

State Making and Environmental Cooperation

**Linking Domestic and
International Politics in
Central Asia**



Erika Weinthal

State Making and Environmental Cooperation

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Central Asia

Erika Weinthal

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State Making and Environmental Cooperation

1

The Aral Sea Crisis

You cannot fill the Aral with tears.

—Mukhammed Salikh, poet¹

Control over water is power in Central Asia.

—Yusup Kamalov, Director, Union for the Defense of the Aral Sea and Amu Darya²

The Sea Is Dying

Central Asia is an arid environment in which three-fourths of the land mass is desert. The majority of the population lives in rural areas, concentrated in the oasis regions along the two main rivers: the Amu Darya (previously known as the Oxus) and the Syr Darya (previously the Jaxartes). These rivers originate in the eastern mountains of Central Asia and then flow across the Kara Kum and Kyzyl Kum deserts before emptying into the Aral Sea, a large terminal lake in the midst of the desert. For centuries, the territory between the two rivers was coveted by both the British Empire and the Russian Empire because the Great Silk Road ran through it. As a result of the struggle to gain access to Central Asia, British and Russian explorers generated numerous reports detailing the physical characteristics of the water basin and the economic activities of the local populations. In his account of reaching the shores of the Aral Sea with the Imperial Russian Geographical Society in 1874, Major Herbert Wood (1876, p. 186) observed: “Quantities of fish of large size sport in these foaming waters, over whose troubled surface flights of gulls and other aquatic birds hover and circle in search of their prey.” In reference to the economic activity of the local population, Wood noted that “a great

number of Karakalpaks are fishermen, who take, in fixed nets, quantities of a large, coarse sturgeon, with which the waters of the Amu abound, and which, dried and salted, form the staple of a very brisk trade carried on by the boats of the Amu and its branches, for distribution among the nomads of the Khwarezmian deserts and the sedentary populations of Central Asia” (ibid., p. 192).

More than 100 years later, the picture along the shores of the Aral Sea differed remarkably from Major Wood’s description. While visiting the town of Muynak as the Soviet Union was collapsing, the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski (1994, pp. 261–262) captured the contrast:

It is a sad settlement—Muynak. It once lay in the spot where the beautiful, life-giving Amu Darya flowed into the Aral Sea, an extraordinary sea in the heart of a great desert. Today, there is neither river nor sea. In the town the vegetation has withered; the dogs have died. Half the residents have left, and those who stayed have nowhere to go. They do not work, for they are fishermen, and there are no fish. . . . If there is no strong wind, people sit on little benches, leaning against the shabby and crumbling walls of their decrepit houses. It is impossible to ascertain how they make a living. . . . They are Karakalpaks.

In only 30 years, the Karakalpaks have witnessed the drying up of the lake on which they had subsisted for decades. Although the Aral Sea was always saline, it supported a productive fishery. As the Soviet authorities withdrew water upstream for irrigation, the sea rapidly desiccated. With less water discharging into the Aral Sea, salinity increased from 10 grams per liter to more than 30 (Micklin 1992a).³ Many of the native fish were unable to adapt to the rising salinity. As a result, commercial fishing came to a halt in the early 1980s. In 1959, the fishing boats and trawlers that now reside in the sand of the exposed seabed hauled in nearly 50,000 metric tons of fish (mostly carp, bream, pike-perch, roach, barbel, and a local species of sturgeon), but by 1994 the few fishermen that remained retrieved a mere 5000 metric tons of carp.⁴ In order to keep the canneries operating and provide some form of economic sustenance for the affected local population, the authorities flew in fish from as far away as the Baltic Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

In short, under Soviet rule unprecedented amounts of water were diverted from the rivers to expand cotton monoculture and to reclaim new lands for agricultural production. These withdrawals for irrigation drastically altered the water balance in the Aral. The sea receded by 60–80

kilometers. Once the fourth largest lake in the world (behind the Caspian Sea, Lake Superior, and Lake Victoria), it shrunk to the sixth largest. In 1988 it bifurcated into a “small” sea in the north and a “large” sea in the south. Until 1960, about 55 cubic kilometers annually flowed into the sea. By the mid 1980s, the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya no longer emptied into the sea, which made commercial navigation practically impossible (Micklin 1992a; Micklin 1991).⁵ (See table 1.1.) Between 1974 and 1986 the Amu Darya did not flow into the sea, and between 1982

Table 1.1

Year inflow of water from Amu Darya and Syr Darya (km³). Source: Rakhimov 1990, p. 9.

