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“Security is about maintaining preconditions for human prosperity and development and ‘security challenges’ are actions that threaten to undermine these preconditions” Sven Holtsmark & Broke Smith Windsor – NATO Defence College Paper 2009.

Earthquakes in Sumatra! Floods in Philippines! Tsunamis! Rain and Floods in INDIA! Snow in Strawberry season in New Zealand! Climate change or Climate Evolution?

Probably some of both but we know for sure the ice is melting. The oceans are rising and the temperatures changing. Climate change means different thing to different nations and many aspects of climate change trigger security concerns.

Security concerns and challenges are not all negative however and many do not involve the military but they could. In turn the question is often -What role would NATO play?

The cold war of the High North was fear of nuclear exchanges over the cap and the SLOCs between North America and Europe. Security was determined by all the intelligence gathering sites and platforms as well as constant sea air borne platforms at the ready...!

The shift in NATO after the cold war has been more southerly and out of area. BUT ...

The High North has, over the last few years, been an area of growing interest for NATO in a world of climate change. Several NATO nations are part of the High North. As a strategic NATO partner, Russia has a large stake in the area as well. The High North could be balanced with a comprehensive approach to all regions of strategic interest in operations. NATO has sponsored or co-sponsored several seminars and conferences in the last few years to include an international conference

in Tromso, Norway entitled “Emerging from the Frost” sponsored by the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies in September 2007, and a conference in Reykjavik, Iceland “Security Prospects in the High North, January 2009. There will be another conference in Oslo, Norway in 2010.

Alyson Bailes wrote an essay that argues the governance challenges in the high north must be multi-functional, multi-institutional and cross-sectional. I would add multi-national to that list as well.

THE HIGH NORTH is one example but there are other areas of security challenge as well because of the cause and effects of climate change and I would rather argue the HIGH NORTH, THE ARCTIC OCEAN is a main element.

It is a place of extremes. The two former Superpowers are closest geography. Global Warming as we see already is more noticeable there than almost anywhere else.

People generally transit but didn't live there. There are issues of indigenous people and their homes and migration routes.

There are only relatively few nations who know and understand this part of the world.

Potential for gas, oil and minerals is unknown and because of the changing physical nation makes borders and security more complex although much of the gas, oil reserves are not undisputed areas.

Many areas of potential oil reserves are not in the disputed areas. It is the open sea, continental shelf issues and the changing landscape/seascape for the people there that will cause tension as well as the increase of the human footprint.

The strategic challenges of NATO include failed states, terrorism, non-state actors, proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the demand for energy, climate change. I would say that demands for energy and climate change are the least military in nature on this list.

In the High North there are no failed states, no indication of terrorism working there but there could be issues of new passages and SLOCs opening, migration and fishing grounds, a race for new mining, oil and gas areas that will open as the ice melts, and for indigenous peoples

issues of migration, food and diseases that could spread as more people are occupy that area.

I think the cooperative effort of the nations of that is part of the region could be a model for security cooperation in other regions. Recently the 5 Nordic countries of Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland and Norway commissioned Ambassador Thorvald Stoltenberg to link ahead 10-15 years on cooperation that could be maintained. The security and protection of the ecological aspects of the area are key to stability and prosperity. Canada, US and Russia are also important players in this. The phrase often heard is HIGH NORTH LOW TENSION!

Increasing the situation awareness from understanding the region, the metrological aspects, the migration of fish, animals, the changes in the ocean and the need to manage minerals, gas and oil reserves are all important. Maritime Security is an aspect the world must be part of, but few nations have an understanding and ability to work in the area.

Search and Rescue must be developed especially as tankers begin to use the routes in some cases cutting their trips by over 3000 km. Passenger cruise ships increasingly traverse the area and what would happen if there was an emergency near Greenland with a ship carrying upwards of 3000 passengers?

New communications will be needed. We all know the northern lights interfere with communications and as the ozone layer thins, more sunspot flares cause such things as HF (still used in commercial shipping) to be erratic.

The role of the NATO Alliance should be a provider of enhanced capabilities for prevention and management of crisis for long term stability and prosperity.

NATO SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AN ACTOR IN THE GLOBAL WORLD, NOT A GLOBAL ACTOR IN THE WORLD!

As delivered on 7 October 2009