

Mis/Managing the Resources of Identity:

Towards an Understanding of the Roots and Possible Solutions to the Water Management Crisis in Central Asia

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Introduction

Identity is a feature of all the attempts to exploit human resources. Communities who feel they share cultural historical heritage will tend to opt to cooperate and share resources. Water is the source of life in the Earth and, thus, it is essential to secure access to water for everyone. However, due to its life sustaining proportion the distribution of water resources along social and political lines is a critical area to understand. For example, in 1985 Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali famously said “the next war in the Middle East will be fought over water, not politics”, where he recognized the potential threat of water conflicts in various regions in the world. This paper focuses on the Central Asian region where water conflict may erupt in near future, where five former Soviet republics are struggling to negotiate the management of water resources. This paper sets out to understand the essence of water problems in Central Asia, conflicting interests and existing agreements.

The allocation of water resources in Central Asia is a vital task for regional states due to the possible implications of conflict over water. The environmental disaster of Aral Sea and subsequent need for common strategy of water resource management makes the distribution of water already a crucial issue for negotiations among Central Asian states. Thus, the security of access to water resources is vital for prevention of further deterioration and reoccurrence of Aral Sea environmental disaster in the region. In addition, it is estimated that almost 65 million people live in five Central Asian republics among which 48.5 million people live in the Aral Sea basin (Ibatullin, 2010). It is therefore clear that the effect of water shortage on Central Asian people will be large-scale and transnational.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union has brought the collapse of the system of unified water management and also the Soviet identity as a whole leading a gap in the conceptualization of cultural community and heritage. The understanding of how these two factors are related will be presented in this article. The authors argue that identity politics in Central Asian states have resulted in the creation of specific state policies towards water allocation and the lack of regional compound in it.

Geography

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Source: Map no. 3763, Rev. 6, June 2005, United Nations Cartographic Section.

The major water resources of Central Asian region are coming from two rivers Amudarya and Syrdarya. The major flow of Amudarya is formed in Tajikistan (80%) and the major flow of Syrdarya is formed in Kyrgyzstan (74.2%) making these two upstream countries in control of water release to downstream countries (Ibatullin, 2010). Thus, conflict arises between upstream countries Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and downstream countries Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in the matter of the system of water management and purposes of water use.

The water supplies from Amudarya and Syrdarya are important for agricultural sectors of downstream countries. The agricultural sector in downstream countries plays a crucial role in the state's economy by providing employment to a large percentage of population and producing goods for trade (ICG report, 2002). The cotton and rice production in Uzbekistan require large amount of water. Thus, the prosperity of agricultural sector is crucial for the interdependent economic growth of Central Asian states and subsequently, the water supply is vital.

The water from these two rivers is used for multiple purposes serving as a source of drinking water, irrigation and hydropower (McKinney, 2003). Subsequently, Central Asian states have a varied set of vested interests in the management of water resources in the region. Thus, the water problem in Central Asian region includes several points:

- The use of transboundary river water;
- The construction of dams on transboundary rivers;
- The pricing of water distribution.

Irrigated agriculture (mostly cotton) accounts for the major consumption of water in the Central Asian region and, at the same time, is the substantial source of economic revenue making of approximately a third of GDP of particular states, like Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (Weinthal, 2006). Thus, the importance of agriculture for the economies of Central Asian states and desire for the use of hydroelectric potential creates a competitive and intense combining of interests among Central Asian states.

The change in the operational regime of major water reservoirs, such as Toktogul in Kyrgyzstan has led to repeated floods in downstream countries which resulted in loss of agricultural lands, crops, livelihood of people living in the affected areas and health problems (ADB, 2006). This situation could lead to economic, social and health problems in the region if the water allocation problem is not

addressed properly by regional states. Thus, finding solutions to management and distribution of water resources in Central Asia could contribute to the sustainable development of not only one particular state, but for the region in general.

The increasing population of Central Asian region puts an additional pressure on the urgent need for finding solution to the water allocation problem in the region due to the decrease in percentage of the water distribution per capita and, consequent, water deficit (Ibatullin, 2010).