1960	56.0
1961	39.9
1962	35.1
1963	40.6
1964	51.7
1965	29.9
1966	42.8
1967	37.5
1968	36.3
1969	80.6
1970	38.5
1971	23.5
1972	22.6
1973	42.5
1974	8.2
1975	10.1
1976	10.3
1977	7.2
1978	19.7
1979	12.5
1980	8.3
1981	6.0
1982	0
1983	0
1984	4.0
1985	0
1986	0

and 1986 the Syr Darya did not reach the sea. In contrast, in the late 1800s the Russian colonialists relied on the Amu Darya (the Oxus) for navigation, which enabled them to fortify their strategic hold on Central Asia (then referred to as Turkestan). Yet by 1991 sea level had fallen by about 15 meters, surface area had been reduced by half, and the volume had diminished by two-thirds. In actual numbers, this meant that in 1960 the average area of the sea was 66,900 square kilometers; in 1991 it was 33,800. The average volume had diminished from 1090 cubic kilometers in 1960 to 290 in 1991 (Micklin 1992a, p. 275).

The water crisis became more pronounced in the 1980s, coinciding with indications of a severe economic and political crisis of the Soviet regime. Soviet authorities were no longer able to dismiss earlier warnings from the scientific community regarding the economic, environmental, and health consequences of the rampant and indiscriminate use of water for irrigation compounded by inadequate drainage. First, the cotton industry was in dire straits, as water logging and salinization of the soil were causing agricultural yields to decline even though production quotas from Moscow were increasing. Second, the quality of water in the rivers had deteriorated severely—especially in the Amu Darya, where until the 1960s the water was of satisfactory quality. Historically, the Amu Darya was the source of irrigation and drinking water for the populations of Khorazm Oblast⁶ and Karakalpakstan. By the mid 1980s, the small amount they received was laden with agricultural runoff containing large amounts of pesticides and herbicides, rendering it unfit for human consumption. Third, the desiccation of the sea led to a sharp upsurge in dust storms containing the toxic salt residue from the exposed seabed, and in place of the sea a new desert, referred to as the Akkumy (white sands), began to emerge (Smith 1994).⁷ Finally, the downstream populations were unequivocally confronting a public health crisis as a result of the dust and salt storms and the contamination of the drinking water. Compounding the lack of potable water in the Aral delta, poor health conditions, inadequate diet, and high birth rates raised the rate of infant mortality to 75 per 1000 in Dashhowuz Oblast in Turkmenistan in 1988 and to 60 per 1000 in Karakalpakstan in 1989 (Micklin 1992b, p. 103).⁸ In addition, there were numerous accounts of respiratory illness, esopha-

geal cancers, typhoid, paratyphoid, and hepatitis among the populations bordering the Aral Sea (Carley 1989; Elpiner 1999).

The Russian geographer Arkady Levintanus (1992, p. 85) notes that “the desiccation of the Aral Sea is rightfully listed now amongst the worst ecological disasters of the twentieth century.” For many, the desiccation of the Aral Sea ranks with the meltdown at Chernobyl as one of the worst examples of the Soviet Union’s environmental legacy of utter wastefulness and unaccountability for human life (Ananyev 1989, p. 14). It is no wonder that, by the end of the Soviet period, the Soviet leadership was left with little choice but to officially designate the Aral Sea region a “zone of ecological catastrophe.” The immediate cause of the water crisis was inefficient irrigation; however, the root causes of the Aral disaster were much deeper. Some suggest the underlying factors are related to the inappropriate strategy of economic development in Central Asia wherein Soviet planners emphasized agricultural raw products (primarily cotton, a water-intensive crop) rather than finished products or other traditional crops (Levintanus 1992; Rumer 1989). The Soviet economic system treated human beings and the environment as expendable for the sake of “progress.” Preference was given to industrialization (and to heavy rather than light industry), mechanization, and economic specialization; as a result, the authorities blatantly ignored environmental protection and health and safety issues so that they could increase production in order to meet higher annual targets. The price was steep for diverting water to promote cotton monoculture. Indeed, the socio-economic choices made during the Soviet period succeeded in destroying a whole people’s culture and livelihood, namely that of the Karakalpakhs. In Karakalpakstan there is such a sense of hopelessness and fatigue among the population that when glasses are raised in honor of a foreign guest the locals regularly toast their “environmental poverty.”⁹ In like manner, Tulebergen Kaipbergenov (a well-known writer from Nukus, Karakalpakstan) recalls:

