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Book review

**Amer, K., Adeel, Z., Böer, B. & Saleh, W. (Eds.). (2017).
The Water, Energy, and Food Security Nexus in the Arab Region.
Springer International Publishing AG, 239 p.**

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Рецензия

**The Water, Energy, and Food Security Nexus in the Arab Region /
Ed. by K. Amer, Z. Adeel, B. Böer, W. Saleh.
Springer International Publishing AG, 2017. 239 p.**

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Water and energy of the 21st century remain to be essential and in many cases indispensable sources of security and sustainable development of state, economy and society. Along with that they are not static and experience constant and rapid changes so that from time to time decision-makers face with unpredictable events and consequences. Region of the Middle East demonstrates a remarkable case here. Some regional rich powers have access to huge spaces of oil and financial resources. And, at the same time they have to search for ways to buy water they need in and build various expensive installations. States, having no access to financial well-

being, may use water resources but do that without well-thought clear strategy and technical programs. Slow pace of reforms in water consumption is followed by or connected with rising Arab population, emerging conflicts among the Middle Eastern states and mobile terrorist threats.

The challenges and opportunities presented by climate change and water scarcity in the Middle East conflict zones require to be jointly addressed. 45 million people are threatened in the Nile Delta within the next twenty years by the rise in water levels of the Mediterranean. Recently, Iran warned that by continuing to exploit 97 % of Iran's surface

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water, approximately 55 million people, 70 % of Iranians, will have no choice but to leave the country.

All these dramatic factors lead to new forms of instability and chaos in the area that we already witnessed during the so-called Arab Spring. Experts in water issues sound the true alarm. Many conferences sponsored by UNESCO and UN University stress the necessity to pay more attention to the issue of water consumption and its just distribution.

The authors of the book under review — “The water, energy, and food security nexus in the Arab Region” — focus on this highly challenging topic. Contributors to this science-based multidisciplinary book represent well-known experts from Middle Eastern universities and think tanks and from the ones beyond the area. Their different professional background is quite enriching as they are key specialists on agriculture, climate change, environment, national security, water resources, and biology.

The authors highlight two extremely important facts which define the situation in the field.

1. Some places in the Arab Region, which are poor by natural resources, but rich by per capita income, have developed rapidly from places of low human population densities with the best environmental footprints globally to places of the fastest increase in human population and the highest rate of per capita water and food and energy consumption and wastage, even though the water and food are naturally not available, and energy availability has technical, geographical, and volume limitations. This wastage of water, energy, and food is unacceptable from many approaches — environmental, societal and religious.

2. Good water governance urgently requires incentives for all, for everybody, to contribute to good water management. The authors actually do not suggest or recommend what needs to be done in the sphere. They just urgently call for incentives. Energy management practices should one way or another be rewarded by the governments and authorities, because they do the right thing in the best interest of the entire human community [Amer, Adeel, Böer, Saleh 2017].

This strong alarm of the expert community is strengthened by history and tradition. The traditional Arabs, wherever they had water, they used it wisely, and they most certainly avoided any wastage. This is no longer the case. Wastage nowadays is real and

needs to be readdressed. Wastage has become both key term in the analysis and in policy recommendations the peer-reviews book contains. The wastage must no longer go on as usual. This urgent call is addressed at decision-makers and this circumstance makes the book highly important in terms of strengthening international cooperation. Obviously, solution to the water wastage problem could be found on the basis of mutual action and regional cooperation.

Paul Sullivan in Chapter 8 shares with Thoughts and Policy Options on Water-Energy-Food Security Nexus in the Arab Region. One of his most important statements is that energy, water, and food availability show not only stress today, but potentially much greater stresses in the future. He urges the need to integrate policies across energy, food, and water. Education, outreach, training, investment, and other programs need to be truly developed to help lead people and their leaders to a better future, and to avoid resource, economic, and political disasters. And *To integrate* means to act together, means to share information, knowledge and technologies [Amer, Adeel, Böer, Saleh 2017: 156].

Paul Sullivan from the U.S. National Defense University warns about extreme resource stresses in the future beyond what has been observed to date in the region. These, in turn, could cause increased energy insecurity, increased terrorism, and increased migration. 52 points of policy recommendations are summarized and presented in order to assure the improvement.

The authors argue that the water-food security of the Arab world is constrained by several internal and external stresses. Key among them are high population and economic growth (socio-economic), arid and semi-arid climate, dependency on external water resources and food supply, climate change, and political unrest [Amer, Adeel, Böer, Saleh 2017: 167].

In Chapter 10, Rabi H. Mohtar, Amjad T. Assi and Bassel T. Daher state that innovative thinking is needed to understand the potential of available and under tapped resources, and to better utilize them at the local scale, in order to better contribute to bridging the water-food supply-demand gap. The experts do not exclude the role of food imports, rain water harvesting systems, or existing hydraulic structures contributing to bridging the gap. They propose to localize the farming system. Localizing, once adopted as a strategy moving forward, would increase the

overall resilience of the water-food systems. Such a strategy should be inclusive and must account for the natural, social, economic, and technical environments after which local solutions are prescribed and geared toward optimizing, rather than maximizing, the use of water, soil, plant and atmosphere. The proposed approach is a socio-techno-environmental approach as opposed to a solely technical one. This recommendation over and over shows that interdisciplinary expertise and multi-dimensional approach with collective decisions by concert of sovereign states could pave the optimal way to the solution of the resources problem in the Middle East [Amer, Adeel, Böer, Saleh 2017: 196].

Obvious fact is highlighted in the book: the Arab Region is under considerable water stress, and the situation will continue to get worse in tandem with a number of global changes — most notably to climate and the related regional water distribution. Secondly, viable solutions are available in the region and can be implemented through innovative policies, judicious use of new technologies, and energizing

public opinion. Key instrument would be promoting joint efforts, regional cooperation and pooling together of resources. Experts are convinced that the available data and information are sufficient to formulate broad policy and strategic visions at the regional level. A number of regional forums can be utilized to form a common vision, allocate resources, empower through enabling policies, and provide incentives for success.

The book creates the feeling of the extreme importance of the issues, but it also proposes a fresh view on the agenda and has urged decision-makers — influential and not so much — to hear the experts in order to work out strategies and use instruments required to prevent regional catastrophe. The mission is to transform the nexus of risky challenge to the nexus of sustainable development. However, the path of transformation is difficult as ever. Contradictions and conflicts, national ambitious and external factors, economic competition and arms race, migration processes and others do complicate the matter that essentially is one of survival.

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