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The Rogun Dam in Tajik-Uzbek Official Discourse

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to analyse the official discourse by Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on the Rogun Dam issue with a constructivist approach in order to find out whether the discourse invokes conflict rhetoric. It analyses official statements from 2012 to 2015. The Rogun Dam project is a hydropower project that was developed during Soviet times, but its construction was halted when the Soviet Union collapsed. Recently, the Tajik government announced its desire to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam in order to generate hydropower for economic purposes. Uzbekistan, as a riparian of the water flowing from Tajikistan, fiercely objected the construction plans. Therefore, the World Bank was asked to undertake feasibility studies on the hydropower project. As the feasibility studies proceeded, Uzbekistan appeared to seek different ways to oppose the construction of the Rogun Dam. In 2012, both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan appeared to be offensive towards each other in their official statements when mentioning the Rogun Dam. Over the course of time researched, tones towards each other softened. Both countries were also able to improve their bilateral relations on other issues than the Rogun Dam at the end of the period researched. Therefore, this thesis concludes that the official discourse on the Rogun Dam by Tajikistan and Uzbekistan does not invoke conflict rhetoric.

Keywords: Rogun, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Discourse

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Abbreviations

AA	Almaty Agreement
CACO	Central Asian Cooperation Organization
CAEC	Central Asian Economic Community
CAPS	Central Asian Power System
CAR	Central Asian Region
CAU	Central Asian Union
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
CU	Customs Union
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EurAsEC	Eurasian Economic Community
GUAM	Georgia Uzbekistan Armenia Moldova
HPP	Hydropower Plant
IMU	Islamic Militants of Uzbekistan
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
TJ	Terajoule
UN	United Nations
US	United States
UTO	United Tajik Opposition
WB	World Bank

1. Introduction

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the relations between the former Soviet states changed dramatically. The independence and sovereignty of the fifteen former Soviet states caused a change in the identity of all countries, which resulted in new national interests and changing international relations within the post-Soviet space. This was also the case for the Central Asian region (CAR), which consists of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. When the countries within the CAR were part of the Soviet Union, they cooperated very closely. However, in the post-Soviet era, they appeared to be rather competitive when they became independent states.¹

This competitive attitude was also reflected in the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan after Tajikistan announced its plans to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam. This is a dam project, which was planned to be constructed in Soviet times, but when the Soviet Union collapsed, the plans were suspended and the construction was halted as Tajikistan suffered from a civil war from 1992 to 1997.² But as the country was recovering from turbulent times, Dushanbe announced its plans to resume the construction of the big dam project. The main reason for Tajikistan to resume the construction was that the Rogun Dam could solve the country's energy shortages and strengthen Tajikistan economically through hydropower production and export.³ But the Tajik plans to resume the construction of the dam project were met with concerns by Tashkent, since Uzbekistan is a riparian state of the water that flows from Tajikistan and therefore the country could be affected by the operation of the Rogun Dam.⁴

¹ A. Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia: new geopolitics, old regional order," *International Affairs* 80 (2004), 486-501.

² S. Horsman, "Uzbekistan's Involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-1997: Domestic considerations." *Central Asian Survey* 18 (1999), 37-38.

³ S. Ito, S. El Khatib and M. Nakayama. "Conflict over a hydropower plant project between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan." *International Journal of Water resources development*. (2015), 3; World Bank, "Key issues for Consideration in the Proposed Rogun Hydropower Project," Draft for discussion, 2014, 5.

⁴ World Bank, "Key issues for Consideration," 6. A. Kamilov, "Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan H.E. Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov at the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly," New York, 27 September 2013; G. Saidova, Letter from the Uzbek government to the World Bank, November 7, 2012; R. Nurshayeva, "Uzbek leader sounds warning over Central Asia water disputes," Reuters, September 7, 2012. Accessed February 23, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/centralasia-water-idUSL6E8K793I20120907>.

The concerns of Uzbekistan led Tajikistan to ask for international involvement in the construction plans of the Rogun Dam. The World Bank (WB) agreed to undertake feasibility studies on the dam project, which were finalized in 2014. As the WB was proceeding with its studies on the feasibility of the Rogun Dam, Uzbekistan expressed more and more concerns.⁵

In academic research and in media sources, the Rogun Dam issue is described as one of the biggest problems affecting the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.⁶ This thesis seeks to research how the Rogun Dam issue has been used in the official discourse of both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in order to find out whether the Rogun Dam issue is as heavily disputed as described in the literature. This brings us to the research question of this thesis: *To what extent does the official discourse on the Rogun Dam issue by Tajikistan and Uzbekistan invoke conflict rhetoric?* The thesis researches this issue over the course of 2012 to 2015. This limited timeframe is chosen because it allows going more into detail on the issue. It was also during this period that the Rogun Dam was heavily discussed by both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, since the WB was wrapping up its feasibility study during this period.

It is of importance to look into discourse in international relations, since discursive power can be used to reproduce the political reality in international relations. This means that discourse on a certain issue between countries can produce a conflict reality. The distribution of ideas and thus language is considered to be the starting point for a conflict reality. However, this is not necessary. Discourse can also be used to create a narrative

⁵ UN Radio, “Malye GES- Klyuch k vodnomu balansu v Tsentral’noi Azii: Intervyu s zamministrom po vodnomu hozaistvu Uzbekistana,” March 21, 2013. Accessed February 23, 2016, <http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/russian/archives/134616/>; Nurshayeva, “Uzbek leader sounds warning over Central Asia water disputes,”; Saidova, Letter from the Uzbek government to the World Bank.

⁶ B.R. Eschanov et al., “Rogun Dam- Path to Energy Independence or Security Threat?” *Sustainability* 3 (2011): 1573-1592; B. Abdolvand et al. “The dimension of water in Central Asia: security concerns and the long road of capacity building.” *Environ Earth Sci* 73 (2015): 897-912; C. Putz, “Uzbekistan Still hates the Rogun Dam Project.” *The Diplomat* August 4, 2015. Accessed February 24, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/08/uzbekistan-still-hates-the-rogun-dam-project/>; D. Trilling, “Tajikistan: World Bank Gives Dam Green Light; Rights Watchdog Worried,” *Eurasianet* June 26, 2014. Accessed February 23, 2016, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68761>; G. Voloshin, “The Uzbek-Tajik dentente, can it last?” *CACI-Analyst* July 8, 2015. Accessed February 24, 2016, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13247-uzbek-tajik-detente-can-it-last.html>.

rather than a political reality in order to support the identity of a country.⁷ The study of discourses in international relations allows a researcher to observe change in relations between specific countries. This is also what this thesis attempts to do, seeking for change in the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan by treating the discourse on the Rogun Dam issue by both countries as an independent variable.

The issue of the Rogun Dam has already been discussed in scholarly research.⁸ The literature, which discusses the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is rather marginal. Filipino Menga and Mohira Suyarkulova wrote on how the Rogun Dam has been used for Tajikistan in order to build a nation.⁹ Menga argues in his research that the Rogun Dam is used for symbolic and social power.¹⁰ Suyarkulova focuses on the discourse by Tajik elite in Tajikistan on the Rogun Dam.¹¹ Other scholars have focussed mainly on analysing the conflict between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and proposed solutions for resolving the dispute over the Rogun Dam between both countries.¹² However, all of this research already assumed that the Rogun Dam issue is one of the biggest issues in the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Therefore, it is also important to take a step back and consider to what extent the Rogun Dam issue is actually changing the bilateral reality between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This thesis attempts to take that step back. Furthermore, none of the research on the Rogun Dam issue has focussed on the official discourse of both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on the Rogun Dam issue and how they create a narrative around the Rogun Dam issue in their bilateral relations.

⁷ A. Wendt, "On the Via Media: a response to the critics," *Review of International Studies* 26 (2000), 166-167.

⁸ F. Menga, "Building a nation through a dam: The case of Rogun in Tajikistan," *Nationalities Papers* 43 (2015), 479-494; E.A. Borisova, "Spory vokrug Rogunskoy GES," *Istoriya i Sovremennost'* 1 (2011): 93-106; Ito, El Khatib and Nakayama. "Conflict over a hydropower plant project between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan," 1-16; Melnikovova, L., B. Havrland and R. Valencik. "Rogun – Hydropower Generating Controversy in Central Asia." *Acta Universtatis Agriculturae et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis* 62 (2014): 1353- 1361; M. Suyarkulova, "Between national idea and international conflict: The Roghun HPP as an anti-colonial endeavor, body of the nation, and national wealth," *Water Hist* 6 (2014): 367-383.

⁹ Menga, "Building a nation through a dam," 479-494; Suyarkulova, "Between national idea and international conflict," 367-383.

¹⁰ Menga, "Building a nation through a dam," 479-494.

¹¹ Suyarkulova, "Between national idea and international conflict," 367-383.

¹² Borisova, "Spory vokrug Rogunskoy GES," 93-106; Ito, El Khatib and Nakayama, "Conflict over a hydropower plant project between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan," 1-16; Melnikovova, Havrland and Valencik, "Rogun – Hydropower Generating Controversy in Central Asia," 1353- 1361.

The thesis uses a constructivist lens in order to analyse the discourse in the bilateral relations of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on the Rogun Dam issue and argues that the official discourse on the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan does not invoke conflict rhetoric. Both countries make offensive official statements towards each other, but throughout the time researched the official statements on the Rogun Dam matter soften increasingly. Furthermore, at the end of the period researched, both countries were even able to improve their bilateral relations on other areas than the Rogun Dam issue.

The thesis is structured as follows: first, the theoretical framework and the methodology will be laid out in order to structure findings of the research and to discuss a theoretical approach that will be used to analyse the data which is discussed in the thesis. This is followed by a discussion on regionalism in Central Asia in order to gain more knowledge on the regional context of the CAR. Then the official statements by both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan will be discussed and analysed through a constructivist lens.

2. Theoretical framework and methodology

This chapter discusses the theoretical approach and the methodology used to analyse the impact of the Rogun Dam issue on the international relation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. A constructivist approach will be used in this thesis. Below the general ideas of the constructivist school are presented. This is followed by a methodology.

2.1 Constructivism

The constructivist school was established as a response to the limited scope that the neorealist and neoliberal schools present in world politics.¹³ Both schools are rationalist schools, which means that they treat states' identities as given factors in world politics.¹⁴ The constructivist school is mainly concerned with the social aspect of international relations. According to constructivist scholars, the rationalists leave out the ideological reasons for states to act. The constructivist school challenges the assumptions of both schools.¹⁵ According to both theories, there exists a structure in the international system, which is rather fixed. States act out of an uncertainty and therefore their primary interest is survival, but they ignore the historical aspect of the states' identities and how states are driven towards action through their historical development.¹⁶ Constructivists state that both the actors of the international system and thus the international system itself are changing factors.¹⁷ States act according to their identity, not only according to their means of power, like the rationalists state. They might be self-interested, but their interests change over time, because states' identities change.¹⁸ Moreover, the constructivist school also considers the historical factor in its approach towards world politics.

