

Russia – EU Cooperation in Socio-Economic Area

EU – Russia Relations Regarding Water Resources in Central Asia

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In Central Asia, the water deficit and water-energy problem have been among the most acute and conflict-ridden challenges for the sustainable development of the region and for regional security. Key trade and investment partners, including Russia and the European Union, could play a considerable role in influencing this issue, due to the long-lasting status quo, the inability to find a solution through intra-regional dialogue and the region's rising dependence on foreign trade. Indeed, water-related interactions between Russia and the EU have been developing in a complementary manner. The EU possesses new technologies and its members have access to long-term capital markets, while Russia carries influence through providing security, regulating migration and holding a favourable political position for offering mediation services to the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

This article examines EU – Russia relations regarding water issues in Central Asia over the medium term. By analyzing cooperative and non-cooperative strategies used by the major stakeholders in the water conflict (the five republics and the third parties of Russia and the EU), it confirms the continuous complementary character of EU and Russian activities in this context. Russia will take responsibility for moderating the principal questions (as with the construction of big dams such as Rogun or Kambarata), as they relate to the provision of security guarantees. The EU will act through providing support for water companies from small and medium-sized enterprises, and promoting the European Water Initiative principles and by developing its investment policy. The intersection of interests is possible if Russia attracts an independent arbiter, such as an actor available to provide guarantees related to the values of professional objectivism, human rights support and environment protection. These issues inevitably arise with relation to big infrastructure projects.

Key words: water resources in Central Asia, EU-Central Asia relations, Russia-Central Asia relations, post-Soviet space, EU – Russia relations

The water problem in Central Asia

Traditionally, water resource issues are considered under the framework of sustainable development, with regard to environmental protection, water and sanitation, and human rights (as

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approved by the United Nations General Assembly on 28 July 2010). What makes Central Asia unique is the pivotal role of those resources in the systematic development of the economies of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and they are key for Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan as well [Smith, 1995]. Table 1 summarizes the main aspects of the water-energy nexus in Central Asia.

Table 1: Key aspects of water-energy nexus in Central Asia

Factor	Kazakhstan/Uzbekistan/Turkmenistan	Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan
Peak demand	• Spring/summer	• Winter
Water withdrawal industry	• Irrigation	• Energy production
Energy sources	• Hydrocarbons	• Hydropower
Consequences of non-cooperative actions	• Winter floods • Water deficit for irrigation period • Degradation of environment (salinization and erosion of soils)	• Energy deficit in winter (blackouts, central heating cuts) • Economic pressure and trade blockade

Source: Based on Eurasian Development Bank [2008].

In Central Asia, for the last 20 years the world has been watching the grave consequences of the decentralization of systems that were integrated and complementary under the Soviet Union. It was a unified energy network, not only for Central Asia but also for the whole USSR, with a system for controlling the water flow of Syr Darya and Amu Darya.

The water system was designed in the Soviet era to provide extra water during periods of high demand through a system of cascading hydropower plants, so that when the upstream republics needed extra power in winter, they received it via an energy “ring” made up of the other republics. Thus, all five managed to have water throughout the spring and summer. With the collapse of the USSR, the system broke down and produced a conflict of interest that has still not been overcome [Guseynov, Goncharenko, 2010].

No Central Asian actor has been capable of taking the leadership on the hydro energy conflict. The authoritarian governments of the five new republics have been unable to establish an efficient supranational institution to act as mediator. First, to do so would require the transfer of sovereign rights to such an institution and, second, it would deprive both upstream and downstream countries a powerful resource in domestic politics. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, taking an uncompromising attitude on water issues has almost become a national idea [Pannier, 2009]. It is no coincidence that these two countries are mentioned: the acutest conflict is between Uzbekistan (with the highest population) and upstream Tajikistan and, to a less extent, Kyrgyzstan. It also touches on the leadership ambitions of Uzbekistan, which cannot be realized because the water comes from upstream, and Kazakhstan [Smirnov, 2009]. The Kazakh economy depends much less on agriculture than the Uzbek economy, and has additional water resources from Irtysh and some small northern rivers. Turkmenistan receives considerable income from the export of hydrocarbons, has the smallest population among the five republics and depends less on flow allocation.

As a result, the region remains in an irrational deadlock. On the one hand, the circumstances are ideal for bartering (water for energy) [Shatalov, 2008]. On the other hand, neither the upstream nor the downstream states are ready for such negotiating. The situation is worsened by general tensions among them, their uncompromising positions and a high degree of attention paid to independent regional policy [Likhacheva, 2014].

For a long time, Central Asia was considered the “black hole” of Eurasia, and no one was eager to get involved in regional problem solving. But a few years ago the situation reached a breaking point [Ashimbayev, 2005]. Several factors – the region as a source of resources, increasing integration in the post-Soviet space, its physical location as a buffer between Afghanistan and other countries, the risk of being a potential source of instability for China and Russia – led to Central Asia rising on the international political agenda for neighbouring Russia, China and Iran and for other global actors such as the United States and the EU [European Council on Foreign Relations, 2011; Laruelle, Peyrouse, 2013]. Traditionally, the Central Asian states have implemented multi-vector foreign policies, so the involvement of these actors opened up new opportunities for strategies and political tactics.

