



DELEGATE BACKGROUND GUIDE

# RUSO-UKRAINIAN PEACE TALKS



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## Director's Letter

Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to *Russo-Ukrainian Peace Negotiations* at TMUN 2023. I, Mohit Bhabak, will be your director for this committee. From conference participation in Vancouver to Toronto, I assure you that our experience will help facilitate the best possible committee for all of you.

In this committee, delegates will be discussing and debating over topics that will shape the future of our world, or rather should we say, out of this world. As delegates of your respective countries, it is your task to best represent and mirror the actions, policies, views, and opinions of your nations. This background guide will serve as a starting point for your research, we highly suggest for delegates to complete their own research pertaining to their respective countries. We hope that the topics we have selected provide for some interesting debate, and hopefully some very nice conflict; because well, what is Model UN without conflict?

Your nations may not be battling it on the battlefield, but don't underestimate the battle that is fought in the committee room. Gone may be the days of disputes being resolved by swords and shields, bring forth the days they are solved by motions and yields. At the end of the day, your role is to best push forth and establish the political agenda of your nation, and to succeed in this, do whatever it must take. Form alliances, form enemies, backstab your peers, target the weak; all is fair in Model UN, so do what it takes for you to come out on top.

We look forward to seeing you all conference day, and hopefully facilitating an action-packed, entertaining, conflict-filled, and memorable Model United Nations experience. Shoot for the stars delegates, just don't miss.

Sincerely,

Mohit Bhabak  
Director | TMUN 2023

## Committee Description

After the conclusion of WW1, people believed that the “War to End All Wars” would truly do so, however this was not the case. After WW2, people believed that once again, large scale invasions and conflict would become a thing of the past. Although this held true for decades, especially in the 21st century where full blown land invasions of nations have almost become a relic of the past, the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine truly was a milestone. On the 24th of February, 2022, Russian President, Vladimir Putin, announced that the Russian military would be conducting a “special military operation” in Ukraine. These words marked the beginning of a conflict that would storm headlines worldwide for months. A conflict that ever since then, has single-handedly had the greatest impact on the global economy, geopolitics, trade, military strategy, & quality of life of arguably any war since WW2 itself. The world has witnessed energy prices spike all over, the power & integrity of the UN itself being questioned, militaristic & geopolitical strategies of all major nations being reconsidered, and so much more. The sheer magnitude of what is currently happening arguably still has not even been realized by much of the world. This is a conflict that, one way or another, eventually will come to an end, and for most of humanity, the quicker it ends the better.

That is why you all as delegates convene here, to attempt to find a solution to the conflict that has been ravaging our world. This committee is set on October 24, 2022, exactly 8 months following the announcement of the invasion. The conflict ever since then has resulted in some of the largest energy price hikes in Europe’s history, the Russian federation being removed from the UNHRC itself, the largest refugee crisis in Europe since WW2, & a questioning of the geopolitical stability that our modern world was said to be so good at maintaining. Delegates range from Russian & Ukrainian officials themselves to ambassadors of foreign nations, all of whom look to produce a resolution to their greatest benefit. At the end of the day, everyone’s goal is to end the conflict, however what a “good end” may mean to your role varies drastically. In this committee, delegates will have to consider economic, financial, political, militaristic, & humanitarian factors in an attempt to accomplish their goals. This committee has heaps of intricacies, with the presence of the active conflict and the mere thought of what the future holds being more than enough to get gears turning in the minds of anyone.

## Topic One: Sanctions & the Economic State of the World

### Background Information

Arguably more devastating than the conflict on the battlefield itself may just be the economic ramifications that have ensued worldwide following the onset conflict. The Russo-Ukrainian conflict has resulted in some of the greatest sanctions upon one nation in global history. Western nations, their allies, and many others imposed limited sanctions on Russia when it recognized Donetsk and Luhansk as independent nations. When the attack itself began on February 24th, 2022, harder sanctions rained down on Russia in what can be referred to as “economic warfare”, with western nations attempting to cripple the Russian nation by destroying their economy. Sanctions targeted individuals, banks, business, monetary exchanges, exports/imports, and more. Russian banks were removed from the SWIFT network on the 1st of March, 2022 in an unprecedented move. With SWIFT being the agency facilitating almost all international financial transactions, this move made it extremely difficult for Russian banks to conduct business, and thus extremely difficult for exchanges utilizing the Russian Ruble as a whole. The host of sanctions also froze the assets of the Russian Central Bank, which held almost \$630 billion USD in foreign-exchange reserves. The proposed Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline was also frozen. By just the 1st of March, the total amount of Russian assets frozen by sanctions amounted to over \$1 trillion USD.

