Adding fuel to the conflict: How gas reserves complicate the Cyprus question

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Setting the stage

1.1 NATURAL GAS AS THE NEW CHAPTER OF THE CYPRIOT SAGA

In February 2018, the Italian state owned energy company, ENI, found an allegedly important amount of gas reserves in a well within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus. After this discovery, the company headed towards a different destination close to that area in order to launch drilling in another well. On its journey, it encountered a number of Turkish warships, which, following a navigational warning issued by Turkey's authorities, harassed the drilling rig and threatened to sink it. ENI's vessel manoeuvred to avoid the collision and sailed for a different destination in another country.

While commenting on this incident, the Italian Foreign Ministry announced that it was not related to the bilateral relations between Italy and Turkey. It should be rather viewed in light of the 'relations and economic balances between the Republic of Cyprus and the island's northern part' (ANSA 2018). Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a press release casting the blame for this standoff on the Greek-Cypriots (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018). After the collapse of the 2017 Crans Montana reunification talks between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, Turkey accused Greek-Cypriots of promoting their energy plans 'as though they were the sole owner of the Island', instead of 'expending their efforts towards a just and lasting comprehensive settlement in Cyprus' (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018). The collapse of the reunification talks in Crans Montana signalled the dramatic termination of a two-year UN brokered peace process. It was considered as the best opportunity to terminate the division of the island (Reuters 2017a).

This was not the first time that such incidents had transpired around Cyprus. In 2011, 2014 and in the summer of 2017, Turkey promulgated similar navigational warnings and dispatched seismic vessels to areas encroaching on the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey justified its activities on Turkish-Cypriots' exclusion from the energy initiatives that the 'Greek-Cypriot administered' Republic of Cyprus had been undertaking. These activities, based on the accusations of Turkish-Cypriot leaders, affected the continuation of the reunification talks between the two communities. In February 2014, the President of the Republic of Cyprus and Greek-Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, had signed a joint declaration with Derviş Eroğlu, the Turkish-Cypriot leader at that time. The document would allegedly work as a kick-starter of the stalled reunification talks at that time. A couple of months later, the Greek-Cypriot leadership announced drilling in one of the wells within its Exclusive Economic Zone causing the reaction of the Turkish-Cypriot leader. In response to this announcement, Turkey issued a navigational warning (NAVTEX) and reserved a large area within an overlapping region for seismic surveys performed by the Turkish vessel *Barbaros* (European Parliament 2017). The President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades,

invoking Turkey's 'provocations in the Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone', withdrew from the negotiation talks with Derviş Eroğlu.

The discovery of the gas reserves has become a new chapter of the convoluted Cyprus conflict and a new issue of contention between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. Since 1974, the territory of the Republic of Cyprus has been divided by a UN buffer zone. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Nicosia remains the last divided capital in the world. A green line separates the self-styled 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' (TRNC) in the north (37% of the territory) from the remaining territory of the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus in the Greek-Cypriot administered southern part, excluding the UK sovereign bases in Akrotiri and Dhekelia. From 1960s onwards and after its declaration of independence, the island of Cyprus is not simply a battleground between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. It is also the arena for the conflicting interests of its guarantor powers – Turkey, Greece and the UK – as well as a prospective area for great powers antagonism (USA and Soviet Union/Russia). In 1974, in the aftermath of a coup attempt engineered by the Greek dictatorship against the Cypriot President at that time, Turkey invaded the island and occupied 37% of its territory. Afterwards, Turkey embarked upon settlement policies by bringing Turkish inhabitants from Anatolia to the northern part of Cyprus in order to enhance its 'Turkish' character. Although no organized armed violence has occurred between the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots since 1974, a number of issues has been inhibiting a comprehensive settlement between them: disagreement about the exact form of a future governance system, territorial adjustments, a thorny issue about the missing persons, the dispute about the compensation for the properties lost in 1974, and disagreements about the presence of Turkish troops on the island as well as Turkey's intervention rights. The recent gas discoveries, however, have exacerbated the pre-existing predicament between the two sides.

The challenge of this exploratory study is to construct a discursive line of enquiry to define how and why the natural resources have become embroiled in the Cyprus conflict. Such enterprise does not take place in a theoretical vacuum. I first examine the plethora of explanations investigating the relationship between natural resources and conflict. Academic scholars (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Humphreys, 2005; Le Billon 2009; Ross, 2006) have popularized the interplay between natural resources and conflicts through the concept of 'resource war' or 'resource curse'. The term was mediatized in the late 1970s as a metaphor to describe the (renewed) tensions between the two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union over the 'control of fuel and minerals in disputed 'peripheries', such as the Middle East and Southern Africa (Le Billon, 2009, 211). It refers to conflicts over the 'possession of critical materials', such as extractive resources (e.g. hydrocarbons, minerals, timber and gemstones), land and water. In my single case study, the 'critical material' under examination is the recently discovered gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean.

1.2 GAS IN GLOBAL POLITICS AND ITS COMPLICATIONS

As a fossil fuel, natural gas 'contains a mix of hydrocarbon gases, mainly methane, along with varying amounts of ethane, propane and butane' (Mokhatab et al 2015, 1). It is detected in underground rocks called reservoirs and can be produced either on its own or alongside oil production; the latter is referred to as 'associated gas'. In the past, 'associated gas was commonly flared or burned as a waste product but in most places today it is captured and used' (NaturalGas.Org, 2013). Once extracted, 'natural gas is sent through small pipelines (gathering lines) to processing plants, which separate the various hydrocarbons and fluids from the pure natural gas to produce what is known as pipeline-quality dry natural gas prior to transportation' (ibid). In general, natural gas is measured in cubic metres or feet and British Thermal Units.[1]

Regarding its availability and based on calculations by BP (2017), at the end of 2016, world proven natural gas reserves stood at 186.6 trillion cubic metres (tcm), sufficient to meet more than 50 years of global production (at current levels). The majority of the gas reserves have been discovered in the Middle East (42.5%), Europe and Eurasia (30.4%) as well as Asia Pacific (9.4%), with the US, Russia and Iran holding the largest proven reserves (BP 2015).[2]

Despite its reportedly prominent role in global energy markets, gas cannot be regarded a 'fully' globalized commodity in its own right, especially compared to oil (Barnes, et al. 2006). The oil market is effectively global because it is easily transportable from one part of the world to another (primarily shipped via oil tankers); therefore, it is, in reality, impossible to segment the oil market.[3] On the other hand, it is difficult to ascertain whether the global gas market will come to fruition and when (Grigas 2017, 23). It is difficult to transport, in the sense that a network must be delivered and import-facilities are required. The transportation of gas needs either an import pipeline or a liquefaction/regasification plant (LNG[4]).

