

ABSTRACT
of the dissertation by Khaibullina Zhaniya Kabylbekovna
“Water Security in Political Discourses of Central Asian Countries:
Understanding, Problematization, and Solution”
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Relevance of the study The region's water resources, including the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers, are characterized by increasing water scarcity, climate change, and growing transboundary interdependence among Central Asian countries. The transboundary nature of the region's water resources, including the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers, creates challenges in water distribution, regulation, and shared use, impacting regional stability and population access to water resources.

Climate change, population growth, urbanization, and agricultural development are increasing pressure on water systems, intensifying competition between economic sectors, and contributing to increased socioeconomic vulnerability. At the same time, the involvement of various actors — states, international organizations, and local communities — complicates water resource management processes and creates competing interests.

In these conditions, the study of water security through the prism of political discourses acquires particular scientific and practical significance, allowing us to identify the mechanisms of water resource securitization, the specifics of interstate interaction, and areas for improving regional water policy in the context of modern challenges.

The aim of this dissertation is a comprehensive, interdisciplinary analysis of the state and dynamics of water security in Central Asian countries, focusing on political, discursive, and institutional components. The study aims to identify the mechanisms of political construction of water threats, the level and forms of securitization, and to determine the sustainability of regional water management strategies in the face of transboundary, climatic, and socioeconomic challenges. The focus is on the interaction of political, legal, environmental, and governance approaches to ensuring water security in the context of regional stability. In this regard, there were The following **research objectives** were set:

(1) To reveal water security as an interdisciplinary and political-strategic phenomenon, to determine its place in the structure of contemporary theories of international, environmental, regional, and human security, and to summarize the main theoretical and methodological approaches to its study in political science, international relations, and sustainable development studies, particularly in the context of climate change, resource scarcity, and geopolitical transformation.

(2) To study the political and legal framework for regulating water security at the international, regional, and national levels, including international water law, regional agreements, interstate treaties, and domestic policy mechanisms; to identify existing legal and institutional gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions; and to propose

directions for improving regulatory and governance mechanisms while taking into account the climatic, environmental, socio-economic, and geopolitical realities of Central Asia.

(3) To analyze international and regional institutional experience in the field of sustainable water governance and integrated water resources management, including the activities of river basin organizations, interstate water commissions, and multilateral cooperation platforms; to identify effective governance models, diplomatic instruments, and mechanisms applicable to Central Asia; and to assess their potential contribution to strengthening transboundary water security, regional cooperation, and conflict prevention.

(4) To identify the key water security challenges faced by the countries of Central Asia, including water scarcity, uneven distribution of water resources, climate-induced hydrological changes, infrastructure deterioration, population growth, and agricultural dependency; and, based on statistical, empirical, and discursive data, to assess the current state, vulnerabilities, risks, and long-term sustainability of water security in the region.

(5) To provide a comprehensive assessment of interstate water cooperation in Central Asia by analyzing the evolution of regional water relations, the effectiveness of existing cooperation mechanisms, and the role of regional and international actors; to identify institutional, political, and discursive factors that facilitate or hinder the development of cooperation; and to develop recommendations for strengthening transboundary water diplomacy, confidence-building measures, and regional coordination in the field of water governance.

(6) To conduct a discourse analysis of the state policies, political narratives, and strategic documents of Central Asian countries in the area of water security; to identify dominant approaches, national priorities, and securitization trends related to water governance; and to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of political decisions and management strategies that influence the sustainability, inclusiveness, and effectiveness of water management systems.

(7) To analyze the participation of women and youth in water resources management policies and decision-making processes at national and regional levels; to identify institutional, socio-cultural, and political barriers limiting inclusive participation; and to assess the potential of gender-responsive and youth-inclusive approaches for promoting sustainable, equitable, and participatory water governance in the context of long-term water security and sustainable development.

The object of this dissertation is water security in the context of discourses in the political context of the Central Asian states from the point of view of the position of water resources on the regional agenda, as well as the dynamics of change and prospects for the development of water policy against the backdrop of internal and transboundary challenges.

The subject is the analysis of political and institutional mechanisms, normative structures and discursive practices through which water policy priorities are constructed, threats are formulated, the framework of securitization is determined and

the trajectories of interstate interaction in the field of water resources management are built.

Predicts that under these conditions Due to climate change, increasing water scarcity, and growing transboundary interdependence, water security in Central Asian countries will increasingly assume a political and strategic dimension. Water securitization processes are expected to intensify, as well as regional cooperation and water diplomacy mechanisms. Going forward, a key focus will be the transition to sustainable and people-centered water resource management models aimed at reducing conflict and ensuring regional stability.

