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AZIZ NIYAZI. UZBEKISTAN: PROBLEMS OF CURRENT MODERNIZATION OF WATER MANAGEMENT AND AGRICULTURE

Keywords: Central Asia; Uzbekistan; Water management; agriculture; water and land resources; climate change; social and environmental crisis; conflicts.

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Abstract. The situation with a shortage of water and land resources in Uzbekistan cannot be called critical, but it is close to it. Given the growing shortage of water and fertile land in the republic, quite effective measures are being implemented and planned to save them. They are commensurate with the capabilities of the state. The safety margin from the inevitable impact of negative natural phenomena related to climate change is built in. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how the growth of water and farmland shortages can be stopped on its own together with increasing consumption and turnout against the background of high fertility rates and unresolved water and land problems with neighbors. However, such a puzzle faces all the states of Central Asia.

Uzbekistan was the first in the CA region which seriously undertook the implementation of technologies to adapt to climate change impacts, accumulating its own funds for this and attracting international financial and technical assistance. It managed to consolidate leadership among CA states in the planning and implementation of projects on the rational use of water and land resources, which will help in the future in adapting to future climate changes. However, this is only a tactic of an individual country in the absence of a common regional strategy. Given the uncertainties associated with regional integration and climate variability in the long term, it is now difficult to provide an answer how Uzbekistan will be able to solve the problem of water and food security in the future. Without the development of a common water and energy policy, Central African countries can face challenges, up to severe social upheavals, internal and interstate conflicts.

Recently, the water and land problem in Uzbekistan has noticeably worsened. Since the Soviet period, it has been of complex nature. The growing scarcity of water and land

resources is caused primarily by enormous extension costs in the irrigation system, the preservation of environmentally harmful technologies in agriculture, and growing industrial and demographic pressures on the environment. With the transition to capitalist development, starting in the 90s, the influence of these factors only increased. At the same time, the increase of serious problems in the water management and agriculture of the republic was boosted by the accelerating climatic changes that have been taking place recently throughout Central Asia.

For decades, about 90 percent of the water consumed in Uzbekistan has accrued to irrigated agriculture. According to the Ministry of Water Management of the Republic in 2020, irrigated agriculture, as before, took 90 percent of the total amount of water consumed by all sectors of the economy [1]. At the same time, extremely wasteful irrigation technologies lead not only to huge unproductive water losses, but also to soil degradation – their salinification and erosion. Land degrades due to excessive watering and flooding of fields or the long-term absence of their reclamation. Due to the deterioration of land-reclamation and irrigation networks, the lack of proper accounting for water consumption, the shortage of water in irrigated areas increases from year after year.

It is officially recognized that the service life of most water infrastructure facilities exceeds 50–60 years, and their technical condition is constantly deteriorating. In particular, 66 percent of the channels of the irrigation system have a land canal, the loss of water in them due to filtration remains high. 77 percent of the irrigation system channels require repair and restoration, 20 percent – reconstruction. Most of the existing tray networks have been serving for more than 30 years, due to the failure of carrying out repairs at proper time and the expiration of their service life, 70 percent of them require replacement or reconstruction. In most cases, water withdrawal points are not equipped with water control and accounting device. The efficiency of the irrigation system and irrigation networks is on

average 0.63 (with a standard of 0.7), in some regions - lower than this indicator [2].

Return water from irrigation is an important component of water resources, since more than half of their volume again enters rivers. According to estimates by Uzbek experts, the total volume of return water is about 35 km³ per year, of which 65 percent is in the Syr Darya river basin and 35 percent in Amu Darya, due to large filtration losses from canals and irrigation fields. In addition, the quality of return waters poses a serious threat to water resources and terrestrial ecosystems. In general, 35–40 percent of the water produced from the main water sources is lost in irrigation networks.

Destruction of collector and drainage networks, non-standardized irrigation lead to raising of underground water and salinification of land. Along with this, soil degradation is often associated with the lack of the necessary crop rotation and optimal fall plowing. Non-compliance with crop requirements and uncontrolled use of fertilizers lead to non-compliance of soil and environmental conditions.

