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

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8 Conclusions

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The discourses I analysed in Chapters 6 and 7 represent well-consolidated and widely shared assumptions on both sides. In this Chapter, I will explain why is this the case by laying out their implications. By elaborating on them, I stipulate the discursive factors underpinning the escalation of the conflict. I stress, though, that due to the contextual factors explained in length in Chapters 3 and 4, my findings are by no means testable to the study of other resource-related conflicts. Ultimately, this is not the objective of an exploratory research. As I argue in the second section of this concluding Chapter, importance of my study lies in the adoption a discursive framework in tandem with Q-methodology. I encourage the discursive shift to conflict studies because it helps scholars discern the *modus operandi* of the intangible factors in underpinning the escalation of a conflict. Moreover, another innovation of this research lies in the use of Q-methodology. The adoption of such a methodological approach has been never employed in the rich literature of the Cyprus conflict and has been rarely used in the examination of conflicts between ethnic groups (O' Connor 2016; Uluğ and Cohrs 2017).

8.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE DISCOURSES

The events in February 2018 between the Italian state-owned company ENI and Turkish warships confirm the security concerns of the Greek-Cypriot discourse, 'Gas boosting our geopolitical standing'. Adding to this, in March 2019, Turkey launched a military exercise named 'Blue Motherland' (Mavi Vatan). This exercise covered a terrain comprising the Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (a total area of 462,000-square metres), with the involvement of over 100 ships, SAT and SAS commando units, land forces and the Turkish coastguard. It was the largest navy drill ever conducted across the three seas. These exercises represented a flexing of Turkey's military strength and signalled its firm stand on Cyprus's hydrocarbons exploration programme in its own Exclusive Economic Zone (Iseri and Bartan 2019).

According to the discourse, 'Gas boosting our geopolitical standing', Greek-Cypriot policymakers have fixated on Turkey's threat in the energy calculations, especially in light of Turkey's repeated incursions into areas that encroach on Cyprus's Exclusive Economic Zone.[1] According to the respondents in my discourses, who participated either directly or indirectly in the licensing rounds, military criteria had gained prominence in the selection criteria for the bidding companies. More specifically, as some of them underlined, during the licensing procedures, they had to consider the military strength that the country of origin of each company held before granting the licenses. The logic behind such a policy formulation was

[1] See Chapter 4

quite clear: the drilling company had to be able to counter-balance Turkey's incursions into the Greek-Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone. Without military strength of the home country, the personnel and equipment of the drilling company would be in danger. The rhetoric of Turkish officials, besides Turkey's incursions, seems to justify, in their view, why Greek-Cypriots prioritize military power of the home countries in the selection of the drilling companies: 'Greek-Cypriots understand the importance of the issue only by show of force; so, in order to bring them [the Greek-Cypriots] to the negotiation table you need to do your own drilling, and the best way to do it is to go to where they found their gas' (*Hurriyet Daily News* 2017).

Nonetheless, if, assuming that the escalation and prolongation of conflict are costly and risky for the disputants, one would expect that 'rational' Greek-Cypriot leaders should have cultivated incentives to prioritize negotiated settlements with the Turkish-Cypriots rather than gambling over the possibility of an armed conflict with Turkey. This is what Greek-Cypriot discourse 'Pipedreams and imported nationalism' would assert. However, such 'rationalistic' assumptions cannot live up to the realities of the Cyprus conflict, at least as represented throughout my discourses. Despite the fact that an agreement with Turkish-Cypriots before a Cyprus settlement would reduce the costs and risks of the continuous power struggle, especially vis-à-vis Turkey, the Greek-Cypriot discourse, 'Gas boosting our geopolitical standing' explains what prevents Greek-Cypriots leaders from reaching *ex ante* bargains with Turkish-Cypriots on the natural resources. Natural resources are a matter of sovereignty which cannot be compromised by letting Turkish-Cypriots participate in hydrocarbons management without reaching a settlement on the Cyprus conflict beforehand. The president of Cyprus, Nikos Anastasiades, seems to have embraced this discourse by stating that he would never accept 'any issue touching on the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus to be on the negotiating table' (al Jazeera 2017). Hydrocarbons' management, as clearly articulated in the discourses, falls within the sphere of Greek-Cypriots' sovereignty: that is why it cannot be discussed. An official dialogue on the use of the gas reserves would infringe on Cyprus's sovereignty, as exercised through natural resources management, in the sense that the reunification talks are 'dictated by Turkey', according to the Greek-Cypriot discourse. Therefore, natural resources management, as a matter of sovereignty, is presented as *indivisible* in any relevant discussion with Turkish-Cypriots.

