

International Court of Justice

“The Iran-Turkey-Europe Pipeline”



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Context & Historical Background

Natural Gas is found inside the ground due to ancient fossils, and is thus found in countries with huge land areas (like the USA or Russia). Due to its low density, natural gas is transported using pipelines or through ships, as transporting it on trucks is slow and costs a lot. Ergo, many countries invest in underground pipelines to transport it. Due to Europe's size and economic expanse and influence, it demands a huge amount of natural gas. Historically, this was mainly supplied by Russia, one of countries with the largest supplies of Natural gas. It passes through Eastern European countries to countries like Germany and Turkey.

Turkey, Iran, and Azerbaijan are planning to extend the Caspian pipeline (from Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan) to supply natural gas from Iran to Western Europe. This is in direct opposition to Russia's pipeline that currently runs through Europe. Russia supplies about 80% of the German natural gas demand, which is the highest in European countries. This hyper dependence on Natural gas from Russia is something that most of the Western bloc wants to end. To this end, projects are already underway in Algeria to allow European countries in the Mediterranean (such as Italy) to import hydrocarbons (natural gas). This has been severely opposed by Russia, which continues to cheapen prices in order to stop the development of these projects.

Due to the recent conflict in Ukraine, with the Russian occupation of Crimea. This has put the European union, especially the Eastern bloc, on edge. Fearing Russian aggression, the European union and the United States sanctioned Russia. This took an economic toll on Russia, but one thing that the European Union was still reliant on was Russia's natural gas. This was an awkward position for the United States and its allies. The Iran-Turkey-Europe pipeline is a bold attempt at trying to divert purchase from Russia.

After the oil market crash of 2014, which saw oil prices (and Natural gas prices) free fall, many countries had to face many economic hardship. Russia's main export at the time, natural gas and oil products, became cheaper and thus not as profitable. During the Ukraine crisis that unfolded in late 2014, the Russians were able to take control over Crimea, but at the cost of their economic stability. Their public spending had to be reduced and their economy shrank from 2.1 trillion Dollars in 2013 to 1.3 trillion dollars in 2016. This huge decrease in a very short amount of time caused higher public debt and discontent among the public. Putin's regime had to make difficult cuts to social welfare and pensions, which angered the public. It is understandable to see Russia's concerns for a second pipeline to Europe, as it can move the balance of power in favour of the West and further damage its economy.

What the delegates of ICJ must do is compromise Russia's position as the chief supplier and Turkey and Europe's ambition to become more financially independent. This will be hard as no country mutually benefits, but there can be a compromise. Because Moscow has shown that it'll

use military force when cornered and provoked financially, it is necessary to resolve this peacefully and without drastic changes to the status quo.