The water resource allocation problem in Central Asia should be resolved urgently due to the fact that according to the estimation by 2020 there will be insufficient amount of water resources per capita and by 2040 there will be a deficit of water (Ibatullin, 2010). Thus, in order to prevent the deterioration of the situation of water resource allocation in Central Asia, the regional states should mobilize their efforts to find common solution.

Although, Central Asian states from the early years of independence since 1990s began to cooperate on the water allocation in the region today the situation is very different. A key question to ask is why the negotiations on water management have failed in Central Asia and what main arguments state leaders are using in order to promote their interests while inhibiting cooperative efforts that will benefit the region as a whole.

This article tries to present how by using diverse cultural heritage and traditional local practices can support the efforts to resolve water conflict in Central Asia. The elimination of conflicting rhetoric and promotion of regional solution could supplement existing attempts to establish regional water management strategy.

Water conflict in Central Asia could serve to stir tensions between ethnic groups in the region for the access to water. The bright example would Ferghana Valley which is already prone to ethnic clashes and with the additional problems with access to water the ethnic violence may erupt. Therefore, the solution to water problem in Central Asia would contribute to economic and social development of each Central Asian state and the region as a whole.

While there has been a great amount of research done on the economic, technical and political causes of the water conflict in Central Asia, little has been discussed on how identities of particular states and the notion of regional identity has an impact on the resolution of the conflict. This article attempts to present alternative point of view on the water problem in Central Asia and endeavors to provide the missing link in the Central Asian states policies towards water management and distribution.

History

Historically, water resources in Central Asia played an important role not only as a source drinking water, but also as a major physical, economic and cultural connecting point between peoples of Central Asia (Weinthal, 2006). Thus, for instance, the intersection of rivers in the region has served as a meeting place for traders and pilgrims from various countries, where they could rest and exchange goods, information and cultures (Weinthal, 2006).

In ancient times the Central Asian region was known as "Transoxiana", the Greek term that meant land on the other side of the river Oxus (currently Amudarya), hence, the region historically was connected with water (Allouche, 2007). During the Soviet period, state borders existed only administratively and were not used in practice and, subsequently, the Central Asian region largely coincided with the borders of the Aral Sea basin (Weinthal, 2006). Therefore, water has been integral for

regional identity and representation. Moreover, as Weinthal (2006) notes The Aral Sea basin defines the physical and political environment of the Central Asian region.

After the end of World War II, the Central Asian region has received a large amount of financial and technical assistance for the reconstruction and expansion of agriculture and water infrastructure (Bichsel, 2011). The Soviet authorities, following the experience of Russian empire, put cotton production as a priority industry in Central Asian in order to support overall textile industry (Bischel, 2011). During the 1950s, Soviet planners started to prepare programs on the development of land and water potential of Aral Sea basin for agricultural purposes (McKinney, 2003). The development of cotton production started in 1960s which coincided with period when Soviet authorities were emphasizing economic development, especially the expansion of agriculture (Laldjebaev, 2010).

The Soviet authorities managed Aral Sea's water resources for the economic priorities of the whole country with the determined water allocations and usage (Weinthal, 2006). These economic priorities mostly meant the cultivation and production of cotton in Central Asia for the whole Soviet Union (Weinthal, 2006). Agriculture is the major consumer of water in the region, especially in downstream countries accounting for 85 out 90 percent of total water use for agricultural purposes (Weinthal, 2006). Subsequently, agriculture was not developed during the Soviet period in Tajikistan whereas the emphasis was put on the downstream countries (McKinney, 2003).

The rapid expansion of irrigated lands in Central Asia required a stable supply of water resources in large amounts during the irrigation season, hence, water reservoirs and dams were constructed in the upstream countries of the region (Laldjebaev, 2010). The major water reservoirs were constructed on Amudarya and Syrdarya in upstream countries, such as Toktogul in Kyrgyzstan, and Nurek and Kayrakum in Tajikistan (Laldjebaev, 2010).