Now [Nukus] is a city filled with dust blowing about. But I remember very well how different it was. The air was different, the color was different, and life was different. Then practically, all the roads led to the Amu Darya, on which our city stood. . . . It was like that not very long ago. Thirty years ago, even less. And nothing from that remains today. A fishing village is in the past. The pier is in

the past. . . . The last time the Amu Darya or the *Zbeihun* (the Furious River, as it was called in the past) inundated these places was in 1968. In 1971, the water already stood motionless. . . . An ecological catastrophe occurred and today continues along the Aral. . . . There are victims; there are people who for their whole lives are crippled.¹⁰

Internationalizing the Aral Sea Crisis

The breakup of the Soviet Union transformed a domestic water crisis into one of international relations for the newly independent Central Asian states. For the first time since the wave of decolonization in the 1960s, a major river system has undergone a process of political reorganization. The rivers that constitute the Aral basin became international rivers overnight. The Amu Darya extends across three new states (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan), and the Syr Darya flows among four new states (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan).¹¹ Although rivers physically unite their users, politically they demarcate borders. Accordingly, the introduction of new political borders had an immediate impact on the social, economic, and political relations of the 35 million persons living within the Aral basin. For downstream populations, such as the Karakalpaks, it became uncertain who now had the authority and the capacity to address the past ills caused by indiscriminate use of water for irrigation that had resulted in the “death” of the Aral Sea. Would Moscow follow through on the Soviet Union’s commitment to help the Central Asian republics restore the Aral Sea, or would the newly independent Central Asian states have to figure out an appropriate solution to the water crisis alone?

The new Central Asian states are similar to other developing countries in that water demands are increasing rapidly as a result of high rates of population growth and an economy based on agricultural production. Without additional sources of water, the Central Asian successor states will not meet the basic needs of their populations in the twenty-first century. For economic and ecological reasons, cooperation is crucial for states that share an international river system. Sandra Postel of the Worldwatch Institute points out that cooperation is “essential not only to avert conflict but to protect the natural systems that underpin regional

economies” (Postel 1996, p. 42). To prevent discord over water allocations and water quality, the Central Asian successor states must sustain cooperation while adapting politically to a new state system and physically to an international river system. Yet, with the breakup of the Soviet Union, cooperation over joint fresh-water resources in the Aral basin is no longer just a technical problem; it is now also a political one that ultimately links issues of environmental scarcity and degradation with the political, economic, and social challenges inherent in the transition from communist rule.

Conflict or Cooperation in the Aral Basin?

Owing to the imminent need to find a solution to the Aral Sea crisis, scholars and policy makers in and outside the region assumed that the unsettling of political and physical borders would intensify violent conflict and competition over land and water resources in Central Asia rather than engender the political conditions necessary for cooperation to take hold. The geographer David Smith (1995, p. 351) alleged that, since political borders no longer corresponded to the physical borders of the river system but now divided them, “nowhere in the world is the potential for conflict over the use of natural resources as strong as in Central Asia.” Sergei Panarin of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow conjectured that “the extreme shortage of water for irrigation is bound to bring to the fore, in an acute form, the issue of national control over water sources” (1994, p. 87). The World Bank concluded in a preliminary report (1993a, p. iv) that “in a region in which water is life and virtually nothing can grow without irrigation, the competition for water will be acute.” Moreover, Ze’ev Wolfson, a specialist on Soviet environmental issues, purported that “with a tangle of economic and social problems against a backdrop of a depletion of such basic resources as water and fertile land, one must expect a further increase in political instability and conflicts throughout the entire area of Central Asia” (1990, p. 45).

