



## RESOURCE SECURITY WATCH

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

# Resource Security Watch No. 38

July 14, 2021 **Annie Swingen, Caillou Peña**

**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Resource Security; Arctic; Africa; China; Latin America; Russia

## HOW CLIMATE CHANGE FUELS AFRICAN INSTABILITY

The growing link between climate change and conflict is becoming apparent across the African continent. Researchers have identified a correlation between rising temperatures and violence; specifically, with every 0.5 degree Celsius increase in local temperatures, statistics indicate the risk of armed conflict increases by as much as 10 to 20%. That is because, as temperatures rise, so too does widespread food and water insecurity for millions on the continent, leading to mass migration. In the restive Sahel region, for instance, persistent drought, changes in grazing patterns and the depletion of arable land have helped fuel civil war, while in the Lake Chad region, a combination of the militant Boko Haram group and climate change have displaced millions more. (ReliefWeb, March 11, 2021)

## CLIMATIC SHIFTS FUEL SOUTHERN MIGRATION

As thousands of migrants continue to arrive at America's southern border, the Biden administration is ramping its efforts to address the reasons for their departure from the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador). The Northern Triangle remains one of the most dangerous areas in the world, riddled with crime, poverty and official corruption. However, climate change is increasingly driving migration as well. In recent years, as the region has witnessed a decline in homicides, changes in weather patterns have brought back-to-back Category 5 hurricanes that have killed off mass amounts of livestock and decimated agricultural production. The resulting food insecurity, coupled with the aforementioned factors, have led many to make the dangerous trek northward.

In an attempt to mitigate the influx, the White House is now seeking \$4 billion to boost anti-corruption measures, aid civil society organizations, and build climate resilience in the Americas. In coming years, as climate change continues to impact the Northern Triangle, experts warn that the U.S. may see an exponential rise in climate migrants arriving at the southern border. (Council on Foreign Relations, March 22, 2021)

## RUSSIA LOOKS NORTH FOR MILITARY EXPANSION

Melting ice on Russia's northern coast corresponds with a build-up of Russian military presence in the Arctic, and for good reason. Russia is taking advantage of more habitable conditions in its northern border areas to test hypersonic weapons and unmanned stealth torpedoes - capabilities which, in the future, could allow for Russian power projection in the North Atlantic. "Satellite images provided... by space technology company Maxar detail a stark and continuous build-up of Russian military bases and hardware on the country's Arctic coastline, together with underground storage facilities likely for the Poseidon and other new high-tech weapons," *CNN* has reported. "The Russian hardware in the High North area includes bombers and MiG31BM jets, and new radar systems close to the coast of Alaska."

Additionally the thinning of ice on the Northern Sea Route, an alternative to the Suez Canal that takes half the time it takes to ship containers from Asia to Europe, made the corridor navigable in winter for the first time last year. Russia hopes to exploit the NSR economically by asserting dominion over it and obtaining "de facto acquiescence on the part of the international community" for the grab, U.S. officials say. (*CNN*, April 5, 2021, *Defense News*, April 11, 2021)

## THE INTERSECTION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREAT POWER COMPETITION

President Biden's solar power ambitions are in jeopardy. The Administration is simultaneously promoting solar to cut climate changing emissions while also acknowledging that some panels are being produced by forced labor in Xinjiang, leading the White House to consider a ban on solar panels from the region. The conflict is centered around polysilicon, a raw material used to make photovoltaic cells for solar panels, which is reportedly produced by forced labor. The global solar panel industry gets 45% of its supply of polysilicon from Xinjiang, leading to serious concerns regarding the future of solar power in light of growing "great power competition" between the United States and China. To wit, most major manufacturers use raw materials from Xinjiang, and the U.S. has few options for alternative suppliers if it hopes to ramp up the use of solar power in the U.S. without relying on forced labor. (Associated Press, May 21, 2021)