

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](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:

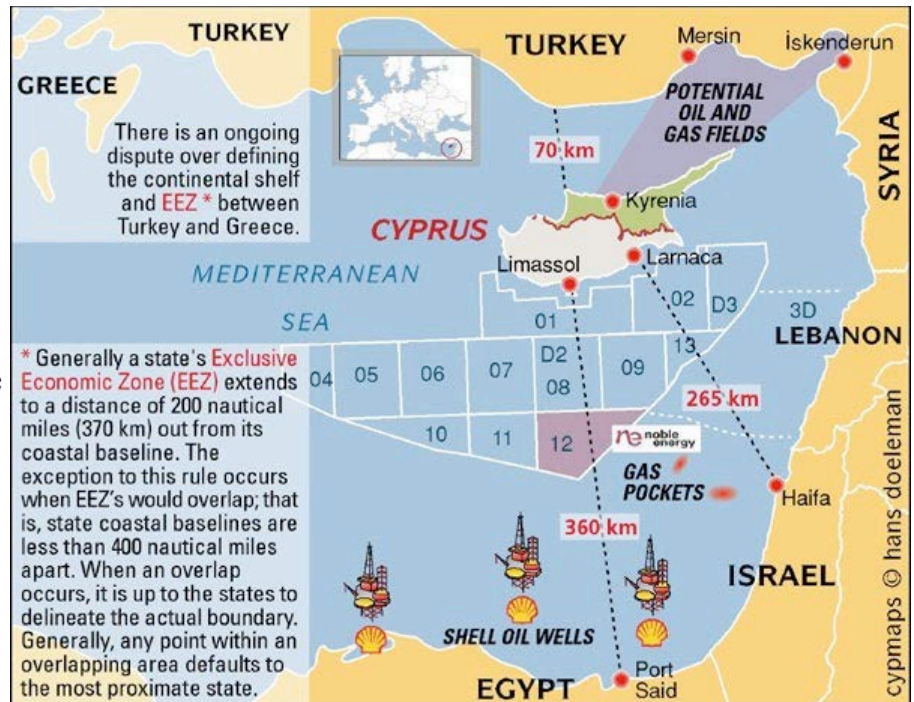
- Cyprus Conflict
- Aegean dispute
- EU/Turkey relations
- Arab/Israeli conflict

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> ■

United Nations Narrative

It has been almost 39 years since July 1974 and the Turkish military operation in Cyprus after a short-lived coup by Greek Cypriot supporters of union with Greece (enosis). This operation resulted in the division of the island into the Greek Cypriot South and the Turkish Cypriot North. Since then, the Republic of Cyprus, controlled by Greek Cypriots alone, has been the only internationally recognized political entity on the island, while the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has been largely isolated, enjoying recognition and support from Turkey alone. The seeds of division were sown in the early 1960s when intercommunal tensions led to Turkish Cypriot withdrawal from power-sharing administration amidst a constitutional crisis,¹ three years after the country gained its independence from Britain. Widespread intercommunal violence led in 1964 to the deployment of UNFICYP, one of the oldest UN peacekeeping forces in the world, whose mandate is to supervise the ceasefire line, maintain a buffer zone on the island, undertake humanitarian activities and support the good offices mission of the Secretary-General.

Despite continuous efforts made by the UN ever since to reunite the island, no agreed upon solution has been found. In addition, the conflict has also harmed Turkey's attempts to join the European Union, in which since May 2004 the Greek Cypriot government represents the whole island, providing in many instances obstacles to Turkey's EU accession. A number of plans presented by different UN Secretary Generals have not been accepted by the leaders of the two Cypriot communities, who have historically spent more time blaming each other than trying to create the necessary political will and momentum that would facilitate a constructive discussion towards a commonly accepted settlement. Boutros-Ghali's set of ideas in 1992 was rejected by the Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktas, who enjoyed Ankara's support, while the Anan Plan in 2004 failed due to the uncompromised position of the Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos, who accused the UN of negotiating a Turkey-friendly plan, convincing his compatriots to vote against it. Criticizing the UN for trying to impose a solution has been a common tactic of all parties in the Cyprus conflict in order to justify the collapse of several negotiation processes. For this reason the current UN envoy to Cyprus, Alexander Downer, has adopted a low-profile strategy of minimal involvement in the talks between the leaderships of the two communities.

Over the years, the involved parties have come to agree in principle on a reunification of the island under the umbrella of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, with political equality, single citizenship and a single international identity. But there is still significant divergence on how to co-govern, what territorial adjustments will take place between the two future constituent states, and what will happen with the property of thousands of internally displaced people. Recently, efforts toward reunification appeared to be stalled, despite the UN Secretary General's call to all interested parties to work intensively in order to bridge their remaining differences.