The aforementioned predictions that conflict would ensue in the post-Soviet period were predicated on the upsurge in ethnic conflict in Central Asia that marked the last few years before the breakup of the Soviet

Union. For example, in June 1990 a violent conflict between two ethnic groups in Osh, the Kyrgyz¹² and the Uzbeks, claimed at least several hundred lives. During the previous year, Tajiks and Uzbeks quarreled over land and water rights in the Vakhsh Valley, deadly ethnic strife erupted between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks in the Fergana Valley, and Tajiks and Kyrgyz fought over land and water rights in the Isfara-Batken district along the border of their republics. In all these instances, the social unrest was due to shortages of land and water.

Yet acute conflicts over water resources did not arise after independence. In fact, the Central Asian successor states embarked on a path of cooperation. State breakup and the subsequent political demarcation of the water system created unforeseen possibilities for the Central Asian states (which for all intents and purposes resemble developing countries) to engage in coordinated efforts to mitigate threats from their ethnic and environmental legacies. The need for collective action to resolve the Aral Sea tragedy resonated with the Central Asian leadership. In a speech on the status of the Aral Sea, President Karimov of Uzbekistan said: "The problem is that our destiny was controlled by others. Now the time has come to take a serious approach to the task. . . . The fate [of the Aral] is inseparably linked with that of the independent states of Turkestan as a whole. . . . Therefore, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan must create a single powerful international organization to solve the problems."¹³

On February 18, 1992, shortly after gaining independence, the Central Asian states signed the first of several interstate agreements regarding cooperation in the management, utilization, and protection of the interstate water resources of the Aral basin. In March 1993, in Qyzlorda, Kazakhstan, the heads of state signed an intergovernmental agreement on solving the problems of the basin. In January 1994 they approved an action plan for addressing the basin's dire situation and for broader social and economic development in the basin. In the autumn of 1996 they renewed their commitment to water sharing, signing the Nukus Declaration to strengthen the nascent international institutions for joint water management of the rivers. In March 1998 the Prime Ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan endorsed a limited water sharing agreement over the Syr Darya.

Environmental Cooperation among Transitional States

The purpose of this book is to explain why rapid regional environmental cooperation emerged where we would least expect to find it—between new states with a history of ethnic tension and over an international river system—and what form that cooperation took. The regional environmental cooperation that ensued in the Aral basin contrasts with the historical record, in which cooperative agreements over international river systems prevail more often in the developed industrialized countries than in developing countries (LeMarquand 1977). The unsettling of both political and physical borders and the creation of new states in the Aral basin raises the following questions: Broadly, how do new states embark on regional cooperation during periods of transformation? Why will new states agree to build interstate institutions before they have reconfigured domestic state institutions? How do new (and moreover transitional) states with weak institutional capacity deal with complex political and environmental problems? Under what conditions are these states able to negotiate institutional arrangements to overcome collective action problems in situations where the incentive structure precludes cooperation? Even if states succeed in cooperating over their shared water resources, will this form of cooperation be sufficient to improve the environmental situation?

Simply put, the Central Asian states must simultaneously engage in regional environmental cooperation at the international level and in state building at the domestic level. These are concurrent processes generated by the unsettling of physical and political borders. The puzzle presented by environmental cooperation among transitional states thus demands an integrative approach that connects domestic and international politics. In chapter 3, to explain interstate cooperation over the Aral basin, I develop an approach to two-level institution building that links environmental cooperation at the international level to state building at the domestic level.