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[1] Natural gas has been often portrayed as the fuel of the future. Its consumption at a global level has tripled over the last 3 decades, and demand could grow by another 50% over the next twenty years. Based on the most recent projections of *IEA* (2017), after oil (31%) and coal (29%), natural gas supplies 22% of the energy consumed worldwide and is used in nearly a quarter of electricity generation. It is a versatile fuel, while its growth is partially 'linked to its environmental benefits relative to other fossil fuels, particularly in terms of air quality as well as greenhouse gas emissions' (ibid). According to the Norwegian DNV GL, an internationally accredited classification society, 'natural gas will keep playing a key role alongside renewables in helping to meet future energy requirements' ((DNV.GL, 2017; Ellinas, 2017b).

[2] The shale gas revolution transformed the US natural gas market, in the sense that initially perennial shortages gave way to substantial surpluses.

[3] Meaning to apply different prices to different customers or prevent oil from flowing to a specific customer or from a specific producer

[4] According to Yergin (2012, 335), the rise of natural gas as a new supply 'coincided with a rapid buildup of LNG'. For instance in 2010, 'Qatar celebrated reaching 77 mn tons of LNG capacity – 28% of the world

The political ramifications emanating from these features – pipelines and LNG projects – cannot go unnoticed. It takes about 10 to 15 years for these investments to pay off. Both options rely on a system of logistics and transportation which is much less flexible than the system for oil (Barnes et al 2006, 6). Pipeline and LNG infrastructures bear an extremely high cost to be built; they necessitate long-time horizons in tandem with predictable -political and economic- context for investors to commit their capital and knowledge (Barnes, et al. 2006). This means that 'investors are keen to ensure that involved companies and states will uphold contracts for the life of a project' (Shaffer 2013, 114). Consequently, they require from both host and transit state governments to support international supply projects through intergovernmental arrangements (Shaffer 2013, 114). Moreover, since natural gas supply needs building permanent infrastructure in fixed locations, such as 'electric power plants, refineries, offshore platforms, terminals, ports, pipelines, high-voltage transmission lines, distribution wires, gas storage fields, storage tanks substations' (Yergin 2012, 282), states are called to approve the installations and routes and to provide security for the infrastructure and facilities (Shaffer 2013, 116). The segmented nature of the gas market allows the possibility of punishing or rewarding specific participants, either suppliers or customers.

These properties render natural gas an inherently geopolitical commodity.[5] Infrastructure projects link states and mirror the geopolitical relations among them (Shaffer 2012). States, in choosing routes to export their goods and import their energy supplies, naturally consider the political ramifications of the various route options (Shaffer 2012). Consequently, political instability along the selected routes renders gas energy supplies more vulnerable to political disruption than oil and coal. So how have these aspects played out in the Eastern Mediterranean?

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total. Australia is emerging a new LNG powerhouse, number two only to Qatar, and is well positioned to supply Asia and to continue to expand' (ibid).

[5] Based on Yergin's (2012, 335) assumptions, 'the energy trade becomes global and crosses more maritime and land borders, the security of supply chain also becomes an urgent question. Critical choke points along sea routes pose various vulnerabilities for the transport of LNG, such as accidents, terrorist attacks and military conflicts'. Chokepoints refer to 'narrow channels along widely used global sea routes, which are critical to global energy security' (EIA 2013b). The inability of gas to transit a major chokepoint, even on a temporary basis, may create substantial supply delays and result in higher shipping costs; this may further instigate higher world energy prices. The most famous choke point is the Strait of Hormuz, an energy pathway in the Middle East, situated between Iran and Oman, with a shipping lane of two miles. It constitutes a strategically important strait or narrow strip of water which linking the Persian Gulf (where more than quarter of oil production and substantial LNG can be found) with the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman, while separating it from the Indian Ocean (Yergin 2012, 283). Another choke point is the Malacca Strait, a narrow route between Malaysia and the Indonesia island of Sumatra; it 'funnels in from the Indian Ocean, curves up around Singapore and widens out in the open waters of the South China Sea' (Yergin 2012, 283).

1.3 THE ENERGY OUTLOOK IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

The Eastern Mediterranean is situated at the crossroads of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. It is located at 'the apex of two important geostrategic triangles: one formed in the north and north-east with the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and the other formed in the south and south-east with the Middle East and the Persian Gulf' (Stergiou et al. 2017, 8). The countries in the region are Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, Turkey, Greece, Syria, Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. As shown in Figure 1.1, the Eastern Mediterranean consists of eight basins (the Cyprus basin, Eratosthenes High, the Latakia Basin, the Levant Basin, the Judea Basin, the Nile Delta Basin, Western Arabian Province and Zagros Province). The majority of the historical hydrocarbon production takes place in the Nile Delta Basin, the Western Arabian Province and the Zagros Province (EIA 2013a).