In both Greek-Cypriot discourses, 'Resentment matters' as well as 'Gas boosting our geopolitical standing', there is an extra reason not to share the management of the gas reserves with the Turkish-Cypriot community. Greek-Cypriots, according to both discourses, cannot trust the Turkish-Cypriots, who are considered as Turkey's mouthpiece and a promoter of Turkey's interests in hydrocarbons management. The mistrust vis-à-vis Turkey and Turkish-Cypriots dominates the two Greek-Cypriot discourses. This historical trauma allegedly underpins the issue's *indivisibility* and pinpoints the important role of grievances in the Greek-Cypriots' discourses. Following Schmitt's approach, sovereignty is determined by the act of decision, by the capacity to definitely decide contested normative disputes with the state, and particularly to

decide when a threat to the status quo has reached a point where it constitutes an 'emergency' and necessitates suspension of normal rules and procedures so that the status-quo itself can be preserved (Schmitt 1932, Williams 2003). So, in that case, the sovereignty is exercised by the people who make the decisions on the hydrocarbons management; who are authorized to sign delimitation agreements, invite drilling companies and take military measures[2] when things spiral out of control. These 'survival' attributes are clearly articulated in both Greek-Cypriot discourses.

In line with the Turkish-Cypriot discourse, 'Gas stimulating political equality', the Turkish-Cypriot leader, Mustafa Akinci, asserted that the continuation of the Greek-Cypriot drilling initiatives would trigger Turkey's reaction.[3] As predicted by the Turkish-Cypriot discourse before this announcement, Akinci (TRNC-PIO 2018) clarified that if Greek-Cypriots move on 'with their unilateral drilling and exploration activities', they will leave the Turkish-Cypriot side with 'no other option than to launch their own hydrocarbon explorations in cooperation with Turkey'. According to the 'Gas stimulating political equality' discourse, Turkish-Cypriots have been aware of the alleged Greek-Cypriot strategy behind the licensing rounds. In this vein, Akinci has accused the Greek-Cypriot side of attempting to put Turkey in a tight corner, briefly in confrontation with the 'big powers'. So, what should the Greek-Cypriots do, according to him? In line with this analysis, Greek-Cypriots should downplay the 'sovereignty attributes' of their energy policy and promote the establishment of a bi-communal committee along with Turkish-Cypriots. Akinci called on both sides to co-design this committee in order to jointly explore 'the common resources in cooperation' (TRNC-PIO 2018).

According to the discourse, 'Gas boosting our geopolitical standing', Greek-Cypriots are not likely to entertain such a possibility; they clarify, however, that, in all events, the wealth emanating from the exploitation of the gas resources would be distributed to all Cypriot citizens, both Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, after a settlement is reached.

The prospect of sharing profits does not lure the Turkish-Cypriots into terminating their own exploration initiatives in tandem with Turkey. As already explained in the discourse, 'Gas stimulating political equality', what Turkish-Cypriots actually want is to have a say in the management of the hydrocarbons rather than anticipate potential profits coming from their utilization (whenever this occurs). They also assign their sovereignty attributes to the natural resources. They push the 'uploading' of energy on the negotiation agenda. Their primary concern is to share the legal competence over who controls energy policy and not just gas reserves. The Schmittian definition of sovereignty is also displayed in their discourses.

[2] By invoking military partnerships when necessary

[3] As it did in the case of ENI in February 2018 (see introduction).

Eventual participation in the hydrocarbons management could allegedly help them upgrade their status in the eyes of the international community and gain a form of legitimacy, which they were deprived of after their unilateral declaration as a state entity in 1983. Moreover, they consider it as integral part of the 'future security architecture' on the Island. The Greek-Cypriots, according to the two discourses, 'Gas boosting our geopolitical standing' and 'Resentment matters', underscore that since Turkish-Cypriots have abstained from the state apparatus since 1964 and have established their own 'illegal secessionist entity', they cannot point out how the Greek-Cypriots should run their own domestic affairs, within which the management of the hydrocarbons allegedly falls. Had they allowed the Turkish-Cypriots to participate in the hydrocarbons' management before reaching a settlement, the latter would have no actual incentive –no carrot – to take a constructive stance in the negotiations. The contrasting 'sovereignty discourses', manifested through the Greek-Cypriot discourse 'Gas boosting our geopolitical standing' and the Turkish-Cypriot discourse 'Gas stimulating political equality' visualize the mechanisms through which an economic commodity becomes a matter of contention.

