



The framing of Water Security in Asia: a comparison of China and Central Asia

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The term water security constantly evolves. In different contexts, water is valued differently and the perception of water security is closely affected by local history, culture as well as the political systems where the agents are located. In Asia, water politics has been explored from a range of perspectives, reflecting the complicated discourses, processes and narratives when the global South respond to water-related challenges. Lacking of a coherent conceptual tool of water security, the region suffers mistrust among nations, along with misinterpretation of the water security situation in policy dialogues.

Because of its sheer size, China's commodities importation and especially food imports induced by water shortages can have a large impact on international markets. The Central government has constantly revised its water governance, with an intention to demonstrated that on a national scale, the overall volume of water supply from the country is sufficient to support its economic and industrial development. However, domestic water governance has shown its inefficiencies. Additionally, being the source of many international rivers, China's policies toward international river basins have also significantly impacted inter-state negotiation and the peacefully resolution of tensions over shared international river basins.

In Central Asia, after the dissolution of the Soviet regime, divergent views and perceptions exist on water security. Apart from attention for water allocation issues in the entire region, there has been an effort to reconsider the dimensions of water use and control in CA in order to protect and utilize water resources on national level. Different measurable indicators and indexes have been introduced to assess the most vulnerable or else insecure aspects of water use among the five Central Asian countries. However, the suggested approaches often represent these frameworks in a fragmented manner, lacking of a holistic evaluation of the understanding of the vulnerability status at a country or regional level.

We adopt the evaluation framework proposed in the Asian Water Development Outlook (AWDO) as the main platform to conduct our assessment. Namely, the five key dimensions on household, economic, urban, and environmental and resilience to water-disasters are accounted as the major parameters to evaluate the degree of vulnerability of water resources in Central Asia and China. With regard to method, data is sourced from literature review published between 1991-2019. Consistent data screening method will be applied to the case of China and Central Asia to understand the evolution of national water interest. The analysis will be based on the identification and evaluation of different indicators and attributes through coding and data classification approaches.

We conduct an extensive literature review on the approaches and methods that directly or indirectly touch upon the above-mentioned dimensions. The findings will fill a major gap on the perception of water security in Asia, where both differences and mutual understanding of water risks exist between China and the Central Asian countries. This work has significant policy implications. It'll contribute to a better understanding of water vulnerability in the region, which also contribute to policy dialogues.