

**Central Asian Integrations obstacles:**

Authoritarian regimes dealing with big powers and internal tensions

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## **Abstract**

After the disintegration of Soviet Union, one could expect that five Central Asian actors, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan would integrate. However, these newly independent states decided to follow different ways. Confidently, Central Asian actors shared common history, more importantly, they operated under single system and integration process would be easily achieved because Soviet Union seemed to be base for this. But nation states possessed different features which did not allow integration to happen. Precisely, some of them such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan had stronger “say” because of its natural resources, while, countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were weak in all possible spheres. One may assume that these individual characteristics could not provide pure “win-win” situation which in the case of any integration process plays a key role. Furthermore, authoritarian regime differences were another prominent issue that impeded integration. Clearly, new actors had not similarities in their domestic regimes that are believed to be one of the fundamental elements for integration. For example, Kyrgyzstan became close to Western style of governance such as democratization, while, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan decide to be more closed ones. Turkmenistan with its natural resources transformed into isolated state and became neutral. Finally Tajikistan was suffering from civil wars which impeded not only integration but deteriorated the whole situation.

Thus, this paper aims to explore obstacles that impeded possible integration of Central Asian actors by looking at historical data and analyzing individual states’ features.

## **Introduction:**

Nowadays the integration processes are going on almost on every continent and very fast in 21th century, one of the region which is still is not integrated is Central Asian states and there are reasonable obstacles for that. This dissertation will mainly illustrate the points, questions and problems of cooperation of five Central Asian states Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

It is now discussed what countries Central Asian region includes, mostly Central Asian states considered as five states Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, but some refer Afghanistan to Central Asian region. This work going to discuss the integration of five states Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. But nevertheless the role of Afghanistan will be mentioned.

It is not simple to say that there are only one or several problems in a region to solve. Realistically there are bunch of the problems from the very simple up to political and ideological problems. The obstacles that are going to be covered in this paper will illustrate the authoritarian regimes and its attitude to solve the problems.

Nevertheless, one of the many prominent problems of Central Asian states as countries and region is a lack of cooperation and creditability between the leaders of country because of Authoritarian regimes. The central Asian states cooperate with foreign countries rather than with each other. When each country comes to the cooperation it has already own view to solving the problem they share together and which might be conflicting with others. Three countries Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan involved in regional organizations such as Shanghai Cooperation and CSO, others two countries Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have choose the isolation policy. Such a situation creates bad platform for the mutual development of the region and brings conflicts of interest of the Central Asian states and big powers such as China, USA

and Russia. Moreover there is no regional integration organization of Central Asia itself, there are only external ones such as Shanghai Cooperation, CSO and newly emerging Eurasian integration.

The reason of such behavior of authoritarian leaders is in increasing its and family well-being. Moreover Central Asia states is a between of interests of big powers, it is a triangle of Russia, China and USA. Besides of that each country has own problems inside the country and at the same time problem might be interrelated with other countries, for example water problem is a problem of whole Central Asian region. Before the solving such problems in a first place they (leaders) put own interest, but not the country's interest. Because of such an attitude in solving regional problems there is now integration up to now, after the fall of USSR.

There are many problems and disputes on water and territory problems in Central Asia. Even today after 20 years of collapse of Soviet Union problem of territory is not solved, the disputes on small territory creates big problem on borders between the ordinary people and armed forces of countries. There are already victims of armed conflict on the borders of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan from two sides. Fergana valley might be brought as example of instability and sources of further issues. Fergana valley is a most density region of Central Asia it is crossed through most part of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. For instance:

*Revolts and ethnic violence in Central Asia took place in Fergana valley:<sup>1</sup>*

- *The ethnic conflict between Uzbek and Kyrgyz took place in Southern part of Kyrgyzstan in 1990s, in 2010*
- *In 1992 the Uzbek city of Namangan witnessed an outbreak of religious -based violence that presaged the founding of the radical Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.*

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<sup>1</sup> Yakovleva Polina, Security challenges in Central Asia, Almaty, 2014

- *In 1999 a Tajik colonel, Mahmud Khudoiberdiev, took control of large areas of the Tajik sector of the valley in an attempt to oust President Emomali Rakhmonov*
- *In 2005, Uzbek forces opened fire on Uzbek protestors in Andijon, killing from several hundred to 1,000 people according to differing estimates (Frederick Starr 2010)*

Moreover there are regional hazard in the region each country of the central Asia Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan has following natural hazards:

- Geophysical: Earthquake,
- Hydrological: Floods
- Climatological: Extreme temperatures, Drought

### **Research Questions**

The integration of five newly emerged states after the fall of Soviet Union was attempted several times, but it has not happened up to now. Moreover this idea in a framework of today's political situation of Central Asia has become something far from reality. So why has the integration not happened up to now? After the study on the Central Asia and making research on that it might be concluded that authoritarian regimes dealing with big powers and internal tensions like water impede to the integration up to now.

Historically, Central Asian region has common heritage which are culture, language, religion and geographical location. Common heritage of the region as minimum creates decent platform for mutual cooperation, but it does not still solve the problems of credibility between the states and the problems of authoritarian political regimes. The problem is that the regimes are authoritarian and mostly does not represent the interest of its people, because of corruption, unfair elections and authoritarianism they rather represent the interest of the elites of the state.

So, particularly there is problem of the regimes that prevent the cooperation and integration of the region. This circumstance impacts on whole region and each state particularly.

## **Chapter 1: Political Regimes as Obstacles**

### **1.1. Historical background**

“One of the most important events of the twentieth century was clearly the disintegration of the USSR which resulted in emerging five independent states; Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The disintegration of the Union opened a new stage of multidimensional interactions both for the successor states and for the other countries involved in this historical evolution. Students of this process of transition, in which all the new independent states are living, prefer to categorize these countries in groups relating to their geopolitical position and to their social-economic and ethnic structures. It could be argued that trends towards the integrationist policies in the long-term have taken shape and developed within the framework of these groups.”<sup>2</sup> “During the Soviet times, all the Soviet republics were interdependent, centrally governed units as a part of the socialist system, and this background produced different challenges to independent states. These newly independent states are trying to adapt their foreign trade to the conditions of global economy and to figure out their domestic problems with foreign support. On the other hand, the political dimension of this transition shows some similarities at regional level. It is reasonable to expect the emergence of similar problems in the countries whose cultural and ethnic structures are similar to each other. The solution of these problems at a regional level is very important both for international peace and for the interests of the great powers because the micro-states are widely considered to be destabilizing factor in the contemporary world.” Furthermore, Central Asian countries faced economic crisis due to sudden disintegration and unprepared transition because before Moscow used to provide policies and changes. As a result, newly independent states applied various approaches to stabilize their internal affairs and each of them turned out to be different from one

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<sup>2</sup> Erhan Buyukakinci, “Patterns of Integration in Central Asia,” *Galatasaray University* : 1.



another. That's why; there was little cooperation between countries despite of common history, culture, and similar language.