The impact of these sanctions on Russia was devastating at the beginning, with the Russian stock market falling by 39% on just the first day of the invasion. The national currency, the Russian Ruble, fell to record lows as citizens rushed to exchange the Ruble into foreign currencies before it went worthless. Many stock exchanges, notably those in the capital, Moscow, and Saint Petersburg closed until the 18th of March, 2022, in an attempt to negate a complete collapse of the stock market. This closure was also the largest in the nation’s history. Borrowing also very quickly became very difficult for the Russian state as the government’s credit rating plummeted, making it far more difficult to receive the bonds and investments required to get the nation out of debt. Very quickly, nearly all major Western companies ceased trading and later completely even seized operations in Russia. The fallout in the nation was so devastating that Sergei Aleksashenko, the former Russian deputy finance minister, said “This is a kind of financial nuclear bomb that is falling on Russia.” This display was truly a form of economic warfare, with the intended effects of a deep recession, bank runs, and hyperinflation in Russia very quickly coming to fruition.

A major part of international economic backlash upon Russia was through fossil fuels and other such natural resources, which make up a significant portion of the Russian economy, GDP, and even global supply. On February 28th, 2022, Canada began the implementation of natural resource sanctions against Russia by banning all Russian imports of crude oil. On March 8, 2022, President of the United States, Joe Biden, ordered for a ban of all Russian imports of oil, gas, and coal into the nation. The

European Commission followed suit in May with a ban of all oil imports from Russia. However, this ban was later minimized to a ban on only imports from sea after tough campaigning from Hungary which gets 60% of its oil from Russian pipelines. The complete European oil pipeline supply from Russia is almost 800,000 barrels a day as is an exception relative to other common sanctions. Despite this law however, certain nations have committed to a full ban on Russian oil imports including those by pipeline, a move taken by Germany & Poland amongst others. The European ambition to free themselves of Russian fossil fuels was furthered when the European Commission and International Energy Agency presented joint plans to reduce their reliance on Russian fossil fuels by first reducing gas imports by two thirds within a year and completely by the turn of the decade. The President of the European Commission stated in April 2022 that “the era of Russian fossil fuels will come to an end.” The European Union also formally announced its plans to end its reliance on Russian fossil fuels by 2023 in May. Major international companies in the fossil fuels industry also began to repeal their business out of Russia, with Shell announcing on March 8, 2022, that it intended to withdraw from the Russian hydrocarbons industry. Despite these setbacks, Russia was still exporting a significant amount of fossil fuels, generating funds that were crucial to stabilizing the economy and funding the war effort. To counter this, on September 22nd, the G7 nations agreed to cap the price of Russian oil.

Despite the substantial number of sanctions applied on Russia, which may make it seem as if the nation would be absolutely crumbling, things have arguably not panned out as well as the Western nations have hoped. The sanctioning was not as universal as these nations would have hoped, with several major nations refusing to sanction Russia and standing up well against Western pressure to do so. Major nations such as India, China, Brazil, Serbia, & Mexico declared intentions to not sanction Russia, and have stuck by it. This has allowed Russia the opportunity to conduct trade with these nations in order to keep its economy and war effort alive. Nations such as India & China particularly have grown as a stronger export destination for Russian fossil fuels. Several disagreements have also ensued between Western nations and nations refusing to sanction Russia, with India being a notable example. This was furthered by the fact that Joe Biden had even threatened to impose sanctions on India itself after the nation refused to halt its purchase of Russian military goods. India held strong against pressure, and has arguably increased its cooperation with Russia in financial & economic terms. This similar trend has been witnessed amongst many nations across the Eastern world and even in some European nations in the Balkan regions. Overall, the barrage of sanctions implemented against Russia has essentially resulted in an economic “Cold War” of sorts where nations are now divided depending on their willingness to cooperate with Russia economically.