Conventional approaches that are based on two-level games perceive states to be the main actors (Putnam 1988). My approach perceives international organizations (IOs), bilateral aid organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as the primary actors. At one table,

these organizations must negotiate with the Central Asian governments to reach an international agreement on water sharing; at the other table, they must negotiate with the local communities hardest hit by the transitional period. Even though the overarching objective for these third-party actors or what can be considered transnational actors is to foster interstate cooperation in the Aral basin, they are entangled in the domestic game of state making in which side payments¹⁴ are dispensed as inducements for regional cooperation that in turn are used by government elites to compensate key domestic constituencies that could undermine an agreement or threaten the government's hold on political and social stability. Thus, at the interstate level, side payments from third-party actors induce regional cooperation; at the domestic level, the introduction of side payments affects the structure of state formation.

With the end of the Cold War, the number of IOs and NGOs has increased tremendously. Similarly, the nature and the scope of their activity have broadened, making it necessary to investigate the precise role they play in world politics and the extent to which they have an impact on global issues and on the internal functions of states (Mathews 1997). The emerging literature on the internationalization of environmental protection (Keohane and Levy 1996; Schreurs and Economy 1997; Darst 2001) has helped to specify the growing influence of non-state actors such as IOs, NGOs, and multinational corporations in bringing about cooperation and collective action. Here, non-state actors define environmental issues, place them on the policy agenda, heighten awareness, mobilize domestic actors to push their governments to take action, and participate in monitoring and implementation (Kamieniecki 1993; Princen and Finger 1994; Porter and Brown 1991; Zürn 1998). Yet a smaller collection of researchers interested in the "pathologies" and/or the "perverse effects" of IOs and NGOs have also begun to focus on how third-party actors shape the internal functions of states or even relieve the state of its internal functions (Barnett and Finnemore 1999).¹⁵ In Central Asia, IOs, bilateral development agencies, and NGOs assume this dual and sometimes contradictory role, in which they affect both interstate cooperation and state building through side payments.

This intervention in the internal affairs of new states creates a dilemma for IOs and NGOs. On the one hand, they help to maintain stability

during this period of transformation and domestic flux in Central Asia; on the other hand, these sources of assistance allow corrupt members of the nomenklatura¹⁶ to remain in place. In new states with weak domestic administrative structures, regional leaders can rely on previous institutional structures to secure domestic support and, as a result, can continue to appease local groups instead of building new national constituencies. As it turns out, in Central Asia the inchoate nature of domestic institutional structures permits national and regional elites to advance the short-term interests of their local constituencies in exchange for short-term payoffs of political and social stability.

Despite this paradox, without an overtly active role for IOs, bilateral aid organizations, and NGOs the Central Asian states may not have immediately established new institutions for regional cooperation; rather, other outcomes of discord or non-institutionalization may have transpired. IOs, bilateral aid organizations, and NGOs were able to replace the lost Soviet resource flows with alternative sources of financial and material assistance. Although these agreements may have mitigated violent ethnic conflict over scarce natural resources in the post-Soviet period, they certainly have not helped the Central Asian states to mitigate environmental degradation. The form of cooperation that has emerged in the Aral basin has reinforced social and political control rather than producing meaningful environmental protection.

Thus, in addition to focusing on how the active and purposive role for IOs, bilateral aid organizations, and NGOs has influenced whether or not the Central Asian states were able to cooperate, this book investigates the form that cooperation has and has not taken. Why were the institutions designed not the most environmentally efficient, even though they were the most politically efficient? In order to explicate why these new interstate institutions were unable to deal with the roots of the Aral Sea tragedy, in chapters 4 and 7 I explore the political and social remnants of the Soviet legacy of cotton monoculture, which continued to constrain Central Asian state building and regional environmental cooperation. Even when state breakup disrupted previous patterns of traditional rule based on patronage, the legacy of cotton monoculture enabled national and regional elites to maintain a strong hold on state power and social control in the Aral basin. By providing for a system for social control,

cotton monoculture managed to impede any radical measures to effectively address the Aral Sea crisis; in fact, they directly influenced the process of state building. Similarly, the importance of the cotton sector as a source of foreign revenue has impeded attempts to reform agriculture and place it on the institutional agenda for those devising interstate institutions for the Aral basin. As a result, cooperation in Central Asia has been more about producing security regimes than about producing environmental-protection regimes.

