EU Crisis Management Role in Water Conflicts in Central Asia: Open Opportunities or Lost Causes?

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Content: 1.- Introduction; 2.- Environmental Conflict versus Environmental Cooperation; 3.- Water Security in Central Asia as a Case Study; 4.- CA Reality: Water Agreements; 5.- CA Reality: Conflictual Behavior; 6.- The EU’s role in the Central Asian conflicts: achieved results and future opportunities; 7.- Conclusions.

1.- Water is essential for human survival, both on individual and a societal level. Water’s position as arguably the most important resource naturally leads to the question: Can wars be fought over water? There have been studies that claimed that certain types of natural resources scarcity combined with societal and political factors can lead to violent conflict. A new direction in the literature observes that natural resource management can foster cooperation as opposed to conflict. Studies that focus specifically on water and conflict conclude that “water wars” are unlikely and disagree what types of conflict disagreements over water resources might produce.

This paper attempts to answer research question: Do water scarcity or water distribution lead to inter and intra-state conflict or cooperation in Central Asia? What roles can third parties (such as European Union) play in these patterns? We will provide general description of literature debate on environmental conflict, scarcity versus abundance and also environmental peacemaking approaches. We will then review situation in Central Asia with regards to water. Our findings demonstrate that CA countries are likely to engage in cycles of conflict-cooperation interactions in inter-state level and into upstream-downstream discrimination on intra-state level. We argue that by taking a pro-cooperation rather than anti-conflict approach EU miscalculates the real threat of water conflicts in the area.

It is important to note, however, that the topic of EU involvement in Central Asia is difficult to address as so far the EU has had a rather limited role in Central Asia’s security landscape. Even after September 11, 2001. The main international actors in Central Asia have traditionally included Russian Federation, USA and to lesser degree, China, Japan, Turkey and Iran. However, in the summer 2007 EU has launched

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a new Strategy on Central Asia thus making investigation into its potential role in Central Asia a timely undertaking.

2.- There have been numerous case studies that attempted to link environmental degradation to violent conflicts (most notably the studies by so-called Toronto Group, lead by Dr. Thomas Homer-Dixon). Homer-Dixon, one of the strongest advocates for the theory that environmental issues cause and continue violent conflicts, is primarily concerned with issues of resource scarcity, especially those of renewable resources. He argues that most cases of scarcity are caused by demand (over-population or over-consumption by a population), supply (stemming both from natural scarcity and the “vulnerability of the ecosystem” to human activity) and distribution (the social structure that distributes resources). Additionally, he focuses on identifying specific issues that might constitute environmental security and points to seven major problems that might “plausibly contribute to conflict within and among developing countries: greenhouse warming, stratospheric ozone depletion, acid deposition, deforestation, degradation of agricultural land, overuse and pollution of water supplies, and depletion of fish stocks.”

These issues of scarcity and environmental degradation will, Homer-Dixon believes, manifest themselves in four distinct but interrelated social effects: “reduced agricultural production, economic decline, population displacement, and disruption of regular and legitimized social relations.” These negative social effects will, in turn, lead to three major types of conflict: simple scarcity conflict, group-identity conflict, and relative-deprivation conflict.

Norman Myers utilizes a case study approach that relies on a system-level analysis of environmental problems that occur both at the domestic and international levels. In the 1980s, droughts and disputes over use of the Nile’s water resulted in an increasingly tense situation between Egypt and Ethiopia, prompting Egyptian President Anwar el-Sedat to declare that “If Ethiopia takes any action to block our right to the Nile waters, there will be no alternative for us but to use force.” In his case study of water rights to the Jordan River, Myers points to the conflict between Israel and Syria and Jordan that did eventually erupt into violence. He says that it is not inconceivable that future interstate violence in the Middle East might arise not from the region’s most plentiful resource, oil, but from its scarcest, water. Long after the oil wells run dry, competition for water will continue to increase.

Nils Petter Gleditsch addresses several levels of analysis. At the system level he posits that “in a world with high resource constraints, there will be more interstate conflict”, at the nation level “countries with high resource constraints are more likely to be involved with other countries” and finally at the dyadic level “countries with high resource constraints are likely to be involved in conflict with countries with an

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ample supply of the same resource, and even (but to a lesser extent) with countries with the same resource constraints.” And while Gleditsch does advocate “environmental security”, he ultimately echoes Gasana’s sentiments about poverty and the indirect relationship between the environment and security.

In contrast to studies that examine the link between resources and conflict, the authors of *Environmental Peacemaking*, edited by Ken Conca and Geoffrey Dabelko, articulate a variety of reasons why cooperation is an important potential outcome of resource scarcity. Dabelko in identifying shortcomings with conflict-based approaches says, “There is very little evidence, for example, that that environmental degradation has led directly to interstate war”. The authors are looking at how environmental cooperation can lead to enhanced peace rather then how environmental scarcity could lead to greater conflict. Using a model that looks for cooperation it is possible to avoid the bias of looking for conflicts in situations of environmental scarcity and then generalizing these outcomes to all situations. Dabelko states that globalization is not entirely healthy for the environment but that increased interconnection offers an opportunity to address environmental issues outside of ridged state boundaries.