Erosion processes are widespread in most of Uzbekistan. They continue to develop, which is one of the characteristics of ecosystem susceptibility to desertification. Thus, out of 27 million hectares of land, 25 million hectares (92.6 percent) are subject to erosion to varying degrees, 2.7 million hectares out of 3.8 million hectares are subject to erosion in the irrigation zone. Water erosion is developed on an area of more than 1 million hectares of croplands, more than 50 percent of irrigated land is subject to secondary salinization, their meliorative state is deteriorating. 45.3 percent of the irrigated lands of the republic have different degrees of salinization, of which: 2 percent are highly salinized, 12.2 percent are medium salinized, 31.1 percent are slightly salinized. The area of irrigated land, groundwater level of which is up to 0 to 2 meters below the surface, is about 30 percent. Although the State programmes recently have improved the land meliorative state of some 1.7 million hectares, the level of water

supply remains low for 560 thousand hectares and 298.5 thousand hectares were cycled out. The area of irrigated land in the country is approximately 4.3 million hectares [3], and the question of its conservation along with the rational use of water resources is becoming very urgent. Some progress has been made in this regard. According to the Ministry of Water Industry of Uzbekistan, the amount of water consumed per 1 hectare in 1991 was 18 thousand cubic meters, and in 2019 it was used much less – 10.2 thousand cubic meters per 1 hectare. During 2008–2017 there was improved water supply to more than 1.7 million hectares of irrigated areas, and land ameliorative state of 2.5 million hectares [4]. Advanced irrigation technologies are being introduced progressively, for example, dribble irrigation from 2013 to 2019 was introduced on 77440 hectares [5]. In 2020, water-saving technologies were introduced on an additional area of 133 thousand hectares [6]. According to the forecast for 2021, they should be placed on an area of 430,000 hectares, of which dribble irrigation for 210,739 hectares [7]. Nevertheless, such positive dynamics is difficult to call pivotal, in general the situation remains alarming.

It is true that Uzbekistan has made serious efforts in the present period to preserve and manage water and land resources. In the last 2 years, some cardinal measures have begun to be implemented in the republic to modernize water and agriculture simultaneously. In fact, reforms are being carried out to shift these sectors of the economy to market rails gradually.

The system of water and agriculture management established in the country in the post-Soviet period is not effective. Its functions are dispersed across many departments, coordination between them is weak, often they duplicate each other's work. The material and technical base of organizations responsible for the conservation of water and land resources is still financed mainly from the state budget and remains low. The widespread adoption of water-saving technologies is held by an inefficient system for meeting the expenses of water supply in agriculture. The

management of water supply in the agricultural sector, as well as in all agriculture as a whole, is still dominated by non-market methods.

In order to reduce losses in water and agriculture, the country has taken a course towards a gradual transition from the use of administrative methods of government regulation in these areas to the expansion of market mechanisms. Public-private partnership is developing in agro-production and water economy. The reform of water resources management provides for the expansion of the share of non-state financing of the sector through a phased transition to payment for water delivery services, the transfer of economic functions for the management of inter-farm infrastructure to outsourcing to non-state entities. The increase in financing in this sector is due to the attraction of private investment, including foreign, as well as loans and grants from international financial institutions and foreign countries.

In this regard, the number of associations of water consumers (WCA) operating at the grassroots level is likely to decrease. They were created to assist State organizations in implementing water resources management activities. They fulfill this function poorly. In addition, they have not become stable structures of self-government of water consumers. First of all, the reason for this situation lies in the low level of fees associated with their poor-quality services. Between farmers and peasants, on the one hand, and associations, on the other, conflicts often arise due to improper accounting of water consumption at the border of water users.

It is considered that the functions of proper maintenance of irrigation systems and the introduction of advanced water-saving technologies can be more effectively carried out by the recent active agricultural clusters [8]. Clusters of different directions are formed in Uzbekistan: grain, meat and dairy, fruit and vegetable, horticultural, seed-growing, but the largest of them are cotton and textile ones. They have extensive investment opportunities to introduce advanced technologies, including in water use [9].

There are about 120 cotton-textile clusters in the republic [10]. Despite the fact that in their fields there is yield enhancement, it remains unclear how carefully they use water and land resources. So far, such data have not been released. It is clear that in order to increase profits, large private companies can violate water and land use standards. In addition, there are fears that they will supplant and absorb farm enterprises.

Since 2020, a state order for cotton purchases has been canceled in Uzbekistan. Its procurements are made at a market price. The forced system for cotton crop was also canceled. Since 2021, the state order for wheat cultivation has been canceled. The agricultural financing system is renegotiated. The task of non-interference of the state in pricing in this sector of the economy is set.

It is planned to increase significantly government spending on the modernization and construction of water facilities, scientific research, development, introduction of advanced water-saving technologies and training of highly qualified specialists. There is an ambitious goal to create an integrated management of water resources with full coverage of their use, consumption and distribution between the water supply of the population, sectors of the economy and the natural environment [11]. Domestic capacity to modernize water and agriculture is supported by serious investment not only by the state, but also by private capital.

