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## Forum: GA3

**Issue: Discussing the issue of Russian gas and reliance on goods and services from countries that have committed crimes against humanity.**



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**Position:** President

### **Introduction:**

Since the beginning of this decade, the rate at which trade and technology have expanded has never been greater, making the world rapidly more connected and interdependent. This growing interdependence of the world's economies, technologies, goods, and services, although bringing advantages such as lower costs for products, also makes other countries vulnerable to disruptions in the supply chain. The purpose of this committee is to discuss the contentious issue of receiving goods and services from countries committing crimes against humanity. This issue is multifaceted, as it involves economic, political, and ethical considerations. On one hand, purchasing from said countries can be seen as supporting their economy and indirectly condoning their actions, however, boycotting these goods may harm innocent individuals and small businesses. It is up to this committee to come to a conclusion whether to, and how, to advocate for more socially responsible practices by governments, as well as evaluate the relationship between economic interests and ethical values in international relations. This research report seeks to give an analysis on the role of corporate boycotts of aggressor states' products, including the history of such instances in the past, like Britain's boycott of Iran in 1951, and current issues, with a primary focus on the ongoing 2022-2023 Russia-

European Union gas dispute. Additionally, it seeks to recognize important stake holders and provide a study of previous attempts to solve the issue, with possible new solutions.

### **Definition of Key terms:**

**Crimes against humanity:** acts deliberately committed as part of a widespread systematic attack against a civilian population

**Energy security:** the availability and accessibility of energy resources, and the ability to meet energy needs reliably and affordably

**Sanctions:** economic or political measures taken by one or more countries to restrict trade, investment, or other forms of exchange with another country or entity, usually in response to perceived violations of international law or norms

**Human rights:** universal entitlements that are inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, or other status, and that are protected by international law

**Geopolitics:** the study of the relationship between politics and geography, and the ways in which power and resources are distributed across different regions and countries

**Energy transition:** the shift from traditional fossil fuels to cleaner, more sustainable forms of energy, such as renewable energy and energy efficiency measures

**International law:** the body of legal principles and norms that govern relations between sovereign states and other actors in the international system, enforced through international courts, tribunals, and treaties

**Energy diplomacy:** the use of diplomatic tools, like negotiations, agreements, and incentives, to advance national or international energy interests, and to address energy-related challenges and opportunities

**Energy efficiency:** the practice of using less energy or the same amount of energy to produce either the same level or more output or service, by improving technology, management practices, and other means

**Renewable energy:** energy derived from sources that are replenished naturally at a higher rate than they are consumed, like sunlight, wind, water, geothermal heat, and do not generate significant greenhouse gas emissions

## **Background:**

### ***Historical Context***

With the evolution of global energy and the international economic landscape, countries have become increasingly dependent on imports of goods and services from other countries. The foundation of Russia's "energy partnership" with Europe were laid during the Cold War, with trade being able to develop despite American opposition, worried of European dependence on the USSR, since gas was seen as a force for peace and partnership. In 2001, the European Commission proposed an "energy dialogue" with Russia, to develop a stronger relationship with a main gas supplier as the need for gas in Europe increased. This establishment of communication and the framework of the dialogue, the EU had agreed to 'recognize certain Russian gas projects as "energy infrastructure projects of common interest"', like the Yamal pipeline, the Shtokman gas field, and the Druzhba-Adria oil pipeline link. On the economic front, the natural gas trade

provides Russia with a critical source of revenue, as well as diversifying Europe's energy supply and reducing its reliance on less stable suppliers. The energy trade has led to the development of significant infrastructure, like pipelines, that further deepened the economic relationship between Russia and its gas importers. Now, Russian imports account for a quarter of Europe's energy consumption in 2020, as well as is responsible for two-fifths of the EU's gas imports. This reliance on gas imports has given Russia much coercive power over Europe's economies, and the world has before seen Putin's willingness to use energy exports as a tool of geopolitical influence. For example, in the mid-2000s, Ukraine was receiving subsidized gas shipments from Russia, but after the "Orange Revolution" of 2004, where a pro-Western government was elected, Gazprom, the state-owned Russian gas company, demanded Ukraine pay full market rates for gas. When Ukraine refused to do so, Russia restricted the amount of gas through the pipelines, disrupting gas supplies to several EU member states.