During the 20th century, the history of the Eastern Mediterranean was inextricably associated with the great powers' struggle to gain control over its lucrative oil fields. At the dawn of the 21st century, technological advances, boosted mainly by skyrocketing international oil

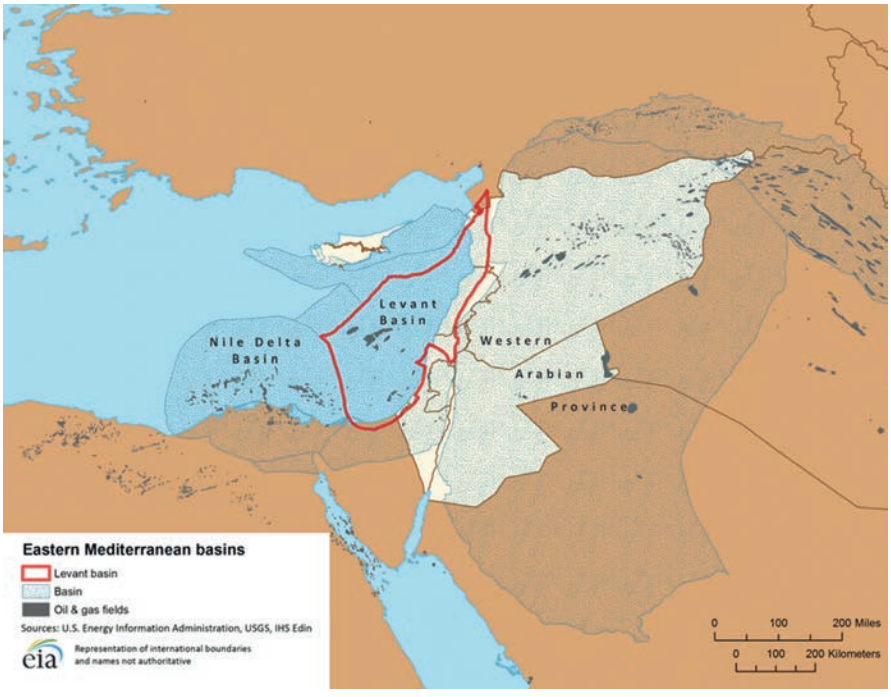

Figure 1.1. Eastern Mediterranean Basins. Source: EIA (2013a), *Eastern Mediterranean Region.* Washington, DC: US Energy Information Administration, Retrieved at 14.1.2017 from http://www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/Eastern_Mediterranean/images/basin_map.png

prices at that time, triggered new exploration initiatives.[6] Such technological innovations influenced the energy developments around Cyprus as well. In March 2010, the US Geological Survey estimated that there was a mean of 122 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas in the seabed of Levant Basin Province, located along and off the coast of Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Gaza Strip, extending westward into Cypriot waters (US Geological Survey 2010). Most of these countries, especially Egypt and Israel, have been vying to position their resources on the European and Asian gas market. The Republic of Cyprus is no exception.

It first proclaimed an Exclusive Economic Zone and signed delimitation agreements with Egypt, Lebanon[7] and Israel in order to mark off the outer limits of the exploration area, which it then parcelled out into 13 blocks (Ker-Lindsay 2011). Each of these blocks was granted to gas companies for seismic surveys and drilling after the initiation of international tenders. For the first tender in 2007, no large international companies expressed any particular interest; the uncertainty about the quantities of the hydrocarbons along with the political and legal complications in the region forced the companies to search for other opportunities around the globe (Gürel et al. 2013). In October 2008, the Republic of Cyprus awarded only one licence to the small-sized Noble Energy, which had already been operating offshore Israel. After multiple seismic surveys by Noble, the first exploratory drilling took place in 2011, indicating a natural gas deposit in deep waters (ibid.). Despite its small magnitude, this discovery sparked significant interest in a second offshore licensing round in 2012, during which 15 bidders participated, including bigger international oil companies and gas traders. The Italian ENI, the French Total and the Korean Korgas were accredited with the exploration rights for six more blocks (Ellinas et al. 2016). In December 2016, a third licensing round transpired and a consortium formed by the American giant Exxon Mobil and Qatar Petroleum won the bid to start drilling in an additional block (Republic of Cyprus Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry 2016)

Besides the launch of licensing rounds and the invitation of international companies, Cyprus carved out strategic collaborations with Israel, Greece and Egypt. These nascent partnerships incorporated agreements of a military and economic nature. All these regional actors deliberated about various projects which would transport gas either to the European or to the Asian gas market: (a) the construction of a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility, (b) a pipeline linking Israel, the Cyprus, Greece and Italy, (c) a pipeline between Egypt and the Cyprus, (d) a pipeline linking Israel, Cyprus and Turkey, (e) a Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) facility or a Floating Liquefied Natural Gas (FLNG) facility (Ellinas, Roberts and Tzimitras, 2016; Giamourides

[6] The rapid progress in micro-processing 'rendered the analysis of vastly more data possible and enabled geophysicists to improve their interpretation of underground structures and, consequently, exploration success' (Yergin 2012, 40).

[7] Not ratified by the Lebanese parliament yet.

2013; Gürel, Mullen and Tzimitras, 2013; Gürel and Le Cornu, 2014; Tagliapetra, 2013; Tsakiris 2014).

These Greek-Cypriot energy plans triggered Turkey's and Turkish-Cypriots' reactions. According to the former Turkish-Cypriot leader, Derviş Eroğlu, 'Greek Cypriot side's decision to go ahead and start drilling, in a daring and challenging fashion against Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot people, was a clear indication that it had no desire to reach a solution to the Cyprus problem' (Today's Zaman 2011c). Turkish-Cypriots signed delimitation agreements with Turkey and enabled the latter to dispatch seismic vessels several times, escorted by frigates, in areas encroaching on the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey and Turkish-Cypriots disagreed with the breadth of the delimitation of exclusive economic zones signed by the Republic of Cyprus with Israel and Egypt. Furthermore, Turkey and Turkish-Cypriots accused Greek-Cypriots of not involving them in the hydrocarbons' management and of acting 'as though they were the sole owners of the Island' (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018).

