



RESOURCE SECURITY WATCH

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

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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Science and Technology; Resource Security; Arctic; China ; North America; Pakistan; Russia; South Asia; Southeast Asia

ZOMBIE ICE A THREAT TO COASTS WORLDWIDE

Greenland, the world's second-largest ice shelf, is melting faster than previously projected as a result of "Zombie Ice" – ice sheets attached to parent glaciers not being replenished by seasonal snow. Historically, Greenland's snowfall outpaced or stayed at the pace of the melting of glaciers. However, as ocean temperatures rise and snowfall decreases, Zombie Ice is becoming a serious concern. The resulting population displacement could be pronounced over time, because some 630 million people worldwide live along coastlines and could be affected by sea level rise. (International Panel on Climate Change, August 9, 2021; Associated Press, August 29, 2022; *The Week*, August 31, 2022; *Washington Post*, August 31, 2022; *The Conversation*, September 20, 2020)

AMERICA'S NEW "ARCTIC AMBASSADOR"

The Biden administration has announced the creation of an Arctic ambassador position to work cooperatively with Arctic nations and indigenous groups. The move comes just months after the nations of the Arctic Council suspended their membership in the body in protest over Russian aggression toward Ukraine. Meanwhile, the Arctic is warming at alarming rates, creating new waterways for military and commercial vessel use between previously impenetrable glaciers and ice caps. Russia has already increased its military presence in the Arctic, and China has built research stations in the area, causing worries in Washington. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) welcomed the appointment, noting that "the U.S. had been the only Arctic nation without dedicated diplomatic representation for the region at ambassador level." (*The Guardian*, August 27, 2022; *BBC*, August 27, 2022)

PAKISTAN'S CLIMATE EMERGENCY

An August monsoon caused devastating floods in Pakistan, leading to the death of 1,100 people and the mass devastation of infrastructure, agriculture, and the national economy. Both the monsoon and extreme flooding are being attributed to warming temperatures and unpredictable, intense weather patterns. A drought had hit Pakistan prior to heavy rains, leading to flooding because of the quick swings between wet and dry weather. The flooding is due to glacial melt as well; Pakistan has over 7400 glaciers – the most in the world outside of the polar regions – which are melting quickly. Consequently, the country's lakes and rivers are swelling, and can burst beyond their boundaries at any moment if impacted by heavy rains.

The scope of the devastation has led Islamabad to request humanitarian and economic aid from other nations, as well as extracting a promise of \$100 billion in aid from richer nations for climate-related problems. The climate emergency could end up causing significant geopolitical shifts as well; the food insecurity caused by the floods could lead Pakistan to reopen trade routes with rival India, despite tensions between the two neighbors. (*New York Times*, August 29, 2022; *Washington Post*, August 29, 2022; *Vox*, August 30, 2022)

A FRAGILE CONSENSUS IN BALI

In late August, G20 environment officials converged on Bali, with Indonesia serving as this year's organizational chair, to discuss climate change and the growing environmental and food security implications of Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine. "We are actually in a climate crisis position, no longer just climate change," Indonesian environment minister Siti Nurbaya told reporters. "We must work even faster to bring the global temperatures down as low as possible." However, no consensus was reached at the gathering with regard to the issuance of a joint statement, with forging a common position over the conflict in Ukraine serving as the stumbling block. Also in attendance at the Bali summit was Alok Sharma, president of the 2021 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) who stressed the need to disassociate from countries such as Russia when it comes to fuel dependence. "The current energy crisis has demonstrated the vulnerability of countries relying on fossil fuels controlled by hostile actors," he laid out. "Climate security has become synonymous with energy security and the chronic threat of climate change is not going away." The meeting followed a July decision by the finance ministers and central bank governors of the G20 nations to address climate change through a range of fiscal, market and regulatory mechanisms. (*PBS*, August 31, 2022; *Reuters*, August 31, 2022)