



## RESOURCE SECURITY WATCH

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

# Resource Security Watch No. 16

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**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Energy Security; International Economics and Trade; Science and Technology; Middle East; Southeast Asia

## NEW MEKONG DAM COULD DAMAGE REGIONAL FISHERIES

A study recently completed by a U.S. nonprofit suggests that a new planned dam in Cambodia will devastate vital fisheries and potentially ratchet up tensions between Cambodia and Vietnam. China supports the dam, which would be the biggest on the Mekong and generate significant power for Cambodia. But, as the study - which was commissioned by the Cambodian government and issued by the National Heritage Institute - notes, the dam would block the migration of many fish species that comprise one of the most productive freshwater fisheries in the world, as well as prevent fertile sediments from replenishing farmlands in Mekong Delta in Vietnam. Both of these outcomes could easily contribute to regional food insecurity. In addition, the potential disruptions could create tension in relations between Cambodia and Vietnam. Cambodia would control how much water and sediment gets down river to Vietnam, thus seriously impacting the productivity of the Mekong Delta. (*South China Morning Post*, May 17, 2018)

## CFC CHEATING... AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Emissions of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), a banned industrial chemical agent and atmospheric pollutant, are once again on the rise, after decades of decline. CFCs, which break down the ozone layer and expose the Earth to ultraviolet radiation, were banned by the 1987 Montreal Protocol, one of the first successful international efforts to address global pollution. However, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has detected rising amounts of CFCs in the atmosphere since 2012. NOAA considers the source of the new emissions to likely be somewhere in East Asia - where a country or company may be intentionally cheating on emissions inspections tests in a move that undermines a key international understanding, and which could undermine the international community's ability to respond to environmental issues cohesively. (*Washington Post*, May 16, 2018)

## EBOLA OUTBREAK IN THE CONGO CONTINUES

The Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has entered a new phase, with a case of the disease confirmed in Mbandaka, a city of 1.2 million people. Experts fear that the epidemic could quickly grow in size, pushing local health infrastructure to its limits. International organizations are on the ground, both to train local health professionals and to deploy an experimental new Ebola vaccine in an effort to control the spread of the disease. However, should containment methods fail, the outbreak is now likely to produce a high death toll, further destabilize the region, and potentially spread to the country's capital, Kinshasa. (*The Atlantic*, May 17, 2018)

## NIPAH OUTBREAK IN KERALA

The death toll from an outbreak of the Nipah virus in the southwestern Indian state of Kerala continues to rise. The virus, which was only identified in the 1990s, has no cure or standardized treatments, and normally circulates among fruit bats. The fatality rate among humans ranges from 50 to 75 percent, but only spreads from the touching of contaminated materials, including pigs and raw date tree sap. Indian health officials are responding to the outbreak, and are monitoring over a thousand people to prevent a further spread of the disease. The chance of a large-scale outbreak appears low, despite the high fatality rate of the disease and a lack of treatment. (*The Times of India*, May 31, 2018)

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES STRESS MIDDLE EAST

Complications from environmental challenges are compounding tensions in the Middle East. Temperatures are consistently reaching record highs, which may render parts of the Persian Gulf uninhabitable. Rainfall is declining across the region, exacerbating already-long droughts. The droughts, in turn, have forced farmers from their lands and have pushed hundreds of thousands of people into cities, ill-prepared to receive them, across the Arab world. Those that remain are quickly draining existing aquifers. This internal migration is suspected to have contributed to unrest in the Middle East, as the new urban arrivals have struggled economically in vast slums from Tehran to Damascus. Solutions to such problems exist, and include heat-resistant crops, drip agriculture, desalination plants, and solar power. Some states, such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, have begun to implement such solutions. However, many others, including Syria and Iraq, are too unstable to address these issues effectively. (*The Economist*, May 31, 2018)