Geographically, "Central Asia is a vast landlocked region of steppe, desert, and various mountain ranges in the center of the Eurasian. It stretches from the winter freezing Siberia in the north to the summer humid of Pakistan and India in the south, and is bordered on the geographical diversity of China inland in the east and to the Caspian Sea in the west."<sup>3</sup>

Geographical situation demonstrates that Central Asian countries find it difficult to integrate with global economy. On the other hand, Central Asian region is attractive for outside actors with its ability to offer natural resources. "Central Asia has an abundant supply of natural resources that include petroleum, natural gas, and rare metals. Especially, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are the three main oil and gas exporters in the region. Farming, the regional primary industry, is in line with the climactic and natural conditions of the region. Cotton is one of the main products for the Central Asian countries. The countries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are the world top producers of cotton. Livestock and grain industries are important for a number of the Central Asian countries. Most of these countries are in transition from the centrally planned agricultural production to the market-oriented manufacturing industries."<sup>4</sup> So, despite of being land-locked region, it is rich in natural resources. Subsequently, interest from international community has been intensified. Countries' features were perceived as hooks to attract foreign investment and improve national economy of respected countries. And the key point is a distribution of all those investments, mostly the leaders of Central Asian countries are using those investments for own interest.

## **1.2 Interaction with Great Powers**

The first and foremost big power has become Russia. Namely, Russia resumed its relations with Central Asia after temporarily being busy with its own domestic problems. China

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<sup>3</sup> Simon W. Tai, Jung Wan Lee, "Strategies of Regional Economic Integration and WTO," *Eurasian Journal of Business and Economics*, (2009):1.

<sup>4</sup> Simon W. Tai, Jung Wan Lee, "Strategies of Regional Economic Integration and WTO," *Eurasian Journal of Business and Economics*, (2009):1.

bilaterally built relations with newly independent states because it needs natural resources. Consequently, Central Asian states ties with Russia became even closer after the creation of CIS. The Central Asian states, except Turkmenistan, also accepted a liberal customs system with the other members of the CIS. In March 1992, these states signed an agreement on the principles of free trade: each state must ensure free movement of goods through their borders and implement a common customs policy with non-member states. In January 1993, all the CIS member states signed a document aiming to create an inter-state bank that would facilitate financial transactions in the Russian rouble. On its side, Russia's economic policies play a dominant role in the field of foreign trade within the CIS and influence directly the internal conditions of each member state and it ends up with Russian political influence.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, China pursued policies which made Kazakhstan one of the major partners in importing oil. Nowadays, the largest oil companies operating in Kazakhstan are Chinese. What's more, China intensively invests in Central Asia in terms of building roads and improving manufacture. As far as integration is concerned, "In January 1994, the Kazakh, Uzbek and Kirghiz presidents signed an agreement on the creation of the Central Asian Union in order to accelerate regional co-operation. The provisions cover free movements of goods, capital and labor and collaboration between the budget, monetary and taxation policies. These countries thus accepted the principle of mutual recognition of the national currencies and of their mutual convertibility. This agreement has a positive effect for the development of regional relations: Kazakhstan's trade with its two Turkic neighbors has shown a rise of 70 per cent since 1994. From its start, the Union was intended as a model for closer economic integration within the CIS. During the Almaty Summit in February 1995, the leaders of the CIS' member states approved the principles of free trade between their countries. Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan and Tajikistan separately joined the customs union established between Russia and Belarus in 1995."<sup>6</sup> But it was impossible to eliminate Russia from cooperation. Finally, a representative of western world, U.S. emerged as the third player after the 9/11

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<sup>5</sup> Erhan Buyukakinci, "Patterns of Integration in Central Asia," *Galatasaray University* : 3.

<sup>6</sup> Erhan Buyukakinci, "Patterns of Integration in Central Asia," *Galatasaray University* : 3.

tragedy. Needless to say, U.S. active role in Central Asia brought internal changes to sovereign states. Definitely, U.S. started imposing its own policies such as democratization, human rights, rule of law which irritated two other big powers-China and Russia. It can be believed that intense participation of these foreign powers worsened the process of integration because Central Asian actors were involved with the new environment created by big powers. Subsequently, each Central Asian actor cooperated with Russia, China, and U.S. differently and this process negatively influenced internal integration.

### **1.3 Internal Political Regimes**

Another striking reason why Central Asian states cannot integrate with each other is their differences. Most of them use authoritarianism as their political regimes. So, firstly, it is crucial to define what authoritarianism stands for. "An authoritarian government is the form of government based on the principle of requiring obedience to the authority of one person or a small group of people. Other people must be obedient to the will of the government, and they have little or no influence over the decisions made by the government. Authoritarian government involves a "top-down" command structure, often with elements of a military or quasi-military dictatorship."<sup>7</sup> More importantly, level of authoritarian regimes differs from one state to another which complicates the integration process because each actor pursues its own interests. Moreover, authoritarian type of government is generally believed to be corrupted and prevailed by informal politics which makes it difficult to achieve a consensus at any issue. Hence, Central Asian integration is much more difficult than it appeared at first glance.

Ideally, "political integration means that co-operating countries become completely integrated into a single market; there appears a need for common policies in social policy (education, health care, unemployment benefits and pensions) and common political institutions. This is political integration and its culmination occurs when the co-operating countries are so

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<sup>7</sup> "A.p. Government:unit 1." A.P. Government:Unit 1 Flashcards. Accessed April 14, 2015. <http://www.cram.com/flashcards/ap-governmentunit-1-871551>.

integrated that they share the same foreign policies and merge their armies. In fact, they form a new country.”<sup>8</sup> However, Central Asian states’ political regimes do not allow to progress. “Central Asia is difficult case when it comes to integration. In addition, integration assumes that there should be effective economic integration which means the process by which different countries agree to remove trade barriers between them. Trade barriers can be tariffs (taxes imposed on imports to a country), quotas (a limit to the amount of a product that can be imported) and border restrictions.<sup>9</sup> However, once more, political regimes does not provide with “win-win” outcome. Thus, without these two important elements, integration seems to be impossible.

#### **1.4 National Identity**

Generally speaking, integration is not only about politico-economic one but also about sharing common identity. However, the cultural history of Central Asian states is extremely complex and many have made the mistake of simplifying its citizens as Turks with nomadic and Mongoloid features, or Tajiks with Indo-European features; characteristics that are often times rooted within traveler’s descriptions. In reality, one might note that Kyrgyz and Kazakhs have ties to nomadic, tribal societies and Islam, while at the same time having clearly Mongoloid features, but such criteria become inoperative as soon as one enters Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan or even in Turkmenistan. An Uzbek is someone who speaks Uzbek and calls himself Uzbek, and not necessarily somebody who has Turkic features.”<sup>10</sup>

The idea reveals that newly independent states busy with building national identity and ideology whereas integration means opposite process. Not to mention about differences, there are territorial disputes, environmental disputes, and border disputes which escalates tensions between national governments. For example, Fergana is a problematic place which is still unsolved. Hence, the concept of integration seems to be utopian.

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<sup>8</sup> John McCormick. *The European Union: Politics and Policies*. Westview Press: Boulder Colorado, 1999.

