

**POLITICAL RISKS  
IN ENSURING WATER SECURITY.  
CENTRAL ASIAN STATES' EXPERIENCE:  
KAZAKHSTAN, TAJIKISTAN, UZBEKISTAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

**T**he article focuses on examining the influence of political risks on ensuring water security in the context of comparative analysis of the experience of the Central Asian countries—Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. The article pays particular attention to the prospects and peculiarities of the subsequent development of water

diplomacy among the region's countries in the context of globalization and world economic crisis. The results of the conducted research make it possible to reveal and aggregate scientific approaches to the definitions of the political risk and water security concepts; characterize the influence of political risks on water security in the context of

*intensifying international relations; define the characteristics of formation of water policy in a number of countries and determine the approaches to ensuring water security in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In*

*addition, the work stipulates the need to conclude a unified interstate water agreement, which should become the foundation of a sustainable water policy for the Central Asian states.*

**KEYWORDS:** *water policy, political risks, Central Asia, water security, international relations.*

## *Introduction*

Preserving security in the world is currently a key goal both for national states and international organizations. Ensuring the fragile balance in international relations is a difficult task in the context of the globalizing world, and the water crisis is one of the greatest threats of our days. Its first international manifestation was the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1967.

Scientists from various parts of the world regularly emphasize the fact that this problem is of a global scale, and the tendency is only bound to deepen. Rapidly growing demand, in particular for livestock products, stimulates demand for water. According to U.N. forecasts, the international demand for foodstuffs is expected to grow by 70% by 2050.<sup>1</sup>

While it is not as apparent for European countries, the issue of water supply is all too poignant for Asian and African states. This problem will be intensified with each passing year, since the planet's population is growing, and the demand for water to provide for economic, industrial and agricultural needs is also slated to increase.

High-quality, detailed research of the above-mentioned problem today should entail the examination of the theoretical and methodological foundation of the existing water security system in the context of international relations. This research is particularly relevant under the conditions of significant transformations of the modern geopolitical environment. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were selected as the objects of analysis due to the negative development tendencies of their water security-related interstate conflicts, which at this point are leading to the formation of new relationships on the geopolitical map of the world and are a direct consequence of the domestic and foreign policy implemented by these states. For instance, excessive water consumption in Amu Darya and Syr Darya has led to a deficit of water resources in their lower reaches, particularly, to the drying out of the Aral Sea. Moreover, the irregular distribution of water resources in Central Asia pre-determines the conflict of interests of the key water suppliers (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) and its main consumers (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan). Thus, the confrontation between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan regarding the rights to the disputed body of water had reached its peak in 2016 and was ready to move into the active military hostility phase. In this manner, these states' varied water consumption needs cause the emergence of political risks and allow to consider the situation to be a non-traditional regional security threat.

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<sup>1</sup> See: "Increasing Demand and Climate Change Threatening World Water Resources Says New U.N. World Water Development Report," UNESCO OFFICE IN JUBA, 12 March, 2012, available at [[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/juba/about-this-office/single-view/news/increasing\\_demand\\_and\\_climate\\_change\\_threatening\\_world\\_water/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/juba/about-this-office/single-view/news/increasing_demand_and_climate_change_threatening_world_water/)].

Numerous experts tend to consider the current water resource-related conflict in Central Asia to be not only a consequence of the Soviet regime, but also determined by the political ambitions of regional state leaders. Each of the newly established states has begun to seek the reasons to make a claim regarding the infringement of their interests. The accumulated mutual dissatisfaction, no longer limited by any regulators, began to splash out in the form of violation of obligations and new claims being lodged.

It is worth noting that in 2012 at the Rio-de-Janeiro Conference on the Issues of Environment and Development, member states have demonstrated their commitment to long-term sustainable environmental development vector for the entire planet, taking into account the interests of both current and future generations.<sup>2</sup> The international tendency towards ecosystem preservation, ecologically balanced use of natural resources and the intensification of environmental security measures had only increased its lead. Based on the conceptual provisions of a systemic approach to resolving the sustainable development issues, it can be said that currently the primary innovative dominant element for democratic and developed countries is the formation of a complex international environmental system that is balanced and adequate to their state interests, and contains a mandatory water security component.

