

Foreword

Dr Kai Wegerich has built a prominent reputation in rural, irrigation and international studies in Central Asia. This book reflects the sound foundations built in Dr Kai Wegerich's earlier work.

The purpose of this book is to bring together a suite of studies that have illuminated the main features of the post 1990 political economy and political ecology of the Khorezm Province of Uzbekistan.

The first two case study chapters analyse the attempts to cope with disintegration of the complex former Soviet system which had integrated the management of water in Uzbekistan with that of neighbouring Aral Basin republics. This system also integrated the water sector with the energy sector, the agricultural sector and the economies of the Aral Sea states with the Soviet system more generally. The later case study chapters exemplify the role of meso level water bureaucracies, agricultural bureaucracy and state control as well as land reforms in Uzbekistan.

The main messages - conveyed very effectively - are that, first, the contested water resources are not being managed effectively. Agricultural water systems and the environmental services provided by water resources are being handled sub-optimally. Secondly, the attempts at institutional reform via Water users Associations and land reform have had very limited impacts. It is shown that embedded social networks and inherited systems of power relations have been able to capture both resources and processes. These social and political processes have often had negative impacts. Thirdly, the full agricultural potential of the land and water resources of many regions of Central Asia is not being realised. This outcome is a consequence of the absence of an effective international water management regime and presence of dysfunctional institutions at the local and national levels.

Each case study chapter has a relevant theoretical framework which enhances the communication of the individual and overall findings. Dr Kai Wegerich deploys theory from a number of social science disciplines. The theory is handled fluently and helps the reader to understand the complex political and social processes being analysed. The interdisciplinary approach to the topics has produced a coherent and authoritative analysis.

The book is of high quality. The description and analysis presented in it provide new perspectives on water management, water policy reform and land reform in Central Asia.

Professor Tony Allan

