

# 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:

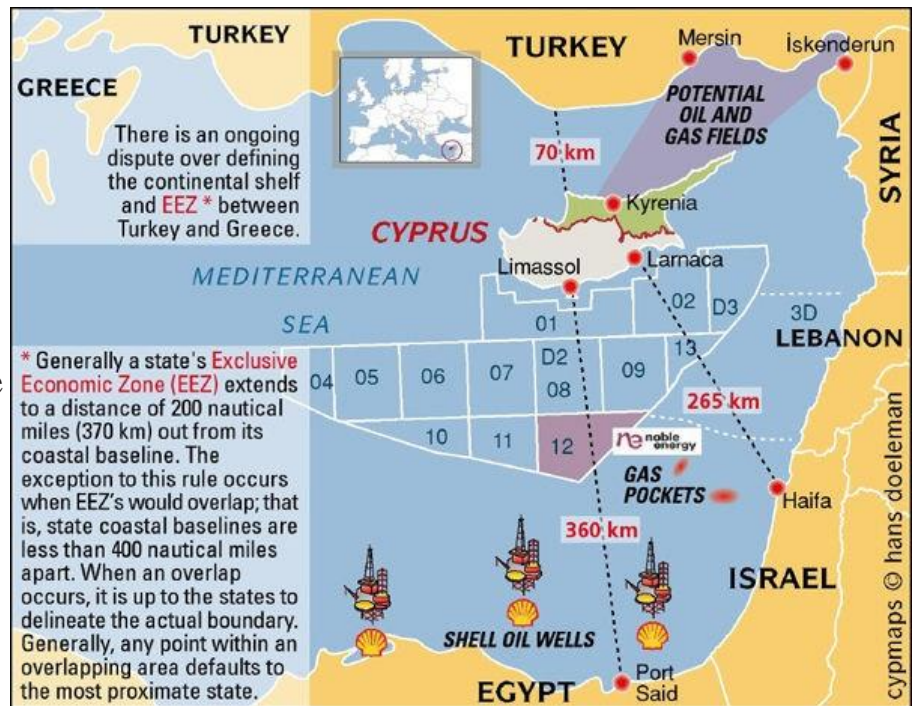
- Cyprus Conflict
- Aegean dispute
- EU/Turkey relations
- Arab/Israeli conflict

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>*

# Greek Cypriot Narrative

It has been almost 39 years since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, which divided the island and resulted in the illegal occupation of 37% of its territory and the stationing of 30,000 Turkish troops in the North. The invasion, apart from the division of the island and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Greek Cypriots, marked the beginning of a long period of insecurity for Greek Cypriots, who have been in a vulnerable position against a country that for many years has stood as a regional bully in Eastern Mediterranean. The Greek Cypriot-controlled Republic of Cyprus (RoC), an EU member state since 2004, is the only sovereign power governing the island according to international law. The Greek Cypriot rightful claims have been backed by UN Security Council Resolutions 186 (1964), 541 (1983), and 550 (1984), which called on all member states to not recognize the self-proclaimed, so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (KKTC) and to only recognize the Greek Cypriot Republic. In its turn, Turkey - standing alone against the whole international community - does not recognize the Greek Cypriot state. Despite orchestrated efforts to reach a negotiated settlement in the island, Turkey's uncompromised positions have not allowed for a breakthrough to take place.

Recently, extensive reserves of natural gas have been discovered in the Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), a sea zone 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. According to recent explorations, the Aphrodite gas field, where the Greek Cypriots have struck natural gas, contains an estimated up to 9 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves. Drilling this gas would end the energy dependency of the country on imports from other countries; importantly, it could render Cyprus a supplier of natural gas to EU either through a Liquefied Natural Gas plant or through pipelines that could pass through Greece. This discovery may significantly advance the economic development and prosperity of Cyprus, especially given the current grim state of the Greek Cypriot economy. To add more, as the energy sector is becoming especially important in the region of Eastern Mediterranean, the country may improve its relative position vis-a-vis Turkey. As the only internationally recognized state on the island, the Republic of Cyprus exercising its legitimate rights has signed bilateral agreements for exclusive economic zone trading with a number of neighboring countries. Of particular importance is its strategic economic partnership with Israel, with which Cyprus has signed an accord demarcating their maritime border and an agreement for joint gas explorations. Noble Energy, licensed by the RoC, has been drilling over the past two years for natural gas off the island's southern coast.