Any country attempting to play an important role in Central Asian affairs will inevitably encounter the importance of water in the region and engage in a mediation process. With regard to the theory of hydro politics, it is a remarkable case study, closely involving external actors that are economically, demographically, military and politically much more successful and located well beyond the river basin.

This case also has the interesting aspect of EU – Russia relations in the post-Soviet space, given a different set of rules that apply to the European parts of Central Asia. While European and Russian policies in the region often diverge in many areas (such as politics and energy), the water issue is one of a few where interests do not contradict each other. Although European and Russian actions have not been coordinated for a decade, they have been complementary.

This article is divided into two parts: the first analyzes the evolution of EU and Russian policies on water for the last decade, with a focus on the economic aspects, and the second draws conclusions for the medium term. It does not cover issues related to the Aral Sea, which is a human-made, irreversible disaster now related only to environmental protection, on which much has been written by many international experts.

Supranational solutions for water in Central Asia

It would be incorrect to say that the Central Asian republics have not made any collective attempts to resolve the water situation through international organizations. The first such attempt was made after the Tashkent conference in October 1991: three months later, in February 1992, all five states signed the Agreement on Cooperation in Joint Management, Use and Protection of Interstate Sources of Water Resources. Later, in 1998, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan signed a water-energy agreement on Syr Darya. Some bilateral agreements were also concluded between 1998 and 2004 but turned out to be inefficient. The winter of 2008 – the coldest for many decades – was a point of no return, however, and as a result the region entered its deepest water-energy crisis [Libert et al., 2008].

The well-known Aral Sea Foundation unites all five republics. However, it is difficult to consider it effective, and it has been stricken by numerous international scandals [Ferguson, 2005]. The Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia (ICWC), with its Scientific Information Centre, formally under the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, is an important structure for resolving disputes over operational water distribution related to Amu Darya and Syr Darya under the 1992 agreement. But the influence of international projects and organizations has been minimal and inefficient with regard to any major issues. They cannot solve the core question of how to optimize opposite seasonal water demand.

A single successful example of the efficient regulation of transboundary water resources between upstream and downstream states in Central Asia is an agreement between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, signed in 2000, on the use, repair and maintenance of dams and other water infrastructure used by both countries on the Chu and Talas rivers [Mamataliev, 2012]. Kazakh-

stan confirmed its obligation to co-fund the repair and maintenance of a number of canals, dams and water reservoirs owned by Kyrgyzstan but that are part of the common water distribution system serving both countries. This agreement has been successfully implemented. The Chu-Talas Water Management Commission, established by the two countries with assistance from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, is based on two crucial principles:

- both countries agree to follow inter-country water allocation schemes and schedules applied in the Soviet era; and
- the downstream country, i.e., Kazakhstan, must reimburse the upstream country (i.e., Kyrgyzstan) for part of the maintenance and operating costs of water infrastructure relative to the volume of water delivered by that infrastructure.

Any attempts to conclude a similar agreement between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have not yet succeeded.

Russia

During the post-Soviet period, most interaction between Russia and the Central Asian republics was developed bilaterally, despite joint work in international organizations within the Commonwealth of Independent States. Until 2001, Russia was considered a major partner in the region and guaranteed external security [Cherniavsky, 2010]. But the Afghanistan campaign increased instability in the region and created new opportunities for the Central Asian republics to develop multi-vector policies. Increased hydrocarbon exports from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to China and the EU also weakened Russia's position.

Meanwhile Russia remains a unique country capable and ready to provide security guarantees for the Central Asian states (based mainly on its own national interests of protecting its borders), and anything dealing with water is intimately connected with these guarantees [Borishpolets, 2010]. This is one of the main reasons why China – a major trade partner of Central Asia since 2010 (overtaking the EU according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) with vast experience in building dams and water channels (such as the Three Gorges Dam and the Black Irtysh channels) – neither participates in controversial hydro projects in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan nor seeks to mediate in negotiations on this issue.

After decreasing its regional activities in the 1990s in order to focus on domestic problems, Moscow returned to the water-energy issue in the Central Asian republics and started taking some notable initiatives [Chufrin, 2010]. Russian companies were mainly oriented toward large-scale infrastructure and investment projects: the construction of the Rogun Dam (in Tajikistan) and the Kambarata-1 and -2 Dams (in Kyrgyzstan). As a result, it became necessary to regularly attempt to soften the position of the downstream states (beginning with Uzbekistan). A brief comparison of these two dams is presented in Table 2.