Besides the over-emphasis on the 'geopolitical' and 'sovereignty' aspects of the debate, another implication of the discourses is, in my view, the ill-developed economic logic that the contending parties follow as regards the monetization of the gas reserves. A slight exception to this assumption is probably the second Greek-Cypriot discourse, 'Pipe-dreams and imported nationalisms'. This discourse proposes to put the expected revenues into a particular wealth fund, such as the Government Pension Fund Global of Norway (known as the Oil Fund).4 Could this prospect work for Cyprus? One of my participants does not believe so: 'The Oil Fund has become the prey of populists that still govern today; they use the hydrocarbons in order to cover the mistakes from the mismanagement of the social insurance funds in the past'. According to the same discourse, an issue like the gas industry, being treated as an economic commodity, could offer some solutions. Side payments through attractive export options or linkages with other issues could be possible. Such a logic could bring the two communities closer through energy cooperation, while it would render Turkey's gunboat diplomacy more costly because it would 'bully' not only the Greek-Cypriots but also the Turkish-Cypriots, who, in general, fall under its 'protection umbrella'.

The policy deliberation between both sides did not evolve around a cost-benefit analysis of the available monetization projects on how the potential profits would be shared between

[4] Established in 1990, the fund was set up to provide every Norwegian government with some room to maneuver in its fiscal policy in case oil prices dropped (incurring losses in petroleum revenues for an exporting country like Norway) or the domestic economy faced recession. According to the regulations running the administration of this fund, each Norwegian government is allowed to use only returns of this investment and only 4% in a given year (if necessary).

the two communities before or after a settlement. This is an observation drawn from the discourses. Some energy analysts would justifiably argue that, on the basis of the existing geological and financial realities, such deliberation would be 'premature and misguided' (Tsakiris 2017). Preliminary findings on the Aphrodite field in 2013 indicated a range of natural gas volumes of 3.6 trillion cubic feet (tcf) to 6 tcf, with a gross mean of 5 tcf. This amount would not do justice to the high expectations that were raised about the profitability of that particular gas field.5 We should note, though, that on February 8, 2018, the drilling company ENI made a lean gas discovery in Block 6 offshore of Cyprus. This reversed Cyprus's hydrocarbon fortunes, especially after the initially 'bad' news from Aphrodite (ENI 2018). Besides the uncertainty around the available quantities, the challenge of accessing the available monetization options is global gas prices (Ellinas 2018)6.

The size of the gas reserves and low prices, albeit neglected as factors, are not the only ones inhibiting the development of the Aphrodite field. The latter's south-eastern section extends over the maritime boundary dividing the Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone from that of Israel (Roberts 2017).7 At the time of writing, both sides were about to apply for international arbitration to decide on the distribution of the gas there. Furthermore, any eventual positive economic effects would materialize after 2021 because almost all of the revenues – produced during the first years after the production – have to be channelled to the gas developers in order for them to recapture their initial investment (Tsakiris 2017). All of these geological and financial hardships succinctly explain why a dialogue over the economic utilization of the gas could be rather premature at this stage.

Nonetheless, despite the gravity of these thorny questions around the monetization of the gas reserves, most participants had not paid particular attention to them amid this four-year 'informal debate'. Most of them did not treat energy as a commodity that could

[5] As Hadjistassou (2013) asserts, 'in order to reach credible estimates, an offshore operator (such as Noble Energy) collects data using various techniques with the ultimate purpose of minimizing uncertainties while understanding the characteristics of a hydrocarbons field as exhaustively as possible'. The companies operating there have manifested little interest in developing it as a stand-alone site and decided to render it adjunct to other fields in the region, such as Egypt's Zohr with its 32 tcf of proven reserves or Israel's Leviathan, with 18 tcf.

[6] At the current level, the 'Cypriot gas that has been discovered so far cannot match average gas prices in Europe (in the range $5-$6/mmBTU). Whenever gas reaches Europe, whichever way it is exported – as liquefied natural gas (LNG) or through pipelines – the asking price would outweigh this range' (Ellinas 2018). Even politically desirable US LNG, at prices just above the EU market range, is struggling to make inroads into Europe (ibid).