Just like in the other leading schools in international relations, power plays a central role in the constructivist school. However, constructivists define power differently than the rationalists. The rationalists assume material power to be the most important power in world politics. With material power is referred to states' physical actions. This does not mean that

¹³ S. Brincat, "Towards a social-relational dialectic for world politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 17 (2010), 687.

¹⁴ A. Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46 (1992), 391-392.

¹⁵ M. Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002, 3.

¹⁶ Ibid.; Brincat, "Towards a social-relational dialectic for world politics," 688.

¹⁷ T. Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23 (1998), 181.

¹⁸ Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations*, 4.

the realists and the liberalists do not take state behaviour and identity into account, but identity is secondary in considering state power and state actions according to both schools.¹⁹ According to the constructivists, this is not the case, because next to material power, there also exists discursive power, which is of great importance to state behaviour. Discursive power refers to the power of discourse used by states. According to them, the material power is given meaning to by the social context in which they are interpreted by the actors in international politics.²⁰ Actors thus use language in the international system in order to construct a political reality. This expands the concept of power to a more realistic view of power in modern world politics, since material power is not the only source of power used in world politics.

The constructivist school makes the assumption, just like the rationalists, that there exists anarchy in the international system, however, this is, how Alexander Wendt, one of the leading constructivist scholars, phrased it “what states make of it.”²¹ This also has to do with the identity of states in the international system. The structure of the international system depends on the behaviour of the actors in the international system.²² The behaviour of states is driven by norms. Norms establish the identities of the actors in the international system, according to the constructivist school. A change of norms also constitutes a change of identity of the actors in the international system.²³ States’ identities change over time, which means, according to the constructivist school, that the international system is also subject to change since the international system consists of state actions. International and domestic policies are thus inseparable from each other.

When it comes to interests of states, neorealism assumes that states all have the same *a priori* interests, which are derived from their main interest to survive, which leads to

¹⁹ E. Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 3 (1997), 322.

²⁰ A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 139; Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground,” 330; J.T. Checkel, “The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory,” *World Politics* 50 (1998), 326.

²¹ A. Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46 (1992), 391-425.

²² R. Koslowski and F.V. Kratchowil, “Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire’s Demise and the International System,” *International Organization* 48 (1994), 216-223.

²³ *Ibid.*, 222-223. Checkel, “The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory,” 327-328.

self-help among states.²⁴ Constructivists also assume that states take action according to their interests. However, constructivists do not consider states having the same interests, since states' identities differ significantly, according to their development.²⁵ Furthermore, according to the constructivist school, states have more choices to take action than neorealists assume, since states' actions do not depend on only one primary interest, but also on their identity. Choices that states are able to make are also constrained by their identity, according to the constructivist school.²⁶ The identity of states partly decides how an actor in the international system responds to changing material circumstances.²⁷ According to the constructivists, states' identities are thus formed by their historical development and this is reflected in their actions in the international system. Interactions of the states form the international system.

Above, the basic assumptions of the constructivist school are presented. However, the constructivist school is not a unified theory, like other prominent theories in international relations.²⁸ Different scholars define different subgroups within the constructivist school. Ted Hopf, a leading constructivist, identifies two main groups within the constructivist school, which are the conventional group and the critical constructivists. The conventional constructivists' aim is to present an alternative theory on the mainstream international relations theory, such as neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism. They try to find the so-called "middle ground" between the mainstream theories of international relations. Their approach to international politics is rather positivist. The critical constructivists identify themselves more with the critical social theory.²⁹ The conventional constructivists, such as Alexander Wendt and Jeffrey T. Checkel define states as having identities that are rather fixed. They emphasise that it is hard to change the identity of a state and that it is not likely, but possible.³⁰ Critical constructivists state that the development of states is never completed. They argue that the conventional constructivists

²⁴ R.E. Keohane ed., *Neorealism and its Critics*, Columbia University Press: New York, 1986, 102-108.

²⁵ Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism," 176.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 177.

²⁷ J.K. Jacobsen, "Duelling constructivisms: a post-mortem on the ideas debate in mainstream IR/IPE," *Review of International Studies* 29 (2003), 47.

²⁸ Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations*, 6-7.

²⁹ Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism," 172.

³⁰ Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory," 346; Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 339.

leave out the domestic factors of identity of states.³¹ The constructivist school thus appears to be a diversified school in international relations although they all share the assumption that the mainstream theories in international relations left the social part of international relations mainly out.³²

There exists no single method of analysis of international relations. However, the constructivist school's most significant character is that international relations are basically socially constructed. This assumption is also an important assumption in this thesis. It treats the foreign policies of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as a result of their identities. This thesis is rather leaning towards Hopf's conventional constructivism in its approach, since it approaches the subject rather in a positivist way. The thesis uses language, just like the conventional constructivists, to see how the actors Tajikistan and Uzbekistan use the Rogun Dam in their discourse in order to find out how they construct their understanding of their bilateral relations. Furthermore, the thesis assumes states as dynamic in their identity to a certain extent. It does believe that a change of identity is possible, but it assumes that identity change takes time, as the critical constructivists argue.

The relations among the Central Asian states have changed in their struggle towards taking on a new identity when the Soviet Union collapsed. This also caused that the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan changed after the fall of the Soviet Union. The Rogun Dam plans were already developed in the Soviet Union with mutual agreement of both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. But when the Soviet Union collapsed, the views on the construction plans of the dam have changed. Views on the Rogun Dam construction plan have thus also changed through identity change, is what this thesis argues. Furthermore, the choice for the explicit conventionalist turn in constructivism is because the thesis aims to only to look into the relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan without taking in consideration the domestic backgrounds into detail, but only in a limited way in order to be able to focus on the bilateral relations on the international stage between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It offers a state-centric perspective on the Tajik-Uzbek relations and how they are affected by the plans for resuming the construction of the Rogun Dam. This means that the thesis is interested in how both countries construct their understanding of their bilateral relations. The reason that it offers solely a state-centric view on the Tajik-

³¹ Y.C. Cho, "Conventional and Critical Constructivist Approaches to National Security: An Analytical Survey," *The Korean Journal of International Relations* 49 (2009), 87-90; K. Devine, "Stretching the IR Theoretical Spectrum on Irish Neutrality: A Critical Social Constructivist Framework," *International Political Science Review* 29 (2008), 463.

³² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 4.

Uzbek relations is because states are considered to be the ultimate decision-makers in international politics. There exists no single explanation for the actors' behaviour, since, according to the constructivist school, actions depend on identity, which means that they depend on the context and interpretation of the researcher. This means that there is no objective explanation possible, also in the case of the relation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and the impact of the plans to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam.

2.2 Methodology

The thesis seeks to gain a better understanding of the Tajik-Uzbek relations. The reason that I chose for a single case study is because it allows one to gain more detailed information about this specific case, which results in a deeper understanding of that specific case.³³ In order to analyse the Tajik-Uzbek relations over the Rogun Dam issue, the constructivist approach is being used as described above. The thesis thus takes into account the identity of the states by analysing their relations. This means that the thesis will focus on both discursive and material power of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in this matter. However, this thesis puts more emphasis on the discursive element of power and treats it as an independent variable.

In order to analyse how the plans for the construction of the Rogun Dam have affected the relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan a method needs to be developed. There exist different methods of analysing case studies. For this thesis is chosen for the "explanation building" analysis, developed by Robert K. Yin.³⁴ The thesis aims to create a narrative on the case in order to explain causal links between the different events. First, in order to understand the interregional relations in Central Asia, regionalism in Central Asia will be discussed. This part also discusses the bilateral Tajik-Uzbek relations right after the fall of the Soviet Union. So first a narrative will provide us from the bigger picture of the relations in Central Asia and the bilateral relations of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The narrative is followed by an explanation of the Rogun Dam construction plans. This is followed by an analysis of how the Rogun Dam construction plans have affected how both countries construct their understanding of their bilateral relations. In order to research this, official statements will be used of both countries to see how their discourse on

³³ J. Moses and T.L. Knutsen, *Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research*, Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2007, 139.

³⁴ R.K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, 2009, 141-144.

the Rogun Dam developed. This is important because through their discourse both countries construct their political reality.

Different sources both in English and Russian will be used to gain the data used in this thesis. Since the WB conducted feasibility studies on the Rogun Dam, it published a lot of material on this specific issue. This information will be used for the thesis. Official statements on the Rogun Dam will also be retrieved from the official state sources of both countries, mainly from their Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Through the government websites, both countries have also published statements on the Rogun Dam issue to share with the general public. News sources will also be used in order to find statements made by both countries on the Rogun Dam. The reason that this thesis is also relying on news sources is because most news sources in both countries are state controlled.³⁵ This means that statements are published that are in line with the government's policies of both countries. Through different media these news agencies share public statements made by state officials with the general public. And last, this thesis will use information retrieved from independent organisations and news sources that provide information from the CAR. These include Eurasianet and The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst. These sources are assumed to be reliable by this thesis, because they provide information independently from the ground.

The official statements that are discussed in this thesis show how the Rogun Dam construction plans are used in the discourse of both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and how this reflects their struggle for a new identity and eventually, how this affects their bilateral relations. Sometimes, statements are not shown on the official pages of the governments any longer, but different news media still quote statements that have earlier been made by the governments. In that case, this thesis still uses these quotes, since it was literally quoted from the state source and other media sources also published pieces of the statement.

By showing what both countries' official responses were throughout the above mentioned period in the different stages of the planning process of resuming the construction of the Rogun Dam, one can conclude what the two countries wanted to report officially on the dam and how they constructed their bilateral relations through their discourse. Through this, one is able to conclude to what extent the Rogun Dam issue is used

³⁵ Freedom House, "Uzbekistan," Accessed May 10, 2016 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/uzbekistan>; Freedom House, "Tajikistan," Accessed May 10, 2016 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/tajikistan>.

to construct a narrative around the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and whether the relation between both countries has become worse in the discourse because of the Rogun Dam construction plans. This can be measured in terms of action which follows after the discourse. Here we come back to the material power, which is discussed above.