Not surprisingly, Turkey has protested the Cyprus-Israel agreements and the drilling of gas. Turkey's unconstructive involvement in the issue has its roots in problems it has with both Israel and Cyprus in many accounts. On the one hand, once smooth relations between Turkey and Israel have turned into a relationship of antagonism and animosity. Over the last years, under the leadership of the 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 the Israel 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, although this gesture instigated Greek Cypriot fears that they will be left alone in the region, a long way has still to be gone toward a real rapprochement between Turkey and Israel. On the other hand, Turkey claims that

Turkish Cypriots, who run their own illegal pseudo-state in the North of the island, have rights on the exclusive economic zone and should have a say in the decision-making process regarding gas and oil reserves, forgetting that it was Turkish Cypriots' own decision to leave the RoC and stop participating in its administrative structures! A basic rationale behind Turkey's objections is that it does not recognize Cyprus, and therefore, its right to grant explorative and drilling rights in its EEZ. In other words, Turkey's outrageous argument is that Cyprus is non-existent on the map of EEZ delimitations and the rights of exploration and use of marine resources in the region should be divided between Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Israel.

Turkish responses to the Cyprus-Israel agreement and the initiation of the drilling have been spasmodic and angry. On September 22nd, Turkey and the self-proclaimed 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' signed a continental shelf delimitation agreement, in violation of international law. In addition, the two sides have identified EEZ blocks for prospective, exploration and exploitation, with a number of them overlapping the Republic of Cyprus's EEZ. Turkey has also sent exploration ships to the Eastern Mediterranean and, raising possibilities of a naval confrontation, said its exploration vessels will be escorted by warships! Turkish officials announced that they have invited major oil companies to Turkey to discuss drilling off the Turkish coasts and very close to Cyprus, once again questioning the country's international marine borders. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea could be used here as a basis to help all parties solve the dispute. Whenever there is a maritime legal dispute, the Law of the Sea is referenced as the only source of international law. However international treaties apply only to states that have signed them, and Turkey has not signed the 1982 convention. Therefore, it is not bound by its provisions! With regard to the exclusive economic zone, Turkey does not hold the same view as the international community nor does it accept the legal claims of the Greek Cypriot administration. Instead, the Turkish position is that as long as there is no political solution to the Cyprus issue, Greek Cypriots should refrain from gas exploration and drilling. However, the Cyprus government has repeatedly 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) once a comprehensive agreement is reached on the island.

In addition, time is pressuring the Republic of Cyprus to make decisions on how to proceed with the exploitation of natural gas. During the first months of 2013 the economy of the country collapsed and the Republic sought financial support from the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (aka Troika). Even after this bailout, which many in the country feel it was achieved in really harsh terms for the Greek Cypriot people, who were abandoned by their friends, the RoC economy is still struggling with recession. Revenues from gas exports could bring the once-blooming Greek Cypriot economy back to a path of growth.

It is within this climate that Greek Cypriot 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: a) set an end to the 39-year long division of the island; and b) allow for the undistracted drilling and use of the rich reserves of natural resources in the region. Although important international actors, such as US Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry, have given their full support and encouraged the Republic of Cyprus to go full steam ahead with gas drilling, the truth is that no actor - state or company - 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, Greek Cypriots are called to genuinely engage in a constructive dialogue, so as to settle their differences with Turkey and Turkish Cypriots - while preserving their strategic partnership with 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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