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The EU and Ukraine: Possibilities for Accession

Every day the newspapers have another story, another way to catch the reader's eye and entertain them for a little while. Whether the stories are exaggerated or accurately to the point, they paint a picture of another society outside of the borders of the United States. They illustrate suffering that we, as a society, could not even begin to imagine. We read stories of protests and deaths in Independence Square over a cup of Starbucks in-between meetings or classes and then continue to push these stories to the back of our minds: dismissing them as a mere fact of life, as if suffering is natural. We sympathize with the suffering and equate it to the failed exam grade the week before, or the heart wrenching death in the family. We cannot even imagine that a society could be split in two over their beliefs and then proceed to make a statement through death. They protest amid the current plight of the Ukrainian economy, amid the numerous deaths in protests and amid the dying motivation of thousands of people willing to turn a blind eye to both the current economic and political nature of their country. They hold their families closer and build their fences higher, not once realizing that there is a way to end their suffering. Ukraine could follow in the steps of other Post-Soviet countries such as Latvia and work towards political stability and economic independence. Given the structural nature of the EU and benefits provided to Post-Soviet countries such as Latvia, it would be beneficial for an economically, politically and socially crippled country such as Ukraine to progress on the path to EU succession despite current outside influencing factors such as Russia.

In this paper I will begin with the discussion of the rules and conditions for EU membership. The first section will expand upon all of the requirements of a country seeking accession to the EU. After discussing the requirements, I will delve into the discussion of the

overall political, social, and economic benefits that a country will experience upon accession. Benefits include items such as protection of minority rights, development of infrastructure leading to political stability, as well as opportunities for economic expansion. The section will conclude with the argument that countries that have joined the European Union in the past have experienced positive changes in the spheres of economic, social and political policy. I will further make the claim that the requirements of accession are criteria for a functioning and thriving country. The second section of the paper will consider all of the benefits and criteria of EU accession and apply it to a Post-Soviet case such as Latvia. In this section I will cover the multitude of benefits that Latvia experienced upon joining the EU. Along with this discussion, I will discuss pertinent Latvian history and its circumstances prior to joining the EU. Then through the discussion of economic, political and social benefits, I will prove that EU accession has significantly contributed to Latvia becoming a more stable and successful country-- despite its tumultuous past and Soviet roots. With the progression into the third section of the paper, I will argue that if a Post-Soviet country such as Latvia can benefit from the EU, it is highly probable that other Post-Soviet countries such as Ukraine will benefit from joining the EU. I will take this section to discuss the similar nature of both Ukraine and Latvia in both the division of their people, weak economic roots and the crippling influences of the Soviet Union. Then I will move into a discussion of Ukraine's past and current issues. By applying the case of Latvia and the overall benefits of the EU, I will argue that it is beneficial for Ukraine to join the European Union due to the plethora of benefits that all countries within the EU, including Latvia, have experienced. Since Latvia and Ukraine are similar countries in nature, it is likely that Ukraine will benefit from EU accession. The fourth and final section of the paper will discuss possible objections to my argument. Finally, the conclusion will illustrate the feasibility of EU accession

for Ukraine in the near future.

Section 1-Requirements and Benefits of EU Membership

The European Union has been an institution present since the early 1990's that has contributed to the overall wellbeing of many of its partner countries throughout the years. The EU has proven to be an institution that has provided political, social, and economic benefits to all of its 28 current members. The inherent nature of the institution has provided many countries with stability in many of their interrelated governmental spheres. The requirements of EU accession may be extensive, but they instill many important values and laws concerning issues such as the establishment of human rights and democratic institutions.