<sup>9</sup> John McCormick. *The European Union: Politics and Policies*. Westview Press: Boulder Colorado, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Scott Haase, “A Study of History, Society, Culture and its Affects Current Political and Economic Ideologies of Today’s Leaders,” *Hawaii pacific University*, (2008): 20.

Lastly, “the emergence of new states in Central Asia where the great powers occasionally met each other caused a new process for the geo-strategic and political-economic interests of each related state following the disappearance of the USSR. In this context, one observes various factors for the foreign policy-making of these new states. First, the geographical position of Central Asia facilitated the penetration of certain powers in regional politics. Second, the geographical factor of adjacency also includes the confluence of cultural elements with the other regions. In particular, Islam seems to play a geo-cultural role in this regional reality. Third, the Russian presence in these regions as a dominant power has indisputably influenced the foreign policy of these states.”<sup>11</sup>

Based on this, Greater Central Asia idea is unlikely to happen because of different interests, unsolved internal issues, different positions in international arena and constant interaction with influential with great power. Nevertheless, Central Asian states share common past and international community expected that they will merge with each other, new states moved away from integration rather than going to it.

## **Chapter 2: Consequences of Soviet Union vs. Integration**

### **2.1 Short History**

After the demise of USSR, the states of Central Asia were granted their independence. Unlike other nations that received independence with open arms, Central Asia was reluctant to embrace their newfound freedom. Unprepared, they were forced to build nation states out of the ashes that Moscow had left with only their past to serve as a compass to follow.<sup>12</sup> The five countries have each chosen a different path towards development and towards transition, particularly in their political regimes.<sup>13</sup> Subsequently, the five former Soviet republics have

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<sup>11</sup> Erhan Buyukakinci, “Patterns of Integration in Central Asia,” *Galatasaray University* : 3.

<sup>12</sup> Scott Haase, “Central Asia: A study of history, society, culture and its affects on the current political and economic ideologies of today’s leaders.” *Hawaii Pacific University* (2008): 5

<sup>13</sup> Richard Promfret, “Central Asia since 1991: The Experience of the New Independent States.” *OECD Development Centre* (July 2003): 5

become separate states, developing at different rates and in different directions, and with different political and economic regimes.<sup>14</sup> These individual characteristics defined political wills of each Central Asian actor. As was told earlier, the dissolution of the USSR was unexpected in Central Asia and the new independent states were unprepared. Aside from this difficult process of building a nation state, the new governments faced several political and economic challenges.<sup>15</sup> The main problem was that there was no Moscow who used to provide with directions, now, Central Asian states had to survive on their own. Realistically, five Central Asian states had different levels of potential. Some of them realized that they are rich in natural resources; examples can be Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. On the contrary, countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were noticeably in worse situation. Therefore, integration was not the most attractive option because simply each of them focused on its own internal affairs. On the other hand, integration topic was becoming more and more famous because globalization demands separate actors to cooperate in order to be able to fight potential threats. But surprisingly, Central Asian states were reluctant to cooperate with each other. The point is that common history under USSR seems to discourage Central Asian states to integrate. One may claim that political regimes lead sovereign states to survive individually rather than collectively.

## **2.2 Big Powers and Their Own Views**

Since Central Asia found itself as geopolitically important region, five national states aim to get benefit out of it location. These benefits included economic assistance which was crucial particularly for Kyrgyzstan, building networks with big market was attractive for Kazakhstan in order to benefit from its natural resources. Thus, outsiders could not accept Central Asia as one region because substance was completely different. Each of them had unique interests, demands and conditions. Unquestionably, this fact became another important obstacle for potential integration. Particularly, interest in Central Asia from outside the region has been on the rise in

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Promfret, "Central Asia since 1991: The Experience of the New Independent States." *OECD Development Centre* (July 2003):7

<sup>15</sup> Richard Promfret, "Central Asia since 1991: The Experience of the New Independent States." *OECD Development Centre* (July 2003):8

recent years: Central Asia's energy resources are of great importance to its neighbors in Europe and Asia. In addition, China wants a peaceful backyard, while Russia considers Central Asia part of its historical economic and regional interests and draws heavily on Central Asia migrants. Turkey is attracted by the common Turkic heritage of the region. Iran shares language and cultural ties with the Tajik people. The Central Asia's Islamic tradition connects it with the Middle East and other Islamic countries. And now NATO countries rely on Central Asia for transit of their military supplies to Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> So, more attention was put on Central Asian actors, the more independence they wanted. Those five actors not only benefit from foreign attention but also want to behave individually rather than collectively. For instance, after the dissolution of USSR, economic opportunities of Central Asian states have changed dramatically. During Soviet times, Central Asian economies were mostly oriented towards Moscow. Now they can increasingly look towards China, South Asia, Europe and the Middle East to gain access to markets, while maintaining strong links with Russia.<sup>17</sup> Of course, each state attracts foreign actors differently which prevents Central Asian actor to cooperate. The reality is that all of them want to benefit as much as possible from access to their big neighbors such as Russia and China.. However, integration needs participating states to have at least common foreign policies towards international market.

As was claimed earlier, regional integration among five Central Asian actors was always interesting topic to discuss, although actual progress towards integration did not take place.<sup>18</sup> There are certain unifying aspects like common history, Russian language, and Turkic similarities but still integration is greatly impeded.

Some scholars believe that integration is necessary in order to fight existing challenges such as regional security and ensure long-term development and growth in the Central Asian

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<sup>16</sup> Johannes Linn, "Central Asian Regional Integration and Cooperation: Reality or Mirage?" *Eurasian Integration Year Book* (2012): 96

<sup>17</sup> Johannes Linn, "Central Asian Regional Integration and Cooperation: Reality or Mirage?" *Eurasian Integration Year Book* (2012): 97

<sup>18</sup> Farrukh Irnazarov and Zafar Salmanov, "Regional Integration in Central Asia: Measuring the Perceptions of Economic Actors in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan." *Norwegian Institution of International Affairs* (2012): 2

states. However, none of Central Asian actors are ambitious and put valuable efforts to build a path towards integration. Another issue, which is often overlooked, is that integration in the region is barely possible without the united efforts of the two regional heavyweights – Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.<sup>19</sup> Capacities of each actor in Central Asia differs from one to another, so most influential ones such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are fundamental players who can influence integration process. On the other hand, weaker actors like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are willing to integrate because they realize possible benefits but again stronger actors still remain reluctant.<sup>20</sup>

### **2.3 Potential for Integration**

As was told before, all Central Asian actors are different from each other, so each of them has its own interests. These interests vary from political regimes that these states have. Thus, there is an important point that whether Central Asian actors are able to integrate internally or they need bigger power to intervene.<sup>21</sup> But more importantly, Central Asian actors may benefit from integration both politically and economically. All these benefits are fully applicable to a potentially very profitable Regionally Integration Agreements (RIA) between the Central Asian states which have a number of very important advantages for their successful integration. Among the region's key assets are a geographical location that provides relations between Europe and the growing markets of Asia, significant oil and gas reserves and well-educated population. But most importantly, Central Asian states are remarkably complementary to each other geographically, historically, politically, and economically. First, a fundamental rule of regional integration is the regional nature of trading blocks. The geographical proximity of member countries within each block lends itself to the creation of a RIA. In fact, RIAs form traditionally between “natural” trading partners – geographically contiguous countries with well-established trading patterns. Second, the Central Asian states share not only in geographic proximity and