Methodological framework included discourse analysis, content analysis, comparative political analysis, and institutional analysis, applied to examine political discourses, strategic documents, regulations, and water resource management mechanisms in Central Asian countries. The study utilized systemic and comparative methods to identify the specific features of national approaches to ensuring water security and interstate cooperation. The empirical basis of the study consisted of fieldwork, qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with local community representatives, experts, and water sector specialists, as well as observation and statistical data analysis. Additional analysis included international and national regulatory documents, expert dialogues, and materials from international organizations. This interdisciplinary approach provided a comprehensive study of water security as a political, social, and environmental phenomenon.

guiding idea is that water security in Central Asian countries is not simply an environmental or resource issue, but also a politically constructed phenomenon shaped by state discourses, securitization processes, and mechanisms of interstate cooperation. The study posits that sustainable water security is impossible without the development of regional cooperation, institutional coordination, and a people-centered approach focused on protecting the interests of the population, reducing vulnerability, and strengthening regional stability.

The theoretical significance of this study lies in its development of a political science approach to studying water security as an interdisciplinary and discursively determined category. The work expands theoretical understandings of water security by integrating securitization theory and the concept of human security, allowing us to consider water resources not only as an object of environmental and economic analysis but also as a factor in political stability, regional security, and interstate cooperation.

Practical significance of the work: The research findings can be used to develop theoretical and applied approaches to ensuring water security in Central Asian countries; improve public policies and water resources management mechanisms; strengthen transboundary water cooperation and water diplomacy; and serve as an analytical basis for developing effective measures to reduce water risks, enhance resilience, and ensure human security in the region.

The theoretical basis of the study is formed by the works of domestic, regional, and international scholars in the fields of political theory, international relations, security theory, political ecology, and sustainable development. Key contributions

include the principles of the Copenhagen School's securitization theory (B. Buzan, O. Væver), the concept of human security, and approaches to the study of water diplomacy, transboundary cooperation, and sustainable water resource management.

The study's methodological framework included discourse analysis, content analysis, comparative political and institutional analysis, and systems and interdisciplinary approaches. The study utilized fieldwork, expert interviews, observation, and analysis of regulatory documents and statistical data, providing a comprehensive examination of water security as a political, social, and environmental phenomenon.

The study draws on international and national regulatory documents, strategic programs, and official materials on water security, sustainable development, and transboundary water cooperation in Central Asian countries. The study also draws on scientific publications by domestic, regional, and international authors, statistical data from international organizations and government agencies, and materials from international and regional expert platforms. The empirical basis of the study was formed by the results of field research conducted in the Aral district of the Kyzylorda region of the Republic of Kazakhstan, including expert interviews, observation materials and data from interactions with representatives of local communities, water management authorities and the expert community.

This dissertation represents one of the first interdisciplinary studies of water security in the political discourses of Central Asian countries. **Its novelty** lies in the following:

1. An interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of water security as an element of national and regional security within the framework of political science is substantiated.
2. A systematic examination of the political and institutional aspects of water resources management in the context of global water scarcity is presented.
3. Key issues of distribution, use and availability of water resources in Central Asian countries were identified in the context of public policy and interstate cooperation.
4. The processes of politicization of water resources have been identified, within which water is considered a strategic resource and a factor of national security.
5. Discursive practices of water security in the countries of Central Asia have been systematized, allowing us to consider water security as a discursively constructed category of political relations.

The main provisions submitted for defense:

1. Water security in Central Asian countries is an interdisciplinary and politically constructed phenomenon associated with securitization processes, regional stability, and transboundary interactions between states.
2. Political discourses in Central Asian countries shape different interpretations of water threats, priorities, and water resource management mechanisms, which influences national and regional water policies.

3. The processes of water resource securitization are used by states in the region as a tool for legitimizing political decisions and strengthening negotiating positions in transboundary interactions.
4. In the context of climate change and increasing water scarcity, water security is becoming a strategic factor for socio-economic sustainability, domestic stability and international cooperation.
5. The effectiveness of the Central Asian water security system depends on the level of institutional coordination, the development of water diplomacy, and the formation of sustainable mechanisms for interstate cooperation.
6. Integrating the concept of human security into water management systems helps reduce population vulnerability, develop inclusive approaches, and increase the sustainability of water policies.
7. The development of a comprehensive regional model of water resources management requires strengthening the role of international organizations, the scientific community, and civil society in decision-making processes.

The structure and scope of the dissertation are determined by the objectives and logic of the research. The work consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, a list of references, and appendices. The length of the dissertation is 155 typewritten pages. The list of references includes 193 titles, of which about 130 are in English (foreign sources). The structure and content of the work reflect a step-by-step solution the tasks set, and the volume meets the requirements, ensuring completeness presentation of the material and justification of the conclusions.