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION AND FOCUS

Gas reserves have eventually become an additional chapter of the Cyprus conflict. The research challenge is to explore why and how is this case by putting the viewpoints of the contending parties, Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, at the forefront of my analysis. Through the single-case study of Cyprus, I propose the following research question for my single case exploratory study: What is the impact of the gas discoveries on the escalation of the Cyprus conflict? By closely scrutinising Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot discourses my study investigates the links between gas reserves and the escalation of the Cyprus conflict. The period I am focusing on is between 2011 and 2018. 2011 was deliberately chosen as the departing point because it coincides with the first announcement (by Noble Energy) of the existence of natural resources in the seabed of the Republic of Cyprus. I selected 2018 as the final point because of the final incidents that occurred in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus between the drilling company operating there (ENI) and Turkish warships. These incidents occurred a couple of months after the collapse of the 2017 reunification talks in Crans Montana and increased the intensity of the conflict (as above mentioned). I define them as the escalation of the conflict in my research.

Due to the broad scope of the research question, I divide it into the following sub-questions:

- Sub-question 1: How do existing theories examine the conflict-inducing role of natural resources?
- Sub-question 2: What is the historical and energy context concerning the recent Cyprus gas dispute?
- Sub-question 3: What are the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot discourses on this topic and how do they differ?

Addressing this set of sub-questions paves the way for the structure of this chapter.

1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

1.5.1 The research puzzle: conflict because of scarcity or choice?

Any attempt to theorize about the conflict-inducing role of natural resources raises the following question: is the escalation of the conflict the purposeful outcome of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot choices or the by-product of an 'anarchic' environment that compels them to fight over these resources in order to survive? Such a question mirrors the classic agent-structure dilemma that has animated scientific inquiry across international relations and conflict studies (Wendt 1987). At the core of this dilemma is a continuous debate over the primacy of agency or structure in shaping the behaviour of the contending parties. Agency treats ethnic groups as purposeful actors, who act independently and make their own choices. Therefore, the conflict over natural resources is the purposeful outcome of their own choices. On the other hand, structure pinpoints the recurrent patterned arrangements in the system within which the actors have to operate (Wendt 1987); this system, dominated by a scarcity of resources and security, constrains their choices. Fighting over these resources is the essential means to safeguard their survival in that system.

Prioritizing the primacy of agency over structure or vice versa incurs serious epistemological considerations as regards the theoretical approach to my study. If I underscore the primacy of structure as my key explanatory factor, I necessarily resort to pure systemic theories of international relations that investigate the impact of the 'anarchic system' on the eruption of resource-related conflicts. If I stress the role of agency as the key explanatory factor, I must adopt the literature on the political economy of natural resources.

1.5.2 Structure-based explanations: neorealism and geopolitics

By granting primacy to the explanatory role of structure, neoclassical realism can offer an adequate theoretical toolkit. Neorealism pinpoints the break-up of the international system into competing blocks, which engage in rivalry over the control of natural resources (Casier 2011;

Ciuta 2010; Correlje & van der Line 2006; Fearon 1995; Mearsheimer 1994, 2001; Waltz 1979, 1986; Winrow 2016). Neorealists or structural realists paint a grim picture of an anarchical international system defined in terms of states and their responses to international distributions of power (Mearsheimer 1994, 2001). To safeguard their security and, ultimately, survival, states are 'destined' either "to control what they depend on or to lessen the extent of their dependency' on others' (Waltz 1986, 103). Natural resources treated as a key strategic good become a source of internal strength, essential for the dictates of an anarchic international system and as a concomitant source of external dependency – and, thus, vulnerability – for those who do not have access to it (Casier 2011, 494). A generalized quasi-Darwinian logic emphasizes the 'survival' strategies of the contending parties and the role of natural resources as 'energy weapons' in this respect. By survival, neorealist scholars mean preserving the sovereignty of the states.

In light of this approach, geopolitics becomes the key explanatory factor in the genesis and escalation of resource-related conflicts. Geopolitics puts its emphasis on the geographic understanding of power relations between the key disputants (as well as other regional and global stakeholders). Geopolitical perspectives have the state at the centre of analysis and claim that the absence of an overarching authority, which would adjust states' incompatible objectives, compels them to enhance their security for their own survival. By granting primacy to the role of structure in resource-induced conflicts, geopolitical scholars treat gas reserves as a power resource, tailor made for the advancement of contending states' survival in the 'anarchic' system. The stake here, as iterated, is to protect their sovereignty.

Such 'systemic' approach has inspired a number of scholars to study the conflictual strategies of Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus as the inevitable outcome of an anarchic environment. These scholars have underlined the emergence of the Eastern Mediterranean as a (sub)regional security complex characterized by a pre-existing imbalance of power full of uncertainty and security threats for the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey (Adamides and Christou 2013, İşeri and Bartan 2019, Koktsidis; Kouskouvelis 2015, Paraschos 2013; Sitilides 2014; Stergiou 2016, 2017, Stivachtis 2019, Tuncalp 2015, Turan 2015, Tziampiris 2019, Tziarras 2016, 2018, Winrow 2016).

Despite its useful insights, geopolitical approaches cope with some shortcomings as well. They use states as a key unit of analysis. In this respect, the "TRNC", which is not recognized as a state entity, should have theoretically fallen out of the scope of such studies. Moreover, such structural approaches, with a few exceptions in the case of Cyprus (Christou and Adamides 2013; Tziarras 2016, 2018), pinpoint the almost 'automatic' impact of the anarchic environment on the responses of the contending parties. Such theorists dismiss 'domestic' calculations aimed at 'deciphering' this anarchic environment before policy responses are made to it. These calculations can function as transmission belts, which filter systemic pressures and convert them into actual policy responses (Juneau 2015, 4).