## Potential Solutions

A solution to the conflict itself is complicated at best. Western nations sanctioning Russia is not a new phenomenon by any means, rather sanctions began in 2014 during Russia’s initial annexation of Crimea itself. These sanctions were maintained for the most part for 8 years until they were all increased in magnitude following the recent escalation of the conflict. Thus, potential solutions on the

economic front must work even harder in order to reverse the damage done during the several years of sanctioning itself. It is highly unlikely that sanctions will come to an end without the ending of conflict itself, or at least some promise of ceasefire. For Western nations, their philosophy behind their approach to the conflict has been one of economic warfare, defeating Russia from a distance by crushing its economy, thus, taking a U-turn from this approach is highly unlikely without some major concessions from the other side. However, compromises should be considered by delegates, especially when taking into account the global economic situation. Many nations currently sit on the brink of another recession, with economists and organizations worldwide reiterating a sense of relative crisis across the globe. Many banks globally, especially ones in Western nations, are seeing unprecedented lows. Stock markets worldwide have taken hits, and inflation across the world has gone up tremendously. Although much of this economic damage can also be accredited to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impacts as well, the conflict in Russia has exacerbated everything. Thus, taking this all into consideration, for many nations a compromise may well be in their best interests. A temporary solution that reduces sanctions on certain goods which are both crucial to Russia's export economy and also needed for nations worldwide is a potential solution to consider. Russia has seemingly been gaining more cards to play with as the economic conflict progresses. Despite the lackluster performance on the battlefield, the world has truly seen the importance of Russian goods to the global economy. Russia is the world's largest exporter of not just fossil fuels, but also grains, fertilizers, and several minerals such as platinum, gold, cobalt, nickel, aluminum, and palladium. All of these are crucial materials to high-tech manufacturing which in turn are crucial for most business in Western nations themselves. These factors are crucial to remember for all delegates when coming to the negotiation table and proposing potential solutions.

## Past Attempts

Peace-negotiations and attempted solutions have been discussed throughout the conflict. Very early on in the conflict, several rounds were held. The first meeting was held on 28 February, 2022, in Belarus with following rounds held on 3 March & 7 March. These were very early on into the conflict when the sanctions really had devastated the Russian economy severely. However, as the war continued to go on, the impacts of these sanctions were minimized as the Russian economy adapted and export markets were changed. More bargaining power on the economic front was granted to the Russian delegation as Western nations began to have their own economic issues to deal with. At the time of this committee taking place, Russia still remains isolated from much of the world, however one can say it has formed a network of sympathetic nations who continue to cooperate with it, sustaining its economy and therefore its war effort. All foreign nations have expressed a desire for the conflict to end, with leaders from both sides of the world and allies with both nations expressing their concern for conflict, however the way that they go about bringing an end to the conflict differs severely. Russia for example, early on demanded that Western nations drop their sanctions on Russia, arguing that these sanctions just escalated the conflict rather than attempting to bring an end to it like the claimed intentions of them said. Western nations however refused to drop such sanctions, instead threatening

more sanctions unless Russia retracted their invasion. This dynamic is likely to continue, with both sides essentially not wanting to budge first before the other does.

## Things to Consider

Delegates in this committee should take into consideration their nation's geopolitical alliances and past actions on such issues when forming any decisions. Economic situations are also important factors to note. Delegates are encouraged to look into the current economic situations in their own nations, and attempt to negotiate deals and broker agreements as such. It is important also to maintain accurate positions and provide an accurate political representation of a nation's allegiances in real life. The severe sanctions imposed on Russia have had varying effects on different groups of nations. For Russia itself, it has seen their economy taking severe damage, their banks being nearly cut off from the global market, and a huge difference in the everyday lives of Russian citizens. With business leaving the nation, their currency going through near hyperinflation, and services being cut off, much of the Russian populace has not been happy. The onset of the conflict saw anti-war protests occurring throughout the nation which were quickly cracked down upon. Media censorship and propaganda has become mainstream in Russia, however arguably it has been present in the rest of the world as well. For delegates coming from the Russian legislature, the issues of the civilians and populace of their nation are very important factors to consider when forming decisions. This is something that stands true for all delegates however, as in this extremely unstable time for global geopolitics, it is crucial for all nations to keep as much political stability as possible internally.

