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MASTERARBEIT

Titel der Masterarbeit

„Power Asymmetry in the Mekong River Basin: The
Impact of Hydro-Hegemony on Sharing Transboundary
Water“

Verfasserin

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2014

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt: A 066 864

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt: Masterstudium Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Ostasiens

Betreuer: Mag. Dr. Alfred Gerstl, MIR

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACMECS	Ayeyawady–Chao Phraya–Mekong Economic Cooperation
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AMBDC	ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation
ANN	Asia News Network
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CLV	Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam
ECAFE	Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
ICEM	International Centre for Environmental Management
IISS	International Institute of Strategic Studies
JPY	Japanese Yen
LMI	Lower Mekong Initiative
LWRG	London Water Research Group
MC	Mekong Committee
MGC	Mekong-Ganga Cooperation
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOFAIC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
MOFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MRB	Mekong River Basin
MRC	Mekong River Commission
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODA	Official development assistance
PPP	Purchasing power parity
PRC	People's Republic of China
QEC	Quadripartite Economic Cooperation
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
TWINS	Transboundary Water Interaction Nexus
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USD	United States Dollar
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WB	World Bank

1. INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues have recently been gaining more attention in political studies and thereby also within the research of international relations, mainly due to the increasing demand on natural resources and human-induced environmental degradation. Broadly speaking, there are two antagonistic camps in the international environmental politics. Whereas one group of scholars warns against the possible relationship between environmental problems and international conflicts, the other side suggests that environmental problems may rather enhance cooperation between states. As there are over 250 transboundary river or lake basins in the world, an important subcategory of international environmental politics is the question of water allocation between several riparian states. Also the move by the United Nations to declare the year of 2013 as the International Year of Water Cooperation indicates that transboundary water allocation is an essential question in current international politics.

Whereas most of the river or lake basins are shared by two countries, several river basins include also more riparian states. One good example is the Mekong River Basin in Southeast Asia that is shared by six riparian states, i.e. Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Just as there are contrasting views about the connection between environmental problems and international conflicts, there are also diverse opinions encircling about the water allocation in the Mekong River Basin. Some scholars consider water sharing of the Mekong as a good example of enhancing cooperation on this particular matter and thereby also inducing collaboration as a spill-over effect on other issues in the region. On the other hand, there are more pessimistic viewpoints that rather emphasise conflictive events and growing tensions over water sharing in the river basin. Due to this controversial situation, the topic is regarded as a highly interesting research subject for the master's thesis.

In addition to the high number of riparian states and conflicting viewpoints, there are also other reasons for choosing the Mekong River Basin for the analysis. For instance, there are often serious problems with floods or droughts in the region, and thus it is crucial to have an effective water management system in the basin. Furthermore, several countries, especially China and Laos, are increasingly active in developing hydropower projects on the mainstream or on the tributaries of the river. This also causes concerns and opposing standpoints in the downstream states. Aside from the hydropower, the Mekong River is due to its length and size, an essential river for transportation, irrigation, fishery, domestic and industrial usage. The diversity of

riparian states is another aspect that makes it interesting to study how the countries can cope with this serious problem together. Moreover, it would be also appealing to test the Mekong case with a relatively new approach of the international environmental politics.

The complicated and controversial situation in the Mekong River Basin hence indicates that the traditional approach for analysing the relationships between riparian states in a linear continuum of conflict and cooperation is not very appropriate and there is a need for a more comprehensive methodology. Therefore, the two-dimensional Transboundary Water Interaction Nexus (TWINS) seems to be suitable for the analysis, as it considers simultaneously collaborative and conflictive examples of the relationships. Consequently, by looking at the question of water allocation in the Mekong River Basin from this different angle by not focusing solely on positive or negative events and rather merging these opposing aspects into one analysis, it should be possible to get a more comprehensive and balanced overview. There will be thus applied a three-level analytical framework comprising of three interrelated approaches proposed by the London Water Research Group.

Primarily, the first two sub-questions of the thesis require analysing the countries according to the concept of hydro-hegemony by assessing the power relations and asymmetry between the six riparian states via four different types of power, i.e. the geographical, material, bargaining and ideational power. Thereby it will be possible to determine the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons of the river basin and their differences in terms of these forms of power.

Although several scholars have already referred to China as the hydro-hegemon and it is obvious that China has a strong position in the region, this paper examines whether China could be seen as the most powerful state in all types of power under consideration and has thereby also the supremacy in the question of water-sharing, or whether it has in some category deficiencies. It is especially important when looking at the bargaining and ideational power, as these two categories are the main opportunities for non-hegemons to gain more power and resist the hydro-hegemonic state. However, also the material power includes several subcategories that could give weaker states some advantages and make the research even more interesting. As the bargaining and ideational power are less visible than the geographical or material power, the content analyses of statements, speeches and media articles form an essential part of these sections and enable to demonstrate how bargaining techniques or the power over ideas are used by different states.

As a second step, there will be looked at the collaborative methods of non-hegemons in order to answer to the next two questions that require examining whether and which cooperative groups these countries have initiated for resisting the hydro-hegemon, and what could be their strong and weak aspects. When the non-hegemonic states have been passive in establishing alliances, it would be also interesting to look at the main reasons for their inactiveness.

As a final step, it is necessary to analyse the Mekong case according to the TWINS approach that utilises results of the previous sections, but also looks at the national strategies, laws and bilateral agreements. The third level thus enables to find out, which type of interactions there are between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemonic states, and whether the cooperative methods of the non-hegemons have been successful.

This three-level analytical framework allows to give an extensive overview of the situation, while it does not focus exclusively on one hydro-hegemonic state as it is often done previously, but also concentrates on the role of non-hegemonic states and on their weak and strong aspects. After answering to the six sub-questions it should be possible to find an answer to the following main research question, i.e. “How does hydro-hegemony influence transboundary water sharing in the Mekong River Basin?”, and thereby observe the role of hydro-hegemonic order in the relations between riparian states, and its impact on the actions and behaviour of states in water-sharing questions. The hydro-hegemony in the research question is thus understood as a phenomenon and not a specific country per se.

This approach should thereby enable to look at the broader picture and, as a final point, make conclusions about the relationship between three key concepts included in the framework, i.e. power, environment and international relations, with the example of the Mekong River Basin. This would be a highly interesting feature of research, as there have been commonly studied the bilateral relations between power and international relations with the theory of realism, or the relations between environment and international relations with the green theory of international relations. This relatively new approach, however, enables to study the trilateral relationship of power (in terms of hydro-hegemony comprising of the four types of power), environment (sharing water as a natural resource), and international relations (conflictive and cooperative events in the relations between the six riparian states). Although the method of the London Water Research Group is more prevalent recently, this relational trio is still often

underestimated. Nevertheless, it seems appropriate to observe these important concepts altogether in one case study.

The thesis is divided into three main parts, each including several subchapters. The first section (Chapter 2) is dedicated to the theoretical background; including the state of the art, definitions of some main concepts, analytical framework and the research questions. The second part (Chapter 3) starts with some basic information about the river basin and the main water-related events, and thereafter applies the developed analytical framework to the case of the Mekong River Basin. This section thereby analyses the distribution of four types of power and determines the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons; but also looks at the main collaborative counter-hegemonic measures, i.e. the central cooperative groups in the Mekong River Basin and their weak and strong points. Additionally, it examines the relations between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons according to the TWINS approach, and ends with an analysis of the connection between the three key concepts of power, environment and international relations. The final section (Chapter 4) of the thesis demonstrates the main conclusions and some recommendations for future.

There are included a wide variety of sources to the thesis. Firstly, there are used academic journals and books for the theoretical part and for explaining the antagonistic situation in the research area. The analysis of the empirical part is, among many others, including statistics from different databanks, such as the Asian Development Bank, Aquastat, International Institute of Strategic Studies, Mekong River Commission, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, or the World Bank; but also reports of meetings and media articles for the content analyses; several reports and homepages of the collaborative groups for examining the counter-hegemonic tactics; and the legislation, agreements, national strategies and action plans for the TWINS approach.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. State of the Art

Sharing a river among multiple parties is a historical source of conflict. For instance, the Pacific Institute (2012) has listed in the Water Conflict Chronology several conflictive events reaching already to the time period before the Common Era. For example, there were disputes in 2500 BCE between the two Sumerian city-states of Lagash and Umma, or in the 18th century BCE when the damming was used as a military tool by Abi-Eshuh in the Tigris River. According to the UN (2014), the first international water treaty derives also from the year 2500 BCE when Lagash and Umma came to an agreement to end the water dispute over the Tigris River. Despite the long history of water conflicts and thousands of treaties related to the transboundary water resources, studying the issue in a sophisticated way as part of the studies of international relations is rather a recent concept.

In this section, there will be firstly described some main approaches to the connection between international relations and environmental issues, including water allocation, i.e. the state of the art of the theoretical base. These include perspectives that emphasise the possible connection between transboundary water sharing and international conflicts, proposed predominantly by Thomas Homer-Dixon, Peter Gleick, Arun Elhance, Wenche Hauge and Tanja Ellingsen. In contrast, there will be introduced some key scholars that rather highlight the linkage between water sharing and enhancement of cooperation, such as Aaron T. Wolf, Marit Brochmann, Nils P. Gleditsch and Daniel Deudney. Moreover, some perspectives of the concept of power encompassed to the international environmental politics (e.g. David Victor et al., Ronald B. Mitchell and Elizabeth R. DeSombre) will be presented. Thereafter there will be also explained some main viewpoints that explain water sharing in the Mekong River Basin (MRB) in order to demonstrate the conflicting opinions about the case study.

2.1.1. Connection between Environmental Issues and International Relations

Studies on the international environmental issues have due to severe environmental problems and growing human demand become more prevalent, but compared to the traditional theories of international relations, e.g. realism and liberalism, this area is still quite underdeveloped and

has emerged slowly. For instance, the international environmental politics¹ as a subfield of international relations emerged in the 1970s (Mitchell 2010: 6, 28). The field was getting stronger in the late 1990s, and from the 2000s onwards it has expanded remarkably, as there emerged several new methodologies, databases and theoretical approaches (Mitchell 2010: 6-7). Since the allocation of transboundary water as an element of international environmental problems is a contested issue in several regions of the world, it is a highly interesting topic that should be developed further. For several years, the approaches examining the connection between water sharing or scarcity and conflicts were generally divided into two main contrasting perspectives of the environmental security.

On the one hand, many authors have concluded that environmental issues, including water scarcity and allocation, could lead alone or rather with other issues to a conflictive stance. For instance, Thomas F. Homer-Dixon (2010) as one of the most popular scholars in this area suggests that although the connection between environmental scarcity (comprising of supply-induced, demand-induced or structural scarcities) and violent conflict is rather indirect, i.e. the environmental problems together with other social, political or economic difficulties can lead to a violent conflict, he still admits that this is a strong link that cannot be ignored.

Peter Gleick with the Pacific Institute (2012) has even proposed a chronology of water conflicts and an interactive map showing in which regions it is possible to see some serious security risks induced by water problems. Thereby they suggest that the frequency of disputes over water allocation within the states, but also in the international level is growing, as the climate change and population growth will deteriorate the poor situation even more (Cooley et al. 2009). Although they admit that the disputes are generally resolved diplomatically, they also propose that historical evidences about the tensions over water sharing and current problems indicate that the challenges with managing transboundary water resources are severe (Cooley et al. 2009: 2).

Additionally, according to Arun Elhance (1999: 7), it is not easy to enhance cooperation in transboundary river basins while the water issue is often strongly intertwined with other problematic questions and cannot be handled separately. Also Wenche Hauge and Tanja Ellingsen (1998: 314) have concluded that countries that have serious environmental problems,

¹ The concept of international environmental problems will be defined in a more detailed way in the Chapter 2.2.

including low freshwater availability, may face more likely a civil conflict than countries without these problems by suggesting that there is a link between environmental problems and domestic conflicts. However, they also suggest that economic and political factors still have a greater role to play in inducing a violent conflict, and that environmental degradation is rather a cause of smaller conflicts. Therefore, Hauge and Ellingsen (1998: 314) propose that although the environmental scarcity is not necessarily a catalyst, it can definitely be considered as an important cause of conflicts.

Aaron T. Wolf et al. (2006), on the other hand, propose a more optimistic perspective by stating that water resources offer more incentives for cooperation than for violent conflicts. Moreover, they suggest that water alone is never the only trigger of an international conflict (Wolf et al. 2006: 1). Although they admit that there have been actually many interstate conflicts over water, they claim that countries rather try to avoid entering a violent conflict, and look for a peaceful solution. Marit Brochmann and Nils P. Gleditsch (2012) have similarly concluded that the factor of sharing a river basin solely does not influence the risk of violent conflict between states, but at the same time, they do not deny that the inequality deriving from the location of countries along the river basin (upstream versus downstream) might exacerbate the tensions. Additionally, Daniel Deudney (1990) offers a critical perspective on the linkage between environment and national security by claiming that these are two separate issues and trying to find a connection between these aspects is already incorrect.

From these different approaches it is thereby possible to observe a controversial situation. The first perspective rather emphasises the possibility that water allocation could exacerbate tensions between the countries and even lead to a violent conflict. This viewpoint could also be seen in the media or among international organisations frequently. For instance, there are often circling articles that warn against water wars, e.g. National Geographic (Schwartzstein 2013) talks about the possibility of water war between Egypt and Ethiopia; The Guardian (Harvey 2012) states that water wars could start soon; and The Washington Times (Chellaney 2013b) warns that “water will be a key to war and peace”. Also in the United Nations, there are concerns about emerging tensions over water (Pentland 2011) and Foreign Affairs warns against a water conflict in the Mekong River Basin that could happen already in the next decade (Pongsudhirak 2014). Nevertheless, the opposite way of looking at the problem rather emphasises the opportunity of resolving the issues of water sharing cooperatively and peacefully.

Consequently, the theoretical landscape of water sharing between countries is clearly divided into two polarised perspectives and the evidences of both sides seem also reasonable, which makes the question even more complicated. Nevertheless, the London Water Research Group has recently developed another approach that could be located between the two aforementioned antipodes. The London Water Research Group that is based at King's College London and the University of East Anglia is a network of academics that deals predominantly with water research, i.e. with the topics of water security, management, resource development, sharing transboundary waters, and connection between water and energy (LWRG 2014). The key members of the group are Professor Tony Allan, Dr Dave Phillips, Dr Mark Zeitoun, Dr Jeroen Warner, Dr Ana Cascão, Dr Naho Mirumachi and Dr Mark Mulligan; and one of their goals is to integrate scholars from different fields of research for investigating this interdisciplinary issue from a balanced perspective. In this manner, it also aims to alter the typical view on transboundary water management and change the theoretical framework into practical tools (King's College 2014).

Firstly, the group has proposed a method for analysing water-sharing issues with the concepts of power, hegemony and counter-hegemonic tactics by looking at the transboundary water management as a political process (Cascão and Zeitoun 2010b: 27). Secondly, they have developed a unified matrix of conflict and cooperation that enables to analyse the relations in a multi-layer framework by not dividing conflict and cooperation into two contrasting camps, but rather proposing that one does not exclude the other (Mirumachi and Allan 2007). Since these approaches offer an interesting and innovative view on the issue, these methods will be combined for constituting the central theoretical ground of the paper.

Although there were also earlier some attempts to study the role of power in the environmental issues, it was often not well systematised and was treated quite modestly. Nevertheless, Victor et al. (1998: 10) researched the implementation and effectiveness of international environmental agreements with the example of the USA, and stated that powerful states can with threats or inducements impose on desirable agreements and usually are able to avoid sanctions for themselves. Similarly, Mitchell (2010: 38) suggests that states with a powerful position can have a significant impact on the actions of weaker states. Also DeSombre (1999: 64) proposes that a hegemonic actor may use its powerful position in environmental questions in order to make others to act as it desires. Mitchell (2010: 38) has also emphasised the role of issue-specific power, suggesting that some states may use their influence in some specific area

over environmental resources and thereby resist those states that even have a better military and economic position.

Moreover, power is sometimes considered to be as a cause of international environmental problems, as states with more power and resources do not tend to enhance the protection of environment, and the weaker states do not have enough possibilities or power to do so, which suggests that the environmental protection is successful only when powerful states have enough interest for it (Mitchell 2010: 61). Additionally, environmental issues are often ignored in domestic level as well (Mitchell 2010: 62), suggesting that it is thereby also harder to initiate actions in the international level.

To sum up, the previous information suggests that although power and hegemony are studied within the international environmental politics, it is often done in a quite general level and the main conclusion has been that powerful states make the key decisions and influence weaker states in the decision-making process. Although it shows that these concepts belong to the international environmental politics, they still seem to have quite vague positions and could be studied further. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine the case of the Mekong River Basin in the light of the concepts of power and hegemony as proposed by the London Water Research Group in order to see how the water sharing is influenced by these central notions.

Before describing in a more detailed way the analytical framework, it is necessary to look at some previous works written about the interactions in the Mekong River Basin. Additionally, there will be described how the key definitions of “international environmental politics”, “international environmental problems”, “power” and “hegemony” are interpreted in this paper. Although the concepts seem, at first glance, easy and understandable, it can be quite tricky to find suitable definitions for them.

2.1.2. Conflict versus Cooperation in the Mekong River Basin

First of all, it is possible to notice that recently the number of studies in different areas about the Mekong River Basin has to a great extent increased. For instance, Yu (2003) has investigated the regional cooperation and energy development in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS); Pech and Sunada (2008) have studied population growth and increasing

demand on resources in the Mekong River Basin; Watcharejyothin and Shrestha (2009) have focused on energy security and energy resource development in the GMS; Orr et al.(2012) and Ziv et al.(2012) have examined the impacts of hydropower projects on fish catches and biodiversity; Semone and Kozak (2012) have analysed the tourism brand development in the GMS; and Wong and Lewis (2013) have researched water quality in the Lower Mekong Basin. However, there have also been paid more attention to the connection between environmental issues and international politics in the Mekong River Basin. Nevertheless, there seems to be no consensus on the impact of environmental issues on the relationships between the six riparian states.

On the one hand, there are quite pessimistic viewpoints that rather emphasise the negative aspects and tensions. For instance, Kirby et al. (2010) have predicted that greater tension and political conflict in the basin could be expected, as there is no effective cooperation between the riparian states. They argue that the main reasons for this situation are unilateral decisions made by the national governments; weakness of the international institutions, including the Mekong River Commission (MRC); non-involvement of local people in resolving the question; the imbalance between growing demands and limited resources; and the impact of environmental changes. Also Wolf and Newton (2008: 217) have concluded that the Mekong is suffering under serious development problems, as the riparian states have not succeeded in reaching efficient compromises over sharing the river water.

Li (2012: 52) has similarly highlighted the negative sides of relations and, especially, the weakness of the MRC by arguing that the non-membership of China and Myanmar in the commission has hindered productive cooperation. Hinton (2000: 17) has also criticised the weakness of the Mekong River Commission by stating that the cooperation has been mainly technocratic, and the contrasting interests of riparian states are creating serious tensions. Wolf and Newton (2008: 217) have also regarded the question of non-membership of China and Myanmar as one of the main constraints in the successful relationship. Collins (2003: 107, 109) has similarly rather a pessimistic view by predicting that the relationship between the riparian countries could deteriorate, because the MRC is relatively weak and restrained. Furthermore, Haacke (2013: 157) suggests that reduced flow of the Mekong River poses a hazard for the Lower Mekong states, referring thereby to a security threat.

Another problematic aspect is a growing demand on resources that is emphasised by several scholars. For instance, Kirby et al. (2010) and Cartin et al. (2012: 3) have stated that tensions between the upstream and downstream countries have exacerbated due to the increased demands on water and energy. Moreover, several environmental organisations, e.g. International Rivers (2013b), 3S Rivers Network (2013), Oxfam Australia (2013), have emphasised the negative impacts of hydropower projects that are already built or are currently in the planning process in the Mekong River Basin.

At the same time, there are also some positive perspectives. For instance, Onishi (2007) has concluded that although China can be seen as a dominant power in the Mekong River Basin, it is still gradually starting to enhance cooperation with downstream states. Dinar et al. (2007: 225, 233) have emphasised the fact that the cooperation in the Mekong River Basin was not entirely stopped during the warfare in the period of 1950s to the 1970s, which could be seen as an essential aspect in the cooperation. Moreover, the Asian Development Bank has often highlighted the strong partnership in the Greater Mekong Subregion in several areas, e.g. in energy, agriculture and environment (ADB 2012a). Susanne Schmeier (2009) has also concluded that although there are several weak points in the cooperation, there are still some signs of improvement, e.g. the Mekong River Commission and the Greater Mekong Sub-Region Program, which could strengthen the overall security in the region. Therefore, the aforementioned sources have mostly highlighted cooperative aspects, but at the same time, they have not neglected existing obstacles to the collaboration.

The previous information suggests that there are quite contrasting views on the interaction of the Mekong River Basin. In addition to this ambiguous circumstance, Chou et al. (1997: 101) have suggested that the Mekong River Basin is a good example that can be potentially explained with cooperative as well as conflictive examples, which makes the case even more interesting to examine. Also Douglas (2005: 212) suggests that the interaction in the basin could actually be both conflictive and cooperative, depending on the countries' actions. Therefore, it is not easy to locate the water sharing of the Mekong in a linear continuum of conflict and cooperation, and it would be more appropriate to use the TWINS method proposed by the London Water Research Group that will be described in the next chapters.

Several studies on this topic have also often implicitly referred to the hydro-hegemonic situation in the Mekong River Basin when talking about the tensions in the region without using the term

“hydro-hegemon”. Moreover, Sinha (2012) and Chellaney (2013a) have even explicitly indicated to the hydro-hegemonic role of China. Similarly, Menniken (2007: 101) has described the circumstances as “Rambo-situation”, where China has the most powerful position in the geophysical, political, military and economic level. Therefore, it already seems that the hydro-hegemon of the river basin is quite obvious, but the simple division between one hegemon and five other non-hegemons does not help to examine the situation thoroughly. This paper hence tries to examine the power relations between all riparian states, i.e. also the differences between the non-hegemons, by observing why some countries have a weaker role in the region, whether and which methods they use for improving their conditions and how this hydro-hegemonic order influences water sharing of the transboundary Mekong River. Additionally, as the analytical framework of this paper includes several types of power that could give opportunities also for weaker states, it would be interesting to observe whether China has some weak points or could be seen as the strongest riparian state in every aspect.

2.2. Definitions of Key Concepts

This chapter explains in a more detailed way some key definitions that are used in the thesis. As the notions of “power” and “hegemony” are the most central aspects of the paper, there are also two other concepts that have to be clarified beforehand. These are the “international environmental politics” and “international environmental problems”.

First of all, it is important to mention that this master's thesis can be categorised as being part of the studies of *international environmental politics*, which is a subcategory of the international relations. Ronald B. Mitchell (2010: 1) has suggested a good way to understand the international environmental politics by stating that it is “the study of the cooperation and conflict among governments that surround environmental degradation, natural resource use, and other human-generated impacts on the Earth and the efforts to address them”. Therefore, the current topic corresponds appropriately to this definition and could be included to this subgroup of the international relations, as it is dealing with the use and sharing of a natural resource (water) between six countries.

Another important concept is the *international environmental problems*, which is defined by Mitchell (2010: 21) in a following way: “those impacts on the natural environment of human

activities that some significant set of people view as negative and that have either a transboundary or international commons aspect”. Additionally, he has explicitly indicated that those issues which have impacts on the transboundary rivers and lakes will often turn to an international problem, and that sharing a transboundary river is an important international issue (Mitchell 2010: 24). This reassures once again that the current research topic can be considered as part of the international environmental politics, as it handles an essential international environmental problem.

The concept of *power* has been a research subject in the political studies and in the international relations for a long time, and there are numerous papers written on this topic. Moreover, it seems that it is often handled as a central aspect when analysing international relations. However, due to its abstract essence there are many ways of defining the concept. As this paper uses several types of power, the definition should also be quite broad. At the same time, it should relate to the environmental issues, which definitely helps to narrow it. For demonstrating the diverse situation, there will be presented some ways of defining this broad concept in the Table 1.

This selection represents only a small part of definitions suggested by the scholars, but even this narrow spectrum shows how diversified the situation is. The definitions in the table vary from a well-known explanation offered by Robert A. Dahl to some more contemporary examples. There are also several types of power, ranging from the general concept of power to more specific forms, i.e. smart or soft power. Although there are used different conceptions and words, it is still possible to see that the meaning of definitions is actually quite same. The similarities are marked with bold letters. This means that all these definitions highlight the need to come about some specific results (or outcomes, effects, change), i.e. the meaning of having a power is not the need to have a leadership over other actors per se, but rather using others as tools for achieving desired outcomes. Therefore, in this thesis, the concept of power is used similarly in this broad way, i.e. as a need for achieving desired outcomes in sharing a transboundary river by influencing other actors, e.g. other riparian states. The specific types of power used in the analytical framework will be explained in the chapter 2.3.1.

Table 1. Ways of defining the concept of power

POWER	Power enables A to get B to do something that B would not otherwise do (Dahl 1957: 202-203).
	Power is the capacity to produce a change (Wartenberg 1992: 241).
	Power is structurally determined potential for obtaining favoured payoffs in relations where interests are opposed (Willer et al. 1997: 573).
	Power is the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate (Barnett and Duvall 2005: 42).
	Power is the ability to effect outcomes , not the ability to affect others (Morris 2006: 126).
	Soft power is the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes (Nye 2011: 20-21).
	Smart power is the ability to combine hard and soft power resources into effective strategies (Nye 2011: 22-23).

Source: compiled by the author.

The final broad concept that has to be defined is the *hegemony*. As this paper deals with the hegemonic order in terms of water sharing, there is used a definition of *hydro-hegemony* proposed by Ana Elisa Cascão and Mark Zeitoun (2010b: 27, 28) who modified the traditional concept of hegemony proposed by Antonio Gramsci. According to their definition, “hydro-hegemony is hegemony at the river basin level that occurs where control over transboundary flows is consolidated by the more powerful actor”, referring to the situation where “the first amongst equals”, i.e. the most powerful actor from a group of formally equal parties, has the controlling position due to the four (geographic, material, bargaining and ideational) forms of power (Warner and Zeitoun 2008: 805). Therefore, this definition refers to a close connection between hegemony and power that are the two main concepts of the thesis.

2.3. Analytical Framework of Transboundary Water Allocation

2.3.1. Hydro-Hegemony and Four Dimensions of Power

The main concept in the context of hydro-hegemony is, according to Cascão and Zeitoun (2010b: 28), the asymmetry of power, as the distribution of resources between riparian states is determined by an asymmetric capacity for using different types of power. This suggests that a state with the most powerful position can direct the management of resources in a way that is most suitable for itself. As other countries are aware of their weaker positions, they do not challenge the stronger riparian state (Zeitoun 2008: 4), and strengthen thereby the asymmetric situation even more.

This argument leads, however, to the question of how to measure *power*. Cascão and Zeitoun (2010b) have offered a way for analysing power according to four different pillars that are essential for measuring the hydro-hegemonic situation of riparian states. Actually, in some previous versions they have also used a model comprised of three dimensions of power where the geographical power is combined with the category of material power. However, it seems more appropriate to analyse the geographical power as a separate entity to see how it differs from the material power, and whether the geographical position alone has a great role to play. Subsequently there will be explained these four forms of power and the sub-criteria that will be used in the analytical framework.

Geographical power. The first form of power is considered to be one of the most influential types of overt power (Cascão and Zeitoun 2010b: 31), as it is clearly visible and gives the upstream country an advantage and a possibility to manipulate water flows. However, the example of Egypt as a powerful downstream country in the Nile River Basin also indicates that the geographical position is not always the most important indicator (Cascão and Zeitoun 2010b: 31).

This criterion can be easily determined by looking at the geographical location of riparian states for understanding which country enjoys the most convenient and which the most unfavourable position. However, the location measured only in terms of up- and downstream of a river could be too superficial when analysing the differences among the lower riparian states that may have quite equal positions. Therefore, there will be additionally analysed the vulnerability of each riparian state by looking at the share of the river basin catchment area in their territory and the number of people living in the basin. The criterion of vulnerability thus helps to explain the differences in the geographical power between the downstream riparian states better, as it demonstrates to what extent the countries are affected by the changes in the river basin.

Material power. The second type of power considers material capabilities, including economic power, military might, technological prowess, relative size and international political and financial support that are used in order to gain the compliance of other parties (Cascão and Zeitoun 2010b: 31; Zeitoun 2008: 26). This suggests that this criterion resembles the typical type of power analysed often in the realist perspective of the international relations.

Firstly, for measuring the economic power, there will be examined two criteria, i.e. the gross domestic product (GDP) at purchasing power parity (PPP) and GDP growth, as these indicators are commonly used for this type of analysis. For instance, Tellis et al. (2000: xiv) have similarly suggested that the economic strength as part of national power is usually measured in terms of GDP. These two measurements enable to look at the size of the economies and their potential for future development in a comparable way. Additionally, there will be examined the number of mainstream hydropower projects already constructed or in progress in the river basin, as this is often one of the most contested issues in water sharing among several riparian states. Therefore, this criterion should help to show the capacities and interests of the countries in using the resources of the river.

Secondly, the complicated subject of military power requires also criteria that are available and easily comparable. Therefore, there will be compared the share of military expenditure as a percentage of GDP, the number of active military personnel and the size of the defence budget of the riparian states. These criteria are typical measurements for military might and should demonstrate in a comparable method the similarities and differences, and hence enable to rank the riparian states. For instance, Tellis et al. (2000: 137) have also proposed that the criteria of defence budget and manpower are among others the two main indicators for measuring military might.

Thirdly, Cascão and Zeitoun (2010b: 31) have used the term “technological prowess” as a next form of material power. However, as people form an essential part of this type of power, in this paper it will be labelled more broadly, i.e. as the “human capital”, that includes following categories: size of population, adult literacy rate, gross enrolment in tertiary education as a percentage of respective school aged population, life expectancy at birth rate, labour force participation rate, unemployment rate, number of mobile cellular subscriptions and fixed broadband Internet subscribers. As the World Economic Forum (2013) has proposed four main pillars of human capital, i.e. the education, health, workforce and enabling environment, the chosen eight subcategories should demonstrate in a comparable way the differences among riparian states in this particular area.

Fourthly, the theoretical basis includes also the criterion of international support, as the existence of powerful friends and a good political position in the world can give a stronger footing also in water sharing (Zeitoun and Warner 2006: 449). Therefore, they suggest looking

at the financial and political support given to the riparian states. As the area of international support is relatively broad and the focus of the thesis is on water sharing, in this paper the criterion will be narrowed to the international support given to the water management of the river (e.g. investments of the hydropower projects) or to the aid given explicitly to the specific region, i.e. to the specific river basin.

Fifthly, it is important to analyse the amount of water resources of the riparian states, i.e. the renewable water available in the countries, as this helps to show whether there is some type of water scarcity or stress, or there is an abundance of water by indicating thereby to the dependency on water resources and also to the material power of riparian states. Finally, the sixth separate operational criterion used for measuring the material power is the size of riparian states that enables to conclude which countries have advantages in the material power deriving from their large territory. All six aforementioned criteria will be thereafter combined into one comparative graph for making conclusions about the imbalance of material power among the riparian states.

Bargaining power. The third form of power considers the “capability of actors to control the rules of the game and set agendas”, and refers to the power of influencing the terms of agreements for getting desired results (Cascão and Zeitoun 2010b: 31). Some examples of the bargaining power are following: finding official recognition through international treaty, claiming the moral high ground by linking the question with international water law, linking water with some other important or emotional issues (issue-linkage), influencing the negotiations by imposing the terms of bilateral agreements, refusing to negotiate and cooperate, or agreeing to negotiate only on its own terms, promoting cooperative institutions and using trade-offs (Cascão and Zeitoun 2010a: 189-90; 2010b: 36; Zeitoun 2008: 26).

Since the bargaining power is not as clearly visible and measurable as the geographical or material power, it would be suitable to use a content analysis for examining the statements of meetings held on the topic of water allocation in the river basin, in order to see whether some countries have influenced the course of negotiations by using some of the aforementioned methods. According to Cascão and Zeitoun (2010b: 31), this type of power is strongly influenced by the relations between the countries, e.g. if each side has a legitimacy in the group, this power helps to compensate the lower level of material power. The bargaining power is thus

one of the main tools for non-hegemonic states to compensate the asymmetric situation in the geographical and material power (Zeitoun 2008: 28).

Furthermore, it is important to look at some factors that influence the bargaining positions, such as the impact of material power. For instance, Daoudy (2009: 381) has emphasised that the lack of financial capital influences significantly the country's bargaining position. Also Zeitoun (2009: 15) has suggested that the bargaining power is often closely related to wealth. Therefore, there will be beforehand also analysed some main reasons that could give the riparian states more bargaining power, e.g. the role of investments or hydropower projects.

Ideational power. The last dimension of power represents “the capacity of a riparian to impose and legitimise particular ideas and narratives” and is thus considered to be the less visible and the most abstract form of power (Cascão and Zeitoun 2010b: 32, 36). The power over ideas thus enables the basin's hegemon to shape the course of actions, perceptions, cognitions and preferences; and manipulate the interaction with other riparian countries by using sanctioned discourse, i.e. delegitimising other types of discourse with its own hegemonic rhetoric, and thereby hiding necessary information or data (using silence), sharing ambiguous information, having better knowledge about the situation, stalling deliberately (intentional use of time), trying to securitise the water issues by changing them to the matter of top national security and overemphasising some minor issues, using issue-exclusion and co-opting (Cascão and Zeitoun 2010b: 31, 36; Warner and Zeitoun 2008: 807; Zeitoun 2009: 15; Zeitoun and Allan 2008: 8).

By using those abovementioned measures, a riparian state has the possibility to make other countries to believe that their decisions are made voluntarily, whereas they actually are shaped by the more powerful state. It is also characterised as a form of power that distinguishes between acceptable and non-acceptable, because the country using this type of power can “(re)write the rules of the game” and thereby make its own plans to look in an acceptable way to other riparian states (Zeitoun 2009: 15; Zeitoun and Allan 2008: 8). The ideational power will be predominantly studied with the content analysis of media articles for examining how the question of water sharing is presented publicly. In this paper, the criterion of co-opting will be also widened to the category of promoting cooperation, as the latter enables to observe the usage of sanctioned discourse with the content analysis better. Additionally, there will be looked at the question of data sharing among the riparian states, as the control over hydrological data enables to shape the ideas in the river basin in a desired way.

Measuring hydro-hegemony. After collecting data about the four dimensions of power, it is possible to determine the hydro-hegemonic situation of each country, i.e. the power asymmetry between the riparian states. Cascão and Zeitoun (2010b: 32) have not used numerical scales for demonstrating the strength of each type of power and have depicted the pillars of power as relative to other riparian states. Nonetheless, it seems more reasonable to have some kind of numerical spectrum with similar values for each type of power in order to have a better and easily comparable overview.

In this paper, the scores will be given to the countries in the scale of 1-6 depending on their performance in the four levels of power. Six points correspond thereby to the highest possible score, one point with the lowest measure, and three points show an average value. It is also allowed to give the countries same scores when they have similar positions of power, e.g. for several countries equally two points. By having the same scale for different types of power, it is finally possible to combine the separate results together and conclude which riparian state is the hydro-hegemon and for which reasons (i.e. which fields of power are the strongest); and which country has the weakest position in the basin. Moreover, it also enables to analyse the power relations between all riparian countries, including between the non-hegemons themselves, and not focusing solely on the differences between one hydro-hegemon and others. Additionally, it is possible to observe in which categories there are greater or smaller dissimilarities. In order to analyse whether the non-hegemonic states have also tried to improve their weaker position and balance the asymmetrical situation by forming some coalitions, it is appropriate to use the subsequent approach of anti-hegemonic methods.

2.3.2. Counter-Hegemonic Tactics

The analysis of counter-hegemonic tactics constitutes the second step in the theoretical framework, as it needs beforehand the results of the power relations among riparian states. Although the method of cooperation is also a minor part of the bargaining power, it is necessary to examine this possibility in a more detailed way to see whether the non-hegemonic countries have used this tactic for challenging power asymmetry and resisting the hydro-hegemon.

Marwa Daoudy, Ana Cascão, Jeroen Warner and Neda Zawahri have analysed several anti-hegemonic tactics. For instance, Daoudy (2009) has focused mainly on negotiation tactics, such

as issue-linkage, forming alliances, signing agreements and blocking international investments; and has concluded that the counter-hegemonic tactics rather help the weaker riparian states to achieve short-term gains. Warner and Zawahri (2012: 222), on the other hand, have concentrated on the non-state actors, such as NGOs and interest groups who could use lobbying, mobilise the public in protests, leak reports to the media, challenge existing discourse and enlist international allies. However, they have also named some other more severe methods, such as blocking access to sea and building up military capacity (Warner and Zawahri 2012: 219). Cascão (2006: 5) has also with the example of the Nile River Basin listed several counter-hegemonic mechanisms ranging from violent to cooperative mechanisms, e.g. military acts, internal violence, reactive and pro-active diplomacy, unilateral infrastructures, cooperation and offering discourse alternatives.

Therefore, it is possible to see that these authors have examined counter-hegemonic tactics that could be done by a state (or some other actor) alone or with other non-hegemonic states together. In this paper, the focus will be only on the formation of several blocks, i.e. on the cooperation between non-hegemonic states, in order to see whether the power asymmetry is challenged by some collaborative methods of the weaker countries. This also means that there will be concentrated mainly on the states and not on other actors. Additionally, from the categories offered by Daoudy, Cascão and Warner, it is possible to see that the cooperation is suggested as one of the main methods for resisting the hydro-hegemon while all authors have listed collaboration (e.g. forming alliances, signing agreements, enlisting allies or general cooperation) as an essential factor.

For that reason, there will be looked at the main cooperative formations among the non-hegemons by examining their main activities and interest areas, regularity of meetings, attitude against the hydro-hegemon, and their other strong and weak points. If the cooperative methods are absent or weak, there will be analysed what could be the reasons for this situation. Thereafter, there will be examined the results of this (non)action and its impact on the power asymmetry.

2.3.3. Transboundary Water Interaction Nexus (TWINS)

After identifying the power relations among riparian states and the counter-hegemonic tactics, it would be interesting to see how this hydro-hegemonic situation influences the interactions on the transboundary water allocation, i.e. where does the case locate in the conflict-cooperation matrix. Therefore, the third and also final step of the analysis that also helps to answer to the main research question uses the Transboundary Water Interaction Nexus (TWINS) proposed by Naho Mirumachi and John Anthony Allan (2007). They suggest that the typical view of one-dimensional continuum of conflict and cooperation does not explain transboundary water-sharing issues well, and have thus offered a new perspective, i.e. the TWINS model.

Mirumachi and Allan (2007: 1) suggest that the asymmetry of power has a crucial role in the interactions of transboundary water sharing, which means that their approach is thereby strongly intertwined with previously introduced aspects considering the power relations. Therefore, the TWINS method is suitable as a third step in the analysis while it needs also information from two previous sections. The two-dimensional model shows that conflictive and cooperative aspects may coexist and do not exclude each other, as conflictive interaction may also include positive effects and every cooperative relation should not be entirely positive (Casção and Zeitoun 2010b: 29). Thereby they are also challenging many previous studies on transboundary water sharing that rather look at the issue through the lenses of a linear continuum. The TWINS approach hence enables to combine cooperative and conflictive events into one model by examining the trajectory of interactions of water allocation. The model has two parts (Figure 1): the horizontal scale for measuring the cooperation intensity, and the vertical scale for conflict intensity.

Mirumachi and Allan (2007: 6-7) have divided the cooperation into five categories ranging from a low to a high level of cooperation:

- (1) confrontation of the issue - the problem is acknowledged but there exists neither joint action, identification nor shared goals;
- (2) ad hoc interaction - there is joint action but no shared goals;
- (3) technical cooperation - there are shared goals but no joint action;
- (4) risk-averting cooperation - there are shared goals, joint action, and a mutual belief that other will act as expected, but the states do not undertake the unforeseen costs in the future when committing such action;

- (5) risk-taking cooperation - an ideal form of cooperation where costs and risks are taken into account and the reciprocal behaviour is evident.

The vertical line of continuum is divided into four categories ranging from a low to high conflict intensity, and is mainly adopted from the securitisation theory of the Copenhagen School and supplemented by Jeroen Warner. The categories are:

- (1) non-politicisation as the lowest level of conflict that reflects a situation where a state is not concerned over the water-sharing issue and the question is not in the public domain (Buzan et al.1998: 23; Mirumachi and Allan 2007: 5);
- (2) politicisation as the second step in the continuum is also adopted from the Copenhagen School and indicates to those circumstances where water sharing gains a place on the political agenda and public policy, and requires thereby government decisions and resource allocations or some other communal governance (Buzan et al.1998: 23);
- (3) securitisation-opportunisation is the third subcategory of conflicts that includes two options: the securitisation refers to a situation where the issue is presented as an existential threat that requires emergency measures and justifies actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure (Buzan et al.1998: 23-24); and the opportunisation proposed by Jeroen Warner occurs when there is a chance to improve the situation by justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure (Mirumachi and Allan 2007: 6);
- (4) violisation is adopted from Iver Neumann and presents the extreme point of continuum, when the issue is intensified to the point that violent action is employed and extreme measures are included (Mirumachi and Allan 2007: 6; Zeitoun 2007: 219).