1.5.3 Agency-based explanations: the greed-grievance dichotomy

There is another school of thought that prioritizes the role of agency over structure. Inspired by rational choice theorists and rooted in the fields of development studies and social psychology, the political economy of natural resources attributes the eruption or escalation of resource-related conflicts to the rational calculations that the contending parties make. It is not the structure of the 'anarchic system' that compels the disputants to fight about the possession of the natural resources, but greed and grievances. These theorists do not use states as the key units of analysis, but ethnic groups within ethnically divided states.

Theorists advocating grievance-based explanations have underscored the centrality of pre-existing 'perceived injustices' for understanding the outbreak of conflicts over natural resources. Prominent scholars in conflict studies, such Edward Azar (1985, 1986, 1990) and Ted Gurr have underscored the explanatory power of relative deprivation in the eruption of conflicts. In the case of Cyprus, cultural anthropologists and political scientists (Birgel 2018; Bryant 2001, 2008, 2012; Hadjipavlou 2007; Hatay and Papadakis 2012; Yakinthou 2009; Yilmaz 2010) have highlighted the role of grievances at the grassroots level in consolidating the current impasse. However, with a few exceptions (Birgel 2018), the linkages between grievances and the escalation of the Cyprus conflict in the energy setting have been underexplored.

While granting primacy to the role of agency, during the last two decades, a burgeoning quantitative empirical literature has emphasised the dominant impact of 'greed' in conflict outbreaks (Collier and Hoeffler 1998; Soysa 2000; Ross 2006). Through inferential statistics, they have identified a strong correlation between the economic opportunities which natural resources offer to key actors in a conflict and the escalation of the conflicts *per se*. Based on these calculations, key actors prefer to keep fighting rather than reaching a settlement. The problem with such studies is that the statistical relation between greed and escalation of conflicts does not necessarily imply a substantive significance in the sense that correlations derived from cross-country data do not adequately capture the procedural causal links essential to gaining a sound understanding of conflict incidents, especially when examining a single case study (Ahmadov 2014). One of the few exceptions is Humphreys' (2005) work. He lays out some qualitative causal mechanisms, according to which political parties and leaders prefer the continuation of a conflict because of their inability to make credible commitments in honouring a peace settlement or because they may be engaged in activities which they would be unable to carry out if a settlement were reached.

Bringing these assumptions to the case of Cyprus, I did not find any literature examining the linkages between political opportunism and the recent escalation of the Cyprus conflict. I encountered, however, a literature focusing on the role of problematic political leadership in the perpetuation of the conflict (Adamides 2015; Charalambous 2015; Christophorou 2015; Heraclides 2011; Kaymak 2009, 2012). These authors imply that political leaders from both

sides seem incapable of or reluctant to adopt bold and far-reaching decisions to extricate themselves from a costly antagonism and reach a political settlement. Demonstrating a pro-solution attitude at all costs would come at a high political price, such as non re-election. Similar to the case of grievances, what the literature misses is potential causal links between the potential expediencies of the political elites and the recent escalation of the Cyprus conflict. In this research, I wish to explore the extent to which such links exist.

1.5.4 Epistemological challenges in adopting one theory over the other

The insights offered by structural and agency-related perspectives are useful for understanding how natural resources may influence the escalation of conflicts and helping me address sub-question 1. Nonetheless, for the study of each perspective a researcher needs to resort to a different academic discipline, such as international relations, conflict studies, sociology, and different theories, such as neorealism or the political economy of natural resources. The choice of academic discipline and theory is not the only challenge for such an enterprise. These two academic disciplines span different 'levels of analysis'. The level of analysis notifies the researcher where to locate the causes of a state's or a national group's behaviour by categorising contrasting explanations on the basis of the units in which the entity under examination is conceptualised (Ramsbotham et al 2011).

The founding father of structural realism (neorealism), Kenneth Waltz (1959) first developed a three-level schema to theorize states' behaviour. The first level focuses on the conception of human nature and the role of leaders. The second level elaborates on the nature of the state. Finally, the third and most crucial level, according to him, illuminates the nature of the international system. International relations scholars recommend that analysts should stick to a single level of analysis. Indicatively a major international relations' scholar, Singer (1961, 77), clearly stipulates that different levels of analysis are mutually exclusive, asserting that 'one could not add these two types of statements [systemic and domestic causes] together to achieve a cumulative growth of empirical generalizations'.

What will happen if I follow one level of analysis over the other? If I embrace a structure-based logic, the 'third-level' of analysis will gain ground. I will have to solely concentrate on the imperatives of the 'anarchic system' in the Eastern Mediterranean to explain the behaviour of states, such as the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey, while downplaying the role of Northern Cyprus (which is not recognized as a state entity). If I focus on the second-domestic-level explanation, I will have to resort to grievance theorists to identify the relative deprivation of individual nation-states or communities as the main 'trigger' of a resource-related conflict. Finally, if I look for first-individual level explanations, as proposed by 'greed' theorists, I will have to investigate the personal or psychological characteristics of individual statesmen.

1.5.5 Need for a discursive framework of analysis

The problem with such a form of level-based theorization is that only a limited set of real-world cases lend themselves to this sort of analysis (Moravscik 1993). Imre Lakatos's work on the philosophy of science has been widely employed as a heuristic model for social scientific theory building. The tendency for such theories to employ an increasing number of ad hoc variables on a single level of analysis is one of the hallmarks of a 'degenerating' research programme that is ripe for revision (Lakatos 1974). That is why empirical studies formulated at a single level of analysis, be they international or domestic, are increasingly being supplanted by efforts to integrate the two levels. To this end, I need to extend my analysis beyond this level-based model and create a single, unified, holistic theory, rather than a theory which identifies only one aspect of the resource-related conflict.

My departing point is that questions of material agency and structure, regarding natural resources and the *a priori* dualisms crystallised between natural resources and conflict, are not intrinsic, self-evident and universal givens (Birgel 2018, 56). Instead, I consider perceptions of agency and structure as contingent, precarious and processual achievements, linked to the context under investigation (Law 1999; Birgel 2018, 71), and to a context often suffused with relations of power and politics from the start (Braun 2006).