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<sup>19</sup> Farrukh Irnazarov and Zafar Salmanov, “Regional Integration in Central Asia: Measuring the Perceptions of Economic Actors in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.” *Norwegian Institution of International Affairs* (2012): 3

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*



extensive common borders, but also in cultural and linguistic sympathies and a common heritage. Third, the Central Asian states were for many times throughout their history politically united.<sup>22</sup> Fourth, they have shared histories of interaction and economic connections, making successful integration among them smoother. Finally, the last but not least advantage is popular support of the integration processes in Central Asia. Undeniably, a substantial majority of the population feels very positively towards integration because it is perceived to include numerous social and economic benefits.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev outlined advantages of integration and demonstrated its ambition towards regional integration. “Until the end of 15th century, Central Asia was a major player in the global economy. Our region bridged the East and the West. The population of the region was not divided into countries and nations. The decline of the Silk Road turned Central Asia into backwaters of progress. For the first time in over five centuries, our independence is making it possible to restore the economic importance of our region. We are developing our transit infrastructure and emerging as a global major supplier of commodities, including oil, gas, iron and agricultural products. The network of new oil and gas pipelines and modern highways and railways can already be seen along the ancient Silk Road ... We have a choice between remaining the supplier of raw materials to the global markets and wait patiently for the emergence of the next imperial master or to pursue genuine economic integration of the Central Asian region ... In the region, we share economic interest, cultural heritage, language, religion, and environmental challenges, and face common external threats. The founding fathers of the European Union could only wish they had so much in common. We should direct our efforts towards a closer economic integration, a common market and a single currency.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Zhenis Kembaev, “Legal Aspects of Regional Integration in Central Asia,”: 969

<sup>23</sup> Zhenis Kembaev, “Legal Aspects of Regional Integration in Central Asia,”: 969

<sup>24</sup> Zhenis Kembaev, “Legal Aspects of Regional Integration in Central Asia,”: 969

Overall, integration could draw a line for further development of Central Asia as a whole, they might benefit significantly not only from integrated market but also integration would increase both internal and external security in the region.<sup>25</sup>

## **2.4 Integration Signs**

Hence, gradual steps towards integration were done and it can be described as follows. As the starting point of potential integration can be considered the conclusion of Minsk Agreement, signed by the presidents of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine at Belarus on December 8, 1991, which formally established the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The Minsk Agreement said that “the USSR has ceased to exist as a subject of international law and a geopolitical reality” and recognized the sovereignty, equality, and territorial integrity of each republic. The three original signatories were joined by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in Alma-Ata on December 21, 1991, when those states acceded to the Minsk Agreement.<sup>26</sup> Later on, all these states unanimously adopted the Alma-Ata Declaration, confirming the devotion of the former union republics to cooperation in external and internal policies, and guaranteeing the implementation of the former Soviet Union’s international commitments.<sup>27</sup> However, there were tense relations among the CIS actors that made integration process difficult. In 1994, the member states of the CIS signed an agreement on the establishment of an FTA to implement the provisions of the Treaty on the Establishment of the Economic Union. Although this agreement was signed by all parties, it was not unanimously ratified by the national parliaments of each respective member state. The main reason for this was a fundamental disagreement over the goals and purpose of the CIS. Russia, viewed the CIS as a vehicle for closer economic and political integration, while another party, led by Ukraine, visualized the CIS as a transitional organization that served only to prepare the individual republics for complete independence. While the first camp strived to create a customs

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>26</sup> Zhenis Kembaev, “Legal Aspects of Regional Integration in Central Asia,”: 971

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.,

union, the second camp worked toward the creation of a bilateral preferential trade system. By 1994-1995, it was clear that further integration in the framework of CIS was possible only at different levels and in different camps.<sup>28</sup> Undeniably, divergence of interests complicated the creation of regional integration. Great powers had their own plans while smaller actors perceived integration in completely different way. Central Asia became one of those parties where the regional integration processes started on 10 January 1994 with the signing of a treaty for the establishment of an integrated economic space between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Shortly after this, on 16 January the contracting parties decided to admit Kyrgyzstan upon its application as a full-fledged partner to their emerging organization. Thus, on 30 April 1994 in Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyzstan), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan concluded the Treaty on the Establishment of Single Economic Space. This treaty generally repeated the provisions of the treaty between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and provided that the contracting parties entrust the following objectives to the organization.<sup>29</sup> Firstly, to coordinate joint actions in the matters of the economic reforms, the development of market economy, and the formation of effective mutually advantageous economic relations in order to more effectively use rich natural and mineral resources of the contracting parties; secondly, to create and develop a common economic space based on the freedom of movement of goods, services, capital and labor in the light of the necessity to implement the provisions of the CIS Treaty on the Establishment of the Economic Union.<sup>30</sup> In particular, the 1994 Treaty clearly stated that the contracting parties would not allow any discrimination on the basis of nationality with respect to labor conditions in their respective territories and would provide a visa-free regime of the movement of their citizens within the common economic space. These actions demonstrate that there some attempts to promote integration but considerable success was not achieved. This might be due to authoritarian

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<sup>28</sup> Zhenis Kembaev, "Legal Aspects of Regional Integration in Central Asia,": 971

<sup>29</sup> Zhenis Kembaev, "Legal Aspects of Regional Integration in Central Asia,": 972

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.,

regimes and big powers' influences who do not want Central Asia to become united because it is much easier to impact them individually rather than talk to it as one region.

### **Chapter 3: Great Powers as Obstacles for Integration**

#### **3.1 Domestic Challenges**

Confidently, there were obstacles that did not allow regional integration to happen smoothly. One of those reasons may be the wrong perception or interpretation of the concept of regionalism and integration by participating actors. So, investigating very concept of both regionalism and integration and then applying them into Central Asian case may be helpful in determining roots of obstacles. Regionalism as a discipline has produced an impressive literature, both in volume and quality, on how to conceptualize regional processes and tendencies in different parts of the world.<sup>31</sup> Generally, regionalism was defined as “a state-led or states-led project designed to reorganize a particular regional space along defined economic and political lines” (Gamble and Payne, 1996).<sup>32</sup> From the early 1990s, when the leaders of above mentioned countries announced their intention to create a Central Asian regional integration institution, outside of the frameworks that included Russia or China, there have been significant discussions around Central Asian regionalism.<sup>33</sup>

The point is that Central Asian states are willing to integrate not only within the region but also out of it. They aim to be recognized at international level and fit with today's global market demands. Furthermore, Central Asian countries are seeking for security which is one of the priorities of creating regional integration but in this sense they cannot isolate themselves from big powers such as Russia because security cannot be achieved separately, especially without involvement of stronger power. Here, regional integration is understood as partial

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<sup>31</sup> Ikboljon Qoraboyev, “From Central Asian Regional Integration to Eurasian Integration Space?” *The Changing Dynamics of Post-Soviet Regionalism.* *Regional Integration and Regionalization* (2010):206

<sup>32</sup> Ikboljon Qoraboyev, “From Central Asian Regional Integration to Eurasian Integration Space?” *The Changing Dynamics of Post-Soviet Regionalism.* *Regional Integration and Regionalization* (2010):206

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*,

agreement on some issues; countries' national interests outweigh the integration interests. None of them wishes to be entirely engaged in regional integration but security threats are targeted altogether not separately. Therefore, security matters appear to be the fundamental ground for creating sustainable integration. Most importantly, Afghanistan and other security threats which emerged as a result of globalization seem to promote integration in this region. Briefly, regional integration will bring advantages but abovementioned obstacles considerably impede this process.