The tension between Russia and Tajikistan over the Rogun Dam has lasted since 2004, when international agreements on Russia's participation in the Tajik hydro market were signed. Russia initially planned to develop Tajik hydropower through the enormous Rogun project (at an estimated value of \$2.2 billion) and the Sangtuda Dam (estimated at \$200 million and finished, although at three times over its budget) [Kurtov, 2013b].

The project failed because of a range of factors, such as the global economic conditions and Tajikistan's multi-vector policy, which at one point became its main preoccupation. The Russian company RUSAL, a Rogun contractor, planned to send the energy to an aluminum plant in Tajikistan [Ibid.]. But the Tajik partners, encouraged by booming aluminum prices that rose from \$1,500 to \$2,575 per ton between 2004 and 2008, reconsidered the terms of the contract several times. In the end they made RUSAL forget about the aluminum plant, which

Table 2: Comparative analysis of the Rogun and Kambarata Dams

	Rogun	Kambarata-1, -2
Location	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan
River	Vakhsh	Naryn
Main purpose	Original purpose: irrigation Current purpose: power generation	Power generation
Characteristics	Planned as a highest dam in the world; work started before the collapse of USSR	Part of the Naryn-Syr Darya Cascade, situated above the Toktogul Dam and other power stations
Estimated capital expenditure	\$2.2 billion	\$2 billion
	Very high risk of exceeding the budget (by more than 50%)	
Power capacity	3,600 megawatts	1,900+360 megawatts
Current situation	Tajikistan is looking for investors	Treaties between Russia and Kyrgyzstan signed in 2012; technical expertise to be launched soon
Transboundary disputes	Uzbekistan continues opposition and demands international guarantees; World Bank expertise is in progress	Downstream states invited to participate; Uzbekistan primarily concerned about how long it takes to fill the period of filling the reservoir

achieved the status of a strategic site, making private ownership forbidden. As a result RUSAL abandoned the project.

Despite trying, Tajik authorities were unable to attract new investors, given the inefficient Tajik economy, increasing protests by Uzbekistan, its trade blockade, unprotected property rights in Tajikistan and the global financial crisis.

In 2012, there was an intensive development in the water-energy issue in Central Asia. Of course, a number of steps to address this imbalance had been attempted over the previous 20 years, but 2012 was a turning point. During his visit to Central Asia, on 20 September, Vladimir Putin signed agreement with Kyrgyzstan to cooperate in the field of hydropower.² Russia announced its intention to build a new water-energy balance in Central Asia. Two features of Kambarata-1, which had been planned during the Soviet years, are its position at the top of the cascade of existing hydroelectric power stations in Kyrgyzstan and its initial focus on generating energy instead of regulating flow and irrigation (as had been planned for Rogun). Thus, it would be technically possible to drain the water in winter to generate electricity and to hold it downstream – in the reservoirs at Shamaldy-Say, Uchkurgan and Toktogul. This system would prevent winter floods and allow spring runoff to be adjusted during irrigation in the downstream state. This project would improve Russia's reputation, as well as RUSAL's, after the decades-long controversy over the Rogun project [Kurtov, 2013a, 2013b]. In August 2013, during an official visit to Moscow, the president of Tajikistan also confirmed the interest of the republic in the construction of four hydroelectric power plants with Russian participation; these projects are significantly smaller than Rogun and have not been involved in any international scandals.

Obviously, any active expansion into Central Asia cannot be without some complications. Russia faces the problem of limited resources – financial, political and human. Countries in the region do not completely orient their policies toward Russia, realizing the benefits of co-

² Kremlin (2012) Visit to Kyrgyzstan. 20 September. Available at: <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/4428> (accessed 1 August 2014).

operation with several partners, such as Chinese investment and inexpensive loans, European participation, and the interests of India, Iran, Turkey and the United States.

European Union

The first remarkable step in the institutionalization of the EU's relations with Central Asian countries was made in 1996, when it signed the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In 1998, a similar agreement was signed with Turkmenistan and, finally, in 2004 – with Tajikistan [Dadabaeva, 2011].

Since 2001, in response to the Afghanistan campaign, the West has paid much more attention to Central Asia. European countries began to try strengthening their own energy security by diversifying their gas suppliers in the 2000s, actively pursuing the idea of building the Nabucco pipeline from Turkmenistan to Europe, bypassing Russia. In 2007, the EU and the Central Asian states launched a strategy for a new partnership [Council of the European Union, 2007]. This medium-term strategy, adopted for six years until 2013, included six priorities: security, economic reforms, energy dialogue, environment, human rights and education reform. Most relevant to this article is the reform of the water system and participation of European investment institutions in Central Asian infrastructure projects. Although the energy component remains the main interest of the EU, Brussels pays attention to the water issue, understanding its systemic impact on the entire region. In a broad sense, the implementation of the strategy institutionalized relations between the EU and the countries of Central Asia: EU representative offices were opened in the region, a system of meetings between EU representatives and the heads of republics was established, and investment and educational programs were launched, as was the promotion of the rule of law, antidrug campaigns and so on [Bolgova, 2010; Granit et al., 2010].

