

# 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:

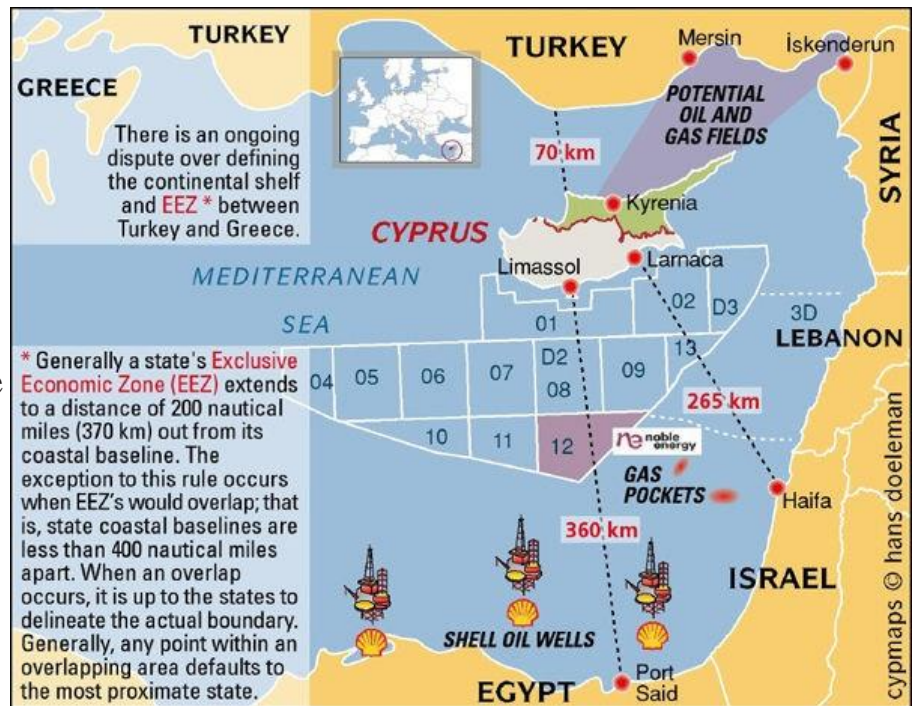
- Cyprus Conflict
- Aegean dispute
- EU/Turkey relations
- Arab/Israeli conflict

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>*

# Turkish Narrative

The discovery of hydrocarbons by Eastern Mediterranean countries that were previously thought to have no such resources is changing the geopolitics and economics of the region. Turkey, having the biggest and the most dynamic economy in the Eastern Mediterranean, plays a significant role in this rapidly changing political environment. Turkey's active role in the Syrian conflict, its current rapprochement with Israel, and its decades-long strong alliance with the US, renders it a country with a prominent role in the region. Importantly, Turkey believes that the newly found natural resources might create an opportunity for the regional actors to collaborate. However, there are a number of issues that Turkey sees as obstacles to peace and stability in the region, such as decades-long mistrust between the Greek Cypriot (GC) Administration, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and Turkey. An extra challenge that was recently added to an already troubled environment is the Greek Cypriot administration's decision to proceed unilaterally with exploration and exploitation of the island's natural resources - resources over which TRNC has equal inherent rights. Since 2011, both Turkey and the TRNC have consistently declared their opposition to the Greek Cypriot administration's offshore hydrocarbon exploration activities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey did not hesitate to announce several times that it would defend the TRNC against any behavior that undermines its legitimate rights.