An important concept among the scale is the *existential threat* that is used by a securitising actor for changing an issue from lower levels of conflict to a securitised issue (Buzan et al 1998: 24). Although existential threats are diverse among different sectors, the securitisation does not necessarily mean that there exists an actual threat but rather that the issue is framed in this manner (Buzan et al.1998: 24). For example, Mirumachi (2012: 87) has proposed that water scarcity could be presented as a threat to the agricultural sector or economic growth that endangers the survival of state and thereby legitimises the construction of hydropower projects. This means that by showing some risky conditions as being existential threats, states have the possibility to justify their actions. Moreover, there is a possibility of *desecuritisation*, which refers to the situation, where an issue moves out from the securitised atmosphere back into the logic of politics (Buzan and Hansen 2009: 216-217).

As one method for studying securitisation is to analyse discourse and political constellations (Buzan et al. 1998: 25), it indicates that the results of the content analysis of speeches and media articles that will be used in the first section of the analytical part (by the bargaining and ideational power) are also suitable for the TWINS approach. Buzan and Hansen (2009: 214) also propose that the securitising actors (i.e. those who use the securitisation method) are usually political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists, and pressure groups, which suggests that it is good to include several sources (speeches of meetings and also media articles) to the content analysis.

The previous information shows that the concepts of securitisation and existential threat are relatively wide-ranging and may be used in numerous ways. This paper considers thus any discourse of a state (political leaders, government etc.), media or other actors in the context of water allocation that includes references to a damaging effect on state, people, animals, biodiversity, water resources, environment, economy or other similar essential subjects as a securitising action and the mentioned examples of negative impacts as existential threats. On the other hand, when similar issues are not presented as threats (i.e. there is no reference to the damaging effects), but rather as problems that are regulated in the political level; e.g. in the national strategies and legislation; they are considered to be under the category of politicisation. Also when the issues are not concerned with survival and are solely showing a loss or maintenance of some values, they could be seen as non-existential threats (Warner 2004: 7). In this manner, the non-existential threats also coincide with the category of opportunitisation, as there is a possibility of improving the situation by applying some certain measures. When the situation has become extremely severe and there are used violent methods in dealing with water-sharing issues, it could be seen as a final step of the conflicts, i.e. as the violisation.

In this paper, there will be used a two-dimensional model of TWINS (Figure 1), including cooperation and conflict intensity levels, but the third aspect, i.e. the robustness of political economy², will be excluded, as it is not in the focus of the thesis. The modification would not minimise the benefit in this case, as the goal of using the method is to look at the coexistence of conflict and cooperation in the river basin. The two-level analysis is also more common, as

² The criterion of robustness of political economy indicates to the diversity and strength of economies, i.e. to other unique institutional and hydrological qualities the states have in the river basins, for instance, trade and technology, that enable them to achieve water security better (Mirumachi and Allan 2007: 13-14).

Mirumachi and Allan (2007: 10), Zeitoun and Mirumachi (2008: 307) and Sojamo (2008) have similarly used the two-dimensional model without the third component.

According to Zeitoun and Mirumachi (2008: 310), the TWINS approach enables to conclude whether the interaction between states is positive, neutral or negative; depending on the values of the matrix. They suggest that if the transaction is in the position of low conflict and high cooperation, it can be called as a positive interaction that is mainly driven by the need for “expand the pie” or reduce environmental uncertainty, and is often represented as a cooperation on a wide variety of issues or initiated on equal terms. Neutral interaction can be seen in a case of low conflict and medium or low cooperation and is often driven by economic goals, mutual distrust or by the need for improving the international reputation, and is represented as a narrow, minimal or unstable cooperation. Additionally, they propose that a medium or high conflict and low cooperation refer to a negative interaction that is often motivated by the need for having control over resources, or because of the changes in power symmetry. This is often represented by securitisation, as a coercive and dominant cooperation or as a violent conflict.

Along with the opportunity to analyse the complex relations including several dimensions and aspects, the TWINS approach also enables to depict changes over a certain period of time. Nevertheless, in this paper, there will be examined the current stance and not divided the analysis between different time periods. On the other hand, the model will be applied for analysing the relationships between multiple actors. This means that instead of analysing the relations between two countries in one table as proposed by Mirumachi and Allan (2007), the model will be utilised for assessing the relations between six riparian states, i.e. between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons. Additionally, it would be interesting to analyse the relations between the hegemon and the bloc of non-hegemons in order to see whether the counter-hegemonic tactics have improved their situation. In this way, there will be integrated all the previous methods (power relations, hydro-hegemony and counter-hegemonic tactics) into the TWINS-approach in order to get one cohesive model for analysing the relationships and thereby answering to the main research question.

		Cooperation intensity (low-high)				
Conflict intensity (high-low)		Confrontation of the issue	Ad hoc interaction	Technical cooperation	Risk-averting cooperation	Risk-taking cooperation
	Non-politicised					
	Politicised					
	Securitised/ opportunitised					
	Violised					

Figure 1. Modified version of TWINS model

Source: Mirumachi and Allan 2007: 7

2.4. Research Questions and Their Relevance

The three approaches explained previously are strongly interrelated and complement each other, as they all rely on the basic concepts of power asymmetry and hydro-hegemony. Therefore, by following the three-step analytical framework, it is possible to answer to the subsequent main research question: “How does hydro-hegemony influence transboundary water allocation in the Mekong River Basin?”. This question hence enables to find out the role of power asymmetry and hydro-hegemony in the interactions over water sharing in the Mekong River Basin.

The question is relevant in this research area, as it enables to look in a comprehensive way at the situation of the Mekong River Basin. This implies that the paper will not examine solely the positions of non-hegemons in relation to one hydro-hegemon, but there will be also studied the impact of the hydro-hegemonic order in the river basin on all six riparian states, which is often neglected in several studies. The analytical framework thus enables to examine also the differences and similarities between the non-hegemonic states in terms of power. Thereby it is possible to see which role the power asymmetry in transboundary water sharing plays, but also whether and how the non-hegemons are able to resist the hegemonic country.

In a broader concept, the question enables to examine the triangular relationship between power, environment and international relations. This suggests that instead of studying the bilateral relations between environment and power as often is done in the research field of green theory of international relations, or between power and international relations as an essential part of realist theory of international relations separately; this research will add these three phenomena together. Firstly, as proposed by Mitchell (2010), sharing a transboundary river (natural resource) is an important international environmental issue and belongs to the international environmental politics by constituting thereby the aspect of environment in the triangular network. Secondly, the focus on the hydro-hegemony represents the section of power, as the hydro-hegemonic order is determined by four different types of power. Finally, the conflictive and cooperative examples in the relations over transboundary water sharing among six riparian states constitute the aspect of international relations. Therefore, the analytical framework comprised of the three steps enables to look at the question of water sharing in the Mekong River Basin from a slightly different angle by including these three important issues into one system.

In order to find an answer to the main research question, it is beforehand necessary to answer to six sub-questions by following the three-step analysis. This means that with the first approach of the hydro-hegemony composed of four pillars of power, there will be find answers to following questions:

- (1) How are the four types of power, i.e. geographical, material, bargaining and ideational power, distributed between the six riparian states of the Mekong River Basin?
- (2) Which riparian state has the most and which countries have less powerful positions, according to these types of power, i.e. who can be considered as the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons?

These two sub-questions help to examine the power asymmetry in the Mekong River Basin and the power relations between all six riparian countries. This means that, instead of just focusing on one hydro-hegemon, there will be examined the differences in the four types of power between non-hegemons as well.

In the second section, there will be answered to the following questions:

- (3) Whether and which cooperative methods have the non-hegemonic states used in order to resist the hydro-hegemon? What are their strong and weak points?
- (4) If the countries have not used many cooperative methods, what could be the reason for this passiveness?

The final section, i.e. the TWINS approach, will enable to find out answers to the next two questions:

- (5) Which type of interactions (i.e. positive, negative or neutral) there are between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemonic states of the Mekong River Basin, according to the TWINS model?
- (6) Have the cooperative methods of the non-hegemons (if existing) been successful?

The answers to the last four research questions will help to find out whether there are some successful and effective collaborative counter-hegemonic tactics or severe conflictive examples that will be combined into the TWINS model. As the focus of the counter-hegemonic tactics is on collaborative measures, it is possible to analyse several cooperative groups in the Mekong River Basin in a quite detailed manner. With these research questions it is also possible to see from the analytical TWINS matrix, whether it is beneficial for the non-hegemons to act in a collaborative way in the river basin. Moreover, the TWINS method should demonstrate how the interactions between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons could be characterised, i.e. are they rather positive, negative or neutral, and thereby also show the impact of the hydro-hegemonic phenomenon on sharing the water of the Mekong River.

2.5. Summary of the Analytical Framework

In order to have a clear overview of the main criteria used in the paper, there will be next summarised the key steps of research and thereby presented a short overview of the following empirical part. The third chapter will hence begin with some basic features about the Mekong River Basin and with a brief history of relationships between the riparian states considering the water allocation of the Mekong River.

Thereafter, there will be used the approach of hydro-hegemony in order to measure power relations between the riparian states, and to see which country is the most powerful in these

four areas (geographical, material, bargaining and ideational power) and can thereby be considered as the hydro-hegemon. Additionally, this approach enables to assess the situation of non-hegemons and the power relations in water-sharing issue between all riparian states. For each type of power there will be used several sub-criteria that are described in the chapter 2.3.1 in a detailed way.

As a next step, there will be investigated whether the non-hegemonic states have tried to cooperate for resisting the hydro-hegemon and influence the power asymmetry. This will be done by looking at several collaborative institutions or agreements, and at their strong and weak points. When the cooperative activities are relatively weak, there will be analysed the main reasons causing this situation.

Finally, there will be analysed the case according to the TWINS model by locating the countries in the conflict-cooperation matrix. The hydro-hegemon will be thereby positioned against all the non-hegemons separately, but also against the non-hegemons together as a bloc. This will help to demonstrate how the power asymmetry and hydro-hegemony influence the relations, whether the counter-hegemonic tactics have had some impact on the interactions, and how the water sharing of the Mekong River Basin can be described according to this model. After analysing the case of the Mekong with these three key dimensions, it should be possible to answer to the developed research questions and also see how the three concepts of environment, power and international relations are interrelated with the example of the Mekong River Basin.

3. WATER ALLOCATION IN THE MEKONG RIVER BASIN

3.1. Overview of the Mekong River Basin

The importance of the Mekong River is reflected by its size, strategic location in Southeast Asia and by the number of riparian states. Although there is various information about the position of the Mekong River in the rankings of length and size of the world rivers, depending on the measuring methods and data gathered about rivers (Campbell 2009: 1, 2), it is still considered to be one of the world's longest (10th-12th place in the ranking) river and has also one of the world's largest flow. For instance, according to the Mekong River Commission (2011d: 3; 2014c), it is the twelfth-longest and tenth-largest river in the world with a length of 4909 km and with a mean annual discharge flow at the mouth of 14,500 m³/s. However, according to Wolf and Newton (2008: 217), the river is the tenth-longest and seventh-largest river in the world. Therefore, it is reasonable to be cautious with exact numbers and simply take into account some approximate values and rankings.

Additionally, the Mekong River is an important transportation route and a vital source of life for its riparian countries. As the river extends from the Tibetan Plateau to the Mekong Delta, its climate and riparian states are very diverse. The Mekong River is thus shared by the People's Republic of China, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Kingdom of Thailand, the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam³; and the climate varies from temperate to tropical. Moreover, the monsoon seasons have a serious impact on river flows, dividing the year roughly into wet and dry periods, as the dry season lasts from November to May, and the wet season from June to October (Kirby et al. 2010: 573; MRC 2013a: 5). Some great differences between wet and dry seasons could be well seen at Pakse, in Laos, as during wet periods the water flows could be even fifty times higher than in dry seasons (MRC 2013a: 5). Also northeast Thailand suffers seriously from seasonal water shortage, as the difference of river flow between wet and dry season is there about tenfold (Kirby et al. 2010: 573).

As there are great differences between the average flow and dry season flow, the activities in the Upper Mekong Basin play a significant role for the lower riparian states, especially in the

³ In this paper there will be mostly used shortened forms of the countries' names, i.e. China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

dry periods. For instance, the Upper Mekong Basin within China and in the eastern part of Myanmar that can be described as rather mountainous region with small river tributaries, comprises 24 percent of the total basin area with 15-20 percent of the annual average water flows, but with about 30 percent of dry season flow (MRC 2011d: 3; MRC 2013a: 5).

The Mekong River Basin can be divided into several smaller sub-basins formed by a great number of tributaries due to its variable characteristics (UNEP 2006: 17), which makes the whole geographical picture of the Mekong even more complicated. Furthermore, the basin is divided into six different bio-geographical zones, i.e. the mountainous Lancang River Basin (in Qinghai province, the Tibet Autonomous region and Yunnan province in China); the sparsely inhabited mountainous Northern Highlands with many tributaries (in Yunnan province in China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand); the Korat-Sakon Plateau as the driest region in the basin (in northern Thailand and southern Laos); Eastern Highlands with a dense network of tributary rivers, high rainfall and many forests (in Laos and Vietnam); Southern Uplands with low population density and many forests (in Cambodia); and Lowlands including the Mekong Delta and coastal area (in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam) (UNEP 2006: 17-18).

It is also important to add that the Mekong River Basin is an area with a diverse fish, bird and animal species (Campbell 2009: 4). On the one hand, this shows the importance of the area for population and economy, as fishery and agriculture together are the two most important economic activities of the local population in the Mekong River Basin and even 75 percent of the population depend on these sources (UNEP 2006: 24). This implies that local people are highly influenced and dependent on the water resources of the Mekong River. On the other hand, it also means that there is a great need for protecting the species and their habitat.

The river also contributes to other relevant aspects for local communities, such as transportation, industries, public water supply systems and mineral resources (UNEP 2006: 25). Last but not least, the hydroelectricity is an area that is gaining more importance, as the Mekong River Basin has a good potential for developing hydropower projects and there is also a growing demand for energy. For instance, in 2008, the population of the Mekong River Basin was over 70 million people (Pech and Sunada 2008: 219), which implies that the need for alternative sources of energy is essential for the region.

Therefore, the countries in the Mekong River Basin are actively developing and planning several hydropower projects. Besides the interest in producing electricity, there are also other reasons for constructing large dams, e.g. the need for irrigation, flood control and water impoundment (Weatherbee 2005: 263). However, this wide variety of interests is also one of the main reasons why the management and sharing of the basin is highly complicated. Additionally, the concern over negative impacts of the hydropower projects has grown remarkably. For instance, Weatherbee (2005: 263) suggests that at the beginning of the construction process, the negative influences were not considered and the focus was on the economic benefits, as many international funding agencies (e.g. the World Bank, Asian Development Bank) kindly supported the construction. However, the situation has changed and there is now more attention bestowed upon the dangerous consequences.

For instance, it is often emphasised that dams constructed in the upstream would interrupt the flow of the river and thereby change the natural river ecosystem to an “artificial slack-water reservoir habitat” (Collins 2003: 108; International Rivers 2013b). This could thereby have a serious impact on the Lower Mekong Basin, on its population and on the environment. Some problems that could emerge from the construction of hydropower projects are soil erosion, deforestation, land degradation, blockages in the river's mouth, increased salinity, silting, declining fish catches due to the blocked fish migration, extinction of fish and other aquatic species, loss of habitats for birds and animals, displacement of many villagers, reduction of water, sediment and nutrient flow to the delta, and the change in the overall balance of nature (Collins 2003: 108; Douglas 2005: 213; International Rivers 2013a, Weatherbee 2005: 263).

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the Mekong River Basin has very diversified geography, climate, riparian states and water flows that make the entire management and sharing of the basin relatively complicated. Moreover, there are many different actors included in the water sharing, ranging from national governments and international organisations to local and regional NGOs, local communities, and companies interested in the development of hydropower projects. Therefore, the contrasting interests and multilevel players change the water allocation extremely difficult, require a steady joint action, an efficient water management and strong cooperation among the riparian states.

3.2. Main Water-Related Events in the Mekong River Basin

In this section, there will be briefly described some main events of the water-sharing process in the Mekong River Basin from the end of the Second World War until present for having a better overview of how the countries have reached today's situation. One of the first important events is the creation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) in 1947, as it established the Bureau for Flood Control that started to research floods in international rivers (MRC 2013a: 18; Wolf and Newton 2008: 217). In 1952, the ECAFE that had an aim to support the overall development in Southeast Asia presented the results of its first report of the Lower Mekong Basin over the flood control and water resources development (MRC 2013a: 18). Although the report demonstrated that the river has a great hydropower potential, active development was impeded due to the complicated situation in the region because of the First Indochina War, and due to the non-participation of China and Myanmar (MRC 2013a: 19). Therefore, there was no serious attempt to manage water sharing in the Mekong River Basin until signing the Geneva accord in 1954 that aimed to end hostilities in the region (Wolf and Newton 2008: 217).

The first document highlighting the need for joint management in the Mekong River Basin (Reconnaissance Report – Lower Mekong Basin) was introduced in 1956 by the US Bureau of Reclamation (MRC 2013a: 19; Wolf and Newton 2008: 217). Another similar report written by the ECAFE in 1957 had similar suggestions, but it also induced the riparian states to have a permanent organisation for improving the joint management of the basin (Wolf and Newton 2008: 217). As the four lower riparian states were positively disposed towards the suggestions, the Committee for Coordination of Investigations of Lower Mekong Basin, i.e. the Mekong Committee (MC) was established with the support of the United Nations in 1957 by the governments of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and the Republic of Vietnam (Mekong Committee 1957; Sneddon and Fox 2006: 185).

The statute of the MC stated that the members will jointly study the development of the Lower Mekong Basin (Mekong Committee 1957: Chapter I). Some more specific functions of the MC (1957: Chapter IV) were following: “promoting, coordinating, supervising and controlling the planning and investigation of water resources development projects in the Lower Mekong Basin”. According to Wolf and Newton (2008: 218), the MC was initially quite active and its projects functioned despite the intense situation in the region. However, it seems that the

cooperation was predominantly technical, e.g. there were established networks of hydrological and meteorological stations and programs for aerial mapping, surveying and levelling.

The next crucial step in the cooperation was the agreement between Laos and Thailand in 1965 that regulated the development of power generation project in one of the tributaries of the Mekong River, i.e. in the Nam Ngum River, with the aid of the Mekong Committee (Wolf and Newton 2008: 218). Moreover, Wolf and Newton (2008: 219) have repeatedly emphasised that the importance of the MC can be seen in the fact that the project was not stopped during the hostile situation between the two countries. Nevertheless, in the 1970s the cooperation was weakened due to political tensions. Although the MC signed the Joint Declaration of Principles on the mainstream development in 1975 that included also the clause of “reasonable and equitable use”, the conflict in Cambodia acted as a serious impediment for the committee; and thus in 1977, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam established the UN Interim Mekong Committee without the participation of Cambodia (MRC 2013a: iv; Wolf and Newton 2008: 219).

On the other hand, the period of early 1990s demonstrated several positive outcomes. Firstly, Cambodia re-joined the MC as a full member in 1991 (MRC 2013a: vi). Additionally, the Greater Mekong Subregion Cooperation Program with assistance from the Asian Development Bank was started and included all six riparian states. The main functions of the program are “implementation of sub-regional projects in transport, energy, telecommunications, environment, human resource development, tourism, trade, private sector investment and agriculture” (ADB 2013c). Therefore, this program encompasses also other areas of cooperation and is not solely focusing on water sharing. In 1993, the so-called golden quadrangle (Quadripartite Economic Cooperation, QEC), i.e. the cooperation between Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and China, on transport and tourism was established (Weatherbee 1997: 171). Another important milestone in the cooperation was in 1995 when the four lower riparian countries signed a new agreement (Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin) that changed the Mekong Committee to the Mekong River Commission (MRC). When comparing these two agreements, it is possible to see that the latter is more sophisticated, detailed, and gives the commission more functions.

First of all, as the previous agreement was explicitly dealing with the Lower Mekong Basin, the Agreement of 1995 states that it regulates the whole Mekong River Basin (MRC 1995: Art.1), despite the fact that China and Myanmar are not participating as full members in the MRC.

Also the area of functions has widened, as the previous committee was focusing on planning and investigation of development projects in the Lower Mekong Basin (MC 1957: IV-4), but the latter states that the cooperation is conducted in “all fields of sustainable development, utilisation, management and conservation of the water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin including, but not limited to irrigation, hydropower, navigation, flood control, fisheries, timber floating, recreation and tourism” (MRC 1995: Art. 1).

Secondly, the structure of the MRC is more complex composing of the Council (one member from each member state at the Ministerial and Cabinet level) for making policies and decisions, providing guidance, and resolving differences; the Joint Committee (one representative from each member state at least at the Head of Department level) for implementing policies and decisions of the Council, formulating a basin development plan, regularly obtaining, updating and exchanging information and data, assigning tasks and supervising the Secretariat, resolving differences, conducting, reviewing and approving studies, and making recommendations to the Council over the structure and modifications of the Secretariat; and the Secretariat for technical and administrative services (MRC 1995: Art. 12, 15, 21, 28). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the assignments are clearly divided so that the Joint Committee has the main role in the implementation process, the Council is making the main decisions and the Secretariat is for administrative issues.

Thirdly, the Agreement of 1995 includes several relevant aspects of water utilisation that were not regulated before. For instance, there are clauses of notification and prior consultation, which regulate that riparian states provide information to the Joint Committee on its proposed use of water, and other member states can discuss and evaluate the impact of the proposed use (MRC 1995: Art. 5). Hence, the agreement states that the tributary projects should be subjected to notification to the Joint Committee; the mainstream projects require notification during wet season in the case of intra-basin use; but during wet season in the case of inter-basin diversion, and during dry season in the case of intra-basin use they require prior consultation (MRC 1995: Art. 5A, B). Moreover, inter-basin diversion projects on the mainstream during dry season need specific agreements (MRC 1995: Art. 5B). Therefore, the prior consultation is utilised for more serious projects or during critical periods (dry season) and is, according to Sneddon and Fox (2006: 191), stricter as it requires an actual dialogue before implementing the projects. Although these rules do not give a right to veto the proposals and there are no sanctions, it is

still stated that the prior consultation should end with an agreement by the Joint Committee (MRC 1995: Art. 5B).

One important aspect that has often been named as the main obstacle to the cooperation in the Mekong River Basin is the non-membership of China and Myanmar. However, they are dialogue partners of the MRC since 1996. Moreover, in 2002, China signed an agreement with the MRC, that obligates China to provide water level data in flood season from two stations in the Upper Mekong; and the agreement was renewed in 2008 (MRC 2008, 2013d). In 2005, China also agreed to discuss on technical issues with the Mekong River Commission, such as flood management and alleviation (Biba 2014: 35). Another significant landmark was in 2013, when China agreed to share more frequently and regularly hydrological information with lower riparian states (MRC 2013b).

The previous information suggests that despite some cooperative steps, the participation of China and Myanmar in the management of the basin is relatively limited and also the decisions of the MRC are not binding. Moreover, the development of hydropower projects on the Mekong River is causing tensions. Therefore, the MRC could be seen as a successful step in creating a platform for discussions, but at the same time, its action is strongly hindered. Several problems of the MRC and the disputes about the hydropower projects will be discussed in a more detailed way in next chapters.

In addition to the MRC and GMS Program, there are also established other cooperative frameworks, e.g. the ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (AMBDC) in 1996. Its main goals are promoting economic integration and development, encouraging dialogue, and strengthening relations between the ASEAN member countries and the Mekong riparian states with several sub-regional and national projects (ASEAN 1996, 2014). Therefore, it includes, along the six riparian states, also Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. The cooperation is conducted in the areas of infrastructure, trade, investment, agriculture, forestry, industry, tourism, human resource development, science and technology (ASEAN 1996). Although there are also several other collaborative groups in the Mekong River Basin that will be demonstrated in the Chapter 3.4, it seems that the Mekong River Commission is the greatest cooperative method that deals predominantly with water-sharing issues, whereas other cooperative tools are broader and include several areas and/or other states.

It is also important to mention some greatest tensions in the Mekong River Basin. The main concerns are over the development of hydropower projects by China, as there are worries about data sharing and misleading information. Therefore, the downstream countries have often criticised the activities conducted in the upper parts of the basin. For instance, in 2004, the Mekong River Commission demanded more information from China on its dams, and in 2010, the MRC sent a complaint to China for resolving the problems with the river's low flow (Biba 2014: 35).

Furthermore, Laos has recently also created tensions with its own projects. Therefore, there have been several complaints from other riparian states about the vague information proposed by Laos. For instance, there were controversies among the MRC members when the commission required more time for studying negative impacts of the planned hydropower project of Laos (Xayaburi dam) and, at the same time, a Thai construction company contracted to build the dam and already hired personnel for construction (The Economist 2012). Moreover, there were complaints that Laos did not notify its partners of the MRC about the construction on time (The Economist 2012).

The controversial Xayaburi dam along with other hydropower projects of Laos and China have been also highly criticised by several NGOs. For instance, in 2011, 263 NGOs required the governments of Laos and Thailand to stop proceeding with the proposed Xayaburi Dam in Laos (International Rivers 2011). Furthermore, the Transboundary Freshwater Dispute Database by the Oregon State University (2008) has also categorised the complaints of social and environmental groups and also the warnings of the MRC about China's hydropower projects as being rather conflictive events in the relationship of riparian states.

Additionally, the disastrous floods in the river basin have also created criticism and several problems. For example, there were major floods in 2000 and 2001 along the Mekong Delta; in 2008 in northeast Thailand; and in 2011 in Cambodia and southern Vietnam (IRIN Asia 2008; Thul 2011). The flooding has hence caused even more criticism in downstream states about the upstream hydropower projects. For instance, China's dams have been blamed for floods as well as for extreme drought in downstream states (BBC 2010; The Irrawaddy 2008). The accusations together with other conflictive, but also collaborative events will be further analysed in following chapters. Nevertheless, it already seems that there is much criticism and controversy

encircling in the river basin, especially due to the hydropower projects, unilateral actions, uncertainty and ambiguous information.

3.3. Hydro-Hegemony: Distribution of Power in the Mekong River Basin

3.3.1. Geographical Power

The geographical power is the first type of power under analysis. The map (Figure 2) indicates clearly that China as an upstream country has the most convenient location in the basin. Also Myanmar is often considered to be part of the Upper Mekong River Basin (UNEP 2006: 11). However, sometimes it is also added to the group of the Lower Mekong Basin. For instance, Douglas (2005: 197) has named the whole area south of the Chinese border as the Lower Mekong Basin. Nevertheless, China and Myanmar should have the most powerful positions in terms of the geographical power, especially China as the most upstream country could be considered as a riparian state with the most convenient position.

Moreover, Myanmar has not been very interested in engaging in the river management. One reason for its low interest is that the Mekong River as a border river of Myanmar comprises only a narrow and quite inaccessible area of the country (Schmeier 2009: 33; Thim 2010: 58-60). However, Myanmar has been recently showing greater interest, as it has started to plan more actively several hydropower projects (Schmeier 2009: 34). Its relatively narrow range of interests and small share of the river can thereby be considered as weakening factors for the geographical power when compared to China, but due to its relatively convenient position in the upper part of the basin, it still has advantages over other downstream riparian states.

Additionally, the vulnerability of the two upstream riparian states is relatively low. One possibility for measuring the vulnerability in a geographical sense is to compare the share of the river basin catchment area from the riparian states' territory and the share of population in the basin. If the catchment area comprises a high percentage of the country's territory and a great share of population lives in the basin area, the state is more vulnerable and affected by the alterations made in the upper part of the basin (e.g. in the case of floods or drought), and has thus a more fragile position. These two indicators even strengthen the dominant positions of the two upstream states, as the catchment area comprises 38 percent of China's territory and only 4

percent of Myanmar's territory (Thim 2010: 58). Similarly, the percentage of the population living in the basin is low while the upper reaches are mountainous and sparsely inhabited.

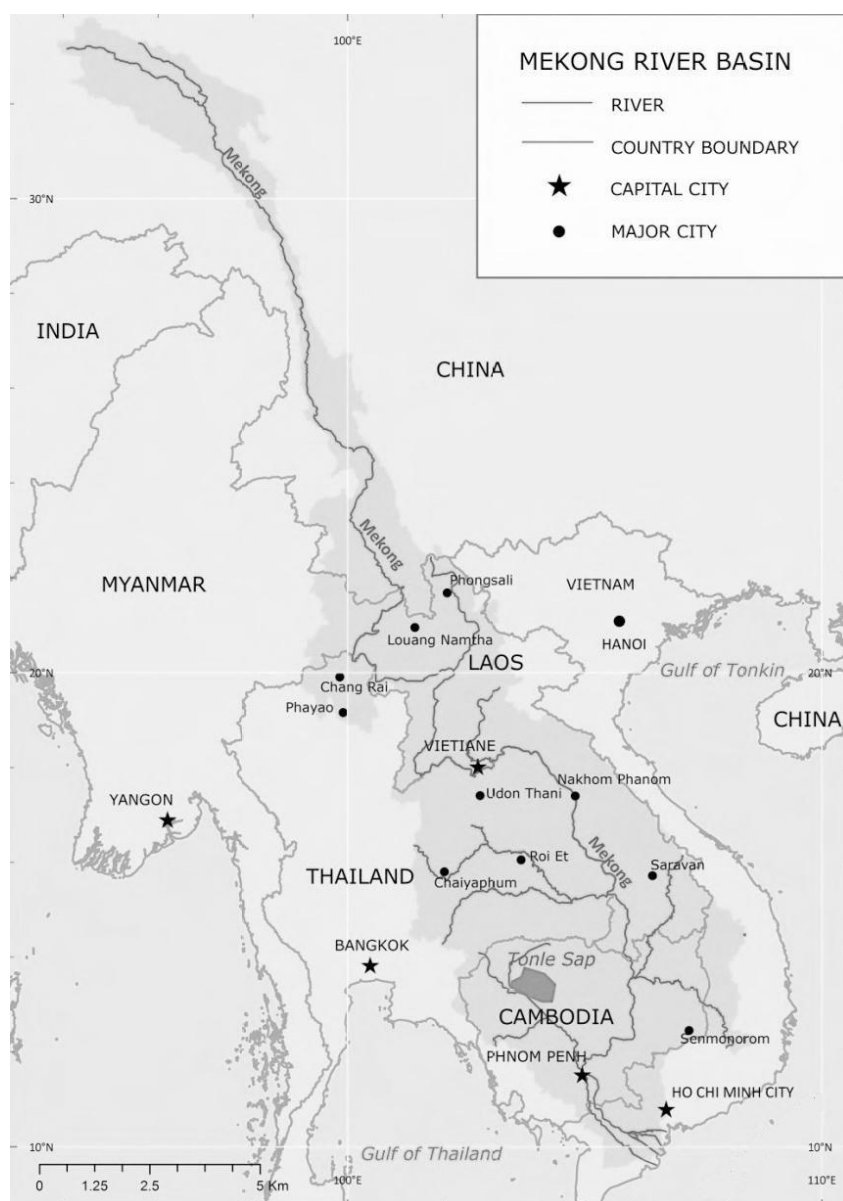


Figure 2. The Mekong River Basin
Source: CGIAR 2012

Thereafter, the river passes through the downstream states of Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Although the predominant position of the two riparian states of the Upper Mekong Basin (i.e. China and Myanmar) is clear, the distribution of geographical power between the four downstream states may not be that visible. This means that the geographical location on the map does not solely determine their geographical power, as the riparian countries depend to a different extent on the river resources. Therefore, the vulnerability may easily minimise the

geographical power of a country, i.e. the more vulnerable a state in the basin is, the weaker position it in the geographical power has.

Firstly, Laos can be seen as a country with a high dependency, as the catchment area comprises 97 percent of the country (Thim 2010: 58). Moreover, about 89 percent of the population of Laos live within the Mekong River Basin (MRC 2011d: 13). This data clearly suggests that the country has relatively vulnerable position and thus the downstream location may act as a serious impediment for the country. Also according to Schmeier (2009: 34-35), Laos is highly dependent on the river and hence is likely to be negatively affected from the developments made on the upper part of the Mekong.

Similarly, Cambodia's share of the catchment area comprises 86 percent of the country's territory and 81 percent of its population lives in the MRB (MRC 2011d: 13; Thim 2010: 58). Therefore, the dependency on the river basin is quite similar to Laos, but as being situated below of Laos, it has even more vulnerable position and thereby also less geographical power. Schmeier (2009: 36) has also considered Cambodia as one of the most vulnerable countries in the basin. Next to the great share of the catchment area in the country, the vulnerability derives also from its high dependency on water resources used for agriculture that is the country's main economic sector (Schmeier 2009: 37).

Thailand as being situated between Laos and Cambodia should have the middle position of the geographical power. However, as the catchment area comprises only about 36 percent of the country's territory and 36 percent of the Thai population live in the basin (MRC 2011d: 13; Thim 2010: 58), its vulnerability is not that high. This means that it has also better position in the means of the geographical power. Also according to Schmeier (2009: 35), the Mekong has not been very important for Thailand, but the growing interest in irrigation and energy has changed the situation.

Vietnam as being situated in the lower part of the MRB should have the least convenient position. Nevertheless, the catchment area of the basin comprises about 20 percent of the country's territory and about 24 percent of the population live in the basin (MRC 2011d: 13; Thim 2010: 58), which are quite small indicators when compared to Cambodia or Laos. However, as being the lowest riparian state, it still has the weakest position in the geographical power, but the differences between Vietnam and Cambodia are not that great as they would be

if considering only the geographical location. Nevertheless, Vietnam is according to Schmeier (2009: 37-38) in an “extremely vulnerable” position despite the low share of catchment area in the territory, as the region of the Mekong River Basin is responsible for half of the whole country's agricultural production and also the severe damages of floods increase its vulnerability. Elliott (2009: 255) has similarly considered Cambodia and Vietnam as being greatly dependent on the Mekong River. Therefore, Vietnam can clearly be seen as the weakest country in the sense of the geographical power.

In order to demonstrate the relative distribution of the geographical power in a graph, there will be measured the average of subjectively given scores for the geographical position and vulnerability, according to the previous data. When considering only the geographical position in the basin (upstream or downstream location), the pillars of power (in the scale of 1-6) would have following scores: China – 6, Myanmar – 5, Laos – 4, Thailand – 3, Cambodia – 2, Vietnam – 1. However, as the lower riparian countries have different degrees of vulnerability, the power distribution is more complicated. Therefore, the pillars of the final geographical power are also slightly altered. Nevertheless, the location in the basin is regarded as a slightly stronger factor than the vulnerability in determining the scores.

The final distribution of geographical power (Figure 3) thus indicates that China has the most powerful position in the basin, followed by Myanmar. Although Laos should, according to the geographical location, have better position than Thailand, the remarkably higher levels of vulnerability of Laos decrease its relative geographical power, and therefore Laos and Thailand are positioned in an equal place, with the score of 3 out of 6. Cambodia and Vietnam have the weakest position in the distribution of power. Although Cambodia has a larger share of catchment area in its territory and more people living in the basin than Vietnam, the latter is still the lowest riparian state and hence depends to a great extent on the activities made in upstream countries and has the lowest score in the geographical power.

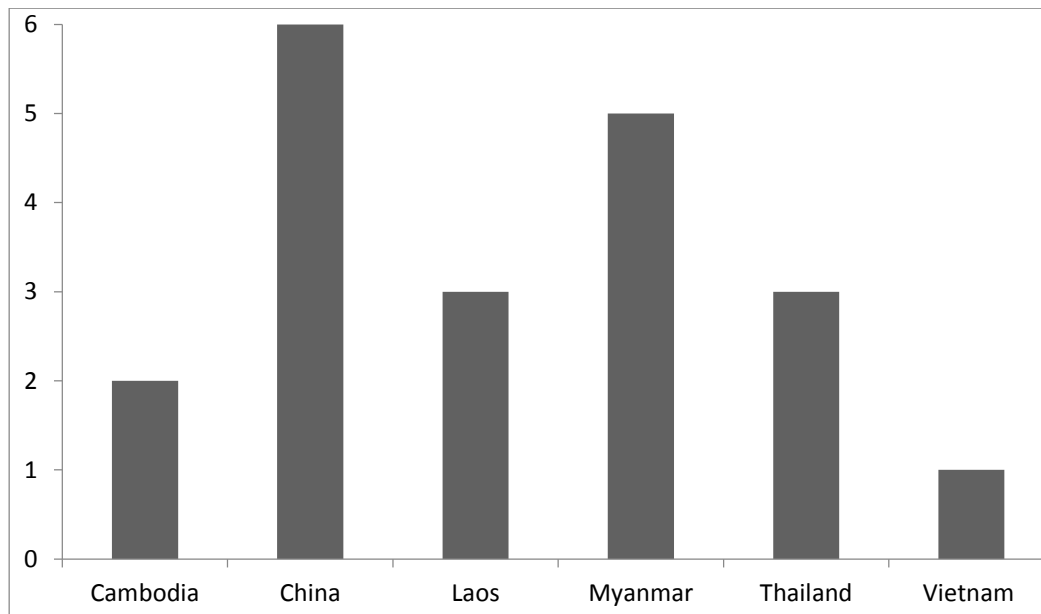


Figure 3. Distribution of geographical power in the Mekong River Basin (compiled by the author)

3.3.2. Material Power

This section will analyse the distribution of material power among six riparian states. The material power includes several aspects ranging from economic features to international support and thus these criteria should enable to decide how the total material power (i.e. the average of all criteria) is divided between countries. In order to have a clearer overview, the material power will be separated into different smaller subcategories, i.e. economic power, military might, human capital, relative size, water resources and international support. However, the final result of the material power will be presented as one unified chart comprised of all the sub-categories. Data about the material power that can be presented in quantifiable terms is located in the Table 2 that enables to compare the information easily. For a better overview, the best indicators are written in bold font and the poorest are underlined.

Economic power. For analysing the economic power of riparian states there will be compared following indicators: GDP at PPP, the growth of GDP and the number of hydropower projects in the mainstream of the river. Although these criteria would not be sufficient for analysing the economic power in a detailed way, they are adequate in this thesis, as they comprise only a small part of the total material power and help to give parameters that can be conveniently compared.

As the Table 2 indicates, there are great differences in the criterion of GDP at PPP, as China has considerably higher indicator than other riparian states and Laos has the lowest GDP. Cambodia has also quite low result, whereas Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand are located in the middle position. However, the circumstances are altered, when looking also at the real GDP growth, while these indicators are quite similar for all riparian states, remaining between 6.5-7.9 percent, and only Vietnam has remarkably lower score with 5.2 percent (ADB 2013a: 220). This means that when looking only at these two indicators, China is clearly the most powerful country in the basin, but there are no great variations between other five states, as the scores for GDP growth help to even the results.

When adding to the analysis also the criterion of hydropower projects, the picture is even more mixed, as Laos with its courageous plans is clearly in a better situation than other downstream states. However, China has still the dominant position, as it is the only riparian country that has currently operational dams in the mainstream of the Mekong River⁴. As the Table 2 indicates, China has currently seven operational dams, another five under construction and sixteen in the planning or preparation stage (International Rivers 2013c). These indicators give China clearly the strongest basis of power, as other countries have less potential for constructing so many dams. Therefore, from other five riparian states, only Laos has currently one mainstream dam under construction. Additionally, Laos has another nine mainstream projects in planning or preparation stage (i.e. Pak Beng, Luang Prabang, Pak Lay, Sanakham, Pakchom, Ban Koum, Lat Sua, Don Sahong and Thakho) and two of them, i.e. Pakchom and Ban Koum, are developed together with Thailand (ICEM 2010: 150). Moreover, there is recently much criticism among neighbour states of Laos about the construction of the Xayaburi dam. For instance, Cambodia and Vietnam are opposing the construction, because they are afraid of several negative impacts of the project, and thus there have been many protest rallies in those countries (Berning 2012). Additionally, numerous Thai villagers have demonstrated against the project, as the dam is strongly backed by Thai government that is interested in importing the hydroelectricity from Laos (Deetes 2012, Matthews 2012: 393).

⁴ The focus of the thesis is predominantly on the mainstream and not on the tributary dams, while the hydropower projects on the mainstream are influencing other riparian states more seriously. For instance, the International Centre for Environmental Management (2010: 27) has suggested that the mainstream dams have a stronger influence on the general equilibrium of the river, whereas the tributary dams have rather local impacts.