As the EU's role in water issues, especially in its early years, was mostly as an intermediary, the first steps in this direction were made at multilateral meetings in Tashkent, Paris and Ashgabat. On 3 December 2008 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan co-hosted a high-level meeting with Italy, as the coordinator of the EU's regional initiative, with the support of the European Commission; the meeting was attended by representatives from all the republics of Central Asia and the EU member states, after which participants discussed a draft document on strengthening EU-Central Asia regional coordination on the environment and water resources. In 2010, a multilateral seminar on management of water resources in the region was again held in Ashgabat.

Today, the EU is trying to participate in regulation through the European Water Initiative (EUWI), which includes a project on Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). The initiative's objectives relate to the UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on access to clean water and sanitation, and focus on the concept of integrated water resources management (IWRM) introduced at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At the 2013 meeting in Brussels, there were discussions on the adaptation of national water policies in Central Asia to EUWI principles and the development of cooperation in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan investment plans [EUWI, 2013].

As noted in “The European Union and Central Asia: a new partnership in action,” regarding the development of water resources, the EU intends to promote the use of “transboundary river basin management” and environmental initiatives (in particular the Caspian Sea Environmental Convention, the Kyoto Protocol, the UN conventions on biological diversity and desertification, cooperation with the Central Asian Regional Environmental Centre), priority projects to implement water-saving technologies and water efficiency, and the integrated use of transboundary water resources [Council of the European Union, 2009]. The readiness to

increase investment in such projects by attracting funds from third parties is emphasized, although there is no mention of direct financial support from the EU. Finally, the EU declares its support of the development of regional hydropower.

Both hydropower development (a strength of Russia) and new technologies (an EU strength) are fundamentally important because the implementation of such projects could significantly reduce possible conflict over water issues. Today up to 79% of the regional withdrawal for irrigation is used inefficiently, i.e., it is simply lost [European Union External Action, 2009]. Channel beds do not have cover, so water soaks into dry soil; it also evaporates from the uncovered channels, and drip irrigation is not utilized on a large scale. As a result water intake is high. The controversial Karakum Canal in Turkmenistan is a global symbol of the inefficient use of water: irrigation efficiency is about 0.6–0.9%. That is, for every litre needed, 110–170 litres are wasted [Kuvaldin, 2006].

In 2010 the Investment Facility for Central Asia was launched, which covers the period from 2010 to 2013. Some of the €65 million allocated to it was directed to improve water sanitary systems in Tajikistan [European Commission, 2012]. The EU also financed the construction of hydroelectric power in Tajikistan and developed bilateral dialogues within the EUWI. One of the most fruitful projects, between the EU and Kyrgyzstan, was launched in 2008. The dialogue was interrupted by political change in the country, but resumed in 2010 in the context of water legislation, management and implementation of joint projects, in particular, on Lake Issyk Kul [United Nations Economic Commission on Europe, 2011]. National medium-sized projects are the most effective for the EU: throughout the post-Soviet period, the EU has never participated in major multilateral projects in Central Asia, with the exception of environmental initiatives.

Russia – EU relations in the 2000s

In the post-Soviet years, the EU and Russia addressed water-energy issues at different levels, and as such bilateral relations did not arise. After 2000, the EU's role in regional water issues was indirect and not very important. However, in 2007, with the adoption of several agreements and cooperation programs, the situation started to change, and the period of 2010–12, to some extent, became a turning point. The EU promotes the principle of IWRM in the framework of the EUWI and has tried to encourage the establishment of a supranational multilateral organization for basin management, but these efforts have been limited by environmental agenda.

Russia has focused on bilateral negotiations and participation in infrastructure projects. It significantly increased its participation in 2012, when it entered into several hydropower agreements with Kyrgyzstan and conducted successful talks with Tajikistan, openly supporting projects in those countries to control nearly 100% of river runoff in Central Asia.

In addition, the withdrawal of U.S. coalition forces from Afghanistan scheduled for 2014 poses a serious threat to stability in Central Asia, and worsening water conflicts could have unpredictable consequences. These factors increase concerns for both Russia and the EU, although neither has made any statements on this issue yet.

Central Asian strategies and the opportunities for Russia and the EU

A matrix of cooperative and non-cooperative water-management strategies of the five Central Asian republics illustrates the degree of participation of other countries. China has distanced itself from water issues (preferring to the role of economic rather than political partner) [Swan-

ström, 2007]. Thus the third parties in Central Asia include Russia and the EU [Borishpolets, 2010; Peyrouse et al., 2012]. The United States does not get involved in the republics' conflicts over water, and other powers that might be interested in the region – such as India, Iran and, to a lesser extent, Turkey (which is active in the internal affairs of Central Asia) – have too little influence [Ashimbayev, 2005].