With elections and new leadership having already come to power, or soon coming into the picture in several major nations, delegates are encouraged to look into decisions that will reflect best upon them back in their home countries. Issues such as the cost of living and soaring energy prices for example have been plaguing Western nations particularly, thus it is important for delegates to take these factors into consideration and adapt to them, which includes bargaining with these in mind or even using weaknesses to your advantage depending on your stances on the issue. Overall, delegates from several nations are present, thus it is very important to acknowledge your nation or role's economic position within the greater sphere, and look at what you have to gain and lose from certain decisions. It is also crucial to know what your role or nation prioritizes economically, what issues, resources, and arguments are of utmost urgency and such. All in all, this topic leaves a lot of room for variance and heated debate in terms of the various different views, opinions, stances, and desires that are coming to the table, and at the end of the day, it is in the best interest of each delegate to do what is required to bargain a solution that is for the best interest of your role and position.



### Guiding Questions:

1. What actions has your role or the nation you are representing taken on prior situations involving proposed mass sanctions upon a nation in conflict?
2. What resources (imports/exports) are crucial to your nation, and how have they been affected by this conflict?
3. How has the geopolitical standing of your nation been affected by the conflict?
4. How has your nation been affected by Western sanctions on Russian fossil fuels, has this been positive or negative?
5. How have the people of your nation reacted to the actions taken thus far by your nation?
6. Does your nation have more to gain or lose by imposing/retracting sanctions on Russia?
7. What is the economic power of your nation, and has this power been contested in the past year? If contested, how has your economy fared and has it expanded or limited its influence?

## Topic Two: Separatist Regions & Geopolitical Control

### Background Information

With the onset of conflict also arose two new nations, the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR). These two are self-proclaimed nations who broke away from Ukraine in 2014 following the initial Russian invasion. Since 2014 however, they have had very little success or even legitimacy, with not a single nation in the world officially recognizing them, and Ukraine still having substantial control over the regions. However, this all changed on the 21st of February, 2022, three days before the formal invasion began. Russia officially recognized the DPR & LPR, becoming the first nations to do so, and later using the "defense" of these nations as an excuse to authorize the usage of military forces in the regions and subsequently all of Ukraine. This initial recognition of the two breakaway states was already considered illegal internationally, and Russia was met with heavy criticism from across the globe, however this did not stop them. No other nations had since recognized either of the two states, with them not being allowed to enter almost any major global organizations. Referendums were later held in the regions in late September to decide the future of these nations, albeit illegal referendums with no real official power. Their statehood itself was later even further compromised, as the two nations were annexed by Russia on 30 September, 2022. However, this annexation was not recognized by any nations with the UN General Assembly quickly passing a resolution encouraging nations not to recognize the "attempted illegal annexation".

Separatist regions attempting to become independent nations is nothing new, in fact there are many examples of self-proclaimed breakaway states in the modern world, with varying levels of recognition. A lot of these nations however, are only recognized officially by 1-5 nations, and ironically, it seems to be Russia and its very close allies who are doing this. Self-proclaimed states such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, & Transnistria amongst others are all examples of states breaking away with nations whilst only being officially recognized by Russia. Another similarity between many of these examples is the fact that the nation that these regions are breaking away from are enemies of Russia. South Ossetia & Abkhazia are glaring examples of this, both of which are breakaway states from Georgia, a nation which had a brutal conflict with Russia in 2008. The examples between these states and the DPR & LPR are eerily similar, as just like the two nations in question, South Ossetia & Abkhazia only declared independence after Russian conflicts with their host nations in 2008, similar to how the LPR & DPR only declared independence after the start of Russo-Ukrainian hostilities in 2014.

Russia is a nation with a history of supporting such breakaway states, and using their relative vulnerability to their benefit. The LPR & DPR had practically been Russian puppet states for all their independence, with their leaders essentially being hand-picked by the Russian regime to support the pro-Russian sentiment in Eastern Ukraine. The Russian military also has had a lot of power in the regions, as considering the states have fairly weak militaries of their own, they have relied on the Russian military to fight most of the conflict for them. These regions are also far more ethnically

Russian than the rest of Ukraine, with Russian being spoken by a significant proportion of the population, and with Russian culture and heritage having far wider influence in the region. This has been a fact utilized by Putin several times to justify the Russian invasion and control over the regions, with sentiment essentially stating that since these regions have so many Russians, it is the duty of the Russian nation to defend its people living in these states even if it is in Ukraine at the end of the day. The legislative systems of the nations are similar to that of Russia, with similar ideologies and pro-Russian leaders being heavily supported in elections and such. Many foreign nations and experts have essentially regarded the two states as Russian puppet states, and following the recent illegal annexation, these claims have been further solidified.