Theoretically inspired by a number of scholars who used discursive frameworks to analyse conflicts (Alkopher 2005; Campbell, 1993; Jabri 1996; Jackson 2002, 2007, 2009; Suurmond 2005, Weldes 1999), I resort to discourses as my theoretical framework of analysis. Discourses embody a shared set of capabilities, enabling the 'assemblage of words, phrases and sentences into meaningful texts intelligible to the readers' (Dryzek 1988, 710). They spell out how the most intense historical experiences as perceived and articulated by Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots influence the formulation of their conflictual strategies. The value of such an approach is that it offers important clues as to why the conflict escalated at a particular juncture and necessitates a coincidence of enabling structures and purposeful actors to spark a conflict.

By doing so, I am not questioning the validity of the key premises from the geopolitical and greed-grievances theories. I use them as theoretical preconceptions because their key assumptions are readily discernible in any conflict: insecurity, competition, fear, hatred, mistrust and power struggle. The real challenge does not lie in uncovering them but in letting the agents construct a powerful complex that makes the escalation of the conflict 'possible by rendering it conceivable, legitimate and reasonable' (Jackson 2009, 180). Through discourses, I expect to unravel the contextual *modus operandi* of geopolitics, greed and grievance in real-world politics. I use discourses to fathom the constituents' articulated fears or *hypophysis,*[8]

[8] This term, whose literal meaning is 'looking underneath the surface', is borrowed from Thucydides and captures the politics of fear (Taras 2015)

the distrust, emotions and rational evaluations of their international environment (Dryzek and Berejikian 1993; Dryzek and Holmes 2002); with the aid of such model, I can observe the extent to which my findings fit into or re-evaluate the above-mentioned analytical categories. I should stress, though, that while the discursive approach may be replicable to other conflict studies, my findings-discourses are not because difference contextual factors for each conflict-case-study come into play. Nonetheless, the discursive shift and approach to other conflicts is recommended.

I raise two types of expectations with respect to the discourses. First, given the prominence of the agency and structure-based frameworks in the literature and that they appeal to basic arguments related to resource-related conflicts, I expect that each of the three analytical categories can be traced back to at least one of the discourses about the energy aspects of the Cyprus conflict. In other words, I expect that some discourses will centre on the basic logic of one of the geopolitics, greed or grievance. My second set of expectations focuses on the possible interaction between these analytical categories. I expect that discourses exist in which the logic of at least two frameworks play a role. These can be, in principle, combinations of geopolitics-grievance, greed-geopolitics and greed grievance some of my discourses. Indicatively, I expect to uncover a reservoir of past lessons and scripts (grievance) informing the current strategic understanding of the stakeholders in the conflict (geopolitics). I also expect discourses showing the interplay between 'political opportunism' (greed) and feelings of resentment inherited from the past (grievance). In such an opportunity-rich environment of rivalry and during periods of domestic turmoil, I expect that political elites will have intentionally invoked 'geopolitics' and attribute 'security' overtones to the natural resources in order to divert popular attention from questions of accountability regarding the turmoil. The presentation of the contrasting discourses will help me address sub-question 3.

How can discourses enrich our understanding of the conflict-inducing role of natural resources in the Cypriot context? The scholarship I presented above has shown how greed and grievance have consolidated the impasse in the Cypriot negotiations. The interplay between greed and grievance has never been examined in exploring the energy tensions. This is one of the gaps that my research seeks to fill. Moreover, as shown above, the geopolitical literature on the recent tensions is vast. However, most of these studies, with a few exceptions (Christou & Adamides 2013; Tziarras 2016, 2018; Tziarras and Moudouros 2016), have maintained the purity of the international level of analysis and have downplayed the role of domestic and ideational factors, including greed and grievance; these factors could work as transmission belts that account for the responses of the contending parties to the external imperatives of the 'anarchic system' in the Eastern Mediterranean. Scholars have not considered how 'greed' and grievance' may have functioned as 'filters' of the 'stimuli' from the 'anarchic environment' before being converted into 'conflictual strategies'. This is the contribution that my study intends to make in the conflict-inducing role of natural resources.

1.5.6 Research design: the synergy between discourses & Q-method

This holistic-discursive framework is not the only contribution that my study intends to make in the rich literature of the Cyprus conflict and the ethnic conflict over natural resources in general. The point of my research remains to endogenize agency by letting the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots articulate the stakes behind the hydrocarbons' management and its association with the conflict. To tackle such a challenge, I apply Q-methodology, which offers a set of systematic procedures that not only incorporates the participants' perspectives but 'also places them at the centre of analysis' (Durning and Brown 2006, 537). Some scholars consider the best developed paradigm in measuring human subjectivity (Dryzek and Berejikian 1993; Dryzek and Holmes 2002; Steunenberg et. al 2011; Uluğ and Cohrs, 2017) and without insisting on the 'more objective' status of my own construction of reality. This is the first time that Q-methodology has been employed for the study of any aspect of the Cyprus conflict.

The theoretical basis upon which Q-methodology has been established relies on the axiom that I acknowledge and present the opinion leaders' concerns without prejudging or discrediting them. By opinion-leaders I identify these people who are considered as influential members in the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot populations, who turn to them for advice and opinions. These include elites like policy-makers and chief executives in the state-apparatus as well as NGO representatives. Due to their involvement in international diplomatic fora a as well as their continuous deliberation with their domestic constituents, these people have a good understanding of what happens in Cyprus' external and internal environment.