Therefore, Laos is currently the most active riparian state in the Lower Mekong Basin and is thus also often named as the “battery” of Southeast Asia, as it is actively developing several hydropower projects on the Mekong River in order to export electricity to other states (Dore et al. 2012: 26; Matthews 2012: 393). This means that about 95 percent of the produced electricity from the hydropower projects of Laos will be exported to neighbouring countries, and about 80 percent of total foreign direct investment inflows to Laos goes to mining and hydropower sectors (Government of the...2013 163; Matthews 2012: 392). This also suggests that Laos is highly dependent on foreign investments. The top three FDI countries in all sectors in the period of 1989-2012 were Vietnam (4.91 billion USD), Thailand (4.09 billion USD) and China (3.95 billion USD) (Ministry of Planning...2012). According to the International Rivers (2010), from nine planned mainstream dams of Laos, three have sponsors from Thailand, three from China, one from Vietnam, Malaysia and France; and thereby most of the produced electricity would be exported to Thailand (from seven hydropower projects), to a smaller extent also to China (from two projects), and Vietnam (from one project). For that reason, Thailand, China and Vietnam are the greatest supporters and partners in the hydropower sector of Laos.

Thailand, on the other hand, has constructed several tributary projects (in addition to the two mainstream projects developed together with Laos) that are mainly backed by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (Li 2012: 62). Cambodia is also quite actively developing its hydropower projects and has currently two mainstream dams (i.e. Stung Treng and Sambor) in the planning or preparatory stage (ICEM 2010: 150). However, Cambodia's projects are mostly supported by China's companies (Li 2012: 60). Although Myanmar and Vietnam have currently no public plans for mainstream hydropower projects, they have several tributary dams in operation and in the planning stage. Myanmar is thereby mainly backed by China, Thailand and India; but Vietnam is itself investing in hydropower projects of Laos and Cambodia, and has also many tributary projects in the region of Central Highlands under development or in the planning stage (Li 2012: 61). Therefore, Vietnam is regarded as an important player in the region (Rutherford et al. 2008: 57). Same can be said about Thailand, which is according to previous data, actively supporting hydropower projects of Laos. Nevertheless, as they have been passive in developing mainstream hydropower projects in own countries, their economic power is, according to this analytical framework, weaker.

China is hence the most active riparian state in the Mekong River Basin, as it is currently the only owner of mainstream dams. Additionally, it has most hydropower projects, i.e. sixteen, in

the planning or preparation stage. China was also the first riparian state that started to develop hydropower projects in the Mekong region. The first Chinese hydropower plant was completed already in 1946, but it was relatively small and was located on a tributary (on the Xi'er River) of the Mekong River (Li 2012: 57). After the first dam, China has actively constructed many greater projects, i.e. Gongguoqiao, Xiaowan, Manwan, Dachaoshan, Nuozhadu, Jinghong and Long Qing Xia, and, for instance, the Xiaowan Dam is one of the highest dams in the world and the largest on the Mekong (Li 2012: 59). Additionally, according to Rutherford et al. (2008), China's role as an investor and developer of hydropower projects is especially important for Laos and Cambodia.

As a result, it is possible to conclude that China has the greatest economic power among the six riparian states (Figure 4). However, Laos is despite its low GDP value in a relatively good position, as it has been actively developing several mainstream hydropower projects and has also a good indicator on GDP growth. Thailand and Cambodia are rather in a central position of the economic power. The least powerful positions belong to Vietnam and Myanmar due to their modest indicators on GDP growth and because of non-existing mainstream hydropower projects or plans. Nevertheless, the role of Vietnam as a great investor will be considered afterwards in the section of bargaining power.

Therefore, Laos can be considered as the greatest surprise for this criterion, as it initially seems that the economic power of Laos should be quite weak. But as the mainstream hydropower projects form an essential part of the economic power, Laos has compensated its low position with active development in this area. However, it is important to bear in mind that Laos receives a lot of foreign support for developing its projects, which creates a significant dependency between the states that will be described in a more detailed way in following sections.

Military might. The second subcategory for measuring the economic power of the riparian states is military might. For analysing the military power, there will be used three operational criteria, i.e. the defence budget, military expenditure as a percentage of GDP and active military personnel. With these criteria it should be possible to have a clear and easily comparable overview of the main military indicators, as these are showing the financial capabilities, importance of military, but also the number of people who are actively contributing to the armed forces. Evidently, these three criteria do not cover all the necessary data for analysing military power in a detailed way, but as the military might is only a subcategory of the material power,

it should be adequate for having an overview of the power relations in this area. There will be used two different databanks, i.e. the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), as these have a good overview of all the six riparian states.

Firstly, when analysing the defence budget, it is clearly visible that China has the predominant position among the riparian states. According to IISS (2013), the defence budget of China was 102 billion USD in 2012, whereas the same indicator for other countries was much lower, i.e. 5.5 billion for Thailand, 3.3 billion for Vietnam, 2.3 billion for Myanmar, 0.3 billion for Cambodia and 22 million for Laos. China has also the highest number of active military personnel, i.e. about 2.3 million persons (IISS 2013). Other riparian states have again clearly weaker positions while Vietnam has about 482,000; Myanmar 406,000; Thailand 360,850; Cambodia 124,300; and Laos 29,100 active military personnel.

When analysing the military expenditure as a percentage of GDP, it is possible to see that the ranking is quite different. For instance, Myanmar had in 2012 the highest percentage (4.6) spent on military (SIPRI 2013). It was followed by Vietnam (2.4), China (2.0), Cambodia (1.6) and Thailand (1.5). The smallest percentage was in Laos (0.2), which means that the latter is clearly, according to all the three criteria of the military power, in the last position. China is also apparently the most powerful riparian state, as it has in absolute terms much more spent on the military when compared to other states of the Mekong River Basin. However, also Myanmar has quite good position in the power relations due to the greatest share of military expenditure from the GDP and because of a quite high number of active military personnel. Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia are rather having the middle position.

Human capital. Another important part of the material power is human capital that will be analysed with eight operational sub-criteria, i.e. with population size, adult literacy rate, gross enrolment in tertiary education, life expectancy at birth rate, labour force participation, unemployment rate, number of mobile cellular subscriptions and fixed broadband Internet subscribers. There is mainly used data that is mutually the latest available for all riparian states, but for the criterion of adult literacy rate there is also used information derived from different years (2005, 2009 and 2010), as there is no data available about the same time periods. Nevertheless, as for this type of analysis it is important to have rather some approximate order

of magnitude, it should be adequate for measuring the power relations, since the time span is not that great.

Firstly, the data on population demonstrates that China has the most powerful position, as the population in 2012 was about 1.35 billion (ADB 2013a). This was followed by Vietnam with 88.8 million, Thailand with 66.8 million and Myanmar with 52.8 million. Cambodia with 14.9 million and Laos with 6.6 million are located in the last position. Next, the data on adult literacy rate (the percentage of people aged 15 years and above) shows that China, Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar have the highest scores; and Cambodia and Laos the lowest scores (UN 2012). The data on gross enrolment in tertiary education presented as percentage of respective school aged population demonstrates quite different results. This means that the highest percentage is in Thailand (53) that is followed by China (24), Vietnam (24) and Laos (17) (World Bank 2013b). The lowest scores are in Cambodia (16) and Myanmar (14).

When looking at the next category of human capital that demonstrates the health pillar, i.e. the life expectancy at birth, it is possible to see that Vietnam has the best indicator with 76 years (World Bank 2012c). This is followed by China (75 years), Thailand (74 years) and Cambodia (71 years), whereas the poorest indicators are in Laos (68 years) and Myanmar (65 years).

The criteria of employment factors have also quite diverse results. Firstly, the indicators on labour force participation show that the best result is in Cambodia with 85 percent and it is followed by Myanmar (82 percent), Vietnam (82 percent), Laos (81 percent) and Thailand (78 percent), whereas China has the least favourable situation with 77 percent (World Bank 2012b). Secondly, the unemployment rate from total labour force in 2012 has also interesting results. This means that the lowest unemployment rate is in Thailand (0.7 percent) and it is followed by Laos (1.3 percent), Cambodia (1.5 percent), Vietnam (2.0 percent), Myanmar (4.1. percent) and the poorest situation belongs to China with the highest unemployment rate, i.e. 4.5 percent (World Bank 2012e).

The final section of human capital includes two criteria that demonstrate the enabling environment of human capital, i.e. the number of mobile cellular subscriptions and fixed broadband Internet subscribers per 100 people. Interestingly, there are also diverse results for these two criteria. Firstly, there are most mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 people in Vietnam (148), Cambodia (129) and Thailand (127) (World Bank 2012d). More modest

indicators are in China (81), Laos (65) and Myanmar (10). Contrastingly, the criterion of internet subscribers shows that China has the best result (12.72 per 100 persons) and is followed by Thailand (8.15) and Vietnam (4.90) (World Bank 2012a). On the other hand, the indicators in Cambodia (0.20), Laos (0.11) and Myanmar (0.01) are clearly weaker.

As the criterion of human capital includes so many different areas, the results are also quite diverse. Therefore, the relative ranking for total human capital would be following: Thailand as the most powerful country when combining all the criteria is followed by China and Vietnam that have relatively equal position. The fourth place in the ranking belongs to Cambodia that has, for instance, the best indicator on labour force participation, but also strong positions in unemployment rate and mobile subscriptions. Thereafter follow Laos and Myanmar that have visibly lower scores when compared to other riparian states.

Size. The size as another sub-criterion of the material power will be analysed with the data on the countries' territory. As it is possible to see from the Table 2, the power relations according to the size of the countries would be following: China has again a clear advantage and is followed by Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. Cambodia is the smallest country and hence has the poorest position in this ranking.

Water resources. The next subcategory of material power will measure the amount of water resources of riparian states by looking at the indicators on total renewable water resources, total renewable water availability per capita and baseline water stress. Thereby it should be possible to demonstrate, which country has most problems with the availability of water and is thus more dependent on the Mekong River. Additionally, the baseline water stress is an indicator that measures total annual water withdrawals expressed as a percentage of the total annual available blue water and is divided into following measures: low (0-1), low-medium (1-2), medium-high (2-3), high (3-4) and extremely high stress (4-5) (Gassert et al. 2013: 8). Thereby the higher values indicate a stronger competition among the users of water resources and hence demonstrate a more critical situation.

The indicator on total renewable water resources of 2011 shows that China has again the best position, as it has 2,840 km³ of total renewable water per year (Aquastat 2012). China is followed by Myanmar (1,168 km³), Vietnam (884.1 km³), Cambodia (476.1 km³) and Thailand (438.6 km³). Laos has the least amount of renewable water per year, i.e. 333.5 km³.

Nevertheless, when considering the total renewable water available per capita, the situation is quite the opposite, as Laos has the highest indicator (52,322 m³) and China the lowest measure (2,051 m³) (Aquastat 2012). Also Cambodia has better position in this ranking (32,884 m³) and is followed by Myanmar (23,972 m³), Vietnam (9,853 m³) and Thailand (6,275 m³).

Similarly, the last criterion that measures water stress shows that Laos has the best situation by having the lowest indicator on water stress (0.01) (Gassert et al. 2013). Under the category of low stress belong also Myanmar (0.30) and Cambodia (0.44). Low-medium stress can be seen in Vietnam (1.01) and Thailand (1.70), and medium-high stress is among the six riparian states only in China (2.94). Also Ewing (2013: 195-196) has highlighted that as China's water resources are distributed unevenly in the country, water should be one of the main concerns for China.

As a result, it is possible to see that the category of water resources offers quite surprising outcomes (Figure 4), as Laos and Myanmar have the best positions. They are followed by Cambodia and Vietnam. China and Thailand, on the other hand, have the least convenient positions, as they have the lowest average indicator on the three abovementioned sub-criteria. Although China has the highest score on total renewable water resources, it has serious problems with the availability of water per capita due to its large population.

International support. The topic of international support is very broad and would require a separate research for a detailed overview. Therefore, this paper cannot study the subject meticulously and is rather looking at the broader picture. This means that there will be described some main foreign countries and international organisations that are supporting the water management in the Mekong River Basin or the region in general.

First of all, it is possible to see that several international organisations and foreign countries are predominantly focusing on the lower riparian countries. For instance, Japan has developed strong support mechanisms for Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam by having regular meetings with the representatives of these riparian states and is also offering financial aid. For example, according to the Tokyo Strategy 2012 (MOFA of Japan 2012), Japan offered 500 billion JPY of the official development assistance (ODA) for the time period of 2010-2012, and another 600 billion JPY over the next three years. Additionally, Japan offered some

technological assistance. The pillars of the support plan include broad areas, i.e. connectivity and general development of the region, but also human security and environmental sustainability. Therefore, this project is not exclusively for developing the Mekong River, but is rather offering a broader approach to the whole region, excluding China.

However, in 2013, the countries talked explicitly about water resource management in the Second Green Mekong Forum, and in 2010, Japan assured that it is supporting the public-private cooperation, i.e. investments for the infrastructure of the Mekong region countries by Japanese companies through financial measures by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation and other organisations (MOFA of Japan 2010a, 2013). Moreover, in 2010, Japan was supporting several water management projects through different measures, e.g. Japan was supporting the Phan Ri-Phan Thiet Irrigation Project in Vietnam with a loan of 4,874 billion JPY, but also the agricultural river basin management and development project in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos with technical aid (MOFA of Japan 2010b).

Similarly, the USA is focusing with its programme of the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) to five countries of the Lower Mekong Basin, i.e. Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. The programme was initiated in 2009 and includes following topics: agriculture and food security, connectivity, education, energy security, environment, water, and health (LMI 2014), and is hence quite similar to Japan's support system. The USA provides thereby technical assistance and supports information exchange, but also emphasises the need for strengthening the effectiveness of the Mekong River Commission in gathering necessary data. Additionally, the United States has offered financial aid by promising to provide 50 million USD over three years for supporting the work of the Initiative (LMI 2014).

Also several other countries have offered their help in developing the Mekong region. For instance, Australia has supported water governance in the Greater Mekong Subregion with 4.7 million USD for the period of 2012-2013 (Australian Government 2014). Australia is thereby supporting the national governments of the MRB and the work of the Mekong River Commission, and is also working with several non-state actors. Sweden has a similar support system while it provided 8.3 million USD for the Mekong Environment Program in 2013 (ADB 2012c). New Zealand, on the other hand, is focusing on four riparian states, i.e. Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, by supporting them in the period of 2012-2015 with 40 million USD (MOFAT of New Zealand 2014).

Additionally, the Mekong River Commission has several other countries and international organisations as development partners that provide technical and financial aid, i.e. Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, ADB, ASEAN, European Union, International Union for Conservation of Nature, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, World Bank and World Wide Fund for Nature (MRC 2014b). For instance, in 2013, the European Union supported the MRC with 4.95 million euro for fighting the climate change (Delegation of the...2013). In 2005, the United Nations introduced the Mekong Water and Sanitation Initiative with the aim to develop and reform the area through several investments (UN-Habitat 2014). However, it is currently focusing on four riparian states, i.e. Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and China. The Asian Development Bank, on the other hand, supports the whole Mekong Region, including all six riparian states. For instance, as of 2011, the ADB had applied 55 investment projects and supported them with 14 billion USD (ADB 2011). The programs cover again very wide variety of topics, including infrastructure, trade and environment.

Besides these support programs, there are also several foreign companies that invest in the riparian states for developing hydropower projects. For instance, several hydropower projects of Laos are sponsored by the companies of China, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Belgium, France, Norway, the USA, Japan, Russia, South Korea; Cambodian mainstream projects are backed by Chinese and Russian companies and there is also great interest coming for other Cambodian hydropower projects from Vietnam, South Korea, Canada and Japan (CCFC 2013; International Rivers 2010; Osborne 2009: 25-26). Additionally, China, Thailand and India are interested in the hydropower potential of Myanmar (Li 2012: 61; Schmeier 2009: 33).

Therefore, China, Thailand and Vietnam are actively developing hydropower projects in other riparian countries. Especially China is considered to be the key player in this area. For instance, China invested more than 6.1 billion USD in the period of 2006-2011 for the hydroelectric power infrastructure in Southeast Asia, as Chinese “investors financed 46 percent of all hydroelectricity capacity additions in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar (PennEnergy 2013). Reilly (2012: 79) has also suggested that China's main economic and strategic interest in Cambodia is the development of hydropower projects and the access to the electricity. Also according to Pongsudhirak (2014), China is “Cambodia's largest investor and a major aid donor”, which demonstrates the great dependency of Cambodia on China.

The previous information suggests that the whole support system in the Mekong River Basin is quite complicated, as it includes besides the riparian states also countries from other regions and several international organisations. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that the greatest international support and aid is addressed to the lower riparian countries, because Laos and Cambodia are the greatest receivers of foreign support. Also Keskinen et al. (2008: 97) and Leibo (2012: 58, 185) suggest that Cambodia is one of the world's most aid-dependent countries, as about half of the country's operating budget derives from foreign aid; and also Laos has received substantial foreign investment for its hydropower projects. Additionally, Myanmar and Vietnam have received much support from several aid programs. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that China and Thailand receive less international aid for the development of the Mekong River and rather invest in other countries.

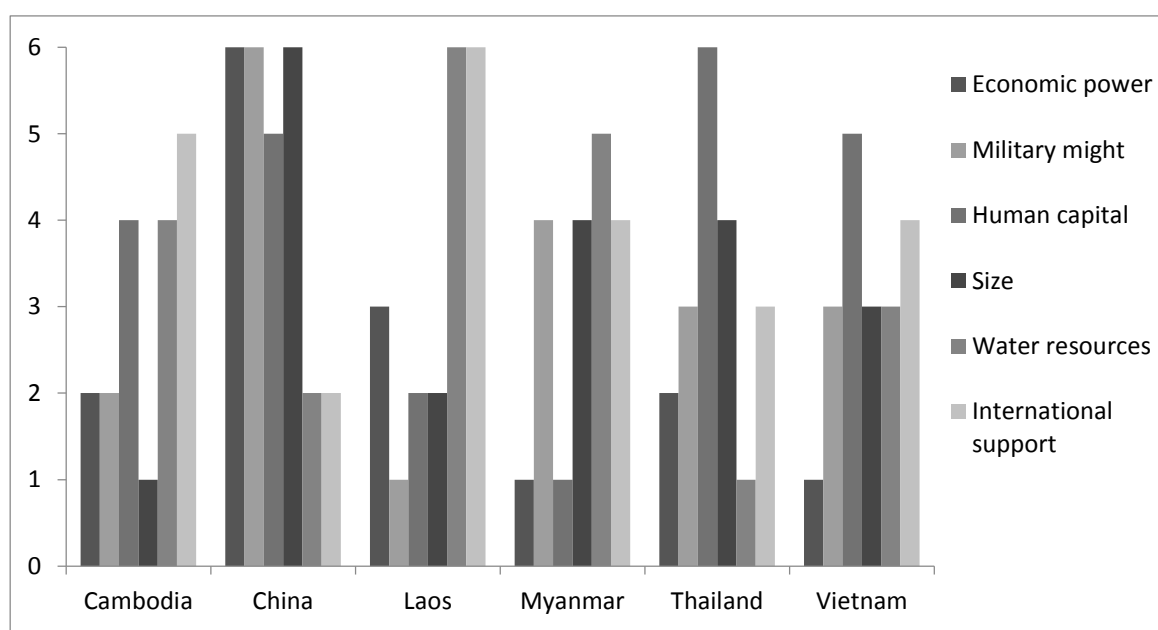


Figure 4. Distribution of different types of material power in the Mekong River Basin (compiled by the author)

Table 2. Quantifiable measures of the material power

	Cambodia	China	Laos	Myanmar	Thailand	Vietnam
Territory (km ²)	<u>181,040</u>	9,596,960	236,800	678,500	514,000	329,560
Population (2012)	14,864,646	1,350,695,000	<u>6,645,827</u>	52,797,319	66,785,001	88,775,500
GDP at PPP (2012, current international dollars, million)	37,017	12,470,993	<u>19,052</u>	109,813	692,326	354,953
Real GDP growth (2012, %)	7.3	7.8	7.9	7.6	6.5	<u>5.2</u>
Number of operational mainstream dams	<u>0</u>	7	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Number of mainstream dams under construction	<u>0</u>	5	1	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Number of mainstream dams in the planning or preparation stage	2	16	9	<u>0</u>	2	<u>0</u>
Defence budget (2012, millions of USD)	346	102,000	<u>22</u>	2270	5500	3330
Military expenditure (2012, % of GDP)	1.6	2.0	<u>0.2</u>	4.6	1.5	2.4
Active military personnel (2012)	124,300	2,285,000	<u>29,100</u>	406,000	360,850	482,000
Adult literacy rate (% of population aged 15 years and above)	73.9 (2009)	94.3 (2010)	<u>72.7</u> (2005)	92.3 (2010)	93.5 (2005)	93.2 (2010)
Gross enrolment in tertiary education (2011, % of respective school aged pop.)	16	24	17	<u>14</u>	53	24
Life expectancy at birth (2012, years)	71	75	68	<u>65</u>	74	76
Labour force participation rate (2012, % of total population ages 15-64)	85	<u>77</u>	81	82	78	82
Unemployment (2012, % of total labour force)	1.5	<u>4.5</u>	1.3	4.1	0.7	2.0
Mobile cellular subscriptions (2012, per 100 people)	129	81	65	<u>10</u>	127	148
Fixed broadband Internet subscribers (2012, per 100 people)	0.20	12.72	0.11	<u>0.01</u>	8.15	4.90
Total renewable water resources (2012, km ³ per year)	476.1	2,840	<u>333.5</u>	1,168	438.6	884.1
Total renewable water available (2012, m ³ per capita per year)	32, 884	<u>2,051</u>	52,322	23,972	6,275	9,853
Score for baseline water stress (2013)	0.44	<u>2.94</u>	0.01	0.30	1.70	1.01

Sources: ADB 2013a; Aquastat 2012; Gassert et al. 2013; ICEM 2010; IISS 2013; International Rivers 2013c; MRC 2011d; SIPRI 2013; The Economist 2013; UN 2012; World Bank 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2012e, 2013a, 2013b.

Summary of the material power. After measuring the six subcategories of material power separately, i.e. the economic power, military might, human capital, size, water resources and international support, it is necessary to add all these results together. The final results of the material power are hence depicted in the Figure 5. To begin with, it is possible to see that China has the predominant position. However, as China did not have for each type of power the strongest position, i.e. in the categories of water resources, international support and human capital, the distance between China and other riparian states is not that great as one could predict. Laos could be thus located in the second position, which is actually quite surprising, as it had quite low results in the military might and human capital. However, the good position in the areas of water resources and international support reassured Laos a relatively strong situation in the power relations. Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam are equally in the middle position. Finally, Cambodia has the weakest position in the total material power, as it has relatively modest results in all subcategories, excluding the international support.

As a conclusion, it is possible to state that the final results of the material power are relatively equal, especially among the lower riparian states. The reason for this kind of equality is probably the high number of subcategories that helped to even out great distances. On the other hand, it also demonstrates that, despite the great economic power of China, there are also some categories in which it does not have the preeminent position. Nevertheless, China has as a sum the highest ranking.

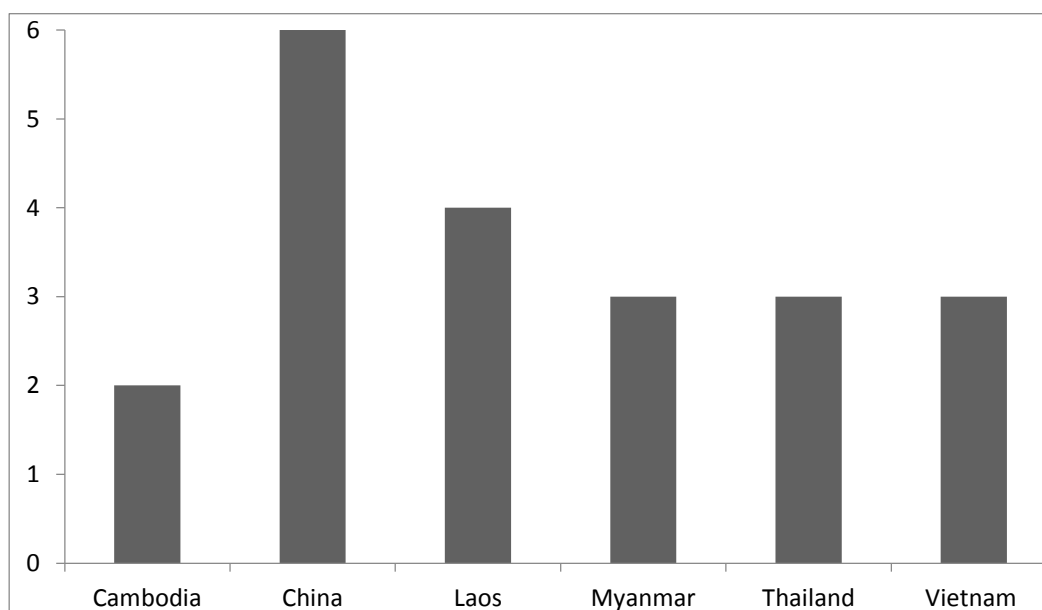


Figure 5. Distribution of material power in the Mekong River Basin (compiled by the author)

3.3.3. Bargaining Power

The bargaining power will be analysed in two ways. First of all, it is necessary to look at the broader picture of the negotiation process in the Mekong River Basin for understanding better why some riparian states possess greater bargaining power than others. There will be also used some aspects from the previous sections, e.g. investments and hydropower projects, as this data indicates, which countries should have powerful positions in the negotiation process and why other riparian states are ready to comply easily with their demands.

As a second step, there will be examined with the content analysis the texts of statements and speeches from the meetings that are related to the water-sharing issue of the Mekong River Basin in order to find out whether and to what extent the riparian states have used different methods of bargaining power in the negotiation process. There will be looked at following methods: finding official recognition through international treaty, claiming the moral high ground by referring to international water law, issue-linkage, promoting cooperation, imposing the terms of bilateral agreements, refusing to negotiate, agreeing to negotiate only on its own terms, using trade-offs or using some other negotiation strategies that do not fit under these categories. Also Blanchard and Lu (2012: 576) suggest that some of the best ways for measuring soft power are analysing the statements of the decision makers and using a content analysis. Therefore, the content analysis of the statements and speeches seems also appropriate for measuring the bargaining power.

3.3.3.1. Negotiations in the Mekong River Basin

One important criterion of the bargaining power is forming and promoting cooperative institutions, which is visible also in the Mekong River Basin. However, as already mentioned before, the cooperation between the riparian states seem to be quite fragile. Also Keskinen et al. (2008: 101) have suggested that the MRC and its predecessors have performed weakly. One of the reasons for this weakness is the non-membership of Myanmar and China in the Mekong River Commission. Therefore, the establishment of the MRC indicates that there have been promoted a cooperative institution, but the refusal of China and Myanmar to join the group refers to their bargaining power, i.e. to the criterion of refusing to negotiate. Although they are dialogue partners of the commission, they have denied negotiating on an equal basis and rather

discuss the issues in a way that is suitable for them, which also refers to their bargaining power, i.e. to the method of agreeing to negotiate on its own terms.

It is also important to consider the development of hydropower projects that could give the riparian countries a stronger position in the bargaining power. This means that China and Laos as two riparian states with numerous mainstream projects or plans could be considered with greater bargaining power, because they have been able to disregard the complaints of other countries over negative impacts of the dams and are actively constructing several projects. For instance, Laos has successfully included the question of its controversial Xayaburi dam in a meeting of the MRC by stating that the project will be beneficial for the country and for the whole region as well (MRC 2011e). Laos has thereby tried to emphasise the positive sides of the dam, which could be considered as one of the negotiation techniques that strengthens its bargaining power.

Furthermore, this forced development of controversial projects by China and Laos also indicates that they rather refuse to negotiate on those issues, discuss the topic on their own terms or make decisions unilaterally, which again strengthens their bargaining power. For instance, Keskinen et al. (2008: 92) have suggested that China as the superpower in the basin has showed small interest in regional cooperation and initiates its unilateral projects, while it does not have to engage in negotiations due to its convenient position in the Upper Mekong Basin. Therefore, it demonstrates clearly the strong position of China in the bargaining power. A good example of China's unilateral action is the construction of the Danwan dam in the mainstream of the Mekong without prior consultation with the downstream states (Keskinen et al. 2008: 93).

Additionally, China rather tries to improve cooperation with bilateral agreements, which can be seen as another way of using the bargaining power. For instance, according to Chen et al. (2013: 219), China's transboundary water treaties are also in other river basins primarily bilateral, which suggests that bilateralism is the predominant method of negotiations used by China. Also Keskinen et al. (2008: 96) have proposed that China is an important bilateral partner for the riparian states of the Mekong, as it is greatly investing and enhancing trade with these countries, especially with Cambodia and Laos. This also reassures the need for looking at the investments in other riparian states when analysing the bargaining power.

As already demonstrated in the chapter 3.3.2, China, Thailand and Vietnam are the greatest investors of hydropower projects in other riparian states. They have thereby significant power over other countries that will be manifested in their bargaining power. As they are contributing for developing the projects in Laos, Cambodia or Myanmar; they have a certain authority and can influence these states in the negotiation process. On the other hand, as they are interested in investing in those countries and do not want to lose their potential benefits, they have to be careful and act in a relatively friendly manner, so that these countries would not choose other investors.

Therefore, it is possible to see a mutual dominance and interdependency where both sides are reliant on the other. However, the power is still tilted towards those states that have more powerful position in other areas. For instance, Li (2012: 67) has concluded that China has the strongest bargaining power in the basin, as it has a huge hydropower potential, control over headwaters and lack of foreign investment. Ba (2009: 196) has similarly highlighted the economic presence of China in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam; as China is their primary economic competitor, a relevant source of trade, investment and assistance. Also Cronin and Hamlin (2010: 3) have suggested that the dependency between China and the downstream countries will give “an unhealthy geostrategic advantage for Beijing”. Therefore, it seems that China has a clear predominance in the bargaining power due to its role of a great investor and the most upstream state. Vietnam has similarly a relatively good position in the bargaining power, as it is investing in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia (Li 2012: 67); and also Thailand as an important investor of Laos has an advantage on this matter.

On the other hand, Li (2012) suggests that China's bargaining power against Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia may be also limited. This means that the investments change the question of bargaining power to a quite difficult one, as it includes several mutual and interdependent relations. Therefore, it is important to look at the number of foreign investors to see how dependent Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia are on one investor. Since Laos has several foreign investors for its mainstream projects (as demonstrated in the Chapter 3.3.2), it is less dependent on the investments of one country (China, Vietnam or Thailand). Cambodia and Myanmar, on the other hand, have fewer options to choose between, and have thus a greater disadvantage.

3.3.3.2. Content Analysis of the Bargaining Power

As a next step, there will be looked, in a more detailed manner, at the ways of using bargaining power in the meetings. Therefore, there is conducted a content analysis of 60 statements, i.e. 10 documents from each riparian state from the time period of 2007-2013. As the meetings of the Mekong River Commission are the main venues where the riparian states come together to talk about water allocation in the river basin, this sample should be appropriate for analysing the bargaining techniques used by riparian states. However, as China and Myanmar are not the full members of the MRC and there are fewer statements given by these two countries in the commission, there will be also used additional sources, i.e. documents from the homepage of the Myanmar President Office, Chinese Government and Asian Development Bank with the focus on water-sharing issue in the Mekong River Basin. The full list of documents and keywords of the content analysis with the coding frame could be seen in the Appendix A and the summary of results in the Table 3 that demonstrates the negotiation methods and the number of times that each riparian state has used them in the documents.

First of all, it is possible to see that China has used the widest variety of methods of the bargaining power, i.e. six different types. These are issue-linkage, promoting cooperation or bilateral agreements, agreeing to negotiate on its own terms, using trade-offs and other negotiation tools, i.e. justifying or demonstrating itself as a victim, or showing itself from a positive perspective and demonstrating its economic power. China has also used the bargaining power more often than other riparian states.

China has, similarly to other countries, most frequently used the tool of promoting cooperation by emphasising the regional level of cooperation or the technical collaboration. In the 16th dialogue meeting of the MRC (2011e: 52), China's presentation even included a slogan of "Together we can", implying how important it is for China to demonstrate its willingness to cooperate. The criterion of issue-linkage is also used relatively often, as China has frequently linked the question of water sharing with the topics of social and general development, traditions, culture, poverty or business.

Additionally, China has often promoted bilateral agreements by explicitly referring to bilateral trade, investment and cooperation with the riparian states separately, or presenting the cooperation between China and the MRC as a bilateral issue, and thereby also showing its

refusal to join the MRC. Therefore, the cooperation in the bilateral level seems to be the most preferable form for China. This is also linked to the next important method used by China, i.e. imposing its own terms of negotiations, as China has explicitly showed that it wishes to continue as a dialogue partner and cooperate on a bilateral basis and not as a full member of the MRC. Additionally, China has suggested that it is willing to share some hydrological data by stating that it *considers* sharing dry season information (MRC 2011e: 3). The last example also demonstrates clearly how China is showing its powerful position in the negotiations by emphasising that it has the power to decide how and when to share necessary data with lower riparian states.

From the statements it is also possible to find an example of the trade-off, as China has stated that the country has taken steps that “even came at the expense of hydropower development” for protecting the environment and answering to the concerns of downstream states (MRC 2010d). In this manner, China has presented itself as a good partner that is ready to make concessions and could later thereby make further demands.

Finally, China has also used some other negotiation techniques, e.g. justification by stating that the hydropower stations of China do not have a negative effect on the downstream; portraying itself as a victim by saying that the drought has influenced also China and not only downstream countries; demonstrating its good-neighbourliness by bringing examples of how much China is investing in other riparian states; or highlighting its economic power by stating that it has become “the world's second largest economy and the biggest exporter” and has several projects in other riparian states (ADB 2012b; Chinese Government’s Official...2008, 2010, 2011).

Also Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam have used many different methods of the bargaining power. For instance, Myanmar has used five different tools, i.e. the issue-linkage, promoting cooperation and bilateral agreements, agreeing to negotiate on its own terms and once also other negotiation tools. The most common method is again the promotion of cooperation while Myanmar has emphasised the concept of MRC+2 by showing itself as a dialogue partner and not as a full member. Additionally, Myanmar has also highlighted the cooperation with ASEAN, Japan and other development partners. The emphasis on bilateral meetings, e.g. with Vietnam and Laos, is similarly important for Myanmar.

The method of agreeing to negotiate only on its own terms is visible when looking at Myanmar's statements about its status of dialogue partner. For instance, Myanmar has proposed that the country “will continue to cooperate with MRC as a dialogue partner” or “needs to consider the invitation and steps to take in more detailed discussions on its side” (MRC 2010b, 2011e), suggesting that Myanmar is not willing to become a full member yet. Moreover, Myanmar has used the issue-linkage when referring to the security in the region, or talking about job opportunities and the imbalance between urban and rural areas. The last method used by Myanmar is the demonstration of its success in the material power by stating that “Myanmar is rich in arable land and water resources... Myanmar stands as a leading country in ASEAN in production and exporting of beans and pulses” (MOFA of Myanmar 2012). The latter method of demonstrating its importance is a relevant tool, because Myanmar could thereby gather more decision power and a greater position in the negotiations.

Vietnam has also used five different methods. First of all, it has several times referred to the 1995 Agreement of the MRC. Secondly, the issue-linkage is visible while Vietnam has highlighted the impact of water on the quality of life and individuals. The most popular method is again the promotion of cooperation. For instance, Thailand has emphasised the general cooperation in the MRC, but has also talked about the full-membership of Myanmar, the role of dialogue partners, ASEAN, Japan, and the USA. From the category of other methods, Vietnam has used the way of showing itself as a victim by emphasising its negative situation in the basin. For instance, following has been stated: “As the most downstream country, Vietnam is experiencing clearly the changes of the Mekong caused by natural phenomena and man-made activities. In this dry season, Vietnam and its Mekong Delta in particular are suffering from the dual impacts of the most serious ever droughts” (MRC 2010c). Interestingly, Vietnam is also the only riparian state that has used a reference to the international law by stating that the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses should be promoted.

Laos has used four different methods of the bargaining power. For instance, in two statements it has referred to the 1995 Agreement of the MRC, which could be seen as a way of finding official recognition through international treaty. Additionally, it is common for Laos to use issue-linkage by relating the water question with following topics: life of people, poverty, economic growth, biodiversity, political stability and social order. The most common method is, similarly to China and Myanmar, the promotion of cooperation, e.g. in the MRC, with China

and Myanmar, but also with ASEAN, Japan, India, the USA, Russia, and the European Union. It is also possible to find another method of the bargaining power, as Laos has tried to show its controversial Xayaburi dam in a positive light by stating that “the project will bring important national benefits in terms of poverty reduction and also bring many added regional benefits” (MRC 2011b: 2). Laos has thereby demonstrated that its hydropower project is beneficial and should be allowed and accepted by the MRC.

In comparison with other riparian states, Cambodia and Thailand have used less different methods of bargaining power, i.e. both have used three different techniques. In Cambodia, the most popular method is again the promotion of further cooperation within the MRC, in the region, but also with dialogue and development partners. Cambodia has also several times linked the question of water sharing with the poverty, financial crisis and food security. Additionally, Cambodia has referred to the 1995 Agreement of the MRC and also to the MRC Council Resolution of 1999.

Thailand has similarly to other states, most often promoted cooperation by emphasising the role of the MRC and partnership with China, Myanmar and development partners. Additionally, it has used issue-linkage by referring to poverty, economic growth, cultural and social heritage, and studies on biodiversity. Thailand has once used the method of other tools by being grateful for data sharing, but at the same time asking for further information, i.e. it has tried to use a positive approach in order to get something in return. For instance, in the meeting of 2011, “Thailand expressed appreciation for the report but requested for more information on the transitional period between September to November” (MRC 2011e: 2).

To sum up the results of the content analysis, it seems that China is more actively using different methods of the bargaining power, but also Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos have quite powerful positions in this aspect. On the other hand, Cambodia and Thailand are more passive in using the techniques of bargaining power in statements. It is also possible to conclude that the promotion of cooperation is the most popular among all riparian states. This is also logical, as the statements were mainly given in the meetings of the MRC where it is common to appreciate cooperative activities. Additionally, the radical method of refusing to negotiate is not explicitly used in the meetings. Similarly the trade-offs or references to the international law are not used frequently. Although it is not unexpected that China has not referred to the international law, such as the 1997 UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International

Watercourses, as China voted against it in 1997 (Menniken 2007: 102), it is quite surprising that among others only Vietnam referred to this law.

Table 3. Results of the content analysis of the bargaining power

Negotiation methods	Cambodia	China	Laos	Myanmar	Thailand	Vietnam
1) Finding official recognition through international treaty	2	0	2	0	0	3
2) Referring to international water law	0	0	0	0	0	1
3) Issue-linkage	4	5	4	2	2	1
4) Promoting cooperation	10	9	8	8	8	9
5) Imposing the terms of bilateral agreements	0	5	0	2	0	0
6) Refusing to negotiate	0	0	0	0	0	0
7) Agreeing to negotiate only on its own terms	0	3	0	2	0	0
8) Using trade-offs	0	1	0	0	0	0
9) Other (negotiation tools)	0	4	1	1	1	1

Source: compiled by the author.

3.3.3.3. Summary of the Bargaining Power

The previous information allows concluding that the strongest position in the bargaining power belongs to China (Figure 6). Although China is not a member of the Mekong River Commission, it is still a dialogue partner and has often used its bargaining power in the commission. However, it is more important that China has several on-going projects on the Mekong River, which is a proof for its strong bargaining capabilities. However, this also shows its refusal to negotiate, as China has often acted unilaterally by initiating its projects.

Additionally, as a great investor in other riparian states, e.g. in Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia, it has a certain authority over those countries, especially over Cambodia and Myanmar that have less foreign investors than Laos. Also the content analysis suggested that China is most actively using different types of techniques of the bargaining power. The results correspond to the opinion of Pearse-Smith (2012: 153), who states that China's huge storage capacity of the mainstream dams guarantees China a potential bargaining tool for negotiations. Therefore, China can be definitely considered as the strongest riparian state in the bargaining power.

Vietnam together with Laos and Thailand are equally located in following positions. The main reasons for Vietnam's good position are its investments in other riparian states and bargaining techniques used in the meetings. The strength of Laos lies in its hydropower projects and usage of several bargaining methods. Main reasons for Thailand's quite good position are investments in other riparian states, but also the mainstream hydropower projects in the planning stage and bargaining techniques used in statements.

Myanmar and Cambodia could be seen as the weakest states in the bargaining power. Myanmar's weakness lies in the fact that it is not a great investor like China, Thailand or Vietnam; and has no mainstream hydropower projects. Although Myanmar has used several bargaining methods, it seems to have quite low interest in the Mekong River Basin, as the Mekong is only a border river of Myanmar and does not comprise a great share of its territory. Cambodia is not in a preferable situation when considering the bargaining power, as it has used less bargaining techniques, has only two mainstream dams in the planning stage, and is highly dependent on foreign investments (especially on China's finances). Nevertheless, due to the on-going hydropower development, it has a similar position to Myanmar.