## Potential Solutions

Solutions to the issue at hand definitely are extremely difficult. It is important to note that the current annexations or independence of separatist regions are not recognized internationally by any nation. Thus, on an international level, Russia cannot benefit from de facto occupying these territories. This is important to consider when thinking about possible solutions, as the current status quo itself is not exactly good for the Russian regime. For Russia, international recognition of its claims in Ukraine would be amazing, finally allowing it to assert full political control over the regions and actually benefit from the leverage these regions provide. This would also assert Russian power in Eastern Europe, finally proving that the nation does have enough power to force its geopolitical agenda on a global scale if it feels so. This would obviously be a huge geopolitical boon for Russia. The regions themselves contain a lot in terms of natural resources, valuable land, and history, and if the Russian claims to the land were to be officially recognized, Russia could actually utilize these in potential trade negotiations, infrastructure projects, and more. A solution like this would likely have to coincide with a conclusion of the conflict, as this essentially would give Russia most of what it wanted in the first place. As previously mentioned, one of the main reasons the Russian regime stated for its military intervention into the regions were to protect the Russian populations in the DPR & LPR, and therefore to come to the aid of these nations that it just officially recognized a few days ago. Alongside these two regions, we cannot forget the Crimea region. Crimea was annexed by Russia in 2014, however this again was not recognized internationally despite Russia since having had de facto control over the region. Crimea is even more vital in terms of its brilliant geopolitical position in the Black Sea, allowing the Russian navy its only year round port, overall proving a massive boon for their military. All together, the international recognition of Russian control over the LPR, DPR, & Crimea was one of and arguably the greatest reason behind Russia's invasion of Ukraine. International recognition of Russia's annexations here would finally cement these claims, and prove a massive geopolitical win for Russia. This would also likely coincide with the end of the conflict, which is a possibility that definitely must be considered if things go the way of the Russian Federation.

However, there is obviously a lot standing in the way of any potential recognition of the separatist regimes. Obviously, there is a strong reason why most of the world has not been entertaining these

claims for almost 8 years. For Western powers, it is crucial to not allow Russia to formally expand any further. Because of the massive power struggle that Ukraine essentially has become between Russia & the Western powers, it is crucial for either side not to give in. Recognizing Russian claims over Ukraine would essentially be admitting defeat in the quest to protect Ukraine's sovereignty, a severe blow for the West. Furthermore, this could very well likely provoke more conflicts globally, as nations would now see that if they are able to thoroughly win a conflict, their annexation claims over another nation's territories will be recognized. Considering the already very unstable state of global geopolitics that we reside in, this would not be good for the West as they attempt to maintain their influence over most of the globe. Potential solutions for the Western powers would have to incorporate the protection of Ukraine's sovereignty, essentially ensuring that these separatist regions do not fall into Russian hands. This view will likely be upheld no matter what it takes, as the NATO nations have shown so far that they are willing to provide Ukraine with massive amounts of military goods and resources in order to sustain its conflict and protect its sovereignty. Maintaining Ukrainian claims over the LPR & DPR are crucial. However, Crimea is a bit of a different story. Considering that the Russian claim and de facto control over Crimea runs all the way back to 2014, it is far more likely for nations to budge on this issue as Crimea has in all practicality been a part of Russia for nearly a decade now. This would be far less embarrassing and would give away far less ground than for Russia to seize control over the Eastern regions of Ukraine instead.