Thus, the water reservoirs and dams of upstream countries have served for agricultural purposes of downstream countries, as was in the case of Kyrgyzstan, at the same time irrigated lands in Tajikistan was also connected to agricultural lands of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan through the system of hydroelectric complexes on Amudarya river (Weinthal, 2006).

The clear example of this connection between water reservoirs and irrigated lands could be seen in the work of Toktogul Reservoir in Kyrgyzstan. Toktogul Reservoir is the largest multiyear water storage facility in the Syrdarya basin (McKinney, 2003). From April to September water from Tokogul was released in order to be used for irrigation in downstream countries, in return downstream countries were providing energy resources for electricity generation in Kyrgyzstan during winter season (McKinney, 2003). This exchange of water and energy resources was mutually beneficial for the common regional development during Soviet period (Laldjebaev, 2010).

It is important also to notice how hydroelectric facilities in upstream countries were used during the Soviet period. Indeed, for instance, hydroelectricity in Tajikistan was used for aluminum industry and not for provision of electricity and heating (Weinthal, 2006). Thus, it is clear that water resources of Tajikistan were used for agriculture in downstream countries and for domestic industrial purposes. This situation has left Tajikistan with high hydroelectric potential and underdeveloped facilities for hydroelectricity use.

The water allocation and development of particular sectors of economy in Central Asian republics during the Soviet period was managed in a way that would benefit the USSR and did not take into account the needs and interests of particular states (ADB, 2006). However, from the perspective of

regional development, it was reasonable and economically viable to channel water from the places where it is available to the places where there is a shortage, similarly, it was done with energy resources. Thus, the system of exchange of water and energy was obvious and practical for Soviet planners. The idea was to connect Central Asian states amongst themselves to work together for the benefit of the Soviet Union, at the same time Central Asian states were cooperating and assisting the economies of each other.

The development and support of agriculture in Central Asia was crucial for the economy of Soviet Union and, thus, was a prioritized by Soviet officials. The project on diversion of water resources from major rivers in the Aral Sea basin was done for the irrigation purposes and development of massive agricultural complex in the region, however, this project did not consider environmental impact on the regional ecosystem (McKinney, 2003). This negligent miscalculation of Soviet authorities towards assessment of environmental impact from diversion of Syrdarya and Amudarya has resulted in the major environmental disaster in the region that is the loss of water level in the Aral Sea. So, it is necessary to emphasize that water resources in Central Asia are not only important for agriculture, hydroelectric power, but also for environmental situation in the region.

The conflict

The collapse of the Soviet Union created 5 new independent Central Asian republics which currently share 18 transboundary rivers (Weinthal, 2006). In the absence of central administrative system of water management that existed in Soviet Union, Central Asian states face the necessity to negotiate the management of transboundary rivers. The collapse of Soviet Union and the administrative system of management resulted in the conflict over control of water and the purposes for water use among Central Asian states (Weinthal, 2006).

The soviet legacy of state interconnectedness affects the current situation of water allocation in such a way that the change in the water use for agricultural or hydroelectric purposes in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will have direct impact on the ability to develop or maintain agricultural sector in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (Weinthal, 2006).

The system of water allocation that existed in Soviet Union was created to support regional economic production of cotton and did not consider hydroelectric potential of upstream countries (Weinthal, 2006). This discrepancy has resulted in the current conflict of interests between upstream and downstream states in the region. Since agriculture was not developed in the past in Tajikistan, the objective of Tajik authorities currently is to expand irrigated lands and use water resources in order to ensure food security for growing population of this country, making the past allocation of water resources contradictory to state's interest (McKinney, 2003).

Thus, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the question of water releases from Toktogul reservoir was a challenge for Central Asian states due to the importance of water from this reservoir for irrigated lands and ultimately for Aral Sea (Weinthal, 2006). Severskiy (2004) notes that the reasons for the freshwater shortage in Central Asia are increased water diversion changes in return water. Thus, he concludes that the modification in the management of water flow can change the situation in the region. In particular, after 1991 Kyrgyzstan started to release water from Toktogul in wintertime changing its working regime from irrigational to hydroelectric which subsequently had an effect on downstream countries (McKinney, 2003).

