

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:

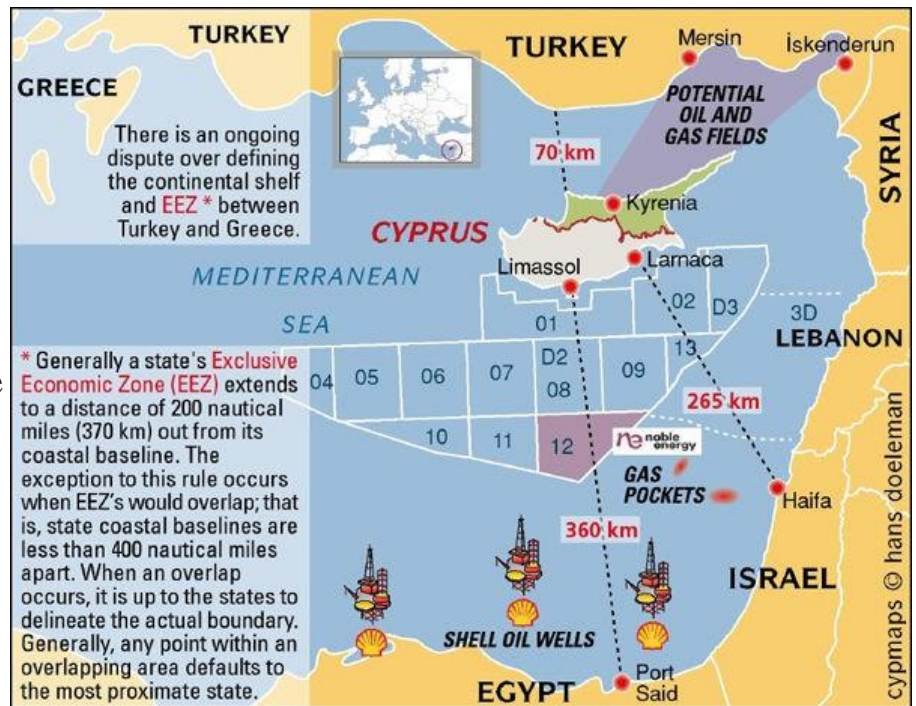
- Cyprus Conflict
- Aegean dispute
- EU/Turkey relations
- Arab/Israeli conflict

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>*

Israeli Narrative

Since the days of Zionist pioneers "making the desert bloom," Israelis have always taken pride in self-reliance, innovation and using brainpower to develop a prosperous economy in a small country, have desert, surrounded by hostile neighbors and forced to fight for existence and basic security. Early Zionist settlers drained malaria-infested swamps and built thriving agricultural settlements; Israeli agronomists developed drip irrigation and other technologies that enabled productive farming in arid conditions; in contemporary times, a thriving Israeli hi-tech sector lists more companies on the NASDAQ than any other country besides the United States - which has a population 45 times the size of Israel.

High levels of diplomatic and technological resourcefulness have always been an existential necessity for Israel. Neighboring Arab states refused to recognize Israel for decades; Israel's northern neighbors Lebanon and Syria still have no relations with the Jewish state. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states famously used the "oil weapon" to punish Israel and its Western supporters after Israel fought off the deadly Egyptian-Syrian invasion on Yom Kippur of 1973. In its first decades, Israel relied on an energy/security alliance with the Shah of Iran. The 1979 Iranian revolution, however, led to Iran and its proxy armies Hezbollah and Hamas becoming Israel's most dangerous enemies in the Middle East. Hamas's suicide bombing campaigns have killed hundreds of Israeli civilians in the last two decades, undermining the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. And since Israel withdrew all forces from Southern Lebanon (2002) and Gaza (2005), Hamas and Hezbollah have responded by firing thousands of rockets at Israeli civilians, forcing Israel to respond with military offensives. Iran continues today to arm Hamas and Hezbollah, while striving to build its own nuclear arsenal in defiance of the international community, and threatening explicitly to destroy Israel.

In the 1980s and 1990s, peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan and economic and military cooperation with Turkey temporarily improved Israel's geostrategic environment; for energy needs, Egypt even built a pipeline delivering natural gas to Israel at a favorable rate. Yet in recent years, the rise of radical Islamist parties has undermined those gains. In recent years, Turkey's Islamist Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has downgraded bilateral relations and escalated rhetorical attacks against Israel, and threatened to send Turkish warships to patrol the Eastern Mediterranean. In Egypt, Islamist parties won 65% of the seats in 2011 parliamentary elections before being overthrown by the military in 2013, and natural gas supplies to Israel have been disrupted repeatedly by sabotage of the Sinai pipeline. Along its entire Mediterranean coast, from Egypt and Hamas-ruled Gaza in the South to Hezbollah-controlled Lebanon, Syria and Turkey to the North, Israel is surrounded by regimes that are either hostile, unstable, or both.

In the 20th century, Israeli diplomats often lamented that, "of all the countries in the Middle East, God gave the Jews the only one without any oil." Since the year 2000, however, Israel has discovered vast undersea reserves of natural gas off its Mediterranean shoreline. In this precarious strategic environment, these finds seem nothing short of miraculous. The Mari, Dalit, Tamar and Leviathan gas fields together hold trillions of cubic feet of natural gas. This is enough to achieve energy self-sufficiency, and even to make Israel an energy exporter. After economic ingenuity and military resolve, these resources are Israel's greatest strategic asset. As President Shimon Peres stated in

November 2011 on a visit to Cyprus, a new strategic partner in Eastern Mediterranean, Israel intends to develop these resources entirely for peaceful purposes. Israel has negotiated agreements of cooperation with Mediterranean neighbors Cyprus and Greece, outlining the borders of our Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) in concert with the International Treaty on the Law of the Sea and for mutual benefit. Israel is ready to do the same with Lebanon and Turkey, in order to assure that these precious natural resources serve peace, development and stability in the region. Indeed, Prime Minister Netanyahu recently took an important step to contribute to regional peace and stability by apologizing to Turkey for lives unfortunately lost in a 2010 provocation by pro-Palestinian activists at sea. The Prime Minister emphasized to his counterpart that the tragic results were unintentional and that Israel seeks to restore productive ties with Turkey. While maintaining rapprochement with Turkey, Israel will also maintain its excellent bilateral relations with the Republic of Cyprus. Accordingly, Israel, Cyprus and Greece will continue to conduct joint military exercises in matters of search and rescue within the legally established Exclusive Economic Zones of the two countries. The case with Lebanon is different; after the signing of our maritime borders delimitation agreement with the Republic of Cyprus, Lebanon claimed that the northern part of the Israeli EEZ overlaps the southern part of what Lebanon sees as its EEZ. This adds extra friction to an already troubled relationship with our neighboring country, in which Hezbollah appears to be playing an increasingly important role, further radicalizing both domestic Lebanese politics and the country's foreign policy orientation.

We know that our region has more than enough resources for all of us to live in peace and prosperity - the only scarce resources are political stability and good will. Israel sincerely believes that the energy resources found in the Eastern Mediterranean would constitute an opportunity and a new beginning for peace and a lasting settlement. It is within this climate that Israeli 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, so as to come up with an arrangement that would define each country's rights in Eastern Mediterranean and 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, Israel is called to genuinely engage in a constructive dialogue, so as to settle existing differences, maintain strategic partnerships and find an arrangement that would allow 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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