The data, the official statements in this case, found, will be structured chronologically. The statements will thus be discussed per year in chapter four. The statements that are discussed, are all the official statements by both countries that can be found. This means that the thesis discusses every time the Rogun Dam was mentioned in official discourse over the course of 2012-2015. This results in a chronological overview of the events, which makes it easier for the researcher to look for continuity and change in the relations over the Rogun Dam construction plans between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

So the discursive power of both countries will be analysed in order to see how both countries view the Rogun Dam construction plans and how the Rogun Dam is used in their discourse and whether their discourse is reflected in their material actions. It is assumed that the discursive power is derived from the identity of both countries, which is constituted by norms. Norms thus lead to identity, which could cause material actions of both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

3. Central Asian relations after the fall of the Soviet Union

The CAR became a very diverse region after the Central Asian states became independent. However, when the Soviet Union collapsed, it seemed obvious that the Central Asian states would cooperate and form a unified region. According to Annette Bohr and Marlene Laruelle, two scholars on Central Asian regionalism, there are several reasons to assume that they would work together as a region. First of all, the countries share a Soviet past and therefore they have a Soviet legacy of being economically and politically dependent upon each other.³⁶ Second, the countries share some commonalities in their culture and history.³⁷ And third, the Central Asian states share problems and issues that are transboundary in nature since the fall of the Soviet Union, like water and energy issues. These issues need to be dealt with on a regional level since they pass political boundaries.³⁸ However, up till the moment of writing, the CAR has not been acting like a unified region. Different attempts have been made in order to cooperate within the CAR. In this chapter these attempts will be discussed. First identity change within the CAR after the collapse of the Soviet Union will be discussed. This is followed by the integration frameworks that the Central Asian states have created and joined. Then the Tajik and Uzbek positions in the region and the bilateral relations between both countries since their independence will be discussed.

3.1 Identity change in the post-Soviet era

When the Soviet Union collapsed fifteen newly independent states emerged. The identities of these states went through a dramatic transformation with the fall of the Soviet Union. Whereas the Soviet republics shared an identity of being Soviet republics acting according to the communist ideology, which was imposed by the Soviet government, they shared similar interests. But while struggling with taking on a new identity as independent and sovereign states, the post-Soviet states appeared to develop diverging needs and interests.³⁹

³⁶ M. Laruelle and S. Peyrouse, "Regional Organisations in Central Asia: Patterns of Interaction, Dilemmas of Efficiency," University of Central Asia, Institute of Public Policy and Administration, Working Paper No. 10 2012, 6; Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia," 486.

³⁷ Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia," 486.

³⁸ Laruelle and Peyrouse, "Regional organisations in Central Asia," 6.

³⁹ R. Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account," *Theory and Society* 23 (1994), 61-64; Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia," 494-501.

This also appeared to be the case in the CAR. As the Central Asian states became independent, they developed all differently. The governments of the states promoted nationalism intensively in order to redefine the countries as independent states and to move away from their Soviet past.⁴⁰ This caused that the Central Asian countries took different stances in regional issues. Identity appears to be a common issue in the CAR. This is also reflected in the regional cooperation frameworks in the CAR and in Tajik-Uzbek bilateral relations.

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan remain mostly closed towards regional integration initiatives. Turkmenistan is the only Central Asian country that is publicly announcing that it is not interested in joining any regional cooperation structures.⁴¹ Since the fall of the Soviet Union the country has moved away from the former Soviet countries and oriented itself more towards Turkey and Iran.⁴² Turkmenistan has a clear stance towards regionalism; the country is not willingly to join any initiatives and chooses its own path. Uzbekistan is less clear in its stance towards regional integration, but has since the fall of the Soviet Union moved away from Russia and tries to cooperate with other countries at least as possible in order to retain its independence.⁴³ This means that, since independence, both countries are not very interested in creating regional unity in the CAR.

In economic and security initiatives that have been taken in the years since the fall of the Soviet Union, both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have been reluctant to join initiatives because of their independent identities. The other Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, always appear to join the regional integration frameworks. However, the fact that two of the Central Asian states are rather reluctant to cooperate on some matters is hampering cooperation within the region. Below there are some examples discussed on how regional integration frameworks are failing to create a regional unity in the CAR.

⁴⁰ J.G. Mellon, "Myth, Legitimacy and Nationalism in Central Asia," *Ethnopolitics* 9 (2010), 137- 138.

⁴¹ Laruelle and Peyrouse, "Regional Organisations in Central Asia," 34.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ D.R. Spechler and M.C. Spechler, "Uzbekistan among the Great Powers," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 42 (2009), 353-363.

3.2 Regional integration efforts

Economic integration efforts

The only real Central Asian economical integration initiative was the creation of the Central Asian Union (CAU), although it did not include Turkmenistan. This organisation's name has changed throughout time to the Central Asian Economic Community (CAEC) and eventually to the Central Asian Cooperation Organisation (CACO).⁴⁴ However, in 2004 Russia joined the CACO, which caused that the organisation was *de facto* dissolved and integrated into the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) framework.⁴⁵ The CAU was also the only economical organisation that was joined by Uzbekistan.

After this, some of the Central Asian states have attempted to join economical integration frameworks together with the traditional hegemon, Russia. These include the Customs Union (CU), which was created in 1994 by Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia and later on joined by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.⁴⁶ The CU was in 2000 transformed into the EurAsEC.⁴⁷ Recently, out of all these economic integration initiatives grew the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which was officially established in 2015.⁴⁸ Tajikistan has shown interest in joining the EEU, but has not been accepted up till the moment of writing.⁴⁹ Uzbekistan has not shown any interest at all in these Russia-led economic initiatives. This confirms that Uzbekistan tries to be independent within the region.

Only the CAU included only Central Asian countries, but this organisation proved to be ineffective and therefore did not contribute to regional economic integration. The other initiatives included Russia and did not include all of the Central Asian countries. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan were mostly reluctant to join regional economic integration initiatives. At the moment of writing economic cooperation is still lacking in the CAR.

⁴⁴ Laruelle and Peyrouse, *Regional Organisations in Central Asia*, 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 7; R. Allison, "Virtual Regionalism, regional structures and regime security in Central Asia," *Central Asian Survey* 27 (2008), 191; R. Deyermond, "Matrioshka hegemony? Multi-levelled hegemonic competition and security in post-Soviet Central Asia," *Review of International Studies* 35 (2009), 54.

⁴⁶ Pomfret, "Regional integration," 52; Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia," 488.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ S. Blockmans, H. Kostanyan and I. Vorobiov, "Towards a Eurasian Economic Union: The challenge of integration and unity," CEPS Special Report no. 75, December 2012, 1-2; A. Libman and E. Vinokurov, "Is it really different? Patterns of Regionalisation in post-Soviet Central Asia," *Post-Communist Economies* 23 (2011), 140-141.

⁴⁹ L. Filipova and I. Veleva, "How Europe should approach the EEU (and Russia)," *The diplomat*. October 16, 2015, Accessed January 20, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/how-europe-should-approach-the-eeu-and-russia/>.

Change in the identity caused by the fall of the Soviet Union resulted in diverging economic interests in the region. Uzbekistan has little interest in cooperating economically with the rest of the region. Within the frameworks, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan do not cooperate economically, because Uzbekistan does not join the initiatives. This is also reflected in the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, since Uzbekistan also shows signs of lack of willingness to cooperate with Tajikistan on the Rogun Dam construction plans as shown in the next chapter.

Security integration efforts

In the field of security, the Central Asian states have also joined several initiatives after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, these initiatives are led by big powers outside the CAR, like Russia and China. One of them is the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) was established as a part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) security treaty, which included Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Later on Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan also joined the CSTO.⁵⁰ Although CSTO was joined by Uzbekistan, in 1999 the country withdrew from this framework when it diverted its foreign policy more towards the United States (US). Instead, Uzbekistan decided to join another organisation, the GUAM (Georgia Uzbekistan Armenia Moldova), in order to counter Russia's power. In 2006, when the US military forces were ousted by Uzbekistan, Tashkent decided to join the CSTO again. However, Uzbekistan did not participate in many of the CSTO activities.⁵¹ Eventually in 2012, Uzbekistan decided again to withdraw its membership from the organisation.⁵² Again Uzbekistan shows its disinterest to join regional integration initiatives. Turkmenistan did not join this initiative at all and with that confirming its stance in the region as described above.

⁵⁰ Laruelle and Peyrouse, "Regional Organisations in Central Asia," 9.; I.I. Pop, "Russia, EU, NATO and the strengthening of the CSTO in Central Asia," *Caucasian review of International Affairs* 3 (2009), 282.

⁵¹ Pop, "Russia, EU, NATO and the strengthening of the CSTO in Central Asia," 282-289; A. Pikalov, "Uzbekistan between the great powers: a balancing act or a multi-vectoral approach." *Central Asian Survey* 33:3 (2014), 297-298; F. Tolipov, "Uzbekistan without the CSTO," *Central CACI-Analyst*, February 20, 2013. Accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12652-uzbekistan-without-the-csto.html>.

⁵² Y. Kim and F. Indeo, "The new great game in Central Asia post 2014: The US "New Silk Road" strategy and Sino-Russian rivalry," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 46 (2013), 282.

Another initiative in the field of security has been made after the fall of the Soviet Union, which also included China. In the mid 1990s Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Russia and China organized several meetings in order to settle territorial disputes inherited from Soviet times. Out of these meetings grew the so-called “Shanghai Five” in 1996, which transformed in 2001 in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).⁵³ The SCO fostered closer cooperation in security issues between the Central Asian countries, China and Russia. The main goal of the organisation is to coordinate policies in fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism.⁵⁴ Although it achieved some successes in fighting drug trafficking and border delimitation, it is mainly a China-led organisation. Furthermore, the organisation does not foster intraregional cooperation in Central Asia.⁵⁵ Although the SCO is mainly built around the Central Asian states, the Central Asian players appear not the most important players.⁵⁶ Moreover, this organisation is also not fostering regionalism in Central Asia.

In the field of security, the Central Asian states have always cooperated with Russia in a framework since the fall of the Soviet Union. With the help of this traditional hegemon, the states succeeded in fighting external threats to some extent. However, the internal regional threats are still present. Another weakness of the security integration frameworks is that again, just like in the economic frameworks, not all Central Asian states are participating, or Uzbekistan which is every now and then participating and in all of them Russia is playing a leading role. Again Uzbekistan shows a lack of willingness to cooperate in security frameworks.

3.3 Tajikistan’s position in the region

As shown above, Tajikistan is rather eager to join regional cooperation initiatives. The country is economically the weakest country in the region and this is reflected in its position in the region. Tajikistan very much depends on other states for its existence and is therefore struggling to find its own identity and interests since the fall of the Soviet Union. The

⁵³ A. Jarosiewicz and K. Strachota, “China vs. Central Asia: The Achievements of the past two decades,” OSW Centre For Eastern Studies, number 45, October 2013, 17-19.