### ***Energy Security Concerns***

The risks of the dependence on Russian gas has generated much discussion on the energy security of Europe, since Russia can use its energy exports as a means of achieving geopolitical goals, political manipulation, and this reliance has potential for supply disruptions, causing significant consequences on energy supply. The production and transportation of natural gas is also associated with greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts, and this may hinder efforts of transitioning to sustainable and renewable energy sources. The discussion of energy security in Europe has driven the development of alternative energy sources and the creation of energy security policies

aimed at reducing this dependence. Alternative energy sources, such as renewable and liquified natural gas (LNG) can reduce Europe's dependence on Russia gas. The cost of production of renewable energy sources, like wind and solar power, has gotten governments to implement more policies aimed at promoting their use. LNG, which has a variety of sources to import from, like Qatar and the US, is a good means to diversify energy supply.

### ***Human Rights Concerns***

The role of alternative energy sources is particularly important in light of ethical dilemmas raised by importing goods and services from countries accused of committing crimes against humanity. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, which violated international law, in February of 2022, and its treatment of opposition figures has been brought to discussion in relation with the ethics of doing business with the country. The same concerns have also been raised about other countries, such as China and Saudi Arabia, accused with human rights violations. The debate over the ethics of doing business with countries accused of human rights violations is complex and multifaceted, having to take into consideration a variety of economic and political factors as well. On one hand, there are concerns about complicity in the actions of these regimes, since supporting an aggressor state by continuing to support their economy, especially considering that the state-owned Gazprom, Russian's largest gas company, gives its revenues from sales to Russia's federal budget. Continuing to feed into Russia's federal budget, which is now directing its focus on the purchasing of military weapons to continue its invasion of Ukraine, can be seen as indirectly condoning their actions. However, due to Russia's dependency on its

oil and gas revenues, since about two-thirds of Russia's export revenues comes from oil and gas, boycotting these may harm innocent individuals and small businesses within Russia itself. Additionally, there is the question of if the EU can ethically wean off of Russian gas, ensuring that more vulnerable member states do not bear a bigger burden. Most countries in the EU that are heavily dependent on Russian gas are former USSR satellite countries, as well as their geographical proximity, which means there is a complex history that includes deep mistrust between these countries and Russia, as well as stronger political response to Russia's aggression. As well as, although some EU countries have already been transitioning to green economies, some member states do not have the means to do the same. Lastly, the current EU's plan to transition off of Russian fossil fuels tend to benefit countries not as vulnerable to Russian gas. The sanctioning of Russian gas has led to harsh inflation and rising energy prices that weaker member states cannot endure for much longer, like Hungary which has deemed the sanctions "like a bomb" on the Hungarian economy.

There are several other countries that have been accused of committing crimes against humanity, including China and its violation of Uyghur Muslims' human rights, North Korea's forced labor, torture, and extrajudicial executions, and Saudi Arabia's involvement in the Yemen conflict and its treatment of women, among others. Despite the international community's criticism for these actions, historically, corporations that do business with these countries has tried to separate matters of trade from matters of state, stating that their primary responsibility is to shareholders. However there has been a recent transformation of the role of corporations in matters of state and their actions in

boycotting. In 2020, for example, the US imposed sanctions on several Chinese companies involved in human rights violations in Xinjiang. This was seen as a significant step in holding corporations accountable for their actions.

### ***Geopolitical implications***

The imports of goods and services from countries accused of human rights abuses raises multiple ethical concerns. A continent's entire reliance on one country for goods can lead to giving a country too much coercive power, economically, and causes concern for the weaponization of goods and services as a political tool. For example, the import of cheap goods from China has been a key driver of economic growth in many countries, but it has also been criticized for contributing to labor abuse and environmental degradation in China. Additionally, the import of cheap goods from China has contributed to the decline of manufacturing industries in many countries, which political and economic implications, leading to calls for more protectionism and the development of alternative industries less reliant on imports from China and other countries with a record of violating human rights. China's emergence as an economic superpower has increased conversation about the ethical dilemmas about supporting a human rights violator. Continuing to import goods from China, despite its suppression of political dissent and mistreatment of ethnic and religious minorities, has contributed to the growth of the Chinese economy and the expansion of its political influence. This leads to debates about the appropriate balance between economic engagement and political pressure.