Expensive, resource-intensive and technologically difficult modernization projects in water and agriculture cannot be realized without attracting foreign assistance. For their implementation, close cooperation of national research institutes with foreign and international research organizations is established. Leading foreign companies are preparing national personnel. Highly qualified foreign scientists and engineering specialists are invited to ministries and departments. The aim is to accelerate the attraction of grant funds, loans and technical assistance from international financial institutions and foreign countries. Uzbekistan has already been noticeably successful in this direction. In general, more than \$3.5 billion in investments,

loans and grants were attracted to agriculture together with water management projects [12].

An analysis of the measures taken and planned until 2030 to save water and modernize agriculture shows that the country can achieve the goals on time. Nevertheless, own efforts of the republic will not solve the problem of its water and, accordingly, food security. There remains a risk of severe water shortages in the future. Serious risks are associated with misregulating of transboundary water use amid climate change [13]. Downstream countries use water primarily for land irrigation and need maximum water flow during summer, while headwater countries are interested in maximum water discharge during the energy-deficient winter in order to increase electricity production. In this situation, water shortage for irrigation has increased, especially in the systematically frequent low-water years and periods of drought. In winter, excessive discharge of water from the upper reservoirs began to lead to flooding of territories in the lower reaches.

Nodal difficulties in meeting the demand from competing CA countries for water supply remain. In order to overcome them stepwise, the Uzbek side has put forward a number of measures aimed at implementing inter-State cooperation in the use of transboundary water resources. So far, it's not a case of creating a single supranational body for managing the water and energy resources of CA, but about developing and applying principles and mechanisms for the integrated management of transboundary rivers, finding compromise solutions for upstream and downstream water users. Uzbekistan's activity in this direction has recently increased significantly and its position is likely to have an increasingly great impact on the division of transboundary waters and their rational use.

The issue of unified integrated water resources management in the region remains open. Its relevance increases as the impact of climate change increases. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan is becoming a regional leader in solving problems of water use taking into account the climate factor. It demonstrates a serious

desire to adapt agriculture and water management to the upcoming abnormal natural and climatic stresses. Strategic government documents related to environmental protection and water and land management now obligingly include sections on changing climate impacts. In Central Asia, by all appearances, it's beginning to take on menacing proportions. The average annual temperature here has grown by about one degree over the past 30 years. For comparison – about the same – 1.1°C the average annual warming rate throughout the Earth [14] increased from the pre-industrial period to the present day. If over the past decade (2010–2019) the average ground temperature of our planet grew at a rate of 0.2°C , then in Uzbekistan its average growth rate for this period amounted to 0.29°C , which significantly exceeded the global average. Intense warming is observed throughout the country. This trend is expected to continue both in Central Asia and in the world as a whole, due to record high levels of heat retention in the greenhouse gas atmosphere [15].

The Central Asian region belongs to a group of territories with a high vulnerability to climate changes impacts. Warming here is accompanied by the accelerated melting of mountain glaciers and snow patches, which feed most rivers and reservoirs [16]. The number and intensity of abnormal weather events and natural disasters, including droughts, heat waves, floods and mudslides, and incessant showers, are increasing. In 2021, Central Asia experienced a significant increase in temperature. In some areas of Uzbekistan, starting in June, the air warmed to 44°C , in neighboring Tajikistan to 48°C . Many regions of Central Asia were affected by drought, which led to large-scale crop failures, cattle loss, low water supply of rivers, and drying up of reservoirs. Experts relate the lack of water to insufficient snowiness in winter and increased evaporation of water in summer. Certainly, the remaining huge water losses during irrigation are taken into account.

According to World Bank experts, abnormal weather events in Central Asia are becoming the norm and will increase from

year to year. In the coming decades, average temperatures in the Central Asian region may rise by 3–5°C, which will lead to the disappearance of more than a third of mountain glaciers by 2050. In turn, this will cause flash floods, avalanches and mudflows. Rising temperatures will adversely affect agriculture, and reducing river water content will affect hydropower. According to a critical version of forecasts based on different climate change models, the two main water arteries of CA – the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers – can shallow by 10–15 percent by 2030. In the long term (2050–2100) the flow of Amu Darya can be reduced from 21 to 40 percent, and Syr Darya – from 15 percent to 30 percent, which can in the future lead to an environmental and humanitarian disaster [17]. Now, Central Asia is facing a very significant reduction in water resources. Over the past decades, the per capita volume of water resources has decreased fourfold – from 8.4 thousand cubic meters in 1960 to 2.1 thousand cubic meters to date. By 2040, this figure may reach a critical line – 1 thousand cubic meters per capita [18].

