Boundaries of Cooperation: Cyprus, de facto Partition,

and the Delimitation of Transboundary Resource Management

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It almost goes with saying that scholars working on different aspects of conflict around the world are often so involved with the systemic and regional implications of conflict, involving norm creation and protection through third parties and international organisations and institutions at the high-level (as it is often called in Cyprus) that the micro-level implications are often obscured. Not only does this mean that the multiple dynamics (normally involving lives and livelihoods) from this perspective are ignored but so are their broader implications. The metanarratives of disciplinary and policy debates are such that there exists a blind spot between the moment of a conflict's descent into violence, and its settlement. This blind spot often means resources, which are the basis of socio-economic life, are relegated to a far lesser priority than strategic, geopolitical, and military issues as well as claims for justice, recognition, and representationThis myopia induced by an obsession with military security has long been known to be self-defeating (the example of World War I springs to mind, as with many others), yet it is still the dominant framework of international thought among many scholars and policy makers the world over. Often the plea that is produced to excuse such unsophisticated and crude approaches to understanding conflict is that the enormous difficulties needing to be addressed in a conflict environment denote a requirement for speedy, short term remedies– crisis management procedures. In other words, policy issues demand immediate responses crude though they may. This study appears to challenge this mode of thought at its foundations in that it shows that short term responses to conflict, such as the drawing of boundaries, may have less effect than expected. Cooperation may continue over boundaries caused by conflict even between divided disputant communities. Yet, at the same time, the act of boundary creation undoubtedly has momentous and problematic effects on resource distribution.

The book is structured around eight chapters, the first of which outlines the issues surrounding the management of partitioned resources, and the methods applied for the case of Cyprus. The remaining chapters fall into three sections that

examine transboundary resource management, the creation of transboundary resources in Cyprus, and their management in 'post-partition Cyprus'. These sections are aimed at interdisciplinary audiences, spanning political geographers to IR theorists, as well as the international policy community.

Hocknell's study on the boundaries of cooperation in Cyprus is one of the few publications on the island that steps outside of the obsession with strategic resources. Its focus on the management of transboundary resources effectively underlines the inequities that can exist in such processes which reinforce de facto divisions. There are also broader lessons to be learned here in the context of legitimate and consensual boundaries. One of the key questions that this study asks is whether conflict over resources in Cyprus can be delinked from the political conflict? This question appears to be established by the author as something of a straw house, though as Hocknell's research and findings show all is not what it seems. What appears to be the case is that while one might assume that every aspect of political, social, and economic exchange on the island is regulated and politicised by the Cyprus conflict, what actually transpires is that there are 'islands of cooperation' which have emerged over the years in the context of transboundary resource management (the Nicosia Master Plan being a case in point). This has occurred in the context of inflexibility over a political solution to the conflict, which makes it all the more remarkable.

This is a gem of a study among so much that is published on Cyprus and the region that is often empirically unoriginal and conceptually unsophisticated. Perhaps, I might go as far to say that it is heir to Patrick's brilliant study published in the mid 1970s which examined the political geography of the Cyprus conflict.[1] While there is much to debate about in this volume, it is also one of the few studies I have read on the Cyprus issue which manages to combine detailed fieldwork with a sophisticated intellectual position spanning many disciplinary boundaries in such a comprehensive manner. Questions related to cooperation have long formed part of the liberal-institutionalist agendas in IR, though rarely at the micro-level discussed in this study. The issue of boundaries also has been a constant issue of debate throughout the development of the discipline, again rarely at the micro-levels this study addresses. In both debates, the introduction of interdisciplinary work has been relatively rare. This study manages to combine these elements, while dealing with issues that have been basic to life on or near to a boundary. It underlines the reality of boundaries, while also emphasising the oddity of this particular one. Most poignantly, it illustrates the impact of political boundaries on resources, their management, and ultimately on whole communities which then become slave to them. As such, this study makes an interesting contribution to debates within IR about ethnic conflict and multiple claims to territorial sovereignty, and an important contribution to the canon of work on the Cyprus problem.

However, and as with all studies of the Cyprus problem thus far, in many ways this is still a work in progress in parallel to the process of reunification (of sorts} of the island, and suffers from the limitations associated with drawing empirical and theoretical insights from ongoing conflicts. Yet, its underlying insight is that partition may well breed partition, despite economic, social, political or cultural attempts to overcome it.

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1. R. Patrick, Political Geography and the Cyprus Conflict, 1963-71, University of Waterloo Press, Ontario, 1976