## **Major parties involved:**

**Russia:** On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded and occupied parts of Ukraine in an escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War, which began in 2014, with the annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the war in Donbas, on the terms of “demilitarizing” and “denazifying” Ukraine, as well as attacking Ukraine’s right to statehood, and claiming Ukraine was governed by neo-Nazis who persecuted the ethnic Russian minority. Russia has demanded in the past that the US and NATO enter into a legally binding arrangement preventing Ukraine from ever joining NATO. Russia holds the world’s largest natural gas reserves, as of 2023, and makes up 14% of the world’s total supply of crude oil. Russia holds much power in this issue, as it has the ability to disastrously unbalance the West’s energy security, however it is also dependent on the revenues from EU oil and gas exports. Russia has the power to act internationally, however, the strength of the EU’s response has already caused damage to Russia’s economy, with 70% of assets of the Russian banking system under sanctions, and declining trade. Russia has the power to turn this conflict around.

**The European Union:** The EU has acknowledged Russia’s actions against Ukraine as unlawful and in violation of international law, as well as a violation of human rights. To retaliate against Russia, they have collectively imposed 10 packages of hard-hitting sanctions against Russia, targeting the core of their economy and depriving it of critical modern technologies and markets. They intend to cripple the Kremlin’s ability to finance war and impose economic and political costs on Russia’s political elite and diminish Russia’s base. They, however, do not intend to affect energy and agri-food export from

Russia to third countries. They have also set price caps on the export of Russian crude oil and petroleum products hoping to hit Russia's revenues and reduce its ability to wage war. Price caps also will help to stabilize global energy markets. Due to the strong coalition of EU countries, it has the ability to significantly unite against Russia and hinder its ability to continue to wage war, however, must be careful in not causing intra-EU disparities, since weaning off of Russian imports has harsher effects on more-dependent countries. The EU has the ability to act internationally.

**The United Nations and its many branches:** The United Nations considers the Russian invasion of Ukraine to be a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, and that Russia is acting contrarily to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2022, deploring the aggression committed by Russia, and the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on 4<sup>th</sup> of March calling for the swift withdrawal of Russian troops in the entire territory of Ukraine, as well as urgently establishing an independent international commission of inquiry, and many more. The biggest way the UN has supported Ukraine is through its humanitarian aid efforts to bolster resistance against Russia, as well as coming to a number of conclusions and sanctions against Russia. The UN has the power to act internationally and has a legion of Peacekeepers that would be able to entire Ukraine, however due to Russia's veto power in the Security Council cannot take definitive action yet.

**The International Energy Agency:** The IEA is an autonomous intergovernmental organization that provides policy recommendations, analysis, and data on the global energy sector. The 31 member countries and 11 association countries of the IEA represent 75% of the global energy demand, not including Russia, and work to reduce dependence on oil, developing alternative energy sources, research and development and creating a stable energy market. The IEA has released a 10-point plan to reduce the EU's reliance on Russian natural gas as of March 2022, which includes investment in clean and efficient technologies and moving away from Russian gas suppliers to alternative pipeline and LNG exporters, and promotes clear communication between governments, industry, and consumers. The IEA has the power to act internationally and requires all member countries to hold emergency stocks of oil imports, which have been deployed twice in 2022 in response to the Russian invasion and are used to stabilize oil markets.

**The United States:** The US has opposed the Russian invasion of Ukraine and has banned all US imports of Russian gas and oil, and is Ukraine's largest bilateral donor, providing close to \$50 billion in security, economic, and humanitarian assistance. The US has joined the international coalition of partners including in the sanctioning of Russia, with the European Union and other members of G7. The US also has great reserves of LNG, which is useful when diversifying Europe's energy sources and to wean off the reliance of Russian goods. The country is the second-largest producer and consumer of electricity, behind China, and the country itself has much say in international relations.

