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Crisis: Russia cuts Ukraine's gas supply

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Contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading	7
Discussion	8
Speaking	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

2 January, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Crisis: Russia cuts Ukraine's gas supply

Russia has begun cutting off natural gas supplies to Ukraine following a long standoff over the prices Moscow wants Kiev to pay for its energy. Ukraine's perturbed President Yushchenko described the move "as showing clear signs of a threat to our national security". He added: "We consider this an obvious form of economic pressure...and a violation [by Russia] of treaty obligations." Many observers see it as a form of retaliation for the ousting of a Moscow-backed candidate in last year's election in Ukraine. Mr. Yushchenko was propelled into power in the country's "Orange Revolution". The Ukrainian leader has since irked Mr. Putin with his pro-Western stance and his designs for Ukraine to join the EU and NATO.

Russia and Ukraine have been wrangling over gas prices for much of the past year. Moscow maintains it is time for Kiev to start paying higher prices. Under current agreements, Ukraine gets gas at discounted prices because it pipes much of Russia's exports across its own borders into Europe. However, Mr. Yushchenko has balked at the five-fold price hike demanded by Moscow. In upping the ante between the two neighbors, Ukraine's leader has announced his "readiness" to ask nuclear nations and the EU for their support against Russia. The severance of gas supplies to and through Ukraine will adversely affect Europe. Worst hit would be Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, which depend on Russia for 70 to 100 percent of their natural gas supplies.

WARM-UPS

1. UKRAINE SEARCH: Talk to as many other students as you can to find out what they know about Ukraine. After you have talked to lots of students, sit down with your partner(s) and share your information. Tell each other what you thought was interesting or surprising. Would you like to visit or live in Ukraine?

2. MY NEIGHBORS: Do you get on well with your neighbors? Are you a good neighbor? What recent acts of good neighborliness have you done? Answer these questions in pairs / groups. Talk about the following neighbors. What are relations like between your neighbor and you? Have they always been this way?

- a. My next-door neighbor where I live
- b. My other neighbors
- c. The countries neighboring my own
- d. The people in the next town / city
- e. My English class neighbors

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Russia / natural gas / standoffs / threats / national security / economic pressure / retaliation / revolution / discounted prices / price hikes / neighbors / nuclear nations

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. RELATIONS: What do you know of Russia's relations with other countries? Find out as much as you can about this from other students. Share your findings with your partner(s). You could talk about these countries:

- USA
- China
- Japan
- Cuba
- Iran
- Ukraine
- India
- Your country

5. FUTURE HEADLINES: Talk about the following "headlines" in pairs/ groups. Do you think they could become real headlines? Talk about them as though each was true.

- a. Russian Revolution 2006 – People rise against Putin.
- b. Ukraine joins the EU and NATO.
- c. Russia breaks up – More breakaway states declare independence.
- d. Russia invades Ukraine.
- e. Russia and US on brink of war over Ukraine.
- f. Putin and Yushchenko win Nobel Peace Prize.

6. PRESSURE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "pressure". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Russia has stopped selling natural gas to Ukraine. | T / F |
| b. Ukraine's president called the severance a threat to its secretaries. | T / F |
| c. Observers view Moscow's actions as retaliation against Ukraine. | T / F |
| d. Ukraine's president wants his country to join the EU and NATO. | T / F |
| e. The latest spat over gas prices started last week. | T / F |
| f. Russia currently sells gas to Ukraine at a discount. | T / F |
| g. Russia wants Ukraine to pay five times more than current prices. | T / F |
| h. The crisis between the two countries is unlikely to affect Europe. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| a. standoff | raising the stakes |
| b. perturbed | revenge |
| c. violation | cutting |
| d. retaliation | ruffled |
| e. irked | riled |
| f. wrangling | resisted |
| g. balked | impasse |
| h. hike | abuse |
| i. upping the ante | squabbling |
| j. severance | rise |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. a long | of retaliation |
| b. a violation by Russia | to join the EU and NATO |
| c. Many observers see it as a form | to and through Ukraine |
| d. the ousting of a | wrangling over gas prices |
| e. his designs for Ukraine | of treaty obligations |
| f. Russia and Ukraine have been | ante between the two neighbors |
| g. Mr. Yushchenko has balked | standoff over the prices |
| h. In upping the | would be Slovakia, Hungary... |
| i. The severance of gas supplies | Moscow-backed candidate |
| j. Worst hit | at the five-fold price hike |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WORD ORDER: Put the underlined words back into the correct order.

Crisis: Russia cuts Ukraine's gas supply

Russia has begun cutting off natural gas supplies to Ukraine standoff long over a following the prices Moscow wants Kiev to pay for its energy. Ukraine's perturbed President Yushchenko described the move "showing signs as of a clear threat to our national security". He added: "We consider this an obvious form of economic pressure...and a violation [by Russia] of treaty obligations." Many observers form retaliation of it see as a for the ousting of a Moscow-backed candidate in last year's election in Ukraine. Mr. Yushchenko into propelled was in power the county's "Orange Revolution". The Ukrainian leader has since irked Mr. Putin with his pro-Western stance and join Ukraine for his designs to the EU and NATO.

