



RESOURCE SECURITY WATCH

The American Foreign Policy Council's Review of
Changes to the Global Strategic Environment

Resource Security Watch No. 51

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Related Categories: Terrorism; Warfare; Resource Security; Africa; China; Russia; Ukraine

CHINA'S FISHING FLEET GOES GLOBAL...

China's massive fishing fleet, consisting of around 600 vessels, is exploiting the lack of regulations in international waters off the coast of Argentina. These vessels create "floating cities" of lights that attract plankton and squid, disrupting the marine ecosystem. The fleet has tripled in size over the past two decades and operates in the Atlantic Blue Hole, an area known for its rich biodiversity. The main target is squid, but unsustainable fishing practices are depleting the species and causing significant environmental damage. The Chinese government subsidizes these fleets and the vessels operate without oversight or adherence to sustainability standards. In addition to the environmental impact, there are reports of forced labor, human trafficking, accidents, and deaths aboard these vessels. In 2021, the International Labor Organization estimated that there were approximately 128,000 fishermen trapped in forced labor on fishing vessels, working up to 20 hours a day. (U.S. Department of Treasury, December 9, 2022; *Dialogo*, June 5, 2023)

...AND ENCROACHES ON AFRICA

Meanwhile, Chinese trawlers are depleting fish stocks along the West African coast, affecting the livelihoods of local fishermen. Overfishing and diminishing catches have led to poverty and hunger in coastal communities that rely on the sea. Chinese vessels, far superior in size and capability, cause smaller boats to capsize and destroy their nets. The Ghanaian fishing industry has been infiltrated by Chinese-owned trawlers operating through Ghanaian-fronted companies, often engaging in illegal fishing. The impact is severe, with dwindling catches and financial struggles for fishermen. Observers who expose illegal activities on Chinese trawlers, meanwhile, face danger, with some disappearing under suspicious circumstances. While the Ghana Fisheries Commission blames small-scale fishermen for using illegal methods, locals believe they are forced to do so in order to compete with the Chinese trawlers. (*Telegraph*, June 5, 2023)

DAM DESTRUCTION AN ACT OF RUSSIAN ECO-TERRORISM

Russia's deliberate destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam, a major hydroelectric dam on the Dnipro River, is an act of eco-terrorism, according to Ukraine's president. Volodymyr Zelenskyy called the early June attack nothing short of an "environmental bomb of mass destruction." The Ukrainian government has argued that an explosion of the scope and power that took place at Nova Kakhovka could only have occurred through mining of the facility, which has been under Russian control since the start of the war.

In addition to the immediate ecological and humanitarian disaster triggered by the destruction of the dam, Ukrainians are also distressed by the effects of the resulting flooding – including the dispersal of landmines from the banks of the Dnipro into neighboring villages and farmland as a result of floodwater, as well the implications for the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant situated 120 miles (200km) upstream. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and European commissioner for crisis management Janez Lenarčič issued a joint statement warning the attack could constitute a war crime, saying that it "represents a new dimension of Russian atrocities and may constitute a violation of international law, notably international humanitarian law." (*The Guardian*, June 6, 2023)

RABAT'S GRAIN DILEMMA

Drought and adverse climate conditions in Morocco are leading to another poor year for cereal production – a trend which the World Bank has warned could negatively impact the country's economic growth. The Kingdom's Ministry of Agriculture projected cereal production of 55.1 million quintals (1 quintal = 100 kg) for the 2023 harvest, representing a 62% increase from the previous year but still below Morocco's historical average of 70-75 million quintals. Last year, Morocco experienced a severe drought that caused a 60% decline in cereal production. However, despite the increase in production for this year, the quantity is still insufficient to meet domestic demand, necessitating significant imports. In 2022, Morocco imported over 8.8 tons of cereal, a 23.2% increase compared to a year prior. (*Al Monitor*, June 1, 2023)

[EDITORS' NOTE: Morocco's lackluster grain situation mirrors that of other countries on the African continent, which have been hard hit by regional drought conditions – and which, as a consequence, are deeply dependent on supplies of cereals from Russia and Ukraine. Those supplies have been significantly impacted by the Ukraine war, which has sent commodity prices soaring. And now, with Russia's pullout from the Black Sea Grain Initiative in mid-July, the continent faces the specter of supply disruptions as well.]