Most of work that examines connection between violent conflict (or cooperation) and environmental resources management use case studies approach. There have been only few academic projects by Hauge and Ellingsen (2001) and Esty (1999) that attempted to draw generalized conclusions by using quantitative approach to systematically analyze proposed links between environmental degradation and violent conflict. These studies only analyze data in 1980-1992. Stalley’s study (2000) found that states suffering from greater levels of environmental scarcity are more likely to be involved in militarized international dispute. Tir and Diehl (2001) addressed population pressure and its positive relation to conflict. In our project we wanted to conduct such quantitative study in the attempt to clear the difference in their findings, enlarge the factors looked at, conduct more up to date study and thus, hope to make more solid conclusions about interrelations between environmental factors and outbreak and persistence of violence.

Environmental security theory posits that environmental degradation, resource scarcity, rapid population growth, and global systems changes may all play part in explaining, to some extent, the rise in violent conflicts and resource squabbling among neighboring states. If environmental security assumptions hold, then the cyclical nature of long-standing conflicts (periods of heavy fighting interspersed with eras of virtual peace) would naturally be tied to cycles of resource availability and equal (or unequal) allocation of these resources. Thus both aggravated violence and eventual peace settlements might be tied to agreements dealing with issues that could be termed an environmental security threat. The problem persists that these threats remain undefined and that no causal links between environmental issues and violent conflicts have been reliably established. We have chosen water as the resource we were going to examine as we consider it the most important natural resource.

Literature on water resources agrees for the most part that “water wars” are not

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8 Conca and Dabelko 5.
feasible. However, the authors also agree that water scarcities, distribution or pollution can lead to some disagreements. Peter Gleick points to 54 disputes over water both in the past and at present. Conflicts over water can take many forms. If a shared body of water is polluted, one nation can accuse the other of causing pollution and threaten action, or assert the right to pollute. Transportation rights can cause another kind of conflict, where one nation asserts the right to navigate in a body of water and another state challenges that right. Conflicts over rivers in particular can have either of these aspects but one more common cause of tension is dispute over water extraction. In such a situation, the downstream party generally refers to prior use, relying on precedent to determine demand, and equitable division, determining “fair share” in negotiations because the upstream riparian can invoke resource sovereignty, whereby it has legal right to exploit any resource within its borders. Both are legally tenable assertions, and a lot depends on states’ power. There are several UN Conventions (1991, 1992, 1997) on trans-boundary and international watercourses. A United Nations directive compels riparians (countries sharing the same river) not to take actions that will harm downstream users (Uni92) but the situations often call for interpretations. Similar concerns are reflected in the projects supported by EU institutions and their facilitation of cooperation between two or more states throughout most of the 10 year running period of TACIS support.

There is less agreement in the literature that focuses on environmental security, including water, in Central Asia. Many studies focused on Aral Sea while there have been few attempts to general analysis of Central Asia water situation and Central Asia Water Diplomacy. Most authors agree that many existing agreements between Central Asian states come from the heritage of the USSR – exchange of water resources for oil and natural gas. For example, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are riparians of the Syr Darya. Under Soviet central management “spring and summer irrigation in downstream Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan balanced upstream Kyrgyzstan’s use of hydropower to general heat in the winter”. However, at present the parties are not adhering to recent agreements that exchange upstream flows of alternate heating sources (natural gas, coal and fuel oil) for downstream irrigation, and sporadically breach the agreement. Spoor and Krutov claim that “in the not too distant future the former Soviet Central Asia could be confronted with resource-based conflicts or even, …, with “water wars…. Increased demand for water for irrigation and hydroelectric power by the competing newly independent states both upstream and downstream is a potential source of inter-state and even enterethnic conflict”. Some scholars recently have gone further and suggested that there are first signs of coming war of the new type – not for oil and gas but for water. The first battles are between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

10 Elhance 1996; Micklin 2002.
12 Karaev, 2005.
13 Wolf, Kramer, Carius, and Dabelko, 2005, p. 82.
14 Ibid.
In contrast to studies that examine the link between resources and conflict, the authors of *Environmental Peacemaking*, edited by Ken Conca and Geoffrey Dabelko, articulate a variety of reasons why cooperation is an important potential outcome of resource scarcity. Dabelko in identifying shortcomings with conflict-based approaches says, “There is very little evidence, for example, that that environmental degradation has led directly to interstate war”16. The authors are looking at how environmental cooperation can lead to enhanced peace rather than how environmental scarcity could lead to greater conflict.

Few cooperation studies that focus on Central Asia conclude that it is far from certain that anything near high level of coordination exists, but certainly some cooperation does exist between the states on water issues17. Water treaties have been allotting levels of usage and dealing with other issues such as pollution. While these treaties certainly are not perfect the author considers them as positive steps towards creating a region where resource scarcity is not a driving or compounding force in violent or non-violent conflict.

Energy and agriculture sector policies have a large impact on water management in CA. Currently no mechanism is in place to coordinate or manage this inter-sectoral problem within most of the countries, let along at the regional level. A new paradigm for regional water cooperation in CA is needed. Water sector managers cannot solve the problems of regional cooperation alone18.