Today we can observe the activation of negative water crisis tendencies among developing countries, which can subsequently provoke catastrophes of a planetary scale. Approximately 1.1 billion of the world population still do not have access to clean water, which leads to millions of deaths every year.<sup>3</sup> Apparently, along with negative health consequences, the lack of access to clean water impedes national development, therefore condemning the suffering population to sinking deeper into poverty and low quality of life.<sup>4</sup>

Central Asia is facing a choice between electrical power generation and irrigation. The circumstances in place have led to practically all of the countries in the region setting a course for autonomous power generation. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have assumed particularly principled stances on this issue.

Based on the above, the goal of our research is the definition of the concepts of water security and political risks in this sphere, as well as an analysis of the water policy of Central Asian countries, particularly Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

## Literature Review

In the recent decades, globalization and qualitative systemic changes have forced scientists to seek more grounded arguments for the intensification of the internationalization and conversion of the political and ecological interests of the majority of the world's countries. However, few of these studies have encompassed the definitions of political risks and water security. These issues were fragmentarily touched upon by the scientific schools of political science, economics, sociology, philosophy, environmental and international law, as well as others. Both domestic and foreign scientific publications, monographs, regulatory acts of national and international legislation in the sphere in

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<sup>2</sup> See: *Report of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*, A/CONF.216/16. 28 September, 2012, available at [[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/CONF.216/16&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/CONF.216/16&Lang=E)].

<sup>3</sup> See: "Safer Water, Better Health: Costs, Benefits, and Sustainability of Interventions to Protect and Promote Health," World Health Organization, 2008, available at [[http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43840/9789241596435\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43840/9789241596435_eng.pdf?sequence=1)].

<sup>4</sup> See: J. Barnett, *The Meaning of Environmental Security: Ecological Politics and Policy in the New Security Era*, Zed Books, London, 2001.

question were the object of analysis. For instance, in her work N.A. Piskulova<sup>5</sup> revealed the proportion of political risks in international relations and ecology; in turn, A.A. Pozhalov<sup>6</sup> had conducted a complex study of political risks. A special contribution to the study of this issue was made by A.N. Bordovskikh<sup>7</sup> in her dissertation entitled “Political Risks: Contemporary Issues in Evaluation and Theoretical Modeling.” Among the foremost pertinent foreign scientists are M. Fitzpatrick,<sup>8</sup> R. Stulz<sup>9</sup> and A. Shapiro,<sup>10</sup> who have exposed the category of political risks and conducted their own classification, encompassing the sphere of water security.

A review of scientific literature, which either fully or fragmentarily touches upon this issue, gives grounds to state that this phenomenon has not been subject to complex exploration within political science, and, in turn, increases the poignancy of this paper.

## **Methodology**

In the context of the research conducted in this paper, general scientific (dialectical, systemic, synergetic, analytical and synthetic, formal logical, legal modeling, instrumental, etc.) and specialized scientific (historical legal, comparative legal, formal legal) methods have been used. For instance, the dialectical method allowed to reveal the condition, tendencies and development prospects of scientific research in the sphere of the influence of political risks on ensuring water security; the comparative legal method allowed to conduct a comparative analysis of the specifics of the Central Asian countries’ positive experience in the sphere in question; the method of legal modeling provided the opportunity to predict the potential prospects of further development of the existing situation in the sphere of ensuring water security of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

## **Concepts of Political Risks and Water Security. Central Asian States’ Experience in the Sphere of Water Conflict Management**

First and foremost, special attention should be devoted to the definition of the concept of political risk, which needs to be examined in the international relations context. Equating political risks

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<sup>5</sup> See: N.A. Piskulova, “Tendentsii izucheniia problem ekologii v sovremennoi zarubezhnoi nauke o mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniakh,” in: *Sovremennaia nauka o mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniakh za rubezhom*, in 3 volumes, Vol. 2, RSMD, Moscow, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> See: A.A. Pozhalov, “Issledovaniia politicheskogo riska: istoriia zarozhdeniia, stanovleniia i razvitiia,” *Vest. Moskovskogo un-ta*, Series 12: “Politicheskie nauki,” No. 3, 2006, pp. 43-57.

<sup>7</sup> See: A.N. Bordovskikh, *Politicheskie riski: sovremennye problemy otsenki i teoreticheskogo modelirovaniia*, PhD Thesis in Political Science, Moscow, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> See: M. Fitzpatrick, “The Definition and Assessment of Political Risk in International Business: A Review of the Literature,” *Academy of Management Review*, No. 8 (2), 1983, pp. 249-254.

