



RESOURCE SECURITY WATCH

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

Resource Security Watch No. 36

March 15, 2021 **Annie Swingen, Ashlyn Pearson**

Related Categories: Energy Security; International Economics and Trade; Resource Security; China; Europe; Israel; Middle East

CLIMATE AND A VOLATILE MIDDLE EAST

Regional experts are warning that the Middle East will begin to feel the effects of climate change sooner than other regions – and that the change could fuel greater conflict in the already-volatile regional environment. According to current projections from Israel's national Meteorological Service, regional temperatures are expected to rise by two degrees Celsius by 2050, resulting in more frequent and extreme weather patterns. That, in turn, could lead to greater inter- and intra-state tensions over resources and other climate-related problems. Shira Efron, a Senior Research Fellow at Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), explains that "while climate effects are not the only cause of conflicts between state and sub-state actors, they are considered threat multipliers that risk exacerbating existing problems and increasing instability."

The problem, according to Efron, is an acute one, because it falls outside regular national security planning practices in the region. "Defense and national security apparatuses [currently] do not view climate as affecting national security, and the issue is not included in strategic assessments, scenarios, planning processes, and budgeting," she notes. Yet climate change can directly impact security and the functioning of militaries, with increased temperatures negatively affecting the operation of equipment and the health of troops.

In order to fully address the "ramifications of climate change for its national security," Efron argues, "Israel must integrate the topic into its core national security agenda and discourse, including by facilitating a dialogue between climate and security experts; integrating climate effects into risk scenarios; and accounting for climatic effects in budgets and planning." By doing so, she posits, the country will make significant strides toward climate change readiness while increasing opportunities for cooperation with allies and neighboring countries. (Institute for National Security Studies, January 4, 2021)

THE WORLD LOOKS TO WIND

According to data collected by the International Energy Agency, a number of countries – including China, Germany, and the UK – are now investing in expanding renewable energy via offshore wind farms. In a January report, China's National Energy Agency announced the country more than doubled its previous energy growth record with the creation of 71.7 gigawatts (GW) of new wind capacity installed in 2020. China currently remains in the lead in the development of wind power, with 327 offshore wind farm projects (53 of which are in operation) and an annual projection of an additional 2.8 gigawatts of energy generated by offshore wind farms over the next three years. However, Germany and the UK's efforts indicate continued growth through 2025. Germany is currently home to 180 offshore wind farm projects, of which 28 are currently operational. However, construction has not progressed enough to connect the turbines and generate electricity. The UK, meanwhile, has one offshore wind farm with turbines generating electricity, and another 159 in various stages of development and construction. (International Energy Agency, May 2020; *Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 2021; Reuters, January 21, 2021; *4C Offshore*, January 2021)

CLIMATE AND THE NEW U.S. AGENDA

While still on the campaign trail, Democratic candidate Joe Biden made clear that he would make climate change a major priority of his administration if he was elected president. Upon taking office in January, the new president quickly moved on the issue, including through steps like cancelling the Keystone XL pipeline and rejoining the Paris Climate Accords – steps that have been decried by his political opponents. Arguably more significant, however, has been the new Administration's focus on the intersection of climate change and national security. Shortly after taking office, President Biden issued an Executive Order placing "the climate crisis at the center of U.S. foreign policy and national security," with a specific policy focus on the "integration of climate considerations across a wide range of international fora, including the Group of Seven (G7), the Group of Twenty (G20), and fora that address clean energy, aviation, shipping, the Arctic, the ocean, sustainable development, migration, and other relevant topics."

The Order directs agencies that engage in extensive international work to develop strategies for integrating climate considerations into their international work within 90 days. It also requires the director of National Intelligence, the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide reports on the security implications of climate change and to climate risk analyses within 120 days of its issuance. (White House, January 27, 2021)