This is also the view circulated by EU policies towards Central Asia. In its documents and policies the EU has been treating Central Asia as a region, advocating its own model for regional cooperation and arguing that increased regional cooperation will decrease potential for conflicts in the area. In its recent *Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia* EU optimistically concludes that environment is an area where regional work provides clear added value and where cooperative relationships can be build despite political tensions ...

3.- The European Security Strategy outlines the following major threats to security in CA: drug-trafficking, terrorist attacks, government oppression, rise of Islamist radicalism, organized crime. It follows that the core objectives of EU as outlined in EC Regional Strategy Paper on Central Asia: *To ensure stability and the security of countries in the region; to help eradicate poverty and increase living standards; to facilitate/promote closer regional cooperation both within Central Asia and between Central Asia and the EU particularly, in the energy, transport, higher education and environmental sectors.* Embedded in these goals is promotion of European values (democracy, market economy, human rights, rule of law – factors that constitute good governance by EU standards). According to EU ensuring good governance will ensure greater security in CA.

There have not been inter-state wars in CA up to date. Direct war has only occurred in in Tajikistan during civil war (1992-1997). However, recent violence has

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16 Conca and Dabelko 5.
17 Erica Weinthal in Conca and Dabelko.
18 McKinney, 213.
occurred in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 during Tulip Revolution and in Andijan (Uzbekistan) in 2005. The potential for large scale violence is unclear according to many scholars and practitioners. It has been suggested that violence if occurs in CA, might have unclear agenda, extreme violence, potential quick spread\textsuperscript{19}. Central Asia’s most fragile region is Fergana Valley, where Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan meet, the most populous and ethnically diverse area. Since independence CA states have often expressed hostile behavior towards each other – often in the area of water sharing – the area this paper focuses on. However, before investigating water security in Central Asia it is necessary to define categories of conflicts and disagreements studied. Prior to data collection the author created the following scale for the levels of conflict (focusing on water) in order to examine the potential for future disturbances and roles for the third parties.

1. Large-scale inter-state violence (more than 1000 deaths per year).
2. Civil War more than 1000 deaths per year.
3. Occasional armed-inter-state violence.
4. Occasional armed-intra-state violence.
5. Occasional armed inter-state violence tied to environment.
6. Occasional armed intra-state violence tied to environment.
7. Actual cutting of supplies of natural resources.
8. Disagreements in fulfilling regional/bilateral agreements on water-sharing (harsh words between governments, threats to cut off supplies).
9. Disagreements about fair allocation of water resources (before actual agreements, in the process of negotiations).
10. Disagreements over new water projects (building dams, desert sinks, etc).
11. Disagreements on all of the above with non-Central Asian country.

EU Regional Strategy outlines managing rivers and river basins as the issue of serious importance for CA and the issue that requires increased regional cooperation and regional approach. According to this document in the environmental sphere, perhaps the greatest challenge to be faced is the management of regional water resources between competing demands for human consumption, irrigation, industrial use and the generation of electricity… In the energy sphere, hydrocarbon resources in Central Asia are of global significance, and have a key role to play in helping to meet the ever growing energy needs of the EU.

Recent 2006 World Development Report claims that the Central Asian states are in urgent need to develop fairer ways to share their water. The United Nations World Water Assessment Program’s annual report offers rather alarming information about Central Asia’s Cross-border water disputes, water losses caused by poor irrigation practices, and the continuing decline of the Aral Sea\textsuperscript{20}.

While there is no simple shortage of water in the region, the freshwater resources are very unequally distributed between CA countries. Most of the water in Central Asia come from Amu Darya and Syr Darya, the rivers feed the Aral sea. The Amu Darya has an average annual flow 73.6 km and Syr Darya River has an average annual flow of 38.8 km. The upstream net-donor countries are Kyrgyzstan and Tajilis-

\textsuperscript{19} Matveeva 2006.
\textsuperscript{20} http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101107.shtml.
tan and also Southeastern Kazakhstan. Tajikistan contributes 80 percent of flow generated in the Amu Darya’s basin, whereas Kyrgyzstan contributes 74% of the Syr Darya. The downstream net-users countries are Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Southwestern Kazakhstan. Hydroelectric power is particularly important for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Water is widely used for agriculture mostly cotton crop, primarily in Uzbekistan. This creates competing demands for use of water for agriculture and hydroelectric powers. The years have uneven distribution of flow. For example, 1999-2001 were the years of very low flows with history records breaking droughts. During the Soviet times there has been centralized allocation of water by the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources (Minvodkhoz) in Moscow via Ministries of Water in the five republics. After the independence the states had to create new agreements on resources’ allocation. Disagreements and conflicts have risen although no major scale violence has been observed.

The author and her research assistants have systematically collected data for Central Asia for 1991-2007. We have found out that Central Asian countries are likely to engage in cycles of conflict-cooperation interactions in inter-state level and into upstream-downstream discrimination on intra-state level. This situation opens up a role for international institutions and third parties: EU and the range of International Organisations - World Bank, IMF, EBRD, UN family, but also for bilateral activities specifically RF, China, Germany, UK and USAID) active in Central Asia in attempt to influence patterns of conflict and cooperation.

4.- There has been a large number of bilateral and multilateral agreements in Central Asia with regards to water sharing and usage. The general tendency has been to make regional agreements on principles and then resort to bilateral agreements for particular issues\(^\text{21}\).