<sup>9</sup> See: R.M. Stulz, “Pricing Capital Assets in an International Setting: An Introduction,” *Journal of International Business Studies*, No. 15 (3), 1984, pp. 55-73.

<sup>10</sup> See: A.C. Shapiro, “Currency Risk and Country Risk in International Banking,” *Journal of Finance*, No. 40 (3), 1985, pp. 881-891.

with state risks is among the unfounded and mistaken approaches in this sphere. The latter category is broader and more extensive in content, encompassing all of the characteristics of the environment that a state interacts with internationally.

For the first time this term was formalized by the International Commission on Radiological Protection (1972), which defined it as the determination of the de facto amount and presence of harmful factors and unprejudiced evaluations of the harm to human health.<sup>11</sup> Since then, this concept has significantly expanded and began to comprise multiple components. Today, political risk is regarded by the international relations theory as one of the components of the democratic process, associated with the evaluation and selection of alternatives, as well as with their subsequent practical approbation,<sup>12</sup> and is seen as the potential onset of any political event (war, revolution, coup d'état, etc.) within the state or beyond its borders, which can lead to loss in revenue and/or assets in international business operations,<sup>13</sup> in particular as the risk of financial loss due to the transformation of the political system, combination of political powers within a society, political instability.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes, this same threat is determined as unforeseen circumstances that emerge on the political arena and take the shape of various limitations.<sup>15</sup> In addition, political risks are regarded as events that may lead to cardinal changes of governmental policy and create unfavorable situations for specific social groups or national development in general.<sup>16</sup>

It is essential to note that an integrated unified definition is absent in the scientific circles, however, the latter may be considered the most appropriate of the aforementioned definitions, as it encompasses the widest range of legal relations.

Thus, the political risk for each state depends on its strategy and tactics, and is a growing concern in the countries that are at the stage of deep-rooted institutional changes, an unstable economic or sociopolitical situation, and are also distinguished by the inadequacy of the legislation in place and the absence of a developed political activity culture.<sup>17</sup> It is worth mentioning that a large number of approaches to the analysis of political risk testify to the complexity and multidimensionality of this problem.

Security is one of the notions that border that of political risks. This term traditionally incorporates the protected state of an individual's society's and state's interests from external and internal threats.

The concept of water security should be examined separately in the context of this research.

There are several definitions of this notion. According to the 2013 U.N. report, water security is defined as the population's capability to continually access an adequate quantity of water acceptable for: sustaining means of sustenance, human well-being and socioeconomic development; protection from water-related pollution and disasters; preservation of ecosystems in the world climate and political stability.<sup>18</sup> This definition of water security is provided by the Asian Water Development Outlook 2013, which reveals not only the evaluation of the water resources condition and their usage,

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<sup>11</sup> See: J. Barnett, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> See: M. Busse, C. Hefeker, "Political Risk, Institutions and Foreign Direct Investment," *European Journal of Political Economy*, No. 23 (2), 2006, pp. 397-415.

<sup>13</sup> See: J. Barnett, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> See: A.A. Pozhalov, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> See: T.V. Zonova, *Diplomatiia: modeli, formy, metody*, Aspekt Press, Moscow, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> See: L.V. Smorgunov, *Gosudarstvennaia politika i upravlenie*, Textbook in two parts, Part 1, "Konceptcii i problemy gosudarstvennoi politiki i upravleniia," Rossiiskaia politicheskaia entsiklopediia (ROSSPEN), Moscow, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> See: E.A. Panfilova, "Poniatie riska: mnogoobrazie podkhodov i opredelenii," *Teoriia i praktika obshchestvennogo razvitiia*, № 4, 2010, pp. 30-33.

<sup>18</sup> See: I.V. Dzhuz, *Politicheskie riski: otsenka, analiz i upravlenie*, IMEMO RAN, Moscow, 2004.

but also lays the groundwork for long-term safe water use by Asian countries and the entire Pacific region.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, it is precisely the lack of water resources that often leads to interstate conflicts that are difficult to resolve and in certain cases may span for as long as decades. As was mentioned above, Central Asia is a region with a high risk of conflicts associated with the lack of water resources. We would like to discuss this issue in more detail on the cases of several countries. The factor of Central Asia's geographical isolation, its remoteness from the world markets and undeveloped communicative characteristics negatively affect its transformation and integration of countries in the modern world. Following the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., the existing water resource management schemes were disavowed, while the quotas no longer satisfied the republics. The interests of independent states moved to the foreground, and these states began to conduct a policy of absolute national sovereignty, with no regard for their neighbors' interests, thus disrupting the balanced water resource management model that was previously in place. Let us note that the existing international agreements between the republics were not being honored since the 2000s, thus, according to certain scientists, water confrontation between the countries under examination is a political problem that has been forming for years.<sup>20</sup> According to the calculations of the World Bank, the absence of regional cooperation in Central Asia will lead to a loss of 20% regional gross product. This problem is particularly poignant in relation to the use of common water resources.<sup>21</sup>