Discourse analysis and Q-methodology can be conjoined, inasmuch as both seek to model structures embedded in the articulations of the research participants. The Q-method, discourses alike, is rooted in the 'universe of verbalisations' about the topic under investigation: the concourse. The concourse consists here of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot expressed views in the historical and energy contexts of the Cyprus conflict. Based on my field research, that I will explain later, I collect a specific number of statements from open-ended interviews with Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot business and geopolitical analysts, historians, and former policy-makers. The selected 'population of these statements' constitutes the concourse of verbalizations regarding the articulated Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot socially shared concerns over the topic under investigation. I build-up the concourse through answers from open-ended interviews while laying out the historical and the energy context of the conflict.

1.6 HISTORICAL AND ENERGY CONTEXT

After collecting notes from historical textbooks, most of which provide the historical background, addressed in depth in Chapter 3, I visited the island for the first time in November 2014 in order to conduct field research. The field research, in general, includes bricolage, which

associates what I had been studying so far with the geographical context under examination (Neuman 2014, 437).

The investigation of the historical scope warranted short-term, face-to-face interactions with former accredited negotiators, historians, policy advisors and sociologists in the form of open-ended interviews. After looking into the historical literature, I examined the experts' concerns and historical interpretations, while further developing questions in relation to them. Qualitative interviewing projects, in general, provide an in-depth exploration of what the selected interviewees hold as substantial experience, often leading to important insights (Charmaz 2001). Their transcribed views on the situation being studied form the empirical data of this research, which is the historical part of the concourse.

After completing the first field research and transcription of the interviews, I began formulating the second part of my concourse, comprising the energy views of Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot opinion leaders. I initially studied reports illuminating the available export options on the basis of international experience of natural gas, its availability in the Eastern Mediterranean and estimations as regards its future utility (De Micco 2014, EIA 2013b, Ellinas, Roberts and Tzimitras 2016, European Parliament 2017, Giamourides 2013, Gürel, Mullen and Tzimitras 2013). I also examined through desk research the perceived risks and dangers attached to the implementation of every decision (ICG 2013; Giamourides 2013; Gürel et al. 2013; Khadduri 2012; Tagliapetra 2013, Tsafos and Giamourides 2015, Tsakiris 2014), the priorities which the political leaders had set before engaging in the formulation of their strategy and, most importantly, the geopolitical (Christou & Adamides 2013; Tsakiris, 2014) and economic (Giamourides 2013, Tsafos and Giamourides 2015, Paraschos 2013) factors under examination.

In November 2015, I started the second round of my field research in Cyprus. I met former policymakers, chief negotiators and energy analysts from both sides and asked them about the significance of the discovered gas reserves for the economies of the relevant communities, the problems with existing infrastructure, the impediments which companies faced in the exploitation and monetization of the gas reserves and, under the price regime (low at that time), which options were optimal for the monetization of the gas reserves. I also approached former policymakers to ask them about their rationale in delimiting the zones of exploitation, as well as Turkish-Cypriot analysts and former chief negotiators, to question their potentially 'triggering role' in Turkey's 'gunboat diplomacy'. The presentation of the historical and energy context addresses sub-question 2

The collection of Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot views formulates the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot concourses of my study. As I explain in Chapter 5, this material was reduced to a manageable volume of statements and was subject to further inspection in order to produce the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot 'elite discourses'. These discourses address sub-question 3.

1.7 THE SOCIETAL RELEVANCE OF THE SUBJECT FOR EU OFFICIALS

Before concluding the introduction, some questions are still pending. What is the societal relevance of the topic? Why should the EU officials shed light on how Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, with the involvement of Greece and Turkey, deliberate about the natural gas reserves? Why is it important for EU policymakers and analysts to investigate the conflict-inducing role of the gas reserves? There are two reasons for EU policymakers to focus on these developments.

The first obvious reason is that Cyprus has been a member of the EU since 2004. Although the EU recognizes the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus over the entire territory, the acquisition of 37% of the territory, where the Turkish-Cypriots live, is suspended. The EU has embarked upon efforts (Green Line Regulation, Direct Trade Regulation) to fix this anomaly in order to bring Turkish-Cypriots closer to EU values and norms. Therefore, the EU officials have an interest in taking a close look at these developments. They have to observe the processes and the ideational dynamics through which the disputants formulate their incompatible objectives, in the positions articulated by the assigned leaders. Thus, I penetrate the official nuances and display the logic underpinning them.

The interests for the EU around these developments in Cyprus loom larger than the island's territory. They touch upon the 'diversification strategy' that the EU adopted in the aftermath of multiple energy crises with its main gas supplier, Russia. The EU has set out newly designed initiatives, called projects of common interest (PCI).[9] They represent major infrastructure facilities which connect energy networks across Europe. Herewith, I present the big picture for the EU's gas supply infrastructure, which involves around four gas corridors, varying in terms of maturity, challenges and future possibilities (European Parliament 2009). Figure 1.2 illustrates these corridors.

a. The main North-Eastern Corridor from Russia: Russia constitutes the main external source of gas supply. In 2015 29.4% of the EU's overall NG imports came from Russia (Eurostat 2017). From northern Russian sources, two pipelines, the Northern Lights and the Druzhba Gas, largely supply the EU-28 northern via Poland) and south-eastern region via Slovakia (Eurostat, 2017).
b. The North-Western Corridor from Norway: Norway exports cover approximately 25.9% of EU-28 consumption needs (Eurostat 2017). From sources in the North Sea, several pipelines are linked to the EU territory. More particularly, the Langeled, Cats, Seal,

[9] In November 2017, the Commission published a list of 173 projects (European Commission 2017).