On October 23, 1991 The Ministers of Water Supplies from the Central Asian republics and Kazakhstan signed an agreement designed to resolve conflicts over the use of water resources in the region\(^\text{22}\).

Under the agreement, equal rights are established for all the republics concerning the rivers of Kazakhstan and Central Asia. A working group was set up to oversee the enforcement of the agreement. In 1992 Agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan on the Cooperation in the Field of Joint Management of the Use and Protection of Inter-State Water Resources recognized the need for the agreed and organized solution of the problems of joint management of inter-State water resources. The Agreement admitted the unity of the region’s water resources and the resulting equal rights of use and the responsibilities for securing their protection

\(^{21}\) It is important to note that on the national level National Ministries/Departments of Water Resources and Agriculture and National Administrations play very important role in water management. Every CA state also has a water code – each shares some features but also differ in certain aspects (see MacKinnley 2003 for details).

\(^{22}\) The information about these agreements is taken from timeline data created for the purpose of this research.
and rational use. It was agreed not to permit in their territories any activities that would concern or damage the interests of other Parties. The Agreement created the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination. Through present ICWC has been the highest authority on transboundary water resources management in CA. Each country has an equal vote in the decisions and decisions are made by consensus. Basin Water Organizations (BVO Syr Darya and BVO Amu Darya) are the executive organs of ICWC, which also has the Scientific Information Center.

On 18th of February, 1992, Almaty water-sharing agreement was signed. With involvement from the World Bank & other international organizations, the 5 republics signed an agreement (the Agreement on Cooperation in the Management, Utilization and Protection of Interstate Water Resources) “to ensure delivery of water to the Aral Sea & its deltas.” Later that year Interstate Council for Aral Sea Basin problems (ICAS) was created which was charged with implementing the agreement. The same year International Fund for the Aral Sea was set up: each country was called upon to contribute 1% of its GNP. However, little action was taken & few funds were allocated. The fund has been hampered by economic situation of participating countries/lack of funds.

In January 1994 a long term “Concept” and a short-term “Program” for the Aral Sea were adopted at a meeting of the Heads of Central Asian states. The Concept described a new approach to development of the Aral Sea basin, including a strict policy of water conservation. The Aral Sea itself was recognized as a legitimate water user for the first time. The Program had four major objectives: to stabilize the environment of the Aral Sea; to rehabilitate the disaster zone around the Sea; to improve the management of international waters of the basin; and to build the capacity of regional institutions to plan and implement these programs. In June 1994 the World Bank approved a 220-million-dollar program to save the basin of the drying Aral Sea. The program was aimed at the rehabilitation of hard-hit areas and the improvement of water management during the next three to five years.

Since 1995 Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan signed several interstate protocols and agreements on the use of water and energy resources in the Syr Darya Basin. The agreements specified the amount of compensatory deliveries of fuel and energy resources and releases from Toktogul reservoir. Based on these agreements Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were supposed to receive excess energy from Kyrgyzstan generated by Toktogul reservoir in the summer, and in the winter they agreed to provide Kyrgyzstan with energy through delivering natural gas and coal.

In April, 1996: after Kyrgyzstan began charging for water, complex barter agreement was announced between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The new accord obligated Kyrgyzstan to guarantee sufficient flows through the Syr Darya River to the cotton fields of desert areas in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In return, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were supposed to receive excess energy from Kyrgyzstan generated by Toktogul reservoir in the summer, and in the winter they agreed to provide Kyrgyzstan with energy through delivering natural gas and coal.

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23 According to McKinney 2003, these main regional water and energy institutions have very limited capacity and their function is often based on contradictory principles. For example, the operation modes of hydrosystems in the Aral Sea basin should be determined and approved by ICWC but without participation of the energy sector. The operation plans should be implemented by the energy sector but without participation of the water sector (McKinney 2003, p. 8).
Kistan and Kazakhstan agreed to help pay for the upkeep of the Kyrgyz water works, to supply gas and coal and to purchase hydroelectricity generated in Kyrgyzstan.

In 1996 Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan signed a bilateral agreement agreeing to split the waters of Amu Darya below the river gauge at Kerki.

In September 1997 all five Central Asian republics have agreed on the need for a common strategy in the use of the region’s water for power generation, irrigation and other purposes and a meeting of an interstate water-resources commission representing Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, decided to create a special consortium for the purpose. The meeting also agreed to install special equipment in the main rivers of the region in order to monitor the flow of water into the Aral Sea. The CA states merged ICAS and IFAS into a new IFAS under rotating chairmanship of Presidents of CA states.

In December 1997 the Prime Ministers of Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan signed an agreement in Bishkek “to eliminate disagreements, which have been going on for 3 years, over water & energy cooperation between the 2 countries.” Kazakhstan also undertook to share the cost of operating Kyrgyzstan’s hydropower complex. Talks dealt mainly with the problem of exchange of water for power, which became aggravated in fall 1997. In accordance with previous agreements, Kyrgyzstan supplied irrigation water & electricity to regions of Kazakhstan. In order to do so, Kyrgyzstan limited the output of its main energy producer (Toktogul) to save irrigation water for Kazakhstan. In return, Kazakhstan would supply coal-generated electricity to cover shortfall.

