

# 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,<sup>1</sup> 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. -

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<sup>1</sup> 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](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:

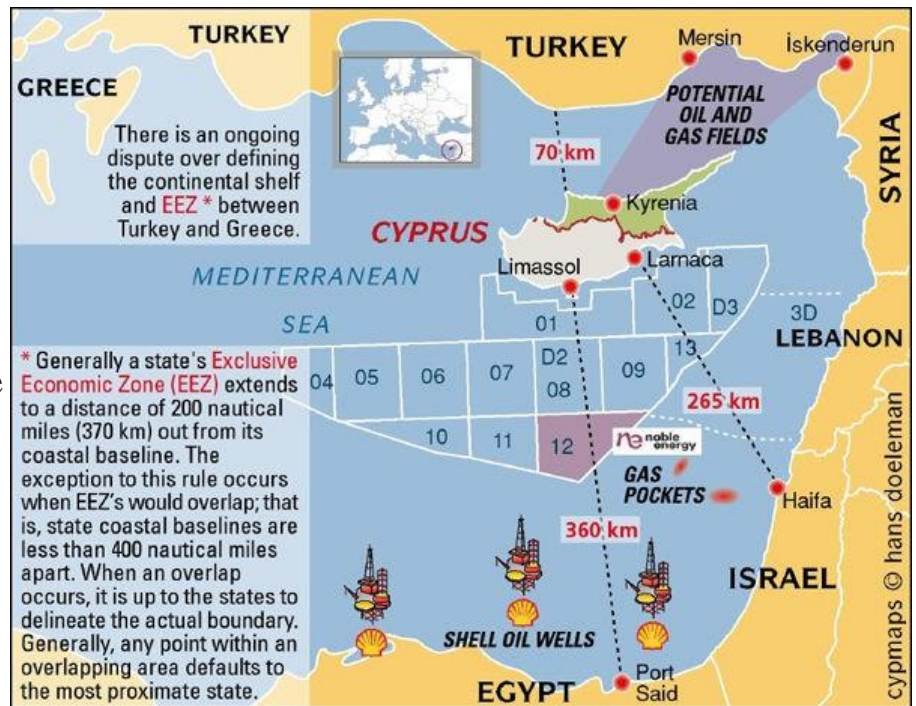
- Cyprus Conflict
- Aegean dispute
- EU/Turkey relations
- Arab/Israeli conflict

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](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>*

# Environmental NGO Narrative

Energy executives are fond of stating that natural gas is the clean, green fuel of the future. They proudly assert that burning natural gas produces fewer greenhouse emissions than coal or oil. Yet they skirt around the impact of the overall process of harvesting natural gas, in which the environmental hazards exist before the gas is ever converted to electricity. The primary dangers stem from methods used to extract gas from sensitive subterranean and marine environments. The destructive "externalities" of deep water drilling and hydraulic fracturing are vividly illustrated by the BP disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, and the toxic and seismic side effects of "fracking" in the United States. Not content with degrading the environment of their own country, US energy executives now have their sights set on unsettling the ecosystems of the Eastern Mediterranean - and they have found all-too-willing partners in local governments and industries.

Our movement/organization is well aware of the potential economic and political benefits of harvesting the natural gas fields of the region - for the foreign companies that will drill and sell it, the local tycoons who will get their share, and the politicians who will use it for patronage. But in the frenzy that the media has created around these gas deposits, it seems no one is stopping to ask the important questions - not whether the gas will be harvested, but how? In a cautious, responsible manner that will preserve and protect the marine habitat that has sustained great civilizations - Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Turkey - from ancient to modern times? Or in a "gold rush" race to the bottom, in which companies and countries compete to get their share out of the ground first? The gas has been there for millions of years - why this hurry? Is this gas more valuable than everything that the Mediterranean has meant to humanity until now?

Moreover, no one is asking the crucial economic questions - not whether the gas will ever produce power and profits, but how will those be distributed? Following the egalitarian, long-term successful example of Norway? Or according to the corrupt patronage models all too typical of our region? What about the existing local industries, built over decades and centuries, that our citizens and economies truly depend on - such as fishing and tourism? A single drilling incident can wreak economic havoc that will demand all of the gas revenue and more to repair - assuming that the local governments obtain a fair share, and distribute it fairly.

These gas fields are also disputed between the parties to some of the most intractable conflicts in the world, making a political disaster even more likely - and dangerous - than the risk of environmental accident. A confrontation between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, Israel and Lebanon, or any of the above and Turkey can quickly spiral into violence and war - sowing destruction and loss, and driving away tourists and foreign capital for a generation. If the gas is so valuable, can't the governments in the region work harder to resolve their differences in order to reap the benefits? Our argument is simple - it is the governments of the region, through their environmental and diplomatic policies, who will determine whether these gas discoveries are truly a blessing, or a new "resource curse."

# 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. ▀



## School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

3351 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 4D3, Arlington, VA 22201

## Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education

1990 K St. NW, 6th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20006