The EU prides itself on opening its doors to membership to any country willing to fulfill all of its membership requirements. The preliminary requirements include criteria such as complying with all of the EU's standards and rules, having the consent of the EU institutions and fellow members of the EU, as well as encouraging the consent to EU membership by the country's citizens. After fulfilling the preliminary criteria, countries must also learn to adhere to the Copenhagen Criteria, as outlined by the European Union. Before beginning the full process of accession the Copenhagen Criteria states that interested countries must work on developing certain key items within their borders before venturing to benefits outside. The Copenhagen Criteria is an extensive list, but there are four extremely important parts of the criteria. These include the development of stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for minorities. Following the development of basic laws and values, the country must develop a functioning market economy, as well as the tools required to effectively cope with market forces of the EU. Finally, a country must have the ability to withstand the obligations of EU membership, including the pressures of the political, economic and monetary

union (European Commission: “Conditions for Membership”). Overall the Copenhagen Criteria has contributed to the growth and reduction of unemployment in its member countries. The criterion allows for both short-term and long-term sustainable growth, as well as public investment in infrastructure. This aids in reducing consumption of certain energy sources, increases competitiveness by lowering taxes on labor and works to bring down the interest rates in Europe (“European Council in Copenhagen - 21-22 JUNE 1993- Conclusions of the Presidency”).

Along with the benefits due to the Copenhagen Criteria, the overall benefits of joining the EU are extensive, but there are several well-known and commonly discussed benefits for member countries. These include regional development funding, EU scholarships that promote the education of citizens, subsidies for farmers, and decreased visa costs due to free movement between member countries (Johnston “Pros and Cons of Joining the European Union”). The EU, along with all of its preliminary requirements, inherently allows for the establishment of specific social and political values within a country. The requirements of accession encourage the development of strong democratic institutions and therefore contribute to a greater role in civil society. By strengthening the democratic institutions, the EU allows for the voices of the citizens to be heard and considered amidst the changes in policy of the respective country. This aids in encouraging dialogue between the decision makers and citizens, which ultimately enhances political accountability and overall social cohesion. In the long run, increased social cohesion could aid in creating positive political energy regarding the accession of a country into the EU. The increased functioning of institutions guaranteeing democracy allows many countries to find a balance between local, regional, and central government in order to increase the development of advantageous laws and reforms. An example of a set of advantageous laws encouraged by the

EU is known as the Rule of Law. The Rule of Law was created by the council in December of 2011 and encourages countries to tackle issues such as judicial reform and more actively participate in the struggle against crime and corruption within early accession negotiations. Along with the positive establishment of laws and renewed encouragement of the participation of citizens in society, it becomes imperative that the country works to protect its citizens from evils such as discrimination or human rights abuses. The respect for fundamental rights becomes increasingly important in modern society, especially in light of all of the discrimination of minorities and individuals that consider themselves a part of the LGBT community. Accession into the EU encourages the development of basic human rights, including those protecting minorities. It encourages the freedom of expression and the protection of individuals from detrimental discrimination and abuse. In order to expand upon the importance of the establishment of these rights in member countries, the EU created the Speak-up! Conference. This conference brought hundreds of people from civil society, the media, and national authorities together in order to address concerns within human rights and protect the rights of traveling journalists. It aimed to protect the freedom of expression within both the professional and societal sphere. Finally, after the imperative development of rights, laws and values within a country, the EU aims to maintain good neighborly relations within the member countries in order to increase cohesion and cooperation between countries. This allows for the overcoming of conflicts such as bilateral disputes, as in the previous case of Serbia and Kosovo. The encouragement of cooperation between countries allows for the encouragement of values and laws instilled by the EU, as well as an increase in progress over conflict (European Commission “Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2013-2014”).