In January 1998 the Governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan concluded the Agreement on the Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection and Rational Resource Use.

In April 1998 Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed a package of documents on bilateral cooperation at the end of a one-day working visit by Uzbek Prime Minister Utkir Sultonov to Dushanbe. The documents included an intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the use of water and energy resources and agreements on legal aid, on cooperation and mutual assistance between the two countries’ security services and interior ministries, on cooperation to combat crime, on transport and on cooperation in the struggle against drug trafficking, the agency said. An intergovernmental agreement on restructuring Tajikistan’s debt to Uzbekistan was also among the documents signed.

In March 1998 agreement between the governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Republic of Uzbekistan was signed on 1) joint and complex use water and energy resources of the Naryn Syr Darya cascade reservoir; 2) cooperation in the area of environment and rational nature use; and 3) on the use of water and energy resources of the Syr Darya Basin.

In 1999 CA countries signed the Ashgabat Declaration where they recognized the need “to work out joint measures for the realization of a regional strategy”. There have been no precise steps taken in that direction though.

In a very interesting step in June 2000 Presidents of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan reject OSCE-proposed conference on water, stating they prefer to handle water problems on bilateral basis.
In February 2001 two intergovernmental agreements were signed between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The first agreement between the governments of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was on cooperation in the efficient use of water resources in 2001 and the second agreement was on the mutual settlement of payments for cargo transportation and deliveries of material and technical resources in 2001 and the state debt of the Republic of Tajikistan.

In March 2001 Kazakh and Kyrgyz authorities signed a protocol under which Kazakhstan agreed to settle a $21.5 million debt in order to facilitate negotiations on water supplies.

In 2002 Kyrgyzstan concluded agreements on the joint distribution of water resources and energy with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

In May 2004 Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan signed water and energy deal according to which Kyrgyzstan would provide electricity to Kazakhstan in return for oil and coal. Kyrgyzstan would also discharge electricity from the Toktogul hydroelectric power plant for winter energy needs in Kazakhstan. However, Kyrgyzstan warned that if coal and fuel are not delivered on time it would have to increase electricity production at the power plant, raising the amount of water discharge into the Char-dara reservoir.

In July 2006 Kazakh and Kyrgyz leaders have established the Chu-Talas Rivers Commission, a bilateral agreement that will address water infrastructure issues. This initiative was supported by UN ECOSOC.

In August 2006 Summit of Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) agreed on two new projects: a customs union and a common energy market. With the exception of Turkmenistan CA states participate in the organization and agreed in principle on this initiative by RF.

The recent 2007 EEC summit deliberated on the formation of a hydropower consortium, which is crucial for Central Asia. The idea behind this consortium is to take steps in the direction of evolving a technologically and economically powerful system for addressing the interconnected problems of water distribution and the development of hydropower infrastructure for the region. The proposal came from RF which recently has been active in involvement in natural resources arrangements. This is exemplified by its plan to assist Tajikistan in building many hydroelectric plants – in the past few years RAO-UES has expanded its role to incorporate large hydroelectric stations in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan24.

5.- Despite the presence of many multilateral agreements, these agreements have been broken many times by the parties. Here are just some instances of conflictual behavior.

Instance I. Kyrgyzstan’s unilateral Actions.
In April 1996 Kyrgyzstan1 began attempts to charge for water considering water its main currency. On the 1st of October 1997 President Akaev signed an edict codify-

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24 Since 2004 RF has been more and more active in CA in general including water and energy sectors.
ing Kyrgyzstan’s right to profit from water resources within its territory. Kyrgyzstan threatened to sell water to China if Uzbekistan refused to pay. It also demanded compensation for revenues lost from releasing water downstream to Uzbekistan farms, instead of using it to generate hydropower. On 31st of March, 1998 the Assembly of the People’s Representatives of Kyrgyz parliament passed a draft law on interstate use of water objects, water resources and water reclamation constructions in Kyrgyz Republic and send it to Legislative Council of the Supreme Council. On the 18th of April 1998 Kyrgyzstan announced that it was going to increase its prices for electricity again because the cost of electricity did not cover even the basic production expenses. The Kyrgyz government also decided unilaterally to reduce the export of electric power to Uzbekistan and to Kazakhstan because of the low level of water in the largest reservoirs of the republic.

In June 2001 Kyrgyz parliament touched off a fresh controversy with the adoption of a law, dictating “On the Interstate Use of Water Facilities, Water Resources and Water-Management Installations of the Kyrgyz Republic” that classified water as a commodity. This attitude up to date produces protests from downstream countries depending on Kyrgyz water. At present Kyrgyzstan attempts to introduce market-based mechanisms for exchanging natural resources between CA countries.

**Instance II**
In June 1997 Uzbekistan cut off 70 percent of flow downstream, threatening 100,000 hectares and prompting a riot by Kazakh farmers. On 07.01.1997 Uzbekistan deployed 130,000 troops on the Kyrgyzstan border to guard reservoirs straddling 2 countries. It has been noticed by observers that Uzbekistan has often exacerbated regional tension by acting unilaterally. On 07.20.1997 Kazakhs staged a protest near the Uzbek border to demand that Uzbek officials restore the previously-promised water flow.