In Uzbekistan, the per capita water supply has decreased from 3,048 cubic meters to 1,589 cubic meters over the past 15 years. In the period until 2015, the total water deficit in the republic amounted to more than 3 billion cubic meters. According to the calculations of Uzbek specialists, by 2030 it can amount to 7 billion cubic meters, and by 2050 – 15 billion cubic meters [19].

The situation with a lack of water resources in Uzbekistan cannot be called critical, but it is close to it. In the ranking of countries experiencing water stress conducted by the Institute of World Resources (WRI, Washington), the Republic of Uzbekistan is located in a group of states with a high level of basic water load. It means that, on average, more than 40 per cent of available water is spent annually on agriculture, domestic consumption and industry. Various districts of the country experience extremely high water stress. In Bukhara, Samarkand, Ferghana, Navoi, Jizzak and Kashkadarya regions, more than 80 percent of water is taken from all available reserves [20]. This tense balance

between the availability of water resources and their consumption poses a risk of acute water shortages in the future.

At the same time, the land problem is aggravating. In the republic, the demographic and economic burden on agricultural land is gradually increasing. Over the past 15 years, the area of farmland has decreased by more than 5 percent, and per capita – by 22 percent. Population growth is far ahead of the increase in irrigated land. Over the past 30 years, the area of irrigated land per capita has decreased by about 25 percent, from 0.23 hectares to 0.16 hectares. According to estimates of the Asian Development Bank, while maintaining existing trends, the area of irrigated land in Uzbekistan will decrease by 20–25 percent over the next 30 years [21].

Given the growing shortage of water and land resources, Uzbekistan is taking and planning to implement quite effective measures to save them. They are commensurate with its capabilities. The safety margin from the imminent impact of negative natural phenomena is laid. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how it is possible to stop the growth of water scarcity and fertile soil on its own, while increasing consumption and flow of output against the background of high fertility rates and unresolved water and land problems with neighbors. However, such a puzzle faces all the states of Central Asia.

The shortage of vital natural resources is growing steadily throughout Central Asia. Their increasing scarcity leads to the accumulation of dangerous socio-environmental shifts, creating new points of tension both within countries and among states. At the same time, old unresolved problems of boundaries division, lands and water sources remain. Unlike its neighbors, Uzbekistan was the first in the CA region to take up seriously the introduction of technologies for adapting to climate change impacts, accumulates its own funds for this and succeeds in attracting international financial, technical and scientific assistance. Recently, it has managed to consolidate leadership among CA states in the planning and implementation of projects on the rational use of water and land resources. With the rational

use of its own and foreign funds, the republic is able to fulfill the tasks set for water conservation and land reclamation in the target date (until 2030). Advanced technologies in irrigated agriculture will undoubtedly help in adapting Uzbekistan to future climate changes. But this is only a tactic of an individual country in the absence of a common regional strategy. Given the uncertainties associated with regional integration and climate variability in the long term, it is now difficult to answer to what extent Uzbekistan will be able to solve the problem of water supply and food security in the future. Without the development of a common water and energy policy, the Central Asian states are waiting for great trials, possibly up to severe social upheavals, serious internal and interstate conflicts.

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13. In Uzbekistan, transboundary rivers account for approximately 80 percent of total water consumption. Irrigation agriculture of the republic is extremely dependent on water lumps from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In Soviet times, the upper republics supplied water in the necessary periods for the lower agrarians and in return received hydrocarbon energy. The construction of

reservoirs and the generation of electricity were then planned along with the development of the agricultural sector throughout the region - the operation of hydroelectric power plants and reservoirs was commensurate with the irrigation regime. The unified water-energy system guaranteed the balanced economic development of all five Central Asian republics. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, it disappeared. Having gained independence, the Central Asian states began to solve their own economic problems in their discretion, based on the availability of resources. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which have scarce gas and oil deposits, relied on increasing hydropower capacity, which over time led to a change in the water balance at the regional level. The agreed regimes and values of water launches for countries located downstream of the watercourse - Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan - were violated.

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ELENA DMITRIEVA THE INFLUENCE OF THE TALIBAN COMING TO POWER IN AFGHANISTAN ON THE SITUATION IN THE REPUBLICS OF CENTRAL ASIA.
Condensed abstract.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Taliban movement, Central Asian republics, international community, Russia, geopolitics, ethnopolitical situation, international terrorist organizations.

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