



## RESOURCE SECURITY WATCH

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

# Resource Security Watch: No. 14

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### THE COMING POPULATION EXPLOSION

Is a global population boom on the horizon? A new study by demographers Daniel Hoornweg and Kevin Pope has predicted that, under what is known as a "Fragmentation" scenario, in which developing nations cannot control their populations, over 120 cities could have a population more than five million by as soon as 2050. The implications are significant, since many urban centers struggle to properly manage limited resources for their rapidly-swelling populations. Without proper planning and infrastructure, urban cities could spread too rapidly and cause significant damage to their surrounding ecosystems. (London *Guardian*, March 19, 2018)

### A HELPING HAND FOR THE PALESTINIANS

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has pledged to provide the Palestinian Authority with 456 million Euro (\$560 million) to fund the Gaza Central Desalination Plant and Associated Works Project. Once operational, the plant will provide fresh water to more than two million people in the Gaza Strip, which is controlled by the Hamas terrorist group. The funds to be provided by the EIB constitute more than 80 percent of the project's total costs. (desalination.biz, March 21, 2018)

### A GROWING TRASH PROBLEM IN THE PACIFIC

A recent study found that the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, the largest accumulation of ocean plastic on the planet, consists of seventy-nine thousand tons of plastic debris in an area three times larger than the territory of France. The Patch lies between California and Hawaii, and the survey found that it is four to 16 times more massive than previous estimates had indicated. The patch itself is not growing larger, however; rather, it is growing more dense. A 2015 study estimated that 8 million tons of plastic enter the ocean every year. Scientists predict a 22 percent increase in this number by 2025. (*Washington Post*, March 22, 2018)

### THE VANISHING ARCTIC

According to scientists, the maximum coverage reached by Arctic sea ice this year was 5.59 million square miles, the second-lowest coverage in decades and 23,300 square miles smaller than documented last year. NASA scientists have linked ice loss to a warming of the Arctic, but the phenomenon has significant economic and political implications, because the disappearing ice alters shipping routes and affects ocean circulation, which affects environmental systems around the world. (National Aeronautics and Space Administration, March 23, 2018)

### THE DANGERS OF ANTIBIOTICS OVERUSE

A study recently published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) found that human antibiotic consumption increased by 39 percent between 2000 and 2015. This surge, in turn, has heightened concerns about growing antibiotic resistance among bacteria - a process in which microbes develop resistance to medicines used to treat them, due in large part to overuse of antibiotics among human and animal populations. During the period examined by the PNAS study, low- and middle-income countries increased their antibiotic use by 114 percent, which is partially a good thing, as it means that poorer countries now have greater access than before to lifesaving treatments. However, developed countries still significantly overuse antibiotics; up to a third of antibiotics prescribed in the United States are unnecessary. It is also dangerous; researchers estimate that up to 10 million deaths could be attributed to antibiotic resistance by 2050. (*TIME*, March 26, 2018)