal support for Ukraine’s territorial integrity, even as tensions brew over allegations of Serbian arms supplies.

In recent commentary, analysts have suggested that Serbia's balancing act may no longer be sustainable, particularly given the pressure from the West regarding its close ties with Russia amidst the war in Ukraine. The ongoing geopolitical chessboard requires a calculated approach from Belgrade, one that may ultimately need to resolve the tension between its historical alliances and contemporary realities.

President Vučić's visit to Ukraine thus represents both a significant diplomatic overture and an ongoing challenge for Serbia's aspirations on the European stage, a dance that may not end without significant shifts in geopolitical allegiances.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/serbia-ukraine-aleksandar-vucic-moscow-belgrade-b2768319.html), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/a782959b3922fbac39aaf4d48896771e)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/serbia-ukraine-aleksandar-vucic-moscow-belgrade-b2768319.html), [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/world/serbias-vucic-says-he-wants-join-eu-despite-visit-moscow-2025-05-13/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/a782959b3922fbac39aaf4d48896771e), [[4]](https://www.huffingtonpost.es/global/el-presidente-serbia-rebela-aliados-ucrania-delante-zelenski-primera-visita-pais.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/356972b28d08d7f0835ab7036d4b31bf), [[7]](https://www.ft.com/content/cc12fe45-0518-4255-945f-7349e882fc9d)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/serbias-president-aleksandar-vucic-makes-first-ever-visit-ukraine-2025-06-11/), [[4]](https://www.huffingtonpost.es/global/el-presidente-serbia-rebela-aliados-ucrania-delante-zelenski-primera-visita-pais.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/356972b28d08d7f0835ab7036d4b31bf), [[7]](https://www.ft.com/content/cc12fe45-0518-4255-945f-7349e882fc9d)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/serbia-ukraine-aleksandar-vucic-moscow-belgrade-b2768319.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/a782959b3922fbac39aaf4d48896771e> - Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić made an unexpected visit to Ukraine for a summit aimed at bolstering European support for Ukraine amid its conflict with Russia. Despite attending the event in Odesa alongside leaders from 12 Southeast European countries, Vučić declined to sign a joint declaration advocating for stricter sanctions against Moscow, citing the complexity and referencing Serbia's ties to Russia. Although Serbia aspires to join the European Union, Vučić has maintained close relations with the Kremlin, attending Russia’s Victory Day parade in May, which drew criticism from EU officials. Serbia has not imposed sanctions on Russia and remains largely dependent on Russian energy, although it officially upholds Ukraine's territorial integrity. The visit follows recent accusations from Russia alleging that Serbia has been covertly supplying arms to Ukraine, a claim Serbia neither confirmed nor denied, but has pledged to investigate at Russia's behest. Vučić thanked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for the hospitality during the visit but remained cautious in aligning Serbia more strongly against Russia.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/serbias-president-aleksandar-vucic-makes-first-ever-visit-ukraine-2025-06-11/> - On June 11, 2025, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic made his first official visit to Ukraine since assuming power 12 years ago. Attending the Ukraine-Southeastern Europe Summit in Odesa—a city recently targeted by major Russian attacks—Vucic joined leaders from 12 Southeastern European countries at the event hosted by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy. Vucic expressed willingness to aid in Ukraine’s post-war reconstruction. However, maintaining Serbia’s delicate diplomatic balance between the West and Russia, he abstained from signing the summit’s joint declaration, which supported Ukraine’s path toward peace and urged enhanced international support for Kyiv. Although Serbia aspires to join the European Union, it maintains strong energy ties with Russia and has refused to impose Western sanctions against Moscow. Serbia has expressed support for Ukraine’s territorial integrity at the UN, but tensions have risen due to allegations—denied by Belgrade—that Serbian arms reached Ukraine through intermediaries. Vucic stated Serbia’s neutral position serves to protect the broader interests of international law. His visit marks a significant moment in Serbian-Ukrainian relations, being the first by a Serbian president since 2011.