## Past Attempts

Although past attempts to solve this solution itself have not really been substantial, we can look into some past examples in similar solutions to get an idea. Russia has had a history of adamantly supporting self-proclaimed breakaway states in nations it has had direct conflicts with, examples being the aforementioned Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria amongst others. We can look at actions taken regarding these nations to gain a sense of what may be happening in the breakaway states and regions of Ukraine. Throughout their periods of de facto independence that lasted from February to September before their annexation by Russia, the LPR & DPR were recognized by a total of three UN member states. These were Russia, North Korea, & Syria, and otherwise support was extremely limited. This is likely to stay the same, as the other three previous breakaway states we mentioned are all only recognized by 5 UN member states at most, those being the three that have recognized the Ukrainian breakaway states in addition to Nauru & Venezuela. Therefore, we can expect international recognition of the LPR & DPR and their annexation by Russia to stay limited at best. Despite the lack of international recognition however, these prior breakaway states have essentially been controlled by Russia ever since. Taking South Ossetia as an example, although the Georgian government and the UN consider the territory part of Georgia, Georgia does not in any practicality control the region. The region essentially operates as its own nation in many ways, having its own government, political parties, militaries, laws, and even issuing passports. In order to sustain this, the nation relies heavily on military, political, & financial aid from Russia, and is also influenced

extensively both politically and militaristically by Russia itself. This has led to the nation and fellow breakaway states essentially being labeled breakaway Russian puppet states.

International bodies and almost all nations globally have refused to acknowledge the independence of these separatist states. This is even more worrying for Russia when taking into consideration that their 2008 conflict with Georgia resulted in very clear Russian victory and came with far less international backlash when compared to the current invasion with Ukraine. Thus, the lack of international recognition for the separatist states born out of that conflict tells a worrying tale for those wishing to see Russian claims over Ukraine recognized as well. On the bright side however, since these nations have essentially operated unchallenged by their host nations for some time under Russia's watch, with massive funding and influence, this does make for a good outlook for Russia when they look to assert their control over their claimed territories in Ukraine.

### Things to Consider

Delegates in this committee need to take into consideration their nation's stake in these issues. Their nation and subsequently their blocs reputation, and the potential damage that can be done to it needs to be assessed. For many blocks, recognizing Russian claims or not doing so would prove extremely embarrassing for them, essentially proving a geopolitical defeat to the other side. In the current geopolitical state of our world, the power struggle between blocks is very real. We are in a situation where major nations are doing everything in their power to uphold their geopolitical agenda and spread their influence to nations across the world, especially to developing nations. In order to spread your influence, it is crucial for nations to be seen as strong and capable of defending their allies, something which applies to all parties involved. Therefore, all delegates need to consider what damage can be done to their reputation. Influence, and how much geopolitical power they have to lose/gain from any decision, resolution, or agreement that is made in this committee. Nations at this time have to look out for themselves to prove their own agendas, and an inability to do this could prove devastating.

Furthermore, delegates should also consider the resources that a nation has in hand, both financially and militaristically, and what it is sacrificing in order to make any agreements. For example, Western nations should consider how much militaristic weaponry and goods they have to send to Ukraine if they would like to take an approach that involves stronger conflict. On the flipside, Russia may have to consider how much more manpower it has when attempting to assert its control and subjugate the region. This applies to delegates of all positions, as all nations will have significant stakes in the conflict and/or the nations involved, all of which have varying impacts on their economy, politics, militaries, etc. Geopolitical allegiances, and maintaining these are also crucial. There are many issues that are weighted heavily in geopolitics, however arguably none are more important than the control of territory itself, which is what is at stake here. Nations must work together with their allies to cooperate and further their agendas together. That being said, delegates are encouraged to be a bit creative in finding approaches to form allegiances, even looking towards other nations as long as it still



helps further their own influence. Delegates need to consider what their nations have done in the past regarding similar issues, potentially looking into how its nation has supported or opposed separatist states in the past, and its past actions regarding annexations and invasions in semi-recent times.

### Guiding Questions:

1. How has your nation supported/opposed Ukraine so far in their quest to maintain control over the LPR & DPR?
2. What actions did your nation take following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014?
3. How has your nation responded to past Russian recognitions of self-proclaimed breakaway states in Georgia & Moldova?
4. How has your nation gone about foreign intervention into domestic conflicts in the past?
5. Has your nation shown sympathy towards Russia in a geopolitical regard previously, and how so?
6. What has your nation done in response to past annexations from other nations, is similar action feasible given the current situation?
7. What resources does your nation have to offer in order to support either side in the current issue?
8. What does your nation have to gain/lose from recognizing the Russian claims?