⁵⁴ Ibid; T. Dadabaev, “Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Regional Identity Formation from the Perspective of the Central Asia States,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 23 (2014), 107.

⁵⁵ Laruelle and Peyrouse, “Regional Organisations in Central Asia,” 26; T. Naarajarvi, “China, Russia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: A blessing or a curse for new regionalism in Central Asia?” *Asia Eur J* 10 (2012), 114.

⁵⁶ Naarajarvi, “China, Russia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation,” 115.

country is the economically weakest state in Central Asia. Approximately half of its GDP comes from remittances and most of those remittances are coming from Russia.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Tajikistan is a fragile state after experiencing a civil war and because of internal struggles, it has been hard for Tajikistan to find its own identity.⁵⁸ Within the CAR, Tajikistan struggles the most with its nation building process since the fall of the Soviet Union.⁵⁹ This is reflected in the foreign policies of the country as shown above. Tajikistan joins almost every regional cooperation initiative to seek economic and military security with the help of other countries. Tajikistan thus needs other countries for its existence.

3.4 Uzbekistan's position in the region

In the previous sections, it becomes clear that Uzbekistan rather isolates itself from the rest of the Central Asian states. Tashkent tried, since the fall of the Soviet Union, to take on an identity of regional hegemon. The country had a strong position in the region when the Soviet Union fell apart. This was caused, according to Ruth Deyermond, by two reasons. First of all, Uzbekistan had the largest armed forces in Central Asia. And second, Uzbekistan is positioned in a favourable geopolitical position, since the country borders all Central Asian states.⁶⁰ Uzbekistan's government even expressed its willingness to play a key role in the regional policies.⁶¹ Uzbekistan defines itself as an independent and leading player within the CAR.

In order to achieve its role as regional hegemon, Uzbekistan attempted to become independent from Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. As shown above, Uzbekistan did not actively participate in any of the Russian led regional initiatives. Basically, Uzbekistan tried to challenge Russian hegemony in the CAR. Later on, in 2004 and 2005, Uzbekistan

⁵⁷ M. Sulstonov, "The Macroeconomic Determinants of Remittance Flows from Russia to Tajikistan," *Transition Study Reviews* 19 (2013), 418; Trilling, D. "Tajikistan: Migrant Remittances Now Exceed Half of GDP." *Eurasianet*, April 15, 2014. Accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68272>; World Bank, "Migration and Development Brief 22," April 11, 2014. Accessed March 1, 2016, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1288990760745/MigrationandDevelopmentBrief22.pdf>.

⁵⁸ L. Jonson, *Tajikistan in the New Central Asia: Geopolitics, Great Power Rivalry and Radical Islam*, I.B. Tauris: London, 2006, 6.

⁵⁹ W.O. Beeman, "The Struggle For Identity in Post-Soviet Tajikistan," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3 (1999), 100.

⁶⁰ Deyermond, "Matrioshka hegemony?" 162-163.

⁶¹ I. Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, Richmond: Curzon 1997, 138.

tried to improve relations with Russia again after the United States' military forces were ousted by Tashkent.⁶² However, the relation with Russia is still rather unstable in the field of security and Uzbekistan tries to maintain its independent position from the other countries and still sees itself as strong player in the region. This is also reflected in its bilateral relations with Tajikistan.

3.5 Tajik-Uzbek bilateral relations after the fall of the Soviet Union

As discussed in the previous sections, the Central Asian states are struggling to cooperate because of the different identities they developed after the fall of the Soviet Union. This is also reflected in the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the two countries struggled to develop friendly and progressive bilateral relations. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan appear to differ greatly from each other in their views on regional cooperation as shown above. Uzbekistan is a strong player, which rather sees itself as an independent player within the region. Tajikistan is not able to be independent from the other countries in the CAR and in the post-Soviet space. This difference is one of the reasons Tajikistan and Uzbekistan lack good bilateral relations.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, both countries did establish some bilateral agreements and contracts in order to foster the bilateral relations between the two countries. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, both countries enforced 111 contracts and agreements since 1992.⁶³ Although both countries have these contracts and agreements, their bilateral relations have been affected negatively since the fall of the Soviet Union because of a series of events. Below these events are discussed.

Uzbek involvement in the Tajik Civil War was one of the reasons that the bilateral relation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was harmed after the fall of the Soviet Union. When the Civil War broke out in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan remained initially a neutral party. However, soon Uzbekistan became involved because of concerns that the violence would spill over to Uzbekistan.⁶⁴ Russia and Uzbekistan initially became involved in favour of the government of Tajikistan. They also tried to foster dialogue between the opposition, the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), and the government. However, these opposition forces also

⁶² Deyermond, "Matrioshka hegemony?" 164.

⁶³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, "Relations of Tajikistan with Uzbekistan," Accessed May 20, 2016 <http://mfa.tj/en/relations-with-cis-countries/relations-tajikistan-uzbekistan.html>.

⁶⁴ Horsman, "Uzbekistan's Involvement in the Tajik Civil War," 38-39.

invaded Tajikistan, while they were first camped in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, it has been argued by the Tajik government that Uzbekistan aided the opposition militarily in the winter of 1995-1996. When an attempt was made to assassinate the president of Tajikistan, Emomali Rakhmonov, in 1997, Tajik authorities looked even more with a suspicious eye to Uzbekistan and its role in the Tajik civil war.⁶⁵ This shows that soon after the Soviet Union collapsed, the relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan already became worse because of Tajik accusations of Uzbek involvement in the Civil War.

Another factor which harmed the relation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was that president Rakhmonov openly stated in 2009 that Bukhara and Samarkand, both located within Uzbekistan's political boundaries, actually belong to Tajikistan and that at some point Tajikistan will get these areas back. This issue is a Soviet legacy. In 1924, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were turned into one administrative unit by the Soviet authorities. But in 1929, the Soviet authorities split up this administrative unit into the Tajik SSR and the Uzbek SSR. During this period, nationalism also became important and the Soviet authorities attempted to draw national distinctions between the Tajik SSR and the Uzbek SSR.⁶⁶ When they split up the area, Tajik-speaking Samarkand and Bukhara became part of the Uzbek SSR. Later on, the different cultures were supposed to melt into an overarching Soviet culture. However, in the 1970s, nationalism revived again in Central Asia and this is where the dispute between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan started. In the 1970s, scholars tried to define the Tajik history and ethnogenesis. During this process, some parts of this history and ethnogenesis crossed borders and overlapped with that of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. However, the Soviet government demanded the scholars not to cross borders in this process.⁶⁷ When the Soviet Union collapsed, Samarkand and Bukhara became part of independent Uzbekistan. But in this part of Uzbekistan reside many ethnic Tajik, who also speak Tajik language.⁶⁸ In that same period, nationalism became even more important. The newly independent states were seeking their national identity and promoting nationalism. In this process, Tajikistan still attempted to list heritage to UNESCO as theirs, which is located

⁶⁵ Horsman, "Uzbekistan's Involvement in the Tajik Civil War," 38-39.

⁶⁶ L. Adams, "Ethnicity and the politics of heritage in Uzbekistan," *Central Asian Survey* 32 (2013), 116-117.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁶⁸ M. Sadykov, "Uzbekistan: Tajik language under pressure in ancient Samarkand," *Eurasianet*, November 5, 2013. Accessed February 15, 2016, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67724>; A. Dubnov, "Prezident Tadjikistana nameren vstretit'sya s mestnyimi zhurnalistami," *CA-news* December 10, 2009. Accessed February 15, 2016, <https://ca-news.org/news:275061/>.

within the borders of Uzbekistan for already more than 80 years.⁶⁹ The Soviet legacy of border demarcation caused competition between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan over heritage.

Security issues are also threatening the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In 2000, relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan became tense again, because of Uzbek accusations that the terrorist group, IMU, was supported by the Tajik opposition within the coalition.⁷⁰ This group was established in the beginning of the 1990s in Uzbekistan by Tahir Yuldashev. The party he created, the Adolat Party, was banned in March 1992 by the Uzbek authorities.⁷¹ After the party was banned, Yuldashev and his followers created their bases in Tajikistan.⁷² After the incursion of IMU militants into Uzbekistan in 2000 through the Tajik-Uzbek border, Karimov decided to close the Uzbek borders with the rest of Central Asia and even mined some parts of its borders with the rest of Central Asia, including Tajikistan.⁷³ And in 2001, the Uzbek government introduced obligatory visas for Tajik citizens.⁷⁴

Relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan already appeared to be tense well before serious announcements were made of resuming the construction of the Rogun Dam by Tajikistan. Already within five years after the fall of the Soviet Union, the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan became tense. One can already conclude that the bilateral relations between the two countries has not solely been negatively influenced by the Rogun Dam issue, but by their change in identity when looking at it from a constructivist lens. And this is not only the case for Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but it is a common problem in the whole CAR, which causes a lack of willingness to cooperate. It is clear that Tajikistan as well as Uzbekistan think in national terms, and not in regional terms. From the start there existed distrust between the two countries because of newly developed interests after the fall of the Soviet Union. The relation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan appears to have deeper-rooted problems in their relation that create competition and disputes.

⁶⁹ Adams, "Ethnicity and the politics of heritage in Uzbekistan," 117-118.

⁷⁰ R. Weitz, "Storm Clouds over Central Asia: Revival of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan?" 27 (2004), 514.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 506.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 506-514.

⁷³ Juraev, "Central Asia's Cold War?" 1.

⁷⁴ Voloshin, "The Uzbek-Tajik dentente, can it last?"

4. Tajik-Uzbek official discourse on the Rogun Dam construction plans

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the CAR is nowadays rather characterized by disintegration. The change in their identity from Soviet republics to independent states caused diverging interests, which resulted in weakening cooperation within the region. This is also reflected in the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the two states appear to move away from each other instead of cooperating. This chapter focuses on the relation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in particular and how the plans to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam have been used in the discourse of both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan between 2012 and 2015. In order to analyse this, first the plans for the construction of the Rogun Dam will be discussed. This is followed by official statements made by both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan between 2012 and 2015. The statements will be analysed through a constructivist approach as discussed in the second chapter.