The Nature of Transitional States

A central tenet of this work is that not all states possess the same capacity to deal with similar environmental problems. Developing countries, in particular, are worse at autonomously mitigating environmental problems in view of their lack of basic domestic capabilities. Conclusions generated by a research program on the linkages between environmental scarcity and acute conflict find that most scarcity-induced conflicts will be between states and will take place in the developing world (Homer-Dixon 1994, p. 19). Specific case studies and large-scale statistical studies have shown that it is often in developing countries where environmental factors are most likely to contribute to state failure and to increase the potential for internal conflict (owing to the weak ability of political and social institutions to absorb new stresses).¹⁷

Goldstone (1996, p. 70) has argued that in the field of environmental security what is needed is “better research on *what kinds of states* are likely to experience increased risks of failure due to population and environmental changes.” Thus, in order to discern why cooperation may or may not emerge over an environmental issue and/or why the environment may or may not be a source of political instability and conflict, it is essential to adhere to such advice and to redirect the research agenda toward a focus on the kinds of states involved. By emphasizing the nature of states, this book contributes to mid-level theory building in the field of environmental politics, which in turn will help scholars and policy makers to predict better why environmental institutions may or may not meet the goals set by their designers.¹⁸ With this in mind, we may then be able to design better strategies to counter environmental and physical changes

in scarce resource systems and to prevent conflicts over resources. The case of the Aral basin presents scholars and policy makers with such a challenge, especially since finding a solution to the problem entails neither developed or developing states but rather post-communist states.

First, post-communist states are transitional states distinguished by their movement away from communism. In this context, the endpoint of the transition remains evasive—that is, it is not clear whether they will eventually become democracies. The Soviet system set out to integrate different societies and economies through centralization and hierarchy, but the post-Soviet period is defined by the dismemberment of their state socialist past. As part of the process of breaking ties to the past system of state socialism, these states must build political and economic institutions at the same time that they must reshape the national identity of the population. Indeed, when considering the economic and political transformations away from state socialism, we should not have expected the post-communist states to be better endowed to ameliorate resource scarcity and environmental degradation, insofar as they are poor and weakly institutionalized. Moreover, in the first few years after independence, the Central Asian states experienced, to varying degrees, periods of hyperinflation, rising unemployment, civil war, infrastructure collapse, pervasive corruption, deteriorating medical care, and declining living standards.

Second, with the end of the Cold War the post-communist states entered an international system dominated by a liberal economic order. The “triumph” of the free market and the absence of political, economic, and ideological alternatives to capitalist democracy gave the successor states of the Soviet Union and East Central Europe no choice but to embark on transitions toward a Western model.¹⁹ As a consequence, the terms “democratization” and “marketization” cloak the transitions as these new states hope to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe or (more important) to acquire coveted financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. To meet the conditions set by Western IOs and bilateral aid organizations in order to receive aid, post-communist states are forced to hold elections even before domestic political parties and institutions are firmly established and to undertake economic austerity programs, which can result in greater income

inequalities, higher unemployment, and rising local commodity prices. The Central Asian states have not been immune from these external pressures, which have also influenced the form and the scope of environmental cooperation in the region.

Most studies of cooperation and discord have focused on settled states; the theoretical literature has had few opportunities to consider states under conditions of transformation. In contrast to settled states, the challenges posed by the economic, political, and social transformations in the post-communist states for regional environmental cooperation are daunting in view of how weakly institutionalized and how poor they are. Yet it is the weakness of domestic institutions that is pivotal for understanding the likelihood of regional environmental cooperation in transitional states. In short, I argue that environmental cooperation in the Aral basin is nested within state making in Central Asia, which demands a theoretical explanation that links domestic politics with international relations.