[7] Since 2011, the two countries concerned, Israel and Cyprus, have been negotiating an agreement to settle the development of the Aphrodite's joint reservoir in order to safeguard its efficient production and maximize the economic recovery of the gas from the licenses of the contract areas

somehow factor into the future economic fabric of a potentially united island; they rather portrayed it as a question of 'sovereignty', an 'energy weapon to alter Turkey's stance vis-à-vis the Cyprus conflict' or a 'means to achieve political equality'. Rather than shedding light on the economic challenges as well as the costs that the exploration and the exploitation of the gas reserves incur, the logic underpinning our discourses gave these particular reserves a new twist in the Cyprus question. Along the substantive issues of territorial adjustment, governance, property, guarantees and intervention rights, it seems that hydrocarbons' management may gain the first place and lead to an impasse. The most important implication following this study is that the dynamics of the conflict seem to produce a new material stake, which, in its turn, may contribute to the perpetuation of the conflict *per se*.

8.3 ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION AND LIMITATIONS

Through the discursive framework, my study integrated theoretical premises from the agency-structure dilemma by delving into the strategic rationality articulated by opinion leaders from both sides. The discursive framework rendered the pursuit of the incompatible objectives intelligible and 'rational' to a reader who was not familiar with the complexities of the Cyprus conflict. Such a framework could be used in reanalysing other examples of resource-related conflicts (Sudan and Aceh). I repeat, though, that the discourses I broached here are by no means replicable. This approach, nevertheless, enhances the efforts of other conflict scholars, such as Alkhoper (2005), Campbell (1993), Jackson (2002, 2007, 2009) and Jabri (1996), to embrace the discursive framework as a method of analysis.

I did not imply that the theoretical premises emanating from the agency-structure dilemma are irrelevant. These theoretical preconceptions are relevant, but the aim through this discursive framework was to illuminate their plausibility and potential interplay. The discursive framework enabled my research subjects to draw on these theoretical preconceptions in order to 'rationalize' their decisions and articulations. They helped them render their fears and calculations intelligible to a reader not familiar with the context of a particular conflict. The discursive approach illustrated the 'contextualization' of these theoretical preconceptions.

I adopted the discursive framework to move beyond the agency-structure dilemma and offer a 'synthetic approach' in the study of resource-related conflicts. While the rich literature on the resource-related conflicts, especially after the 1990s, has concentrated on the interplay between greed and grievance, through the discursive framework I was able to underscore the importance of geopolitics as well. Although mainstream traditional geopolitics initially lost its theoretical capacity to investigate intra-state rivalries, geopolitics, as is clear from my findings, should be re-assessed as an explanatory construct that can account for the eruption, escalation or prolongation of resource-related conflicts. Constructivist and post-structuralist 'critical geopolitics', along with 'securitization', as provided by other scholars investigating the energy aspects of the Cyprus conflict (Christou and Adamides 2013), can offer a toolkit

for researchers to meticulously investigate the potentially conflict-inducing role of natural resources in these instances. Both 'critical geopolitics' and 'securitization' put key agents' 'inter-subjective understandings' in the spotlight. Within these understandings, as illuminated through discourses, researchers can assess the simultaneous impact of both structure and agency on the escalation of conflicts. The discursive framework enables researchers to understand how the protagonists of a conflict decipher their 'anarchic environment'; the 'structural imperatives' of such an environment is filtered through the interplay between 'greed' and 'grievance'. The latter are used to highlight the strategic rationale that leaders use to decipher their anarchic environment and, thus, prompt their reactions towards the stimuli emanating from it. Thus, the interdisciplinary synthesis of two unrelated schools of thought, greed-grievance theory, on the one hand, and 'geopolitics', on the other, signifies the academic contribution of this approach to conflict studies.