4.1 Rogun Dam construction plans

One of the main problems in the region, which is caused by the lack of cooperation in the CAR, is the water-energy nexus. Since the fall of the Soviet Union there have been several disputes over water resources governance within the CAR. When the Soviet Union was still in place, the Central Asian states shared their water- and energy resources through a comprehensive system of exchange. Energy-poor upstream Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, were supposed to release enough water for the cotton-producing countries and energy-rich downstream countries, as there existed a so-called cotton monoculture in Central Asia, which was imposed by the Central Soviet government. In return, the energy-rich downstream countries provided the upstream countries with enough energy supplies.⁷⁵

When the Soviet Union fell apart, this exchange system also collapsed. At the beginning of their independence in the 1990s, the newly independent Central Asian states saw the need to work together on their natural resources, since the Soviet Union left a legacy of dependency in Central Asia. Therefore, all of the Central Asian states agreed upon maintaining the agreements of exchange like in the Soviet Union in the 1992 Almaty

⁷⁵ L. Zakhirova, "The International Politics of Water Security in Central Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 65 (2013), 1996-1997.

Agreement (AA).⁷⁶ However, soon it became clear that the confirmed quotas in the AA were not reflecting the situation at the time. The countries discovered that they had conflicting needs concerning the allocation of water.⁷⁷ The energy-rich downstream countries started to sell their gas and oil resources for world market prices. This meant that the upstream energy-poor countries were also to pay these prices for the energy resources they lacked. The upstream countries lacked financial resources for the resources they lacked and therefore started to make plans for hydropower plants (HPP) and took other measures in order to prevent their countries from having energy shortages in winter.⁷⁸ The diverging interests, which were caused by independence and sovereignty, resulted in weakened transboundary cooperation over the Central Asian water resources.

The countries' sovereignty meant that they, just like in the other issues, were more concerned with their own states' interests than with cooperation over these resources. These diverging interests caused weakened cooperation over water- and energy resources in the region and in some cases even disputes erupted over water-and energy resources.

This is also the case with upstream Tajikistan and downstream Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is an energy-rich country which is dependent on the water that is coming from Tajikistan because of its economic dependence on agriculture, especially its cotton production sector is still important for Uzbekistan's economy.⁷⁹ Moreover, water is an important feature for the Uzbek economy and therefore, Uzbekistan is dependent on Tajikistan's water supplies.

Tajikistan, on the other hand, is also dependent on Uzbekistan for Uzbek gas deliveries. Tajikistan has a lot of water resources when compared to the other Central Asian states. The river Amu Darya, which is one of the main rivers of Central Asia, partly originates in Tajikistan. Only 16-18 per cent of the water is used by Tajikistan itself. The downstream countries use the rest of the water.⁸⁰ However, the country has small gas resources, which are hard to extract. The country only produced 422 terajoule (TJ) in

⁷⁶ B.E. Libert Orolbaev and Y. Steklov, "Water and Energy Crisis in Central Asia," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 6 (2008), 11; Z. Karaev, "Water Diplomacy in Central Asia," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 9 (2005), 65.

⁷⁷ Melnikovova, Havrland and Valencik, "Rogun – Hydropower Generating Controversy in Central Asia," 1353-1354; World Bank, "Uzbekistan Overview," 2014 Accessed April 16, 2016, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uzbekistan/overview>.

⁷⁸ E. Weinthal, "Water Conflict and Cooperation in Central Asia," UNDP Human Development Report Office, Human Development Report 2006, 6.

⁷⁹ B. Abdolvand et al., "The dimension of water in Central Asia: security concerns and the long road of capacity building," *Environ Earth Sci* 73 (2015), 898.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

2012.⁸¹ Because of the lack of energy resources, Tajikistan has an electricity shortage of approximately 5 billion kWh per year.⁸² Therefore, Tajikistan is dependent on gas deliveries from abroad, which are coming mainly from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Furthermore, Tajikistan has the lowest income in Central Asia and is heavily dependent on remittances.⁸³ At the same time, Uzbekistan aimed to be self-sufficient in its oil and gas production from the mid 1990s. This meant that Uzbekistan formulated an energy strategy, which was created independently from the energy-consuming upstream countries, which do barely have energy resources plus they are economically weak.⁸⁴ In 2009 this independent Uzbek path resulted in the withdrawal from the CAPS, on which Tajikistan was heavily dependent for its gas deliveries.⁸⁵ Tajikistan's dependence on Uzbekistan is a problem for its economic development, since it can not trust in this case on gas deliveries from Uzbekistan that are beneficially priced. Therefore, the country tried to seek energy independence..

In order for Tajikistan to generate more revenues and to become independent of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in its energy supplies, the Tajik government decided to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam, a HPP located on the Vakhsh river basin, which is a major tributary of the Amu Darya river. It contributes 29 percent to the Amu Darya flows.⁸⁶ The plans for the construction of the HPP had been made already in 1959 as part of the Vakhsh River cascade in order to overtake the Nurek dam, which is also located on the Vakhsh river. The construction of the Rogun Dam had started in 1976. But when the Soviet Union collapsed, the construction of the Dam was also halted due to the breakout of the Tajik Civil War in 1992, which lasted till 1997.⁸⁷ In 2005 Tajikistan made the construction of the Rogun Dam a priority again. During that year, the Tajik government announced that

⁸¹ International Energy Agency 2012, "Tajikistan: Natural gas for 2012," Accessed April 16, 2016,

<http://www.iea.org/statistics/statisticssearch/report/?country=TAJIKISTAN&product=naturalgas&year=2012>.

⁸² Global Water Partnership, "National Stakeholders Consultations on Water on Water: Supporting the Post-2015 Development Agenda," The Post 2015 Water Thematic Consultation, 2013, 4.

⁸³ World Bank, "Migration and Development Brief 22."

⁸⁴ E. Weinthal, "Water Conflict and Cooperation in Central Asia," UNDP Human Development Report Office, Human Development Report 2006, 12; Karaev "Water Diplomacy in Central Asia," 66.

⁸⁵ World Bank, "Key issues for Consideration," 4.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁷ H.B. Havenith et al., "Earthquakes, landslides, dams and reservoirs in the Tien Shan, Central Asia," Proceedings of the Second World Landslide Forum 3-7 October 2011, 3; Melnikovova, Havrland and Valencik, "Rogun – Hydropower Generating Controversy in Central Asia," 1355.

it would resume the construction of the dam with the financial assistance of RusAl, a Russian aluminum giant.⁸⁸ However, after a few years, in 2007, RusAl and Tajikistan could not agree on the height of the dam. RusAl recommended a height of 285 meters, but the Tajik government decided to stick to the plan of constructing a 335 meters high dam and ended its cooperation with RusAl.⁸⁹ But in 2008-2009, Tajikistan suffered from harsh winters and had severe electricity shortages. This meant that the construction of the dam became even a higher priority than before for the Tajik government.⁹⁰

As soon as Tajikistan announced its desire to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam, Uzbekistan expressed its concerns. Uzbekistan uses up to 90 percent of the quota, which is released by the upstream countries for irrigation purposes.⁹¹ When Tajikistan will use the Rogun Dam for the generation of electricity, Uzbekistan is concerned that it will receive less water for its irrigation purposes. Uzbekistan also raised concerns about the possibility of an earthquake, since the Rogun Dam will be located in a seismically active zone in Tajikistan.⁹² Here Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have conflicting interests; Tajikistan wants to generate hydropower in order to become energy independent, but Uzbekistan's government raised its concerns about the consequences of the construction and operation of the Rogun Dam.

In order to convince the downstream countries to support the construction of the Rogun Dam, Tajikistan sought assistance on the international stage. In 2007, Tajikistan formally requested the WB to assess the feasibility of the construction and the operation of the Rogun Dam.⁹³ In its report, the WB states that Uzbekistan was by this time also still interested in WB involvement in order to secure the safety of the dam project.⁹⁴ The WB agreed and undertook feasibility studies by examining the risks and benefits of constructing the dam and of the operation of the dam. Tajikistan was not allowed to resume the

⁸⁸ Government of Tajikistan, "Address by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan H.E. Emomali Rahmonov to the Majlisi Oil of the Republic of Tajikistan," April 20, 2006. Accessed February 17, 2016, <http://www.prezident.tj/en/node/10611>; Menga, "Building a nation through a dam," 483.

⁸⁹ Borisova, "Spory vokrug Rogunskoy GES," 95.

⁹⁰ K. Parshin, "Tajikistan: Citizens Ponder Bleak Future Amid Harsh Winter," *Eurasianet*, January 23, 2008, Accessed April 16, 2016, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61697>.

⁹¹ International Crisis Group, "Water Pressures in Central Asia." Europe and Central Asia Report no. 233. 2014, 3.

⁹² F. Garces de los Fayos, "The World Bank considers feasible the building of the Rogun Dam," European Parliament Directorate General for External Policies, In-Depth Analysis, 2014, 7.

⁹³ World Bank, "Key issues for Consideration," 6.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

construction works before the WB would finish the feasibility studies. However, the assessment studies only serve as an input in the decision making process.⁹⁵ In June 2014, the WB gave a positive opinion on the construction of Rogun Dam in Tajikistan with the publishing of the feasibility assessment. In the report it was said that the dam could operate while benefiting all parties involved, including Uzbekistan. It could both benefit the hydropower generation for Tajikistan and it could provide Uzbekistan of enough water for irrigation purposes.⁹⁶

However, the financing of the dam still remains a problem up to the moment of writing. Tajikistan would be able to finance the construction of the Rogun Dam by itself, but it will take its toll on the Tajik population, since it will cost approximately half of Tajikistan's GDP of 2013. Therefore, the construction will need foreign investors. But in order to have reliable international partners to invest in the Rogun Dam project, Tajikistan needs to pursue a transparent public finance sector and a sound economic management. So far, the Tajik government proves to be unable to do so. The system is corrupt and its public institutions are weak.⁹⁷ It thus remains to be seen whether Tajikistan will be able to actually resume the construction of the dam project.

4.2 Viewpoints on the Rogun Dam

Both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have very different stances towards the construction of the Rogun Dam. This has not only to do with material reasons. At first sight, material reasons indeed seem to play a big role in the dispute over the dam project. However, these material reasons, like improvement of economic conditions or in the case of Uzbekistan, a less independent economy, lead us to the identity of both countries. With material means they are trying to protect their desired identity and position within the CAR. Identity thus plays, like in the entire CAR, a big role in how both countries perceive the construction plans of the Rogun Dam. Below the viewpoints of both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on the Rogun Dam construction plans are discussed.

⁹⁵ Melnikovova, Havrland and Valencik, "Rogun – Hydropower Generating Controversy in Central Asia," 1355; World Bank. "Key issues for Consideration," 6.

⁹⁶ World Bank, "Key issues for Consideration," 10-15.

⁹⁷ F. Garces de los Fayos, "The World Bank considers feasible the building of the Rogun Dam," European Parliament Directorate General for External Policies. In-Depth Analysis. 2014, 5.