**Instance III**
On 12.26.1997 the Prime Ministers of Kazakhstan & Kyrgyzstan signed an agreement in Bishkek “to eliminate disagreements, which have been going on for 3 years, over water & energy cooperation between the 2 countries”. As a result of agreement, Kazakhstan was to receive the necessary amount of Kyrgyzstan irrigation water in spring. Kazakhstan also undertook to share the cost of operating Kyrgyzstan’s hydropower complex. Talks dealt mainly with the problem of exchange of water for power, which became aggravated in fall 1997. In accordance with previous agreements, Kyrgyzstan supplied irrigation water & electricity to regions of Kazakhstan. In order to do so, Kyrgyzstan limited the output of its main energy producer (Toktogul) to save irrigation water for Kazakhstan. In return, Kazakhstan should have supplied coal-generated electricity to cover shortfall. Kyrgyzstan stated recently that if Kazakhstan didn’t fulfill its obligations, Kyrgyzstan would cease irrigation & electricity supplies in 1998. However, on 01.02.1998 Kyrgyzstan threatened to cut off electricity and water supplies to Kazakhstan because the latter failed to honor agreed energy transfers and pay outstanding debts. On 05.00.1998 water supplies to Kazakhstan from Kyrgyzstan were terminated for 10 days.
Instance IV
On 06.07.1998 Tashkent cut gas deliveries to Kyrgyzstan because of Bishkek’s mounting debts\(^1\). Tashkent did it again in December 1998.

Instance V
In July, 2000 tripartite dispute between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan emerges, Southern Kazakhstan faced a serious water shortage after Bishkek cut supplies because of Kazakhstan failure to meet agreed energy supplies and Uzbekistan reportedly extracted more water than it was entitled to\(^1\). On 07.08.2000 Uzbekistan began appropriating some of Kazakhstan’s water share from Fergana Valley. On 07.15.2000 Kazakhstan lobbied Uzbekistan for more water in meetings\(^1\). On 07.17.2000 Kazakh TeleCom stopped relaying international telephone calls from Uzbekistan\(^1\).

Instance VI
On January 23, 2002 Kyrgyzstan was accused on ignoring the terms of its water-use agreement with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan releasing too much water in the winter and not enough in the hot summer months. On February 8, 2002 Kazakhstan withdrew from united regional energy system and halved electricity supplies to Kyrgyzstan. On 22 of February 2002, Kyrgyzstan has issued an ultimatum demanding that Kazakhstan return to Central Asia’s united energy system and resume electricity supplies to the Kyrgyz side. Kyrgyzstan was experiencing a real energy crisis: scheduled power cuts for domestic users and enterprises were introduced in the north of the country including Bishkek.

Instance VII
On 06.00.2002 Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan altered water flow to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Tajiks releasing too much and Kyrgyzstan releasing too little in retaliation for Kazakhstan’s failure to supply coal under the swap agreements\(^1\).

Instance VIII
In May 2005 Uzbekistan’s bilateral relations with the Kyrgyz Republic have worsened as a result of the latter’s refusal to return about 453 refugees who fled across the border to Kyrgyzstan after the Andijan uprising. Uzbekistan claimed them the leaders of the rebellion. Kyrgyz government cooperated with UNHCR and as a result most of these refugees have been resettled in third countries. In response, Uzbekistan has restricted electricity supplies to Kyrgyzstan to one-third of agreed levels and the Kyrgyz Republic had to seek alternative supplies from Kazakhstan and to increase its own hydroelectric production. The increased water flow that this required posed significant risk of flooding along the banks of the Syr Darya river further downstream in Uzbekistan and southern Kazakhstan\(^25\).

Instance IX

During August 2007 SOC Summit Uzbekistan’s President Karimov blamed some states (meaning Tajikistan) for projects of building hydroelectric power plants without considering other usage of transboundary rivers. He warned that near future could bring worsening situation around Aral sea, shortages of water downstream of AmuDarya and Syr Darya and jeopardize lives of ten millions of people of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Tajikistan has extensive plans to build massive hydroelectric plants on rivers Vakhsh and Piandsh that form AmuDaria and on Zeravshan river. At the end of August Tajikistan broke out agreement with Rusal company for building Rogunskaya plant. Tajik government claimed that Rusal purposefully slowed down project due to pressures from Uzbeki government.

From observations of the agreements on water sharing and states’ disputes over water, one can conclude that in Central Asia water is used as a commodity for bidding in negotiations and it is not environmentally scarce resource according to standard definition of scarcity. Our research demonstrated that upstream-downstream dynamics is present in inter-and intra-state relations and population density is important on inter and intra state level. Environmental cooperation is possible and practiced however countries engage in conflict-cooperation cycles.

We can identify the following major disagreements – upstream countries insist on revising former interstate water quotas and are pursuing increasing use of water for hydroelectric purposes. They also insist on schedules of releases from main reservoirs that are favorable to them and/or demand compensation from downstream countries. Downstream countries prefer to keep existing agreements on quotas and they do not cover the costs of stream regulation. Increasingly countries have resorted to bilateral agreements in place of earlier multilateral attempts. However, these bilateral agreements get broken and disputed as well.