The neorealist/geopolitical approach that has been conducted by a vast number of scholars on the Cyprus conflict and the energy developments in the Eastern Mediterranean (Aydin and Dizdaroğlu 2018; Bilgin 2015; Ifestos 2013; Kahveci-Özgür 2017; Karbuz 2018; Kentas 2013; Koktsidis 2014; Kontos and Bitsis 2018; Kouskouvelis 2015; Mazis 2008; Paraschos 2013; Proedrou 2014; Sitilides 2014; Stergiou 2016, 2017; Stivachtis 2019, Tsakiris 2014, 2017; Turan 2015; Tziampiris 2019; Winrow 2016) notify readers on what "systemic" pressures are exerted and what constraints and possibilities are posed by the regional security complex in the Eastern Mediterranean to the disputants. They also inform scholars on how effectively, the member-states, key units of the system will respond to those pressures, constraints and possibilities. Nonetheless, such approaches, with few exceptions (Adamides and Christou 2013, Tziarras 2016, 2018) downplay the discursive factors that could act as transmission belts linking the above mentioned systemic imperatives to the disputants' behavior. They dismiss the role of perceptions that leaders may have vis-à-vis this anarchic environment. I do not disagree that systemic pressures and incentives may formulate the broad contours and general direction of the disputants' behavior. Nonetheless, through this research, I closely examined how these contours are grasped by the opinion leaders "from the inside". I showed that the broad contours of this anarchic environment are not benign but rather murky and difficult to discern. Therefore, by displaying the competing discourses, I explored the socially shared subjective models that help leaders filter these systemic pressures.

Moreover, through the discursive framework, I laid out how greed, in the form of political opportunism, has affected the escalation of the Cyprus conflict, as manifested in the recent tensions. Adamides and Constantinou (2012), Adamides (2015), Charalambous (2015) and Christophorou (2009), Heraclides, (2011), Kaymak (2009, 2012) and Richmond (1999) have pinpointed the routine-like, risk-averse attitude of political parties and assessed its impact on the reunification talks. The authors correctly attributed such behaviour to the unwillingness of the political parties across the island to distance themselves from their domestic surroundings and the historical experiences of their constituents. Their political survival would be threatened.

What the literature missed are potential causal links between the political expediencies of the political elites and the recent escalation of the Cyprus conflict. Through the aid of diversionary theory, my participants demonstrated that political elites, under the pressure of domestic turmoil, may embark upon assertive and risky policies against the 'well-known' enemy from the past. When the image of the political elites is shaken, they may try to restore it by diverting the attention to a crisis with the 'external' enemy. Such an approach confirms the 'in-group/out-group' hypothesis and resonates with Humphreys' (2005) approach. Therefore, policymakers, according to some of my participants, are not that risk averse, despite the claims ofthe scholars cited above. If their institutional position is at stake, they may engage in risky behaviour and initiative a crisis with the 'old enemy'. The motive behind such a move is to deflect constituents' attention from their accountability as regards the domestic turmoil to an external crisis against the 'well-known' enemy. That being the case, their political expediencies may hijack not only potential energy cooperation but also reunification talks. Such an approach is not widely shared among my participants. Nonetheless, it could be used as a theoretical preconception and be subjected to further qualitative research in the rich literature of the Cyprus conflict.

From a grievance point of view, the literature on the Cyprus conflict is vast. Bryant (2008, 2012), Burke (2019), Hadjipavlou (2007), Hatay and Papadakis (2012), Heraclides (2011), Kizilyurek (2006, 2009) and Yilmaz (2010) have clearly explained how denial of identity, relative deprivation and security-needs factor into the intractability of the conflict. However, the way such grievances are reproduced on the energy issue in Cyprus has not been adequately explored, with the exception of Birgel's work (2018). Through my discursive research, I established how the opinion leaders of the contending parties have made use of history in order to 'legitimize' the current energy conflictual strategies.

There are additional ways in which my study contributes to the literature of resource-related conflicts. While the vast majority of studies have focused on armed conflicts involving a significant number of casualties, my research focused on a 'frozen' conflict, which, since 1974, has developed as a 'dormant' crisis with no casualties, or at least none as the outcome of organised violence. In diplomatic parlance, a frozen conflict is defined as a predicament in which an active armed conflict has been terminated, but with the absence of a peace treaty or a comprehensive settlement which would resolve the conflict to the satisfaction of the contending parties. Thus, in legal terms at least, the conflict can flare up again at any moment. From Cyprus to the Balkans (such as Kosovo) or to the former Soviet Union (the situation in the post-2008 Georgia-Ossetia war), a series of nasty, small wars have been settled not via peace deals but by freezing each side's positions (*The Economist* 2008). In many, if not most of such cases, external conflict resolution efforts brokered by the UN, the EU or other regional organizations seem 'underpowered, stalled, failing, or nonexistent' (*The Economist* 2008).