For instance, for many years now the shortage of water resources has been the reason for Uzbekistan being on the verge of acute conflict with the neighboring countries. Taking into account the experts' forecasts concerning reduced water availability in the Central Asian region in the nearest future<sup>22</sup> and the fact that the current need for water has grown qualitatively we can say that today this republic is more vulnerable and dependent on transboundary water bodies.

In this context, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya water usage-associated conflicts remain relevant. For instance, Islam Karimov noted in 2012 that countries that are located higher upstream should be required to request a consulting evaluation from international experts prior to altering river utilization methods.<sup>23</sup> According to him, regional water conflicts related to transboundary water bodies will lead to war in the future, which is confirmed by the absence of consensus on the Syr Darya river and the hydropower plants in its basin between Uzbekistan, on the one hand, and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, on the other. In August 2016, a conflict, which broke out between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan regarding the ownership of the Orto-Tokoy reservoir, almost developed into a military confrontation, and only the news of President Islam Karimov's health problems and death halted this conflict. In addition, the joint Aral crisis problem remains poignant for both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, a problem that makes a vivid example of an ecological problem with serious socioeconomic consequences, which affect all Central Asian states directly or indirectly. The crisis provoked by the drying out of the Aral Sea, was established as a result of an incorrect economic and agricultural policy, irrational usage of the irrigated agricultural resources, and the increase in the volume of the non-recoverable

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<sup>19</sup> See: *Asian Water Development Outlook 2013*, Asian Development Bank, Second print, Philippines, April 2013, available at [<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30190/asian-water-development-outlook-2013.pdf>]; I.M. Malkovskiy, *Geograficheskie osnovy vodoobespecheniia prirodno-khoziaistvennykh sistem Kazakhstana*, Almaty, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> See: A.R. Medeu, I.M. Malkovskiy, L.S. Toleubaeva, *Vodnye resursy Kazakhstana: otsenka, prognoz, upravlenie (kontseptsiiia)*, Vol. 1, Almaty, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> See: "The Rogun Dam: Regional Conflict and Opportunity," Central Eurasia Standard, May 2013, available at [<https://cestandard.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/rogun-dam-a-nexus-of-conflict-and-opportunity.pdf>].

<sup>22</sup> See: "Obespechennost vodoi v TsA k 2040 godu mozhet snizitsia pochti na 25%," available at [<https://ru.sputnik-tj.com/asia/20171123/1023969843/obespechennost-vodoy-v-centralnoy-azii-k-2040-g-mozhet-snizitsya-pochti-na-25.html>].

<sup>23</sup> See: S.-M. Jalilov, "Impact of Rogun Dam on Downstream Uzbekistan Agriculture," North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota, 2011, available at [<http://www.cawater-info.net/library/eng/jalilov-et-al.pdf>].



water used for irrigation. This issue is aggravated even further by the lack of resources and the absence of a common approach to its resolution by the countries of the region.

Uzbekistan's water policy today is undergoing significant transformations in the context of the recently adopted Strategy of Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2017).<sup>24</sup> At the current stage of declarative confirmation of norms, the latter are noted for their progressive features, such as democratization, de-bureaucratization, aim to establish an integrated water policy, prospects of implementing innovative water protection technologies, research and approbation of international experience with regard to the specifics of state structure. Let us note the innovative tendencies of the republic's diplomatic initiatives, particularly in regard to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which were launched in 2018. The above-mentioned facts testify to the conciliatory nature of Uzbekistan's foreign policy, which will subsequently contribute to the implementation of the intended roadmap of water reforms and ensuring water security. Previously, this country was not particularly eager to engage in international cooperation in water resource usage, however, the President of the Republic Sh.M. Mirziyoyev had played a special role. He established friendly and neighborly relations with all the countries in the region and with Afghanistan, which will most certainly contribute to a rational, mutually agreed, and systematic management and usage of transboundary water resources.<sup>25</sup>