Due to the increased demand for energy the Kyrgyz government has decided to use hydroelectric potential of Toktogul reservoir and changed its operation from irrigational to energy producing which had affected the change in the downstream reservoirs – Kayrakum and Shardara (ADB, 2006). As a result, of the change of Tokotogul’s operational regime downstream countries started to experience the shortage of water in summertime and floods in wintertime (ADB, 2006).

In addition to the existing conflict on the purpose of the use of water resources, it is important to consider an economic aspect of the water conflict in the region. Central Asian states have comparatively different level of economic development and, hence, this dictates the economic interests in the water use. Moreover, after the collapse of the Soviet Union the funding for water infrastructure was stopped which led to the deterioration of the facilities and water management control (Wegerich, 2011).

Another issue related to the use of water resources in Central Asia is the dam construction projects along major transboundary rivers. One of such projects is construction of Rogun Reservoir in Tajikistan which is intended to be used for hydroelectricity generation (Allouche, 2007). However, Uzbekistan opposes this project in the fear of total control of water by Tajikistan if the dam is constructed (Wegerich, 2011). Similarly, Kazakhstan is advocating the regional and independent evaluation of the impact of dam construction on the environment of the region and the change in the water allocation.

Similar situation with the construction of Kambart hydroelectric station in Kyrgyzstan which is opposed by Uzbekistan due to its fear for the possible implications for environment of the region and availability of water resources in future (Paramonov, 2010).

Cooperation

The complexity of the situation over water resource allocation in Central Asia and conflicting interests of regional states leaves no room for unilateral decision on the issue. Therefore, the only viable solution for water management problem in Central Asia is to cooperate on a regional basis even with the difference in the state interests and purposes for water use (ADB, 2006).

After the dissolution of Soviet Union, it was clear that there is an urgent need for new agreements between newly independent Central Asian states over use and management of water resources so that any potential conflicts could be prevented. Thus, regional state leaders has signed an agreement on “Cooperation in the Management, Utilization, and Protection of Water Resources of Interstate Sources” in 1992 which stipulated water resources as “common” and “integral” for the region (Weinthal, 2006). This agreement was supposed to replace Soviet system and set up a mechanism for water resource management in the region (McKinney, 2003).

Moreover, the 1992 agreement has created the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) in Central Asia which is regulating and promoting negotiations among regional states on the allocation of water resources. In 1998 leaders of the Central Asian governments have signed an agreement “On the Use of Water Resources in and Energy the Syrdarya river” which was a further step towards cooperation in the water management in the region (ADB, 2006).

The creation of ICWC in 1992 is an important step towards attempting to solve the problem with common regional efforts. This commission has the potential to initiate and implement strategies for water allocation, however, the statute of this Commission was signed only on 18 September 2008 (ICWC, 2008). This indicates the inability of Central Asian states to agree upon the system of water resources

management in the region. According to the statute of ICWC (2008), the Commission is responsible for the elaboration and implementation of regional policies related to water resource use and limits based upon equal and shared access to water resources concerning economic, social and environmental use of water of each member state.

Due to the fact that signed agreements on barter exchange of water for energy resources among Central Asian states were not fulfilled properly and fully, beginning from early 2000s regional states began to sign annual bilateral agreements on the water and energy resources allocation (ADB, 2006). The purpose of these agreements was to foster cooperation on water use, and hence, for Central Asian states it was easier to come to an agreement bilaterally than try to come to consensus on a regional level.

The initial agreements that were achieved in 1990s between Central Asian states on the one hand, have prevented the outburst of conflict over water resources in the region, on the other hand, these negotiations did not address new political reality and needs of newly independent states (Weinthal, 2006). The inability of Central Asian states to agree upon and deal with the causes of the water allocation problem leaves the situation still unresolved and the threat of potential conflict is present in the region.

The barter exchange of energy resources for water between upstream and downstream countries could not be sustainable solution to the water problem in Central Asia due to the existing disparity between energy and water resources availability in upstream and downstream countries. Moreover, the realization of these barter agreements is yet to be achieved as it showed on practice not always agreements were implemented fully (ADB, 2006).