4. <https://www.huffingtonpost.es/global/el-presidente-serbia-rebela-aliados-ucrania-delante-zelenski-primera-visita-pais.html> - During a summit of Southeast European leaders held in Odesa, Ukraine, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic refused to sign a joint declaration supporting Ukraine, which condemned the Russian invasion and called for the withdrawal of Russian troops. Vucic justified his decision by stating that the declaration was not straightforward and reiterated that his stance did not represent a betrayal of Russia. Unlike other European leaders present, Serbia chose to abstain, highlighting its independent attitude towards sanctions against Russia. Despite these differences, Vucic thanked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy for the hospitality and expressed his respect for Ukraine. Zelenskiy avoided entering into controversies and positively valued Serbia's support for Ukrainian sovereignty, emphasizing the symbolic importance of Vucic's first official visit to Ukraine.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/world/serbias-vucic-says-he-wants-join-eu-despite-visit-moscow-2025-05-13/> - Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic reaffirmed Serbia's commitment to joining the European Union (EU) despite recent Western criticism of his visit to Moscow. During the visit, Vucic attended Russia’s World War Two victory parade and met with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping. Following discussions with European Council President Antonio Costa, Vucic emphasized Serbia's desire to advance its EU integration by opening more negotiation chapters. Despite concerns in the EU regarding Serbia's close ties with Russia—its historical ally and major energy supplier—Vucic pledged to implement necessary reforms, including tackling corruption, reforming the judiciary, media, and electoral laws, and aligning foreign policy with the EU, notably by condemning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Costa welcomed Vucic’s continued prioritization of EU membership and highlighted the importance of aligning Serbia’s policies with EU standards. Currently, Serbia is among several Western Balkan countries holding EU candidate status, while Kosovo remains behind in the membership process.
6. <https://apnews.com/article/356972b28d08d7f0835ab7036d4b31bf> - During a visit to Belgrade, EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas urged Serbia to make a strategic decision between aligning with the European Union or continuing close ties with Russia and China. Her comments follow Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic’s participation in Russia’s Victory Day parade alongside President Vladimir Putin, which raised concerns in Brussels due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Although Vucic maintains Serbia’s EU aspirations, the country has refused to impose sanctions on Russia or support most EU positions on Ukraine. Kallas emphasized that EU membership requires concrete reforms, including improvements in media freedom, anti-corruption efforts, and electoral reform, echoing demands made by widespread anti-corruption protests across Serbia. Kallas also discussed tense Serbia-Kosovo relations during a subsequent visit to Kosovo, stressing that dialogue and normalization between the two neighbors are fundamental for their European integration. She revealed plans to invite representatives from both countries to Brussels for further negotiations. The EU views stability in the region as vital, especially following increased tensions in northern Kosovo and in light of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which has accelerated EU enlargement efforts in the Western Balkans.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/cc12fe45-0518-4255-945f-7349e882fc9d> - Russia has publicly criticized its traditional ally Serbia over accusations of arms and ammunition supplies reaching Ukraine, calling it a betrayal. President Aleksandar Vučić denied any direct involvement, stating that the Serbian government had not authorized arms exports to Ukraine and claiming that weapons might have reached Ukraine through third-party intermediaries. Russia’s foreign intelligence service (SVR) accused Serbian arms manufacturers of using falsified end-user certificates and intermediary countries to secretly supply Ukraine, arguing that Serbia was profiting from the conflict and undermining its alliance with Moscow. The incident marks growing frustration in Moscow over Vučić’s attempt to balance Serbia’s alignment between Russia and the West, particularly as Serbia remains a candidate for EU membership. Analysts suggest Russia’s rebuke is a warning that such balancing acts are becoming unacceptable. Meanwhile, Washington has pressured Belgrade over Russian oil ties, and Serbia faces a looming decision regarding its oil company NIS, owned by Gazprom. This diplomatic friction occurs as new Russia-Ukraine peace talks are proposed but remain uncertain due to delays from Moscow and skepticism from Ukraine.