Accession requirements such as the Rule of Law provide a favorable environment for

businesses and the economy to thrive. The accession process into the EU clearly provides a myriad of needed political and social benefits for a country through the establishment of certain laws and values. Along with such benefits, the accession criterion also encourages the positive development of infrastructure and economic enlargement. Many countries that are interested in joining the EU are plagued with issues such as high unemployment and economic instability. The EU's economic enlargement strategy provides for a strengthening in economic governance that ultimately pushes for national economic reform. Along with economic reform, the EU provides increasing possibilities for trade between countries. As a matter of fact, the EU currently accounts for about 18% of the world's trade in goods and accounts for about 24% in the world's trade of services. Therefore, it is economically beneficial for a country to be a member of the EU due to the opportunities for trade, as well as the abolition of tariffs which accounts for cutting final product costs anywhere between 5-10%. Along with trade, the EU is also the biggest provider of Foreign Direct Investment. Finally, along with possibilities for trade and economic reform, the EU provides even more assistance with the establishment of economic reform. It encourages the member countries to prepare a strategy comprising of existing macroeconomic, fiscal program and structural reforms. Through this process, the EU, as an institution, offers each country specific recommendations to increase the effectiveness of their economic reform strengthening the respective country's economy as a whole. This may seem exaggerated, but the overall statistics regarding economic functioning in each country have proven otherwise. For example, European countries that have joined the EU in the past have experienced increases in GDP anywhere from 3.4%-18.8%.

Outside of the plethora of social, economic and political benefits that EU accession provides, the EU goals for the 21st century prove to be increasingly important and influential on

member countries. The new goals outline the development of a single currency, the euro, in order to make the overall market more competitive, investment more attractive and to stimulate saving in order to increase current and future infrastructure projects. Along with economic changes, the EU is working to increase cooperation in research by devoting 3% of its GDP as well as working on profound changes within the current education system to allow for a more educated and progressive base of citizens (“European Council in Copenhagen - 21-22 JUNE 1993- Conclusions of the Presidency”).

Section 2-Latvia’s Accession into the EU

While the previous section discussed the political, economic and social benefits of a country joining the EU, this section will apply these benefits of accession for a Post-Soviet country such as Latvia.

Before EU accession, Latvia was a country that experienced several issues within infrastructure and economy. During this time, due to overpowering Soviet influences, the Latvian national identity was forced to give way to a Russian majority (Mole 86). The country was ravaged by war and by 1920 experienced a population decrease down to 1.5 million people. It experienced an excessively low agricultural productivity and was constantly plagued by high inflation and unemployment. Consequently, prior to entrance into the EU, Latvia experienced tumultuous times.

As mentioned before, Latvia was not a country that developed a strong infrastructure nor did it experience many social and political benefits. The Latvian political system was in shambles, consisting of an enormous amount of parties and cabinets (Aldcroft 98-105). Despite the declaration of its independence, Latvia was subject to over 50 years of Soviet policies that aimed at eradicating the social class and therefore did not leave a lot of room for creating a social

cleavage that would be hospitable for the creation of westernized parties for a successful democracy. The developed political system was so disorganized that it allowed for the creation of what they believed to be “proportional representation.” This consisted of creating a law that would allow any group of five or more people to register as a political party. Consequently, the 1925 elections consisted of 26 different political parties (Mole 44,100). This unfortunately contributed not only to the overall corruption of the system, but also the corruption of the individuals running for office. By the early 1930's, an excessive amount of parties and changes in government contributed to the creation of self-serving politicians that contributed to the increasing downfall of the country. While the serious split between right and left extremists left citizens fearful of a coup d'état.

Due to the already rampant political instability, education in Latvia was continually suffering and contributing to the diminutive supply of competent leaders and citizens. Both the previously “Sovietized” education system in 1945 and the “Latvianized” education system during years of independence gave way to a very narrowly concentrated educational system. The teachers were instructed to teach material only approved by the government during that time, which mostly gave way to either learning things such as specifically Soviet or Latvian history respectively (Mole 41, 60). Janis Jurkans, the previous minister of Foreign Affairs in Latvia even stated, “I learned two histories: one at school and one at home.” Furthermore, the lack of funding to education also gave way to a lack of books for students and teachers for classrooms.