### **3.2 Great Powers impede the Integration process**

As was said earlier, Central Asian actors are not isolated and foreign actors' interests towards them are growing. This is believed to be an impeding element because for great powers it is much easier to communicate with national authorities in a bilateral way rather than engaging with single Central Asian actors because integrated Central Asia may emerge as an actor with a solid position whose demands will be higher. Therefore, regional powers such as China and Russia create different tools to influence Central Asia. For example, regional power China has created Shanghai cooperation to attract Central Asian states; at the same time Russia creates Eurasian Custom Union to unite all former Soviet states in one economic union. USA reveals a new plan for central Asia that called "*Big Central Asia*". Furthermore Turkey and Iran are trying to integrate with a region through religion, language heritage and similar culture. Thus, foreign actors are intensively promoting own interests in the region, whereas some Central Asian states are open to cooperate with those powers due to the economic reasons.

New CA actors were regarded as the important players in international politics. As a result, joining various organizations has become a normal action. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there have been important systemic reasons why Central Asian states have been so hesitant in developing projects and processes to modify the provision of security in their region. First, the overbearing influence of Russia as a regional hegemon in Central Asia and its interest

in promoting supranational structures have preserved at least some of the effects of the superpower of the Cold War period. Moreover, international organizations have gained prominence by engaging actively in the processes of interpretation, production, and promotion of norms, principles, and policies in the global political system. Thus, Central Asian actors become part of international system where different problems come up. Another reason why CA actors became active players is that Western influence has been expanded, particularly, U.S. hegemony increased and eventually reached Central Asian region. This is what neighboring great powers did not favor. So, China and Russia that treat CA states as their regional allies did not want U.S. to be influential in CA. Consequently, some steps were taken. The regional organization named Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was created whose participating actors are former Soviet Republics. It is believed that CIS is peace divorce between USSR and its member-states. Apart from this, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and Collective Security Treaty Organization were formed.

It is impossible to talk about the Central Asian states integration in any form without considering big powers around the central Asian states and those who struggle for the influence in this region. From its history the central Asian itself had no borders as today and it was always between some powers who were struggling for influence in this region. Now those powers are almost the same; those are Russia, USA and China. Dr. Elizabeth Wishnick *“Russia, China, and the United States in Central Asia: Prospects for Great Power Competition and Cooperation in the Shadow of the Georgian Crisis”* In this paper author illustrated interests of these three super powers in region why and what goal driving them to struggle for this region.

*“An overview of changing U.S. Central Asia policy over the past 5 years reveals an effort to respond to changing developments on the ground, most recently the Georgian crisis, but also the “color” revolutions, the Andijan events in Uzbekistan and its subsequent decision to end U.S. basing rights at Karshi Khanabad, Kazakhstan’s*

*economic rise, and leadership change in Turkmenistan. At the same time, the worsening security situation in Afghanistan and growing insecurity about energy supplies has heightened U.S. interest in security and economic cooperation in Central Asia. Russia and China have been reacting to these same pressures as the United States. In response to the “color” revolutions, they achieved broad agreement on the priority of regime security and the need to limit the long-term military presence of the United States in Central Asia. These are also two key areas—defining the political path of Central Asian states and securing a strategic foothold in the region—where the United States finds itself in competition with Russia and China”<sup>34</sup>*

The Russia plays one of the big roles in Central Asia. Russia sees this region as own sphere of influence and as a back front. As a big leader in a region Russia tries to integrate the region upon own economy and politics. One of such union called Eurasian Customs Union, consisting of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Armenia. Iana Dreyer and Nicu Popescu explained in their work “The Eurasian Customs Union: The economics and the politics” about Russian politics and Eurasian Custom Union. This paper shows how this union is going to work.

*“It is also not guaranteed that the union will gain any more members. Even Kyrgyzstan and Armenia are having second thoughts as they gauge the potential consequences of joining: the loss of their political autonomy, the economic costs of more protectionism, and the impact this could have on their economic and political relations with other WTO members and/or neighbors – not least China. Further integration within the union may also be hindered by Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine, with other post-Soviet states (including union members like Kazakhstan) deeply unsettled by Moscow’s aggressive behavior.”<sup>35</sup>*

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<sup>34</sup> Wishnick Elizabeth “Russia, China, and the United States in Central Asia: Prospects for Great Power Competition and Cooperation in the Shadow of the Georgian Crisis”, 2009

<sup>35</sup> Iana Dreyer and Nicu Popescu, “The Eurasian Customs Union: The economics and the politics”, 2014

Another big Actor is China. The China sees the region as a preserving security and economic development for own market not breaking the sovereignty of other states. After the collapse of Soviet Union China began some small political diplomatic activates in a Central Asian region, but those attempts were few and small. Nowadays China cannot leave the region without its attention due to the question of security and economic development. China is also called as a “Sleeping Giant” because china has a strict policy to development within the country. The external politics towards Central Asian are still forming in the external politics of China. Bernardo Mariani in his work “China’s role and interests in Central Asia” retails the Chin’s foreign policy towards not only Central Asian Region but overall about external policy of the China:

*“To comprehend china’s engagement in central asia, it is important to first analyse the main principles that underpin its foreign policy. Chinese foreign policy is still informed, at least in the official discourse, by the 1954 Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.”<sup>36</sup>*

In a case of Kyrgyzstan, it is opened for all cooperation because it is economically poor and needs financial support from foreign actors. While, there are more or less self-sufficient countries such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. However, generally Central Asian states cannot be completely independent because big powers want Central Asia to be in their sphere of influence. For instance, China always needs natural resources and probably the easiest option to get it is Central Asia. On the other hand, Central Asian states do not refuse to cooperate because of economic and political considerations. Cooperation with outside powers is believed to be more important for Central Asian actors rather than interaction between each other. One of the problems is that foreign powers offer financial assistance, investment, and grants while Central Asian actors are pretty similar and cannot suggest assets that big powers do.