As a result, it is possible to see that although China is in the dominant position like in the geographical and material power, the three downstream states, i.e. Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, are also relatively strong. This suggests that the bargaining power is a good way for compensating the weaker positions in the geographical or material power as proposed by Mark Zeitoun. On the other hand, Myanmar has clearly a poorer situation than in two previous types of power, and Cambodia has a similarly weak position.

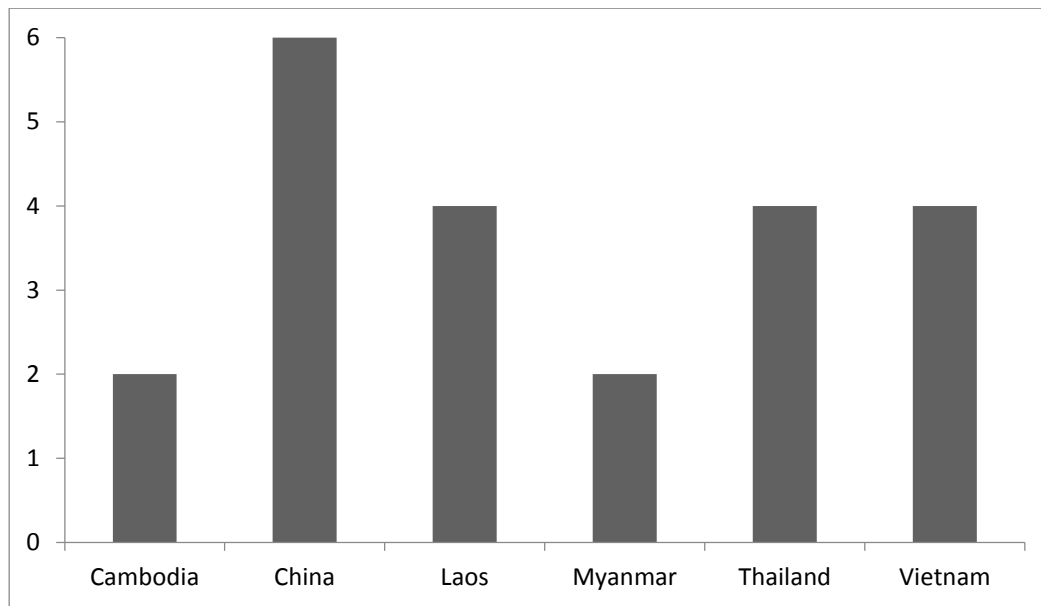


Figure 6. Distribution of bargaining power in the Mekong River Basin (compiled by the author)

3.3.4. Ideational Power

The ideational power that shows the control over ideas is the last and also the least visible form of power under analysis. Due to its complicated characteristics, it is necessary to use several methods as by the bargaining power. First of all, there will be looked at the criteria considering the availability of data, i.e. the knowledge about the basin, the openness and willingness to share accurate data with other riparian states, as these are essential aspects in shaping ideas over the situation. Secondly, there will be used again content analysis. However, this time there will be investigated media articles written about the Mekong River Basin to see how the issue is presented and how the ideas are shaped in each riparian state.

3.3.4.1. Data sharing

The availability of hydrological data is an essential part of the ideational power, as it gives those states that have better access to necessary data a possibility to shape ideas in other riparian states, and hence places the countries in unequal positions. Therefore, it is important to look at the question of data sharing in the Mekong River Basin to see which country has the best opportunity to shape the ideas and perceptions of other states by having better knowledge, sharing ambiguous information or stalling deliberately.

First of all, the control over information is tightly linked to the geographical position, as upstream countries have better opportunities to measure and predict necessary hydrological data. Onishi (2007: 531-532) suggests that China's willingness to share hydrological data is very important for other riparian states in managing the basin-wide flood management and enhancing cooperation. This advantage gives China the dominant position, as it has the ability to act unilaterally and keep the necessary information obscure. For instance, Aiken (2014) has accused China of refusing to share necessary data about its dams with lower riparian states, and Pomeranz (2013: 4) has also stated that China's unilateral actions involve much secrecy. Additionally, according to Cronin and Hamlin (2010: 15; 2012: 6, 40), China's data sharing is problematic, as it notices downstream states often late, acts rather unilaterally, and has not shared enough data over the Yunnan project. They also propose that China has the power to regulate water resources in a way that satisfies its own interests primarily and only thereafter the needs of other countries (Cronin and Hamlin 2010: 29).

Magee (2013) and Cronin (2013: 32) propose even more boldly that China considers hydrological data and information on its projects as being a national secrecy and thus its unilateral actions in developing hydropower are clearly hindering the cooperation and trust-building. Furthermore, Chomchai (2005: 144) suggests that Chinese Government has avoided engaging local communities in decision-making process over the development of hydropower projects and that the downstream states have not been noticed adequately. Also the results of the content analysis indicate that the question of data sharing is actual and acute among the riparian states. However, this will be explained in a more detailed way in the next section.

Nevertheless, there have still been some improvements in data sharing. For instance, in 2010, China informed other riparian states for the first time during the dry season about “daily data collections and river monitoring of water levels, rainfall and discharge data for two stations in China”, and in 2013, China agreed to share more hydrological data with the MRC by extending the period of data-sharing by 30 days and doing it more regularly, i.e. twice a day instead of previous one time (MRC 2011a: 38; 2013b). Nonetheless, despite China's progress on data sharing with the MRC, the previous accusations indicated that there are still several serious problems that have not been resolved.

Moreover, Cronin and Hamlin (2010: 15) suggest that sharing data among the downstream countries is similarly flawed, as the states do not give sufficient information each other. They

have especially referred to Laos' secrecy in developing its hydropower projects. Nevertheless, there are some hints of improvements, as the MRC includes the system of Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement that was also described in a more detailed way in the Chapter 3.2. However, the system is still not entirely functioning, as there are different opinions about the locations of projects. For instance, there have been disagreements about the Don Sahong dam of Laos, i.e. whether it is a mainstream dam or not. Whereas Laos has stated that it is not a mainstream project and thus used the system of prior notification, other states claim that it is a mainstream dam and needs prior consultation (Fawthrop 2013a).

Moreover, there is a controversy about the Xayaburi dam of Laos, as it is said that Laos provided information about the dam too slowly and late, and other countries had thereby not sufficient time for a constructive feedback (Cronin and Hamlin 2012: 74). Furthermore, it seems that the rules of the MRC seem to be loose enough to enable the countries to act in data sharing in a way that is only suitable for them. For instance, despite the accusations of other countries, the Deputy Minister for Energy and Mines of Laos reassured in 2012, that the country has not violated the MRC agreements, as all the construction that was done was a preparatory work and the real construction was not started (Fawthrop 2012).

The previous examples demonstrate that there is a wide variety of problems with data sharing in the Mekong River Basin, as there are serious delays, ambiguous information and confusion. On the one hand, China has clearly a predominant position, as it is an upstream country with many ambitious projects and has the power to decide whether and how to share the hydrological data it possess due to its good location. On the other hand, the downstream states are not unanimous about the dams, and Laos has also a relatively good position that enables to stall, hide or share ambiguous information.

One critical problem that hinders transparent data sharing is the predominance of national interests. For instance, Sneddon and Fox (2007: 2176) have proposed that the national interests in the Mekong River Basin usually surpass regional or basin-oriented plans. This also creates a lack of trust between the riparian states, impedes cooperation and gives the countries unbalanced and unjust possibilities depending on their geographical position and access to the hydrological data. Therefore, when considering the question of data sharing in the river basin, China and Laos as the most active in developing hydropower projects and with convenient

locations have definitely stronger positions and better opportunities to manipulate with the information than other riparian states.

3.3.4.2. Content Analysis of the Ideational Power

In order to understand better, how ideas and narratives are imposed among the riparian states, there have been used a content analysis of media articles of each state. There are analysed following manners of using sanctioned discourse: linking the issue of water allocation to the national security and survival; using justifications for own country, threats and accusations of other parties; and discourse about data sharing and cooperation. These criteria should demonstrate the main tools of ideational power used in the countries and are relatively easily recognisable from the discourse. However, as the articles may not always explicitly use these methods, there are added two other subcategories for the analysis, i.e. the mood and focus of the articles. These should help to understand better how the media has helped to create and shape ideas in a certain manner.

The categories for analysing the mood of articles are following: (rather) positive, (rather) negative and (rather) neutral. The positive mood refers to the articles that are predominantly focusing on positive sides, such as cooperation, meetings and positive achievements. On the other hand, articles that are rather emphasising negative factors, such as dangerous impacts, climate change, threats etc. are listed under the category of negative mood. Finally, the category of neutral stands for the articles that are either including mostly neutral topics that cannot be categorised under negative or positive mood, or are including equally both. Lastly, the focus of articles is examined with the purpose of understanding whether there is mainly emphasised own country, other countries, cooperation between states, or mistakes. This enables to conclude what is the focal point of the articles and whether there are some differences between riparian countries in shaping the ideas. The full list of articles, results, keywords and coding frame of the content analysis could be seen in the Appendix B, and the summary of results is visible in the Table 4.

In total, there have been analysed 300 articles, i.e. 50 articles per country, as this amount should be sufficient for making conclusions about the main ways of shaping ideas in the media. There have been used different online sources written in English, i.e. Cambodian Times, The

Cambodia Daily and The Phnom Penh Post for Cambodia; China Daily, China Economic Net, China.org.cn, Global Times, People's Daily, South China Morning Post, The Economic Observer and Xinhua News Agency for China; Vientiane Times for Laos; Burma Times, Democratic Voice of Burma, The Myanmar Times and The New Light of Myanmar for Myanmar; Bangkok Post, Business Day, Chiangrai Times, Pattaya Today and The Nation for Thailand; Dan Tri, Saigon Giai Phong, Tuoi Tre News and Vietnam News for Vietnam. The choice is predominantly made according to the availability of sources about the topic in English language, and the articles are chosen in a random basis with a search engine of each webpage (keyword "Mekong River"). Additionally, the time period of the analysis is 2008-2014, as it would show whether and how the ideational power is used in recent times.

The results of content analysis indicate that the tools of ideational power are used very widely in every riparian state, but they have used the methods in a quite different way. First of all, it is possible to see that Thailand has utilised the tools of ideational power more often than other riparian states. On the one hand, it could be explained with its interest in Laos' hydropower projects. However, as other countries are also interested in developing dams and the articles of Thailand include also much criticism about proposed projects, there also other reasons for this salient result.

For instance, one explanation could be the press freedom, as Thailand⁵ has according to the Press Freedom Index of 2014 the top position among the six riparian states. This means that the locations of the states in the ranking are following: Thailand (130), Cambodia (144), Myanmar (145), Laos (171), Vietnam (174) and China (175) out of 180 countries (Reporters Without Borders 2014). Thailand as the country with best results among the riparian states has hence more different types of articles and more diversified approaches. For instance, there are often in a same article written simultaneously about negative impacts of the hydropower projects of Laos as well as emphasised the positive effects, e.g. highlighted that about 95 percent of the electricity will be exported to Thailand (Pattaya Today 2011).

Furthermore, it is also important to consider the activeness of civil society. Cronin and Hamlin (2012: 26, 27) suggest that Thailand has the liveliest civil society among the riparian states that is crucial for raising issues about the hydropower development, which indicates that the

⁵ The analysis is conducted before the political changes of May 2014 in Thailand.

criticism over the environmental impacts should be spread more widely than in other states. Also Hughes (2009: 129) suggests that the number of NGOs (including environmental) in Thailand expanded rapidly already since the 1980s. Although the wider variety of topics and viewpoints in the media suggests that Thailand has more freedom to use different tools of the ideational power, it also indicates that the creation of one certain type of idea can be weakened, as it displays several and sometimes even contrasting ideas in one article. However, these articles still enable to give a stronger voice to the active civil society and spread the ideas over negative environmental impacts of the dams, which could be seen as a way of shaping particular ideas in the society.

Myanmar, on the other hand, has used less methods of ideational power than other riparian states, which can be explained with its relatively small interest in water sharing deriving from its geographical position and low dependency on the Mekong River. Contrastingly, Cambodia and Vietnam have used quite actively different methods. It is also quite logical, as Cambodia is often considered to be one of the most vulnerable riparian states. Vietnam has also, due to its geographical position and low material power, quite few options to alter the power asymmetry and thus the ideational power is a good way to shape ideas in a desired way. However, it is important to note that although there are many NGOs dealing with the environmental protection in Vietnam, Hughes (2009: 129) suggests that the activities of civil society are still mostly prescribed by the state. Similarly, the NGOs in Myanmar are rather working for increasing the role of state and have not very successful in making great changes (Hughes 2009: 129-130).

China and Laos have used the tools of ideational power in a quite moderate way. As both have interests in constructing hydropower projects, they have often rather avoided talking about these projects and thus prefer to develop them silently. Nevertheless, it is possible to see that both countries have actively justified their own actions. For example, China has several times emphasised the positive impacts of its dams and their strict control mechanisms, or has stressed that China is also a victim by blaming the climate change. Laos has similarly accentuated that their proposed hydropower projects are not causing any harm to the environment or to other riparian states.

When looking in a more detailed way at the different tools of ideational power, it is possible to see that the methods used by riparian states usually reflect their interests. Firstly, the securitisation is most often used by Cambodia that has a vulnerable situation in the basin and

thus has an interest to show its weak situation by linking the issue of water with security and thereby accentuating the problem. For instance, some common ways of securitisation used by Cambodia are following: emphasising the number of people who are dependent on the river and whose livelihood is threatened by dams; talking about the danger to fishery, food security, biodiversity and animal species. It is also common to demonstrate an emotional aspect by using interviews with local people who are suffering from the negative impacts of the hydropower projects of China or Laos. For instance, it is possible to find similar sentences: “When I heard about this, I panicked. I thought about my family's future.... We depend on fishing and the river, the river is our life” (David 2013).

Vietnam and Thailand have also quite often used the securitisation technique, whereby Vietnam is mainly emphasising the negative impact of dams to the water flows, level and quality; livelihood of millions of people, whole ecosystem, and fishes. Thailand has similarly highlighted the threat to the population, fisheries and ecosystem, but there are also concerns about relocated villagers, forests, landscape and entire regional harmony.

Contrastingly, China, Laos and Myanmar have rarely used the securitisation tool. For instance, China has only three times explicitly used the technique by emphasising the strategic and economic role of the Mekong and the millions of people living in the basin. Laos has similarly used the tool only three times when talking about the ways of how hydropower development could alleviate poverty; and improve the living conditions, including education and health care, which means that Laos has rather tried to show how its activity could save the people from the threat. Myanmar has also emphasised the importance of the Mekong River to the population, when calling the river as being a “lifeline” or “life source”. The securitisation technique is also visible in the examples of talking about flood victims.

The modest use of securitisation tool by Laos and China could be explained with the fact that both countries are keenly interested in developing hydropower projects, and do not want to link the question of the Mekong with security, or overemphasise its importance; as this would diminish their arguments about the benefits of dams. In their interest is thereby to show the positive side of the river and not to associate the Mekong with survival. Therefore, they both rather desecuritise the issue by understating the negative impacts of hydropower development. Also Biba (2014: 34-35) has suggested that China has widely used desecuritisation methods and avoided linking the water question with security in order to refrain from talking about the

water tensions in the country. This is thereby also linked to another sub-criterion of the ideational power, i.e. the issue-exclusion, as these countries have rather tried to avoid the sensitive topic of security when talking about the Mekong River Basin.

The second tool of ideational power reveals also great differences among riparian states. Surprisingly, Thailand has used the technique of accusing other parties most actively. However, this could be again explained with the fact that Thailand's articles are often more objective by showing opinions from different sides. For instance, there have been repeatedly presented the views of environmental activists and NGOs, such as International Rivers or Save the Mekong Coalition; foreign experts, scientists; and local protestors. Interestingly, the accusations are also often directed towards Thailand's support for the projects of Laos.

Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar have also used the accusations quite often. Cambodia has mostly accused Laos' projects and activity (12 times) and to a lesser extent China (3 times); Vietnam has quite equally accused both China and Laos, but also other projects along the river. Myanmar has predominantly blamed China's activity, but has also referred to the Western countries or Japan. Cambodia's pattern of accusations could be explained with its interest in China's support, as the latter is a great investor of Cambodia. As Vietnam is not that dependent on China's support, it has also more often blamed China's dams and their negative impact. Myanmar's accusations could be explained with its geographical position, i.e. as Myanmar is located in the upper side of the basin, it is mainly affected by China's activities and not by other lower riparian states.

China and Laos have, similarly to the previous tool of ideational power, also rarely used the blaming technique. China has mostly referred to the negative impacts of Laos' projects or blamed the downstream states in general. For instance, there have been accused the moves of Laos by stating that “Laos unilaterally ended consultation after six months, despite vigorous objections to the dam in the country's north” (Fawthrop 2013b). Laos has only once used an accusation by blaming foreign media for providing wrong information. This shows that Laos is keenly trying not to lose support for its hydropower projects and rather avoids the topic by using thereby also the tool of issue-exclusion. From the modest use of accusations, it is possible to see that China as a great investor is also rather avoiding the topic.

As a great contrast to the previous technique, the tool of justifications has quite different results. It is most often used by Laos and China, whereas other riparian states are rather modest in the usage. Laos has mostly accentuated that the projects do not cause any harm, as they are environment-friendly, and rather beneficial to the country which aims to be the battery of Southeast Asia, they help to fight with poverty, provide jobs, and modernise the country. For example, it is said following: “Development of hydropower sites leads to improvement of living conditions, such as better education, health care, electrification and water supply for the local population. Roads, highways, bridges and economic opportunity are by-products.” (Vientiane Times 2013). It is also highlighted several times that the villagers who are relocated due to the construction are not complaining and have even better living conditions than before. Laos has also justified its actions by stating that it is openly sharing information, has redesigned its projects in order to meet the demands of other countries, and is offering compensations to villagers.

China has similarly accentuated that its projects are not harmful, but rather beneficial; that it has considered the problems and is very cautious and responsible; is sharing the necessary data and improving cooperation with other riparian states. Moreover, China has stated that the main cause of floods and droughts is climate change and thus also China has been a victim of these negative effects.

Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand have among the analysed articles used the justification only once and Vietnam has not used the method at all. Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand have thereby justified the development of dams with their crucial need for hydropower due to the growing demand on electricity. The low score of Thailand is quite surprising, while it was logical to expect that Thailand as a great supporter of Laos' projects would promote more actively the hydropower development. The low indicators for other countries were quite predictable, as their interests are smaller and they are not developing or investing that actively and hence have no need to justify their actions.

The discourse about data sharing was equally modest among the riparian states. It was most often used in Thailand and Cambodia, but less in other countries. Thailand has mostly talked about data sharing in the context of Laos' dams and the procedure of prior notification or prior consultation in the MRC. However, there were also indications to China's passiveness and demands for better warning systems and well-timed information. Cambodia has mostly referred

to Laos and blamed it for acting unilaterally without consultation, but it has also stated that the information from China is limited. For instance, it is said following: “information coming from the Chinese state about any planned Chinese dams on the Lancang River—which becomes the Mekong farther downstream—is scarce” (Menghun and Chen 2013). Vietnam has similarly expressed that there is a need for more data, assessments and research of the proposed projects. On the contrary, China and Laos have predominantly guaranteed that they are openly providing the necessary hydrological data with other riparian states. For instance, China's media includes following: “China is ready to strengthen the cooperation with the downstream Mekong countries in drought-and-flood relief, hydrological information and technique sharing, as well as mutual hydrographic experts visit” (Li 2014).

The previous results suggest that Thailand as a great investor of Laos' projects is interested in any kind of information about hydropower development and thus is also more often referring to this. Cambodia as a relatively vulnerable state is also highly dependent on the information from the upstream and has thereby also indicated to this necessity. Although Vietnam as the most downstream country needs also any type of hydrological data from upstream states, it has been quite passive in using this method. For instance, Cronin and Hamlin (2010: 21) also suggest that Cambodia and Vietnam will be mostly affected when all the mainstream dams in the Lower Mekong are built. Especially vulnerable areas are Cambodia's Tonle Sap Great Lake and Vietnam's Mekong Delta. China and Laos, on the other hand, are eagerly trying to show that they are willingly sharing their hydrological information with other states.

The keyword that is most often used by the states appears to be “cooperation” and thus it is also the most predominant tool of ideational power in the articles. Surprisingly, Myanmar has most often referred to the cooperation among riparian states. It is followed by Vietnam, Thailand, China and Laos. Cambodia, on the other hand, has less referred to the collaborative actions. Myanmar has often indicated to the cooperation with Japan, China, the Asian Development Bank, ASEAN and also with lower riparian states within the framework of the Greater Mekong Subregion. It has also several times mentioned the cooperation in different areas, such as tourism or even sports. Vietnam has mostly referred to the Mekong River Commission, but has also mentioned the cooperation with the USA, Japan, China, Thailand, Australia, the Asian Development Bank, ASEAN, World Bank and within the framework of the GMS. Also Thailand's focus is on the MRC, GMS, China and Japan, but it has also talked about bilateral cooperation with Laos. Interestingly, China has, to the contrary of others, rather avoided talking

explicitly about the MRC and has highlighted the general cooperation among the “Mekong River countries”, the GMS or the bilateral cooperation with Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. Also Laos has quite much concentrated on bilateral cooperation, especially with China, Thailand, Vietnam, the USA, Korea and Japan, but it has also talked often about the MRC and GMS.

Therefore, cooperation is a tool of the ideational power that is used widely by the riparian states, but like the analysis showed, the countries have used it in a different manner, i.e. with diverse sanctioned discourse. Whereas the members of the MRC have often emphasised the cooperation within the MRC, China and Myanmar as two dialogue partners of the commission have rather talked about bilateral cooperation or collaboration among the riparian states in other areas as well and not merely about water sharing.

On the other hand, threatening is a mechanism that is explicitly used relatively rarely. It is most often utilised by Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. In contrast, China, Laos and Myanmar have not explicitly used this tool. The examples of this extreme method are quite different. Although Thailand has used the threatening three times, it is not made in an aggressive manner. For instance, Thailand has stated that the poor livelihood in the basin has to be improved or the poverty could be a threat for security; it has also suggested that if all eleven planned mainstream dams are built, the fish supply could be cut 40 percent; or it is said that “If the MRC cannot stand up to Laos, it will be failing its mandate as a regional governing body, and risks losing the little credibility it has left” (Bangkok Post 2014; Chiangrai Times 2011, 2013). Therefore, Thailand's threatening discourse is mostly referred to Laos' actions, but it is often also quite vague and not addressed to some specific riparian state at all and thereby rather resembles the securitisation method.

Cambodia has used two different types of threatening. First of all, Cambodia has used a warning of environmentalists to sue developers of Laos' dam (David and Barron 2013). Secondly, it has also used a quotation of the Southeast Asia program director of the NGO International Rivers, where it is said that “If Laos wants to act in good faith, it should go through prior consultation” (White 2014). Vietnam has rather used a neutral threatening related to the securitisation by referring generally to the development of hydropower projects, and stating that if these projects keep progressing, Vietnam will have serious loss to its economy, rich diversity and cultural life

(Saigon Giai Phong 2012; 2013). Although they are not very bold methods of threatening, these examples still indicate how the sanctioned discourse is used.

Additionally, it is also interesting to look at the general mood of the articles, as it could also help to demonstrate how the ideas are shaped in a more implicit manner. First of all, it is possible to see that Laos, Myanmar, China and Vietnam have clearly more articles with positive attitude than Cambodia or Thailand. Since China and Laos often try to present their hydropower projects in a positive way then, it is also logical that they have predominantly used the optimistic mood and have fewer articles with a negative stance. Also Myanmar that does not have many interests in water sharing has rather positive articles. The great number of optimistic articles of Vietnam is, however, unexpected whereas it has as the most downstream country numerous problems. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that Vietnam is also financing hydropower projects of other riparian states, e.g. of Laos and Cambodia, and thus it may also need to show the issue in a more positive light.

The low number of articles with mostly positive attitude and the high number of articles with negative stance of Cambodia is expectable, as it has often tried to show its vulnerability and pessimistic stance. Cambodia has thereby often accentuated negative impacts of the hydropower projects in order to raise more attention to the serious problem. Thailand has used quite moderately both types of articles, i.e. with the positive and negative attitude. This result supports once more the fact that it has often reflected viewpoints from both sides, i.e. quite equally negative and positive impacts. However, it still has more articles with negative attitude, i.e. 17 articles with positive and 29 with negative approach.

The last criterion looks at the focus of articles and enables to understand better how the countries prefer to shape the issues, i.e. whether they mostly emphasise their own country's negative or positive aspects or rather accentuate the activities of other countries. The analysis demonstrates that Cambodia has typically focused on other countries and less on its own activities, cooperation or general mistakes. This could be explained with the fact that it has often referred to the negative impacts of the hydropower projects of Laos and China. On the other hand, China has mostly focused on the cooperation and less on other states or own actions. Laos has also commonly focused on the cooperation or on its own actions, but there is no article that would have a strong focus on other countries or mistakes. Myanmar's focus has also been predominantly on the cooperation. Thailand has mostly focused on the cooperation or other

countries, but only once on its own actions. It has also quite often concentrated on the mistakes made in the basin. Vietnam's focus has primarily been on the cooperation and less on other categories.

This information indicates once more that China, Laos and Myanmar do not want to focus on the mistakes made in the river basin and rather emphasise the cooperation, i.e. the positive side. This also suggests that as they have often avoided talking about negative impacts, they have utilised the issue-exclusion. Also Lang (2013: 208) proposes that although China talks in the media often about environmental issues, it is made usually when “these stories have some support from important sectors of the state institutions”. Thereby it corresponds to the results of the content analysis, as China has predominantly demonstrated positive mood in the articles. Additionally, China and Laos have rather tried to concentrate on their own countries, as in this manner it is possible to show the importance of developing hydropower projects or justify own actions. On the other hand, Cambodia as a highly vulnerable state in the basin has often focused on other riparian states in order to accuse their activities in the basin. Myanmar that has a relatively small interest in the basin has rather focused on the cooperation in several areas.

Table 4. Results of the content analysis of the ideational power

	Cambodia	China	Laos	Myanmar	Thailand	Vietnam
Tools of IP						
1 Securitisation	35	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	7	21	25
2 Accusing other parties	15	8	<u>1</u>	13	28	15
3 Justifying	1	26	27	1	1	<u>0</u>
4 Data sharing	9	7	7	<u>1</u>	11	6
5 Cooperation	<u>18</u>	32	30	37	33	34
6 Threatening	2	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	3	2
Sum	80	76	68	<u>59</u>	97	82
General mood						
1 (Rather) positive	<u>2</u>	32	44	33	17	31
2 (Rather) negative	34	11	<u>5</u>	14	29	17
3 (Rather) neutral	14	7	<u>1</u>	3	4	2
Focus						
1 Own country	13	12	21	4	<u>1</u>	8
2 Cooperation	<u>8</u>	22	29	35	23	33
3 Other country/ies	23	15	<u>0</u>	11	17	4
4 Mistakes, flaws	6	1	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	9	5

Source: compiled by the author.

3.3.4.3. *Summary of the Ideational Power*

The results of the content analysis suggest that Thailand has the greatest ideational power, but it is also closely followed by Vietnam and Cambodia, as they have been most active in using the tools of the ideational power. Although China and Laos have used the tools in their articles in a moderate way, they still have relatively often utilised issue-exclusion as another tool of the ideational power by avoiding some topics. Moreover, their sanctioned discourse has been quite strong and evident, as they have used steadily justifications and have clearly tried to show the situation in a specific manner, i.e. by emphasising mainly the positive side. Lastly, Myanmar is according to the content analysis, the most passive in this type of power.

The final results of the ideational power could be seen in the Figure 7, where the results of content analysis are combined with the previous information about data sharing. First of all, it is possible to see that China and Laos have the strongest position in the ideational power. Although they are not that powerful according to the content analysis, their predominance in data sharing gives them a great advantage, which is demonstrated by several accusations from other states for hiding data or sharing the information ambiguously. They are followed by Thailand that is also the strongest actor according to the results of content analysis. Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar are thereafter in a quite equal position due to their opportunities in data sharing. Nevertheless, Cambodia and Vietnam have actively used the ideational power in the media articles and have hence slightly better position than Myanmar.

The results indicate that the ideational power is quite evenly distributed among the riparian states, as this type of power gives also the downstream countries more opportunities. However, the factor of data sharing still hinders greatly the perspectives of downstream states while China as the most upstream country has the most convenient position for deciding how and when to share hydrological data with others. Additionally, Laos as an active developer of hydropower projects has with its non-transparent actions and secrecy about hydropower projects gathered a powerful position.

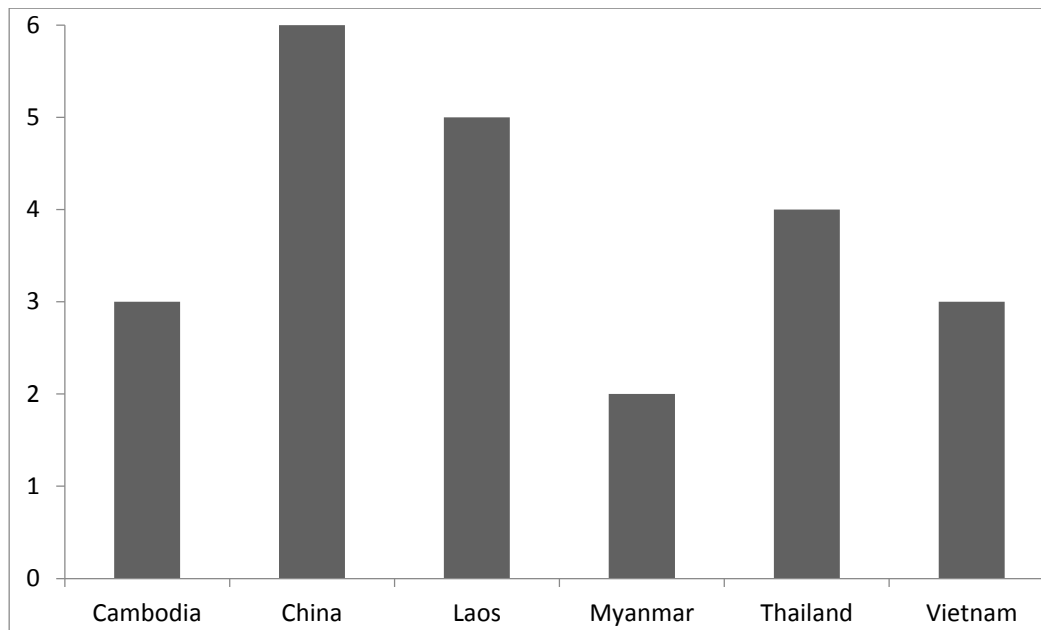


Figure 7. Distribution of ideational power in the Mekong River Basin (compiled by the author)

3.3.5. Hydro-Hegemon and Non-Hegemons of the Mekong River Basin

This chapter will summarise previous results of the four types of power in order to understand the situation of power asymmetry and hydro-hegemonic order in the Mekong River Basin. With the results of this section it is hence also possible to answer to the first two research questions about the power asymmetry, hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons. The results (Figure 8) are calculated in a following mode: the scores of four types of power are added together and thereafter computed the average sum for each state. The average scores of power are hence following: 6 for China; 4 for Laos; 3.5 for Thailand; 3 for Myanmar; 2.75 for Vietnam and 2.25 for Cambodia.

The results suggest that China has the most powerful position and could be seen as the hydro-hegemon when considering all four types of power. Although China has in some subcategories (e.g. human capital, water resources and international support of the material power and in the content analysis of the ideational power) also lower scores, it still has as a sum the most powerful position and could be seen as a powerful hydro-hegemon of the river basin. Therefore, the results also correspond to various opinions about China's hegemonic position that were

considered in the section of “state of the art”. Nevertheless, it is also interesting to see that China has some weaker points as well and is not the strongest state in all subcategories.

Laos as being situated in the second place among riparian states has clearly compensated its weakness with the bargaining and ideational power. Whereas Laos has some serious problems in the section of material power (especially by the military might, human capital and size), the activeness in developing hydropower projects and having thereby greater bargaining and also ideational power gives Laos a great advantage over other lower riparian states. Also the good indicators on water resources and the high number of international supporters strengthen its position.

Thailand as being situated in the middle position among riparian states has actually in every level quite good results, as there are no great differences among the four types of power. However, the least impressive score is on the water resources of the material power. Myanmar has also considerably good position in the power relations. Although Myanmar has currently not very strong interests in the basin, it is still highly important to follow its future actions and consider its great power, as the attention on hydropower development seems to be growing in the country. The relatively good position among the riparian states derives mostly from its good indicators on the geographical and material power. However, in contrast to Laos, it has a poor situation in the bargaining and ideational power.

Vietnam and Cambodia together are the most vulnerable states as also many scholars have suggested beforehand, whereby Cambodia has the weakest position in the power relations. Nevertheless, due to their relatively good indicators on the bargaining and ideational power, they are quite close to other lower riparian states and there is not as great cleavage in the power relations as one could predict from the results of the first two types of power.

Therefore, the non-hegemons of the Mekong River Basin are relatively equal and there are no great differences. This also means that it should be quite convenient for them to establish cooperative institutions as a counter-mechanism against the hydro-hegemony of China, and hence it would be especially interesting to analyse further whether the non-hegemons have used this opportunity for resisting the power asymmetry. This will be done in a more detailed way in the next section. Nevertheless, it is still possible to divide the lower riparian states into two camps while Laos, Thailand and Myanmar would constitute one group with slightly better

results and more powerful base; and Cambodia with Vietnam would form the weaker bloc of the basin.

The results of analysis also indicate that the geographical position along the river or the military and economic power alone do not designate the power relations. Although China as the hydro-hegemon in the river basin has also the best position according to the geographical and material power, the lower riparian states have still compensated their weaker positions in the geographical or material power with other means. For instance, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam have as a sum of all four types of power better positions as it would be when considering only the geographical location. On the other hand, Myanmar has remarkably lost its position in the two last types of power.

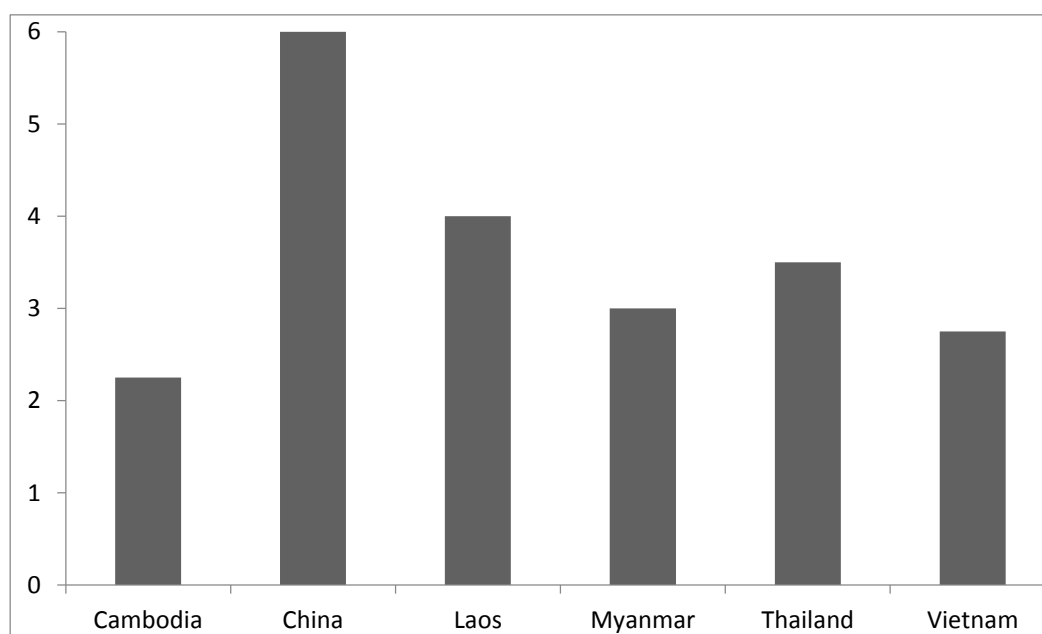


Figure 8. Distribution of total power in the Mekong River Basin (compiled by the author)

3.4. Cooperative Counter-Hegemonic Tactics in the Mekong River Basin

This section analyses the cooperative methods of non-hegemons and thereby observes whether the weaker states have used sufficient tools for resisting the hydro-hegemony of China. There will be looked at the main cooperative groups in the Mekong River Basin, especially at their main activities, areas of interest, goals, regularity of meetings, attitude against the hydro-hegemon, their strong aspects, i.e. their positive achievements, but also the weak points that

hinder effective cooperation. The key cooperative groups that will be analysed are following: the Mekong River Commission, the Greater Mekong Subregion Program, ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation, Japan's Mekong Initiative, Lower Mekong Initiative, Mekong-ROK Cooperation, Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation and briefly some other smaller groups. The comparative aspects of groups will be presented in the Table 5.

3.4.1. Mekong River Commission (MRC)

The Mekong River Commission is often considered to be the main cooperative organisation in the Mekong River Basin. Also when looking at the key collaborative areas and goals of the group, it seems that this is the predominant cooperative instance in the basin dealing especially with the question of water sharing, as its mission refers to the importance of “sustainable management and development of water and related resources” (MRC 2014a). It also aims to strengthen regional cooperation and basin-wide planning, and thereby achieve “an economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin” (MRC 2014a).

Additionally, when looking in a more detailed way at the different programs of the MRC, it is possible to see that they are still more or less related to water. The programs are hence focusing on following topics: agriculture and irrigation; basin development plan, climate change and adaptation, environment, fisheries, flood management and mitigation, information and knowledge management, initiative on sustainable hydropower, integrated capacity building, Mekong integrated water resources management and navigation program (MRC 2014a). This means that the projects concentrate chiefly on the management of water resources in the MRB and do not include some entirely different areas of cooperation like other collaborative groups.

One of the strengths of the MRC is its clear organisational structure that includes three main levels: the Council, Joint Committee and Secretariat that all have clear assignments and roles as already explained in the Chapter 3.2. Nevertheless, the meetings of these institutions are not very frequent because the Council has sessions at least once a year, and the Joint Committee twice a year, but both could also have special sessions (MRC 1995: Art. 17; 23). This infrequency of meetings also hinders to resolve the problems in a quick manner. Also Schulze

and Schmeier (2012: 238) suggest that the decision-making in the MRC takes much time and hence it could be seen as a serious weak point of the commission.

Another weakness of the MRC is that, despite the requirement of consensus among the riparian states in the level of the Council and Joint Committee (MRC 1995: Art. 20, 27), the decisions are legally non-binding (Schulze and Schmeier 2012: 238) and thus do not oblige the states to comply with them. Therefore, as an intergovernmental and not a supranational organisation, the MRC does not have a regulatory power (Lee and Scurrah 2009: 21). The compliance is hence only required by specific cases, e.g. by the prior consultation process. Furthermore, the MRC Agreement does not include coercive sanctions which could be used when some member state is not acting according to the decisions. Nevertheless, Schulze and Schmeier (2012: 238) have proposed that the countries usually still respect the decisions and thus *de facto bindingness* is visible. Therefore, the latter refers to a positive sign in the cooperation, as it shows that the countries are mostly accepting and following the resolutions.

Another disadvantage of the MRC is a “lack of a well-functioning dispute resolution mechanism” (Schulze and Schmeier 2012: 238). Nevertheless, the agreement (MRC 1995: Art. 34, 35) includes a specific section for solving the conflicts. As a first step, the commission has the responsibility for resolving the disputes, and as a next level, the governments of the riparian states are required to deal with the question or request some third party to help to find a solution. Furthermore, the Article 8 of the agreement states that in a case of harmful effects, the states should resolve the issues “in an amicable and timely manner by peaceful means”. Therefore, it seems that although there are determined different general methods of how to resolve disputes, it would be more useful to have a specific institution within the MRC dealing solely with differences and disputes. The whole dispute resolution mechanism would be thereby more efficient and the functioning of the group also faster.

One of the greatest impediments to an effective functioning of the MRC seems to be the non-membership of China and Myanmar. The section 2.1.2 also indicated that the most common opinion among scholars is that China and Myanmar should be the members of the MRC. Although both countries are included into the cooperation as dialogue partners and there have been recently some improvements in data sharing, the lack of full membership of the two riparian states clearly places the countries into an unequal footing. Even though the rules of the MRC are quite loose, China and Myanmar as the most upstream countries have still avoided

joining the group and working under these regulations. This unwillingness to cooperate can be explained with the typical interest of an upstream hydro-hegemon who as the source of a river would rather like to continue freely its unilateral actions without considering the needs of others (Lowi 1993: 10). Lowi has also suggested that the downstream states, on the other hand, would rather promote collaboration, as they are dependent on the actions made in the upstream. This explanation corresponds well to the situation in the Mekong River Basin, as the two upstream states avoid joining the MRC as full members and refuse to collaborate equally with other countries, but the downstream states would like to have a collaborative institution that unites all riparian countries. This situation is definitely hampering a normal relationship and is causing serious tensions in the region.