Scholars have recognized the necessity to divide cooperation on water allocation by separate basins and to negotiate on them separately (Weinthal, 2006). Nevertheless, it seems that the cooperation on water resources from Amudarya might be even more complicated than that on Syrdarya due to tense relationship between upstream Tajikistan and downstream Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on the one hand, and between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on the other (Weinthal, 2006). Currently, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan share equally water resources of Amudarya between each other, however, Turkmenistan has expressed its desire to divert water for the agricultural development (Weinthal, 2006).

The competition over water resources occurs not only between upstream and downstream countries but also among downstream countries. Thus, similar conflict situation happens between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan where Kazakh authorities claim that Uzbekistan diverts larger amount of water than it should under existing agreements (Allouche, 2007). Thus, the diversion of the water of each state is one of the factors in the deterioration of water allocation in Central Asia.

Therefore, the issue of water allocation could not be seen only through the lens of competition between upstream and downstream countries but rather as regional issue that should be resolved by all interested parties. Water conflict in Central Asia could be resolved only with the agreement of all states which should be acceptable for every state (Karaev, 2005).

Kazakhstan's government has suggested to establish a new framework for water allocation in the region which will not only be based on principles of international, utilize an ecosystem approach, but also take into account common water interests and use and protection of water resources each states (McKinney, 2003).

Identity

The loss of Soviet identity is a lost opportunity for water cooperation

The allocation of water resources in Soviet Union was administered in such a way that it did not only physically link Central Asian republics with each other but also psychologically (Weinthal, 2006). The exchange of water for energy resources between Central Asian republics had an effect on the understanding of the necessities of each other and the mutual benefit. Thus, Central Asian states under the Soviet system were working for the benefit of each other. At the same time Central Asian states were also cooperating towards the benefit and development of the Soviet economy. Therefore, here, we see an example of double identity and the attitude of states, first, towards the recognition of regional development and needs of neighboring Central Asian states, and, second, the common work of regional states for the greater good that is the prosperity of Soviet Union as respective member-states. The "Soviet" identity was creating for Central Asian states and other Soviet republics a sense of shared common identity that was connecting different countries together (Suny, 1999).

The feeling of work for the benefit of the local communities and the country (USSR), in general, could be seen in an example how people describe their attitude towards Soviet policies. In interviews with local Uzbek elderly people about the collectivization process Russell Zanca (2005) has found out that despite the hardships of the collectivization process people were supportive of the Soviet policies. One of the interviewers has said that no matter how difficult the work on construction of a canal in her village was, it was necessary to do so for the benefit that this canal brought to people (Zanca, 2005). Thus, even on a local basis we see that people have recognized the importance of their common work for the future benefits, the same to be said about the exchange of water for energy resources between Central Asian states. This exchange system was allowing states to recognize the mutual interdependence and necessity to cooperate for the benefit of each other.

The creation of newly independent Central Asian states has marked the change in the state of affairs while Central Asian states were able to emphasize their titular nations, culture and language, at the same time the attitude towards other former Soviet republics has changed as well (Suny, 1999). The five new Central Asian states were not anymore close nations living together under common roof of Soviet identity, but instead became strategic political neighbors. This shift may have resulted in prevention of advancement of regional initiatives.

Central Asian states and donors have failed to use the Soviet legacy of state interdependence in the region for the sustainable cooperation and development of water resources (Weinthal, 2006). It was clear that after gaining independence Central Asian states still were associating and referring to the Soviet practices and, thus, the governments were able to sign agreements on establishing regional cooperation on water resource management in early 1990s. However, due to the fact that the cooperation could not anymore be based on the Soviet identity and which at the same time was not replaced by equivalent regional identity, the negotiations on the use of water resources could not be implemented efficiently.