This analysis has focused on the basic criteria for assessing the potential for conflict over international watercourses proposed by Aaron Wolf [1998] and Peter Gleick [1993], the concept of virtual water proposed by Tony Allan [2001], and works on water wars by Miriam Lowi [1993] and Claudia Sadoff and David Grey [2002]. To analyze the strategies within concept of hydro-hegemony, the methodology of Mark Zeitoun and Jeroen Warner [2006] has been used. Note for the purposes of this article conflict refers to unarmed conflict. Armed conflict developing into full-scale war is not considered a valid strategy, despite the statements by the Uzbekistan president Islam Karimov that “all of this could deteriorate to the point where not just serious confrontation, but even wars could be the result” [Nurshayeva, 2012]. No global and regional actors are interested in a war in Central Asia, with growing instability in Afghanistan. Moreover, attempts to destroy hydraulic structures in Tajikistan, which controls a large part of the water flow (80%), will inevitably cause serious damage in Uzbekistan, severely affecting irrigation systems. In this regard, Karimov's statement is considered as a form of political bargaining. Non-cooperative strategies are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Non-cooperative strategies of Central Asian republics

	Upstream states	Downstream states	Other stakeholders
Short-term political bargaining	Transit pressure	Economic pressure on upstream neighbors	–
	Provision of international guarantees for projects on international rivers	Rely on powerful partners outside the basin to bloc upstream initiatives	Direct political impact
Long-term real solutions	Construction of independent sources of electricity	Construction of water reservoirs	Investments, technologies, demand, provision of security
	Barter water-energy trade with new partners	Exploitation of groundwater aquifers	

Source: Based on the author's research.

Non-cooperative strategies can be divided into two types, one with tactical objectives and the other with strategic objectives. The strategies are aimed at either the upstream countries (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) or the downstream countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). With regard to downstream countries, there are two basic short-term options: “transit tactical withholding” (thanks to the growing importance of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as a logistics hub for China on the route to Afghanistan and Iran) and one-sided support for international guarantees for projects on transboundary rivers.

China considers Tajikistan to be the missing link for establishing full relations with Afghanistan: it is too difficult to obtain a clear trade route [Peyrouse, 2012]. Most Chinese goods go through Tajikistan to reach northern Afghanistan. The republic's recent role as a transit corridor allows it to attract more investment in infrastructure, mainly roads and railways [Vinson, 2012].

Tajikistan has begun implementing international guarantees for projects on transboundary rivers. In 2012 the World Bank launched an independent review of the Rogun project. A non-

cooperative strategy can have a positive effect (it is not necessarily a conflict), but its implementation may still displease the second party. Thus, Uzbekistan de facto undermines efforts to engage in a multilateral dialogue on Rogun, organized by the World Bank, which is the main stumbling block in Tajik-Uzbek relations. The World Bank review has remained one of the few unpoliticized forums for assessing the prospects and security of the Rogun project, without which is impossible to reconcile the conflicting parties. Representatives of the World Bank met with officials from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in Alma-Ata on 6–7 November 2012. Uzbekistan participated only on the second day of the meeting, at the level of civil society organizations and local authorities. In September 2013, the first of the World Bank reports was published [see World Bank, 2013]. In essence, the assessment neither recommended construction nor justified a ban on it: it suggested that with complex stabilization measures to ensure the safety and capacity of soil barriers, construction could safely continue [Hashimova, 2013]. Thus, the debate remains ongoing.

For the downstream republics, the tactic of political bargaining is much broader. The method, regularly used by Uzbekistan, is to apply economic pressure on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, including economic blockade, delays in the delivery of energy, especially in winter, and blocking the main railway. The “efficiency” of such measures is associated with the markedly superior economic resources of downstream countries. However, apart from absolute figures, the structural underdevelopment of the Tajik economy plays an important role, as does the mutual dependence of both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on these energy imports. Structural underdevelopment, particularly strong dependence on aluminum exports, becomes an effective lever for bargaining because aluminum production is carried out in a continuous cycle. It must remain in cooling smelters for more than 16 hours, which costs up to \$200,000. A complete recovery cycle costs up to \$500 million and can take up to three years.³ Poor countries’ dependence on energy imports not only has economic consequences, but also has enormous social consequences: the downstream country is forced to reduce water-intensive crop production (mainly cotton) in favour of plants (grains and forage plants) that use less water and are cheaper – only economic water use suffers. In the case of a resource blockade, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan do not only stop production, but also residents must live without electricity and in unheated buildings in winter, when the temperature drops below zero.

