



RESOURCE SECURITY WATCH

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

Resource Security Watch No. 53

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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Energy Security; Europe Military; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Islamic Extremism; Science and Technology; Terrorism; NATO; Resource Security; Arctic; Afghanistan; Brazil; Iran; Russia; United Kingdom

NATO'S NEW EYES IN THE NORTH

Positioned 20 miles from the Russian border, the Lapland Border Guard base is gaining strategic significance for its ability to monitor Russian activities in the Arctic. In the wake of Finland's accession to NATO and the signing of a new defense cooperation agreement with the United States last year, American troops are now authorized to be stationed in the Finnish town of Ivalo, making it the closest base to mainland Russia accessible to U.S. forces. The base's proximity to mainland Russia makes it a crucial site for bolstering NATO's northern defenses while also exposing Finland and its allies to threats like weaponized migration and covert operations by Russian forces against critical infrastructure.

Finland's recent shift away from neutrality, spurred by Russia's war on Ukraine (and the possibility of Russian aggression against other European states thereafter) marks a departure from the Nordic state's historical defense strategy. It also significantly strengthens the Alliance's military capabilities in the region, as well as elevating the issue of Arctic security on the agendas of NATO and its member states. (*Foreign Policy*, February 9, 2024)

LONDON LEAVES THE ECT

The government of British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has announced plans to leave the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT). The decision marks a significant change to a longstanding agreement that shielded fossil fuel investors, enabling them to litigate against governments over climate policies that impact their profits. The UK has stated that the reason for its withdrawal is that the pact does not support the country's commitment to a transition to cleaner energy with the goal of achieving net-zero emissions.

The move has garnered praise from many Western nations, which see it as a positive step toward curbing the influence of the fossil fuel industry on governmental decision-making. Moreover, other nations might soon follow London's lead. While the ECT still has more than 50 signatories, many are reportedly contemplating a similar pullout due to the agreement's failure to adapt to modern challenges. (*The Guardian*, February 22, 2024)

ANTICIPATING A TIPPING POINT FOR THE AMAZON

The Amazon Rainforest, an essential hub of biodiversity often referred to as the "lungs of the earth," is approaching a "tipping point" as severe damage due to prolonged droughts push more than a tenth of its current area beyond replenishment. Scientists are unsure when exactly this collapse will happen, but they believe that such a change is approaching faster than previously anticipated, as outlined in a new peer-reviewed study in the journal *Nature*. When it does, the study's authors warn, the effects could be far reaching, ranging from a disruption of global rainfall patterns that could affect food security to mass population migration as a result of more dangerous floods and droughts. (Migration Policy Institute, November 16, 2023; *New York Times*, February 14, 2024)

TALIBAN RESURGENCE WORSENS SOUTHWEST ASIA'S WATER CRISIS

Iran's government has accused the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan of withholding previously agreed-upon water allocations, reviving hydrological tensions between the two Southwest Asian states. Despite heavy rainfall and flooding, Afghanistan's new, Islamist rulers – utilizing canals and recently constructed dams – have prevented water from the Helmand river from flowing between Afghanistan and Iran, significantly exacerbating the latter's water insecurity. The Taliban, for its part, is crying poverty. According to Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, there is insufficient water available for distribution beyond Afghanistan, despite the recent rains. The resulting neglect of Iran's annual claim to 820 million cubic meters of river water has intensified a longstanding dispute over water allocation in the region. (*Iran International*, March 4, 2024)