**Germany, France, and Italy:** All three are major EU countries that heavily rely on Russian oil and gas for their energy market, with Italy relying on 40% of its gas from Russia, Germany a third, and France has access to LNG import terminals, still gets a fifth of its supply from Russia. These countries have much at risk with the EU's sanctioning of Russia as well as the price caps put on Russian imports, and with inflation. All three are opposed to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but all three have made significant commitments to transitioning to renewable energy which will help wean them off of their reliance.

**China:** Although abstaining in UN Assemblies, China has refused to criticize Russia's actions and has criticized Western economic sanctions on Moscow and maintained trade ties with Russia. Not only is China still supporting Russia, but the country itself has been accused of being a human rights violator and has received significant backlash, including the US sanctioning Chinese companies for human right violations. The country has been in many discussions regarding their political oppression and the violation of human rights, especially against cultural or religious groups. China is the top energy producer in the world, with the second biggest economy in 2021, measured by GDP. China has been a key driver of economic growth in many other countries, due to its manufacturing of cheap goods, however its labor abuse and its role in the declining marketing industry of other countries, as well as its crimes against humanity, are now being taken into criticism by other countries. China has a great deal of power, especially economically, and their acts against humanity should be discussed by this committee as well.

## **Relevant UN treaties, resolutions, and reports:**

**UN Global Compact:** Encourages businesses to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies.

**UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/68/262 (2014):** Declares annexation of Crimea by Russia illegal and calls on all countries to respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

**UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/120 (2015):** Condemns the human rights abuses committed by the Syrian government and calls for accountability by those responsible.

**UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72?247 (2018):** Condemns the human rights abuses committed by the Myanmar government against the Rohingya people and calls for accountability for those responsible.

**UN Security Council:** With resolutions calling for accountability for crimes against humanity.

**European Commission's REPowerEU:** A plan to make Europe independent from Russian fossil fuels well before 2030, starting with gas, with measures to respond to rising energy prices and replenish gas stocks

## **Timeline of Events: *The gas war between Russia and the West***

**Autumn 2021:** Energy prices surged as tight gas supplies collided with strong demand of economies recovering from the pandemic. Poland accused Russia of keeping deliveries to Europe deliberately tight. Gas stores in Europe at unusually low levels, in particular those owned by Gazprom.

**February 2022:** On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, German Chancellor Scholz announced he is suspending the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project with Russia in response to Moscow's recognition of two breakaway regions in Ukraine, the Donetsk People's Republic, and the Luhansk People's Republic. Project was always a source of tensions between Germany and United States and Europe who worried it would increase energy dependence. Ukraine feared it would lose revenues from gas transit if Nord Stream 2 goes ahead.

**February 24, 2022:** Russia invades Ukraine, gas and oil prices soar on fears of possible cuts of supplies.

**March 2022:** On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, EU cuts off seven Russian banks off the SWIFT banking system but spares two major lenders that have ties to the energy sector.

On the 8<sup>th</sup>, the European Commission outlines the proposal to reduce the EU's dependence on Russian gas to become independent from all Russian fossil fuels "well before 2030". On the same day, President Biden of the US bans all US imports of Russian gas and oil. EU says it will cut its imports of Russian gas by two-thirds this year, and Britain says it will phase out Russian energy imports by the end of 2022.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Russian President Putin bans European gas customers from paying bills in dollars and euros, only in rubles (which would be violating international sanctions against Moscow) in response to the freezing of \$300 billion in currency reserves held by Russia overseas. The US agrees to provide Europe with an extra 15 billion cubic meters of LNG this year.

**April 2022:** On the 27<sup>th</sup>, Gazprom cuts off gas supplies to Bulgaria and Poland.

**May 2022:** On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the European Commission presents its 300-billion-euro REPowerEU plan to eliminate Russian energy imports by 2027. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, Russia cuts off gas to Finland, which has refused to pay in rubles and asked to join NATO. The Netherlands and Denmark are also cut off after refusing to pay in rubles. On the 30<sup>th</sup>, EU leaders agree to stop most Russian oil imports by the end of the year but put off a ban on Russian gas.

