
ANGELA MERKEL: NO BALKAN BORDER CHANGES

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday rejected any changes to borders in the Balkans, after leaders of both Serbia and Kosovo suggested in recent days that current boundaries are up for negotiation.

Merkels comments were clearly intended to squash talk of a possible partition of Kosovo, a prospect that many fear would trigger violence in the volatile Balkans amid knock-on demands from other nations for border changes.

The territorial integrity of the states of the Western Balkans has been established and is inviolable, Merkel said at the start of a news conference in Berlin with Denis Zvizdić, the prime minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This has to be said again and again because again and again there are attempts to perhaps talk about borders and we cant do that, Merkel said.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić last month floated the idea of partitioning Kosovo, which declared independence from Serbia in 2008. The most commonly discussed scenario would involve the north of Kosovo being recognized as part of Serbia. Another often-discussed possibility is that a mainly ethnic Albanian part of southern Serbia could join Kosovo.

Most of Kosovos 1.8 million people are ethnic Albanians but the territory is also home to other ethnic groups, including Serbs.

Kosovo President Hashim Thaçi said last week that he was against ethnic partition but was in favor of border adjustment.

For years, international officials have strenuously rejected further border changes in the Western Balkans, which was torn apart by war in 1990s as Yugoslavia collapsed into smaller states. Any change to Kosovos borders would prompt secession demands from Bosnia and Herzegovinas Serb Republic and likely spark calls for other boundary changes in the region.

The European Union, however, initially avoided a clear stance on the latest suggestions. A European Commission spokesman last week did not reject the idea of border changes outright, preferring to say that Kosovo and Serbia had to reach a sustainable realistic solution, according to international law.

The United States has so far stayed out of the renewed debate, prompting speculation that U.S.

President Donald Trump could be open to brokering a partition deal.

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