Among the aforementioned republics, Tajikistan possesses the largest water resources, accumulated in numerous glaciers, rivers, lakes and underground water systems, with approximately 60% of the Central Asian water resources formed there. However, the country is encountering significant difficulties due to the obsolete infrastructure, limited financial resources and insufficient technical potential. The issue of the absence of water, and even more so the necessary agreements, which would allow to use the present water resources more efficiently, still remains poignant. As far as the emerging conflicts, the beginning of the construction of the Rogun dam on the river Vakhsh, which uses the Amu Darya waters and, as a consequence, becomes an additional risk and creates a potential conflict in the sphere of water usage, is a stumbling stone between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Let us note that the design of the aforementioned construction has begun in Soviet times, but subsequently was halted until the states gained independence.

The President of Tajikistan Emomali Rakhmon remarked that the country is in the state of energy crisis and the Tajik people have suffered hardships over the course of many years, that's why the only grounded solution is the end of construction.<sup>26</sup> The launch of the first stage of the hydropower plant is slated for November-December 2018. Let us emphasize that Tajikistan had addressed World Bank in order to receive a technical and environmental expert evaluation, which took five years to conduct. The results of the evaluation, which were presented in 2014 and demonstrated that the construction of the hydropower plant with all recommendations taken into account was economically sound and would not harm the environment, were surprising to the leaders of Uzbekistan and prompted them to collaborate.

Currently, the National Water Council, presided over by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, is the highest body involved in the development of policy and efficient utilization and protection of water resources.<sup>27</sup> It is also currently responsible for the water resource sector, and the

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<sup>24</sup> See: K. Zorlu, E. Akilli, "Ulus Devlet ve Bölgesel Dinamikler Zemininde Orta Asya'da Sınırşan Sular," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi*, No. 9 (19), 2015, pp. 25-47 (K. Zorlu, E. Akilli, "Transboundary Waters in Central Asia as the Factors of Forming a Nation-State and Regional Dynamics," *Journal of Central Asian and Caucasian Studies*, No. 9 (19), 2015, pp. 25-47).

<sup>25</sup> See: G. Askeeva, B. Gabdulina, E. Nechaeva, J. Smakova, "Transboundary Water Cooperation in Central Asia and Regional Security," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Volume 18, Issue 1, 2017, pp. 64-75.

<sup>26</sup> See: S.-M. Jalilov, *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> See: *Postanovlenie Pravitelstva Respubliki Tadjikistan ot 30 dekabria 2015 goda No. 791 «O Programme reformy vodnogo sektora Respubliki Tadjikistan na 2016-2025 gody*, available at [[http://www.cawater-info.net/bk/water\\_law/pdf/tj\\_791\\_2015.pdf](http://www.cawater-info.net/bk/water_law/pdf/tj_791_2015.pdf)].

power industry, as one of the types of water usage, with a potential risk of a conflict of interests between these two sectors.

Despite the fact that today state's economic interests not infrequently prevail over the environmental ones, we have to emphasize that Tajikistan is implementing an open-door policy, based on consensus, common discussion and effective political dialog in the resolution of all domestic and international issues. This country had initiated numerous water-related initiatives, which were supported by the international community. For instance, the 2018-2028 decade was declared the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development."<sup>28</sup> In addition, today it is already possible to discuss the qualitative alterations to Tajikistan's Water Code<sup>29</sup> and other regulatory acts in the sphere of water security. Tajikistan can be considered an adherent of political diplomacy in the sphere of ensuring water security, both domestic and international; moreover, its experience is a worthwhile example to follow.<sup>30</sup>

Intensive use of water in the energy sector, along with the changes in the water utilization mode, has created serious problems for Kazakhstan's downward stream. Chu and Talas rivers are strategically crucial for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan both in power production and irrigation. All water bodies, whose stable functioning and proper operation are crucial to the republic, are located in the Kyrgyz Republic, which became the reason for establishing legal grounds for joint water management by the two countries.