The creation of new state-identities

The Central Asian states after the collapse of the Soviet Union were suddenly left with a difficult task of building a nation-state and constructing a national identity. Scholars have argued that national identity is not given and is constructed, modified and adopted by state leaders (Suny, 1999). National identity is a set of ideas about culture, tradition and history of people within the borders of a state. The process of building nationhood is still going on in the former Soviet republics. The creation of state

borders, use of history and identity traces and creation of new state institutions all these things were done by newly independent states of Central Asia as well.

Imagined communities

The search for states identities for newly independent states of Central Asia could be described as a search for stability inside the country. State identities could bring the notion of stability and sense of the place and group belongingness (Suny, 1999). National identities are constructed with the help of tradition, culture, history and even religion that would unite people together into a nation. Thus, it is obvious that former Soviet republics revived pre-Soviet symbols and practices, for example, the imperial flag and the double-headed eagle were used again as a state symbols in Russia (Suny, 1999). The use of historical heritage is crucial for creation of a solid national identity and unification of people under a common notion of a nation.

This is a clear example where due to the fact that Central Asian states are going through the process of nation-building the governments tend to focus on internal affairs and overlook the regional implications of certain state policies. Suny (1999) argues that state's identity is the search for state security. The Central Asian leaders need to ensure social, food and water security in order to prevent instability in the society. The fear of insecurity in terms of food, water and energy availability to people pushes Central Asian leaders to reconsider their policies towards use of water resources.

The need for the new government to ensure its authority over population of the country defines current state policies. Water management policies should be understood in the context of the state internal affairs and its impact on regional cooperation. Economic disparity among Central Asian states and their ability to secure economic development have resulted in the tensions between regional states over the claims for economic development. In the situation where energy is traded for water the economically less developed Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are willing to expand and utilize their hydroelectric potential in order to be independent from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Moreover, the economic policies also have an impact on the solution to the water resource allocation. The desire to secure agricultural sector in Central Asian states has resulted in the unwillingness to divert to less-water consuming crops (Weinthal, 2006). Furthermore, Central Asian states are not willing to halt cotton production not only for economic reasons, but also as a tool for political and social control which is the continuation of the Soviet policies (Bichsel, 2011). The desire to strengthen national identities prevent Central Asian states to address issues from a regional perspective, thus, for instance, Uzbek identity prevails over Central Asian identity (Swanstrom, 2004).

Due to the state-centric identity the authorities of Central Asian states could not embrace regional implications of water mismanagement. The agreements were broken by all sides because the agreements were not taking into account the cultural, historical and social implication of water allocation. The states have addressed the technical side of the issue of water resource allocation, however, it is important to take into account how to adopt the system of water management into the new political realms.

In the discussion of the resolution of water conflict in Central Asia it is necessary to emphasize regional historical heritage where all people living in Central Asia were benefiting from the available water resources and, thus, the notion of the common and equal right to water among all Central Asian republics should be emphasized. The claim of Kyrgyzstan, for instance, that water is a state property, without recognizing the right of other people living in the region for it, could not lead to sustainable

solution to water allocation problem in the region. The change in the attitude towards water in Central Asian can ultimately lead to the change of rhetoric and conclusion of acceptable agreement on water allocation (Karaev, 2005).

The creation of inclusive national identities in Central Asia is a challenge for state leaders, however, in doing so, it is important not only to go back to the pre-Soviet practices and history, but also incorporating Soviet legacy within framework of an independent state. The Soviet period is, undoubtedly, a significant period in the history of all Central Asian states and, most importantly, it is still remembered by the majority of population in these countries. Thus, for the state leaders of Central Asia the creation of national identity would be the revival of the pre-Soviet history and culture and reintegration of Soviet discourse into the new political realm. Whereas the revival of ancient history and traditions requires a great amount of scientific work of historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, and linguists and others, the reintegration of Soviet past could be easily applied due to the generational memory of people. Moreover, in almost all Central Asian states the state leaders are coming from the old Soviet political apparatus and, thus, they are aware of the implementation of Soviet policies from within the system (Suny, 1999).