One of the largest issues within Latvia before accession into the EU was the extreme divide between ethnically Latvian and Russian speakers. About 29.2% of the population was Russian and the Latvian majority actively discriminated against the Russian minority by preventing the minority from voting in elections, preventing them from acquiring land and taking

away some of their fundamental rights, such as excluding them from the scope of the Amnesty Law of 1995 (Tugdar, Emel E. "Europeanization of Minority Protection Policies in Latvia: EU Conditionality and the Impact of Domestic Factors on the Rights of Ethnic Russians" 41).

Consequently, the country became even more divided due to the aligning of political parties and the creation of distinct TV stations and newspapers. (Bertelsmann Stiftung, "BTI 2012-Latvia Country Report").

Along with issues of political and social instability, Latvia experienced great economic instability as well. After the collapse of the USSR, Latvia faced massive foreign debt, spiraling inflation and chronic shortages and endemic corruption (Mole 104). Since Latvia did not have its own currency, it felt the tremendous effects of the inflation throughout Europe (Aldcroft 85). Also, agriculture remained the basis of economic life in Latvia and unfortunately, the country experienced close to a -11% agricultural productivity for most of the 1900s.

As time went on, Latvia began to realize that "if the viability of the Post-Soviet Baltic States was to be assured, adopting the western economic model was essential. They continued to move their trade away from Russia and oriented it towards the EU. They also began the development of a more democratic base for government based on the Rule of Law, which aided in guaranteeing the human rights that were stripped away during the Soviet regime (Mole 98-100). Once Latvia became serious about the accession process, the EU had outlined the three conditions to beginning the process. They demanded that Latvia eliminate the estrangement between citizens and the state, include minorities in the political, economic, and cultural life of the country, as well as continue in the naturalization of non-citizens (Markevica "Latvia's EU Integration Strategy into the 21st Century"). Latvia's eventual willingness to follow the Copenhagen Criteria and the demands made by the EU, gave Latvia a slew of benefits upon

joining. The simplest benefits that citizens could enjoy included free travel, funds for development, increased labor mobility, increase in education opportunities in member states, streamlined trade and the free movement of goods and services ("Main EU Advantages for Latvia Include Free Travel and Opportunity to Study, Work in EU – Survey").

There were politically and socially specific benefits of joining the EU for Latvia. EU accession encouraged the protection of minority rights and the establishment of basic human rights. The introduction of minority rights was extremely important given Latvia's division. Despite all of the other conditions for membership that Latvia fulfilled, its blatant disregard for minority rights nearly blocked its accession (Markevica "Latvia's EU Integration Strategy into the 21st Century"). After the accession into the EU, there was a sharp increase in naturalization. Nearly 16,000 residents were naturalized as citizens immediately upon accession in 2004 (Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2012-Latvia Country Report). Also, despite the abysmal educational system Latvia had throughout its history, the EU successfully encouraged the development of a stronger educational system allowing for citizens to learn at least two languages and allowing for about .91% of the population to study in a member country ("Living in the EU").

The political benefits gave way to plenty of economic benefits. Rapid economic development ensued and overall GDP jumped from about 6.5% to 8.7% upon accession ("Latvia GDP Data & Country Report | Global Finance"). Also, as discussed earlier, the lack of a stable currency in Latvia led to it succumbing to inflation. Therefore, upon entrance into the EU and further development, Latvia transitioned to the euro. The euro is a strong and stable currency that accounts for about 40% of global trade transactions and accounts for 25% of the world's stored currency. The transition to the euro has allowed Latvia to cut the cost of servicing the national debt, reduced costs of loan payments and created for more favorable loan conditions. The

expected effect of euro implementation on Latvian GDP between the years of 2014 and 2020 is estimated at about 8 billion euros ("Joining the Euro Area and Benefits for Latvia").