Just like in the previous years, Syr Darya remains a crucial source of water for Kazakhstan, and the disputes related to the distribution of water resources between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are still in place. With the goal of regulating the spring river flooding after the water flush from the Kyrgyz Toktogul reservoir, Kazakhstan had constructed the Koksarai reservoir in the South Kazakhstan region, which became the counter-regulator for the Shardara hydropower plant. It is worth noting that if there were a mutually lucrative approach to transboundary river water resource usage negotiated with Kyrgyzstan, there would be no need for Kazakhstan to undertake the expensive project mentioned above. Due to the above-mentioned circumstances, the latter entered into a conflict with Kyrgyzstan and declared its deprecation of any unilateral attempt to manage water resources. Moreover, the republic's government had always stated that common grounds and mutual interests may ensure regional stability, and also insisted on developing regional water resource strategies for all Central Asian countries.<sup>31</sup> If the problems currently in place are not resolved, the pressure may affect regional stability.

Unfortunately, the Republic of Kazakhstan possesses great potential for the emergence of political risks capable of affecting water security. There are also a number of hydrological threats capable of leading to an interstate confrontation and unresolved problems associated with soil degradation, water resource deficit, high level of air pollution in cities, utilization of solid municipal waste, etc.<sup>32</sup> The state's water policy is far from perfection: the existing methods of managing and distribut-

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<sup>28</sup> U.N. General Assembly Resolution of 21 December, 2016, 71/222, 71st Session, available at [<http://www.un.org/en/ga/71/resolutions.shtml>].

<sup>29</sup> See: *Postanovlenie Pravitelstva Respubliki Tadjikistan ot 30 dekabria 2015 goda No. 791 «O Programme reformy vodnogo sektora Respubliki Tadjikistan na 2016-2025 gody*.

<sup>30</sup> See: V.I. Fokin, S.S. Shirin, J.V. Nikolaeva, N.M. Bogolubova, E.E. Elts, V.N. Baryshnikov, "Interaction of Cultures and Diplomacy of States," *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, No. 38 (1), 2017, pp. 45-49, available at [<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2016.05.001>].

<sup>31</sup> See: "Vodnyi kodeks Respubliki Tadjikistan ot 27 dekabria 1993 g.," *Akhbor Verkhovnogo Soveta Respubliki Tadjikistan*, No. 2, 1994, Art 38.

<sup>32</sup> See: R. Syzdykov, K. Aitmambet, A. Dautov, *Country Report: Kazakhstan*, Analytical Centre of Economic Policy in Agricultural Sector, Kazakhstan, 2015, available at [[http://www.agricistrade.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Agricistrade\\_Kazakhstan.pdf](http://www.agricistrade.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Agricistrade_Kazakhstan.pdf)].



ing water resources, the regulatory legislation and the mechanism of its implementation are obsolete. However, the state's highest echelons are attempting to overcome the existing situation.<sup>33</sup>

Special attention should be dedicated to the Strategic Plan of Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan up to 2025, adopted in February 2018.<sup>34</sup> This regulatory act emphasizes

- (1) ensuring international accord, security, stability of international relations;
- (2) development of policy in the "green" economy sphere and environmental protection, oriented toward improving the natural resource quality, development of alternative energy sources, adaptation to climate changes, as well as de-carbonization and raising the economy's energy efficiency;
- (3) need to improve the quality of life and environmental security, decrease environmental risks and deficits;
- (4) predicting the development and approbation of systemic water-saving measures in agriculture, industrial and municipal sectors.

Also, the state's obligation to conclude bilateral and multi-partite international agreements in the sphere of water security is formalized.

It should be emphasized that these promising transformations stipulate an implementation mechanism, which, proceeding from the Action Plan for 2017-2018 of the National Dialog for Water Policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan,<sup>35</sup> presumes the participation of the Republic's representatives in the regional meeting on the results of the Economy of Water Security in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan project, familiarization with some of its developments applied in Kazakhstan, as well as the continuation of preparatory work for the Kazakhstan initiative for the 8th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention.

The previously adopted Concept of International Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2014-2020<sup>36</sup> had confirmed the striving towards intra-regional integration in Central Asia with the purpose of minimizing conflict generation potential and resolution of water and energy contradictions. The aforementioned policy vector postulates the creation of a complex independent entity of international law similar to Visegrád Group. Establishing such an association and instituting long-term cooperation in many spheres would resolve many problems in Central Asia and contribute to the improvement of the global environmental situation and ensuring water security.<sup>37</sup>

In keeping with the above, the key role in structuring a dialog between the Central Asian republics on the issues of water resource distribution is currently played by Kazakhstan. Even despite the global economic crisis, the country is not planning to cut down the planned work on the resolution of the Aral Sea problems, which have long exceeded the scope of just one region and one country. In order to improve the situation, efforts in regard to more efficient use of water resources and adherence to water withdrawal quotas should be stepped up.