The content analyses of the bargaining and ideational power have similarly demonstrated, how China and Myanmar rather avoid talking about the MRC, or express their desire to continue as dialogue partners. This affirms that they are not willing to become full members in the near future and are content with their current situation. The members of the MRC, on the other hand, have often referred to the need of a full membership status for China and Myanmar. But they have also mostly talked positively about the current cooperation with China, and have appreciated the recent steps in strengthening the collaboration in other ways, i.e. with the agreement on data sharing. Therefore, it seems that there is no rapid result for this uncertainty.

On the other hand, as the agreement of the MRC requires unanimous decisions in the Council and in the Joint Committee, the full-membership of China and Myanmar would probably change the whole decision process even slower and more troublesome. Therefore, to a certain extent, the current membership of the MRC may even help to produce more effective results and help to act as a good opportunity to resist the hydro-hegemony by the four non-hegemons. Nevertheless, it also removes from the downstream states the opportunity to demand more reciprocal actions from China, as the latter is not obliged to answer to these requests.

Schulze and Schmeier (2012: 239) have stated that another weak point of the MRC is the funding that is highly dependent on foreign sources, i.e. 55 percent of the total budget derives from donor contributions. They suggest that the high dependency has negative impacts on the sustainability, as there is no guarantee of when the donor countries decide to decrease or even stop their supporting mechanisms. For instance, in the budget of 2012, only 1.2 million USD from the total income of 2.7 million USD derive from riparian governments whereby Thailand

and Vietnam have the greatest input (MRC 2012a). Although the great dependency on foreign sources may increase the vulnerability of the system, it also shows a strong international support mechanism. Therefore, in a certain way, this dependency even changes the MRC to a more powerful institution.

Another weakness of the MRC is an internal cleavage of the group. For instance, Fawthrop (2013c) suggests that the MRC is divided into two camps in the question of building the Laos' Xayaburi dam. On the one side, Laos and Thailand are backing the project, but they are confronted by Cambodia and Vietnam, who are afraid of the negative impacts on their countries and thus are rather against the hydropower project. Therefore, the overall functioning of non-hegemons, establishment of common goals and actions for resisting the hydro-hegemony of China are clearly hampered by internal tensions and contradictions.

As a sum, it seems that several aspects of the MRC can be simultaneously negative and positive. Since the question of non-membership of China and Myanmar is usually regarded as an impediment to the cooperation in the basin level, it may even have some positive signs for acting as a counter-hegemonic mechanism. Same can be said about the number of international donors. Although the high dependency on foreign support may be in the long term harmful, it currently shows the strength of international support for the downstream states, and helps thereby to resist the hydro-hegemony better. Nevertheless, the frequency of meetings is very modest and could definitely be improved in order to change the organisation more efficient and the decision-making process more rapid. Additionally, the downstream states should beforehand find a consensus among themselves for changing the whole process in the MRC more effective and stronger. Also due to the lack of any coercive power, the MRC rather acts as a consultative institution. However, when comparing the MRC with other following collaborative institutions, it has the strongest regulatory basis.

3.4.2. Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Program

The second major cooperative institution in the Mekong River Basin is the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Program that was established in 1992 with the support of the Asian Development Bank and includes all six riparian states. As China is also a member of the GMS Program, it is not explicitly a separate counter-mechanism against the hydro-hegemony, but it

is still important to look at the key points of the group in order to see whether it could help the non-hegemons to compensate their weaker position in the basin.

First of all, the GMS Program has like the MRC a relatively clear structure while the summits and ministerial level conferences constitute the highest level of decision-making; the meetings of senior officials comprising of the GMS national coordinators and line ministry representatives are for reviewing sectorial program implementation; the Secretariat at the ADB is for technical, administrative and coordinating issues; and the working groups together with the forums are for coordinating the development of specific sector programs and activities (ADB 2008: 8-9). Nevertheless, the meetings are quite infrequent like in the MRC. For instance, the summits usually take place in every three years; the ministerial meetings once a year or even less; the meetings of the senior officials take place two or three times annually; and the meetings of the forums and workgroups are organised differently while some groups meet several times in a year and other groups once a year or even more rarely (ADB 2008: 9; 2014). Therefore, it seems that the meetings should be much more regular in order to make some serious and effective decisions in this wide range of interest areas.

At the same time, the high number of activities of the GMS Program could also show its strength. As it is dealing with several topics ranging from the agriculture and energy to the trade and tourism, it indicates that the cooperation is promoted extensively in numerous ways. On the other hand, as the meetings are relatively infrequent, it seems that the collaboration in so many different areas should be quite superficial. It appears that at least the forums and workgroups should meet more regularly for making the collaboration more intensive and effective. Nevertheless, there are also some good exceptions. For instance, the group of energy issues has quite regular meetings coming together several times per year (ADB 2014).

Despite many weak points, the GMS Program offers actually several possibilities for the non-hegemons to gain more power. However, this could be rather done in an indirect way. For instance, as one of the main goals of the GMS is to connect the member countries through improvements in infrastructure, trade and investment (ADB 2011: 2), it also should enable to strengthen their overall relationships, build trust and thereby induce cooperation in other areas as well, including in water sharing. Since trade between the downstream states and the Yunnan province of China has clearly increased in the period of 2001-2009 (Su 2012: 521), the closer economic contact may improve the relations in other areas as well.

Another positive aspect of the GMS Program is that it includes all six riparian states as full members, including the upstream hydro-hegemon. The GMS may thereby also help to give the downstream states more information about China's activities in the upstream. Nevertheless, as the GMS Program is not solely dealing with transboundary water management, the data sharing may still be deficient on this particular matter. Therefore, the fact that water allocation is not in the focus of the institution also impedes the strengthening of cooperation in this specific area and could rather be seen as a negative side of the group.

Additionally, the GMS Program is mainly focusing on several investments and development projects and there are no strict rules or regulations imposed on member states. Also Guo and Zhao (2011: 100) suggest that as there are no mutually binding clauses about the water resources of the Mekong River, its success is questionable. Furthermore, the GMS Program is, similarly to the MRC, highly dependent on foreign funding. For instance, about 35 percent of the budget derives from member states, another 40 percent from the ADB and 25 percent from development partners (ADB 2008: i). Although the share of foreign funding deriving from development partners is smaller than in the MRC, the amount of funding from member states is also smaller, as the ADB is the greatest supporter of the program.

On the other hand, the investments have helped to develop the whole region in terms of infrastructure, agriculture or other similar areas. As a result, there might be more resources and time for managing the issue of water allocation better in the near future and thereby have a positive indirect impact on water sharing. Moreover, as the first ten years of cooperation in the GMS were rather for trust-building, and the first framework was adopted in 2001 (ADB 2008: 7), one can also expect that the cooperation will be more intensified and spilled over into other areas in the future. Nevertheless, currently the collaboration within the GMS Program in water allocation is rather weak. Also Oehlers (2006) and Kirby et al. (2010) have suggested that the cooperation in the GMS has been quite fragile.

3.4.3. ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (AMBDC)

Another cooperative level in the Mekong River Basin is the ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation, which resembles to a great extent the GMS Program. The AMBDC was established in 1996 and includes all six riparian states and ASEAN member states, i.e.

Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore (ASEAN 1996). The main goals of the AMBDC are enhancing development and dialogue in the Mekong River Basin, and strengthening economic linkages between the ASEAN members and the Mekong riparian states (ASEAN 1996). Thereby the spectrum of interest areas is like in the GMS relatively wide and not focused solely on water allocation. The cooperation is conducted in following areas: infrastructure, transport, telecommunications, irrigation, energy, trade, investment, agriculture, forestry, mineral resources, industry, tourism, human resource development, science and technology (ASEAN 1996). The positive and negative sides of the AMBDC are thereby also very similar to the GMS Program.

For instance, there is a clear organisational structure including the meetings of ministers and the Steering Committee, whereby the former usually take place once a year and the latter in-between the Ministerial Meetings (ASEAN 1996). Therefore, the gatherings are again quite rare and could thereby influence the management and results of the group. Additionally, the wide spectrum of activities may be considered as being simultaneously negative and positive. On the one hand, the countries have the opportunity to cooperate in different areas, but this situation may also impede concentration in some specific area, e.g. water allocation.

Contrastingly, as the group deals mainly with different development projects that are backed by several investors, it enables the countries to develop the region broadly and may thus help to improve also the area of water allocation. Nevertheless, the lack of clear regulations and rules turns the AMBDC to a quite loose group that gives no explicit responsibilities to its members.

On the other hand, the membership of other ASEAN countries could be seen as a clearly positive sign, as it also includes a third party and may thereby help to balance the cleavage between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons of the river basin. However, the great number of participants may also shift the focus from the riparian states of the Mekong River Basin to some other issues, as other members have different interests.

As a sum, the AMBDC seems to be a relatively weak mechanism in resisting the hydro-hegemony of China by the non-hegemons, as the issue of water allocation is not explicitly in the focus of the group and infrequent meetings hamper the cooperation. Although it may be a good tool for enhancing cooperation in a general level in the region and may have a spill-over effect in the future, the water sharing is currently not strongly improved.

3.4.4. Japan's Mekong Initiative

The Japan's Mekong Initiative established in 2008 is a cooperative mechanism between Japan and the five non-hegemons of the Mekong River Basin, i.e. Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. The initiative aims to improve partnership between Japan and the Mekong Region, enhance economic growth and living conditions of the people in the area (MOFA of Japan 2009b: 4). The cooperative areas thereby include infrastructure, trade, investment, human resource development, environmental issues, tourism and culture (MOFA of Japan 2009a). As the cooperation is mainly conducted at the highest possible level, i.e. as the consultations between the heads of the governments and foreign ministers, the meetings are not being held very often, i.e. usually once a year, but there are also sometimes smaller gatherings with other ministers or representatives (MOFA of Japan 2014). Nevertheless, the meetings are not very frequent and could be seen as a relevant weak point of the initiative.

Additionally, the Japan's Mekong Initiative deals with several topics and is not focused solely on water question, which is once again including positive as well as negative aspects. Nevertheless, it includes explicitly the question of water allocation, as one of the main goals of the environmental sector is to “promote the Mekong water resource management” (MOFA of Japan 2009a). Moreover, as already demonstrated in the chapter 3.3.2, Japan has invested greatly in several water management and development projects in the region. Therefore, the collaboration in water sharing seems to be a relatively important part of the initiative.

Another highly important aspect is the balancing force of the initiative against China, since Japan as a strong actor in the region enables to give the non-hegemons a great support mechanism and thereby improve their position in the river basin. Also Sussangkarn (2013) has suggested that the Japan's Mekong Initiative together with the support systems of the USA and South Korea could counterbalance China's influence in the basin. Therefore, the initiative has a potential to act as a counter-mechanism against the hydro-hegemon. However, as it is quite minor project and the water comprises only a small part of the whole program, there is definitely a need for further improvements in this area.

3.4.5. Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI)

The Lower Mekong Initiative established in 2009 by the USA and the Lower Mekong countries includes currently all five downstream states. The goal of the initiative is to enhance cooperation between the USA and the Mekong region in different areas, such as agriculture, food and energy security, infrastructure, environment, water, health and education (U.S. Department of State 2014).

Therefore, the LMI is relatively similar to the Japan's Mekong Initiative, as China is not a member of the program and the framework with a strong supporter may act as a counterbalancing factor against China's hydro-hegemony. Also Wei (2013: 151) suggests that the LMI should perform as a “geopolitical move to counterbalance China in the subregion”, which means that the support of the USA should be regarded as an important source of power for the non-hegemons. Similarly to previous groups, the meetings of the LMI are quite rare, as it has had only few meetings (U.S. Department of State 2014). Although there are established gatherings of working groups, senior officials, ministers and partner organisations (LMI 2014), the official higher level meetings are usually taking place only once a year.

However, the LMI has a clear advantage, as one of the main interest areas is water management. Although the LMI is active in different sectors, it also has clearly stated that the question of water is a serious and important issue for the group. For instance, the LMI Environment and Water Pillar includes following activities: promoting sustainable natural resource management and climate change policies, strengthening regional institutions, developing better natural disaster forecasting tools, improving sanitation and hygiene, introducing new technologies, and strengthening the ability of the Mekong River Commission (LMI 2010: 8-10). There is also initiated the Forecast Mekong tool that should provide the riparian states necessary information and scientific models for making better decisions about how to cope with climate change, economic stress and other negative impacts (Stefanov 2012, USGS 2013). Although forecasting does not outpace the accurate actual data, it still should help to make better decisions and give the non-hegemons an alternative way for receiving better knowledge about the situation of the basin when having scarce information from China.

As a sum, there are great possibilities to resist the hydro-hegemony of China with the LMI, but at the same time there are also some impediments, as the collaboration seems to be too loose

and weak with infrequent meetings. Nevertheless, the involvement of the USA as a great supporter is definitely a good way to compensate the weakness of the non-hegemons.

3.4.6. Mekong-ROK Cooperation

The cooperation between the Republic of Korea and the five downstream states of the Mekong is quite new, as the inaugural meeting of the foreign ministers took place in 2011. The goal of the program is to promote cooperation between the Mekong region and the ROK mainly in infrastructure, information and communications technology, environment, forestry, water resources management, agriculture, rural and human resources development (MOFAT of the ROK 2011b). Therefore, it is similar to the previous cooperative framework between the USA and the Mekong downstream states, as it has explicitly included the importance of water resource management, and encompasses all five non-hegemonic states of the Mekong River Basin. Nevertheless, as it is still a relatively new program, it has not performed very strongly in resisting the hydro-hegemony.

On the other hand, the ROK represents a relatively great power and its support is definitely a good option for the non-hegemonic states. Moreover, the Han River Declaration of the framework proclaims explicitly that the program will complement and support also other cooperative mechanisms, such as the Mekong-Japan cooperation, LMI, GMS and MRC (MOFAT of the ROK 2011a). Therefore, despite its early stage, the cooperative mechanism between the ROK and the Mekong has already demonstrated that by supporting other collaborative tools, it has the potential to become stronger and act together with other groups for resisting the hydro-hegemon. Additionally, the ROK has already greatly invested in the Mekong Region, and also the trade volume between the ROK and the downstream states of the river has steadily increased (Kim et al. 2013: 2).

Nevertheless, the meetings are relatively rare like in other previous cooperative mechanisms, as the Mekong-ROK foreign ministers' meeting and a supplementary senior officials' meeting usually take place once a year (MOFAT of the ROK 2011a). Similarly to the previous programs, it does not include strict regulations and acts as a relatively loose framework. For instance, the ministerial-level meetings are explicitly stated to “serve as a sub-regional *consultative* body”

(MOFAT of the ROK 2011b), which suggests that it does not aim to become stricter or more regulated.

To sum up, it seems that despite its recent establishment and current weakness, the collaborative program between the ROK and the Mekong River Basin has a great potential to become steadier and thereby strengthen the position of the non-hegemonic states. It has hence also many similarities with the two previous cooperative mechanisms, i.e. with the Japan's Mekong Initiative and the Lower Mekong Initiative.

3.4.7. Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC)

The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation is a program established already in 2000 between India and the five downstream states of the Mekong River with an aim to enhance the cooperation in different areas, such as tourism, culture, education, transport and communications (MOFA of India 2014). Therefore, as being functioning already for 14 years, it should be a relatively mature and strong institution. However, there are several problems with the program. First of all, although it is regulated that the ministerial and senior official meetings will be held annually, they have been less frequent and have taken place in the years of 2000, 2001, 2003, 2007, 2012 and 2013 (MOFA of India 2014; MOFAIC of the Kingdom of Cambodia 2000). Also Sikri (2009: 137) has criticised the institution due to its sporadic meetings and a lack of clear timelines.

Another weak point is that the water management is not explicitly included into the framework. This means that the cooperation is rather improved in other areas, though indirectly it still deals with water issue like the GMS Program or AMBDC. The high dependence on India and Thailand as the two greatest sources of funding of the MGC may be seen as a next negative factor of the program (Sikri 2009: 138). Additionally, as Thailand has showed less interest after initiating the cooperative framework of the Ayeyawady–Chao Phraya–Mekong Economic Cooperation, the MGC has become much weaker and the whole program of MGC has not performed as strongly as expected (Sikri 2009: 138).

Nevertheless, the MGC has also some positive aspects. First of all, it is including all non-hegemons of the Mekong River Basin. Moreover, India as an important country in Asia is a

great and strong supporter and may act as a counterbalancing force against the hydro-hegemon. Also Sikri (2009: 135) has suggested that India as a rising power could have “a swing role in the global and regional balance of power” and thereby stabilise the dominance of China.

As a sum, the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation has a great potential to act as an essential counter-hegemonic force for the downstream states, but its current performance has been quite modest and thereby it has not had any remarkable result. Also the small interest in water allocation acts as a serious impediment in resisting the hydro-hegemony.

3.4.8. Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation (ACMECS)

The Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy was established in 2003 with the Bagan Declaration and includes today all five downstream states (Vietnam was initially missing) of the Mekong River Basin. The aim of the ACMECS is to increase cooperation among the states in several areas, such as trade, investment, agriculture, industry, transport, tourism and human resource development in order to enhance peace, stability and prosperity in the region (Ministry of Energy... 2003). Thereby it is also suggested that the ACMECS should be complementary to other existing collaborative frameworks. Although it is supporting other similar programs, including the MRC, the absence of water management in the framework could still be considered as a weakness of the ACMECS.

On the other hand, one strong point of the ACMECS is that, despite its relatively small range, it has a clear structure and its decision-making process is determined by the Bagan Declaration. For instance, it is regulated that the decisions need a consensus of all parties, the summit meetings of the heads of government take place every two years, and the meetings of the ministers and senior officials are held annually (Ministry of Energy...2003). Therefore, the frequency of the meetings is like in other collaborative groups quite modest and could be seen as a weak point of the group.

Contrastingly, a positive aspect of the ACMECS is its membership, as it includes all five non-hegemonic states. Moreover, it has several development partners, e.g. Japan, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, Canada, the European Union and ADB (Sucharithanarugse 2006: 292). This wide variety of partners helps to give the group a stronger

basis of power and thereby act as a counterbalancing force against the hydro-hegemon. Nevertheless, the development partners are not as steady as full members and thus the ACMECS is not as strong mechanism in resisting the power asymmetry as the LMI or the Japan's Mekong Initiative.

As a sum, the ACMECS is quite similar to several previous collaborative groups in terms of the frequency of the meetings, and the areas of cooperation. On the other hand, the great number of development partners and the clear structure give the group a clear advantage. Nevertheless, it seems that without strong partners, the ACMECS would have a relatively weak counterbalancing effect against the hydro-hegemon.

3.4.9. Other Smaller Cooperative Groups

There are also several smaller multilateral collaborative groups established in the Mekong region. Since the smaller frameworks have fewer opportunities in resisting the hydro-hegemony of China, as they have been relatively weak, passive, or have concentrated on other areas instead of water; they will not be analysed in a detailed way. Nevertheless, there will be shortly introduced some of the groups.

First of all, the Development Triangle of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam was established already in 1999 with the aim of developing cooperation in transportation, trade, electricity, tourism, human resource development and wealth (CLV 2014). Already the cooperative areas indicate that it coincides with several other previous frameworks. Additionally, the membership shows that it is difficult to resist the hydro-hegemony with only three members. On the other hand, its homepage is filled with different information about the cooperation that demonstrates its activeness. Moreover, Japan is one of its greatest supporters and thus gives the group a stronger base. It has also established a clear structural organisation with summits and the Joint Coordinator Committee (CLV 2014).

Another similar cooperative group is established between Laos, Cambodia and Thailand that is called the Emerald Triangle and has been operating since 2000. The main cooperative areas are tourism and agriculture, but it has been quite inactive since the mid-2000s (Hatsukano 2012:

32). Additionally, as the main cooperative areas do not include water management, this group does not play a great role in resisting the hydro-hegemony of China.

Additionally, after establishing the Quadripartite Economic Cooperation Initiative in 1993; China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand signed also the “Agreement on Commercial Navigation on Lancang-Mekong River” in 2000, with the aim of developing transportation on the river and promoting trade and tourism (Agreement on Commercial...2000). The agreement is relatively specific, as it regulates different types of navigation on the river and includes following key areas of cooperation: maintenance and improvement of the navigability; increasing safety for navigation and protection of environment; information sharing on navigation, channels, obstacles and obstructions relating to navigation safety; cooperation in the customs; provision of water flow, the relevant data and other similar issues (Agreement on Commercial...2000: Art. 21). However, the meetings are again relatively rare, as the agreement requires an annual meeting (Agreement on Commercial...2000: Art. 21).

In 2011, the four countries also signed the "Law Enforcement Cooperation along the Mekong River Mechanism" to combat transnational crime and secure transportation along the Mekong River (Ponnudurai 2011). As the core of the cooperation is different from other groups by focusing exclusively on crime and security, it is not dealing explicitly with the issue of water allocation. As these two agreements include also China as a member but not all riparian states (i.e. Cambodia and Vietnam are absent), they could not be considered as strong counter-hegemonic mechanisms.

There are additionally many other collaborative groups, such as the cooperation between Switzerland, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar; or other similar support systems provided, for example, by Australia, New Zealand or Sweden. And as already mentioned before, several foreign countries also act as donors for the greater groups. Nevertheless, as the status of dialogue partner or donor country is not very steady, these support groups are not that relevant in this context.

3.4.10. Summary of Cooperative Groups

The previous section indicates that there are many collaborative frameworks established in the Mekong River Basin. Although the groups are quite diverse, several weak points are often repeating. Main differences are in the interest areas, membership and the strength of counterbalancing factor. As the Table 5 indicates, most collaborative groups (smaller groups of the chapter 3.4.9. are excluded from the table) include all five non-hegemonic states. However, the most important group that explicitly deals with water allocation, i.e. the MRC, does not include Myanmar and excludes also the hydro-hegemon. Additionally, there are many differences with the membership of China, as China is a full member only in the GMS Program and in the AMBDC. The complicated situation of membership could also be seen in the Figure 9 that demonstrates the main collaborative groups in terms of their membership.

Another important difference between the groups is the focus on water. From the greater institutions under analysis only four included explicitly the question of water management, i.e. the MRC, Japan's Mekong Initiative, the LMI and the Mekong-ROK Cooperation. Other collaborative groups rather focused on other topics, included the issue of water sharing in an indirect way or as a minor part of the framework. Therefore, it seems that the importance of water management in the Mekong River Basin is often overshadowed by other topics.

Additionally, the main question of this section, i.e. the strength in resisting the hydro-hegemon is quite diversely represented among the groups. First of all, it seems that these groups that have a strong international supporter, i.e. the USA, the ROK, Japan or India, should work in this manner more efficiently, as they have the power to counterbalance the hydro-hegemon better. However, there are also groups that have a strong international actor as a member or supporter, but do not deal explicitly with the question of water sharing, e.g. the AMBDC or MGC.

Table 5. Main cooperative groups in the Mekong River Basin

Group	Main areas of cooperation	China's position	Strength	Weakness
MRC (1995)	Sustainable management and development of water and related resources, regional cooperation and basin-wide planning.	Dialogue partner	+ Clear organisational structure + De-facto bindingness + Strong international support + Focus on water management	- Non-membership of China and Myanmar - Decisions not binding - Slow decision-making - Lack of well-functioning dispute resolution - High dependence on donors' funding - Internal tensions
GMS (1992)	Transport, energy, telecommunications, environment, human resource development, tourism, trade, private sector investment and agriculture.	Full and equal member	+ Clear organisational structure + Several activities + 6 members + Investments + Spill-over to other areas + Information from China	- Rare meetings - Too many activities - Too loose - Little interest in water issues
AMBDC (1996)	Infrastructure, trade, investment, agriculture, forestry, mineral resources, industrial sector, tourism, human resource development, science and technology.	Full and equal member	+ Clear organisational structure + Several activities + Investments + Includes also other ASEAN members	- Rare meetings - Too many activities - Too loose - Little interest in water issues
Japan's Mekong Initiative (2008)	Infrastructure, trade, investment, human resource development, environmental issues (water), tourism and cultural exchange.	Non-member	+ Japan as a strong supporter + Focus on water management + Includes all non-hegemons + Investments	- Rare meetings - Too many activities - Too loose
LMI (2009)	Agriculture, food security, connectivity, education, energy, environment, water, and health.	Non-member	+ The USA as a strong supporter + Focus on water management + Includes all non-hegemons + Investments, programs	- Rare meetings
Mekong-ROK (2011)	Infrastructure, information and communications, environment, water resources, agriculture, rural and human resources development.	Non-member	+ The ROK as a strong supporter + Focus on water management + Includes all non-hegemons + Investments, trade	- New program - Rare meetings - Too loose
MGC (2000)	Tourism, culture, education, transport and communications.	Non-member	+ India as a strong supporter + Includes all non-hegemons	- Infrequent meetings - No focus on water management
ACMECS (2003)	Trade, investment, agriculture, industry, transport, tourism and human resource development.	Non-member	+ Complementary to other programs + Many development partners + Clear structure, rules + Includes all non-hegemons	- Infrequent meetings - No focus on water management

Source: compiled by the author.

One important weak point that all groups share is the infrequency of meetings. It appears that if the groups had more regular meetings among working groups or also in higher levels, they could be more efficient and stronger. As they averagely come together once a year, a strong cooperation is definitely hindered and could be improved with more regular gatherings. Another common point of the collaborative groups that impedes an effective functioning is the absence of strict regulations that would oblige the member countries to work more actively and steadily. Additionally, the great number of different interest areas may often hamper focusing on a specific issue and handle the problems in a quick manner.

As a sum, it seems that the collaboration is excessively scattered among different collaborative groups, whereas it would be more effective and efficient to have fewer stronger groups. For instance, instead of dealing with the same question in different programs, the non-hegemons should rather strengthen one group for resisting the hydro-hegemony of China more efficiently. The non-hegemons could thereby spend fewer resources, including money, time and human capital, on different frameworks and could concentrate on one or two greater groups.

The complicated network of multilateral cooperative groups is depicted in the Figure 9 that demonstrates with circles and lines the diversity of collaboration in the Mekong River Basin. First of all, it seems that China is the most passive riparian state, as it acts as a full member only in two greater groups (GMS and AMBDC) and has smaller agreements also with Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. This suggests that China is rather excluded from the multilateral cooperation and focuses mainly on bilateral agreements, which was also confirmed in the content analysis. Chen et al. (2013: 219) also suggest that China has only few transboundary water treaties in the Mekong Region when compared with other important river systems located in the northern part of China.

Secondly, although most agreements include all five non-hegemons as members, the most important framework for enhancing cooperation in the water management (MRC) includes only four non-hegemons while Myanmar is not the member of the commission. Therefore, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam are the most active countries in enhancing cooperation in the Mekong River Basin, as they are included in most of the collaborative groups. This also demonstrates that it would be probably more effective and efficient to have fewer but stronger collaborative groups in order to save resources and resist the hydro-hegemony of China better.

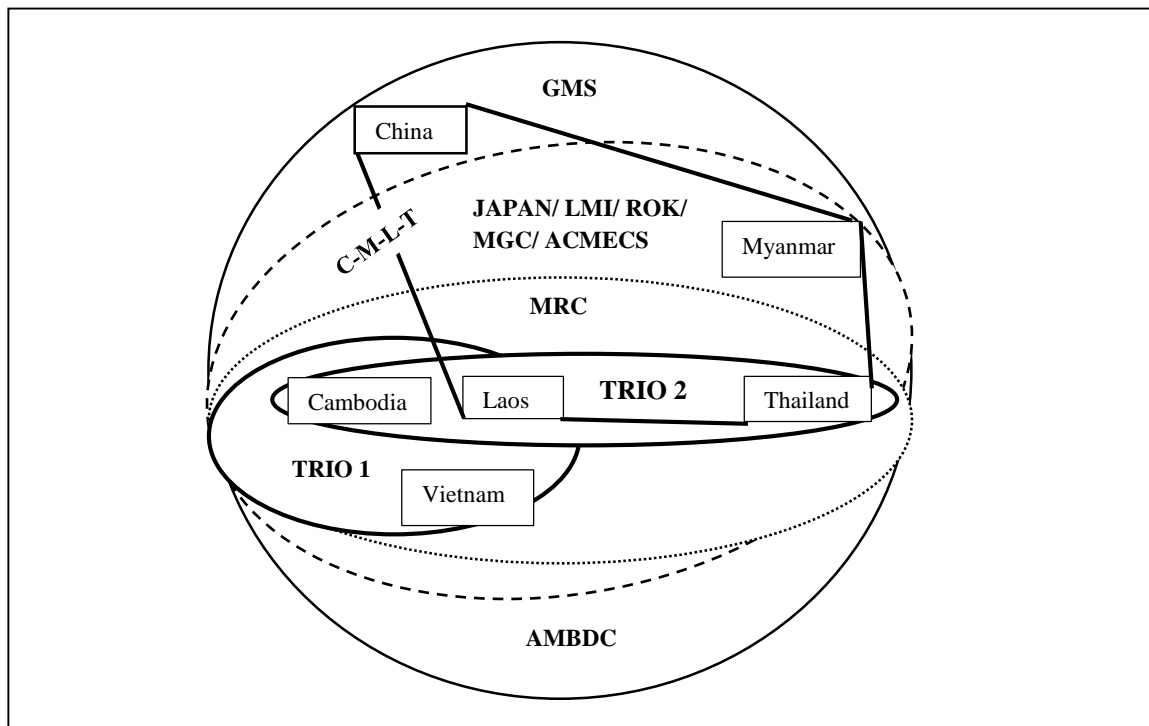


Figure 9. Network of main cooperative groups in the Mekong River Basin (compiled by the author)

Note: TRIO 1 - the Development Triangle of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam; TRIO 2- the Emerald Triangle between Laos, Cambodia and Thailand; C-M-L-T – the cooperation between China, Myanmar, Laos and Thailand

When looking at the coincidence of main interest areas of the collaborative groups (Figure 10), it is possible to see that many activities repeat among the programs (including also the smaller groups). The most common interest areas are human resource development, tourism, agriculture, transport, trade, water, environmental issues, investment, energy and communications. For instance, human resources development is the key focus area of the GMS, AMBDC, Japan's Mekong Initiative, LMI, MGC, ACMECS, Mekong-ROK Cooperation, and the Development Triangle of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. On tourism are concentrated following groups: the GMS, AMBDC, Japan's Mekong Initiative, MGC, ACMECS, the development triangles and the cooperation between China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. Agriculture is developed by the MRC, GMS, AMBDC, LMI, Mekong-ROK Cooperation, ACMECS and the Emerald Triangle. Transport is in the focus of the GMS, AMBDC, MGC, ACMECS, the Development Triangle of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, and the cooperation between China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. The GMS, AMBDC, Japan's Mekong Initiative, ACMECS, Development Triangle of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam and the cooperation between China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand are focused on trade. On the other hand, water issues are explicitly included and highlighted in five different groups, i.e. in the MRC, Japan's

Mekong Initiative, LMI, Mekong-ROK Cooperation and, in some ways, also in the cooperation between China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. Four groups are dealing with the cooperation on environment and investment; and three groups are focusing on energy and communications. Less common is the cooperation in forestry, minerals, science and food that are in the focus of one group.

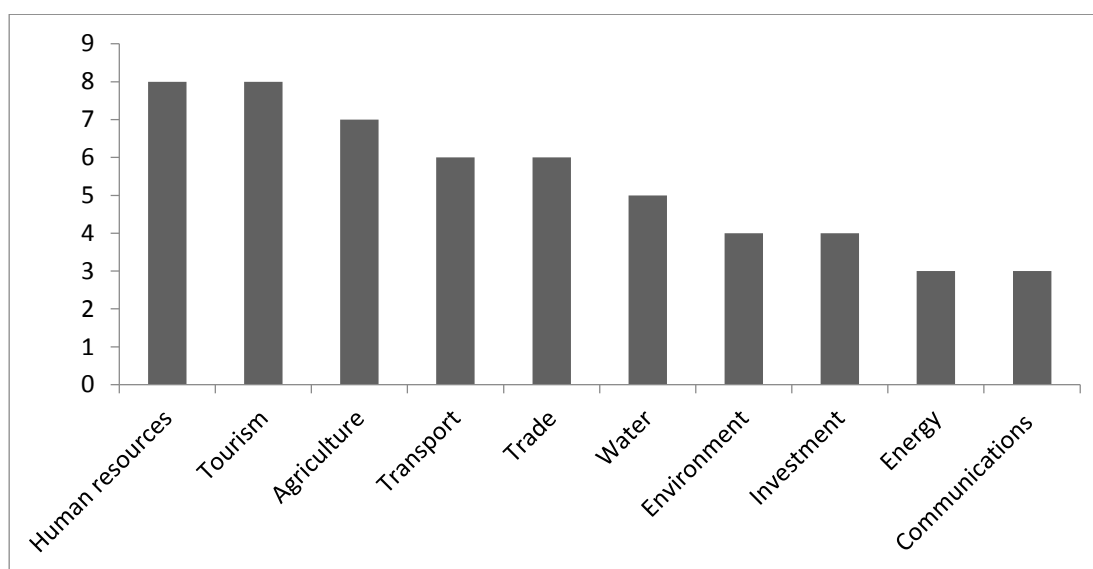


Figure 10. Number of groups dealing with similar interest areas (compiled by the author)

As a conclusion, when answering to the research questions of the second section, it is possible to say that the non-hegemonic states have quite actively used different cooperative methods, as they are active members of several groups. However, as many groups coincide in membership as well as in interest areas, their effectiveness is seriously hampered. Instead of spending many resources on several institutions and organising different summits and meetings, the non-hegemonic states should rather establish with some strong international supporters one greater and stronger cooperative framework that deals actively and on a regular basis with water management, has different working groups, regulations about efficient resolution of differences and tensions between the members, and determines clear rules (e.g. about data sharing) that the members have to obey. It seems that in this manner the non-hegemons could resist the hydro-hegemony of China better, and compensate their weakness together as a bloc instead of having the current scattered network made of several smaller collaborative groups that do not have sufficient resources and incentives to work actively.

Even though the countries have used many cooperative methods, the groups have not performed as strongly as necessary. Therefore, it would be interesting to look briefly at some main reasons why the countries have not been successful in resisting together the hydro-hegemon by answering to the fourth research question. First of all, it seems that the cleavage between non-hegemons is the greatest obstacle in establishing a strong counter-hegemonic mechanism for resisting China's dominance. The differences among the downstream states that cause this gap derive mainly from their contrasting interests.

Although there are also diverse opinions within the countries themselves, it is still possible to find some general interests of each downstream state. For instance, Laos is mostly interested in producing and exporting electricity, as it has several “aggressive plans” for hydropower development; Thailand has interests in diverting mainstream waters into northeast Thailand and importing electricity from Laos; Cambodia wants to maintain water flow and level in Tonle Sap Region in order to protect its freshwater fishery and agriculture, but at the same time it is also trying to develop its hydropower potential and is thereby backed mostly by China; Myanmar with high hydropower potential is until now being quite cautious and passive; and Vietnam's main concern is to maintain the productivity with substantial irrigation in the Mekong delta, but it is also interested in hydropower that could help to resolve its electricity problems (Dore et al. 2012: 26; Li 2012: 59-61; Schmeier 2009: 39).

Therefore, it is possible to see that the interests among the river basin and sometimes even within the countries are relatively diversified. Firstly, these riparian states that are mostly interested in developing hydropower projects (e.g. Laos) or importing the hydropower from neighbouring countries (e.g. Thailand) probably do not want to have stricter rules regulating the water allocation, as it might hamper the construction of dams, and thus they would rather avoid in engaging in more binding agreements. On the other hand, the countries that are in a vulnerable position and suffer seriously from upstream hydropower projects (e.g. Cambodia and Vietnam), may be more interested in those agreements that require stronger commitment and have stricter rules.

Additionally, the high dependency on China's investments makes the situation even more complicated, as some riparian states do not want to lose this crucial support and thereby try to find a balance between China and other non-hegemonic states. It is thus highly complicated to

regulate water allocation and even more difficult to resist the hydro-hegemony, as the non-hegemons have contrasting interests and often cannot find a consensus.

Furthermore, it seems that the cooperative groups with strong international supporters that could potentially counterbalance the hydro-hegemonic situation are often too loose and thereby do not work very efficiently in resisting the power asymmetry. As a result, despite the existence of numerous collaborative groups, there is still a lack of a cohesive and strong cooperative power that could compensate the weakness of downstream states and resist the hydro-hegemony of China.

3.5. Application of TWINS Approach to the Mekong River Basin

This section constitutes the final step of the three-level analysis and examines the relationships in the Mekong River Basin by using the TWINS approach. Therefore, the concluding method of the Transboundary Water Interaction Nexus uses as a basis also the results of previous segments, i.e. the conclusions about the hydro-hegemonic situation, results of the content analyses, and counter-hegemonic tools used by non-hegemons. Although the approach is originally used for examining changes in bilateral relations during a certain period of time, this paper will focus on current relations between six riparian states. As a first step, there will be looked at the bilateral interactions between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons separately, i.e. the relations between China and Cambodia, China and Laos, China and Myanmar, China and Thailand, and China and Vietnam; by looking at the intensity of conflict and cooperation between the states in terms of water allocation in the Mekong River Basin. There will be hence looked at the national strategies and legislation dealing with water sharing of each individual state and at the bilateral agreements that also regulate this area.

As a second stage, there will be analysed the relationship between the hydro-hegemon and the non-hegemons as a bloc, in order to see whether the collaborative measures of non-hegemons have helped them to compensate their weak position and act as a counter-hegemonic method. Although the Mekong River Commission does not include all five non-hegemons as full members (i.e. Myanmar is a dialogue partner of the group), it is still the most important and best institutionalised collaborative group dealing predominantly with water issues in the Mekong River Basin and is thereby selected for the TWINS matrix. After these two steps, it is

also possible to answer to the main research question of the thesis, as the TWINS approach enables to conclude how the hydro-hegemony influences transboundary water sharing in the Mekong River Basin, i.e. whether it has influenced the countries' actions, behaviour or international relations.

3.5.1. China and Cambodia

First of all, it seems that China rather avoids including the Mekong River as a transboundary water source to its foreign policy and often handles the river as its national resource. This means that the focus of China is on the development of its hydroelectricity, but not on sharing the river with others. For instance, the Ministry of Water Resources of the PRC is concentrating on the national projects, and its homepage has very general and vague information about the international cooperation on transboundary waters. For instance, the homepage only states that China has over 40 bilateral agreements and Memorandum of Understandings of water cooperation, and that is participating in more than 40 international water organisations, but there is no specific example or reference to these agreements (Ministry of Water...2014). Also the last available annual report for the time period of 2007-2008 (Ministry of Water...2007) states vaguely that China participated in the 12th Dialogue Meeting with the MRC, but it includes no further information about this meeting.

Moreover, the Water Law of the PRC (2002) deals predominantly with national water management and does not regulate international cooperation or transboundary river management in a detailed manner. For instance, only the Article 78 states that if an international treaty or agreement concluded by the PRC contains provisions that are different from the national laws, the provisions of the international treaty or agreement shall apply, unless the PRC has declared reservation on them. Also other laws that regulate water management are solely focusing on national issues and do not handle international cooperation, e.g. the Environmental Protection Law of 1989; the Law on the Prevention and Control of Water Pollution of 1984; the Law on Water and Soil Conservation of 1991 and the Flood Control Law of 1997 (PRC 1984, 1989, 1991, 1997).

Overall, it seems that the issue of water allocation of the Mekong River Basin is not in the focus of Chinese government, as it is only modestly dealing with the topic. When looking at the

current five-year plan (British Chamber of...2011), it is possible to see that it also includes as an essential part the need for increasing the use of hydropower, but it does not manage the issue of water sharing of the transboundary Mekong River (or Lancang as it is called in China). This suggests once more that China is rather handling the river as its national resource and not as an international issue that should be actively managed with other neighbouring countries.

Additionally, the results of two previous content analyses reassure the same, as China does not actively use the securitisation technique and rather utilises the opposing method of desecuritisation when talking about the Mekong River Basin. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that on the state level, the allocation of transboundary river water is definitely not violised, securitised or even strongly politicised, as China rather avoids talking about the issue explicitly and handles the water as a national resource that could be used unilaterally. Therefore, the conflict intensity from the Chinese point of view on this matter is definitely rather low. However, this also suggests that it is quite difficult for other riparian states to engage in a strong relationship with China for managing this issue.

Nevertheless, as China is involved in some cooperative institutions, such as being a dialogue partner of the MRC, member of the GMS Program and AMBDC, has several bilateral agreements, is also included into the agreement with Laos, Myanmar and Thailand, and is a great investor of several hydropower projects in the region; it is still an important player in the interaction over water sharing. As a result, according to China's perspective, the intensity of cooperation on this particular matter seems to be somewhere between the confrontation of the issue and the ad hoc cooperation, as China is to some extent included into the cooperative atmosphere, but it is not very active participant. However, as this section looks more specifically at the relations between China and Cambodia, the picture is slightly different.

