
JUNCKER SHOCK CLAIM: EU INTEGRATION OF BALKANS NEEDED TO SAVE EUROPE FROM WAR

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EU Commission boss Jean-Claude Juncker suggested integrating the Balkan states into the European Union could be a necessary step to avoid conflict kicking off again in the region.

During the 1990s the Balkans were involved in a series of ethnically motivated wars which that unleashed chaos across the continent that saw at least 130,000 people dead.

Mr Juncker told Deutsche Welle that admitting the former Yugoslav states into the EU might help prevent spiralling Europe into a new conflict.

He said: "People in the EU need to be made aware that the Balkans are on their doorstep.

"War raged here in the 1990s: without the promise of EU accession, we could all too easily see a repeat of the conflict witnessed here in those years."

The bloc is moving ahead with the plans as it plots to absorb Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina by 2025.

Geographical disputes remain an unresolved issue as a legacy of the regions past which was torn apart by war in the 1990s.

A report from the European Commission found the countries "show clear elements of state capture, including links with organised crime and corruption at all levels of government and administration."

The EU paper adds none of the countries can currently be considered a functioning market economy but included a timeline for the states to potentially join the bloc by 2025.

But in March Mr Juncker kicked off a tour of the Balkans to win over the support of their leaders but the decision to offer membership to these states has created some conflict within existing member states like France and Austria.

Speaking at a news conference the EU Commissioner said: The 2025 date is open to all candidate countries.

And to the extent that a candidate country by then or later or earlier would have met all the criteria for membership, we will proceed in such a way that its efforts will be recognised by the EU.

Serbia and Montenegro are widely seen as frontrunners to join the EU but the two nations are currently negotiating chapters they need to address before joining the EU.

Macedonia and Albania are also expected to be given the go-ahead to start EU accession negotiations in June.

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/943101/EU-news-Juncker-Balkans-integration-Europe-war-Bosnia-Kosovo-latest-video>

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