The second tactic, which is certainly available for downstream states, relies on having external partners that are capable of blocking upstream projects [Holoden, 2010]. Due to the absence of a clear leader in Central Asia itself, there is significant room for external actors to participate in the region’s internal affairs. However, this is problematic for the downstream countries for three reasons: Russia clearly supports the development of the hydro potential of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, China has distanced itself from controversial investment projects that require security guarantees and the EU has also committed to supporting the development of hydro in the region as well as the integrated management of international watercourses. The United States has distanced itself from this issue. The only cause for it to get involved would be the risk of instability in the region due to the Rogun conflict, against the background of the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014. The U.S. is more likely to use its influence to prevent such a conflict than to align itself with Uzbekistan and put pressure on Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan [U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 2011].

³ Mirzayan G. (2012) Kak possorilis’ Emomali Sharipovich s Islamom Abduganiyevichem [How did Emomali Sharipovich fight Islam Abduganievich]. *Ekspert*, 15 (798). Available at: <http://expert.ru/expert/2012/15/kak-possorilis-emomali-sharipovich-c-islamom-abduganievichem> (accessed 23 August 2014).

Thus, the tactics either do not involve third countries (such as during economic disputes) or lie in the sphere of direct political influence. In reality, because the republics have primarily used tactical tools for the last 20 years, the inefficient status quo has prevailed. The situation has gradually worsened because of exogenous reasons. The Aral Sea continues to affect the entire region negatively; intense salinization, soil erosion and melting glaciers (covered by Aral salt) are the result of the biggest anthropogenic disaster of the 20th century. Simultaneously, climate change in Central Asia manifests in a sharp increase in periods of drought and cold and harsh winters [Eurasian Development Bank, 2008]. It has also led to an intense melting of the Pamir glaciers. Glaciologists estimate that the glaciers' volumes fell by a quarter in the second half of the 20th century, and by 2025, the area of glaciers in Tajikistan will decrease by 20%, resulting in a reduction of glacial runoff by 25% [Tajik Met Service, 2007]. Today, Tajik river flows have decreased by 7%.

The strategies of upstream and downstream states require the active involvement of third parties in the form of investment, technology, demand for goods and security guarantees. There are four main options for such a strategy.

To counteract the downstream states, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan must resolve the main problem of dependence on energy imports from the other Central Asian countries. This can be done in two ways: by developing its own hydropower potential (according to UN estimates, Tajikistan ranks eighth in the world on this indicator) or developing to barter water for energy with new partners such as Iran, in the long term, and Afghanistan. While such barter trade may seem like a very distant prospect, reports of negotiations between Iran and Tajikistan on the possibility of importing 1 billion cubic metres of water per year appeared in the spring 2012 [Tehran Times, 2012]. The presence of a common language and a simple and clear program of cooperation (water in exchange for energy and infrastructure) create favourable conditions for Iran's participation in the Central Asia on a large scale. In addition to the political aspects, Iran requires substantial amounts of fresh water for the development of nuclear energy and its diversification of water sources is severely limited compared to the capabilities of China and Russia to diversify their fuel trade.

Another country that may be interested in the development of this form of cooperation is China, which could revive its decision to develop hydropower along its border with Tajikistan. However, this program is not popular because of its remoteness from existing and planned hydropower projects in China – electrical transmission lines must be located on inaccessible highlands. China is more likely to be interested in investing in Tajik hydropower plants, which will provide energy for Chinese companies as it had already started to do with the Nurobad plant [Stern, 2008].

The strategic non-cooperative solutions for Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan lie in the effective management of water resources and the development of independent regulation of watercourses. In addition to the use of water-saving technologies, the construction of water reservoirs and the development of underground aquifers are needed. These three tools are gradually being introduced, but the countries have neither the technology nor the personnel nor the investment to expand those projects intensively.

Cooperative strategies in Central Asia

The full independence of the upstream and downstream republics in water and energy issues is a virtually unachievable and expensive utopia. Thus the sustainable development of the region requires strategic cooperation or pooling efforts in order to great a stronger player. With regard to cooperative strategies, a Soviet-type agreement that regulates the balance of water and

energy today seems to be a missed opportunity. After 20 years of conflict, even the theoretical possibility of such a comprehensive agreement is impossible, and the gradual diversification of economic partners and the entry of new ones have rendered such a closed' agreement less attractive. Table 4 illustrates the relevant decision matrix.

Table 4: Cooperative strategies for Central Asian stakeholders

	Upstream states	Downstream states	Other stakeholders
Lost opportunity	Soviet-style agreement for water and energy in all five republics		–
Possible current opportunity	Investment in other projects		Mediation
Future challenge	Sustainable cooperation demanded by neighbouring powers		Political pressure

Source: Based on the author's research.

The opportunity for cooperation exists today in the form of participation in investment projects. It could be co-financing of hydropower projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan or investment in water infrastructure downstream on international rivers. One example of a small-scale but successful interaction is the agreement between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on the Chu and Talal rivers, signed in 2000; a similar scheme is used in the Mekong River Basin, where Laos has contracted a Thai national construction company to build a hydropower plant and attracts funding by Thai banks [Mekong River Commission Secretariat, 2011]. In addition to the proportional distribution of income from the use of dams, investors can claim some of the electricity generated. In Central Asia, energy could also be bartered, as could water withdrawal (hydropower is much inexpensive and could be used domestically, and hydrocarbons could be exported by Uzbekistan). A payment system for withdrawing above the specified quota, as applies in some rivers such as the Nile, would not likely work in the medium term in Central Asia, because the downstream states possess effective tools for tactical control, which allows them the ability to block any discussion over fair water prices for a long time.