<sup>33</sup> See: L.S. Toleubaeva, *Vodoobespechennost Respubliki Kazakhstan: sostoianie i perspektivy*, Almaty, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> See: "Strategicheskii plan razvitiia Respubliki Kazakhstan do 2025 goda, 2018," available at [<http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1800000636>].

<sup>35</sup> See: "Plan rabot na 2017-2018 gody po Natsionalnomu dialogu po vodnoi politike v Respublike Kazakhstan," available at [[https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/water/meetings/NPD\\_meetings/Kazakhstan/5th\\_NPD\\_working\\_31\\_May\\_2017/KZ\\_5WG\\_workplan\\_RU.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/water/meetings/NPD_meetings/Kazakhstan/5th_NPD_working_31_May_2017/KZ_5WG_workplan_RU.pdf)], 27 June, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> See: *Foreign Policy Concept for 2014-2020 Republic of Kazakhstan: Approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 21 January, 2014, No. 741*, Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Kazakhstan, available at [<http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/kontsepsiya-vneshnoj-politiki-rk-na-2014-2020-gg>].

<sup>37</sup> See: T.T. Shaimergenov, M.A. Abisheva, *Tsentralnaia Azia 2027: meniaiushchiisia strategicheskii landshaft. Veroiatnye stsennari na desiat let vpered*, Biblioteka Pervogo Prezidenta RK, Elbasy, Astana, 2017.

## *Conclusions*

The current geopolitical situation is characterized by the intensification of international relations, where the sustainable development concept remains at the core. In the context of active innovative technological development and significant differences in countries' domestic and international policies, the need to establish an integrated interstate water policy becomes ever more poignant. The influence of political risks on water security, both domestic and international, is rationally grounded.

After examining the political accents in the transboundary water sphere we can state that water resources are used by states as conflict instruments. According to research, political motives and military expansion are at the foundation of water-related disputes, thus, ensuring fair and rational usage of water resources in Central Asia is a poignant issue in the context of the disintegrating environmental situation and fresh water deficit.

The data obtained objectively underscore the complexity of the interstate relations and its conflict-prone component. The dependence of Central Asian countries on the transboundary water resources of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers causes discord among them on the issue of the distribution of these resources. Since the countries of the region are incapable of regulating these conflicts independently, they pin their hopes on international intermediaries. Thus, the engagement of numerous external actors, who are pursuing their own geo-economic and geopolitical interests in the region, thus contributing to an even greater fragmentation of the region, can be considered a risk factor.

While the Republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which are located further upstream on the aforementioned rivers, want to use their hydropower potential by building hydropower plants, the countries further downstream, such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, object to such attempts due to their need for water for irrigation purposes. In addition, the Rogun dam construction that has a great impact on the relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan may lead to a military conflict due to a strong protest on the part of the latter.

We have to mention that at this stage, Uzbekistan's aim is to raise the regional interaction to a new level, since the future of this republic depends primarily on water, as well as on a balanced domestic and foreign policy. In the future, Tajikistan should alter its state development strategies, which are now apparently leaning towards the development of the regional hydropower industry rather than the ecological potential and international cooperation. The Republic of Kazakhstan as a mediator state should prevent the intensification of conflicts and contradictions between water consumers, including the aggravation of international water relations in transboundary basins, by correcting the water usage volumes and structure.

Despite significant progress, many problems remain unresolved. The main sign of the resolution of negative situations is the efficiency of measures taken, which is precisely why the elimination of consequences and prevention of emerging risks require a complex political approach and international collaboration. Establishing an integrated international water usage regime for Amu Darya and Syr Darya transboundary water resources is especially relevant. Thus, this would be a proper, if fragmentary, resolution of one problem, rather than continued futile attempts to encompass all of the disputed issues of the water sector.

In addition, it would be reasonable to conclude an integrated water interstate agreement, which would provide a fundamental basis on the path of forming a sustainable water policy for Central Asian countries. All of the above allows us to conclude that the most promising development scenario involves the formation of a newly formed independent organization similar to the Visegrád Four, capable of undertaking long-term obligations in regard to numerous transboundary issues, including in

the sphere of ensuring water security. The prospects of evolution of water-related collaboration and the need to integrate Central Asian countries may become the global-scale driving force in the sphere of ensuring water security, as well as establish a tendency towards a more multifarious international environmental collaboration.

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