

Adding Fuel to the Fire: Energy Resources and International Negotiation in the Eastern Mediterranean

Experiential Learning Activity (ELA) for Intermediate Courses
Student Materials

The Undergraduate Experiential Learning Project

ELA Overview

In this role-play activity, students simulate a United Nations summit aimed at preventing interstate conflict over vast undersea gas and oil fields discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean. The discovery of these valuable resources has sparked tension between parties already embroiled in longstanding conflicts over identity and territory, namely the Republic of Cyprus, Greece, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot Administration/TRNC,¹ Israel, and Lebanon. The UN summit is an attempt to obtain the agreement of all parties to negotiate disputes within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), a treaty which several of the parties have not yet ratified.

The simulation includes roles for UN mediators and representatives of each conflict party, as well as energy companies, environmental advocates, and the European Union. This simulation uses a contemporary scenario to enhance understanding of the complex dynamics of conflict and negotiation at interstate, regional, and international levels, and of identity, interests and international law as potential drivers of escalation or resolution. Students are asked to conduct background research, to represent conflict parties, and to engage in dialogue with other parties in an effort to agree on a framework for negotiating the rights to valuable undersea resources.

International conflicts are all too often framed in two-dimensional fashion, as encounters between two clearly defined opposing parties or positions. This activity is designed to provide students with an experience of the multi-dimensional nature of contemporary international negotiations, through the frame of an actual resource dispute involving diverse stakeholders - states, territories, companies, and international organizations - all embedded in an elaborate web of multi-lateral relationships. By striving to represent any single party to the dispute effectively, students become immersed in the intricacies of negotiation strategy and the dilemmas of decision-making, as they face the tradeoffs between the incentives of global commerce and the politics of regional conflict.

The development of each ELA represents the collective effort of faculty and project staff of the Undergraduate Experiential Learning Project at George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR). The primary authors of *Adding Fuel to the Fire* are Athanasios Gatsias, Gul Mescioglu-Gur, and Dr. Ned Lazarus. -

¹ TRNC: Since Turkey's 1974 military intervention in the Cyprus conflict, the north of the island has been an enclave governed by the Turkish-Cypriot minority. Turkey maintains a large military presence there, and is the only state to grant official recognition to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).

ELA Structure

Overall Schedule

The activity takes place in three stages:

Stage 1 Introduction

Overview of conflict, the activity, distribution of roles (60 minutes)

Stage 2 UN Summit Round I

- a. Parties' official opening statements and responses (90 minutes)
- b. Establishing the negotiation agenda (30 minutes)

Stage 3 UN Summit Round II

- c. Position statements and clarification (45 minutes)
- d. Negotiations, Concluding Vote, Debrief (75 minutes)

Times are approximate, estimated according to typical class size and class period duration; the structure and duration of the activity can be modified to fit different schedules and class sizes.



Marine Oil and Gas Drilling Platform. Photo Credit: Arbyreed, Flickr.

Resources/Background Materials

The following online resources can provide helpful background information on all parties to the summit, Eastern Mediterranean political dynamics, and the issues surrounding maritime hydrocarbon resources in the region.

Online Reports

The Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO) has published a comprehensive overview of the issue and positions of parties (as of early 2013) including maps: http://www.prio.no/Global/upload/Cyprus/Publications/Hydrocarbons_Report-ENG.pdf

The International Crisis Group (ICG) has published a report on the resource dispute, and on the sub-conflicts involved (Cyprus, EU-Turkey, Israel-Turkey, Israel-Lebanon): <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/cyprus/216-aphrodites-gift-can-cypriot-gas-power-a-new-dialogue.pdf>

The ICG site also includes periodic reports on multiple Eastern Mediterranean conflicts, which can be highly informative for the specific parties involved, including:

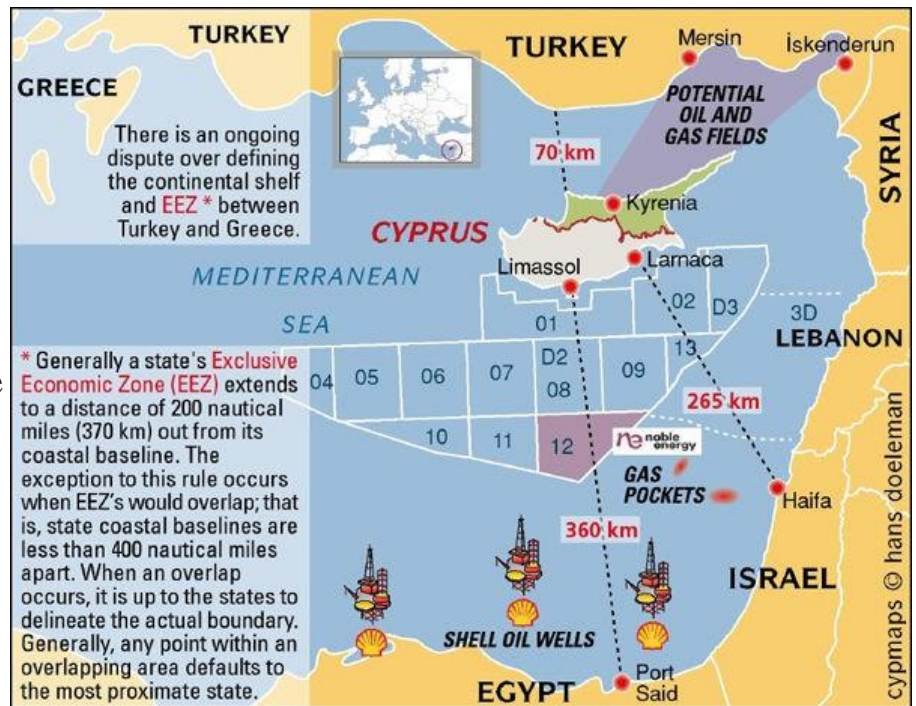
- Cyprus Conflict
- Aegean dispute
- EU/Turkey relations
- Arab/Israeli conflict

The **BBC** site also features brief overviews of regional conflicts.

Al-Monitor.com features excellent coverage of Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East news by local journalists.

UNCLOS/UN Law of the Sea

The history and content of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea can be accessed online from the *United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea*: http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_historical_perspective.htm



Cyprus and East Mediterranean EEZ Map. Photo Credit: Hans Doeleman.

All students should search their own party's English-language news sites for articles related to the conflicts and resource issues most important to their party. This can be done through keyword searches ("natural gas," "offshore drilling," "Law of the Sea," "Cyprus conflict," "Leviathan," "Aphrodite," "EEZ," etc.).



Map of Cyprus. Photo Credit: Nations Online Project.

Additionally, all government parties (all state parties, UN, EU, Turkish Cypriots/TRNC) should research their own official sites - e.g. Ministries of Foreign Affairs and/or Energy.

The following news sites are recommended for information on specific parties:

Energy Industry: *Noble Energy, Delek Group, Globes, Energy Tribune, Wall Street Journal, Natural Gas Europe*

Environmental Advocates: *Offshore-environment.com, Green Prophet, Mideast Environment, Greenpeace, Natural Gas Europe*

European Union: *EU Observer, Europa.eu*

Greece: *Ekatherimini, Tovima*

Israel: *Ynetnews, Haaretz, Globes, The Times of Israel*

Lebanon: *Daily Star, Lebanon Now, Naharnet, Al-Akhbar*

Republic of Cyprus/Greek Cypriots: *Cyprus Mail, Famagusta Gazette*

Turkey: *Hurriyet Daily News, Today's Zaman, Journal of Turkish Weekly, Turkishpress.com*

Turkish Cypriots/TRNC: *NorthCyprusNews.com, LGC News, Kibkom Times*

United Nations: *UNCLOS, UNFICYP (United Nations Force in Cyprus) Resources: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unficypr/resources.shtml>*

