POLITOLOGY

WATER RESOURCES CONFLICT IN THE CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract

The article deals with the conflicts in economic and political spheres of the Central Asian states in the context of water rivalry. There is some competition for water use in Central Asia and conflicts between states of the region over various mutually contradictory goals. Misunderstanding on irrigation and energetic purposes for using of trans border rivers seriously affect relations among the Central Asian countries, and as a consequence hindered the economic development and social stability in region. This article measures the role of highly developed nations and international organizations in creating a solution for this problem with assistance and mediation on both the regional and international levels. Conducting research is considered the roots and dynamic of these conflicts, their possible consequences, and the possibilities for resolution.

Keywords: Central Asian region, Syr-Darya, Amu-Darya, conflict, cooperation, trans border rivers, irrigation, energetic.

The problem of water in the Central Asian region is one of acute and practically are not solved. Today the Central Asian region is a group of countries with high population density, high population growth rates and critical levels of poverty. Experts estimate that by 2025 the population of Central Asia will double to 100 million people - respectively, and water resources will become of paramount importance. According to UN estimates, the population of Kazakhstan in 2025 will amount to 16.1 mln, Kyrgyzstan - 6.5 mln., Uzbekistan - 34.2 million., Tajikistan - 8.1 mln., Turkmenistan - 6.8 million people. It is estimated that population growth in Central Asia will inevitably increase the need for water in the coming twenty years by 40%. [1]. Thus, in perspective problem of water management in the Central Asian region only worsen due to high population growth. This situation will be cause inter-state conflicts, which requires a solution of water and energy issues.

The most acute water problems are:
- Inequitable distribution of water resources, the seasonality of water use;
- The prospect of reducing the water resources in the region due to climate change;
- An increase in the water with population growth and economic development of the region, consumption for electricity production and irrigation;

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- The growing number of natural disasters related to water and the ongoing process of drying of the Aral Sea;
- The absence of a clear mechanism on compensation for accumulation, storage, maintenance and commissioning of water;
- No elaboration of the principles of the HES (Hydro Electric Station) service and other hydroelectric water and energy facilities, whose condition is deteriorated every year;
- Lack of cooperation in the region in concerning water and energy issues.

The complexity of this issue lies in the fact that from the five Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, own by the biggest water reservoirs of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya, and Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are in the lower part of these rivers, causing a contradiction of the energy and irrigation regime in the region. During production of energy water uses in the winter, and during the irrigation regime the maximum amount of water uses in summer time. This contradiction of interests of water users, primarily refers to the mode of operation of the Toktogul reservoir, the largest in the SyrDarya basin. That’s why the water-energy problem is not unique to the Ferghana Valley, but also for the Central Asian region. The resolution of these problems lies not only in the economic sphere, but in the social and political. It is here that clashed the interests of the Central Asian countries, in particular - Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Currently, the effectiveness of cross-border operation of the irrigation system is largely dependent economy of each CAR republic. For example, about 92% of water used for irrigation in region [2]. Irrigated agriculture accounts for 8 percent of Kazakhstan’s GDP, 39 percent in Kyrgyzstan, 23 - in Tajikistan, 25 - in Turkmenistan, and 39 - in Uzbekistan. According to experts, the region supports about 22 million people depend on it directly or indirectly on irrigated agriculture in these countries [3].

However, the economic damage from the unresolved the problem shared by all countries in the region. According to UNDP unresolved problem of exploitation of water resources in Central Asia annually lead to losses of 1.7 billion dollars due to non effective water management [4].

Systematic collision of irrigation and energy interests of the Central states, lead to an aggravation of the political and economic situation in the region.

Between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, there is a fierce debate over water Naryn cascade of hydropower stations in Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan insists on the annual discharge of large amounts of water from the Toktogul reservoir to improve the water supply of agricultural areas in Uzbekistan.

In the winter of 2000 water-energy issue between the two countries led to the conflict, when the Uzbekistan had cut off the supply of gas to Kyrgyzstan. In response for generate additional electricity Kyrgyzstan began dumping water in the Toktogul reservoir. As a result the cotton fields in Uzbekistan was waterlogged. In this connection, Uzbekistan launched a military unit and held a series of military training for seize the Toktogul with military action. Kyrgyzstan, in turn, announced that in case of an explosion of the dam, the water flow will destroy the Ferghana and Zarafshan Valleys in Uzbekistan.

