

Preface

Aysegül Kibaroglu and Ronald Jaubert

aysegul.kibaroglu@mef.edu.tr

Dept. of Political Science and International Relations, MEF University, Istanbul

ronald.jaubert@graduateinstitute.ch

Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

→ Kibaroglu, A., and R. Jaubert, "Preface", in *Water Resources Management in the Lower Asi-Orontes River Basin: Issues and Opportunities*, Geneva: Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies; Istanbul: MEF University, 2016, p. 5–6.

This book is a product of the International Workshop, "*Water Resources Management in the Asi-Orontes River Basin: Issues and Opportunities*," which was convened at MEF University in Istanbul in November 2014. The workshop was attended by a group of distinguished academics, experts, policy-makers, and practitioners. It was organized as part of a research program on the Orontes River basin led by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies with the support of the Global Program Water Initiatives of the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency. The program aims to analyze water management challenges and perspectives in the Asi-Orontes River basin and to establish a multidisciplinary scientific and technical network on water management including Lebanese, Syrian and Turkish organizations. The first phase of the program initiated in 2012 focused on upper and the middle reaches of the Asi-Orontes River basin. The second phase includes the lower reach of the basin largely located in the Hatay province in Turkey.

The Workshop participants have been acknowledged for their dedication to spend significant efforts to improve the living conditions of the people in the Asi basin on both sides of the political boundaries. It is hoped that the people in Turkey and Syria can have access to sufficient, clean drinking water; secure food through efficient and equitable agricultural and irrigation practices, as well as to operate industries and services in an efficient and environmentally-friendly manner.

The main focus of the book is the challenges and opportunities in water resources management in the Turkish section of the Asi River basin. As such, the contributions represent a coherent whole with components of many relevant aspects of water and land use, development and management in the lower Asi River basin. In this context, technical, social, economic, political and humanitarian issues in the Asi River basin are addressed at local, national, regional and international levels.

Contributors come from diverse backgrounds and different professions (academics, government officials, experts and practitioners), different disciplines (engineering, natural, applied, social sciences) and also different countries (Turkey, Syria, Switzerland, France, Germany). By benefitting from the expertise and the dedication of this colorful group of distinguished participants, the ultimate objective of the book is to produce a much-needed synthesis of academic works and technical studies that are conducted on the Asi River basin.

Part I of the book starts with the chapter by Ronald Jaubert and Myriam Saddé-Sbeih, which provides an overall analysis of the complexity and uncertainty of water management in the Orontes river basin. Ahmed Haj Assad and Omar Shamaly elaborate on population displacements, drinking water availability, collapse of drinking and agricultural water infrastructures, and decline of

agricultural production in the Orontes river basin in Syria under the current conditions of the ongoing civil war. The river basin is a key region in the conflict and it comprises some of the most conflict-affected urban and rural districts in the country.

Part II starts with the chapter by Ethemcan Turhan and Aysegül Kibaroglu on the political economy/political ecology of the Turkish section of Asi River basin with a focus on population, economy, governance and agriculture as the key sector in the region. Next, the Turkish water managers discuss the issue of water resources development and management in the Asi River basin in Turkey. In this context, Bulent Selek's contribution presents the conditions and the problems in the basin, with specific references to the issues of flood protection and works towards building of the Friendship Dam. Cengiz Han Kilicaslan describes the objectives of the Asi River Basin Protection Plan and the role of the Asi River Basin Management Committee as a new way of planning, managing and protecting the river basin in Turkey with the adoption of a series of laws, and regulations in accordance with the process of harmonization with the European Union.

The book continues with the invaluable analyses in Part III made by distinguished academics from the regional universities in Turkey, namely the Mustafa Kemal University and Ardahan University. The contributions by Seref Kilic and Aysel Guzelmansur Gurkan address issues of land use planning and land coverage. While Necat Agca elaborates on the issues pertaining to groundwater water quantity and quality, the contribution by Ayse Bahar Yilmaz surveys the studies related to water quality and pollution in the Turkish portion of the Asi River and the impact of water quality changes on aquatic organisms. The contribution by Berkant Odemis describes the present situation of agricultural water management and measures required for sustainable agricultural production in the Turkish portion of the Asi transboundary basin. On the other hand, Atilla Karatas suggests a hydrographic planning approach in Hatay with its special location on the lower course of Asi River Basin where it is directly affected from all changes that occur in the soil and water resources in the basin.

The book culminates in Part IV with two chapters. Waltina Scheumann and Omar Shamaly review the transboundary dam projects and analyze the incentives for Turkey and Syria for negotiating the Friendship Dam in terms of actual and potential benefits, costs and externalities, notwithstanding the fact that the dam project was halted due to the emergence of conflict in Syria. Aysegul Kibaroglu and Vakur Sumer review the contending theories on transboundary water politics, and thereby analyze transboundary water relations between Syria and Turkey in the Asi River basin particularly by scrutinizing the dynamic set of relations in political-economy domain.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Defne Gonenc, Tugba Evrim Madem, Seyfi Kilic, Cansu Gulec for their assistance in organizing the conference at MEF University and Priti Patnaik for editing the chapters. Special thanks for designing and formatting the book go to Catherine Fragnière.