The history of the hydrocarbon issue goes back to 2006, which Greek Cypriots began prospecting for hydrocarbons in what they see as their Exclusive Economic Zone. Since then, Greek Cypriots invited energy companies, granted exploration licenses and begun drilling, with the most important finding to date being the Aphrodite gas field in Block 12, which is believed to hold an average of 7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. In addition, in December 2010, they signed an accord demarcating their maritime border with Israel, which appears as their new strategic partner in the region, and an agreement for joint gas explorations. Noble Energy, a Texas-based company, has been drilling over the past two years for natural gas off the island's southern coast, as well as in the Israeli EEZ, bringing the two countries even closer. This brand-new and suspicious friendship between Israel and the Greek Cypriots has its roots in the period of Israel's isolation in the region by the international community right after the Mavi Marmara crisis in May 2010, and the subsequent suspension of diplomatic relations with Turkey. Having lost its main strategic ally in the region, Israel turned to Greek Cypriots believing that cooperation on the hydrocarbon issues would break its international isolation. As expected, Turkey and Turkish Cypriots do not recognize the zoning agreement between Greek Cypriots and Israel. First, the Greek Cypriot administration cannot appear as representing the whole island, neither can it sign an international agreement in the name of both communities. Second, the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea is not binding for Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, since - as several other countries - they are not signatories to this treaty. As an example, in regards to the Greek-Turkish dispute in the Aegean, UNCLOS provisions may have a negative impact on Turkey's vital interests in the region. In retaliation to the explorative drilling carried out by the Greek Cypriots, Turkey signed a continental shelf delimitation agreement with TRNC. The boundary is declared to be a line 'determined on the basis of international law and equitable principles'. Exploration blocks have been identified and Turkish-TRNC exploration activity has already begun. Overall, Turkey has been outspoken in affirming its unconditional support to TRNC and has declared its willingness to take any action necessary to prevent the violation of the

Turkish and Turkish Cypriot rights in the region. In addition, Turkey believes that not only states, but also energy companies involved in this process should be cautious and refrain from any natural gas-related activities in areas legitimately claimed by Turkey and TRNC. The Turkish Energy Minister has stated that "those companies cooperating with the Greek Cypriot Administration will in no way be allowed to take part in Turkey's future energy projects."

As evident in the above statements, Turkey and TRNC reject the Greek Cypriot Administration's one-sided approach to the future of the natural resources of the island and its desire to exploit those resources alone, as if the Greek Cypriots are the sole owners of the island. The situation is further perplexed by the current economic crisis in the South. Since his election, the new Greek Cypriot President, Nicos Anastasiades, having found his administration facing the deepest economic crisis ever on the island, did not display any willingness to engage in dialogue with Turkey or TRNC. It is clear that the Greek Cypriot administration is using the economic crisis as an excuse to delay negotiations. It also seems that the economic crisis in the South has intensified the need for the Greek Cypriots to exploit the natural gas resources and raise revenues that could be valuable in revitalizing their once-booming economy. In this environment, a great concern of Turkey is that Turkish Cypriot legitimate rights over resources that belong to both communities on the island will once again be ignored.

A game changer in the region can be the recent apology by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the Mavi Marmara incident, which can be seen as an important gesture toward normalization of the two countries' relationship. For a long time, Turkey refused to engage in a dialogue with Israel, pushing forward three preconditions for reconciliation: official apology, compensation to the families who lost their family members in the raid, and relaxation of the Gaza blockade. In March 2013 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, called Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to apologize for the deaths of nine-Turkish pro-Palestinian activists during the Mavi Marmara Flotilla Crisis. Netanyahu also promised compensation to the victims' families and a relaxation of the Gaza blockade. Turkey is aware of the fact that the regional actors need to collaborate at multiple levels. A rapprochement between Israel and Turkey will create a positive momentum in the region; among others, it could lead to increased cooperation and better coordination of the international efforts in Syria. However, Turkish officials stated that Turkey will not normalize relations unless Israel fulfills its promises. Second, Israel's partnership with the Greek Cypriot administration in the Eastern Mediterranean over hydrocarbon exploration will affect the future of Turkish-Israeli relations. Turkey expects that the alliance that blossomed between Greek Cyprus and Israel in the past two years, especially on energy and defense issues, should be revised carefully to ensure that the rights of Turkish Cypriots are not infringed upon with regard to the island's natural gas and oil reserves. For Turkey, it would be impossible to discuss energy deals before restoring ties between Turkey and Israel.

Under these circumstances, you are invited to participate in an UN-facilitated dialogue as the delegation of Turkey. There you will have a good opportunity to come together with all influential parties and discuss the future of the natural gas and peace in the region. You are one of the most significant actors in this meeting; you are expected to be actively involved in the process and help find solutions in regard to the hydrocarbon issue toward regional stability.

# 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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