Greek Narrative

The discovery of large reserves of natural gas offshore Cyprus has once again stimulated a vigorous debate among governments in Eastern Mediterranean on the demarcation of exclusive economic zones (EEZ). EEZs are sea zones over which - according to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) - a state has exclusive rights over the use of marine and natural resources. The initiation of gas exploration and drilling by the Greek Cypriot-controlled Republic of Cyprus has triggered an angry response by Turkey and Turkish Cypriots as the two states have not come to an agreement on their EEZs. The dispute is of primary concern for Greece as the country faces similar issues with Turkey in the Aegean Sea, a region that is believed to be similarly rich in natural resources. In addition, Greece is bound with strong historical ties to Greek Cypriots and in many instances in the past has stood by the ethnically kin country in any challenges it may have faced. When it comes to Cyprus in particular, the gas dispute should be seen in the light of the Cyprus conflict as it has historically evolved. It has been almost 38 years since July 1974 and the Turkish invasion in Cyprus, which resulted in the division of the island and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Greek Cypriots. Since then, the Republic of Cyprus, controlled by Greek Cypriots alone has been the only internationally recognized political entity on the island. The self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the product of illegal occupation of 37% of the island's territory, has been isolated and enjoys recognition and support from Turkey alone. Despite continuous efforts made by the UN ever since to reunite the island, no agreed upon solution has been found.

The dispute over rights on the EEZ of the island came to add complexity to an already complicated conflict. The situation would be easier if Turkey was a signatory to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which could be used in Eastern Mediterranean - and in the Aegean in particular - as a basis for settling similar issues. Whenever there is a maritime legal dispute, the UNCLOS is referenced as the basic source of international law. However, international treaties apply only to the states that have signed them, and Turkey has not signed the UNCLOS. Therefore, it is not bound by its provisions. With regard to the exclusive economic zones, Turkey does not hold the same view as the international community nor does it accept the legal claims of its neighboring countries, including Greece (in the Aegean) and Cyprus.

An important dimension of the dispute is the involvement of Israel, with which Cyprus has signed an accord demarcating their maritime border and an agreement for joint gas explorations. Similarly to the Cypriot government, Athens sees Jerusalem as an important economic and security partner in the exploration and development of Eastern Mediterranean gas resources. This Athens-Nicosia-Jerusalem entente is not seen favorable by Ankara. Currently, the Turkish-Israeli relations have gone through serious challenges and are characterized by antagonism and animosity. Over the last years, under the leadership of Islamist Prime Minister Erdogan, Turkey has downgraded bilateral relations with Israel and escalated rhetorical attacks against its not long ago strategic ally in the region. The recent apology by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the Mavi Marmara incident and the death of nine Turkish citizens in May 2010, could be seen as a first step toward normalization of the two countries' relationship. Yet, a long way has still to be gone toward a real rapprochement between Turkey and Israel.

Greece has a high interest in the course of their dispute mainly for two reasons: a) the

country has historically been a strategic ally of Greek Cypriots providing them with its unconditional support at all levels; b) the dispute on EEZs between Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus has important implications for the Greco-Turkish dispute in the Aegean Sea, where maritime borders have not been set and this has been a source of continuous tension between two countries (along with a series of open issues related to territorial rights in the Aegean). A central difference between the two countries concerns whether numerous Greek islands in the Aegean - some of them as close as 3 nautical miles to Turkish shores - are entitled to their own EEZ and continental shelf. Turkey's reading of international treaties conveniently dictates that Greek islands in the region should be excluded from EEZ and continental shelf rights. In January 1996 Greece and Turkey came at the brink of war over Imia (Kardak in Turkish), an islet in eastern Aegean the Greek sovereignty over which is disputed by Turkey, whereas on several other occasions Turkish ships have violated the Greek territorial sea.