Tajikistan

As noted above, Tajikistan aims to become energy independent from neighboring countries with the construction of the Rogun Dam in order to strengthen its position in the region. In Soviet times, the country was part of the Central Asian Power System (CAPS). This system divided the energy among the Central Asian states. However, this system collapsed in 2009 when Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan withdrew from it. They prioritized selling gas resources for world market prices. This caused non-payments from the Tajik side, because the country was not able to pay these prices for gas, which led to electricity shortages.⁹⁸ In order to avoid energy shortages, Tajikistan started to generate hydropower through the use of hydropower plants. Nowadays 94-98 per cent of Tajikistan's electricity is generated by hydropower plants.⁹⁹ However, in winter, these hydropower plants cannot operate in their full capacity. In summer, they produce electricity excess but because of a lack of sustainability, this excess is lost every year. When the Rogun Dam is in operation, it will increase the electricity production, which will help Tajikistan to become more independent from Uzbekistan.¹⁰⁰ Tajikistan sees itself forced into relying on hydropower because of economic reasons, it seems. Tajikistan sees the Rogun Dam as a way of achieving energy independence and economic growth.

Furthermore, Tajikistan's economy is the weakest in the region and dependent on remittances for a big part. This could cause dissatisfaction among the Tajik peoples. In order to boost the Tajik economy, the Tajik government committed to the so-called CASA-1000 project. This is a project, which aims to create an electricity market for Central Asia and South Asia. The countries that are involved are Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁰¹ Tajikistan aims for the Rogun Dam to function as one of Tajikistan's main sources of electricity for this project.¹⁰² Through this, Tajikistan would be able to receive more incomes through the Rogun Dam. The Tajik government thus sees the Rogun Dam as

⁹⁸ Ito, El Khatib and Nakayama, "Conflict over a hydropower plant project between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan," 2-7; J. Jacoby, "If only it was water... The strained relationship between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan," Central Asia Program, George Washington University School of International Affairs, Central Asia Policy Brief no. 9, 2013, 2.

⁹⁹ Ito, El Khatib and Nakayama, "Conflict over a hydropower plant project," 4; Garces de los Fayos, "The World Bank considers feasible the building of the Rogun Dam," 6.

¹⁰⁰ Garces de los Fayos, "The World Bank considers feasible the building of the Rogun Dam," 7.

¹⁰¹ Ito, El Khatib and Nakayama, "Conflict over a hydropower plant project," 3.

¹⁰² Ibid.

a way out of its economic problems. The operation of the Rogun Dam might be a step forward to improve Tajikistan's economic position in the region.

A last reason why the Rogun Dam project is important for Tajikistan is because it would be able to help legitimizing the regime. As seen in the previous sections, the country suffered from turbulent times and struggles with defining itself as independent state, which also takes its toll on the Tajik peoples. Furthermore, the country suffered from harsh winters, which also caused suffering among the Tajik peoples. With the Rogun Dam operating, Tajikistan would be able to strengthen its position in the region and with that legitimize its regime.

Uzbekistan

As mentioned before, Uzbekistan tries to retain its independent position within the CAR and is highly dependent on its agricultural sector. Especially cotton and grain are important export products for the country. Approximately 28 per cent of the GDP is made up by the agricultural sector.¹⁰³ Because of its dependence on this sector, Uzbekistan had concerns about how the Rogun Dam will affect the river flow of the Amu Darya, which is one of the main sources of water for Uzbekistan. Therefore, the country's big concern is that the operation of the Rogun dam will cause less water for irrigation purposes. This would affect the Uzbek economy tremendously. Furthermore, the country is also concerned that Tajikistan will be able to control the water flows for political purposes.¹⁰⁴ This is mainly caused by the mutual mistrust between the two countries, which is caused by problems between them well before the announcement of the resuming of the construction of the Rogun Dam project by Tajikistan.

Uzbekistan also showed its concerns about the location of the Rogun Dam. The Dam will be constructed in a seismic active area. If there is an earthquake, this will cause that the Rogun Dam might be destructed. This would be devastating for Uzbekistan, since big parts of the country will be flooded. This will also affect the economy negatively, which could affect Uzbekistan's independent position within the CAR. Uzbekistan thus mainly fears the Rogun Dam will damage its agricultural sector when it finally operates.

When the Uzbek economy is doing worse, Tashkent might lose its independent position within the CAR. This is something the country also seems to attempt to avoid. One

¹⁰³ Ito, El Khatib and Nakayama, "Conflict over a hydropower plant project," 5.

¹⁰⁴ Garces de los Fayos, "The World Bank considers feasible the building of the Rogun Dam," 7.

could thus also state that Uzbekistan is not supporting the construction of the Rogun Dam, because it might affect the country's independent position and identity.

4.3 The Rogun Dam in Tajik and Uzbek discourse from 2012-2015

From 2012, the relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan reached a new stage of conflict in their official discourse because of the Rogun Dam plans. In the literature it is stated that the Rogun Dam issue could result in a bigger conflict between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.¹⁰⁵ This part will analyze the different problems that occurred between the two countries and the statements from the two governments on the Rogun Dam between 2012 and 2015 in order to conclude how both countries have used the Rogun Dam issue in their discourse and how this creates their political reality on the international stage.

Strong rivalry

The reasons that 2012 is marked as a new height in the dispute over the dam, is because during that year the Rogun Dam was heavily discussed in the official discourse of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In 2012, the gas supplies to Tajikistan were halted by Uzbekistan and this caused the Rogun Dam issue being discussed in the official discourse by both countries. The Tajik government connected the halt of the gas supplies to the Rogun Dam construction plans.

On April 1, 2012, the gas supply to Tajikistan was completely cut off by Uzbekistan. Uzbek officials stated that the gas supply was halted, because the three-month contract between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan had expired.¹⁰⁶ Tajik Cement, a big Tajik company, was hit hard by the halt of gas supplies. Reuters reported that Tajik Cement was producing construction material for the Rogun Dam.¹⁰⁷ Following this event, the Tajik government accused the Uzbek government for feeding the confrontation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan by using different tools to pressure the Tajik government into taking decisions

¹⁰⁵ Eschanov et al., "Rogun Dam- Path to Energy Independence or Security Threat?" 1573-1592; International Crisis Group, "Water Pressures in Central Asia," Europe and Central Asia Report no. 233. 2014.

¹⁰⁶ Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, "Uzbekistan Suspends Gas Supplies to Tajikistan." March 26, 2012. Accessed February 22, 2016, http://www.rferl.org/content/uzbek_gas_to_tajikistan_halted_on_april_1/24527285.html.

¹⁰⁷ R. Kozhevnikov, "Halt to Uzbek gas supply hits Tajikistan," Reuters April 2, 2012. Accessed February 18, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/tajikistan-gas-idUSL6E8F21PB20120402>.

that are complying with Uzbek foreign policy.¹⁰⁸ The specific page on the website of the Tajik Embassy in Moscow in which this was stated has been deleted, but several news agencies quoted parts of the announcement.¹⁰⁹ In the statement, it was literally stated that Uzbekistan is with these measures trying to obstruct the construction of the Rogun Dam:

“The plans to construct hydropower projects on the inland waters, including the Rogun Dam, occupy a special place in the Tajik-Uzbek relations. Over the last couple of years, Uzbekistan tried to prevent the development of this important sector of Tajikistan’s economy by using far-fetched and unfounded pretexts. With that, Uzbekistan is in violation with the international law. Without consultation with its neighbouring countries, it is building tens of reservoirs, which allows the country to concentrate large volumes [of water] from the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya and with that exacerbating an already disastrous situation in the Aral (Sea) (...) The ultimate purpose of these steps of Uzbekistan is an attempt to mislead the international community and prevent the completion of the construction of this object.”¹¹⁰

Not only is Tajikistan accusing Uzbekistan here from disrupting gas supplies in order to hinder the construction of the Rogun Dam, it also accuses the country from violating the international law by constructing reservoirs without consulting neighboring countries. From this quote, it becomes clear that Tajikistan was indeed suspicious about Uzbek pretenses to halt the gas supplies to Tajikistan. The Uzbek government responded that Uzbekistan’s actions are completely justified.¹¹¹ From this official statement it becomes clear how highly politicized the Rogun Dam project has become in recent years. Even though the gas supplies were not linked directly to the Rogun Dam, but to an expired contract, Tajikistan’s government still linked it to the construction plans of the Rogun Dam. Tajikistan shows here how important the Rogun Dam has become for strengthening its position.

¹⁰⁸ Fergana News. “Dushanbe Obvinyaet Tashkent v provotsirovanii socialnogo bunta v Tadjikistane.” April 3, 2012. Accessed February 22, 2016: <http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=18442>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.; P. Chorshanbiev, “Tadjikistan Obvinyaet Uzbekistan,” *Asia-Plus* April 3, 2012, Accessed February 22, 2016, <http://news.tj/ru/news/tadjikistan-obvinyaet-uzbekistan?page=1>.

¹¹⁰ Chorshanbiev. “Tadjikistan Obvinyaet Uzbekistan.”

¹¹¹ R. Kozhevnikov, “Tashkent otvetil stradayushemu ot blokady Dushanbe vstrechimi uprekami,” Reuters April 4, 2012. Accessed March 1, 2016, <http://ru.reuters.com/article/topNews/idRURXE8330RY20120404?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0>.

In September of the same year, the president of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, touched the Rogun subject in an official statement. He openly stated that the hydropower plants that both upstream Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan could lead to an armed conflict. During a visit of the president to Kazakhstan, Karimov stated that: "Water resources could become a problem in the future that could escalate tensions not only in our region, but on every continent (...)I won't name specific countries, but all of this could deteriorate to the point where not just serious confrontation, but even wars could be the result."¹¹² In this statement, Karimov sounds warning about the plans of both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to construct their hydropower plants. Although he puts in a rather general way, he still points at both upstream countries by saying "I won't name specific countries" in which he clearly pointed to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. From this statement, one can conclude that the Rogun Dam is an important issue in the relation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It is even such an important issue that Karimov found it necessary to mention it on a state visit to Kazakhstan. One could say that with this statement, the dispute over the Rogun Dam had reached a new height, since the Uzbek president threatens with material means to defend its position. Here it becomes clear that, like the constructivists argue, material power and discursive power are independent but connected, since one could lead to the other.

Tashkent also expressed its concerns on the construction of the Rogun Dam through a letter addressed to the WB. In this letter, Tashkent argued that the feasibility studies lacked some important considerations. Especially the risks on the downstream countries of the operation of the Rogun Dam were not taken well enough into account in the WB's feasibility studies, according to Tashkent.¹¹³ Through this letter the Uzbek government expressed its dissatisfaction with the way the feasibility studies were carried out by the WB. This was another way to express dissatisfaction with plans for the construction of the Rogun Dam compared with the other ways in which, according to Dushanbe, Uzbekistan tried to obstruct the construction of the Rogun Dam.