Section 3-Benefits of EU Accession for Ukraine

While the last section discussed the benefits of Latvian EU accession, this section will apply the effects of the EU on a Post-Soviet country such as Latvia onto another Post-Soviet Country such as Ukraine. The effects of accession on Latvia can be expected in a country such as Ukraine due to their similar histories and economic, social and political weaknesses. Also, both Ukraine and Latvia were countries that had experienced harsh and overbearing Soviet rule throughout their histories. Unfortunately, the effects of such a large country such as Russia echo into modern day society, as do the countries' weaknesses in government.

Latvia and Ukraine are countries with Soviet roots that consequently experienced significant political and social instability within their borders. One of the biggest consequences of Russian influence on both countries is the presence of internal divisions between ethnically Russian and national citizens. As discussed before, the divisions in Latvia were largely based on the discrimination of Russian minorities within the country resulting in separate political parties and media stations. The internal ethnic divisions in Ukraine are quite similar to those that existed in Latvia prior to EU accession. While Latvia may have experienced a division mostly in language, Ukraine experiences a division based on geographical location and culture. Language, unfortunately, becomes only a small factor. For a long time, the ethnically Ukrainian people aimed at weaning themselves off of Russian culture and wanted to avoid being considered "Russified.". For the purposes of this paper, it is beneficial to discuss the division by geographical zone, even though the divisions are much more complicated than they seem. If discussing the most simple division of the country, one would notice that those in Western

Ukraine align themselves more with Western values and are more heavily Ukrainian speaking, while those in the Eastern and Southern parts of Ukraine identify themselves more with Russia and have previously internalized communism (Lewis 65, 78-84). The divide has been present in the country and showed itself within the 2004 and 2010 elections. During the 2004 elections, the Orange Revolution marked an important division between the people of Ukraine. The revolution consisted of masses of citizens protesting peacefully for nearly 17 days over election fraud. The issue during the election was the fact that the elections were manipulated through mediums such as the media in order to push forward the candidate favored by the elite known as Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, instead of allowing the more western-minded and EU favoring candidate named Yushchenko. Due to the efforts of many of the citizens, Yushchenko was successfully elected to office and this unfortunately led to threatened division of the eastern Ukrainian regions (Kates "Ukraine's East-West Divide: It's Not That Simple"). The next election in 2010 had surprising results since the more pro-western and pro EU candidate; Tymoshenko had lost the election further indicating the shift in Ukrainian society.

The internal divisions in both Ukraine and Latvia have contributed to violations of human rights and the blatant disregard of minority rights. Due to Soviet influences, Latvia had not established necessary human rights prior to the EU accession process. Ukraine, however, only fared slightly better. Due to the absence of the elected president and "illegitimate" authorities currently governing the country, Ukraine has not made human rights a priority. Many of the recent protests have resulted in the abduction of protestors by anti-Kiev forces. These forces have beaten and tortured both individuals in the government and protestors alike. Human Rights Watch has also documented the recent abductions of local election commission officials such as Yaroslav Malanchuk and Artem Popyk. Despite the current turmoil in the country, it is

imperative that Ukraine follows the case of Latvia and works to make human rights a priority if it ever stands a chance in the EU accession process ("Human Rights Watch | Defending Human Rights Worldwide").

The political and social issues present in both Ukraine and Latvia prior to EU accession have led to serious economic downturn. Prior to accession Latvia experienced rampant inflation, high unemployment and recession. Unfortunately, Ukraine is experiencing similar conditions of a nearly failed economy and high unemployment. Along with the extremely low GDP numbers, Ukraine suffers from a dependence on Russia for oil, which has resulted in several "gas wars." Ukraine imports nearly 80% of its natural gas from Russia and therefore allows Russia to use oil as a political ploy like in the "gas wars" of 2006 and 2009.