Russia and Ukraine have been much prices over for gas wrangling of the past year. Moscow maintains it is time for Kiev to start paying higher prices. Under current agreements, Ukraine gets gas at discounted prices because it exports much of Russia's pipes across its own borders into Europe. However, Mr. Yushchenko has the five-fold hike at balked price demanded by Moscow. In upping the ante between the two neighbors, Ukraine's leader has announced his "readiness" to ask nuclear nations and the EU for their support against Russia. The supplies through to severance and gas of Ukraine will adversely affect Europe. would be worst hit Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, which depend on Russia for 70 to 100 percent of their natural gas supplies.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Crisis: Russia cuts Ukraine's gas supply

Russia has begun cutting off natural gas supplies to Ukraine following a long _____ over the prices Moscow wants Kiev to pay for its energy. Ukraine's _____ President Yushchenko described the move "as showing clear signs of a threat to our national security". He added: "We consider this an _____ form of economic pressure...and a violation [by Russia] of treaty _____." Many observers see it as a form of retaliation for the _____ of a Moscow-backed candidate in last year's election in Ukraine. Mr. Yushchenko was _____ into power in the country's "Orange Revolution". The Ukrainian leader has since irked Mr. Putin with his pro-Western _____ and his _____ for Ukraine to join the EU and NATO.

Russia and Ukraine have been _____ over gas prices for much of the past year. Moscow _____ it is time for Kiev to start paying higher prices. Under current agreements, Ukraine gets gas at discounted prices because it _____ much of Russia's exports across its own borders into Europe. However, Mr. Yushchenko has _____ at the five-fold price hike demanded by Moscow. In _____ the ante between the two neighbors, Ukraine's leader has announced his "readiness" to ask nuclear nations and the EU for their support against Russia. The _____ of gas supplies to and through Ukraine will _____ affect Europe. Worst hit would be Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, which _____ on Russia for 70 to 100 percent of their natural gas supplies.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'natural' and 'gas'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WORD ORDER: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers.

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "GAS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about the current standoff between Russia and Ukraine.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| • following | • wrangling |
| • move | • pipes |
| • obvious | • hike |
| • observers | • readiness |
| • propelled | • severance |
| • designs | • hit |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Have you been following this story in the news?
- c. Which country do you think is in the right?
- d. Do you think Russia is flexing its muscles to keep its neighbor in order?
- e. Do you think Russians resent the fact that Ukraine and other states broke away from Russia and declared themselves independent?
- f. Do you think other parts of Russia might break away?
- g. How do you think Mr. Yushchenko's pro-European stance goes down in Moscow?
- h. What do you think of Mr. Yushchenko?
- i. How would Europe be changed if Russia joined the EU?
- j. What can the European countries affected by this impasse do to lessen its impact?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think the five-fold price hike is reasonable?
- d. Do you think this crisis will escalate?
- e. Who do you think is the better leader, Mr. Putin or Mr. Yushchenko?
- f. What do you think Mr. Yushchenko wants the nuclear nations and the EU to do to Russia?
- g. What do you think of Mr. Putin?
- h. Does your country have good relations with Russia and Ukraine?
- i. When was the last time someone irked you?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

GOOD NEIGHBORS: In pairs / groups, agree on the most important two points for each of the neighbors below to improve their relations.

NEIGHBORS	TWO POINTS
Russia / Ukraine	1. 2.
India / Pakistan	1. 2.
North Korea / South Korea	1. 2.
USA / Cuba	1. 2.
Israel / Palestine	1. 2.
Other	1. 2.

Change partners and tell you new partner(s) the two points you decided with your old partner(s).

Talk about which of your points are the most important. Discuss the likelihood of positive action being taken on these points that improve relations between the neighbors.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the impasse between Russia and Ukraine. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. NEIGHBORLINESS: Make a poster about how to be a good neighbor. Show your posters to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Mr. Putin and Mr. Yushchenko. Tell them both how you think they should resolve the standoff. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. T d. T e. F f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. standoff	impasse
b. perturbed	ruffled
c. violation	abuse
d. retaliation	revenge
e. irked	riled
f. wrangling	squabbling
g. balked	resisted
h. hike	rise
i. upping the ante	raising the stakes
j. severance	cutting

PHRASE MATCH:

a. a long	standoff over the prices
b. a violation by Russia	of treaty obligations
c. Many observers see it as a form	of retaliation
d. the ousting of a	Moscow-backed candidate
e. his designs for Ukraine	to join the EU and NATO
f. Russia and Ukraine have been	wrangling over gas prices
g. Mr. Yushchenko has balked	at the five-fold price hike
h. In upping the	ante between the two neighbors
i. The severance of gas supplies	to and through Ukraine
j. Worst hit	would be Slovakia, Hungary...

WORD ORDER:

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