The year 2012 appeared to be a year in which the issue on the Rogun Dam became tense and clearly affected the relation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in a negative way. Discourse about the Rogun Dam has mainly been used by Tajikistan in order to accuse Uzbekistan from the use of tools in order to object the construction of the dam. From a constructivist lens, Tajikistan was here not confident of being able to develop its desired identity of becoming an independent and energy-exporting country. Uzbekistan even

¹¹² Nurshayeva, "Uzbek leader sounds warning over Central Asia water disputes."

¹¹³ Saidova, Letter from the Uzbek government to the World Bank.

referred to the possibility of material conflict between upstream and downstream countries and expressed its concerns about the construction plans for the Rogun Dam. Tashkent clearly felt threatened to maintain its independent identity within the CAR as Tajikistan was realizing the idea of the Rogun Dam. Here it also becomes clear how discursive power could lead to material action, since Uzbekistan threatened in its language with using material means.

Tajikistan gains confidence

In 2013, the Rogun Dam remained a subject of interest for both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In February of 2013, the WB appeared to be cautiously positive about the construction of the Rogun Dam. During a Question and Answer (Q&A) session with Saroj Kumar Jha, the WB director of Central Asia, answered questions on the Rogun Dam. He stated the following during the session: “The interim findings from the presentations, reports and feedback from the Panels of Experts are that the dam type under consideration and stability of the slopes appear to be acceptable.”¹¹⁴ From this statement, it becomes clear that already in 2013, the WB became more positive about Tajikistan’s plans to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam. This gave the Tajik government more confidence in the Rogun matter.

After the WB director of Central Asia made this statement, United Nations (UN) Radio held interviews with government representatives from both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The first interview took place with a government representative of Tajikistan, Rakhmat Bobokalonov, in February 2013. During this interview, the issue with Uzbekistan was also shortly discussed. Bobokalonov did not say anything about the dispute with Uzbekistan over the Rogun Dam. He simply stated that experts are studying the feasibility of the Rogun Dam and that they will await the results. Furthermore, the official stated that the construction and operation of the dam will not affect other riparian states negatively.¹¹⁵ The statement is, unlike the statement that appeared a few months earlier, rather neutral. This Tajik official showed its confidence over the construction of the Rogun Dam, than concerns that Uzbekistan will block the construction of the Rogun Dam. This

¹¹⁴ World Bank, “Q&A with Saroj Kumar Jha, Regional Director for Central Asia, on the current status of the Rogun Assessment Studies,” February 22, 2013. Accessed February 26, 2016, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2013/02/21/saroj-jha-q-and-a-rogun>.

¹¹⁵ UN Radio, “Nad Proektom Rogunskoi GES rabotayut eksperty vseмирnogo banka,” February 26, 2012. Accessed February 23, 2016, <http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/russian/archives/132728/index.html>.

can be considered as the result of the slightly cautious positive opinion of the WB on the construction plans of the Rogun Dam.

Through the same medium, an Uzbek official also was interviewed on the Rogun Dam. The Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources of Uzbekistan, Shovkat Khamraev, was during this interview sceptical about the Rogun Dam, especially about the WB feasibility studies to the Rogun Dam. He stated the following during the interview:

“The World Bank should directly finance experts, but (the World Bank) gave money (to Tajikistan) for the research by international experts, but Tajikistan chose who it should conduct- They sign the bills themselves and pay themselves for their work.”¹¹⁶

The quote again touches the WB feasibility studies, about which the Uzbek government earlier also expressed its concerns. From this quote it becomes clear that Tashkent did not see the WB feasibility studies as objective ones. He rather saw it as a way for Tajikistan to recruit their own experts, so it would work in the Tajik benefit, while Tajikistan is also the interested party of the dam project. This proves how much distrust there exists between Dushanbe and Tashkent. However, when the interviewer asked the minister whether it is possible that both sides will be satisfied he responded rather positive:

“Of course there are options (...) We are for it that they (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) build small hydroelectric power stations, which do not change the water and environmental conditions of the rivers in the basin.”¹¹⁷

Here Khamraev argues that under the condition that both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan will build smaller hydropower plants, Uzbekistan would be satisfied with the construction of hydropower projects. In this way, Tashkent argued that both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan can be satisfied.

During the same interview, Khamraev also expressed its political concerns when the construction of Rogun Dam and other dams in Kyrgyzstan will be completed. He argued that with the big dams, upstream Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan might be able to control the water flows for political purposes. This becomes evident in the following statement: “They

¹¹⁶ UN Radio, “Malye GES- Klyuch k vodnomu balansu v Tsentral’noi Azii.”

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

(Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) want to take the water management in their own hands. They want to control the rivers and dictate some unusual conditions.”¹¹⁸

In the interview, the Tajik government representative appeared to be rather confident about the construction of the Rogun Dam. As a response to this, the Uzbek representative showed its concerns about the consequences on the downstream countries of the construction of big dam projects in the region. The concern that the upstream countries might use the dams for political purposes towards the downstream countries appeared to be the strongest concern in the interview with the Uzbek minister.

The Uzbek government also addressed its concerns about the Rogun Dam to the UN General Assembly. In this address, the country again showed its concerns of the plans to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam. The Uzbek government stated that the plans shall lead to “a disruption of the natural flow (of the rivers).”¹¹⁹ Uzbekistan mainly expressed its concerns about the Rogun Dam’s effect when it will be operating through its official statements.

One could conclude that the dispute over the Rogun Dam took a new shape in 2013. Whereas in 2012 Tajikistan accused Uzbekistan for using material means to obstruct the construction of the Rogun Dam, Tajikistan became more confident about the realization of the construction plans in 2013. This changed the Tajik position in the dispute, since Dushanbe slowly seemed to gain international support for its mega project. This supported the Tajik’s aim to become a stronger player in the CAR and with that, Dushanbe seemed to feel less threatened in defending its identity. There were actually more prospects that Tajikistan would realize the construction of the Rogun Dam and therefore Dushanbe probably softened its tone towards Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan’s position also changed significantly. Tashkent now expressed its concerns based on feasibility studies of the Rogun Dam, instead of using material means for the obstruction of the Rogun Dam. One could conclude that the discourse on the Rogun dam became softer.

Strong Uzbek opposition

In 2014, the WB finished its feasibility studies. In June of that year, the WB gave a positive opinion on the construction of the Rogun Dam in its draft report on the Dam’s feasibility. It stated that, if the Rogun Dam was in operation and used in the way on which was agreed

¹¹⁸ UN Radio, “Malye GES- Klyuch k vodnomu balansu v Tsentral’noi Azii.”

¹¹⁹ Kamilov, “Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.”

during the feasibility studies, both upstream and downstream countries would benefit from the operation of the Rogun Dam.¹²⁰ This meant that Tajikistan was gaining more international support for resuming the construction of its long awaited mega dam project. However, the financing of the dam project, as mentioned before, was still a point of concern. The WB also stated this in its draft report on the feasibility of the Dam.¹²¹ However, in an official statement by Tashkent, published on its official government website and sent to the WB by the Uzbek government, Tashkent stated that it did not agree with the WB feasibility studies. The feasibility studies were considered as unreliable by the Uzbek government, because according to Tashkent there was no equal treatment of all interested parties. Tajikistan played a primary role in the studies, while this is the party that wants to construct the Rogun Dam. Furthermore, the Uzbek government stated that the environmental impact and the impact on the run-off conditions of the Amu Darya were not evaluated significantly. The Uzbek government also stated that it gave notice of these issues timely, but that the WB did not take its views into account during the process. In the last part, Tashkent suggests that better studies will be carried out on the feasibility of the Rogun Dam project and it recommends building smaller hydropower plants instead of a big dam project.¹²² Azimov also underlined the potential for conflict if such structures like the Rogun Dam are constructed: “taking into account the extreme water scarcity in Central Asia, this mechanism can be converted into explicit tool of political pressure on downstream countries, provoking escalation of confrontation and growth of conflict potential in the region.”¹²³ Uzbekistan appeared not to support the feasibility studies that were undertaken by the WB, although at first the country was rather supportive of the WB feasibility studies when they commenced. With this statement, the Uzbek government expressed its fierce objection to the construction of the Rogun Dam with arguments based on the reliability of the studies undertaken by the WB. Tashkent also underlined how the Dam can be used as a political tool by Tajikistan, which could result in conflict in Central Asia. Again Tashkent warns for a material conflict.

¹²⁰ Trilling, “Tajikistan: World Bank Gives Dam Green Light.”; World Bank, “Key issues for Consideration,” 15.

¹²¹ World Bank, “Key issues for Consideration,” 18-20.

¹²² R. Azimov, “Proceedings of the High Level Meeting on Regional Riparian Issues in the Context,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan August 4, 2014, Accessed February 23, 2016, <http://mfa.uz/en/press/news/2014/08/2116/>.

¹²³ Azimov, “Proceedings of the High Level Meeting.”

After the WB feasibility studies were published, Uzbekistan's stance became again more negative towards the construction plans. Whereas Tashkent still had a feeling it could influence the WB feasibility report by criticizing it, in 2014, this appeared not to be the case and therefore Tashkent's opposition to the Rogun Dam construction plans grew again. Uzbekistan saw the need to defend its independent position and identity within the CAR.

Softening relations?

After the harsh statement of Tashkent after the publishing of the WB feasibility studies, Uzbek authorities did not mention the Dam for a while in official statements. It even seemed that the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were getting better. Different sources wrote of a so-called *détente* between the two countries.¹²⁴ This *détente* discourse about the relation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan had several reasons. During a meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in Dushanbe, transport between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was discussed. Furthermore, cooperation on gas resources was discussed again, which had halted in 2012.¹²⁵ The Tajik government also announced the establishment of a Tajik-Uzbek Friendship and Cooperation Group.¹²⁶ These developments are all proof of an improving relation between the two Tashkent and Dushanbe. On July 22, 2015 the Tajik Minister of Energy and Water Resources Usmonali Usmonzoda even claimed that Uzbekistan did not have any objections anymore against the construction of the Rogun Dam.¹²⁷ However, this statement seems to have been a false claim by Dushanbe, because Tashkent responded to this statement that it still fiercely opposes the construction of the Dam. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan even republished its statements that it made in 2014 as a response to the WB feasibility studies. In the statement the Uzbek government stated that Uzbekistan's position has not changed

¹²⁴ Voloshin, "The Uzbek-Tajik dentente, can it last?"; E. Lemon, "Tajikistan and Uzbekistan Show More Signs of Thaw," *Eurasianet* April 27, 2015. Accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/73191>; U. Hashimova, "Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Try to Mitigate Water Disputes," *The Jamestown Foundation* June 5, 2015. Accessed February 24, 2016, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=44005&cHash=bb2d8a08e5807de0633ae592da561546#.VtAcJBjuFPM](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=44005&cHash=bb2d8a08e5807de0633ae592da561546#.VtAcJBjuFPM).