**June 2022:** In mid-June, Gazprom drastically cuts daily gas supplies to Germany via the Nord Stream pipeline, causing prices to soar. Gazprom reduced deliveries by 40%, then another 33%. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Germany moves closer to rationing gas, raising its supplies alert level to the second of three stages. Other EU members look for ways to offset their declining gas supplies, finding new suppliers or switching to alternative energy sources. Austria announces plans to reopen a coal-fired power station, while France and Italy take stakes in a giant Qatari gas field.

### **Previous attempts to solve the issue:**

**European Union Sanctions:** The EU has imposed sanctions on Russia following its annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The EU adopted 10 packages of sanctions against Russia, targeting the core of Russia's economy and depriving it of technologies and markets, with the ultimate purpose being to curtail its ability to wage the war. For example, they cut off Russia's access to capital markets of the EU, increasing borrowing and transaction costs, gradually eroding Russia's industrial base, as well as excluding Russian banks from the SWIFT system, import bans, price caps, banning exports of refining technologies, bans on the transport sector, excluding

Russia from public contracts and European money. The total estimated value of export restrictions and bans on goods and technologies is 43.9 billion euros, 49% of the EU's export before the invasion. These measures have been criticized for not being strong enough and for being undermined by some EU member states that have continued to trade with Russia. In order for these sanctions to work more efficiently there must be stronger communication and coordinated international actions, including the use of multilateral sanctions.

**Nord Stream Pipeline Controversy:** The Nord Stream Pipeline is a controversial project that would transport Russian gas to Europe via Germany, bypassing Ukraine. The project has faced opposition from countries like Ukraine and Poland, who would lose transit fees and leverage over Russia's gas exports. The United States and other members of the EU have also opposed this project, fearing it would increase the dependency of EU on Russian gas. The United States has threatened to impose sanctions on companies involved in its construction. However, the pipeline's construction has continued despite the threats of sanctioning. The US and EU's attempt to stop this pipeline from being built, that has increased Russia's coercive power over the EU, did not work due to the political disagreements among countries and contrasting economic interests. Next time, a potential solution could be to strengthen the regulatory framework to ensure that all energy imports meet ethical and human rights standards.

**Corporate Social Responsibility:** Some corporations that do business with countries accused of committing human rights violations have adopted Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies that aim to ensure that their operations do not contribute to or benefit from these violations. However, the policies have been criticized for a lack of



enforceability and being insufficient in addressing systemic abuses of human rights. If a greater national effort was made to regulate and enforce CSR policies, that could be brought to a multilateral level, then this could be a better alternative to keeping trade going, without benefiting from violations of human rights.

### **Possible solutions:**

One potential solution is to increase investment in alternative energy sources such as renewable and liquified natural gas (LNG) to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian gas by diversifying the energy market. This can be achieved through policies that incentivize the development and adoption of these alternative energy sources, as well as the expansion of energy infrastructure to support them. The same can be said in investing in new technologies for extracting and transporting natural gas from other sources to reduce dependence on a singular supplier to keep the balance of power on the energy front.

Additionally, the International Energy Agency and its efforts to reduce the EU's reliance on Russian natural gas should be strengthened, through generating awareness on this report in the public as well as drafting ways that civilians are able to reduce their own energy usage during this time of sanctioning and increased costs, as well as generating public awareness of the situation in Russia and how else they are able to help support the Ukrainians.

Another potential solution is to strengthen ethical and human rights standards for all imports, including goods and services from countries accused of committing crimes against humanity. This can be done through measures such as trade agreements that

prioritize human rights and ethical considerations, and the establishment of regulatory frameworks to ensure compliance of standards. These efforts, however, are proven to be most effective when multilaterally agreed and coordinated, hence the drafting of a new autonomous council that works to achieve this could be an efficient way to improve coordination to ensure results.

In addition, greater transparency and accountability measures can be implemented to address the ethical dilemmas associated with imports from such countries. This can be done through increased monitoring of supply chains and partnerships with non-governmental organizations to identify and address ethical concerns, or the drafting of an autonomous council to regulate supply chains.

Finally, diplomatic efforts can be pursued to address the underlying political and economic factors that contribute to the reliance on Russian gas and the import of goods and services from countries accused of committing crimes against humanity. This includes efforts to promote greater energy diversification, reduce geopolitical tensions, and strengthen international institutions to promote ethical trade practices.

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