Finally, the most favourable scenario in terms of IWRM in the region and the optimization of the withdrawal and settlement of water and energy problems is a "forced cooperation," initiated by external actors. Such external actors could be interested in national security (as in Russia) or economic stability in the region and the continuity of imports (as in the case of China and the EU as well as Russia), or – if the water issue leads to large-scale military action – a threat to stability and global security (which would fall within the scope of the United States). The participation of international organizations is possible, but such participation would be an instrument of the major powers seeking their own interests, because such a campaign for cooperation itself is a very expensive and resource-intensive undertaking.

Bilateral formats of EU cooperation with Central Asian countries on water issues

Given EU energy interests in Central Asia, Brussels has put some effort into promoting the values of the EU [ECFR, 2011]. Those values include the rule of law, education, the fight against drug trafficking and direct humanitarian assistance. Environmental policy and water resources occupy a particular place. The promotion of the EUWI principles had a positive effect on the

agenda by creating a constructive discourse. While such actions are not quite remarkable, they have nonetheless had a gradual effect, multiplied by investment by EU members in the water sector and by attracting the attention of international financial institutions. However, the region is not a main strategic partner for the EU, and it is unlikely to make large-scale investments in the medium term [Bolgova, 2010]. By comparison, the entire EU investment program to support small technology projects in the field of water resources and conservation for the period of 2008 to 2010 was worth €65 million. The estimated value of the Rogun and Kambarata projects exceeds \$2 billion.

There is a good chance for the support of small and medium-sized hydropower plants in Tajikistan, which would have quick and direct effects on the welfare of local residents, as well as the development project on Lake Issyk Kul. In general, the EU recognizes the need to plan and fund for national water dialogues through the EUWI's EECCA. An important factor in future will be recognition of the EU's political leadership in the Central Asian water dialogue: its ability to persuade the republics to subordinate national problems for the benefit the broader goals (such as the MDGs, the development of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the EU strategy with Central Asian countries) [EUWI, 2013].

The EU can offer technology rather than investments in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, where the development of underground aquifers and construction of reservoirs are very costly and not very effective, especially in hot and sunny Uzbekistan, because the water evaporates very quickly, and indoor or underground reservoirs are very expensive. For the downstream republics, cooperation with the EU offers great potential for water-saving technologies: opportunities for increased efficiency of water use in the region are among the largest in the world today, where almost 80% of water is wasted. The only region with a higher level of loss is sub-Saharan Africa.

In light of the EU's efforts to promote the EUWI, in the medium the EU may come up with a broad statement that will unite all the basin countries, confirming the importance of water resources for the region. However, that would be mostly declarative, as the EU does not hold sufficient leverage to create effective supranational regulation for the Central Asian basin.

Bilateral cooperation between Russia and the Central Asian countries

Water issues cannot be excluded from the broader context of Russian foreign policy in Central Asia [Chufrin, 2010]. Having invited Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to join a customs union, Russia pays close attention to the most acute problems of the republics' hydropower potential. As for developing hydro projects, Russia is highly unlikely to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam, but will likely contribute to external expertise to strengthen cooperation with Tajikistan. Apart from political concerns, low aluminum prices (and the absence of any sign of imminent recovery of that industry) make this business project extremely expensive to build an enormous hydropower plant, which would produce energy to be used mostly in the production of cheap aluminum. The financial situation for major Russian steel companies also is far from what it was before the global financial crisis; moreover, the Rogun project is technically very complex, risky and expensive. The initial cost, according to experts, may be exceeded as much as two times.

The project in Kyrgyzstan is in better shape, with intergovernmental agreements already signed, but the next two or three years will be dedicated to preparing project documentation, project coordination and expertise. In general, the protests of Uzbekistan are unfounded, while Russia's indirect participation in the Rogun project is on similar grounds. Protests in connec-

tion with the construction relate mainly to two factors. First, the high seismicity of the region may lead to irreparable disaster. Rogun's reservoir is very large, and given the height of the dam – the highest in the world – if the structure cannot sustain an earthquake, the flow would simply wash away everything for hundreds of kilometres. Second, the time it takes to fill the reservoir negatively affects the water discharge, which will damage the Uzbek economy. It can take as long as ten years to fill, and the lack of transparency in the project's implementation (thus reducing the extent of discharge) and the controversy over the Rogun Dam have had a negative impact on Uzbekistan. If Moscow supports the project, any negative aspect (not to mention disaster) would be directly associated with Russia and discredit it in the international arena.