Over the last 14 years, however, with Turkey being in the midst of its EU accession process, there has been a rapprochement between the two countries and bilateral committees have been established to discuss those issues. Little progress seems to have been made to this end, leading some to think that Turkey may be using the process as a pretext in order to facilitate its EU accession. Although the dispute could be settled by resort to international courts, the two sides have stated that priority should be given to diplomatic efforts instead of judicial processes, which may be less conducive to a win-win outcome. Lately, however, Turkey's uncompromised stance and escalatory rhetoric seems to have derailed the process.

Undoubtedly, the stakes for Greece are high in this dispute. To add more, it is alleged - although not confirmed yet - that there may be extensive reserves of oil and natural gas in the Aegean. With the country still in the midst of a long and difficult recovery process from the economic collapse of the past few years, Athens wants to see an end in this dispute so as to focus undistracted in the extraction of these resources. This would render Greece an important energy player in the region, would upgrade its role vis-a-vis its European partners, and would boost the country's troubled economy. Although committed to providing unconditional support to Greek Cypriots, the Greek government would like to see the dispute between Turkey, Cyprus and Israel settled, as it would have positive effect on its own cause. The Greek government is still heavily focused on the economic recovery process and possesses no significant resources and effort to allocate to this issue. The situation has been further complicated by the recent economic crisis in Cyprus and the harsh austerity measures imposed on the RoC by the European Union, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (aka Troika) in exchange of a bailout. Sucked in its own economic crisis, sympathetic as they may be toward the RoC, the Greek government can do little to help Greek Cypriots at this phase, even more so as the latter consider Greece to bear great responsibilities for the Cypriot crisis. After all, it was the extensive Greek Cypriot exposure to toxic bonds issued by the Greek government that instigated the Cypriot crisis. It is true however, that a potential rapprochement in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean could lead to win-win arrangements for all actors involved. Needless to say, energy from Mediterranean offshore sources would significantly relieve the treasuries of all countries in the region.

It is within this climate that Greek officials will try to engage in an UN-facilitated dialogue with all interested actors over the following weeks in an effort to reach an agreement. There is an urgent need for all parties to find a solution as to: a) set an end

to the 39-year long division in Cyprus; b) come up with an arrangement that would define each country's rights in Eastern Mediterranean; and c) allow for the undistracted drilling and use of rich reserves of natural resources in the region. No one would be willing to invest billions of dollars in the infrastructure needed for the profitable use of these resources, as long as political stability is not guaranteed. For this reason, Greece is called to genuinely engage in a constructive dialogue, so as to settle its differences with Turkey - while preserving its strategic partnership with Cyprus and Israel - and decide on an arrangement that would allow for all parties to benefit from the existence of rich natural resource reserves in the region.

About the Project

This Experiential Learning Activity (ELA) has been developed as part of the Undergraduate Experiential Learning Project (UERP), U.S. Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)-funded initiative that aims to enhance Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) pedagogy in order to improve undergraduate learning.

The CAR field is uniquely positioned to deliver educational experiences that help students make the crucial link between abstract theories and practical application through learning activities such as: conflict mapping, intervention design, role plays, and simulations. The ELAs developed as part of the UERP advance specific learning outcomes, including critical thinking, problem solving, and perspective taking.

Each ELA produced through the UERP has been designed either to augment existing course curricula or to be used as a stand-alone activity. Instructors are encouraged to adapt activities to meet the needs of their specific learning environments, including class size and course objectives.

All UERP project materials are available for public use and may be reproduced without permission. Please ensure that all printed materials display both the FIPSE and George Mason University logos as well as the project URL (<http://scar.gmu.edu/experientiallearningproject/home>).

As your partners in advancing undergraduate education, we are committed to improving the quality of the learning experience and encourage all feedback and recommendations to support that commitment. Additionally, we welcome stories that highlight moments of student insight that arise from participation in these activities. If you are interested in supporting the collection of data for ongoing research, please contact us through our webpage. ▀



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