

EVENTS CALENDAR

Hydropolitics Speaker Series

AYSEGUL KIBAROGLU



The Evolution of Transboundary Water Politics in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria

Thursday, April 21, 2016, 6:00PM - 8:00PM

Mershon Center for International Security Studies

1501 Neil Avenue | Room 120 Columbus, Ohio 43201

[Register here for this event](#)

We will reconvene the Euphrates-Tigris Initiative for Cooperation (ETIC) at Euphrates-Tigris River Basin The Ohio State University as part of the Hydropolitics seminar series on water scarcity and water security, co-sponsored by the Global Water Initiative and Mershon Center for International Security Studies and co-directed by Esther Gottlieb, senior adviser for international affairs, and Brian Mark, associate professor of geography.



The program will begin with a public address and keynote lecture by

Aysegul Kibaroglu, world expert on Turkish water policy issues and the history of cooperation across political boundaries in the Euphrates-Tigris region.

The purpose of this two-day workshop is to uncover the intersections between technical and traditional knowledge bases, and address the misunderstanding that arise due to conflicting epistemic perspectives. The objective of the workshop is to uncover cases in which local wisdom has the potential to aid proper implementation of technical solutions, as well as the pitfalls that should be avoided. Current issues, such as the impending evacuation around the Tigris due to issues with the Mosul dam, make this workshop particularly salient.

This is a unique opportunity to interact with regional experts who have worked locally on water resource management issues in the Euphrates-Tigris region for many years. The starting point for the workshop is the knowledge sharing project conducting by Euphrates-Tigris Initiative for Cooperation (ETIC). We will host ETIC's annual meeting in the morning, followed by a workshop in the afternoon (see program below).

Participants in ETIC come from the Euphrates-Tigris riparian nations of Syria, Iraq and Turkey. The majority of the participants have been academics from faculties of engineering and social sciences, but this year we welcome scholars in the humanities and social sciences who are familiar with the cultural contexts of the region. The last meeting was held in 2012 in Istanbul. Ohio State will reconvene ETIC in for its first U.S. conference.

We would be very glad to welcome you to our campus as you share your knowledge and experience with the other participants, including the founders of ETIC, Feysel Rifai and Aysegul Kibaroglu. We have reserved a block of rooms at Springhill Suites, Marriott at the rate of \$124 for Wednesday, April 20, through Friday, April 22. If you would be interested in participating, please register [here](#). If you can't join us for the entire conference, you are also welcome to attend the keynote lecture by **Aysegul Kibaroglu** on April 21, by registering [here](#).

Background Information

ETIC is a group of academics and professionals from Iraq, Syria and Turkey conducting projects to share knowledge and experience relevant to water resource management and regional cooperation. This entails collecting publicly available data, while bringing together experts from different professions to share their knowledge and expertise on how to harmonize and use that data for the benefit of people in the Euphrates-Tigris region. The majority of the participants have been academics from faculties of engineering and social sciences. The last meeting was held in 2012 in Istanbul.

Academics were not the only participants in the ETIC activities, which included government professionals in ministries of water and energy, agriculture, etc. The purpose of this workshop is to uncover the intersections between technical and traditional knowledge bases, and address the misunderstanding that arises due to conflicting epistemic perspectives. Kibaroglu has written an article on the value of engaging with and forming epistemic communities around practical issues and problem solving (2008).

ETIC scholars trained government officials, and they cooperated on knowledge sharing projects. Concerned citizens were also included in the ETIC activities. Many of the technical people recognized the value of diverse ways of understanding of the place of water in people's daily lives. They observed that local, traditional knowledge of water usage and management conflicts with modern technical views in many cases. At the same time locals often desire modernization if it means the improvement of their daily life. These local "folk" knowledge bases remain relatively untapped.

There may be universal relevance in regard to transnational/regional water issues collaboration. Water scarcity and the dangers to clean water haunt not just arid lands or downstream nations, but places such as drought-stricken California, algae-poisoned Toledo, Ohio, and recently Flint, Michigan. The workshop will cover cases in which local wisdom aided proper implementation of technical solutions, as well as the pitfalls that should be avoided.