¹²⁵ Voloshin, "The Uzbek-Tajik dentente, can it last?"

¹²⁶ Lemon, "Tajikistan and Uzbekistan Show More Signs of Thaw."

¹²⁷ Putz, "Uzbekistan Still hates the Rogun Dam Project."

since.¹²⁸ Despite the fact that the relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were getting increasingly friendly on other issues in their bilateral relations, Uzbekistan still objected the construction of the Rogun Dam.

This shows that the Rogun construction plans itself did not immediately affect the relation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan anymore, although the discourse on the Rogun Dam by both countries shows differently. After the WB feasibility studies were finalized, Dushanbe and Tashkent appeared to be able to improve their bilateral relations again without resolving the Rogun Dam issue. This could be the case because although Tajikistan got prove from international consultants that the Rogun Dam is feasible, Tajikistan still struggled with finding financial resources for the dam project. This indicates that the construction of the Rogun Dam will not be completed in the near future. As long as Tajikistan is not planning on finalizing the project, Uzbekistan's position in the region is not threatened by Tajikistan's growing strength in the region.

At first, the Rogun Dam was not an issue of international concern, but when Tajikistan requested WB involvement, the issue of the Rogun Dam became internationalized. The more the WB became involved and the more positive the Bank became about the feasibility of the construction of the Rogun Dam, the more confident Tajikistan became in its public statements on the Dam project. Whereas in 2012, Tajikistan accused Uzbekistan for its obstruction of the construction of the Rogun Dam by blocking the railroad and halting gas supplies, the country became less negative towards Uzbekistan when the WB became more positive about the project. Uzbekistan mainly used its worries in its discourse on the Rogun Dam as a way to oppose the construction of the dam project. In the discourse of both countries, the Rogun Dam was mainly another tool to jeopardize the other country in a deeper-rooted conflict. The Rogun Dam project plans have become a big issue between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but the Rogun Dam project is not the root of the problems between the two countries. Deeper-rooted conflicts between both states are rather mirrored in the Rogun Dam issue.

¹²⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. "Press Release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan." August 3, 2015. Accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.mfa.uz/en/press/release/2015/08/4992/>.

4.4 Constructivist analysis

The Rogun Dam issue is basically a struggle of power about national identities, when looking at the issue from a constructivist lens. As seen in the previous chapter, identity is a common issue in the CAR. Because of newly developed identities and interests, which are diverging, cooperation within the region is lacking. The Rogun Dam issue became highly politicized because of the discourse on the issue by both countries.

Tajikistan needs a stronger position, since the country is rather a weak player in the region whose identity has slowly developed, but not completed after the fall of the Soviet Union. Tajikistan remains a fragile state with a very diverse ethnic composition.¹²⁹ This makes it hard for the country to create a national idea and unity among its population. According to Filippo Menga, a specialist on hydropolitics, dams can play a significant part in the nation-building process of countries. They can function as symbols for society, because they provide the nation from its needs.¹³⁰ In this case, the Rogun Dam could provide the Tajik peoples from enough electricity and economic growth, which would result in a wealthier society and a more satisfied society, which legitimizes the regime of the country. One could thus say that the Rogun Dam plays a significant part in the nation-building process of Tajikistan after experiencing turbulent times, which halted the nation-building process. Sufficient electricity and economic growth may contribute to the creation of unity in Tajikistan. The Tajik government also promotes this idea heavily within Tajik society.¹³¹ Therefore, the construction of the Rogun Dam gains even more importance for the Tajik government and society. Identity appears to play a big role in the desire to construct the Rogun Dam. The Rogun Dam is a tool for Dushanbe to create unity and welfare in Tajikistan.

For Uzbekistan, however, the Rogun Dam rather poses a threat to retaining an independent position within the CAR. Uzbekistan has a unique position in the CAR as the country borders all other Central Asian states. Therefore, the country assumes to have a so-called “special” position in the region and sees the need to take on a role, which carries more responsibility in the region than other countries because of its geographical position in the region.¹³² This special role can be taken as the desire to become the regional hegemon.

¹²⁹ Beeman, “The Struggle For Identity in Post-Soviet Tajikistan,” 101.

¹³⁰ Menga, “Building a nation through a dam,” 481-482.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 484.

¹³² F. Tolipov, “Micro-Geopolitics of Central Asia: A Uzbekistan Perspective,” *Strategic Analysis* 35 (2011), 635.

As noted in the previous chapter, Uzbekistan is also the biggest military power in the region. In this thesis, it is indeed assumed that Uzbekistan desires to be the regional hegemon. And this is clearly reflected in its stance towards the Rogun Dam construction plans. When Tajikistan is growing stronger because of economic growth and the creation of national unity, this could pose a threat to Uzbekistan's position in the region. Without the Rogun Dam, Tajikistan still depends on other countries and remains a weak player in the region. But when Tajikistan's position in the region would strengthen, Uzbekistan is losing its grip over the Central Asian countries. According to Roman Muzalevsky, the Rogun Dam poses a threat to Uzbekistan's leverage over Tajikistan in the region.¹³³ In order for Tashkent to develop its identity as regional hegemon, it needs to counter any developments in the region that could cause a decline in its regional power.

¹³³ R. Muzalevsky, "The Rogun Controversy: Decoding Central Asia's Water Puzzles," *CACI-Analyst* March 3, 2010. Accessed April 4, 2016, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12004-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2010-3-3-art-12004.html?tmpl=component&print=1>.

5. Conclusion

This thesis has sought to find out to what extent the discourse around the Rogun Dam issue by Tajikistan and Uzbekistan invokes conflict rhetoric in their bilateral relations. One can conclude that the Rogun Dam has primarily been used in the discourse of both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in order to defend their positions and identities within the region. Tajikistan clearly seeks to strengthen its position in the region while Uzbekistan aims a position as regional hegemon, or at least retain a position of independence within the CAR. The plans to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam influenced the discourse between the two countries on the subject, because it poses a threat to the Uzbek position in the region and it could be a tool to strengthen the Tajik position in the CAR.

From the previous sections, it appeared that all of the Central Asian countries struggle to cooperate as a unified region since the fall of the Soviet Union because of the diverging interests which they developed according to the new identities they took on in the post-Soviet period. This was also reflected in the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and the Rogun Dam issue. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are since the demise of the Soviet Union also cooperating on a limited scale. Since 1991, several issues in their bilateral relations developed. Right after the Tajik Civil War, Tajikistan distrusted Uzbekistan already. Furthermore, Tajikistan claims that some of the territory that is within the Uzbek borders, actually belongs to Tajikistan. Terrorism also jeopardized the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. There thus already existed issues in the Tajik-Uzbek bilateral relations well before the plans to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam were announced.

When Tajikistan announced its plans to resume the construction of the Rogun Dam, Uzbekistan approached these plans with concerns and therefore the WB was asked to undertake feasibility studies on the dam. In 2012 both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan developed a strong rivalry towards each other with regard to the Rogun Dam construction plans. Dushanbe saw the Uzbek halt of gas supplies as an attempt to obstruct the Rogun Dam construction plans and president Karimov even threatened with the possibility of an armed conflict if plans such as the Rogun Dam plans are pushed through. One could say at this point that the Rogun Dam issue was one of the bigger issues between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

In 2013, the tones of both countries softened increasingly. There were no more threats of the use of material means. Tajikistan gained more confidence on the Rogun Dam

project as the WB results appeared to be cautiously positive. However, Uzbekistan started to express its concerns on the reliability of the feasibility studies as a way to oppose the Rogun Dam construction plans.

In 2014, the WB published the feasibility studies and gave a positive opinion on the construction plans. Uzbekistan responded to the studies in an obstructive way. It stated that the feasibility studies were unreliable. Tashkent also highlighted how Tajikistan could be able to use the Rogun Dam as a political tool to downstream countries.

In 2015, there appeared to be some positive developments in the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. More cooperation between both countries evolved. But when Tajikistan claimed that Tashkent no longer opposed the Rogun Dam construction plans, Uzbekistan stated that it still fiercely opposed the plans.

Although the discourse on the Rogun Dam has been fiercely oppositional by Uzbekistan, it did not appear to jeopardize the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan anymore after the WB feasibility studies were finished. The official discourse of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on the Rogun Dam did not lead to stronger rivalry between the two countries overall. The discourse on the Rogun Dam by both countries did not lead to material actions by one of the states and did not invoke conflict rhetoric, according to this research. Tashkent in 2015 still stated it was fiercely against the construction of the Rogun Dam, but the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have improved since the WB finished its feasibility studies as both countries were approaching each other in other areas than water-and energy issues.

Tajikistan appeared in its discourse on the Rogun Dam in the first part of the period researched to express itself rather in an offensive way towards Uzbekistan. This shows how important the construction of the dam project is to Dushanbe. As noted in the thesis, the Rogun Dam is used by Tajikistan to create a new national identity in order legitimize the regime. But when Dushanbe gained more confidence when international players became involved in the matter, it softened its tone towards Uzbekistan, since Dushanbe became more convinced of international support for the Rogun Dam construction plans.

Moreover, at first the discourse on the Rogun Dam seemed to create more competition between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan when the WB was still in the process of undertaking the feasibility studies on the Rogun Dam. Indeed, it looked like the Rogun Dam issue was getting a fierce battle between both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Therefore, it is not surprising that the literature that has been written up till the moment of writing states that the Rogun Dam issue is one of the bigger issues in the bilateral relations between Tajikistan

and Uzbekistan. But the issue did not lead to any material action. Also, as time passed and as the feasibility studies progressed, the Rogun Dam did not seem to be such a big issue anymore in the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as before. The discourse on the Rogun Dam by both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan did not jeopardize the bilateral relations, since both countries recently have been able to expand their bilateral relations with each other. Therefore, this thesis does not expect the Rogun Dam to pose a threat to the bilateral relations of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the near future. However, it is remained to be seen whether the Rogun Dam will eventually be constructed and how Tashkent will respond to this. Up till the moment of writing, Tajikistan still struggles with finding financial resources to realize the construction plans. If the dam project actually will be constructed, it is not clear how Tashkent will respond to this, since it recently still stated it is fiercely opposing the construction of the Rogun Dam.

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