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<sup>36</sup> Bernardo Mariani, “China’s role and interests in Central Asia, 2013



There are many problems within the Central Asian states, and problems are the same, but the approaches of leaders are different, more over the leaders are the actors and problems of Central Asian states are the objectives, and the great powers such as USA, Russia and China manipulate the actors through these objectives, suggesting own projects and resolution of problems, one of such big problem within the Central Asia is a water problem, that is going to create big conflict and impede to integration to happen.

## **Chapter 4: Common Problems and Different Approaches**

### **4.1 Water problem**

There are tensions within the region like water issues which is one of the big obstacles for integration. Water issues escalate tensions and deteriorate relations among Central Asian states. Consequently, in this case, integration becomes even more unrealistic project. From different point of view, possible resolution of water issues could serve as the basis for integration because it affects each actor of the region. For example, the shrunk of Aral Sea is Central Asian environmental disaster. What is more, bilateral relation between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are getting worse because Uzbekistan is a large cotton producer which needs a huge amount of water for its irrigation but Kyrgyzstan is upstream country that uses water for producing electricity. As a result, Uzbekistan is irritated by Kyrgyzstan's project of building dams. This demonstrates that as long as internal tensions exist, integration process will not proceed.

In 1992 water management became flashpoint for five independent states which are Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. As known to all, the hydrological regimes of the two major rivers in the region, the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya, are complex and weak to climate change. Water diversions to agricultural, industrial and domestic users have reduced flows in downstream regions, resulting in severe ecological

damages.<sup>37</sup> For example, Aral Sea has shrunk in area by 50% with serious adverse environmental consequences due to water flowing in the rivers being diverted for irrigation leaving very little to reach the Aral Sea.<sup>38</sup> The original idea of soviet times was to control the hydro-infrastructure in irrigation method. In other words, the water resources of Central Asia were managed in order to maximize crop production. This is how part of the hydropower produced during irrigation water-releases in spring and summer was suitably utilized in the downstream for driving lift irrigation and vertical drainage pumps along the 20,000 miles or so of irrigation channels. In return, the upstream got energy supplies in the form of gas and coal to cover winter energy demands.<sup>39</sup> The unfavorable developments in terms of water management should call for urgent attention of the national leaders of Central Asian states and international community.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, future Central Asian water management plans must include the role of Afghanistan because 40% of its territory and 30% of its population lives within the Aral Sea basin.<sup>41</sup>

Water is already a source of potential conflict in Central Asia, with several dams, canals and reservoirs in the downstream countries like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, draining water away from the two main river systems – the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya.<sup>42</sup> The problem is that a mixture of regional, national, and interstate institutions copes with allocation decisions, which used to be centrally administered during Soviet times. Nowadays it should not be surprise that water and energy management among the various sectors and users is not efficient.<sup>43</sup> Water resources, which are increasingly under stress, have an important geographic and economic

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<sup>37</sup> "Water Matters." State of the Planet Water and Energy Conflict in Central Asia Comments. Accessed April 16, 2015. <http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2009/08/18/water-and-energy-conflict-in-central-asia/>.

<sup>38</sup> WATER ENERGY NEXUS IN CENTRAL ASIA, p.1

<sup>39</sup> "Water Matters." State of the Planet Water and Energy Conflict in Central Asia Comments. Accessed April 16, 2015. <http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2009/08/18/water-and-energy-conflict-in-central-asia/>.

<sup>40</sup> "Water Matters." State of the Planet Water and Energy Conflict in Central Asia Comments. Accessed April 16, 2015. <http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2009/08/18/water-and-energy-conflict-in-central-asia/>.

<sup>41</sup> "Post-conflict Afghanistan and the Need for Energy." Post-conflict Afghanistan and the Need for Energy. Accessed April 17, 2015. <http://www.tajikembassy.be/content/post-conflict-afghanistan-and-need-energy>.

<sup>42</sup> "Post-conflict Afghanistan and the Need for Energy." Post-conflict Afghanistan and the Need for Energy. Accessed April 17, 2015. <http://www.tajikembassy.be/content/post-conflict-afghanistan-and-need-energy>.

<sup>43</sup> "Water Matters." State of the Planet Water and Energy Conflict in Central Asia Comments. Accessed April 11, 2015. <http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2009/08/18/water-and-energy-conflict-in-central-asia/>.

aspect, with downstream countries (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan) highly dependent on upstream countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) for irrigation the agriculture<sup>44</sup> That is why, water resources system should be managed collectively and cooperatively<sup>45</sup> with the support of international community as well. In short, the objectives of water issue is to identify reasons for problems, and analyze an approach to make cooperation more reliable, sustainable, and equally beneficial to all actors.<sup>46</sup>

Upon the dissolution of the Former Soviet Union (FSU), many regional issues in FSU became international issues among the newly independent states. The leading among them is the need for resolution of the water-energy related issues in river basins, which cut across the boundaries of the new states. The issue is complicated by the energy and water self-sufficiency approach, which many of the new states tend to pursue. A multiyear water storage reservoir was constructed in the mid-1970s in Kyrgyz region on the Naryn River, a major branch of Syr Darya River, to supply with effectively irrigation of lands under cotton, fodder, wheat, rice, fruits and vegetables in Uzbekistan and South Kazakhstan.<sup>47</sup> Excessive electricity generated in summer was collected into the Central Asian Power System for use by Uzbek and south Kazakh regions. Since Kyrgyz region lacked any significant resources of fossil fuels, they were transferred from Uzbek and Kazakh regions to enable Kyrgyz region to meet its winter demand for electricity and heat.<sup>48</sup>

However, once these states obtained their independences, the above arrangement came under a conspicuous stress. The reasons were that fossil fuel prices rose quickly to world price levels and payments were often demanded in hard currency. Customers quickly switched from expensive fossil fuel fired heating to electric heating, increasing winter electricity demand.

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<sup>44</sup> Accessed April 18, 2015.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/0,,contentMDK:22743346~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:258599,00.html>.

<sup>45</sup> "Water Matters." State of the Planet Water and Energy Conflict in Central Asia Comments. Accessed April 11, 2015. <http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2009/08/18/water-and-energy-conflict-in-central-asia/>.

<sup>46</sup> WATER ENERGY NEXUS IN CENTRAL ASIA, p. iii

<sup>47</sup> WATER ENERGY NEXUS IN CENTRAL ASIA, p. iii

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p.iii

Consequently, the Kyrgyz Republic could not afford to import fossil fuels and started to increase winter discharges of water to meet its winter power demand and reduce summer releases to store water for the following winter, resulting in the farmers in Uzbekistan and south Kazakhstan facing irrigation water shortages in summer.<sup>49</sup> There was attempt to solve this issue the Central Asian states entered into an agreement in February 1992 to maintain and adhere to the Soviet era arrangements. Nonetheless, this effort was ineffective as well as the annual agreements for the release of water and exchange of electricity and fossil fuels.<sup>50</sup>

As was mentioned above, large dams and associated reservoirs were constructed in the mountainous upper reaches of the Kyrgyz and Tajik Soviet Republics to accumulate the flow of those rivers during the non-irrigation season. At the same time, irrigation systems were developed on other lands in the lower reaches, i.e. in the Uzbek, Kazakh and Turkmen Soviet Republics.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the primary goal of regulating the flow of the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya was to provide a reliable water supply for agriculture during the irrigation season (April - September). The secondary goal was the generation of electricity at the hydropower stations of the main dams upstream (the Toktogul Dam on the Naryn, the major tributary of the Syr Darya in the Kyrgyz Soviet Republic, and the Nurek Dam on the Vaksh, one of the two major tributaries of the Amu Darya, in the Tajik Soviet Republic)<sup>52</sup> Based on has been discussed above, one may safely arrive at the conclusion that there was centralized system of managing water resources but collapse of Soviet Union brought disputes and problems among newly independent countries.