We observed that in 1991-1996 Central Asian countries have focused on multilateral agreements on water sharing. It has been noted, however, that the agreements have been under-funded and often did not get implemented. In 1997 upstream country Kyrgyzstan began seeing water as its main commodity and adopted several unilateral legislations authorizing charging neighbors for water. This period also signified start of bilateral agreements between upstream and downstream countries which continued to be trend into 2003. In recent years Tajikistan also began to assert itself as a significant hydropower with emphasis on building hydroelectric plants, a plan that has been largely supported by RF but vehemently opposed by Uzbekistan. In 2006-2007 Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have been advocating for legally binding regional water-sharing framework that still does not exist.

6.- The EU’s involvement in Central Asia could be classified as limited at most. At the bilateral level EU has signed Partnerships and Cooperation Agreements with all

-- The WARMIS Database is a relative database, consisting of tables with text data. The database contains information on water and land resources and use, climate, economic indicators, and water quality. http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101107_pr.shtml.
5 CA states, however, the ones with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are yet to be ratified by the EU. PCA’s are built upon three pillars: political dialog, trade and economic relations and cooperation in variety of sectors. Institutionally, however, these PCAs are less developed than PCAs with Russia and Ukraine. This is due to the fact that in general, EU’s approach to CA countries has been more regional than country-specific. The main tool to support implementation of PCAs has been TACIS – Technical Assistance Program for Commonwealth of Independent States Programme.

Originating in 1995 EU TACIS has been providing support to CA through its Water Resource Management and Agricultural Production in the Central Asian Republics Projects (WARMAP 1 and 2), ending in 2000. The goals of WARMAP 1 and 2 have been to: provide an administrative and technical framework for development programmes concerned with utilization, allocation, and management of water resources in the Aral sea basin; determine the allocation between economic sectors and users based on sound criteria, while ensuring proper regard for the preservation of water quality and downstream usage; obtain more effective use of existing systems and institutions while introducing economic concepts and environmental accounting to create awareness of the benefits of the new policies; assist in developing new technologies for the allocation and management of water resources in agriculture. WARMAP 1 and 2 were also expected to work together with the World Bank and the Global Environmental Facility – the Water and Environment Management Project (GEF)27.

In practice, WARMAP projects have provided technical inputs on drafting interstate water sharing agreements and have been reasonably successful from the point of view of EU and CA states in this endeavor. However, these projects have failed to convince CA states to increase the involvement of regional institutions in the preparation of these drafts and discussions. Some observers even expressed opinion that once a consensus would be reached among water-governing ministries of the CA states, these WARMAP assisted agreements would fail to effect the actions of energy sectors. It is important to note that in general, however, IFAS and ICWC have been treating EU projects with respect. WARMAP project also played major role in developing WARMIS (Water Resources Management Information System) – currently in SIC/ICWC28.

21st Century has witnessed increased attention of EU towards CA. CA states have welcomed certain opportunities for cooperation with EU. In May 2003 the five Central Asian nations formally invited international agencies and lenders to craft and enforce policies for protecting water sources, The document “Strategic partnership on water for sustainable development – Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia component of the European Union Water Initiative” was formed. This document emerged with new plans for water management in CA. It was followed by the “Statement on the “Strategic partnership on water for sustainable development – Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia component of the European Union water initiative”.

In 2002-2004 EU has came up with the new TACIS Indicative Program for Cen-


28 http://www.cawater-info.net/careweis/warmis_e.htm.
tral Asia which stated the following goals for EU actions with regards to CA water: combating water and land desertification by providing further support to the WARMAP project, in particular for the continuation of the work on the collection of reliable data and on system analysis. Assistance for the IFAS in developing and maintaining a database for water resources management could be provided in coordination with other donors. Developing joint river basin management projects based on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) – a multi-sector approach (energy, agriculture/irrigation) to water resources management that involves all stakeholders in the decisions making and management of the resources and ensuring cooperation with the Global Water Partnership. The EU Water initiative launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg could provide a framework for the activities in this domain. WARMAP 3, however, has not taken off as of now (it has been delayed by lack of progress of the earlier prepared draft interstate agreements on data and information exchange, and on development of institutions for basin water management29).

In general, EU has been treating Central Asia as a region in transition that is in need of assistance to move to building democracy and market system. This view, however, can be damaging at present as the idea of democratization for the CA countries is looked upon with suspicion in the aftermath of Tajik civil war and Kyrgyzstan revolution. Overall, EU’s policies in CA have been more ad hoc than planned. EU attention has been focusing more on CA since 2004 under leaderships of UK and later Germany Presidency. As a result in 2005 EU appoints a Special Representative for Central Asia, to enhance cooperation with the region in the area of foreign and security policy, including ESDP. In summer 2007 EU developed new CA Strategy.

According to this Strategy, a significant number of challenges facing CA can only be addressed at a regional level: This is why it is a core priority for action in the EU Strategy towards this region. European Commission outlines major goals of stability and security in CA, sustainable economic development and facilitation closer regional cooperation within CA and between CA and EU. Improved regional economic cooperation between the Republics of Central Asia, their neighbours and the EU provide the key to their security, stability and sustainable socio-economic development.

