



## RESOURCE SECURITY WATCH

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

# Resource Security Watch No. 55

May 14, 2024 **Chloe E. Smith, Elizabeth Oakes**

**Related Categories:** Arms Control and Proliferation; Warfare; Resource Security; Global Health; Arctic; Africa; Sudan; China; Middle East; Russia

## FLOODS PARALYZE PARTS OF THE PERSIAN GULF

Parts of the Persian Gulf have experienced abnormal flooding conditions recently due to changing rainfall patterns. In the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, roads and neighborhoods have been inundated as a result heavy downpours, in the process revealing infrastructure deficient in handling excess rainfall. While increased precipitation can be a boon for the region, which ranks as "the most water-stressed region in the world," the intensity of the rainfall has caused disruptions and damage in urban areas not equipped for significant flooding events. It also underscores a potentially disruptive trend, as excess rain inevitably forces communities susceptible to life-threatening flooding to move elsewhere. (*Al-Monitor*, April 23, 2024)

## A MOUNTING SUDANESE HUNGER CRISIS

The ongoing civil conflict in Sudan has dramatically exacerbated food insecurity in the war-torn African nation, a new report has outlined. Violence and economic disruptions caused by the ongoing conflict, which has been raging between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the rebel Rapid Support Forces faction for over a year now, have prevented normal agricultural activities and aid distribution, outlines a February 2024 assessment by Clingendael, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations.

Already, the study notes, the Sudanese civil war has resulted in significant casualties, with 13,000 deaths and 8 million persons displaced. And still worse could be in store; according to the UN and various humanitarian groups, up to 7 million Sudanese could face emergency hunger levels by mid-2024 if the situation does not improve. At the same time, ancillary factors like disruptions to grain imports due to higher shipping costs stemming from regional instability in the Red Sea have exacerbated Sudan's food crisis still further.

The study posits three scenarios that are likely to confront Sudan in the near future. The first, "localized catastrophic hunger," envisions a situation in which the majority of Sudan's population faces extreme hunger by mid-2024, and certain hotspots such as Khartoum and Darfur see full-blown famine. That scenario, moreover, is the most optimistic of the three outlined. The second, which the report suggests is the most likely, would see catastrophic hunger and the likelihood of famine "in much of Sudan except for some surplus areas." The third - and bleakest - possibility is that of widespread famine in which three-quarters of Sudan's 45 million people "will have access to less than half of the daily energy requirements by July," leading to national famine conditions by the Fall. (Clingendael, February 2024)

## ANOTHER STEP FORWARD FOR RUSSIA IN THE ARCTIC

Russia is intensifying its military activities and expanding its capabilities in the Arctic, taking advantage of heightened maritime accessibility due to melting ice caps. Recently, the *Admiral Golovko*, a frigate attached to Russia's Northern Fleet, conducted a series of combat exercises in the Barents Sea, including test-firing artillery and missiles. Worryingly, the drills involved the testing of Russia's new *Tsirkon* hypersonic missiles, underscoring the Kremlin's strategic objective to bolster its military presence and operational capacity in the Arctic region. (*Tass*, April 27, 2024)

## CHINA'S FLOATING REACTORS SPARK U.S. WORRIES

China is pushing ahead with plans to deploy 20 floating nuclear facilities in the South China Sea. The reactors are ostensibly intended to power both military installations and commercial development projects. However, the plans have raised significant concerns among U.S. officials about the potential implications for regional security. Some are environmental in nature; despite over a decade of development by China, a number of concerns surround these floating nuclear facilities, including potential safety risks given the lack of comprehensive international standards and regulations specifically for offshore nuclear plants. Others, however, are strategic: the United States and other Western governments worry that China's stated intention of using some of the reactors to power military installations would strengthen its control over the contested waters of the region. (*The Washington Post*, May 2, 2024)