Water conflicts, which are inherent in arid zones and in war zones like the Middle East, are increasingly disruptive in many other regions as well. 80 percent of the world's population is exposed to high levels of threat to water security (Vörösmarty et al, 2010). Armed conflicts and civil wars are more likely to occur in situations of ethnic dominance when countries also contest water issues. Examples include Turkey, Syria and Kurdistan (Mitchell, 2015).

This event is co-sponsored by the Middle East Studies Center, the Global Water Initiative, John Glenn College of Public Affairs, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Syrian Student Union, Ohio Water Resources Center, and School of Earth Sciences.

Cited Sources

Kibaroglu, A., and Scheumann, W. (2011). Euphrates-Tigris Rivers System: Political Rapprochement and Transboundary Water Cooperation. Turkey's Water Policy, 277-299.

Kibaroglu, A (2008). The Role of Epistemic Communities in Offering New Cooperation Frameworks in the Euphrates-Tigris Rivers System. Journal of International Affairs, Spring/Summer 2008, vol. 61, no. 2.

Mitchell, Sara. (2015). "Cross Border Troubles? Interstate River Conflicts and Intrastate Violence." Presented at the The Mershon Center for International Security Studies.

Vörösmarty, C.J., McIntyre, P.B., Gessner, M.O., Dudgeon, D., Prusevich, A., Green, P., ... Davies, P.M. (2010). Global threats to human water security and river biodiversity. Nature, 467(7315), 555–561.

Program Schedule

Thursday, April 21 - Keynote Address

Aysegul Kibaroglu, "The Evolution of Transboundary Water Politics in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria"

- Professor of Political Science and International Relations at MEF University Istanbul, Turkey
- Founding Member Euphrates-Tigris Initiative for Cooperation (ETIC) 2005
- Visiting Professor LBJ School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas at Austin 2015-16

6 p.m., Mershon Center for International Security Studies, 1501 Neil Ave., Columbus, OH 43201

- Opening remarks by Rick Herrmann, Interim Director of the Mershon Center and Chair of the Political Science Department

Register here

Friday, April 22 - Euphrates-Tigris Water Issues Workshop for Faculty

Please register here

Mershon Center for International Security Studies, 1501 Neil Ave., Columbus, OH 43201

9-9:15 a.m. - Welcome Remarks

- William Brustein, Vice Provost for Global Strategies and International Affairs, The Ohio State University

9:15-9:45 a.m. - Origin, Mission, and Activities of Euphrates-Tigris Initiative for Cooperation (ETIC)

- Faisal Rifai, Executive Director of the Euphrates-Tigris Initiative for Cooperation (ETIC), retired Professor of Water Resource Management from Aleppo University

9:45 a.m. - Collaborative Planning and Knowledge Development 2008-2011

- Eblal Zakzok, Assistant Professor of Water Resource Management, The Ohio State University
- Faisal Rifai, Executive Director of the Euphrates-Tigris Initiative for Cooperation (ETIC), retired Professor of Water Resource Management from Aleppo University

10:30 a.m. - Comparative Transboundary Issues: Rio Grande and Euphrates Rivers

- Jurgen Schmandt, Professor Emeritus, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas-Austin

11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. - Open Round Table - Luncheon Discussion - Registration required

- Register here if you would like to join the discussion.

1-2 p.m. - Concurrent Sessions

1. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) as useful tools in water resources management: how to continue GIS projects with war on the ground, political tensions, humanitarian crises? (Eblal Zakzok)
2. Capacity building in transboundary water management: regional and local perspectives (Faisal Rifai)
3. Urgent water issues in the ET basin: Case of Mosul Dam (Haytham Quidat, LBJ School, UT-Austin)

2-3:15 p.m. - Report from Concurrent Sessions

- Whole group discussion

3:15-3:30 p.m. - Concluding Remarks

- Alam Payind, Director of the Middle East Studies Center