Due to the similar natures of both Ukraine and Latvia, it is likely that joining the EU will aid Ukraine in many of its political and social issues. Prior to the accession of Latvia, the EU was only interested in simple cooperation with Soviet countries; however, the success of Latvia's accession has encouraged the EU to consider an offer of membership to Ukraine. Accession into the EU forced Latvia to develop a structural framework that would encourage human/minority rights, as well as instill the values and laws of the EU. Latvia's citizens enjoyed the protection of minority rights, encouragement of human rights and development of a stronger education system, as well as a stronger set of laws ("Living in the EU"). For example, the development of a democratic system encouraged social cohesion and fair elections. Therefore, due to the similarities in political and social issues between Latvia and Ukraine, it is likely that Ukraine will enjoy many of the same benefits. Ukraine has previously expressed interest in the political and economic assistance of the EU since the EU and Ukraine nearly came to an agreement regarding accession criteria if the country agrees to disarm and eliminate its nuclear weapons. Also, the

path to EU accession has already benefited Ukraine within the agreements previously created. For example, the Single European Act allowed Ukraine to devote more of its attention to human rights and democratic policies. By establishing democratic principles, the EU could set up a rule of law, civil liberties, free elections, accountable institutions, a free media and open civic society, as it had done in Latvia. While the European Neighborhood policy consisted of a set of tools that allowed for the promotion of democracy and the encouragement of good relations between Ukraine and its neighboring European countries (Velychenko 126, 138, 143-146).

Latvia also experienced an increase in economic productivity upon accession. Given the current state of Ukraine's economy, it is imperative that they country take the necessary steps to encourage economic stability. After accession, Latvia had an increase in the trade of goods and services and GDP ("Latvia GDP Data & Country Report/Global Finance"). While the adoption of the EU currency simplified trade and cut costs. If Ukraine becomes a member, it may also partake in the trade benefits. If Ukraine were to join the EU, it is expected that aggregate trade would increase by a minimum of 10% and would significantly reduce the risk of trade shocks. Interestingly enough, trade between the EU and Ukraine actually accounted for 32% of Ukraine's total trade in 2005 and is currently Ukraine's largest trading partner (Shepotylo "A Gravity Model of Net Benefits of EU Membership: The Case of Ukraine"). Therefore, an increase in trade could increase GDP as it had in Latvia. While, the adaptation of the euro could aid in the current high rates of unemployment and overall weak economy. If Ukraine were to join the EU, the country would experience many Post-Soviet benefits and nearly guaranteed stability given to Post-Soviet countries such as Latvia.

Section 4-Counterarguments

Even though it is clearly beneficial for Ukraine to join the EU due to the plethora of

economic, social and political benefits, there are still arguments that could be made against the integration due to outside fears and concerns regarding the feasibility of such an arrangement.

The argument made in the paper discusses the similarities between the Post-Soviet countries such as Latvia and Ukraine. Therefore it is highly probable that since joining the EU was beneficial for a Post-Soviet country such as Latvia, it will be beneficial for Ukraine as well. The argument could be made that the two countries are entirely different. First of all, they do have internal divisions, but Latvia's internal division is more dependent on barriers in language in culture while Ukraine's is more geographically minded. They also may not have exactly the same economies, political systems or overall conditions pre-accession to the EU. These are all valid points, however, largely not important to the overall argument. Furthermore, one could argue that language barriers have an easy remedy—education. While, geographic barriers may be more difficult to deal with. It may be true that the countries are different in certain respects, nevertheless, they are similar enough in nature to make the argument that both benefit from EU accession in terms of stability and infrastructure. The divisions may not be the same, but they still create internal instability within the country. Both of their economies were doing poorly upon the consideration of accession and prior Soviet influences left both of their governments in disorganized shambles. Therefore, it may be true that the countries are not exactly alike but that does not take away from the endless opportunities for political, social and economic stability that Ukraine could possess upon joining the EU. Every country that joins the EU is completely different and therefore is given a separate set of enrollment criteria. However, the bigger similarities between both Ukraine and Latvia create a set of positive expectations for the accession of Ukraine.