An event of special importance for the future of the island, as well as Eastern Mediterranean in general, is the discovery of energy reserves in the region. These resources have raised the stakes in existing political disputes in the area and this can either increase tensions between the actors involved or be an incentive for them to approach

¹ Greek Cypriots claim that Turkish Cypriots voluntarily withdrew from administration, whereas Turkish Cypriots argue that they were forced out from the power-sharing agreement

their differences more constructively and find a viable *modus cooperandi* so as to pursue their common collective interests. At this point, tensions appear to have increased, rendering energy resources a factor that further complicates the already complex disputes in the region. In Cyprus, the Greek-Cypriot government has initiated offshore gas and oil drilling operations triggering an angry response by Turkey and Turkish Cypriots, a development that adversely affected the overall negotiation process. Two basic points constitute the main dimensions of agreement. On the one hand, there has been no delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) between the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey, as the two sides do not recognize each other. EEZs are sea zones over which - according to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea - a state has exclusive rights over the use of marine natural resources. In other words, Turkey questions the Greek Cypriot rights over these natural resources, as maritime borders have not been established between the two states. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which could be used in Eastern Mediterranean as a basis to solve maritime disputes, applies and is binding only to states that have signed it, and not all states involved in this dispute have signed it. On the other hand, Turkey and Turkish Cypriots claim that as long as there is no political solution to the Cyprus problem, Greek Cypriots should refrain from gas exploration and drilling, as Turkish Cypriots should also benefit from the natural resources of the island. In their turn, Green Cypriot officials have stated that any prospective proceeds out of the natural resources exploitation are guaranteed to be used for the interests of both Cypriot communities (Greek and Turkish), upon the achievement of a comprehensive solution on the island, without however being particularly convincing to this end. On the contrary, sucked in a deep economic crisis, the Greek Cypriot government appears to be willing to use revenues from natural gas exports to boost the country's troubled economy. It is needless to say that the course of this dispute will greatly affect by reflection the conflict between Greece and Turkey over the maritime borders in the Aegean Sea and the delimitation of their Exclusive Economic Zones.

To add more complexity in an already complicated situation, the Greek Cypriot government has developed a strategic economic partnership with Israel, with which it has signed an accord on their maritime borders and an agreement for joint gas explorations on areas that are disputed by Turkey. In addition, over the last years the previously smooth relations between Turkey and Israel - once strategic allies in the region - have turned into a relationship of antagonism and animosity. The situation deteriorated after the killing of nine Turkish citizens by Israeli commandos in May 2010 on a ship that was part of a flotilla which intended to break the Israeli blockade of the Gaza strip and deliver aid to Palestinians. Israeli officials said that its marines acted in self-defense after being attacked by the Turkish activists. A UN report - the product of a year-long investigation of the incident - concluded that the Israeli blockade of Gaza was legal. The report was critical of the flotilla, but also characterized the response of the Israeli forces as "excessive and unreasonable". The recent apology by the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the Mavi Marmara incident 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. Finally, adding new dimension to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Lebanon has also been involved in the wider dispute over exclusive economic rights in Eastern Mediterranean, as it has signed no agreement with Israel demarcating their maritime borders, while the Lebanese-RoC EEZ delimitation agreement, signed in 2007, is unlikely to be ratified by the Lebanese parliament unless a solution is found in the Israeli-Lebanese maritime border dispute. The long history of animosity between the two

countries may negatively influence the course of the talks on the issue. Clearly the gas dispute has rekindled the Greco-Turkish rivalry in Cyprus and the Aegean Sea, while at the same time added a new economic dimension to the 64-year-old Arab-Israeli conflict. Existing political disputes have not allowed for the demarcation of each country's exclusive economic zone and this perplexes the situation even further. Finally, multinational corporations from the energy industry that have partnered with local governments in gas and oil exploration and drilling are also important actors in the dispute, being primarily interested in safeguarding their economic interests. For them, widespread political instability is not an ideal environment when investments of billions of dollars are at stake. At the same time, the UN needs to make sure that all state and non-state actors, while carrying out oil and natural gas exploitation activities, understand their obligations to preserve and maintain local marine ecosystems and abide by the provisions of international environmental laws. Within this climate the UN Secretary General Moon has taken the initiative to organize a multilateral conference, inviting a number of important political and economic actors involved in the dispute, so as to engage them in a respectful dialogue and a common search for viable solutions. His goal is to achieve a breakthrough in this complex issue and render Eastern Mediterranean a role model for the rest of the world on how to deal with maritime border disputes.

About the Project

This Experiential Learning Activity (ELA) has been developed as part of the Undergraduate Experiential Learning Project (UELP), 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 UELP advance specific learning outcomes, including critical thinking, problem solving, and perspective taking.

Each ELA produced through the UELP 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.

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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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