In environmental matters EU’s main policy instrument in CA has been TACIS. At the regional level, the main focus has been on water issues… The TACIS Regional Indicative Programme 2004-2006 allocated an indicative budget of 50m euros, with an additional 10m euros from the Central Asia Indicative programme. ... According to EU evaluation, TACIS has been instrumental in supporting Central Asia Sustainable Development Initiative on environmental issues, ... As regards cross-border river basin management, the projects supported by TACIS on a bi-or tri lateral basis have helped to develop a more comprehensive concept of integrated water management.

In the previous years in the course of attempts to introduce this concept of integrated water management EU and Central Asian countries have completed several agreements.

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29 EU has also conducted a number of smaller water oriented projects such as European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) efforts in Tajikistan, including capacity-building of local structures, improved water and sanitation facilities, food security, nutrition and food hygiene education, and better access to health care services. http://ec.europa.eu/echo/field/tajikistan/index_en.htm.
In April 2006 in a Ministerial Conference in Almaty, the representatives of the Central Asian States and the EU have agreed that EU-Central Asia Regional political dialog should focus on increased environmental cooperation. They also agreed to establish EU-Central Asia Joint Expert Working Group for cooperation on environmental issues, with specific focus on water, including transboundary water. The parties have established that EU Regional Assistance in the environment sector will focus on sustainable development and good governance and in the water sector implement these goals with support for the regional aspects of existing mechanisms in these areas, such as EU Water Initiative EUWI.

7.- The paper analyzed the issue of water security in Central Asia as a case study and the role of European Union in water in CA region. In general one can conclude that current theories cannot have straightforward application to the water situation in Central Asia. Water is used as a commodity for bidding in negotiations and not regarded as public good. This is a typical situation fordeveloping countries. In 2002, the UN declared that the right to water for personal and domestic use should be recognized as a basic human right. This right is not willingly embraced in most of the developing world as governments often view water as the economically profitable resource as proved in the case of CA states. Our research demonstrated that upstream-downstream dynamics is present in inter- and intra-state relations and population density is important on inter and intra state level. Environmental cooperation is possible and practiced however countries engage in conflict-cooperation cycles.

This paper identified the following major disagreements – upstream countries insist on revising former interstate water quotas and are pursuing increasing use of water for hydroelectric purposes. They also insist on schedules of releases from main reservoirs that are favorable to them and/or demand compensation from downstream countries. Downstream countries prefer to keep existing agreements on quotas and they do not cover the costs of stream regulation. Increasingly countries have resorted to bilateral agreements in place of earlier multilateral attempts. However, these bilateral agreements get broken and disputed as well.

The EU has been trying to participate in water situation in CA by contributing to water management projects. The involvement has been more ad hoc than planned and the results have been vague.

Naturally Central Asia has not been and probably should not be the top priority for EU. RF, US and China will continue to be more active and more influential in the area. However, EU should not underestimate its potential for conflict management in the area not only in traditional violent conflicts but also disagreements over natural resources.

The tensions between CA states persist and might still be evolving into crisis in the near future. It remains to be seen whether EU’s involvement will bear fruits both in terms of technical water management systems and overall contribution to region’s security. The incidents of the conflicts over water below suggest that major water problems in CA might be problems of countries’ strategic interests rather than water itself. The conclusion that can follow is that by adopting regional approach in order to en-
hance good regional governance and adopting this vision in the treatment of water problems in CA, the EU might be missing the nature of water problem in CA – security and thus not contributing to overall stability of CA countries with its policies.

The paper argues that in order to have more influential and successful involvement into Central Asia the EU should move away from regional approach into country-specific approaches. In addition to continuing water management projects, the EU should also concentrate on diplomatic management of potential water conflicts in Central Asia. At present, Central Asian republics still to a significant degree view EU with respect, have certain aspirations to be European, and respect EU as a more neutral player in the region than the other more powerful ones.
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Abstract

L’Unione Europea e la gestione dei conflitti sull’acqua in Asia Centrale

Questo articolo analizza il caso riguardante i conflitti sull’acqua nell’Asia Centrale, e il ruolo dell’Unione Europea in questo contesto. La tesi sostenuta è che le teorie attuali non possono essere efficacemente applicate alla situazione idrica centroasiatica. L’Unione Europea ha provato ad intervenire in questo ambito contribuendo a progetti di gestione dell’acqua, ma il coinvolgimento è risultato troppo “occasionale” piuttosto che a lungo termine, e i risultati sono stati pertanto poco soddisfacenti.

Le persistenti tensioni tra gli Stati centroasiatici non sono state sanate, e rischiano di evolversi in episodi di crisi nel prossimo futuro. Gli eventi conflittuali relativi alla questione idrica suggeriscono che i problemi maggiori in Asia Centrale potrebbero essere riconducibili all’interesse strategico dei vari Stati, piuttosto che allo specifico problema delle risorse idriche.

L’articolo conclude che, per ottenere un coinvolgimento più proficuo e risolutivo in Asia Centrale, l’Unione Europea dovrebbe passare dall’approccio regionale ad un approccio più specifico che interessa i singoli Stati. Inoltre, nella gestione dei progetti idrici della Regione, l’Unione Europea dovrebbe concentrarsi sulla soluzione diplomatica dei potenziali conflitti nell’Asia Centrale.