Bridging the Gap between Domestic and International Politics

The interconnectedness between institution building at both the international and the domestic level in transitional states challenges the conventional literature on world politics that restricts international institutions as a subject for international relations and state making as a problem for comparative politics, even though it is frequently acknowledged that each of these processes transcends disciplinary boundaries. The separation is attributed to the different questions each discipline seeks to answer. Scholars of international relations are primarily concerned with the causes of foreign-policy outcomes and the nature of international politics, whereas comparativists concentrate on variations among domestic structures and state institutions. Rather than converge at the nexus of domestic politics and international relations, scholars have preferred to test domestic-level theories against those at the international level. Interaction effects between the two levels are seldom taken into account. As a consequence, causal arrows flow unidirectionally, resulting in second-image and second-image reverse analyses, for example. Second-image arguments focus on domestic sources of international cooperation that are derived from society-centered approaches, state-centered approaches, or approaches that link

the state with society (Moravcsik 1993, p. 6). In contrast, second-image reverse arguments switch the causal arrows to explain domestic structure as a function of the international system such as a state's relative economic position in world markets (Gourevitch 1978).

Yet to understand cooperation problems for states under conditions of transformation we cannot restrict the analysis to either international causes or to domestic sources. Such reasoning from the international level to the domestic or from the domestic level to the international undermines the complex processes new states confront in periods of domestic transformation. Clearly, there is a need to fill this gap in the literature by connecting domestic processes with international ones.²⁰ One of the few attempts to merge domestic politics with international relations is through the development of two-level games in which domestic politics are an intricate part of international negotiations (Putnam 1988). Yet these approaches based on two-level games fail to include other actors that are not a constituent part of "the state" in the actual bargaining game.

Since the end of the Cold War, world politics is no longer just a game between states; it now entails multiple-level negotiations involving states, the international community, and domestic populations. Even in the case of the Aral Sea crisis, where the anthropogenic causes of the desiccation of the sea were well known, devising a solution required that international actors, national governments, and local populations participate in the process. By addressing two-level institution building, this book contributes to the broader theoretical literature on two-level games by highlighting the role that IOs, NGOs, and bilateral aid organizations assume in the negotiation process over new institutions for regional cooperation. By articulating the precise role that these third-party actors are playing at the level of regional cooperation and at the level of state building, my approach integrates domestic and international politics.

The Plan of the Book

Without being uncritically optimistic about the behavior of IOs and NGOs, I will analyze the mechanisms underlying their failures and their successes.

As this is a book about the politics of water, chapter 2 begins with the physical dimension of the Central Asian cooperation problem by depicting the various historical and topographical factors that influence governance over international river basins. In short, the physical makeup and the condition of a natural-resource system are the initial constraints on whether or not a resource becomes an issue of competition between users.

To establish the explicit cause-and-effect links of the general argument presented in chapter 3, I undertake an in-depth single-case study of the Aral basin. In chapters 4–6, I trace the process by which the international community influenced simultaneous institution building in the Aral basin at both the interstate and the domestic level through the use of side payments. In order to furnish empirical support for my argument, I draw on primary research I conducted in four Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. During the period 1992–1998, I visited the region seven times and interviewed approximately 150 local and foreign water, energy, and agricultural experts. These interviews included meetings with official government representatives, international donors, local NGOs, and farmers. The broad scope of the interviews was necessary in order to evaluate what role each actor at the local, the national, or the interstate level was playing in building new institutions at both the domestic and the interstate level. By going back and forth between these levels, I was able to confirm or disconfirm the validity of the different actors' claims regarding the role of the international donor community and its impact on institution building in Central Asia. In addition to interviews, I relied heavily on on-site investigations in order to discern the local-level effects of decisions made at the interstate level and, in turn, how local institutions shaped interstate relations. Stays on several collective and state farms (*kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes*) in Uzbekistan (especially in the Fergana Valley), in Kazakhstan (the Shymkent region), and in Turkmenistan (the Dashhowuz region) and data garnered from Central Asian governments and from international organizations helped me to substantiate the importance of cotton monoculture as a form of social and political control. I combined these interviews and on-site investigations with library and archival research to document how water-sharing practices had changed in response to different external

influences. Chapter 7 follows this presentation of the empirical data by looking at why certain institutions emerged and why others did not. In that chapter, I consider the different ways that the international community in conjunction with domestic actors could have constructed the Aral basin water game. I conclude with an examination of the unintended consequences of the role of the international community in Central Asia for environmental protection and for the early years of state building.

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