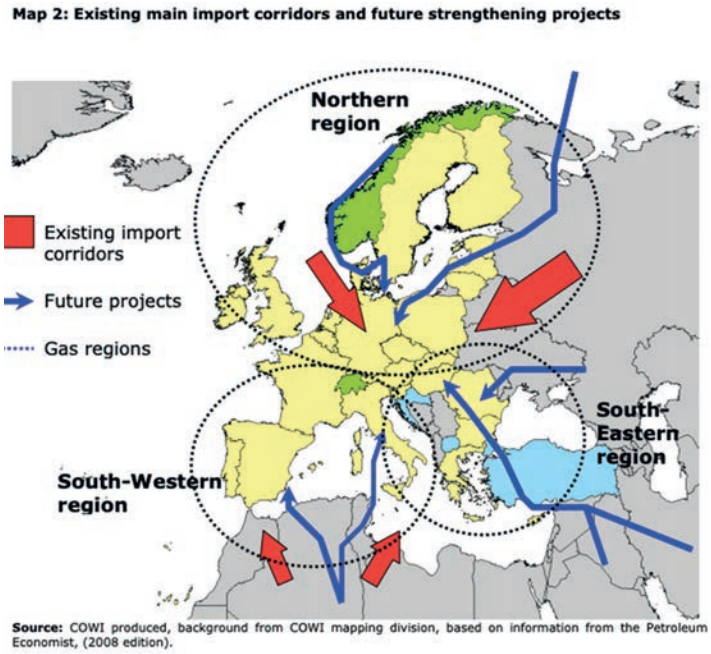

Figure 1.2. Gas corridors across the EU. Source: *European Parliament (2009, November 13). Existing main import corridors and future strengthening projects [Map*]. Retrieved at 18.1.2018 from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2009/416239/IPOL-ITRE_NT(2009)416239_EN.pdf

Sage and Pulsmar pipelines connect with the UK[10] for consumption of gas in the UK or for transit. Pipelines Europipe I/II, Norpipe and Zeepipe are directly connected with EU's import points in Emden and Zeebrügge (European Parliament 2009, European Parliament 2017).

c. The South-Western Corridor from Algeria: Algeria's exports cover approximately 8.8% of EU-28 consumption nneds (Eurostat 2017). The gas to Europe is supplied through the GPDF (Maghreb-Europe) pipeline, via Morocco to Spain and through the Trans-Mediterranean pipeline to Italy (European Parliament 2009)

d. The South-Eastern Corridor from Caucasus/Central Asia/Eastern Mediterranean): This specific import route is under construction and is flagged as a major priority for the EU in terms of supply security, on the grounds that the region supposedly holds great potential with respect to natural gas resources. The route involves infrastructure projects designed natural gas from the Caspian region to Europe (European Parliament 2017).

[10] Since February 1, 2020 the UK has been effectively withdrawn from the EU.

Therefore, the recent discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean could partially contribute to the realization of the South-Eastern Corridor and the fulfilment of the EU's diversification strategy from Russia. However, the Cyprus conflict (among many other problems and conflicts that the region suffers) may become the 'stumbling' block for the realization of its energy plans.

Energy is not the only stimulant prompting the EU's interest in the region and in the conflict in general. Since 1995, the EU has formulated the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (the Barcelona process), whose objective is to dismantle the tariffs and quantitative barriers between EU and non-EU countries in the Mediterranean (without any significant results, though). In 2004, the EU launched the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) to 'foster stability, security and prosperity in the countries located in the EU's eastern and southern neighbourhoods' (European Parliament 2017). ENP was portrayed as a framework 'to govern the EU's relations with 16 of the EU's Eastern and Southern Neighbours in order to achieve the closest possible political association and the greatest possible degree of economic integration' (European External Action Service 2016b). Nevertheless, the Arab uprisings impeded its smooth operation. One of the policy initiatives under the ENP was the Union for the Mediterranean (European External Action Service 2016a). The latter includes key projects such as 'the establishment of maritime and land highways that connect ports and improve rail connections so as to facilitate the movement of people and goods' and the development of alternative energy sources in the region' (ibid).

The land and sea space covering the Levant, the Aegean, Egypt and onward to Libya is considered 'a zone of intriguing, worrisome and dangerous events in the modern world' (Stergiou 2017, 7). It includes an ongoing war in Syria, the rise of ISIS, a continuously increasing refugee crisis, illegal trafficking, the traditionally strained Greek-Turkish relations and Cyprus as well as the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts (Sitilides 2014). All these threats and risks may acquire a more significant maritime dimension, exposing global trade to real danger. The Eastern Mediterranean encompasses a trade hub that gives significance to the Suez Canal, an artificial sea-level waterway in Egypt, which links the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea through the 'Isthmus of Suez and provides watercraft with a shorter journey between the North Atlantic and northern Indian Oceans through the Mediterranean and Red seas' (Filis 2017). New shipping lanes have doubled the daily capacity and shortened the passage time (ibid.). Any dangers across these sea lanes of this region may put global trade in jeopardy. The maritime environment has been a challenge for terrorists who are used to on shore operations. This explains why maritime security in the Mediterranean provides opportunities for multilateral security cooperation between NATO and the EU.[11] It also explains why containing the escalation

[11] This cooperation has partially been developed through NATO's Operation Active Endeavour (2016), which was launched immediately after the 9/11 attacks, and in light of the recent refugee crisis.

of the conflict becomes imperative. To this effect, comprehending the causal links between the discovery of natural resources and the escalation of the conflict is essential.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

I based the structure of this introductory chapter on of the sub-questions of sub-section 1.4. The first sub-question is about the literature review on the conflict-inducing role of natural resources. I examine this subject in Chapter 2, wherein I underscore the importance of a discursive framework of conflict analysis as the proper conceptual method for my study. In Chapters 3 and 4, I formulate the historical and energy contexts that address sub-question 2. In Chapter 5, I present my methodological section by laying out the steps that Q-method requires in order to 'transform' the collected answers from the interviews (the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot concourses) into discourses, which, in turn will formulate the interpretative framework of conflict analysis. In Chapter 6, I discuss the generated discourses in detail, addressing, thus, sub-question 3. In Chapter 7, I examine the extent to which the three analytical categories (geopolitics, greed and grievance) motivate them and analyze their implications. In Chapter 8 I lay out the academic contribution and the limitations of my study.