First of all, as it was possible to see in previous sections, China is an essential supporter and investor of Cambodia, including in the hydropower sector. For instance, Grimsditch (2012: 12) suggests that China has recently become “a key partner” in Cambodia when considering the hydropower development, as China is the biggest supporter of large-scale hydropower dams in Cambodia. Similarly, Pheakdey (2012: 58) proposes that the relationship between Cambodia and China is stronger than before, as China is a great foreign investor, donor and an essential trading partner for Cambodia. This means that the relationship between China and Cambodia

on the water issue is relatively amicable, as Cambodia is dependent on the support of China, and the latter is interested in the benefit derived from the large-scale investments.

As a contrast to China, Cambodia is actively politicising the issue of water allocation of transboundary river basins. For instance, there are two main laws that regulate water management in Cambodia, i.e. the Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Law of 1996 and the Law on Water Resources Management of 2007. The former has an aim to “ensure the rational and sustainable conservation, development, management, and use of the natural resources” (Kingdom of Cambodia 1996: Art. 1). The Article 8 specifies more clearly that water as one of the natural resources should be developed, managed and used in a rational and sustainable manner. This means that this legislation regulates the issue in a quite general level and does not offer very specific principles.

On the other hand, the Law on Water Resource Management of 2007 (Kingdom of Cambodia 2007) is much more specific and regulates water management within the country but also between other states in a more detailed way. For example, it states that water resources shall be managed and developed according to the integrated water resources management, water resources projects shall be prepared according to the national water resources plans, and there are also several clauses about the protection of water resources (Art. 4, 9, 22-23). Moreover, it regulates the relations between the upstream and downstream users within the country (Art. 27) and coordinates the relationship in transboundary river basins by promoting cooperation with international organisations and requiring the management of river basins according to an equitable and reasonable mode based on the international agreements (Art. 7, 34).

Moreover, the National Water Resources Policy handles the allocation of transboundary river water between six riparian states more specifically. First of all, the strategy proclaims that there is a need to act according to the international agreements in the allocation of water during dry seasons, and cooperate actively with international organisations and development banks; it also thereby emphasises the importance of the MRC and requires participation in regional and international programmes in order to mitigate the impacts of several hazards; it includes also more specific policies for cooperating with other riparian states and achieving the aims of the 1995 Agreement of the MRC; and it targets to “integrate Cambodia into the international arena in the water sector” (Ministry of Water... 2004: 11,12,13,17). Additionally, the document acknowledges that upstream activities may have negative effects on the river, even though the

accidental pollution events at the upstream have not yet affected the river system directly (Ministry of Water... 2004: 13). This means that although Cambodia was not very negative about the upstream activities in 2004, the issue was already politicised and seems to form an essential part of the public policy, as the water allocation among the riparian states was included into the strategy several times.

Additionally, the content analysis of the ideational power demonstrated that the issue of water sharing is currently in the media highly securitised, as Cambodia has used the securitisation technique among the riparian states most often. This result suggests that the water allocation of the Mekong River is presented as a quite tense and threatening situation in the country. Nevertheless, most of the accusations of Cambodia are addressed to Laos, and only few of them are directed to China's actions. For instance, there is explicitly stated that the government of Cambodia does not believe that the construction of Chinese dams is affecting the water level negatively (Sambath 2010) that could be conceived as a clear sign of a positive attitude towards China.

On the other hand, there have been recently some protests in Cambodia against China's actions. For instance, in December 2013, several villagers living along Mekong River tributaries protested in front of the Chinese embassy in Phnom Penh against three proposed China-backed dam projects (Lipes 2013); and in March 2014, some ethnic minority villagers in Cambodia's Areng Valley blocked a road and tried to avoid the Chinese company Sinohydro bringing machinery and starting to build another hydropower project on a major Mekong tributary in Cambodia (Walker 2014). Therefore, it seems that there have been several disagreements with proposed hydropower projects on local levels, but the state rather encourages the construction, as it could provide economic benefits for the country.

In addition, there have been recently some examples of an amicable relationship between China and Cambodia. Although, these collaborative steps are not explicitly focused on transboundary water management, they are relatively broad and thereby could have an impact on water allocation as well. For instance, in 2013, the countries signed the Action Plan of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation that includes among many other topics also the need for enhancing coordination in water conservancy, and formed the Cambodia-China Intergovernmental Coordination Committee that had its first meeting in 2014 (People's Daily 2013a; 2013b).

As a result, it seems that in the cooperative level, the relationship between China and Cambodia in terms of water allocation is quite positive and could be positioned in the area of risk-averting cooperation, as there are joint actions and goals, such as China's investment and support in Cambodia and the agreement of strategic cooperation. However, the collaboration is still not strong and ideal enough, as there are some worrisome signs from Cambodia and the transboundary water management is not regulated in a detailed manner. For that reason, the reciprocal behaviour is not that evident as it would be in a perfect type of cooperation.

Additionally, the situation is quite different in the conflictive dimension. Whereas China has not considered the issue to be important enough, Cambodia is clearly politicised and, by some means, securitised the question of water allocation. Although the protests and negative messages derive mainly from local levels, they indicate that there are problematic issues and tensions on this matter. As a sum, in the continuum of the intensity of the conflict, the relationship could be located under the category of “securitised” due to Cambodia's actions and behaviour. Interestingly, the bilateral relationship between China and Cambodia includes thereby simultaneously a relatively high intensity of conflict and cooperation. Since the conflictive and cooperative characteristics together balance the overall situation, the interaction could be regarded as being quite neutral. Nevertheless, it is still more inclined towards a positive relationship.

3.5.2. China and Laos

Laos is, similarly to China, in the governmental level rather focusing on national hydropower projects than on international cooperation. Already the Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan for the years of 2011-2015 indicates that the question of water, especially in the means of hydropower development, is an essential part of the country's development, as some of the targets of the energy section are medium and large hydropower projects (Ministry of Planning 2011...: 100). Additionally, one aim of the water section is to use water resources efficiently and in a sustainable manner by indicating thereby indirectly to the hydropower development, but there is also explicitly stated that the activities of the MRC and other international partners need to be synchronised with the activities of the government of Laos (Ministry of Planning... 2011: 139-140). Therefore, it seems that the hydropower is an essential part of the strategy, but the section about the international cooperation is too vague and general

in this area. Nevertheless, the cooperation in the GMS, MRC and with the dialogue partners of the MRC are explicitly mentioned (Ministry of Planning... 2011: 183).

On the other hand, the cooperation with China is primarily focused on trade but not on water sharing. Thereby, China is named as a “good neighbour” and “trustworthy partner” with whom it is essential to have strong bilateral ties (Ministry of Planning... 2011: 180). Nevertheless, the interdependence between the two countries deriving from China's investment in the hydropower sector of Laos is another important aspect in this relationship that helps to make the bilateral interaction stronger.

Additionally, the Water and Water Resources Law of 1996 indicates that water management is important for the country, as the hydropower and irrigation are specifically coordinated (Lao PDR 1996: Art. 13). Furthermore, it regulates the adequacy with international law and requires that disputes with neighbouring countries should be resolved between the governments with diplomatic and amicable methods (Lao PDR 1996: Art. 44, 45). Therefore, it is possible to see that although the law verifies that water management was an essential issue already in 1996, the question of how to manage water in the international level was relatively vague.

The content analysis of the chapter 3.3.4 also indicated that Laos is not predominantly focusing on the negative impacts in the river basin and is not often using the securitisation technique. Therefore, this behaviour is quite similar to China's action while both countries talk about positive issues and cooperation in the political level but also focus on their own national projects. The recent unilateral actions of Laos are particularly good examples of its desire to handle the river as a national resource. For instance, Lefevre (2013) suggests that Laos is developing the hydropower projects without consulting with its neighbour countries. Similar accusations deriving from other riparian states were also visible in the content analysis of the chapter 3.3.4.

In recent years, there have also been several collaborative steps between China and Laos in the political level. For instance, they established a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership in 2009; they strengthened the relationship in 2011; and two years later, they also tried to reinforce the cooperation even more (ANN 2013; MOFA of the PRC 2013; People's Daily 2011). In 2013, they focused thereby on ten priority areas, i.e. infrastructure, agriculture, natural resource processing, energy, mines, tourism, poverty reduction, telecommunications, small and

medium sized enterprises, and human resources (ANN 2013), and thus the question of water resources was also included under the category of natural resources.

As a sum, the intensity of cooperation between China and Laos is similar to the relations between China and Cambodia, as there is an analogous dependency due to the economic interests deriving from China's investments and due to the recent collaborative steps in the political arena. However, the partnership does not seem to be ideal enough for situating it to the highest category, as the water management is predominantly concentrated on a narrow area, i.e. hydropower. Nevertheless, in the dimension of conflict intensity, it is possible to see an improvement when compared to the interaction between China and Cambodia, because Laos has not used the securitisation technique as actively as Cambodia. Therefore, the relations between China and Laos, in the conflictive dimension, could be placed between the categories of non-politicisation and politicisation, as the issue of water allocation is included into the political agenda, but not handled very intensively or in a detailed way. In conclusion, the interaction between China and Laos is more positive than between China and Cambodia, as it is less extreme in the conflictive level. However, the difference is not very great.

3.5.3. China and Myanmar

Myanmar has regulated the issue of transboundary water management relatively vaguely. For instance, there are two main laws regulating water resources, i.e. the Conservation of Water Resources and Rivers Law of 2006 and the Environmental Conservation Law of 2012. The former legislation includes thereby explicitly those rivers that are situated along border areas (The Union of...2006: Art 2b), which suggests that it regulates also the Mekong River. Although the law is quite general and is focused on the protection of water resources and river systems, and on the development of economy through improved water resources (Art. 3a, c), it additionally covers the issue of water allocation in the international level. For instance, it includes the necessity to act according to the relevant international conventions, regional and bilateral agreements (Art. 4g), which can be seen as a direct reference to the management of water allocation with other riparian states. Nevertheless, the section about international cooperation is relatively brief and does not regulate the interaction more specifically. Similarly, the Environmental Conservation Law aims to promote international, regional and bilateral cooperation in environmental conservation (Republic of the...2012: Art. 3g). Although it is also

relatively general and includes several types of issues, it explicitly states that fresh water resources are included to the conservation of natural resources (Art. 18c).

Additionally, Myanmar has adopted a document called Millennium Development Goals Report of 2013, which includes the necessity to ensure environmental sustainability by extracting natural resources sustainably (Republic of the...2013: 94). This means that the goal is again relatively general. Although the National Sustainable Development Strategy for Myanmar of 2009 includes more specific objectives, e.g. the need for participating in the Mekong River Commission as a member country (Ministry of Forestry... 2009: 21), this goal has not been reached, as Myanmar has refused to become a full member of the MRC and rather desires to continue as a dialogue partner, which was also visible in the section of the bargaining power (Chapter 3.3.3).

Therefore, it seems that the water management is not very specifically regulated and rather handled loosely in Myanmar. Also the Asian Development Bank (2013b: 18, 19, 21) suggests that Myanmar lacks comprehensive planning policies, legislation, decrees, funding and institutional structure for water resource management, and has limited awareness and information about hydrological data. Moreover, the assessment of cumulative effect of the hydropower projects has been weak and there is a lack of studies about the issue (ADB 2013b: 20).

One of the main reasons for underdeveloped water management seems to be the fact that Myanmar has sufficient amount of water resources and does not worry enough about the current situation. As it was possible to see in the section of material power (Chapter 3.3.2), the indicators on the amount of total renewable water resources and the amount of water per capita are relatively good in Myanmar, and also the score for baseline water stress is one of the smallest among the six riparian states. Also, according to the ADB (2013b: 20), the serious situation of deficient water management is relieved due to the relative abundance of water resources. Additionally, as the results of the geographical power indicated, Myanmar is not highly dependent on the Mekong River and is thereby not as vulnerable as other downstream states. This also corresponds to the outcomes of the ideational power while Myanmar has not used the securitisation method very often and has rather referred to several cooperative measures.

On the other hand, there are also articles that include accusations of China's hydropower projects and its action in the upstream, which indicate some tensions between China and Myanmar on this question. For instance, there are demonstrated some critical opinions from the Kachin ethnic group or from environmental groups that are afraid of the negative impacts of China's projects. By the way, it is also possible to see that this negative stance against Chinese action is predominantly presented in the Democratic Voice of Burma and not in other newspapers. Nevertheless, the negative standpoint is still recognisable and indicates thereby an opposing attitude against China's activities.

Furthermore, there have been recently some protests against Chinese-backed hydroelectric dam in Myanmar (Asian Correspondent 2014). Although the protests were against the proposed Myitsone dam on the Irrawaddy River and not specifically against the dams on the Mekong River, it still shows some concern and dissatisfaction with Chinese action in Myanmar. Moreover, Sun (2013) has suggested that China's investment in Myanmar has sharply decreased after the reformist government came into power in 2011, but also that the three greatest hydropower projects of Myanmar that are supported by China have received strong opposition from local levels, and are thereby influencing the climate of investments. Therefore, it seems that there have been recently some problems in the relationship between China and Myanmar. Nevertheless, as there are not many severe concerns explicitly about the Mekong River water resources, the intensity of conflict in this context is not that strongly affected.

In addition, the countries strengthened their bilateral cooperation by establishing China-Myanmar comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership in 2011. Thereby the countries agreed to reinforce collaboration on trade, education, culture, science, technology, health, agriculture and tourism; and also acknowledged that the relationship between the countries is amicable and successful (Embassy of the...2011). The importance and positive side of the cooperation is also strongly represented in Myanmar's media, as the content analysis showed that there is often focused on the need for enhancing cooperation with China, and on the necessity of China's support for Myanmar.

As a sum, it appears that Myanmar is currently not very worried about the management of the Mekong River. First of all, it does not have any grave problems with water resources and is thus not dealing actively with the issue in the political level. Additionally, as it is in the midst of democratisation process, it is focusing more on other major political and economic issues,

and the question of water and environment rather seems to be in the background. Moreover, the Mekong River as a border river of Myanmar comprises only a minor part of the country. This also means that even though there have been some protesting voices about the negative effects of Chinese hydropower projects on local levels, the state is not dealing actively or in a detailed manner with the question of water sharing of the Mekong River. Therefore, it seems that the issue is quite underdeveloped and rather non-politicised. However, as there are some minor examples of including the issue into the political agenda of Myanmar, the relationship between China and Myanmar could be located between the categories of non-politicised and politicised in the conflictive dimension of the TWINS matrix. Since the cooperation is not very strong on this matter, but there are still some signs of collaboration in managing the water resources, it could be situated between the levels of confrontation of the issue and ad hoc cooperation. As a result, the interaction between China and Myanmar is rather neutral, as there are no major signs of conflictive or cooperative actions.

3.5.4. China and Thailand

The legislation of Thailand on water management is currently in progress, which means that the main law regulating water resources is the Enhancement and Conservation of Environmental Quality Act of 1992. However, this law is, like its name already indicates, quite general and water resources constitute only a minor section of the regulation. For instance, it coordinates environmental quality standards, including the water quality standards for river; and also contains the issue of water pollution (Kingdom of Thailand 1992: Art. 32, 69-77), but it is not dealing explicitly with the management of the transboundary rivers.

Although there are currently no specific regulations about the water management implemented in Thailand, an integrated water resource management law is being prepared (Sen 2013). According to the World Bank (2011: 39), the process of developing water law in Thailand has been long, beginning already in the 1990s. In addition to the absence of water law, the World Bank (2011: 39) has also named the institutional fragmentation as one of the most serious impediments to the water management in Thailand, as it hampers to handle the water issues holistically.

On the other hand, Thailand has dedicated a great part of the Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan of 2012-2016 to the question of water management. Overall there are three main topics of water management included into the plan. First of all, the politicisation of water question is clearly visible, as there is repeatedly referred to the inefficiency of current water management situation. For instance, the strategy states following: the water management legislation should be amended in order to give to the local levels more authority; there is a need to develop integrated water resource management, increase efficiency in the use of water resources and of the entire water management system, promote research and development for increasing the usage of hydroelectricity, eliminate the non-transparency and corruption in the water management (Office of the...2012: 64, 89, 116, 119).

Secondly, the development plan is also pessimistic about upcoming negative impacts and includes thereby several examples of securitisation. For instance, there is explicitly stated that, due to water shortage, there is a greater risk to have conflicts over competing uses of intra- and inter-river basin among production sectors; that water shortage will have negative impact on livelihoods and environment; that an integrated water management is necessary for supporting sustainable food and energy security; and that a high water quality is essential for reducing threats to health (Office of the... 2012: 110, 112, 116, 119).

Thirdly, the plan also includes the topic of international collaboration in water management. For instance, it promotes international cooperation under the GMS Program and the Agreement on Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin; it also refers explicitly to the importance of “superpowers”, such as China, Japan, the USA and their cooperative frameworks in the Mekong River Basin (Office of the... 2012: 95, 107), indicating thereby also to the power asymmetry in the river basin.

When looking more specifically at the relations between China and Thailand, it is possible to see that recently there have been several collaborative steps. Nevertheless, these actions are quite general and not focused explicitly on managing the Mekong River. For instance, the countries signed a strategic cooperative joint action plan in 2007; and initiated the Joint Action Plan on Thailand-China Strategic Cooperation for 2012-2016 in 2012 (Royal Thai Government 2007, 2012). The latter includes (among other topics) the cooperation in investment, energy and regional issues, which suggests that also water management could be included under these wide categories. Moreover, they also signed the Memorandum of Understanding Concerning

Feasibility Study for Cooperation on Water Management that requires ministerial level committees for coordinating the issue (Royal Thai Government 2012).

Despite several cooperative examples, there are also tensions between Thailand and China. As the results of the content analysis of ideational power indicated, Thailand has frequently used securitisation and accusations. Moreover, there were also more articles with negative stance and several complaints about the negative impacts of Chinese dams and its passivity on data sharing. Furthermore, in 2010, a representative of Thailand blamed Chinese action in the upstream of the Mekong River by stating that these dams “have already destroyed the river's ecosystem” and thus Thailand is worried about other proposed projects (Roughneen 2010).

As a result, the relationship between Thailand and China could be situated under the category of securitisation in the scale of conflict. Although there have recently been several examples of collaboration (i.e. joint agreements) and they have agreed on some general mutual goals, there is still a lack of an active and strong cooperation and hence the relationship could be located under the category of technical cooperation in the cooperative dimension. This result suggests that the interaction is relatively negative when compared to the previous bilateral groups.

3.5.5. China and Vietnam

Water management seems to be a relatively important issue for Vietnam. First of all, the Law on Protection of the Environment of 2005 states that “River water environmental protection shall constitute one of the fundamental contents of the planning of exploitation, use and management of water resources in river basins” and that the construction of reservoirs used for irrigation and hydropower projects must be in accordance with environment protection (Socialist Republic of... 2005: Art. 59, 64). Therefore, it is possible to see that water management is definitely an essential subject and is also strongly linked with environmental protection.

Additionally, the Law on Water Resources of 1998 includes the question of international cooperation. Firstly, it is quite generally regulated that the state encourages international cooperation in different kinds of water management, e.g. in survey, protection, prevention etc. (Socialist Republic of...1998: Art. 8). Secondly, it requires that state enhances the exchange of

information related to international water sources (Socialist Republic of...1998: Art. 54). This also shows the importance of data sharing for Vietnam, as part of the country is located in the most downstream section of the Mekong River Basin and hence it needs accurate hydrological information from the upstream states. Moreover, the Article 56 describes that the disputes on international water sources should be resolved between the governments, on the basis of negotiations and in accordance with the international conventions, or as designated in the international river basin organisations. Additionally, the law also includes the issue of hydropower by stating that “the state encourages the exploitation and use of water sources for hydroelectricity” (Article 29).

Furthermore, the National Water Resources Strategy 2020 deals specifically with water resources and includes explicitly the great role of the Mekong River Commission. For instance, it has a goal to enhance international cooperation in the frameworks of the MRC and GMS, but also through other multilateral and bilateral cooperation programs (Ministry of Natural...2006: 20). Whereas the Five Year Socio-Economic Development Plan for the 2011-2015 (Socialist Republic of... 2011a) has no explicit reference to the issue of water management, river basins or hydropower projects; the Sustainable Development Strategy for 2011-2020 includes several indications to water security. First of all, it states that there is a need to enhance cooperation with neighbouring countries in sharing transboundary water; to consider water as an important national asset and change water management more effective; protect environment and restore the quality of key river basins (Socialist Republic of...2011c). This suggests that river water is handled as a relevant national resource and thereby also indicates to the politicisation method. On the other hand, as the most downstream country, Vietnam also understands the importance of improving cooperation with other riparian states.

Moreover, the National Strategy on Climate Change of 2011 includes several water-related issues. First of all, some of its missions are dedicated to improve the hydro-meteorological forecasting systems and hydroelectric plants, and develop hydroelectric projects (Socialist Republic of...2011b). There is also a separate section for water security that includes the topics of improving international cooperation in several areas, such as researching, evaluating and managing quality and volume of water resources, but also the issue of sharing transborder water profits, or improving the management of water resources. Furthermore, it is explicitly stated that the Mekong Delta is a highly vulnerable region corresponding thereby also to the frequent

usage of securitisation technique in the media. The strategy thereby refers several times to the vulnerability of Vietnam by stating that “Vietnam is considered as one of the countries most affected by climate change, its Mekong Delta is one of the world's three most vulnerable deltas”; the Mekong Delta is flooded in salt water due to the sea level rising”; and that it is a “highly vulnerable region” (Socialist Republic of...2011b: 1, 2).

Therefore, it is possible to see that water allocation and international cooperation are important topics in the political agenda of Vietnam, and also the vulnerability is demonstrated within the strategy repeatedly. This suggests that Vietnam has politicised and several times used the securitisation, which was also visible in the content analysis of the chapter 3.3.4. For instance, the articles included references to the negative impacts of the upstream hydropower projects, but also direct accusations of Chinese actions in the upstream.

When looking more specifically at the relationship between China and Vietnam in terms of water allocation, it is clearly visible that the relations are not as amicable as between China and Cambodia or between China and Laos. First of all, although China invests also in Vietnam's hydropower projects, the share of investments is not that great. For instance, Beck (2014: 6) suggests that Chinese investments in Vietnam represent “the second smallest investment of Chinese companies in the Mekong region's hydropower development” and all hydropower projects are located in tributaries and not on the mainstream. Moreover, she proposes that the geographical position of the countries and tense relations act as impediments for enhancing closer cooperation in hydropower between China and Vietnam.

On the other hand, despite critical historical examples, there have been recently more cooperative steps in the relationship between China and Vietnam. For instance, in 2000, the countries signed the Joint Statement for Future Cooperation that includes also explicitly the need for intensifying information sharing and cooperation in hydrology and in the development of the Mekong River area (People's Daily 2000). Moreover, the parties agreed to handle disputes in terms of consultations. Nevertheless, it does not include more specifically how the cooperation in water sharing will be improved and thereby it rather seems quite vague.

Another positive example is the establishment of annual meetings in terms of Steering Committee on Bilateral Cooperation for coordinating the overall collaboration between the

countries in 2006 (Thayer 2010: 396). However, when looking at the topics of the meetings, it seems that the cooperation is rather about general issues and not targeted to some specific question, such as water allocation in the Mekong River Basin. For example, the sixth meeting in 2013 included quite broad topics, such as culture, trade, peace, security and stability (VOV5 2013). On the other hand, in 2013, the presidents of both countries had also a meeting where they talked about the need to increase exchanges and cooperation in the management of rivers, and protect water resources of the transboundary rivers (Vietnamplus 2013). Therefore, this example suggests that the question of water allocation is also handled in the high-level meetings.

As a sum, it seems that the relationship between China and Vietnam in terms of water allocation in the Mekong River Basin could be located under the category of securitisation in the conflictive dimension, as there are several concerns in Vietnam about the negative impact of upstream hydropower projects (including China's actions) on Vietnam. In the level of cooperation, it seems that the quite general collaboration could be located under the category of technical cooperation, as there are some general joint goals, but the cooperative actions itself have been quite modest.

3.5.6. China and the Mekong River Commission

The relationship between the hydro-hegemonic China and the Mekong River Commission as a group of non-hegemonic states has been quite controversial, because there have been simultaneously several positive as well as negative examples. Therefore, the TWINS approach should be especially suitable for analysing this case. Subsequently, there will be examined the main cooperative and conflictive examples of that relationship for positioning the interaction in the TWINS matrix and understanding whether the MRC has been effective in resisting the hydro-hegemony.

First of all, as already several times mentioned, China is not a member of the MRC and acts, similarly to Myanmar, as a dialogue partner of the group. Therefore, this refusal could be understood as a negative example of the relationship between China and the MRC. This also means that it is necessary to regulate the cooperation between the MRC and its dialogue partners separately. Hence, there have recently been several agreements between the MRC and China.

In 2002, they signed an agreement on the provision of hydrological information on the Mekong River, which means that China agreed to provide water level data in the flood season (15 June – 15 October) from two hydrological stations (MRC 2013d). In 2008, the agreement on provision of hydrological information was renewed (MRC 2008). Five years later, China agreed to share even more hydrological data, as it extended the period of data sharing (1 June - 31 October) and increased the frequency of the information exchange (from once to twice a day) (MRC 2013b). These collaborative steps indicate that the cooperation is often strengthened after some necessary conditions and not prepared for a long time. For instance, the first agreement of 2002 was signed after a row of several serious floods occurring in 2000 and 2001 (MRC 2002).

Secondly, the attitude of the Mekong River Commission towards China is quite antagonistic, as there are encircling contrasting opinions. On the one hand, there is an optimistic stance towards China, as there have been often appreciated the positive activities of the hydro-hegemon. Especially, the reports of the meetings demonstrate a strongly positive attitude. For instance, in the 15th Dialogue Meeting of 2010, China emphasised its trustworthiness and reliability, and Thailand expressed its gratitude for China's data sharing in extreme cases (MRC 2010b: 2, 3). There was also a very diplomatic and positive attitude in the 16th Dialogue Meeting of 2011, as the progress in cooperation with China was often emphasised (MRC 2011e: 4). In the 33rd Meeting of the MRC Joint Committee of 2011, the success in the cooperation with dialogue partners (i.e. China and Myanmar) in the training courses, data sharing or technical issues was once again highlighted (MRC 2011g : 4). Finally, in the Informal Donor Meeting of 2013, the Chief Executive Officer of the Secretariat emphasised the strengthened cooperation with China (MRC 2013c: 34).

The positive attitude towards China's actions during the meetings is also clearly represented in the content analysis of the bargaining power, as the speeches are mostly optimistic and emphasise the cooperation. Nevertheless, there have been also some controversial examples. For instance, in the Third Regional Stakeholder Forum of 2010, it is said that China confirmed that the upstream dams have not influenced adversely the downstream of the Mekong River, but later it is also stated that the upstream dams of China, Laos, Thailand or Cambodia will have an impact on the flow regime and other conditions of the river (MRC 2010a: 5, 128).

However, apart from the meetings, there are also optimistic signs expressed in several annual reports and strategies. Nevertheless, the main difference between the texts of the meetings and the strategies is that the latter include more often simultaneously positive and negative attitude towards China's actions. For instance, the State of the Basin Report of 2010, presents some positive outcomes of the cooperation between the MRC and China, but also implies that there are different needs among the riparian states, and that China's dams could have several long term transboundary impacts (MRC 2010e: 228, 229). The latter examples could be seen as hints to the negative effects and thereby also demonstrate a pessimistic view on this matter.

On the other hand, there are predominantly positive outlooks in the Working Paper of 2011-2015 that explicitly states that China's dams in the upstream of the Mekong River could not be blamed for the reduction in low flows (MRC 2012c: 67); and also the Strategic Plan of 2011-2015 appreciates the crucial partnership with China, as the latter has provided necessary hydrological information, and there have been joint workshops on navigation safety (MRC 2011f: 6, 24). To the contrast, the MRC Work Programme of 2012 states that the hydropower cascade of China may alter the seasonal flows in the Mekong River and also cause sediment and nutrient trapping in the Lower Mekong Basin, which thereby might have serious effects on fisheries and livelihoods (MRC 2012b: 6). Also the Basin Development Strategy of 2013 states explicitly that China's dams are changing the flow regime (MRC 2011c: 2).

The previous examples indicate that there is an absence of cohesive goals and opinions towards China and a visible lack of unity among the member countries in the Mekong River Commission that may act as serious impediments to the development of the group and hamper the cooperation with China. This suggests that due to different interests among the member states of the MRC (e.g. development of hydropower and interest in China's investments versus environmental protection), the non-hegemonic states are not able to act as a unified and strong force against China. Additionally, as Myanmar is also a dialogue partner and not a full member of the MRC, there is no clear bloc of non-hegemons established within the MRC. Although there are other collaborative groups that include all five non-hegemonic states, such as Japan's Mekong Initiative, Lower Mekong Initiative, Mekong-ROK Cooperation, Mekong-Ganga Cooperation or ACMECS, these often include other areas of cooperation and are not solely focused on water management, or they have too loose organisational frameworks. Therefore, the Mekong River Commission still seems to be the main collaborative group of the non-

hegemonic states that deals predominantly with water allocation, but its actions are also clearly hampered.

As a sum, it seems that the level of cooperation between China and the MRC is quite low while there are no cohesive and clear joint goals, and the cooperation has been implemented quite spontaneously and cautiously according to existing circumstances. This suggests that the cooperation could be located under the category of ad hoc cooperation. In the conflictive dimension, it seems that the issue of water sharing has been politicised, as there are created several agreements between the MRC and China, and it is recognised as a serious issue among the non-hegemonic states. However, as there have been also references to the negative impacts of China's dams and to the existential threats induced by the hydropower projects, it could be seen as a securitised issue. Nevertheless, the securitisation is not very strongly represented due to the wide spectrum of opinions in the MRC, and thus the relationship is tilting more towards a lower level of conflict.

3.5.7. TWINS Matrix

The final results of the TWINS approach could be seen in the Figure 11. On the one hand, the figure shows the bilateral relationships between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemonic states separately, but also between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons as a bloc (with the example of the MRC as the most important and active cooperative framework dealing with water sharing in the MRB). Thereby it is also demonstrated, how effective the collaboration between the non-hegemons in resisting the hydro-hegemonic China is.

Firstly, it is possible to see that the relationship between the hydro-hegemonic China and the non-hegemons separately is relatively diverse, as the bilateral groups are located in quite different positions in the matrix. Nevertheless, there are also some similarities. For instance, the relations between China and Thailand, and China and Vietnam are quite analogous. There are also some parallels between Cambodia and Laos in terms of their interaction with China. On the other hand, the relations between China and Myanmar are in a quite distant position.

This implies that the most positive interaction, according to the TWINS matrix, is between China and Laos, because they have not politicised the issue strongly, and thereby have also not

used the securitisation method actively. Although both countries rather concentrate on their national hydropower projects and have quite general regulations about international cooperation on water management, their collaboration is relatively strong, due to China's investments in the hydropower projects of Laos, and because of several agreements between the countries.

The relations between China and Cambodia are mostly considered to be strong and cordial. However, in terms of water allocation, the relationship is slightly more negative than between China and Laos. The reason for this small difference is that Cambodia has securitised the water-sharing issue. This is especially visible from the results of the content analysis. Additionally, the national strategy of Cambodia also acknowledges the possibility of negative impacts of upstream activities on downstream states, which suggests that the issue is getting more important and serious in the country. Furthermore, the protests of local people indicate that the securitisation method is relatively widely spread in Cambodia. On the other hand, in terms of cooperation, the relations are relatively strong, due to China's investments in hydropower projects of Cambodia and because of recent moves in enhancing the collaboration. Therefore, the relationship between China and Cambodia is quite remarkable, as it has according to the matrix simultaneously a high level of cooperation and a medium level of conflict. Nevertheless, as the position in the conflictive section is still more inclined to a lower level, i.e. heading towards politicisation, the interaction could be considered as being relatively positive.

On the other hand, the relationships of China with Thailand and Vietnam are, according to the TWINS matrix, the most negative. The main reasons for this result are active securitisation and smaller amount of investments from China on the hydropower projects. This means that Thailand has actively, explicitly and in a quite detailed way securitised the water-sharing issue in the National Economic and Social Development Plan. The securitisation is also visible in the content analysis of the ideational power, as there are many media articles that include some securitisation method and also accusations of Chinese action in the upstream of the Mekong River. Although the current legislation on this question is weak, the process of implementing a new and more specific law is on-going. Due to some recent collaborative steps between China and Thailand, the relationship is in a medium part of the matrix in the level of cooperation, i.e. under the category of technical cooperation.

Vietnam has a quite similar situation in the relationship with China. The legislation and, especially, the national strategies indicate clearly, how the issue of water allocation is politicised and also securitised in Vietnam. Moreover, the securitisation was often used in the media articles, and the share of investments from China on the hydropower projects of Vietnam is also relatively small. On the other hand, there have been recently several collaborative steps that may be placed under the category of technical cooperation, as there have included some mutual goals in the meetings and agreements, but the real action has still been quite modest.

The final bilateral interaction in the TWINS matrix is the relationship between China and Myanmar, which is quite distant from other two-sided groups and could be thereby considered as the most neutral interaction. Main reasons for this neutrality are weak signs of conflict and cooperation on the water issue, as Myanmar has not actively securitised or even politicised the question. Similarly, the cooperation on water management has been rather modest, as neither of the countries does not demonstrate their concerns about the subject and rather focus on other topics.

It is also possible to make some other conclusions about the differences of water management in the countries. First of all, it is possible to see that the issue is regulated in a relatively diverse way in the legislative level. Whereas some countries have quite detailed laws and have explicitly included the issue of water allocation in their legislation, such as Cambodia and Vietnam; there also examples of deficient or too general laws, i.e. in China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. Additionally, the national plans and strategies are relatively diverse among the riparian states. Whereas China and Laos have predominantly focused on the development of hydropower projects and considered the rivers as national sources; Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam have rather referred to the international cooperation and water allocation among the riparian states. Myanmar, on the other hand, offers quite vague information, as it is promoting international cooperation and the need of becoming a member of the MRC, but at the same time, it does not behave according to these plans. Nevertheless, there is also one clear similarity among the riparian states, as there are no extreme actions in the relationships, such as direct violence or fully amicable relations. Therefore, the interactions are rather located in an average level, i.e. inclining to the centre of the table.

When comparing the bilateral relationships with the interaction between the MRC and China, it is possible to conclude that the MRC has diverse impacts on its member states. On the one

hand, Laos and Cambodia have clearly better positions when acting bilaterally with China. However, Thailand and Vietnam have slightly different situations. This means that although the level of conflict is slightly lower in the MRC (less securitisation) than in the bilateral relationship between China and Thailand or China and Vietnam; also the cooperation is weaker within the MRC due to the lack of joint cohesive goals. Therefore, it seems that this collaborative counter-hegemonic tactic of non-hegemons has not been very successful in resisting the hydro-hegemon and the bilateral relations are often more useful. On the other hand, the power asymmetry in the bilateral relationships is more strongly represented and hence the non-hegemonic states have to comply with the rules of the hydro-hegemony individually more strongly than in the MRC.

As a sum, when answering to the last two research questions, it is possible to say that there are different types of interactions between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons. The most positive interactions are between China and Laos, and China and Cambodia. On the other hand, the relationships of China with Thailand and Vietnam are more negative. Interestingly, the interaction between China and the Mekong River Commission is quite similar to the bilateral relations of China with Thailand and Vietnam. Contrastingly, the interaction between China and Myanmar is the most neutral among the network of relationships, as it is only weakly politicised and has also quite low level of cooperation. Therefore, it is also possible to say that the collaborative methods of non-hegemonic states have not been successful, as the interaction between China and the MRC is not very strong. This also means that the countries have been more successful in developing bilateral ties with China.

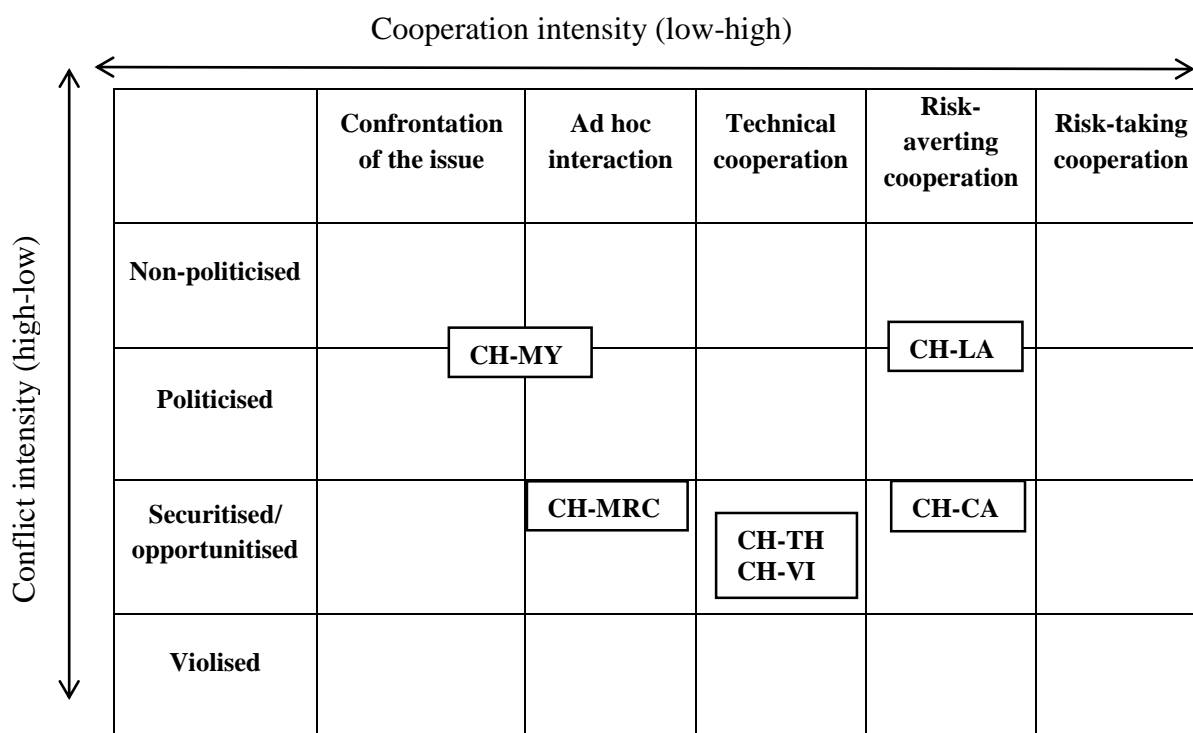


Figure 11. Relations in the Mekong River Basin according to the TWINS approach (compiled by the author)

Note: CA – Cambodia, CH – China, LA – Laos, MY – Myanmar, TH – Thailand, VI – Vietnam, MRC – Mekong River Commission

3.6. Relational Triangle of Power, Environment and International Relations

One of the aims of the paper is to understand which kind of relationship there exists between the concepts of power, environment and international relations with the example of the Mekong River Basin. This means that as a result of the three-step analysis comprised of the sections of hydro-hegemony and power asymmetry, counter-hegemonic tactics and TWINS approach, it is possible to see a triangular interrelation between the aforementioned three phenomena. Moreover, the bidirectional connections between the three aspects depicted in the Figure 12 seem to be relatively strong and indicate that there is no clear start or end point in this relational triangle whereas all links are mutually influencing each other.

First of all, it is possible to see a relationship between the power and environment, as the hydro-hegemony (consisting of the four types of power) and the asymmetry of power between the riparian states have a clear impact on water resources. This relationship is clearly visible when considering the impact of the hydropower projects initiated by the two most powerful countries

in the Mekong River Basin, i.e. China and Laos, on the downstream states. Since the dams may among other possible consequences influence the water flow and level, and thereby change the quality and quantity of water in the downstream states, it can be seen as a serious threat and a connecting point between these two links.

On the other hand, there might be also an opposite connection, while the environmental degradation and problems with water resources also weaken the states and change thereby even more the power asymmetry. For instance, when there is a negative impact on the fisheries, agriculture, sanitation or navigation in some countries, as there is often referred to the losses of Cambodia and Vietnam, they lose a great share of incomes that decrease their economic power and put them thereby in a more vulnerable situation. This also alters the power relations and gives the hydro-hegemon a more powerful position.

The second linking point between the environment and international relations is also clearly visible in the Mekong River Basin. This means that the growing problems with water resources may induce stronger cooperation with other riparian states. This could be seen with the examples of several collaborative groups or bilateral agreements. Secondly, the negative situation, vulnerability and disappointment deriving from the harmful actions of the upstream states may even increase the tensions in the region. This is visible by the accusations and protests in vulnerable states or disagreements about the hydropower projects.

On the other way, the weak cooperation or even signs of conflicts may cause further environmental degradation, as in the absence of strong water management institutions, the riparian states rather act unilaterally and do not care about others, and thereby the situation may become even worse. For instance, this is clearly visible in Cambodia by the negative impacts on fisheries or animal species, especially dolphins. However, when the countries are successful in establishing a strong cooperation, this would enable to decrease the harmful effects or vulnerability, and improve the situation. A good example of this aspect would be the agreement between China and the MRC on the hydrological data sharing that has positive effects on the downstream states.