In 2006 between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan broke out with renewed
vigor once the water-energy crisis. In particular, the Uzbek side has put forward a number of conditions for the supply of gas in Kyrgyzstan in 2007 at $100 per thousand cubic meters [5]. The main requirement was to provide the necessary amount of water for the needs of Uzbek agriculture. Due to existing agreements, permits water to be compensated by purchasing energy consumption in Kyrgyzstan. The prices for it have been proposed by Uzbekistan below market rates, that did not suit Kyrgyzstan. In parallel, Uzbekistan accused Kyrgyzstan in attempts to artificially create a shortage of water for the irrigation of Uzbek agriculture.

The Kyrgyz and Kazakhstan conflicts still exist and on the same topic water problems. In particular, problems Shardarja reservoir, which is one of the components of the Naryn-Syrdarya hydrocascade. From the reservoir feeds the river Syr Darya and the irrigation system of the South Kazakhstan. But even with such an intensive water use in Shardara periodically accumulate huge reserves of fresh water, which is poured into the so-called Hunger Steppe (another name - Arnasay lowland), located on the territory of Uzbekistan. As a result, there appears a sea of salty water - Arnasai Dead Sea. Uzbekistan, to protect themselves, began to build the dam unilaterally. Kazakhstan believes that the construction of dams can lead to real threat of overflow of the reservoir, while the dam just burst, and twenty-meter wave of water washed away part of the South-Kazakhstan oblast and Kyzyl-Orda city.

Since independence, the conflicts take place between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on the joint use of water in the lower stream, as Turkmenistan takes water for Karakum Canal. These tensions are stoked by absurd projects such as the Golden Age Lake (Altyn Asyr) in the Karakum Desert projected to cover almost half the area of the Great Salt Lake in Utah, the synthetic lake will be about six times its volume. In October 2000, Turkmen started the construction of a gigantic artificial lake at northwest of the Karakum desert where the depression covering an area about 3,500-4,000km2 [6].

Although it is unclear whether that much water can ever be sourced from the river, it is obvious that downstream, Uzbekistan will not accept those diversions and is ready to defend its water share with arms if necessary. The already serious soil-salinization problems of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan will worsen overtime, if the project is completed.

The problem demands resolution on national, regional, and international levels, involving great states and international community.

Mechanisms established in Soviet times to regulate the water balance in the region is practically destroyed, real cooperation between water organizations in the region do not yet exist. Therefore, at this moment the problem requires urgent decision. Due to the fact that these rivers are not the property of those states, and have the status of cross-border, it is necessary to turn to the international experience of conflict resolution. Countries, where the transboundary rivers are guided by international conventions and treaties. In this regard, there are two main documents: the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (1991.) And the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (1992.). Before the interethnic agreements on transboundary waters "How to Use the Waters of International Meaning", adopted in 1966 in Helsinki by the International Law
Association. On the basis of these documents were developed and adopted the United Nations Convention on international waterways, as well as a huge number of bilateral and multilateral agreements governing the use of transboundary rivers. Based on these documents, it is necessary to give priority to modernize the legal framework of water relations at national and regional levels, with an emphasis on their effectiveness and practicality.

For decision the water problem, the Central Asian countries have made and are making efforts to settle this issue. Some representatives of the government of Kazakhstan called for all possible ways to prevent the construction of Kambartinsk hydroelectric station in Kyrgyzstan, whose introduction into service would disrupt the fragile balance of power and water supply in the region. As a result, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan would have agree on terms on distributing water and energy needs. To resolve the problem created by the expert group and the special commission of the two countries on the use of water of the rivers Chu and Talas. Kazakhstan agreed to co-finance the operation of hydrotechnical facilities in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan proposed the creation of the Central Asian energy market. On February 18, 1992 in Almaty, the countries signed an agreement on cooperation in the joint management in the sphere of use and protection of water resources. In 2003, in Kyzylorda was created FAS (Fund of Aral Save). In the same year it was formalized agreement on joint actions to address the problems of the Aral Sea and the Aral Sea region, ecological improvement and maintenance of social and economic development of the Aral region. On September 20, 1995 Nukus Declaration was signed by Central Asian states and international organizations on stable development of the Aral Sea basin. On March 17, 1998 an agreement on use of water and energy resources of Syrdarya river was signed in Bishkek. Later a number of similar documents were adopted. But due to expert

Gusev L. "Currently, however, each of the countries of Central Asia aims to solve the water problem unilaterally advantageous only to her"[7].