Institutionalizing basin management

As a precedent, Russia can serve as mediator to conclude additional agreements between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and issue joint statements by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the application of modern technologies for hydraulic engineering to minimize downstream damage. The conclusion of bilateral agreements with the Central Asia countries will likely remain an element of Russian foreign policy in the region, as with the October 2012 intergovernmental agreement to construct four medium-sized hydropower plants in Tajikistan, tied to a treaty on the deployment of a Russian military base.

Although the Kazakhstan – China – Russia water axis is outside the scope of this article, in the future, within the framework of the Eurasian Union, Russia may attempt to adopt a common statement to regulate the use of transboundary rivers so as to function as a single unit in negotiations with China on the use of the waters of the Irtysh. Once Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan accede to the Eurasian Union, such a statement would set an important precedent and would shift the water issue toward a legal context. However, it is extremely difficult to do at present, because neither Tajikistan nor Kyrgyzstan recognize any rivers flowing through their territory as international and, accordingly, maintain their sovereignty over them, which does not require harmonizing their water policies with other countries.

As for scientific cooperation, technology and expert support are important for all five Central Asian republics, and Russia is engaged on this front. Russian hydrologists, ecologists, glaciologists and climate change experts are actively involved in projects in Central Asia. This is also an area of cooperation with the EU, which can provide grants for such research.

Conclusion

This article analyzes the major strategies of all the stakeholders in the Central Asian water conflict. This analysis was used as a tool to estimate prospective Russian and EU policies in the sector. The main outcome is that Russia and the EU will continue to act in different areas using complementary tools, although they could apply almost any strategy. Consequently, as during the period from 2001 to 2012, no EU – Russian interaction can be expected in the medium term. The EU does not direct enough resources for political impact on this issue, and its interest in the region is not strong enough for it to get involved in resolving any conflict over water. It cannot provide security guarantees or sustainable demand for regional agricultural products and cotton from Central Asia. The EU can thus be expected to continue to support independent projects in particular countries in the region through investments and technologies for small and medium-sized enterprises and to support mediation for the participation of downstream states as in Tajik and Kyrgyz hydropower projects.

Russia can participate at any level, but is more likely to engage in resource-intensive policies in the region, given its strategic interests. Among possible instruments at its disposal are direct political pressure, international guarantees for infrastructure projects with its participation, security guarantees, demand for local goods (and trade benefits in a wider context of Eurasian integration), technology, and human resources for large-scaled infrastructure and construction. If the crisis becomes more acute, as a regional hegemon Russia could act as mediator, using appropriate economic and political instruments to stimulate cooperative interactions among the republics.

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Российско-европейские отношения в урегулировании водно-энергетической проблемы Центральной Азии в среднесрочной перспективе¹

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В Центральной Азии дефицит воды и водно-энергетическая проблема остаются одними из самых острых и противоречивых вызовов как устойчивому развитию региона, так и региональной безопасности. В силу затянувшегося статус-кво, неспособности пяти республик выработать консенсуальное решение самостоятельно и растущей зависимости региона от внешнеэкономической деятельности, возможности ведущих акторов и ключевых торговых и инвестиционных партнеров, в том числе России и ЕС, влиять на эти сферы играют важнейшую роль. Более того, взаимодействие внешних игроков обусловлено комплементарным характером ресурсов России и ЕС в данном направлении. Европейский союз обладает передовыми технологиями и его страны-члены имеют доступ на рынки долгосрочного капитала, в то время как Россия располагает рычагами влияния, лежащими в сфере безопасности, миграционного регулирования и обладает значительным политическим весом для оказания посреднических услуг всем пяти центральноазиатским республикам.

Цель работы состояла в определении перспектив российско-европейских отношений по данному направлению в среднесрочной перспективе. Рассмотрение предмета в первом приближении уже демонстрирует, что деятельность России и ЕС сильно отличается по уровню и инструментарию. Сравнительный анализ возможностей России и ЕС показал, что в среднесрочной перспективе комплементарный характер отношений сохранится. Россия будет брать ответственность за модерацию принципиальных вопросов (строительство Рогунской и Камбаратинской ГЭС), что сопряжено с предоставлением гарантий безопасности. ЕС будет действовать через механизмы поддержки малых и средних проектов, популяризацию принципов Водной инициативы ЕС, инвестиционную политику. Пересечение интересов России и ЕС возможно в ситуациях, когда России будет необходимо участие внешнего арбитра, т.е. субъекта, способного предоставить гарантии, связанные с ценностями: соблюдение прав человека (при переселении больших групп населения), поддержка экосистем, экспертиза – все эти вопросы неизбежно возникают при реализации крупных инфраструктурных гидротехнических проектов. На эту роль ЕС претендует и в более широком спектре вопросов.

Ключевые слова: водно-энергетический баланс Центральной Азии, отношения ЕС – Центральная Азия, отношения Россия – Центральная Азия, постсоветское пространство

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