Another argument that could be made is the fact that Latvia experienced one of its

deepest recessions a few years after joining the EU and therefore it is unlikely that EU accession actually contributed to overall economic stability. This may be a valid point, but it does not take all other factors into consideration. The recession may have occurred, but the Latvian economy was already heading towards recession in the years leading up to EU accession. For example, the country experienced a recession around 2002 where GDP numbers extended into the negatives ("Latvia | Economic Indicators"). Entering the EU was a huge change for the country and it has allowed for the stability of the Latvian economy. The economy is a complex system and therefore it is highly unlikely that one factor contributed to its downturn. The EU regulations and recommendations have contributed to GDP increases and positive infrastructure reform that cannot be disregarded, despite the unfortunate recession.

Another argument that could be made is the fact that Latvia is not a typical example of a country entering the EU and therefore cannot be used as an example for Ukrainian accession. This argument is invalid because Latvia may be unique in its own way; however, regardless of the initial requirements of joining, it was required to follow all of the typical regulations and recommendations provided by the EU. Every country that enters the EU has a specific set of criteria for admission along with the Copenhagen Criteria, but every country is also unique in its own way. In regards to its relation to Ukraine, I outlined the similarities between Latvia and Ukraine including their weak economies, and overall instability in section 3 and proved that despite their differences, the main issues in Latvia resolved by EU accession are present in Ukraine as well. Therefore despite differences in internal divisions or GDP numbers, Ukraine is extremely similar to Latvia in foundational issues prior to entrance in the EU. Therefore, it is likely that Ukraine will benefit from accession.

A final case against the entrance of Ukraine into the EU is the argument that by entering

the EU, Ukraine is devolving relations with Russia in a way that could be dangerous or harmful for Ukraine. I have considered this concern, but it is not one that can be directly addressed in my paper and it is one that requires further research. Ukraine and Russia have had complicated relations both in the present and past regarding oil and power; however, so have many other countries in relation with Russia. It would have been possible for Russia to take back the Baltic States and wreak havoc after their accession into the EU, but Russia did not outwardly react negatively. Therefore it is possible due to the strengthening of Ukraine through entrance into the EU that it will be a strong enough country to resist Russian pressures.

Conclusion

Entrance of Ukraine into the EU is a complicated issue that requires much more research and discussion. However, given the preconditions and requirements for entrance and the positive effect that EU accession has had on other Post-Soviet countries such as Latvia, entrance into the EU will prove to be beneficial to Ukraine through political, social and economic benefits and stability. Regardless of the profusion of benefits upon joining the EU for many countries, it is most likely not feasible for Ukraine within the near future. Ukraine has experienced a great deal of protests, change in government leadership and overall economic stability. Due to these circumstances, it is mostly unreasonable to expect Ukraine to complete all the required EU requirements for accession. Recently, the EU has released a list of all of the requirements for EU accession specific to Ukraine. The list includes items such as completing the Association Agreement with Ukraine and working on the Comprehensive Free Trade Area between the EU and Ukraine within this year. However, given all of the unfortunate events in Ukraine and overall distrust of the EU by the citizens, it is unlikely that all of the items on the agenda will be pushed through in the near future especially due to the EU's previous focus on deescalating violence in

Ukraine. The global financial crisis has put a halt on much of the work towards fulfilling the requirements. Also, given Russia's recent actions and its interests in Ukraine, it is unlikely that Ukraine will be moving towards negatively affecting its relations with Russia (Barder “Ukraine: Time for a Constructive and Realistic Initiative by Labour”). Lastly, since the EU is focused on working with other smaller and weak countries such as Romania and Bulgaria, it is unlikely that the EU can focus all of its energy on bringing in such a large and divided population such as Ukraine into the EU. Unfortunately, given the specified reasons and overall nature of the country currently, it is unlikely that Ukraine will move forward with EU accession in the near future until the governmental organization and economy has been stabilized, as well as the betterment of relations between the EU, Ukraine and Russia. However, the eventual accession of Ukraine will prove to be beneficial for the country in all respects.

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