The construction of “imagined communities” may open a space for conflict if the national identity does not include the broader narratives of cultural, traditional and historical heritage of all people living in the particular state. The exclusion of certain narratives may leave particular ethnic group out of the common national picture and, thus, the alienation of the group would result in the divisions in the society. The example of situations in the former Soviet republics in the early stage of independence exposes how the inclusive national identity could prevent occurrence of conflict and stabilize the society, where the exclusivist dominant national identity in ethnically mixed Georgia has led to violence in the country, on the contrary, inclusive national identity in also ethnically mixed Kazakhstan has brought interethnic peace (Suny, 1999).

Possible identity scenarios

The resolution of water conflict in Central Asia could not be based only on economic and technical aspects, social dimension is equally important and should not be omitted as it was argued here. The cooperation on water allocation should be achieved through the engagement of local communities and any changes in the water allocation system should take into consideration implications to particular communities in the region. Thus, the utilization of shared and common regional identity would facilitate the negotiation process.

The renouncement of Soviet identity has led to the inability to fully use existing water management system and to improve it further on a regional basis. The desire to move away from Soviet past drags away the possibility of celebrating the regional common solution to water management problem. The focus of the states on the internal affairs and the absence of regional perspective do not allow governments to utilize regional identities and links between the states for the benefit of the particular country. Thus, the clear example would be for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to use regional links with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in allocation of energy resources in order to secure energy resources availability and not to change the system of water resource management.

The combination of several factors in identity formation in Central Asia has a direct impact on water policies in the region. First, the desire to establish and strengthen national state identity leads to the state projects that are not particularly economically viable, such as not sticking to water consuming cotton production in Uzbekistan and grand dam construction projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In

the case of Uzbekistan, agriculture is the tool of the exercise of political control and is attached to national identity (argument that Uzbeks were historically settled). In the case of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the construction of dams on transboundary rivers would result in the further disruption of water allocation and, thus, towards the change in the ecosystem with additional environmental impact.

The authors do not claim that states should not secure agriculture or energy sectors of the economy, on the contrary these sectors are important for the development of the countries. However, it is suggested to look at the issue from the regional perspective. Thus, for example, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan could assist the development of energy sector in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to improve the supply of energy resources to these countries. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan by recognizing the environmental impact of the dam construction could reconsider the projects or allow impartial examination to be conducted.

The use of Soviet legacy would lead to the more expanded version of national identity and lead to the enrichment of state identity rather than to contradiction with it. The incorporation of the Soviet legacy and in particular the unity of different states that the Soviet period was providing will assist the formation of regional identity in Central Asia. There is no need to invent the regional identity, but to use instead the Soviet practices and to utilize this experience in the new political realm. The understanding of the regional implications of particular state policies related to water allocation in the region is necessary to resolve the water conflict in Central Asia. A good example of the movement toward regional perspective in the state policies could be seen in the agreement of Kyrgyzstan to have independent expertise on the viability of construction of Kaybart hydroelectric station (Paramonov, 2010).

The expanded and inclusive national identity, which would incorporate regional dimension, in Central Asian states would allow state leaders to be able to use regional links for finding the solutions to the problem inside a particular state. In the cases where the whole region is affected, as for instance, it is in the situation with Aral Sea, there is no way but to cooperate and combine state efforts for the benefit and sustainable development of the region.

Conclusion

The understanding of identity issues can assist states to work together and find sustainable solutions to a common problem. Imagine you need to provide water to a city you build a canal and make a way for water to flow to the city. Similarly, where identities are utilized and channeled properly societies can build sustainable policies that would benefit the region.

The creation of regional identity will assist regional states to cooperate with each other on water issues, in particular, and empower the governments to further collaborate on a diverse specter of issues, considering the existence of land and border disputes, increasing ethnic tensions, the threat from criminal and extremists' activities in the region. Identities, therefore, could lay the foundation for the construction of sustainable cooperative relationships between the Central Asian states, and even local communities, which, subsequently, will lead to improvement of the well-being of particular states and the region in general.

Therefore, combined efforts to assist the needs of energy and agriculture sectors in Central Asian states, the promotion of regional needs and common solutions, as well as work for the benefit of the region could improve the situation over water resource allocation in Central Asia and prevent the eruption of water conflict.

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