



## RESOURCE SECURITY WATCH

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

# Resource Security Watch: No. 2

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**Related Categories:** Africa; Iran; Russia; South Asia; Southeast Asia

## THE DIFFICULTIES OF ISRAELI DESALINATION

For years, Israel has invested heavily in the development of desalination plants along its coastline. While this innovation has helped significantly to mitigate Israel's chronic water shortage, it is not without its downsides. Experts note that desalination plants employ sensitive membrane technology to filter water, and that this technology is sensitive to pollution and emergencies in the surrounding environment, such as an oil spill. Contamination of a plant can cause significant and lasting damage. Furthermore, the plants dump wastewater, which contains highly concentrated chemicals and salt, back into the ocean, which could damage local marine ecosystems. These problems are becoming more acute as the country steps up its desalination work; the Israel Water Authority has announced plans to establish five more large-scale projects by 2025 as part of the government's efforts to further stabilize Israel's hydrological situation. (Tel Aviv *Ha'aretz*, February 6, 2017)

## PAKISTAN'S WATER WOES

The United Nations Development Program recently found that Pakistan's water-management strategies are virtually nonexistent. Experts predict that the nation will likely face acute water shortages or drought conditions in the near future, especially as Pakistan currently has the domestic capacity to store only thirty days' worth of water, while maintaining a deeply water-intensive economy (with the fourth-highest rate of water use in the world). Pakistani officials, however, have refused to concede the possibility of deficient water management, instead pinning the blame for the burgeoning crisis on India, which they accuse of taking more than its fair share of shared water sources. (*Deutsche Welle*, February 7, 2017)

## IN IRAN, ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS... AND PROTESTS

Thousands of people in Iran's Khuzestan province took to the streets beginning on February 12th for at least a week of ongoing protests after local power stations failed and the Iranian regime cut off water supplies. The Iranian government blames dust storms and the local weather, which can exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit, for the utility failures. However, another factor is the likely culprit. Namely, Iran's plans to reroute the Karoun and Kereh Rivers, which feed the region, instead sending the water to agricultural projects in Isfahan and Fars, have aggravated many of the environmental problems in the area (including industrial pollution, desertification and drought, and contaminated air). (Riyadh *Al Arabiya*, February 16 and February 22, 2017)

## AFRICA'S NEWEST FAMINE

The United Nations has formally declared a state of famine in parts of South Sudan. The designation connotes that one in five households face an extreme lack of food, more than thirty percent of the population is suffering from acute malnutrition, and at least two people out of every 10,000 dying every day. The South Sudan famine, which is being driven by a combination of drought and conflict, is the first to be declared since Somalia's 2011 famine, where more than a quarter of million people died in two years. South Sudan, moreover, is not the only at-risk nation. The UN has warned that Nigeria and Somalia, as well as Yemen, are all susceptible to massive shortages in the coming months - raising the specter of significant food insecurity as well as resource-driven tensions. (London *Guardian*, February 20, 2017)

## RUSSIA EYES EXPANDED ARCTIC PRESENCE

Russia has announced plans to spend 209 billion rubles (\$3.6 billion) by 2020 to expand and improve its presence in the Arctic. According to Alexander Cybulski, the country's Deputy Minister of Economic Development, the majority of the funds will go to building a new nuclear icebreaker. Resources will also be spent on the exploration of the Arctic's continental shelf for untapped energy reserves, as well as on the creation of eight "supported development zones" in Russian regions abutting the Arctic. (*The Moscow Times*, February 27, 2017)