There were efforts to avoid conflicts on the topic of water. For example, to introduce similar principles to the Soviet-era arrangements for supplying Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with energy over the winter season was made for the Syr Darya basin with an agreement from 1998. This energy-water agreement was signed by the four countries which were Kazakhstan,

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. iii

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. iv

<sup>51</sup> Erkin Orolbaev and Yuri Steklov, *Water and Energy Crisis in Central Asia*, p. 10

<sup>52</sup> Erkin Orolbaev and Yuri Steklov *Water and Energy Crisis in Central Asia*, p. 10

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, sharing the Syr Darya. The agreement was a structure for yearly negotiations and signing of protocols where the downstream countries (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) should pay for electricity which is produced in the Toktogul Dam during the irrigation season and the upstream countries, especially Kyrgyzstan, use these profits to pay for energy distributions from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the winter time.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the agreement was practically successful from 1998 to 2002 but later it was not in force. That is why, it was replaced by annual bilateral and multi-lateral agreements. For instance, there were energy-water agreements signed by Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.<sup>54</sup> According to above mentioned agreements, the Central Asian states tried to cooperate and solve energy-water disputes peacefully. This was one of attempts to find a solution to water issue.

In Central Asia, water-sharing problems became more acute in 2008, as this year was a dry year preceded by an extraordinary harsh winter. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan released extra-large water quantities from their reservoirs to generate electricity to meet the needs of populations.<sup>55</sup> Undoubtedly, this problem influenced the neighboring countries such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Therefore, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan agreed on some energy-water deliveries for the irrigation season in spring 2008. However, another issue was that water released from Kyrgyzstan did not at first reach Kazakhstan as it was used up while passing through Uzbekistan. As a result, national representatives participated in Central Asian Heads of State that took place in capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, on October 2008.<sup>56</sup> Consequently, this meeting reached a solution which declared guaranteed extra energy deliveries from downstream countries during the winter and in return, sufficient water releases from upstream countries over the irrigation period.<sup>57</sup> Once more, states acted as well as possible to find a solution that equally benefits both upstream and downstream states.

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<sup>53</sup> Erkin Orolbaev and Yuri Steklov, *Water and Energy Crisis in Central Asia*, p. 13

<sup>54</sup> Erkin Orolbaev and Yuri Steklov, *Water and Energy Crisis in Central Asia*, p. 13

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p.13

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p.13

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p.13

Although, the Central Asian states showed their trials water management, the self-reliance suggested different decisions by competing countries. For example, Uzbekistan aimed to construct a reservoir capable of storing 2.5 billion cubic meters of water. The purpose was to reduce dependence on Toktogul Reservoir for irrigation in agriculture, in particular cotton fields. As far as Kyrgyzstan, it also followed the same strategy by program of constructing two huge dams Kambarat I, Kambarata II which would generate enough electricity for national self-reliance in terms of electricity.<sup>58</sup> Needless to say, Uzbekistan does not support program with Kambarata I and II because upstream states may decouple themselves from energy deliveries by downstream states.<sup>59</sup> This strategy of self-reliance shows that cooperation between states is not effective enough to manage water resources.

Second issue of water resources concerns the Central Asian states and Afghanistan. There are potential problems and suggestion which deal with role of Afghanistan and central Asian countries which can be listed as follows.

Since water is already a source of potential conflict in Central Asia, with many dams, canals and reservoirs in the downstream countries like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, draining water away from the two main river systems – the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya which are used apparently to irrigate large strips of thirsty crops like cotton and even rice. The problem is that Afghanistan is a potentially significant player in Central Asian water management as 40% of its territory and 33% of its population reside within the Aral Sea Basin. Around 12.5% of the total water supplied to the Aral Sea Basin, which embraces vast areas of Central Asia, originates in Afghanistan, yet very little land in Afghanistan itself is irrigated. Countries in Central Asia are interconnected and situation in Afghanistan may surely influence neighboring countries in Central Asian region. Even so, several dams, canals and reservoirs are mud-lined and lose huge amounts of water from ground-seepage and evaporation. The result has been the disastrous

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<sup>58</sup> Beatrice Mosello, *Water in Central Asia: A prospect of conflict and cooperation?*, p.159

<sup>59</sup> "Water Matters." State of the Planet Water and Energy Conflict in Central Asia Comments. Accessed April 11, 2015. <http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2009/08/18/water-and-energy-conflict-in-central-asia/>.

drought of the Aral Sea which has shrunk to a fraction of its former size in only a single generation.<sup>60</sup>

According to experts, when the current conflict in Afghanistan is finally resolved, there will be great efforts to restore the Afghan agricultural sector. The scientists claim that it would be simple to expect this to happen without a significant increase, perhaps even a doubling in water extraction from the rivers Afghanistan shares with the five Central Asian republics.<sup>61</sup> Needless to say, stability in Afghanistan depends on its economy. Consequently, Afghanistan will pay a close attention to water to improve agriculture.<sup>62</sup> Briefly, Afghanistan plays a key role in water management so as soon as Afghanistan reaches political stability it will be certainly an important actor in water disputes.

According to scholars, there are clear solutions to solve abovementioned challenges but each disputing party possesses its own view and interests. Firstly, for restoration the Aral Sea, Uzbekistan can replace the cotton monoculture with less water intensive crops. Moreover, farming is extremely important in Afghanistan and before conflict erupted in the late 1970's, Afghanistan was famous for its pomegranates. Accordingly, the replacement of crop production in Uzbekistan may lead to the increase of pomegranate production in Afghanistan.<sup>63</sup> The solution seems to be clear but although expansion of pomegranate industry may promote stability and development in Afghanistan, the increased use of water from the Amu Darya River which the crop will require, may have serious consequences for inter-state relations with Central Asian neighbors.<sup>64</sup>

Unquestionably, there are impediments to cooperate properly between Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. The hypothesis is that cooperation has been hindered by the regional states' perception of water resources as a

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<sup>60</sup> Available on: <http://www.tajikembassy.be/content/post-conflict-afghanistan-and-need-energy>

<sup>61</sup> Available on: <http://www.tajikembassy.be/content/post-conflict-afghanistan-and-need-energy>

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

zero-sum game, which means one's gain is achieved at the expense of another's loss.

