

Water Security in a New World

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Zafar Adeel • Robert G. Wirsing
Editors

Imagining Industan

Overcoming Water Insecurity in the Indus
Basin

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Environment and Health

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Preface

The world is encountering an era in which new threats and opportunities abound. Terrorism threatens peace and harmony far and wide, but equally challenging are a host of threats stemming from what many consider as even more menacing developments such as overpopulation, climate change, loss of species diversity, failures of governance, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, spread of epidemic disease, and mounting resource scarcities, to name only some of them. Whatever their disciplinary leanings, practically all serious observers of world affairs characterize the present era as one unusually beset with a myriad of deeply disturbing trends and, as well, with more than the usual turbulence and unpredictability. Some of these observers determinedly busy themselves nevertheless trying to tease from the chaos at least the broad outlines of the future, and they do not infrequently offer up alarming and conflict-laden scenarios under the ominous label of the “coming global disorder.”

It is thus conceivable that the subject of this book might seem imprudently optimistic, especially since it is about a region of the globe that fares dismally in virtually every assessment of the world’s danger spots. When it comes to insecurity of any kind, the Indus Basin is not perceived as a bastion of peace, harmony, and well-being of the populace. And yet it was not really optimism that drove the *Imagining Indistan* project to completion but a combination of the available opportunities and what might happen if they are not availed. There was a significant consensus among all the book’s contributors that further delay in tackling collectively the region’s widely shared and massive problem of water insecurity probably risked intensifying already considerable tensions among the four states sharing the basin (Afghanistan, China, India, and Pakistan). Delay most certainly also posed a huge risk to the economic potential and well-being of the many millions who now inhabit the basin as well as of those who come after.

This is therefore a book which takes a deliberately pragmatic and sober look at the way things are today with respect to utilization of water resources in the Indus Basin. Without excessive expectations (but with an abundance of concern for the region’s future water security), it examines the reasons for the meager level of cooperation one finds among the basin’s four riparian neighbors, the costs of

noncooperation among them in regard to these resources, and, finally, some of the practical things that are being done now or can be done in the near future to move these states, however slowly and awkwardly, in the direction of cooperative, integrated management of the basin's water resources. That objective is obviously not one that will be easily achieved. However, movement in its direction is achievable, and, as many of the chapters in this book testify, the benefits such movement will bring are almost certainly immense.

Through their superb contributions and collective wisdom, the authors have undertaken a skilled and thorough assessment of the problem of water insecurity in the Indus Basin and explored some new concepts and innovative, unconventional solutions. We believe that this exploration provides the requisite evidence that can be taken up by the governments and other stakeholders when they consider the future of the Indus Basin.

Hamilton, ON, Canada
Doha, Qatar
April 2016

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Robert G. Wirsing

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