The third connection in the triangle is between the international relations and power. On the one hand, the international relations change the dependency of the non-hegemonic states on the hydro-hegemon. For instance, if the non-hegemonic states were successful in resisting the

hydro-hegemony by establishing a strong collaborative group, they could decrease their dependency on the hydro-hegemonic state and act together as a stronger bloc. However, this has not been strongly represented in the Mekong River Basin, as the non-hegemonic states have not established a very strong cooperative group. On the other hand, the agreements between China and the MRC indicate that the non-hegemons still have had some influence. Nevertheless, the dependency on China has not clearly decreased. Another example could be the Forecast Mekong tool provided by the Lower Mekong Initiative, which shows that the collaboration with the USA has given the non-hegemonic states an opportunity to decrease their dependency on China. Although the forecasting is not that accurate than actual data, it still should help to improve their situation.

On the other hand, if the non-hegemonic states are not successful in resisting together the hydro-hegemony, their dependency on the most powerful state even increases as they are forced to communicate more on a bilateral level. This phenomenon is currently quite common in the Mekong River Basin. The bilateral relation between a strong hydro-hegemon and a weaker non-hegemonic state is thereby clearly an imbalanced relationship. This is also similar to the opposite relationship between the power and international relations, as the power asymmetry indicates that the weaker states are obliged to comply with the hydro-hegemon that is also apparent with the example of the Mekong River Commission. Since China is refusing to become a full member of the MRC, the non-hegemonic states have to adjust to the situation and have no possibilities to force China to change its status in the commission.

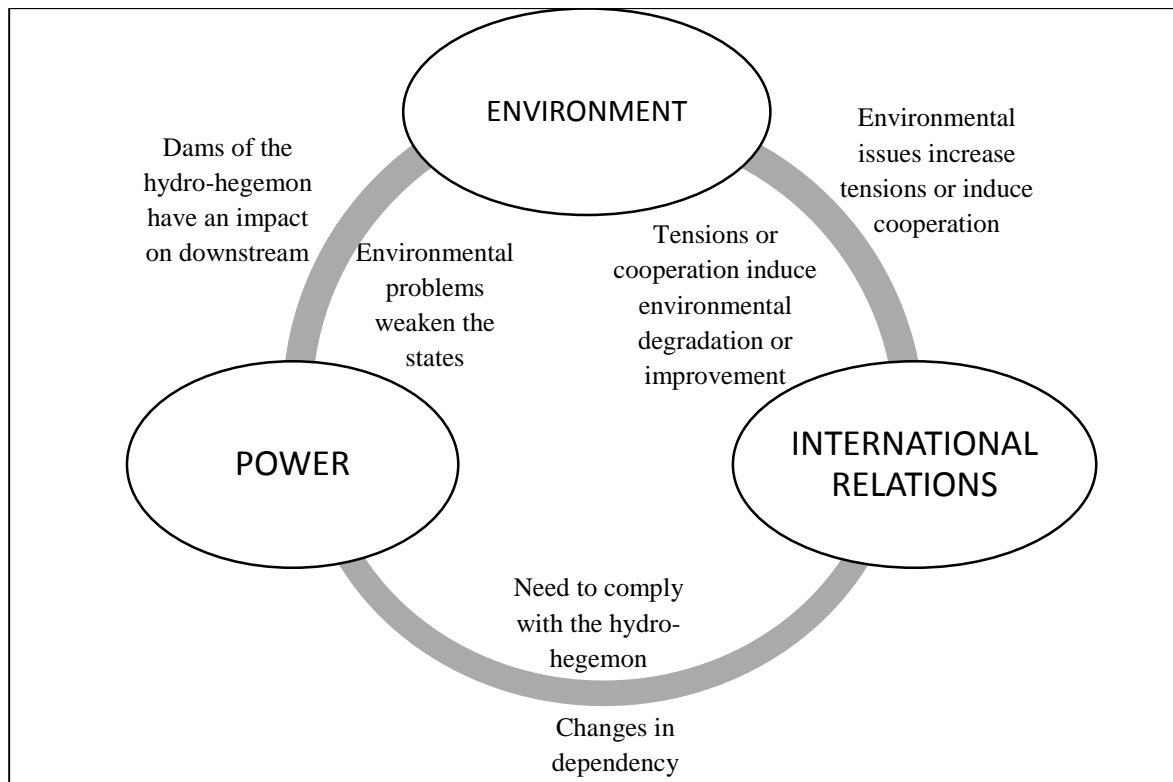


Figure 12. Triangle of power, environment and international relations (compiled by the author)

Note: The explanations outside the circle explain the impacts between the concepts in a clockwise direction and the explanations inside the circle in a counter-clockwise direction

4. CONCLUSION

This master's thesis analysed the water allocation in the transboundary Mekong River Basin and aimed to find an answer to the following research question: “How does hydro-hegemony influence transboundary water sharing in the Mekong River Basin?”. After applying a three-level analytical framework, it was possible to see that the impact of hydro-hegemonic circumstances is visible in several levels. Subsequently, there will be demonstrated the main results by describing conclusions of each section.

First of all, the hydro-hegemony is strongly related to power relations among the six riparian states of Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam; while the hydro-hegemon and the non-hegemonic states of the river basin are determined according to four types of power. The first section assessed the power asymmetry among the riparian states, and tried to find answers to the following two sub-questions, i.e. “How are the four types of power, i.e. geographical, material, bargaining and ideational power, distributed between the six riparian states of the Mekong River Basin?”, and “Which riparian state has the most and which countries have less powerful positions, according to these types of power, i.e. who can be considered as the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons?”.

Therefore, the first section determined that China can definitely be regarded as the hydro-hegemon of the Mekong River Basin, because it has the highest scores in all four main types of power, i.e. in the geographical power by being located in the upstream of the river basin and by having a low level of vulnerability; in the material power by having the best indicators on economic power, military might and size; in the bargaining power by using most actively several bargaining techniques and being a great investor of hydropower projects in other riparian states; and in the ideational power for its strategic possibility of data sharing. Although China is not the most active user of ideational power in the media and has also lower indicators on some of the subcategories of the material power, i.e. human capital, availability of water resources and international support, these low scores are levelled by the high indicators on other subcategories. Therefore, the most upstream state of the river basin could also be seen as the most powerful country among the riparian states.

Nevertheless, the location is not the main factor determining the power asymmetry among the non-hegemons, as other types of power have enabled to compensate the low levels of the

geographical power of several states. For instance, Laos could be seen as the most powerful state among the five non-hegemons, despite the fact that it is located below Myanmar in the river basin. This also means that regardless of its modest indicators on the geographical and economic power, military might, human capital and size; Laos has strengthened its position with the good results in the bargaining and ideational power. For instance, Laos has been successful by promoting the development of hydropower projects and by possessing a high number of foreign investments. Also the content analysis showed that Laos has used several methods of the bargaining power, e.g. referred to the international treaty, used issue-linkage, promoted cooperation and emphasised the positive sides of its hydropower projects. Due to its quite good location in the river basin, Laos has also the possibility to hide, stall or share ambiguous hydrological information with other downstream states that could be seen as a strengthening force of the ideational power. On the other hand, Laos has not very actively used the tools of ideational power in the media articles and has thereby mainly justified its actions or promoted cooperation.

Thailand has similarly compensated its quite average position in the geographical and material power with better results in the bargaining and ideational power. The main reasons for greater bargaining power are its investments of several hydropower projects in other riparian states, especially in Laos. The results of the content analysis suggested that although Thailand has not very actively used the methods of bargaining power, it has still quite often promoted cooperation and used issue-linkage by referring to the poverty, economic growth, cultural and social heritage in connection with the issue of water sharing in the Mekong River Basin. On the other hand, Thailand has been the most active riparian state in using the tools of ideational power in the media. Some main reasons for this activeness are the high interest in Laos' hydropower, the best indicators among the riparian states on press freedom index, but also the high number of NGOs dealing with the environmental protection. Thailand has thereby often used securitisation, accusations, but also references to data sharing or cooperation.

Myanmar, on the other hand, has lost its position among the riparian states mainly due to low indicators on the ideational and bargaining power. This means that although Myanmar has a stronger position in the geographical and material power, the weak indicators on the two final types of power have deteriorated its situation remarkably. However, the main tools of bargaining power used by Myanmar are the promotion of cooperation, imposing own terms for negotiations; e.g. refusing to become a full member of the Mekong River Commission; and

demonstrating its success. Myanmar has also often highlighted the cooperation by the ideational power. Nevertheless, the passiveness of Myanmar in the bargaining and ideational power could be explained with its relatively small interest in the Mekong River.

Lastly, Vietnam and Cambodia as the most downstream states have also as a sum of all types of power the most vulnerable and weakest positions in the river basin. Whereas Vietnam has the lowest score in the geographical power, it has in the material and ideational power quite average positions. The best situation of Vietnam is in the bargaining power, due to its investments in other riparian states and because of the activeness in using the methods of bargaining power, such as referring to the international law or agreements, promoting cooperation, or victimising itself by highlighting its vulnerable situation in the river basin. Vietnam has also been quite active in using the tools of ideational power, as it has utilised the securitisation, accusations and also emphasised the need for data sharing.

Cambodia has quite low indicators on all four aspects. However, its best position is in the ideational power, as it has used several tools of this type of power in the media. For instance, it has quite often utilised accusations and has, similarly to Vietnam, highlighted the necessity of data sharing among the riparian states. On the other hand, Cambodia has been one of the most passive riparian countries in using the tools of bargaining power, and has also serious problems with the geographical and material power, despite of having quite good results in the categories of human capital, water resources and international support.

Although the non-hegemonic states are relatively equal when combining the results of the four types of power, it is still possible to divide them into two main groups. This means that Laos, Thailand and Myanmar comprise the stronger group, whereas Vietnam and Cambodia rather constitute the weakest bloc in the river basin. Nevertheless, the relative equality suggests that there should be a strong stimulus among the non-hegemons for establishing collaborative groups in order to resist the hydro-hegemon. However, the results of the second section proved the opposite while the equality of the non-hegemonic states has not induced them to collaborate effectively and thus demonstrates an interesting impact of the hydro-hegemonic order on the water allocation. Thereby, the second part of the paper tried to find answers to the following questions: “Whether and which cooperative methods have the non-hegemonic states used in order to resist the hydro-hegemon?”, “What are their strong and weak points?”, and “If the

countries have not used many cooperative methods, what could be the reason for this passiveness?”.

The main collaborative groups in the Mekong River Basin are the Mekong River Commission, Greater Mekong Subregion Program, ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation, Japan's Mekong Initiative, Lower Mekong Initiative, Mekong-ROK Cooperation, Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation and several smaller groups, such as the Development Triangle of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, the Emerald Triangle, and the agreements between China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. The results showed that despite the high number of collaborative groups, the cooperation has not been strong enough in resisting the hydro-hegemony of China. There are several reasons for the weakness of the groups.

First of all, it seems that the countries are wasting their resources by participating in several different collaborative groups that deal with similar questions, instead of establishing one strong cooperative institution. For instance, the key interest areas are often duplicated within different groups while the most popular topics are human resources development and tourism that are in the focus of eight different programs. Also the water and environmental issues are among other topics relatively popular, as five groups are dealing with the former and four with the latter topic. The member countries thereby need many resources, such as time, money or administrative staff, for a wide variety of small groups. However, they could use those resources much more efficiently by improving cooperation in fewer and greater collaborative groups. This is also linked to the next weak aspect, i.e. to the infrequency of the meetings. Although the countries are engaged with different alliances, the meetings of the groups are quite rare. This means that as most of the gatherings are held only once a year, there cannot be very intensive, strong and steady cooperation in the water management.

Additionally, the membership is quite problematic while the Mekong River Commission as one of the most important groups in the Mekong River Basin has only four downstream states as full members and includes China and Myanmar as dialogue partners. This also means that the two latter countries have clearly distanced themselves from the MRC and show their hegemonic situation or disinterest in engaging with other riparian states. On the other hand, the Mekong River Commission has had some success in collaborating with the hydro-hegemon, as China has agreed to sign several agreements on data sharing with the MRC. Another important

weakness that has hindered strong cooperation and changes the groups to quite weak and loose institutions is the lack of strict regulations that could make the work more effective and efficient for all riparian states.

As a result, it seems that the weakness of the collaborative groups derives mainly from the passiveness and disinterest of the riparian states. Additionally, there are great differences between the non-hegemons in terms of their interests and needs. However, also the high dependency on China and the prevalent tendency of strong foreign countries to have collaborative groups with the non-hegemons separately but not together with other great supporters are hampering the cooperation.

This means that the non-hegemons have often neither joint interests nor mutual necessities in the river basin. For example, Laos is famous for its hydropower development and desire to export electricity; Cambodia is interested in maintaining the water flow and level for protecting the local fishery and agriculture, but it is also interested in developing hydropower projects with the support of China; Thailand is concerned with importing electricity from Laos, but it has also worries for environmental issues, mainly due to the active NGOs dealing with the question; Vietnam wants to maintain its productivity and protect the Mekong delta area, but it also needs the hydropower; and Myanmar is until now quite passive, due to the low dependency on the river. The wide variety of interests is hence strongly impeding the countries to engage strongly and actively with joint goals, as some of the countries are not interested in implementing strict and binding rules, but other would require those regulations for receiving the necessary hydrological data and protecting its territory and people.

Additionally, China as the hydro-hegemon has a crucial role in influencing the actions of non-hegemons of the river basin, as several non-hegemonic states are dependent on its investments and would like to show its commitment to China. Therefore, it seems that many non-hegemons are not very keen to cooperate with other non-hegemonic states, as they are afraid to demonstrate their distrust towards China. Moreover, the collaborative groups with international supporters, such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, the USA or India, are separate units that do not have a common ground for cooperating together. Therefore, these loose groups are not strong enough for resisting the hydro-hegemony of China.

The third and final section of the paper used the method of the Transboundary Water Interaction Nexus for assessing the interactions between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemons separately and also between the hydro-hegemon and the main collaborative group of the non-hegemons, i.e. the Mekong River Commission. Thereby it enabled to find answers to the two last research questions, i.e. “Which type of interactions (i.e. positive, negative or neutral) there are between the hydro-hegemon and non-hegemonic states of the Mekong River Basin according to the TWINS model?” and “Have the cooperative methods of the non-hegemons (if existing) been successful?” This method showed that there are quite diverse bilateral interactions in the river basin. Whereas the most positive interaction is between China and Laos, the collaboration between China and Cambodia is slightly weaker. The bilateral interaction of China with Thailand and Vietnam is the most negative, and the relationship between China and Myanmar is the most neutral in the river basin.

The interaction between China and Laos is the most positive due to the relatively high level of cooperation and low level of conflict. These results derive mainly from the weak politicisation, while both countries rather focus on their national projects and avoid engaging in conflictive actions over the issue. Additionally, the high level of cooperation originates from China's investments in Laos and from their mutual agreements. Although the interaction between China and Cambodia is also quite positive, the securitisation by Cambodia is turning the relationship to a more negative one. The securitisation is mostly visible in the national strategies and media articles but also due to the protests against hydropower projects. On the other hand, in the cooperative level, the relations between these two countries are relatively strong, which also shows the importance of the two-dimensional TWINS approach.

Whereas the interaction of China with Laos and Cambodia is rather positive, the relations between China and Thailand, and China and Vietnam are inclined towards a more negative interaction. The reasons for this situation are the active securitisation in Thailand and Vietnam, and the smaller dependency on China's investments. For instance, Thailand has used the securitisation method in its national development plan, but also in the media articles. As there have been some recent cooperative examples, such as agreements between China and Thailand, their relation can be located in the category of technical cooperation, which means that the overall interaction is not very negative. Vietnam's situation is similar, while it has securitised the issue of water allocation of the Mekong River Basin in the national strategies and in the media, but has also some recent collaborative examples with China.

The interaction between China and Myanmar is located relatively separately from others in the TWINS matrix, as it is the most neutral relationship in the river basin. The reasons for this neutrality are the modest levels in the intensity of conflict and cooperation, while neither of the countries has actively politicised the question nor initiated any remarkable steps for enhancing bilateral cooperation on water management.

The interaction between the hydro-hegemonic China and the bloc of non-hegemons, i.e. the Mekong River Commission, is according to the TWINS model, relatively negative. This means that Laos and Cambodia have definitely better positions when collaborating with China bilaterally. However, Thailand and Vietnam have an ambiguous situation, while the level of cooperation but also the level of conflict is slightly stronger when interacting in a bilateral way with China. Therefore, the joint collaborative action of the non-hegemonic states has not been very successful in resisting the hydro-hegemony and the countries have often even better results when interacting bilaterally with China. Nevertheless, the non-hegemonic states have individually definitely less opportunities to resist the hydro-hegemony and thus have to comply more with the demands of China. Additionally, the MRC has been successful in implementing some agreements that require hydrological data from China and thus could be seen as good examples for giving the non-hegemonic states a way of acting together strongly.

The results of the three sections indicated that the phenomenon of hydro-hegemony influences transboundary water sharing in the Mekong River Basin by positioning the riparian states according to their hegemonic order determined by their power. As the analysis demonstrated, the hydro-hegemon of the Mekong River Basin is China that is followed by Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam and Cambodia. This means that the power asymmetry gives some of the riparian states more dominant positions and may thereby influence further relations between the states. Therefore, the power asymmetry and hydro-hegemonic order also enable to understand the tendency and dynamic of the relations in the river basin better. This suggests that the hydro-hegemony is clearly influencing the behaviour and activities of the riparian states.

For instance, Cambodia as being in the weakest position, has tried to be active and induce collaboration in different levels. On the one hand, Cambodia has approached to China due to the need for investments, but at the same time it is also trying to show its vulnerability in the Mekong River Commission. Moreover, Cambodia has regulated the topic with the Law on

Water Resource Management of 2007, and with the National Water Resources Policy in a quite detailed way.

Vietnam as being also situated in a quite weak position in the river basin, has similarly tried to regulate the transboundary water allocation in the legislative level with the Law on Water Resources of 1998 and also with its national strategies. Vietnam is thereby quite actively trying to enhance cooperation simultaneously with the international organisations but gradually also with China.

In contrast, Laos that has the best position among the non-hegemons has not very strongly politicised the issue of water management and rather tries to cooperate with China and Thailand bilaterally due to its need for investments. Laos is thereby focusing more on its national projects with the help of foreign investors but not that much on the international cooperation on water allocation.

Thailand and Myanmar as being situated in the middle of other riparian states have quite different approaches. Since Myanmar has relatively low interest in the Mekong River Basin, it has not been very active in this area. Thailand, on the other hand, has tried to approach to Laos due to the interest in importing hydroelectricity from Laos, but it has also focused on the cooperation with the Mekong River Commission, while being worried about the availability of hydrological data from the upstream states.

As a result, it is possible to see a relatively strong and mutual connection between the hydro-hegemonic order, water management and interactions between the riparian states. This also means that the hydro-hegemony has influenced the whole situation in the river basin, as the cooperation and conflict depend on the power asymmetry among the riparian states. This mutual relation corresponds thereby also to one of the aims of the paper, i.e. assessing the relationship between power, environment and international relations. As there is a bidirectional influence between these three components, it could be presented as a relational triangle where each component is influencing each other in both directions.

The first link of the relational trio shows that the hydro-hegemony and power asymmetry comprised of the four types of power influence the environment, as the hydropower projects of more powerful states in the upstream may have a negative impact on the environmental

conditions of the downstream states. To the contrary, the environmental problems may also weaken the states and thus have an opposite influence on the power asymmetry. Secondly, the growing environmental concerns may induce cooperation with other riparian states, which is also visible by the wide variety of collaborative groups in the Mekong River Basin. However, the environmental problems may also increase conflictive stance by inducing tensions over hydropower projects. To the contrary, international relations also influence the environmental situation, as a strong cooperation on this matter could help to avoid disastrous effects on the environment and improve the conditions in more vulnerable states. Weak cooperation, on the other hand, may cause further environmental degradation. The third link between the international relations and power is similarly two-directional, as the collaboration or, on the contrary, unilateral actions of the non-hegemons change their dependency on the hydro-hegemon and thus also alter the power asymmetry. In contrast, the power asymmetry indicates that weaker states have to comply with the requirements of the hydro-hegemon, representing thereby the last relational linkage in the triangle.

This interrelated trio hence illustrates once more clearly how the hydro-hegemony influences water allocation between several riparian states that was also the aim of the research. The diverse influence is thereby visible in different levels. Firstly, there is a relevant impact on the environmental conditions by changing the situation of water resources. This was predominantly demonstrated with the example of concerned voices of the downstream states about the upstream hydropower projects. Secondly, the hydro-hegemonic situation influences relationships between the riparian states, as was also repeatedly demonstrated with the analytical part. For instance, the countries have tried to find a balance between approaching the hydro-hegemonic state and collaborating with other non-hegemons, which suggests that the hydro-hegemonic order influences strongly the countries' behaviour and actions. Due to different behaviour and a wide variety of interests among the non-hegemons, they have not been very successful in resisting the hydro-hegemonic state and hence the power asymmetry is influencing the whole system (or relational trio) further again.

The results of the paper thus also suggest that the hydro-hegemony is an essential aspect in the transboundary water allocation that cannot be neglected and should definitely be included in the research, as this phenomenon helps to explain and understand the whole situation and patterns of relationships better. Moreover, this master's thesis also proved that power, environment and international relations are strongly bound together and it is necessary and

beneficial to explain the issue of water allocation in the transboundary river basins by including all three aspects in the research by following the relational triangle.

4.1. Ideas for Further Research

This master's thesis used a three-level analysis for assessing the influence of the hydro-hegemony on water allocation in a transboundary river basin. Although there were many elements included to the research, there are still some aspects that could be improved and researched further.

First of all, this paper focused only on the collaborative counter-hegemonic tactics for analysing the cooperative institutions in a detailed way. However, there are also several anti-hegemonic tactics that the states could apply unilaterally. Therefore, it would be interesting to look at those methods to see whether they have been successful and have changed the power relations in the Mekong River Basin. Nevertheless, since the paper also focused on bilateral relations, several individual methods were also included to the analysis, such as the national water management plans and strategies, bilateral agreements with China and protests of local people. On the other hand, the analysis could definitely be more comprehensive, even though it seems that currently the unilateral steps are not very influential in the Mekong River Basin, as there is a great imbalance between the hydro-hegemon and the non-hegemons.

In addition, it would be interesting to compare the actions of China in the Mekong River Basin also with other similar transboundary river basins, in order to see whether China is using different strategies in other basins or is acting similarly everywhere. Moreover, it would be interesting to assess whether the triangular perspective of power, environment and international relations corresponds to other transboundary river basins in the world as well, or there are great dissimilarities. Finally, it would be also appealing to focus in a more detailed manner on the role of other relevant players in the Mekong River Basin, e.g. NGOs or local communities. Although these levels were also included to this study, they were not in the focus of the research.

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APPENDIX A: Content Analysis of the Bargaining Power

Table A1. Coding frame of the bargaining power

Tools of bargaining power	
1	Finding official recognition through international treaty
2	Claiming the moral high ground by referring to international water law
3	Using issue-linkage
4	Promoting cooperation
5	Imposing the terms of bilateral agreements
6	Refusing to negotiate
7	Agreeing to negotiate only on its own terms
8	Using trade-offs
9	Other (negotiation tools)

Source: compiled by the author

Table A2. Summary table of content analysis

	Date	Title	Country	Tools of BP	Examples / keywords
1	23.04.2007	Report from The International Conference on the MRC	China	3, 4, 7	Development issues; cooperation in different areas
2	28.03.2008	Country Report on China's Participation in GMS Cooperation	China	3, 4, 5	Traditions, landscapes, culture; friendly neighbours and cooperation; bilateral trade and investments
3	13.05.2009	7th Annual Mekong Flood Forum	Thailand	4	Good cooperation in the MRB
4	28.07.2009	14th Dialogue Meeting	Laos	4	Cooperation in the MRB and with China
5	28.07.2009	14th Dialogue Meeting	China	3, 4, 5, 7	Poverty; cooperation at a technical level; bilateral cooperation between China and the MRC
6	28.07.2009	14th Dialogue Meeting	Myanmar	4	MRC+2 as a way of strengthening cooperation
7	28.07.2009	14th Dialogue Meeting	Vietnam	4	Joint activity, visits, data exchange
8	26.11.2009	The 16th meeting of the MRC Council	Thailand	4	Relations with China and Myanmar
9	26.11.2009	The 16th meeting of the MRC Council	Laos	4	Cooperation between the MRC, China and Myanmar
10	2.03.2010	Minutes of the 31st meeting of the MRC Joint Committee	Thailand	4	Initiating discussion with China
11	2.03.2010	Minutes of the 31st meeting of the MRC Joint Committee	Laos	3, 4	Connection between water and life of people; agreement with ASEAN; cooperation with development partners
12	2.04.2010	Chinese official addresses on reason of water reduction of Mekong	China	9	No connection between low water level and upstream dams
13	5.04.2010	First MRC Summit	China	3, 4, 5, 8	Stronger political trust, business, cultural exchange, communication; many steps at the expense of hydropower development; to expand the cooperation; bilateral cooperation
14	5.04.2010	First MRC Summit	Vietnam	1, 4, 9	1995 Agreement; cooperation; suffering as being the most downstream state
15	5.04.2010	First MRC Summit	Laos	4	Cooperation with Japan, India, China, USA, Russia; several frameworks
16	5.04.2010	First MRC Summit	Cambodia	3, 4	Regional cooperation; poverty reduction

17	5.04.2010	Summary of MRC Hua Hin Declaration	Thailand	4	Partnership
18	17.06.2010	Informal Donor Meeting	Laos	4	Agreement with China (dry season)
19	25.08.2010	Minutes of the 32nd meeting of the MRC Joint Committee	Thailand	3	Studies in the use of biodiversity, flora, fauna
20	25.08.2010	Minutes of the 32nd meeting of the MRC Joint Committee	Cambodia	3, 4	Support from Japan; financial crisis, poverty, food security
21	20.09.2010	Regional Stakeholder Dialogue on Directions of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015	Vietnam	4	Possibility of Myanmar to join the MRC
22	20.09.2010	Regional Stakeholder Dialogue on Directions of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015	Cambodia	4	Regional cooperation
23	27.09.2010	15th dialogue meeting	China	3, 4	Economies; people's livelihoods; poverty; social development; regional cooperation
24	27.09.2010	15th dialogue meeting	Vietnam	4	Stronger cooperation
25	27.09.2010	15th dialogue meeting	Myanmar	7	As a dialogue partner
26	26.01.2011	The 17th Meeting of the MRC Council, Opening Statement	Vietnam	1, 4	Cooperation with dialogue partners, assistance from the MRC development partners; agreement
27	26.01.2011	The 17th Meeting of the MRC Council, Opening Statement	Cambodia	4	Cooperation with development, dialogue and other partners
28	26.01.2011	The 17th Meeting of the MRC Council, Signing of the Procedures on Water Quality	Cambodia	1, 4	MRC Council Resolution of 1999; Agreement 1995; cooperation
29	26.01.2011	The 17th Meeting of the MRC Council, Signing of the Procedures on Water Quality	Thailand	3, 4	Water and related resources, poverty; balance between economic growth, environment, cultural and social heritage; partners
30	26.01.2011	The 17th Meeting of the MRC Council, Signing of the Procedures on Water Quality	Vietnam	1, 4	Dialogue partners, ASEAN, US, Japan; 1995 Agreement
31	25.03.2011	Minutes of the 33rd meeting of the MRC Council	Cambodia	4	Strengthening regional transboundary cooperation
32	25.03.2011	Minutes of the 33rd meeting of the MRC Council	Laos	4	Japan's support
33	25.03.2011	Minutes of the 33rd meeting of the MRC Council	Vietnam	4	Myanmar as a member
34	23.06.2011	Informal Donor Meeting	Laos	3, 9	Poverty reduction; Xayabury (as positive)
35	23.06.2011	MRC Informal Donor Meeting	Cambodia	1, 3, 4	Agreement of 1995; development partners; Korea; financial autonomy; ownership; communication
36	29.08.2011	16th dialogue meeting	Thailand	9	Thankful for data sharing, but also need for more information
37	29.08.2011	16th dialogue meeting	China	4, 7	Data sharing; "Together we can!"
38	29.08.2011	16th dialogue meeting	Myanmar	4, 7	Further cooperation (ASEAN, Japan); continue as a dialogue partner
39	29.08.2011	16th dialogue meeting	Vietnam	4	Future cooperation
40	8.12.2011	The 18th Meeting of the MRC Council	Laos	1, 3	Economic growth; environment; biodiversity; poverty; 1995 agreement
41	8.12.2011	The 18th Meeting of the MRC Council	Cambodia	4	Cooperation with development partners
42	9.12.2011	The 18th Meeting of the MRC Council	Thailand	4	Cooperation in the MRC
43	9.12.2011	The 18th Meeting of the MRC Council	Cambodia	3, 4	"Join hands", friendship; poverty
44	16.12.2011	Country Report on China's Participation in GMS Cooperation	China	4, 5, 9	Cooperation; bilateral trade and relations; neighbours; investments
45	19.12.2011	Vice-President Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo held a discussion with State Councilor of the People's	Myanmar	3, 4	Cooperation; security

		Republic of China Mr Dai Bingguo			
46	20.12.2011	President U Thein Sein addresses 4th Greater Mekong Subregion Summit	Myanmar	4	Development partners
47	20.12.2011	President U Thein Sein delivers address at 4th GMS Summit Retreat	Myanmar	4	Meetings; partners
48	23.12.2011	Chinese vice president on priorities in promoting East Asia regional cooperation	China	4, 5, 9	Cooperation with Thailand; China as the biggest export market for Thailand, import source; GDP increased
49	4.07.2012	Ninth Meeting of GMS Working Group on Agriculture	China	4, 9	Projects in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar
50	6.11.2012	President U Thein Sein Attends the 9th ASEM Summit and Delivers Address	Myanmar	9	Increased production in Myanmar (success)
51	30.11.2012	Joint Statement between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar	Myanmar	4, 5	MRC as an important mechanism in the region; bilateral meeting
52	16.01.2013	Signing Ceremony between the EU and MRC to support the MRC Climate Change and Adaptation Initiative	Laos	4	EU support
53	17.01.2013	19th Meeting of the MRC Council	Laos	1, 3, 4	1995 Agreement; political stability and social order; economic growth, but problems; donors, development partners, EU support
54	17.01.2013	19th Meeting of the MRC Council	Thailand	4	Unique role of the MRC
55	17.01.2013	19th Meeting of the MRC Council	Cambodia	4	Stronger cooperation
56	26.01.2013	President U Thein Sein meets Laotian National Assembly President	Myanmar	4,5	Bilateral cooperation
57	21.03.2013	Opening Speech by H.E. Mr Nguyen Tan Dung, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam at ASEM Seminar on Water and River Basin Management	Vietnam	3, 4	Quality of life, individuals; cooperation; ASEM
58	27.06.2013	Informal Donor Meeting	Thailand	4	Development partners
59	27.06.2013	Informal Donor Meeting	Vietnam	2	UN Convention
60	14.12.2013	President U Thein Sein attends 5th Mekong-Japan Summit	Myanmar	3, 4	Job opportunities; gap between urban and rural areas; Japan

Source: compiled by the author

APPENDIX B: Content Analysis of the Ideational Power

Table B1. Coding frame of the ideational power

Tools of ideational power	General mood	Focus of the article
1 – securitisation	1 - (rather) positive	1 - own country
2 – accusing other parties	2 - (rather) negative	2 - cooperation with other riparian states
3 – justifying itself or its actions	3 - (rather) neutral	3 - other country/ies
4 – discourse about data sharing		4 - mistakes, flaws
5 – discourse about cooperation		
6 – threatening		
0 - none		

Source: compiled by the author

Table B2. Summary table of content analysis of Cambodia

	Date	Title	Source	Tools of IP	General mood	Focus of the article	Examples/ keywords
1	18.06.2009	Coalition raises dam worries	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	1	Vulnerable fisheries
2	20.10.2009	Thousands demand halt to Mekong dams	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	4	Lifeline for millions
3	24.11.2009	River council to discuss dams	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 5	3	2	Threat to Cambodia
4	26.03.2010	China to open up Mekong discussion	The Phnom Penh Post	5	1	2	China's involvement is positive
5	29.03.2010	Low Mekong isn't caused by dams: govt	The Phnom Penh Post	2	3	3	China's dams
6	28.07.2010	Planned dams could threaten fish	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 3	2	1	Threat to fish species; Cambodia's sufferings; hydropower is crucial
7	27.09.2010	Mekong action plan wins official approval	The Phnom Penh Post	5	3	2	Mekong-Japan cooperation
8	30.09.2010	Laos' Xayabury dam impact potentially catastrophic	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	1	Catastrophic impact
9	17.11.2010	Hun Sen denies China dam impacts	The Phnom Penh Post	1	3	1	Climate change as a main factor, not dams; Cambodia threatened due to the dams
10	25.02.2011	Officials push firms to use Mekong	The Phnom Penh Post	5	1	2	Cooperation; agreement
11	22.03.2011	River event highlights dam fears	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	1	Fishing families threatened; Mekong as "mother water"
12	12.09.2011	Mekong dams: Xayaburi construction could start this year	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	3	Millions of people rely on the Mekong
13	1.12.2011	US Senate pushes for Xayaburi funds freeze	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	3	Consternation
14	2.12.2011	Controversial dam: Thailand not	The Phnom Penh Post	5	3	3	Controversial dam

		objecting to Xayaburi					
15	19.04.2012	Thai firm says Xayaburi project has begun	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 2	2	3	Think about grandchildren – future
16	2.05.2012	Water minister urges Laos to halt Xayaburi	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 5	2	3	Halting the construction; waiting results of further study
17	11.05.2012	Laos postpones construction on Xayaburi Dam	The Phnom Penh Post	0	3	3	Postponing construction
18	19.07.2012	Officials refute building at Xayaburi dam	The Phnom Penh Post	5	3	3	Controversial Xayaburi dam
19	20.07.2012	World Bank raps dam study firm	The Phnom Penh Post	2	2	3	Laos' mistakes for choosing this company
20	7.08.2012	Thais should step in to stop dam	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 4, 5	2	1	Poor people; prior notification, consultation
21	30.08.2012	Government to inspect Xayaburi	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 5	3	3	Controversial dam; livelihoods
22	10.09.2012	Dams, climate plague Mekong	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	1	Sambor dam- threatening
23	13.09.2012	Xayaburi a go, says Lao minister	The Phnom Penh Post	5	3	3	Controversial dam
24	23.10.2012	Questions over China dams	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 2	2	3	China's dams
25	8.11.2012	Ground broken amid outcry over Xayaburi dam	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	3	Xayaburi dam opposed by Cambodia and Vietnam; threaten livelihoods, fisheries etc.
26	10.01.2013	NGOs call for discussion of Xayaburi dam at meet	The Phnom Penh Post	5	3	2	Contentious dam
27	20.01.2013	Mekong Countries at Odds Over Xayaburi Dam	The Cambodia Daily	1, 2, 4, 5	2	3	Laos has violated, destructive projects
28	8.04.2013	Lies, threats at dam site	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	1	Local people, trees (emotional aspect)
29	4.06.2013	Mekong Communities Tell of Hardship From Hydropower Dams	The Cambodia Daily	1, 2, 4	2	3	Negative impacts; no replies, information is scarce
30	20.06.2013	Threat to giant catfish is mounting	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	1	Threats for fishes
31	27.06.2013	Mekong Dams Could Be Threat to Cambodia's Food Security	The Cambodia Daily	1	2	1	Essential source
32	27.06.2013	Lao dam unapproved yet under way: NGO	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 2, 4	2	3	Secrecy, illicit; without prior consultation; livelihoods of the millions in the region
33	4.07.2013	Dam controversy: Donors voice concerns on Lower Sesan	The Phnom Penh Post	1	3	1	Potential negative effects
34	6.08.2013	Halt building of dams on Lower Mekong: NGOs	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	4	Millions living in the Lower Mekong River and rely on it
35	15.10.2013	Environmental manager defends Laos dam project	The Phnom Penh Post	1,5	3	3	Widespread losses; threaten to achieve the goal

36	31.10.2013	Lao consultants give dam the thumbs up	The Phnom Penh Post	1	3	3	Dam as a disaster for Mekong fish
37	6.11.2013	NGOs threaten to sue over Don Sahong dam	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 6	2	4	Threatening, damage
38	11.11.2013	Laos chided for 'selling' dam project	The Phnom Penh Post	2	2	3	Attempt to sell the project to neighbouring countries
39	14.11.2013	Study calls for halt to dams	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	4	Great impact
40	17.11.2013	Locals air criticisms of controversial Lao dam	The Phnom Penh Post	1	2	1	"River is our life"
41	19.11.2013	Dam channel's classification hotly debated	The Phnom Penh Post	4, 5	3	3	Consultation, notification; mainstream or not
42	2.12.2013	Nations unite against dam	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 2, 4	2	2	Unilaterally; damage, prior consultation
43	3.12.2013	Mekong Dams a Long-Term Risk to Food Security	The Cambodia Daily	1, 5	2	1	Food insecurity for millions of people; dramatically reduce fish stocks; more serious than was thought; Cambodia as a big loser; MRC has failed
44	16.12.2013	Mekong Countries Agree to Expedite Dam Study	The Cambodia Daily	2, 4, 5	2	2	Laos - unilaterally, without full understanding of the risks, without regional consultation
45	17.01.2014	No Consensus Reached on Mekong Dam	The Cambodia Daily	1, 2, 4	2	3	Impacts for millions of people; Laos dismissed the concerns; fatuous
46	17.01.2014	No agreement on Laos dam	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 4, 5, 6	2	2	Prior consultation; the MRC
47	20.02.2014	Public forum calls for halt to Mekong dams	The Phnom Penh Post	2, 5	2	3	MRC failed, Mekong does not belong to Laos
48	20.02.2014	Dam 'dire for dolphins'	The Phnom Penh Post	2	2	3	Threat for dolphins
49	3.03.2014	Wildlife Groups Rebuts Environmental Assessment for Mekong Dam Project	Cambodian Times	1, 2	2	4	Unproven, risky, a recipe for disaster
50	4.03.2014	Impact study on dam problem-ridden: WWF	The Phnom Penh Post	1, 2	2	4	Flawed; livelihoods; food security

Source: compiled by the author

Table B3. Summary table of content analysis of China

	Date	Title	Source	Tools of IP	General mood	Focus of the article	Examples/ keywords
1	19.06.2008	China completes new hydropower station on Yunnan border river	Xinhua News Agency	3	1	1	Dams - beneficial, not harming
2	25.09.2008	MRC chief satisfied with cooperation with China	Xinhua News Agency	4,5	1	2	Cooperation with the MRC; data sharing

3	26.09.2008	Lao PDR Deputy PM: Lao-Chinese relationship moving forward, healthy and vigorous	Xinhua News Agency	3, 5	1	2	Cooperation with Laos
4	21.05.2009	China says hydropower development on transnational rivers subject to ecological assessment	People's Daily	3	1	1	Cautious for ecological effects
5	14.07.2009	MRC calls for public submissions on proposed Mekong hydropower schemes	People's Daily	5	1	2	Cooperation
6	30.03.2010	China takes responsible attitude in exploring upper Mekong water resources, spokesman	People's Daily	3,4,5	1	1	China – responsible; cooperation; data
7	31.03.2010	China denies dams have worsened drought in Mekong River Basin	People's Daily	3, 4, 5	1	1	Denial; rather sharp decline of rainfall; dams beneficial; China's losses; close contacts; good neighbours
8	1.04.2010	Reservoirs not cause of drought	People's Daily	3	1	1	Hydropower stations not blamed for the drought; dams effective; strict evaluations; climate change is guilty
9	2.04.2010	Chinese official addresses on reason of water reduction of Mekong	People's Daily	3	3	3	No connection between water decline and dams; extreme dry weather; drought in China
10	4.04.2010	China to boost cooperation with downstream Mekong countries: Chinese Vice FM	Xinhua News Agency	3, 4, 5	1	2	Cooperation; data sharing; China also a victim; common interests
11	9.04.2010	China not to blame for drought along Mekong: Thailand	People's Daily	3, 4, 5	1	3	Not guilty; cooperation; data
12	28.07.2010	Mekong dams threaten rare giant fish	China.org.cn	2	2	3	Downstream dams - threatening the giant fish
13	8.09.2010	NGOs campaign to defer dams construction in Lower Mekong Basin	People's Daily	2, 5	2	3	Downstream dams - dramatic changes
14	18.11.2010	China responsible in using upper Mekong water resources: FM spokesman	People's Daily	3, 5	1	2	Friendly neighbours; China has always considered others
15	18.11.2010	Cambodian PM insists Chinese dam not be blamed for low Mekong level	People's Daily	3	1	3	Climate change as the cause