The problem was discussed at the level of EurAsEC. In August 2006, the association requested the Interstate EurAsEC Integration Committee to prepare a draft concept of the efficient use of water and energy resources in the Central Asian region. The strategy developed in the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community, and provides for the following tasks in the water and energy sector in Central Asia:

- Development and implementation of agreed measures in the field of rational use of water and energy resources;
- The adoption of measures for compulsory execution of intergovernmental agreements and treaties, as well as between economic entities of EurAsEC member states on all issues related to the use of water and energy resources, regimes of operation of reservoirs;
- Attraction of investments for realization of projects for the reconstruction of the existing water and energy objects of interstate meaning;
- The creation of incentives to attract investment;
- Creation of conditions for industrial cooperation in the energy and water industries.

The key issue is the formation in the framework of the EurAsEC new interstate managers and executive bodies with the status, which will allow to carry out the adopted decisions.
According to international organizations and experts, the main problem between the states of the region in the regulation of water and power relationships remain the same:

- Recommendatory decisions and lack of responsibility for their execution;
- Fragmentation of action at the regional and national levels between the management structure water resources and energy;
- The contradictions between the interests of controlling water resources and consuming them;
- Lack of efficient inter-state structures with competence in the joint management of water and energy resources;
- The absence of any players concerned between the conflicting parts with the possibility of real influence on the settlement of disputes.

Ways of resolution:

Firstly, its associated problems are just extremely important, and the decision can not be delayed; depending on whether, when and how they will be solved, will largely depend not only on the general economic development prospects of the region, but also very specific political and social conditions, living conditions and the environment.

Secondly, the problem of rational use of water resources in the region can not be solved by Central Asian states individually, independently of each other.

Third, the establishment and development of inter-state cooperation and passing from extensive method of water resources to intensive using water-saving (e.g., drip irrigation), sewage treatment and other advanced technologies.

Fourth, intra-relationships on the water in Central Asia will be in increasingly feel the impact of resource like: monetary funding, advancement in technologically, and legally from extra-regional countries and international organizations.

For historical and geopolitical reasons Russia can not be out on resolution problems in the Central Asia. Russia was included to the structures of the Eurasian Economic Community and organization of the Central Asian Cooperation (CACO) where plays a key role.

Russia invests heavily in hydropower of Central Asia - is involved in the construction of hydroelectric station Saktudinskoy-1 and Rogun HPP in Tajikistan. Government of Kyrgyzstan appealed to Russia with a proposal to renew the partnership in the field of water problem and continue to work on the construction of Kambarata HPP-1 and 2 (the required investment is $2.3 billion)[8].

In this context, the role and importance of the Eurasian Economic Community in promoting the interests of Russia and its allies in the region in the field of energy and water have been increased.

The participation of Russia in solving the problems that deal with energy and water use in Central Asia is caused by increased activity of other international players (US, EU), offering mediation services.

The project of the Partnership for Development of Greater Central Asia (GCA), promoted by the US State Department, Washington is seeking to engage in the processes of energy regulation in the region, which implies an impact on water use. American Companies (AES corporation) are involved in the construction of power lines in the southern direction (Afghanistan and
provide consulting services in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Created within the framework of CAREC (The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation) Electricity Regulators Forum (CMERF) already engaged in the implementation of projects aimed at creating a common energy network in the region. The CAREC Program was initiated by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the implementation of projects in Central Asia in the field of energy, transport and trade.

Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia are members of the CAREC and international donors - ADB, EBRD, IMF, Islamic Development Bank, UNDP and the World Bank. One of the main priorities of the CAREC is to support effective and efficient use of energy and water resources in Central Asia.

It is possible that a further strengthening of CAREC could lead it to transform into regional organization competing with the EurAsEC and SCO. Especially US interests in such scenario, which, after activation in the region of Russia and China within the SCO put forward the idea of creating a new regional integration organization in Central Asia.

Negotiations have to solve in a multilateral format inside of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It presents the country through which the transboundary rivers pass, so the solution to the problem of transboundary watercourses common to all these countries. In addition, the SCO has already accumulated sufficient experience in negotiating on this issue.

Water issues in the Central Asia can be solve with the involing of other actors, able coordinate efforts on mutual beneficial decisions. International organizations like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, the European Union (TACIS), UNDP (USAID), UNESCO, UNICEF, Global Water Partnership (GWP) have provided a lot of assistance in techniques, funds, regional legislation and water disputes tackling, as well as a series water related project aids in Central Asia countries.

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