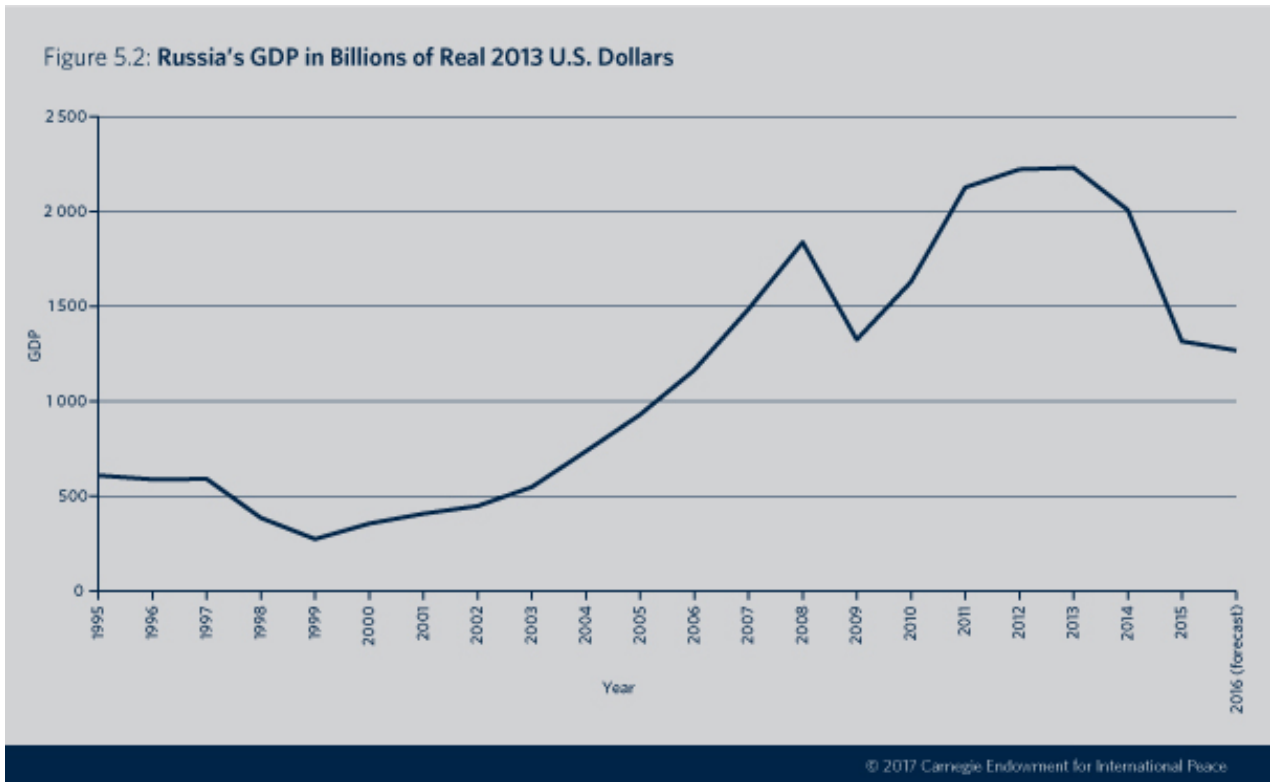


Figure 1: Russia experienced an economic peak in 2013 that has slowly dwindled as the sanctions took effect.

International Involvement

There is very little involvement from the UN regarding this issue, because of the financial nature of the dispute between Russia and Europe. The main involvement comes from the United States and the European union

The United States

While the Obama Administration has sanctioned Moscow for its invasion of Crimea and for interfering with the Russian election. There was a lot of hope that the Trump administration would lower the sanctions, however that does not seem to be the case. President Trump has signed sanctions into law, but this doesn't prevent Russia from sending pipelines to European countries. The United States is against Russian aggression and dominance of the Natural gas market.

The European Union

The EU has also sanctioned Russia over its involvement in the Crimea Crisis, and while the occupation of Crimea is not the topic, the main Russian export to Europe is crude oil and natural gas. When the sanctions were being proposed, Germany was concerned about its nature gas supply, but it was pressured to sanction Russia by the US. This put Germany and many Western European in a precarious spot and forced them to look for other sources of energy, thus the ITE.

Different Perspectives

Iran

Iran holds a strategic location as the gateway between the natural gas and oil rich Middle East and Central Asia, and Europe. They also have the largest Natural gas reserves in the world, but cost too much to ship the Natural Gas. Because of this, Iran has realized that it could take advantage of this position and gain financial benefit. Although Iran is Politically allied to Russia on Syria, it also wants to become financially independent of Moscow.

Turkey and Turkmenistan

Turkey, while lacking natural gas and oil, uses its geographic location and relative political stability to be the main hub of the Pipeline between Russia and Europe. Turkmenistan has defied Russia's Eurasian union. Russia hopes that by having the Eurasian Union, it could exert influence

over the former soviet bloc, Turkmenistan being one of them. If the ITE pipeline does go through, then this presents a great opportunity for Turkmenistan to do so.

European Union

The European Union, especially Germany, have been looking for alternative sources of energy to end their dependence on Russia. The EU also needs to find other routes from Asia and Africa, because the European continent will experience a population boom and thus higher demand for natural gas. In addition, the US-led sanctions have forced European countries to move away from Russia for their gas. And there's an added bonus to diversification: more leverage over Russia in the future.

Key Words

- Trans-Caspian pipeline: completed pipeline between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, now partly supplying Europe's need for natural gas.
- European union: a political and economic union of many European countries.
- Natural gas: flammable gas, consisting largely of methane and other hydrocarbons, occurring naturally underground (often in association with petroleum) and used as fuel.
- Iran-Turkey- Europe (ITE) Pipeline: proposed pipeline to Europe that passes Iran through Turkey.

Questions to Consider

Why is Russia against the Pipeline? How does the drop in oil prices in 2014 affect Russia? Does Russia risk an economic crisis if they don't oppose this project?

Alternatively, How can Germany and her regime shake off Russia as it is illegally occupying Ukraine? How could this pipeline help them accomplish that?

Your job as delegates will be to find a sustainable and achievable middle ground that allows Europe to pursue other sources of natural gas while to coming Russia and provoking it into further military action.

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