16	19.11.2010	Dam in China not cause of Mekong floods: Cambodia	People's Daily	3, 4, 5	3	2	China not guilty, droughts also in China; China has increased data sharing
17	19.11.2010	Cambodia: China not behind Mekong floods	China.org.cn	3, 5	1	1	Responsible attitude, takes into consideration lower riparian states; not dams, but climate change; China also victimised by droughts
18	19.11.2010	China responsible in Mekong water resources	China Economic Net	3	1	2	China is responsible; cooperation; data; friendly neighbours
19	19.11.2010	China pledges water will still flow	China Economic Net	3	1	1	China is not guilty
20	24.11.2010	Experts cast doubt over benefits of hydropower	Global Times	3	1	1	Fully considered the concerns; downstream not affected
21	25.04.2011	Laos' massive dam project on hold	China.org.cn	5	3	3	The MRC
22	9.10.2011	Dam project stumbled over PR failures	Global Times	2, 5	2	2	Accusations
23	13.10.2011	Securing safety of Mekong	China Daily	1, 3, 5	2	2	Brutal killing; importance of the river
24	20.10.2011	Mekong needs security boost	China Daily	5, 1	2	2	Importance of the river; cooperation
25	21.10.2011	Myanmar: Dam issue won't harm ties	China.org.cn	5	1	2	Cooperation with Myanmar
26	7.12.2011	Mekong countries hold forum on sustainable development of water, food, energy	Xinhua News Agency	5	1	2	Ways to sustain the development of water, food and energy along the Mekong river
27	8.12.2011	Mekong countries hold forum on sustainable development of water, food, energy	People's Daily	5	1	2	Meeting for discussion
28	9.12.2011	More study needed for planned river dam in Laos	China.org.cn	5	3	3	Cooperation; studies
29	10.12.2011	China launches joint patrols along Mekong River	China Daily	5	1	2	Joint patrols
30	17.12.2011	China to play rising role in GMS	China Daily	5	1	2	China helps; aid, support
31	20.12.2011	Deforestation, Mekong River's biggest threat	China.org.cn	3	2	4	Not dams are guilty, but deforestation
32	30.12.2011	Laos' continued development fraught with challenges	Xinhua News Agency	0	3	3	Controversial dam
33	21.06.2012	Laos to build more hydropower projects but environmentalists are wary	Global Times	2, 5	2	3	Laos' projects
34	7.09.2012	Largest hydropower station on Mekong River starts operation	China Daily	3	1	1	Positive sides of the project; justifying with low water flow

35	19.01.2013	Laos' construction of barrage triggers Mekong crisis	South China Morning Post	2, 5	2	3	MRC in crisis; Laos' dam – unilaterally
36	24.01.2013	China's investment helps Laotians help themselves	People's Daily	5	1	3	Helping Laos
37	25.01.2013	China Should Set Good Example on the Mekong River	The Economic Observer	2, 5	3	2	China should set an example
38	28.01.2013	Laos may need incentive to stop building Mekong dam	South China Morning Post	2	2	3	Xayaburi - block the Mekong; the dam will irreversibly change the nature of the river
39	11.04.2013	China to spend 1b Yuan to preserve major riverhead	China Daily	3	1	1	Protection of environment
40	22.05.2013	Joint Mekong patrol completes 10th round	China Daily	3, 5	1	2	Chinese patrolman; joint patrol (China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos)
41	11.06.2013	China to strengthen cooperation with GMS	China Daily	3, 5	1	2	Cooperation – GMS
42	15.06.2013	Fish releases aimed to protect plateau waters	China Daily	3	1	1	Protecting environment
43	15.08.2013	Greater Mekong Subregional Cooperation	People's Daily	3,5	1	2	Cooperation; thanks to the central government
44	28.08.2013	Chinese projects in Mekong River basin hurt environment: report	China Daily	3	2	3	Report; good for electricity
45	13.09.2013	Controversial Mekong dam could devastate local population	South China Morning Post	1, 2	2	3	Controversial dam (Xayaburi); tens of millions depend on the river
46	26.09.2013	Officials prepare for Mekong bloc conference	China Daily	5	1	2	GMS
47	10.10.2013	China, ASEAN aim to boost trade to \$1t by 2020	China Daily	5	1	2	Cooperation
48	10.11.2013	Laos seeks to soothe neighbours over Mekong dam	China.org.cn	4, 5	3	3	Different opinions
49	11.01.2014	China invests 2.6 bln USD to protect major riverheads	People's Daily	3	1	1	Ecological protection
50	18.01.2014	18th joint Mekong Patrol concludes	People's Daily	5	1	2	Cooperation for security

Source: compiled by the author

Table B4. Summary table of content analysis of Laos

	Date	Title	Source	Tools of IP	General mood	Focus of the article	Examples/ keywords
1	29.08.2012	Xekong set to see two new dams constructed	Vientiane Times	3, 5	1	1	Dam not harming (according to the MRC)
2	25.09.2012	Laos, China hail value of strategic partnership	Vientiane Times	3, 5	1	2	Cooperation with China; dam's importance
3	9.10.2012	Xayaboury dam will have no transboundary impact: Project developers	Vientiane Times	3	1	1	Dam not harming
4	11.10.2012	Relocated villagers no longer at the mercy of nature	Vientiane Times	3	1	1	Relocated people (because of the dam) - happy, more modern life
5	24.10.2012	Hydropower plants generate safe, clean energy: Deputy PM	Vientiane Times	3, 5	1	1	Hydropower projects are beneficial; battery of SEA
6	2.11.2012	Experts gather for talks on cross-border water sharing	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Cooperation
7	5.12.2012	ADB gives grants, loans for three projects	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	ADB support; cooperation
8	7.12.2012	National Assembly backs Xayaboury dam	Vientiane Times	3	1	1	First dam in downstream; modernise and industrialise the country; not harmful; no complaints
9	3.01.2013	Bridge link underway between Xayaboury and Oudomxay	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Cooperation; China's aid
10	16.01.2013	Laos commits to build sustainable hydropower plants	Vientiane Times	3	1	1	Sustainable hydropower
11	17.01.2013	EU helps MRC to tackle climate change in the Mekong	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Cooperation with the EU
12	18.01.2013	MRC backs Lao dam development plan	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Support from the MRC
13	23.01.2013	Work powers ahead on Xayaboury dam	Vientiane Times	3, 4, 5	1	1	Laos consulted about the dam; against poverty
14	25.01.2013	MRC countries not opposed to Xayaboury dam	Vientiane Times	3, 5	1	2	Other countries not against; cooperation; jointly
15	6.02.2013	Xayaboury redesign addresses concerns, consultants say	Vientiane Times	3	1	2	Redesigning project to meet the demands
16	16.03.2013	Delays in Bokeo-Chiang Rai bridge construction	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Bridge is important; cooperation
17	20.03.2013	Switzerland supports development in Mekong sub-region	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Cooperation with Switzerland; GMS

18	23.03.2013	Relocated villagers to get similar payouts from Xayaboury dam builders	Vientiane Times	3	1	1	Compensations for relocated villagers; people approved
19	24.04.2013	Mekong Agreement backs sustainable development in the region	Vientiane Times	3, 4, 5	1	2	MRC - cooperation; consultations - Xayaboury; not harmful; poverty
20	3.06.2013	Laos explains its hydropower policy	Vientiane Times	1, 3	1	1	Against poverty
21	7.06.2013	Lao officials to study sustainable hydropower development in US	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Cooperation with the USA
22	11.06.2013	Yunnan, Mekong countries enhance cooperation and friendship	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	GMS cooperation; close neighbours
23	15.06.2013	Fish catch declines in the Mekong River	Vientiane Times	0	2	1	Emotional aspect - fisherman
24	21.06.2013	Lao dam development: a local's perspective	Vientiane Times	3	1	1	Dams are beneficial
25	3.08.2013	Ministry of Energy and Mines stresses no preparatory work at Don Sahong	Vientiane Times	2, 3	2	1	Accusing foreign media
26	17.08.2013	Xayaboury dam creates jobs for Lao people	Vientiane Times	3	1	1	Hydropower project - gives jobs for people
27	3.09.2013	China promises further cooperation with MRC	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	China-MRC cooperation
28	21.09.2013	Mekong Agreement project notification procedures explained	Vientiane Times	3, 4, 5	1	2	Meeting; data sharing; cooperation
29	28.09.2013	Xayaboury dam: extensive research generates reassurance	Vientiane Times	1, 3, 4, 5	1	2	Xayaboury, not harming, benefits; fish-friendly turbines etc.
30	28.09.2013	Fourth Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge set to open	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Cooperation with Thailand
31	4.11.2013	Govt to enhance 1995 Mekong agreement compliance	Vientiane Times	3	1	2	Laos' plans - sustainable development
32	13.11.2013	Sahong dam not on Mekong mainstream: engineer	Vientiane Times	3, 4, 5	1	1	Not a mainstream project - not full consultation process
33	15.11.2013	Don Sahong dam surrounded by myths: expert	Vientiane Times	3	1	1	Many myths, actually not harming
34	21.11.2013	Don Sahong site visit: A fact-finding tour, not a sales pitch	Vientiane Times	3	2	1	Controversial project; worried people, but inevitable; benefits

35	28.11.2013	Mekong, Japanese officials discuss cooperation	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Cooperation between the five countries in the Mekong subregion and Japan
36	4.12.2013	Vientiane to work on flood, drought risk management	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	GMS cooperation
37	11.12.2013	China supports Bokeo bridge construction	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Cooperation
38	12.12.2013	Lao-Thai Bridge links three countries	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Bridge as a friendship
39	12.12.2013	GMS investment framework backs Lao development	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	GMS cooperation
40	16.12.2013	ASEAN, Japan pledge to enhance cooperation	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Cooperation (ASEAN, Japan)
41	19.12.2013	Xayaboury dam construction halted as Mekong rises, floods site	Vientiane Times	3	3	1	Unseasonal downpour
42	13.01.2014	Riverside stretch protected from floods	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Symbol of friendship
43	14.01.2014	Korea gives US\$200m loan to support Lao development	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Cooperation with Korea
44	17.01.2014	Govt reiterates stance on Don Sahong Dam project	Vientiane Times	3, 4, 5	1	2	Not blocking mainstream; “We are open”; nothing to hide
45	21.01.2014	Xayaboury dam construction surges ahead after flood delay	Vientiane Times	3	1	1	Relocated people - improved lives
46	4.02.2014	Laos, US enhance cooperation	Vientiane Times	5	1	2	Cooperation - LMI
47	11.02.2014	BBC visits Xayaboury construction site	Vientiane Times	3, 4	1	2	Showing its stance to foreign media; openly sharing information
48	20.02.2014	The fluctuating fortunes of a fisherman's life on the Mekong	Vientiane Times	0	2	1	Fisherman (emotional aspect)
49	22.02.2014	Mekong bridge construction at Pakbeng may experience delays	Vientiane Times	0	2	1	Mekong bridge - obstacles
50	22.02.2014	Hydropower has future potential in national development	Vientiane Times	1, 3	1	1	Huge hydropower potential; fighting with poverty

Source: compiled by the author

Table B5. Summary table of content analysis of Myanmar

	Date	Title	Source	Tools of IP	General mood	Focus of the article	Examples / keywords
1	17.01.2008	Japan offers aid and rights reminder to Mekong nations	Democratic Voice of Burma	5	1	2	Cooperation with Japan
2	31.03.2008	China the dominant force at Mekong region summit	Democratic Voice of Burma	2, 5	3	2	China as an elephant; cooperation with China; China's plans (dams)
3	10.11.2008	Prime Minister General Thein Sein attends opening ceremony of 3rd Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy Summit	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation - ACMECS
4	26.08.2009	Ceremony to commemorate Mekong-Japan Friendship Exchange for 2009 held	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation - Japan, ASEAN; friendly relations, exchanges
5	10.11.2009	Prime Minister General Thein Sein attends 1st Mekong-Japan Summit	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	1st Mekong-Japan Summit - cooperation, friendship
6	6.04.2010	China 'not to blame' for shrinking Mekong	Democratic Voice of Burma	1, 4, 5	3	2	China rejected (not guilty); Mekong's importance; dams; data sharing
7	10.05.2010	Water shortages sweeping Burma	Democratic Voice of Burma	2	2	1	China's dams
8	14.05.2010	Water crisis hits Rangoon	Democratic Voice of Burma	2	2	1	China's fault
9	9.06.2010	Prime Minister U Thein Sein attends working luncheon of World Economic Forum on East Asia 2010	The New Light of Myanmar	3, 5	1	2	Cooperation in the Mekong Region; should be careful when using natural resources; hydropower sector is essential
10	30.07.2010	Grim warning sounded on climate change	Democratic Voice of Burma	1, 2	2	3	China has dammed; vital regional waterway; life source; inter-country tensions; Burma may become a natural disaster zone
11	16.08.2010	Drought depletes Burma's second-largest lake	Democratic Voice of Burma	1, 2	2	3	River as lifeline; intense damming; China has strenuously denied
12	1.11.2010	Prime Minister attends 2nd Mekong-Japan Summit	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation – Japan; trade, investment, development, utilizing Mekong water, friendly ties
13	1.11.2010	PM U Thein Sein attends 13th ASEAN Japan Summit	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation - ASEAN, Japan, China

14	15.12.2010	Chinese dam hits 16,000 Shan villagers	Democratic Voice of Burma	2	2	3	China's activity is harming
15	22.04.2011	Chinese dam-builders' risking conflict'	Democratic Voice of Burma	2	2	3	China is responsible, heavy damming; but also capital from China is significant
16	23.04.2011	Shouldering China's toxic burden	Democratic Voice of Burma	1, 2	2	3	China - increasingly out-sourcing its pollutive and ecologically destructive industries to regional neighbours (exploiting); dams
17	31.05.2011	Myanmar athletes to partake in Mekong Countries' Friendship Sports Tournament	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation - sports
18	25.10.2011	Himalayan glaciers show sharp retreat	Democratic Voice of Burma	1	2	3	Deadly flooding , drought
19	1.11.2011	Dy FM attends First Mekong-Republic of Korea Foreign Ministers' Meeting	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation between Mekong countries and Korea
20	22.11.2011	President U Thein Sein attends Mekong-Japan Summit	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation between GMS and Japan
21	30.11.2011	China 'exploiting developing world': Clinton	Democratic Voice of Burma	2	2	3	China's activity - negative effects
22	1.12.2011	Officials urged to show capabilities of hosting ng 4th GMS Summit	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation - GMS
23	1.12.2011	Meeting on Greater Mekong Subregion Sustainable Tourism Development Project held	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation - GMS
24	2.12.2011	World Bank, IMF to enter Burma: US	Democratic Voice of Burma	5	1	2	Aid from ADB (dams)
25	2.12.2011	28th Greater Mekong Sub-region Tourism Working Group Meeting concludes	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation in the region - tourism
26	12.12.2011	ADB looks to support tourism	The Myanmar Times	5	1	2	ADB, GMS - cooperation, tourism
27	19.12.2011	China relations focus ahead of GMS Summit	The Myanmar Times	2, 5	2	2	GMS cooperation - China not attending
28	20.12.2011	4th GMS Summit opens with address by President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	GMS summit- cooperation
29	21.12.2011	President U Thein Sein addresses 4th Greater Mekong Subregion Summit	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation with ADB; GMS

30	21.12.2011	China backs Myanmar's development path	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation with China
31	21.12.2011	President U Thein Sein briefs on 4th GMS Summit to local and foreign media	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation – GMS; memorandum of understanding
32	26.12.2011	Myanmar seeks 'rightful position' in world order	The Myanmar Times	5	1	2	GMS Summit- cooperation
33	2.01.2012	Experts sound cautious note on tourism growth	The Myanmar Times	5	1	2	Tourism; cooperation GMS; ADB projects
34	13.02.2012	Groups back expansion of small-scale power sources	The Myanmar Times	5	1	1	Energy generation projects
35	17.03.2012	Myanmar, Laos eye Myanmar, Laos eye for soonest completion of Mekong Bridge	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation with Laos - strengthened bonds; bridge
36	21.04.2012	President U Thein Sein leaves for Japan to attend 4th Japan-Mekong Summit, to pay goodwill visit to Japan	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation with Japan
37	25.04.2012	Japan writes off over \$3.6 b debt of Myanmar	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation with Japan
38	26.04.2012	President U Thein Sein attends fourth Mekong-Japan Summit	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation between GMS and Japan; investment, friendship
39	26.04.2012	President U Thein Sein arrives back from Mekong-Japan Summit and official goodwill visit	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation – Japan; GMS
40	30.04.2012	Union Construction Minister views site for Mekong River Bridge	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Cooperation with Laos
41	9.07.2012	Regional art gets boost in Bangkok	The Myanmar Times	0	1	3	China-funded dams (linked with culture)
42	20.08.2012	The geopolitical challenge for Myanmar's energy sector	The Myanmar Times	5	1	2	Cooperation
43	11.10.2012	Japan calls on int'l creditors to support Burma	Democrat c Voice of Burma	2, 5	3	2	Japan's plans - to compete with China
44	19.02.2013	Stake driven for Myanmar-Laos Mekong River-Crossing Friendship Bridge	The New Light of Myanmar	5	1	2	Myanmar-Laos Mekong River-Crossing Friendship Bridge – cooperation

45	27.09.2013	Exclusive Interview with Dr. Maung Zarni	Burma Times	2	2	1	West - negative image
46	7.10.2013	Conservation group WWF enters Myanmar	The Myanmar Times	5	1	2	Cooperation - GMS
47	7.10.2013	Tree falls on 12th century temple in Cambodia's Angkor complex	The New Light of Myanmar	1	2	3	Floods in Cambodia (Mekong); death toll; families forced to flee
48	8.10.2013	Cambodia flood death toll rises to 83, affecting over 800,000 people	The New Light of Myanmar	1	2	3	Cambodia's floods, victims, damage
49	8.12.2013	Mekong trade corridors key to growth	The Myanmar Times	5	1	2	Cooperation - GMS
50	25.01.2014	China's CPI offers to meet Kachin NGO after Myitsone war of words	Democratic Voice of Burma	2	2	3	China's dams are harming

Source: compiled by the author

Table B6. Summary table of content analysis of Thailand

	Date	Title	Source	Tools of IP	General mood	Focus of the article	Examples / keywords
1	30.03.2010	Govt ensures safety of MRC leaders	Pattaya Today	5	3	2	Cooperation - MRC; complaints over China's dams
2	2.04.2010	Mekong power plan will affect millions of lives: activists	Pattaya Today	1, 2, 4, 5	2	3	Millions of people living downstream - negative impact; blaming China; data sharing
3	4.04.2010	Thai-Lao leaders confident with success of MRC Summit	Business Day	4, 5	1	2	Bilateral cooperation – Laos; friendship bridge; China's data sharing
4	6.06.2010	PM highlights regional connectivity among Mekong countries	Business Day	5	1	2	Cooperation - regional connectivity
5	20.04.2011	Laos told to wait	Bangkok Post	1, 2	2	3	Laos is facing pressures from neighbours; controversial dam; insufficient studies; Thai supporting financially; WWF warnings - livelihoods
6	20.04.2011	Tensions rise over Mekong dam	Pattaya Today	1, 2, 4, 5	2	3	Laos faced pressure from neighbours to delay construction; controversial dam; devastating impacts
7	19.09.2011	No stopping flow of construction at 'suspended' dam	Pattaya Today	2	2	3	Controversial Xayaburi; villagers do not have much information; works continue despite concerns
8	8.12.2011	Xayaburi dam fight stepped up	Pattaya Today	2, 5	2	3	Xayaburi dam protestors
9	9.12.2011	Dam plans delayed	Bangkok Post	1, 2, 5	2	3	Laos' plans - cool response; energy-starved Laos; need for further study; could spell disaster for 60 million people

10	26.12.2011	China Takes Control of Upper Mekong	Chiangrai Times	5, 6	3	2	Cooperation with China – security; need for improve well-being
11	5.03.2012	Thai Company Continues Work on Mekong Xayaburi Dam	Chiangrai Times	1, 2	2	4	Thai government is pushing ahead; 60 million people; irreparable damage
12	19.04.2012	China will continue to Support the Greater Mekong Sub-Region	Chiangrai Times	5	1	2	Cooperation with China (GMS)
13	21.04.2012	Japan Pledged \$7.4 Billion in Development aid for Mekong Region	Chiangrai Times	1, 5	1	2	Cooperation - Japan's aid; 60 million people depend
14	4.05.2012	Laos: no work on Xayaburi dam until green concerns solved	Pattaya Today	4, 5	1	2	Cooperation; data sharing
15	2.07.2012	Xayaburi Dam Constructors Defy Mekong River Commission	Chiangrai Times	1, 2	2	4	Thai company pushes ahead with the dam; resettlement of villagers; concerns that dams will wreck the fishery; protest meetings; broken promises; harm to local people and environment
16	15.07.2012	Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Pledges \$50 Million for Lower Mekong River Projects	Chiangrai Times	5	1	2	Cooperation – LMI; aid from the USA
17	31.07.2012	Flooding along the Mekong in Chiangrai Province	Chiangrai Times	2	2	1	China's fault
18	10.08.2012	Mekong Residents Wary of Xayaburi Dam	Chiangrai Times	1, 2, 5	2	3	Lifeblood since childhood (Mekong); diminishing fish catches in Cambodia due to the dams; millions of people; Cambodia - worst hit; Laos and environmentalists - different opinions
19	25.08.2012	Xayaburi project on schedule, Energy Ministry says	Pattaya Today	3, 4	3	3	Laos' dam on schedule; Xayaburi crucial for Thailand; complaints
20	12.09.2012	China, Laos and Myanmar Meet in Chiangrai on Mekong Security	Chiangrai Times	5	1	2	Cooperation on security - GMS
21	6.11.2012	Laos approves Mekong dam despite objections	Bangkok Post	2	2	3	Objections, criticism; villagers affected
22	11.11.2012	Northern Mekong River 'Hydro Diplomacy' Falling Short	Chiangrai Times	2, 5	2	2	Conference - Laos' dams; hydro-diplomacy; current mechanism is falling short
23	6.02.2013	Mekong Giant Catfish Threatened by Xayaburi Hydroelectric Dam	Chiangrai Times	1, 2	2	4	Laos' dam - negative impact on the giant catfish; "tip of the iceberg"
24	3.03.2013	Alarm Over Mekong Region's	Chiangrai Times	1, 2, 5, 6	2	2	Forests threatened by dams; controversial Xayaburi dam -

		Rapidly Disappearing Forests					negative impacts; need for regional cooperation
25	9.04.2013	Climate Change Impact and Adaptation in the Lower Mekong Basin – USAID Report	Chiangrai Times	1	2	3	New study - effects of climate change in the region worse
26	18.04.2013	The Mighty Mekong the River of Hope, and Fear	Chiangrai Times	1, 2, 5	3	2	Cooperation - bridges, but dams (China, Laos) negative; fear; livelihoods of millions
27	4.08.2013	With Mega Dam's Coming Mekong Fishermen Fear for their Future	Chiangrai Times	1, 2	2	4	Emotional aspect – fishermen; negative impact of China's dams; new threat from Laos
28	12.09.2013	Lower Mekong Basin Countries Targeting Growth in Tourism	Chiangrai Times	5	1	2	Cooperation - Lower Mekong Basin
29	1.10.2013	Greater Mekong Subregion Single-Visa Plan Edges Forward	Chiangrai Times	5	1	2	Cooperation - GMS - single-visa plan
30	5.11.2013	Laos set to enhance compliance with Mekong agreement	The Nation	5	1	2	Laos' plans – seminars; cooperation
31	8.11.2013	Mekong catastrophe in the making: An open letter to regional leaders	The Nation	1, 2, 4, 5	2	4	“Mother river”; threaten fishes; threat to regional harmony; MRC as a failure; “absolutely mainstream project”; a new joint platform needed; livelihoods
32	14.11.2013	Laos' trial and error approach threatens the Mekong	The Nation	1, 2, 4, 5	2	3	Negative effects of Don Sahong Dam; problems with data sharing; millions of people; risky experiment
33	30.11.2013	Mekong dam threatens to drain lifeblood of region	The Nation	1, 4, 5	2	4	Livelihoods and security of millions; lifeblood; Laos is ignoring; controversial dam; fishes; problems with data sharing; people have died due to the poor water quality
34	12.12.2013	4th Thai-Lao Bridge worth Bt1 bn opens	The Nation	5	1	2	Cooperation with Laos - friendship bridge
35	14.12.2013	Greater Mekong plan to focus on economic corridors	The Nation	5	1	2	Cooperation – GMS; bridges, connectivity
36	9.01.2014	Winter Flooding in the Mighty Mekong Region	Chiangrai Times	1, 2, 4, 5	2	4	Questions about the cause; data sharing
37	11.01.2014	Laos holds Mekong livelihoods in its hands	Bangkok Post	1, 4, 5, 6	2	2	Controversial Don Sahong Dam; unilateral moves of Laos; Xayaburi showed weakness of the MRC; most critical lifeline, essential resource; conflict threaten the future of livelihoods; if the MRC cannot handle this, then it loses its credibility
38	23.01.2014	Linking up to Laos	Bangkok Post	5	1	2	Cooperation - bridge
39	15.02.2014	Drought Arrives to the Lower Mekong Region	Chiangrai Times	2	2	4	Drought - China closed sluice gates

40	17.02.2014	Concern over Mekong water levels	The Nation	2	2	3	Concern about local people; locals blame China; experts say else; data from China insufficient
41	18.02.2014	Japan vows to aid Mekong region	Bangkok Post	2	1	2	Japan's support; cooperation
42	19.02.2014	SET keen to expand across region	Bangkok Post	5	1	2	GMS cooperation, investors
43	19.02.2014	Japan Pledges to Assistance to Mekong Sub-Region Nations	Chiangrai Times	5	1	2	Japan's assistance
44	20.02.2014	Opponents seek halt to Mekong dams	Bangkok Post	1, 2	2	4	People are suffering; stop supporting; negative effects; China's dams
45	20.02.2014	Laos dam plan threatens existence of rare dolphin	Bangkok Post	2	2	3	Threat to dolphins
46	20.02.2014	Cambodia-Laos dam dolphin threat	Bangkok Post	2	2	3	Extinction of dolphins in Cambodia
47	20.02.2014	Laos dam plan threatens existence of rare dolphin: WWF	The Nation	2	2	3	Laos'dam - threaten dolphins as national treasure for Cambodia
48	24.02.2014	Hydropower producers meet in Vientiane	The Nation	5	1	2	Hydropower development - necessary for Laos
49	25.02.2014	Say goodbye to dolphins, and much else of Mekong's riches	The Nation	1, 2, 4, 5	2	3	Millions of people, livelihoods; objections of downstream to Laos' projects; prior consultation; transform the entire landscape; people resettled; need for long-term vision
50	28.02.2014	Australian Scientist, Philip Hirsch Leads Mekong's "Don Sahong Dam" Protest	Chiangrai Times	1, 2, 5	2	3	Laos' dam - negative for fish stocks; impact for Cambodia and to all the way down to the Mekong Delta

Source: compiled by the author

Table B7. Summary table of content analysis of Vietnam

	Date	Title	Source	Tools of IP	General mood	Focus of the article	Examples / keywords
1	25.08.2008	Mekong River Levels to Keep Rising	Saigon Giai Phong	1	2	1	Mekong water levels
2	31.05.2009	Mekong body starts evaluating mainstream dams	Saigon Giai Phong	5	1	2	MRC; dams
3	18.06.2009	Mekong river dolphin near extinct: WWF	Saigon Giai Phong	1	2	3	Problems with dolphins - pollution
4	12.07.2009	Mekong River sand dredging to be regulated	Saigon Giai Phong	0	3	1	Mekong River sand dredging
5	14.07.2009	Mekong River body calls for ideas on proposed dams	Saigon Giai Phong	5	1	2	Cooperation – MRC; public

6	30.07.2009	Mekong, Mississippi river bodies state cooperation intention	Saigon Giai Phong	5	1	2	Cooperation with the USA
7	3.11.2009	VN Premier asks Japan to help Mekong river countries	Saigon Giai Phong	5	1	2	Cooperation with Japan; aid
8	12.03.2010	Thailand to host Mekong River talks	Vietnam News	5	1	2	Cooperation - Mekong River Summit
9	1.04.2010	Initiatives to save Mekong River	Vietnam News	1, 5	1	2	Meeting with Japan; population
10	4.04.2010	Fishermen left high and dry fear for Mekong's future	Saigon Giai Phong	1, 2	2	3	Emotional aspect - fishermen- "this is our life"; China's dams; 60 million people; need for urgent action
11	4.04.2010	Southeast Asian river countries meet China over dam fears	Saigon Giai Phong	1, 2, 5	2	2	China's dams; transboundary cooperation
12	5.04.2010	Vietnam bolsters cooperation in Mekong River Commission	Saigon Giai Phong	4, 5	1	2	Cooperation with Thailand, MRC, need for exchange information
13	6.04.2010	Mekong River co-operation necessary for prosperity: PM	Vietnam News	5	1	2	Cooperation among Mekong countries; positive: China's data sharing, China and Myanmar considering membership; poverty
14	21.05.2010	Mekong River workshop in Laos examines dam risks	Vietnam News	1, 5	1	2	Cooperation – MRC; livelihood, 60 million people
15	7.06.2010	Mekong River development pivotal to Asia's global role	Vietnam News	5	1	2	Cooperation - sustainable development; GMS and international organisations; Japan and China as sponsors
16	30.06.2010	Exploitation, dams take toll on Mekong River Delta	Vietnam News	1, 2, 4, 5	2	4	Importance of river - need for protection; China's dams; need for more data
17	23.07.2010	US announces climate change help for Mekong region	Saigon Giai Phong	1, 2, 5	3	2	Cooperation - USA (aid); regional cooperation; more than 60 million people; China's dams; Japan's support
18	28.07.2010	Giants of the Mekong River under threat from dams: WWF	Saigon Giai Phong	1, 2	2	4	Threats for fishes; Laos' dams
19	26.10.2010	Mekong River countries meet	Vietnam News	5	1	2	Cooperation - meeting
20	26.11.2010	Mekong River Commission's fisheries program looks to balanced approach	Saigon Giai Phong	1, 5	1	2	Cooperation, meeting – fisheries; impact of dams
21	28.01.2011	Mekong nations adopt water development directions, tool launched for hydropower assessment	Saigon Giai Phong	5	1	2	Cooperation - lower Mekong countries; cumulative effects should be considered
22	26.03.2011	Mekong countries to have extra	Saigon Giai Phong	2, 4, 5	1	2	Controversial Xayaburi dam; data sharing

		meeting for controversial Xayaburi dam					
23	28.03.2011	Mekong inter-gov't body discloses proposed Xayaburi dam's environmental impacts	Saigon Giai Phong	1, 2, 4, 5	2	2	Controversial Xayaburi dam; livelihoods; data sharing (notification)
24	19.04.2011	Vietnam looks at hydro impacts on Mekong River	Saigon Giai Phong	1, 5	1	2	Cooperation in the MRB; important for people
25	9.05.2011	Lao PM says more study for controversial Mekong dam	Saigon Giai Phong	4, 5	1	2	Laos' dam postponed, cooperation – MRC; data sharing
26	8.07.2011	US senators seek safeguards on Mekong dams	Saigon Giai Phong	1, 5	1	2	The USA called for delay in Mekong River dams; aid from the USA; more than 60 million people
27	29.07.2011	Mekong threatened by hydropower plants	Saigon Giai Phong	1, 2	2	1	Negative impact of hydropower plants; Vietnam (Mekong Delta) worst affected
28	15.08.2012	Hydropower dams a curse on Mekong River: Seminar	Saigon Giai Phong	1, 2, 6	2	4	Dams - disastrous, serious threat; irreversible damage; people; if it continues - threat for Mekong Delta
29	16.08.2012	Viet Nam concern over Mekong dams	Vietnam News	1, 2	2	1	60 million people; dams; homeless people
30	14.09.2012	Focus on the Mekong	Vietnam News	5	1	2	GMS – tourism; cooperation
31	16.09.2012	Sub-Mekong countries link up for tourism promotion	Tuoi Tre News	5	1	2	Cooperation - Lower Mekong Basin; tourism
32	11.10.2012	Seminar eyes strategy for Mekong River basin	Vietnam News	0	1	1	Seminar in Vietnam about the goals
33	7.11.2012	More funds to combat disasters in VN and Laos	Tuoi Tre News	5	1	2	Aid - ADB, Australia
34	9.11.2012	Laos asked to further review hydropower impacts	Tuoi Tre News	1, 4, 5	1	2	Vietnam asked Laos for further review; sustainable development; people
35	20.11.2012	ASEAN and partners talk measures to boost ties	Tuoi Tre News	5	1	2	Cooperation - ASEAN+3; GMS
36	21.11.2012	Climate change hikes flood risks	Tuoi Tre News	0	2	1	Study about sea levels, climate change
37	18.02.2013	Hydropower projects intimidate Mekong Delta	Saigon Giai Phong	1, 2, 6	2	1	Dams - if continues, threat for Vietnam (not exporting food)
38	6.03.2013	Int'l pundits discuss Mekong environmental issues in HCMC	Tuoi Tre News	5	1	2	Experts discuss environmental issues
39	7.03.2013	Experts discuss how to protect Mekong River	Vietnam News	1, 5	1	2	Cooperation - Mekong Environment Symposium; livelihood of millions
40	22.03.2013	PM calls for Mekong water unity	Vietnam News	1, 5	1	2	Cooperation among Mekong countries; poverty
41	26.03.2013	Serious water shortages in the	Tuoi Tre News	1	2	1	Water shortage - high prices

		Mekong Delta thirst					
42	2.05.2013	US to boost cooperation under Lower Mekong Initiative	Tuoi Tre News	5	1	2	Cooperation with the USA; LMI
43	2.07.2013	Vietnam joins Lower Mekong ministerial meetings	Tuoi Tre News	5	1	2	Cooperation – LMI; MRC 1995; Vietnam especially vulnerable
44	4.07.2013	NGO builds 25 houses in flood-prone Mekong province	Tuoi Tre News	5	1	2	Aid for flood victims
45	8.07.2013	Dams could signal end for giant catfish	Vietnam News	1, 2	2	3	Negative impacts of mainstream dams - to catfish; Xayaburi dam – threatening
46	21.07.2013	Mekong dam: bad news for fish	Vietnam News	1, 2	2	4	Negative impact of dams - fishes, catfish; Xayaburi dam
47	2.08.2013	Mekong residents voice their concerns	Vietnam News	1, 2	2	4	Livelihood of millions; negative impact of dams to locals
48	5.08.2013	Mekong to face wilder weather	Vietnam News	1, 2	2	3	Uncertain future - more extreme weather; extensive hydropower development - negative
49	29.11.2013	WB finances water resource and climate risk management in Vietnam	Dan Tri	5	1	2	Aid from the World Bank
50	12.12.2013	Enhancing Mekong-Japan cooperation efficiency	Dan Tri	5	1	2	Cooperation - Mekong-Japan Summit

Source: compiled by the author

APPENDIX C: Abstract

There is no clear consensus on the relationship between transboundary water allocation and international conflicts. Whereas some scholars highlight the positive effects of water sharing, others focus rather on the negative impacts. An analogous cleavage of opinions can be seen in the research area of the Mekong River Basin. This master's thesis hence examines the Mekong case from a relatively new angle by combining the concepts of power, hydro-hegemony and coexistence of conflict and cooperation as proposed by the London Water Research Group for analysing the impacts of hydro-hegemony on water allocation in the Mekong River Basin. With this approach, it is found out that the power asymmetry deriving from four types of power; i.e. the geographical, material, bargaining and ideational power; gives China the position of hydro-hegemon that is followed by five weaker non-hegemons in following order: Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam and Cambodia. Despite the great number of collaborative groups, the non-hegemons have not been able to resist the hydro-hegemony of China effectively, as the unity of non-hegemons is mostly hampered by different national interests. Therefore, the bilateral relations of China with other riparian states individually have been more successful, especially with Laos and Cambodia. This research on the Mekong River Basin demonstrates thereby also a strong triangular relation between the concepts of power, environment and international relations that is often omitted in research papers but could be tested further in other similar case studies.

APPENDIX D: Zusammenfassung

Es besteht keine deutliche Einigkeit darüber, ob die gemeinsame Nutzung grenzüberschreitender Wasserläufe und die internationalen Konflikten im Zusammenhang stehen oder nicht. Einerseits ist es üblich die positiven Wirkungen von Wasserverteilung zu betonen, aber andererseits konzentrieren sich viele Wissenschaftler eher auf die negativen Folgen. Ähnliche Meinungsunterschiede gibt es im Bereich der Forschung über das Flussbecken des Mekong. Diese Masterarbeit benutzt bei der Untersuchung einen ziemlich neuen Gesichtspunkt, der von London Water Research Group aufgestellt ist und folgende Konzepte verbindet: die Macht, die Hydrohegemonie und die Koexistenz von dem Konflikt und der Kooperation; um den Einfluss der Hydrohegemonie auf die Wasserverteilung im Flussbecken des Mekong zu untersuchen. Da die Asymmetrie der Macht zufolge dieser Methode aus vier verschiedenen Arten der Macht (geographische und materielle Macht, Verhandlungs-, und Ideenbildungsmacht) gebildet wird, hat China die Position der Hydrohegemonie erhalten. Die fünf schwächeren nichthegeemonischen Staaten sind dadurch folgendermaßen eingeordnet: Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam und Kambodscha. Trotz verschiedenen kooperativen Gruppen, haben sich die nichthegeemonischen Staaten, aufgrund von dem Interessenskonflikt, der Hydrohegemonie Chinas nicht wirksam widersetzt. Die bilateralen Beziehungen zwischen China und anderen Uferstaaten sind deshalb erfolgreicher, vor allem mit Laos und Kambodscha. Die Masterarbeit hat dabei auch beweist, dass es eine starke dreiseitige Beziehung zwischen der Macht, der Umwelt und den internationalen Beziehungen gibt, die man oft bei den Forschungsarbeiten vernachlässigt, aber weiter mit ähnlichen Fällen untersuchen könnte.

APPENDIX E: Curriculum Vitae

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name	Marlen Rein
E-mail	marlen.rein@gmail.com
Nationality	Estonian
Place of birth	Tallinn, Estonia

EDUCATION

10/2012 – present	Master of Arts (MA) University of Vienna Master Program of East Asian Economy and Society Thesis title: "Power Asymmetry in the Mekong River Basin: The Impact of Hydro-Hegemony on Sharing Transboundary Water"
02/2011 – 06/2011	ERASMUS Exchange Scholarship University of Cantabria 25 ECTS from the programme of European Business and Economics
09/2009 – 06/2012	Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences (Cum Laude) Tallinn University, Institute of Political Science and Governance Thesis title: "The Influence of Environment on Security Based on the Example of the Water Conflict between India and Pakistan"
09/1997 – 06/2009	Basic and Secondary Education Kadrion Saksa Gümnaasium (Grades 1-12)

WORK EXPERIENCE

06/2010 – 08/2010	Journalist: junior reporter (International news) Postimees (Daily newspaper)
09/2010 – present	Free-lance journalist Arter (Weekly newspaper)

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Estonian	Mother tongue
English	Proficient user (C1)
German	Proficient user (C1)
Spanish	Independent user (B2)
Japanese	Basic user (A1)

APPENDIX F: Lebenslauf

PERSÖNLICHE DATEN

Name	Marlen Rein
E-Mail	marlen.rein@gmail.com
Staatsangehörigkeit	Estnisch
Geburtsort	Tallinn, Estland

SCHUL- UND HOCHSCHULAUSBILDUNG

Seit 10/2012	Master of Arts (MA) Universität Wien Masterstudium : Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Ostasiens Masterarbeit: "Power Asymmetry in the Mekong River Basin: The Impact of Hydro-Hegemony on Sharing Transboundary Water"
02/2011 – 06/2011	ERASMUS-Auslandsstipendium Universität Cantabria 25 ECTS-Punkte aus dem Programm Europäische Wirtschaft
09/2009 – 06/2012	Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences (Cum Laude) Universität Tallinn, Institut für Politik- und Staatswissenschaft Bachelorarbeit: "The Influence of Environment on Security Based on the Example of the Water Conflict between India and Pakistan"
09/1997 – 06/2009	Grundschule und Gymnasium Kadrjoru Saksa Gümnaasium (Stufen 1-12)

BERUFSTÄTIGKEIT

06/2010 – 08/2010	Journalistin (Auslandsnachrichten) Postimees (Tageszeitung)
Seit 09/2010	Freiberufliche Journalistin Arter (Wochenzeitung)

SPRACHEN

Estnisch	Muttersprache
Englisch	Fachkundige Sprachkenntnisse (C1)
Deutsch	Fachkundige Sprachkenntnisse (C1)
Spanisch	Selbständige Sprachverwendung (B2)
Japanisch	Elementare Sprachverwendung (A1)