Particularly, there are three major factors that create obstacles. Firstly, the political background—the recent independence of the five Central Asian republics and their weak leaderships at the governmental level. Secondly, the social situation—increase of population growth and tensions between different ethnic groups. Last but not least the economic context—political economy directed towards self-sufficiency and tensions between the agricultural and energy sectors within the region.<sup>65</sup> Subsequently, states tend to securitize issues related to water resources. As a result, securitization of water resource management increases the prospects for conflict and, as a consequence, undermines the possibility of regional cooperation.<sup>66</sup> All in all, recently mentioned three main factors may create severe situation under what Central Asian Republics will not be able not only to cooperate but also destroy relations between each other.

The different authors provide different suggestions about steps that can lead to sustainable unification. One of the suggested strategies is to provide the infrastructure that is necessary for the promotion and coordination. In other words, there is need of establishment of regional and international institutions. Another solution can be agreements and treaties for gathering and sharing information. In return, these agreements and conventions will enhance mutual confidence between actors.<sup>67</sup> All of these analyses declare that water has the potential to create wider conflicts, but also to act as a bridge for cooperation. These tensions created by water issues, cannot be considered in isolation because they are attached in factors larger than relations between States, including concerns over national security, economic opportunity, environmental sustainability, and fairness.<sup>68</sup> As stated above, water disputes influence not only bilateral or multilateral relations but also other important sectors.

Since water disputes have potential conflicts that can undermine relations between Central Asian Republics, the international community attempted to help. In other words, the

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<sup>65</sup> Beatrice Mosello, *Water in Central Asia: A prospect of conflict and cooperation?*, p.156

<sup>66</sup> Beatrice Mosello, *Water in Central Asia: A prospect of conflict and cooperation?*, p.156

<sup>67</sup> Beatrice Mosello, *Water in Central Asia: A prospect of conflict and cooperation?*, p.155

<sup>68</sup> Beatrice Mosello, *Water in Central Asia: A prospect of conflict and cooperation?*, p.155



World Bank recognizes that the sound management of water resources for both irrigation and power generation is significant for the sustainable development of all the countries in Central Asia.

The Bank's approach to water and energy issues in Central Asia is based on both regional and country level programs which must deliver benefits to each country in the region.<sup>69</sup>

At the country level, the World Bank is supporting many energy and water resources projects and studies in Central Asia. Most of them have regional significance and benefit. At the regional level, the World Bank is actively engaged in dialogue on energy and water issues with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, acting in the best interests of all its member countries and taking greatest care in the application of its policies, including environmental and social preserve policies.<sup>70</sup>

To illustrate, in terms of regional level, the Bank has initiated a complete **Central Asia Energy-Water Development Program (CAEWDP)**. Originally, it is a four-year program, which aims to improve diagnostics and analytical tools to support the countries of the region in informed decision-making to manage their water and energy resources, strengthen regional institutions, and stimulate investments.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, the CAEWDP includes elements such as energy development, energy water linkage, and water productivity.<sup>72</sup>

The improvements suggested by CAEWDP can relieve stress because program will create conditions under what Central Asian Republics can manage water issues easily and openly.

Apart from this, The CAEWDP also aims to coordinate and control the contributions of other development partners, to provide critical technical support as well as financial resources for the program. As a result, there are several organizations involved in development of water

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<sup>69</sup> Accessed April 15, 2015.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/0,,contentMDK:22743346~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:258599,00.html>.

<sup>70</sup> Accessed April 15, 2015.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/0,,contentMDK:22743346~pagePK:146736~piPK:146830~theSitePK:258599,00.html>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

resources in Central Asia, in both water and energy topics. For example, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Commission (EC), Eurasian Development Bank, UNECE, Germany (GTZ), UK (DFID), the US (USAID), and the Aga Khan Foundation.<sup>73</sup> On the one hand Central Asian states and it leaders are getting investments from foreign countries and world bank to resolve the problems, on the other hand those investments are becoming as a tool for manipulating these leaders and moreover the authoritarian leaders are not willing to integrate rather than to get benefit for themselves and their family for those investment.

“According to Transparency International, a leading global organization dedicated to fighting corruption, the former Soviet states of the Caucasus and Central Asia are among the most corrupt in the world. Transparency International issues an annual Corruption Perceptions Index that "ranks more than 150 countries by their perceived level of corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys." The rankings of the Caucasus and Central Asian states in 2004, 2005, and 2006 were as follows:

Table 1. Level of corruption of the Caucasus and Central Asian states 2004-2006<sup>74</sup>

Country	2004 (of 145)	2005 (of 158)	2006 (of 163)
Kazakhstan	122	107	111
Kyrgyzstan	122	130	142
Tajikistan	133	144	142
Turkmenistan	133	155	142
Uzbekistan	114	137	151

Taking everything into account, one may reach a conclusion that water will not probably lead to armed conflict in the near future for Central Asia. But water is an increasingly important factor in the stressed relations between the five states and an important reason to local conflicts.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> Puckett Blake, The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, OPIC, and the Retreat from Transparency , Winter 2008, page 156-157

Furthermore, Afghanistan's is neighbor to Central Asian Republics. In fact, water shortages are already restraining economic growth and restricting opportunities in rural areas.

### **Conclusion:**

To sum up, the world witnesses the ongoing process of integration and one of the successful models of integration can be observed in the case of European Union. Although it might be true that Central Asian region has prepared platform to integrate with each other, those newly independent actors chose different ways of further development. With so many reasons have been said about fundamental obstacles, one should realize major reasons which greatly impeded integration among Central Asian states. Ideally, Central Asian actors can smoothly cooperate and interact with each other because most of share common history both culturally and politically. All of them were ruled by Soviet Union and operated under the same political ideology. It is safe to claim that Soviet Union provided the basis for integration but unexpectedly, Central Asian actors ignored those basic elements and moved away from each other. Up to now, one observes the disintegration because those new states perceived common history as burden rather than an opportunity to integrate. Aside from this, all of them noticeably disregarded shared internal problems such as water and territorial disputes. In fact, those internal issues can be solved only by mutual and trusted cooperation. One of the main reasons which explain why Central Asian countries were reluctant to ingrate was their political regimes. Even if most of Central Asian countries practice authoritarianism, the degree of this political regime differs which undermines the attempts to find mutual ground for cooperation. More importantly, these differences in political regimes resulted in competition for external resources rather than cooperation for internal development. The point is that it was discussed the demise of Soviet Union ended the hegemony of Russia and opened doors for other major powers like U.S. and China. Logically, newly independent actors, who experienced harsh transitional times, welcomed external powers because of financial gains. Therefore, the concept of integration among five

Central Asian actors acquired new obstacles. Furthermore, big powers had their own approaches and interests in Central Asia which entirely excluded integration plans. All in all, this desertion concludes that Central Asian integration appears to be idealistic not because of domestic issues but also because of increased attention from outside. Lastly, it is important to say that political regimes of Central Asian states contribute to the disintegration rather than integration. As such, each actor pursues its own interests and does not consider the interests of the region. While, for integration asks for close interaction, effective cooperation, and strong commitment which are not found in Central Asia's case.

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