The conflict dynamics in such cases are highly fluid (Sandole 1999; Steward 2002; Ballentine and Sherman 2003). In the face of evolving constellations of constraints and opportunities, the conflict 'transforms, mutates, degenerates, or consolidates' (Ballentine and Sherman 2003, 8). The longer such frozen conflicts last, the more likely they are to go through many stages and the more likely the factors sustaining them will differ from the ones which initially escalated them. Using the conflict of Cyprus as a 'microcosm' of such conflicts, scholars conducting similar studies should meticulously investigate the potential conflict-inducing role which the discovery of natural resources may play in exacerbating pre-existing tensions in the context of frozen conflicts. While the findings are not replicable, as I said before, the approach is encouraged.

Finally, one of the key factors sustaining the conflict is its subjective and perceptual quality: the perceptions that constituents have of each other. This subjectivity lies at the heart of this study, without downplaying the 'ontological realities' at hand. Q-methodology serves this purpose in the sense that it allows participants to articulate their 'subjective perspectives' by actively rank-ordering statements on the issue at hand. While this method has been previously used to examine other conflicts, such as the Kurdish one (Uluğ and Cohrs 2017, Uluğ and Cohrs 2017), it has never been employed to investigate resource-related ethnic conflicts. Such an approach differs from survey methodology, where participants are passively exposed to measurement (ibid). It is an interactive approach, which helps the researcher to clearly identify participants' perspectives on the issue at hand. Therefore, if someone wants to explore how systemic imperatives from the anarchic environment are converted into policy responses or how the greed-grievance play out, the Q-method provides the necessary tools for its 'qualitative operationalization'.

To my knowledge at the time of writing, no one so far has attempted to use this methodology to examine any aspect of the Cyprus conflict. From a strictly methodological point of view, this research constitutes a methodologically pioneering work in examining the Cyprus conflict. My study encourages the employment of such methodology if someone was seeking to discern the subjective qualities and "intangible factors" underpinning the Cyprus conflict and other, similar conflicts. This methodology renders terms such as 'relative deprivation', 'resentment' and 'denial of identity' more substantive and specific to readers not familiar with the realities of the conflict under investigation and brings the insights of the respondents to the forefront of the analysis. This is a contribution that my study makes particularly to the study of the Cyprus conflict and other resource-related ethnic conflicts.

Some concerns about the theoretical and methodological approach of my research cannot go unnoticed. It goes without saying that 'language matters' when it comes to the development of a discursive framework in a conflict study. Since I am Greek, some may justifiably assume that I intentionally impose my own 'Greek' interpretation on the discursive model. Readers

may think that because I have a vested interest, I have 'cherry-picked' certain historical dates, events or opinion leaders who would favour the Greek-Cypriot discourse over the Turkish-Cypriot one. Some might assume that I would lay out a historical background that failed to sufficiently flesh out events that would have been placed more centrally in an account if I were Turkish or Turkish-Cypriot. To assuage such valid concerns, I went to great lengths to provide a protracted history of the conflict across many pages (as shown in Chapter 3, where I presented the historical background of the conflict). I relied on material that came from English, Turkish, Turkish-Cypriot, Greek and Greek-Cypriot sources.

Moreover, in this research I did not investigate the perceptions of the other ethnic groups that live on the island: Maronites, Armernians and Latins. Since the key protagonists of my case study were Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots, I did not delve into the viewpoints and discourses of these groups. Interviewing these ethnic groups might have enriched the understanding of how minorities interpreted the situation and how they feel when they are trapped in a conflict between two other dominant ethnic groups. Do they take sides on the energy debate depending on where they live or do they adopt a neutral stance in order to avoid involvement in the Cypriot imbroglio? Future research could take their insights into consideration.

As a final remark, the impact of natural resources on the escalation of conflicts is a convoluted topic, where multiple factors might not gain the publicity they probably merit. Through the presentation of the discursive framework and the adoption of Q-methodology, I have laid out from a bottom-up logic which contradictory tendencies from the agency-structure dilemma are at play. Geopolitical perspectives could be more likely to prevail under certain conditions than greed or grievance and vice versa. This raises the question of defining the conditions within which one perspective would or could actually prevail in the eruption or escalation of conflict. Unfortunately, despite my detailed analysis, this cannot be accurately predicted in the social sciences. Experience has shown that international politics is exposed to continuous fluidity. In Morgenthau's (1948, 7) words, 'world affairs conceal surprises in store for everyone attempting to read the future from his knowledge of the past and from signs of the present'. Therefore, the realities inherent in the conflicts are too complex for the existing tendencies to capture their essence.