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Author

Victoria Tait

GBA+ Application for:
A Not So Frozen 2035: The Future of
NATO in the European Arctic and High
North

Working paper authors: Kristen Csenkey, Balkan Devlen,
Charlotte Duval-Lantoine, and Annika Schulz

DSFG Thematic Team: European NATO

GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS PLUS (GBA+)

GBA+ is an analytical tool to advance gender equality and diversity outcomes of various policies, programs, and services. This strategy of gender mainstreaming is specific to the government of Canada, and includes not only gender but also intersectional considerations, such as race and sexuality. In 2016, DND-CAF adopted GBA+ in response to United National Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions, which acknowledges the need for gender perspectives in conflict, post-conflict and peace-building processes, and women's participation in decision making. GBA+ training through the Status of Women Canada online course is mandated for most DND-CAF employees and is an important consideration in assessing the most pressing future defence and security issues.

The GBA+ team of the DSF Group has developed a GBA+ toolkit that supports authors of working papers to integrate gender and intersectional considerations in their work from the initial stages of their research to the development of evidence-based findings and recommendations. The GBA+ Toolkit provides a series of key questions for regional teams to consider, such as: "are your concepts conceived in broad and inclusive ways to account for the experiences and perspectives of those not well represented in research and power structures?" or "how does your foresight analysis reinforce or challenge existing power relations?" A gender-liaison from each regional team works in consultation with members of the GBA+ team to develop GBA+ for the working papers. This GBA+ application complements the efforts of working paper authors to apply a GBA+ lens to their work.

GBA+ CONSIDERATIONS OF "TOPIC OF PAPER"

The working paper focuses on a commonly held concern about the future challenges for Arctic security; however, the authors have utilized a novel method in exploring that challenge. The authors utilize a "pre-mortem" foresight examination; a workshop is conducted with experts to determine how a subject of research (like Arctic security) may have arrived at an undesirable endpoint. In this exercise, the workshop consisted of the working paper authors and the subject matter expert Robert Kam. The workshop participants were presented with a possible scenario for the Arctic in 2035. In the description that was provided to the participants, melting sea ice has enabled increased trade and development along coastal areas. This process has led to previous Arctic governance structures becoming outmoded in light of new concerns about resource competition, and more complex security relationships as a result of the "complete fusion of public and private interests, making it difficult for states to distinguish sovereignty issues from corporate nationalism and military ones" (Csenskey et al 2021, 28). Within this milieu, NATO is portrayed as "increasingly unable to cope with addressing security-related problems in the region, due to its Allies' competing interests and the complexities of conflict" (Ibid). The foresight scenario further suggests that Russia's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council has pushed the Council's focus away from sustainability and towards issues of economic expansion (Ibid). This workshop exercise was designed to highlight that this worst-case scenario can be avoided if NATO adopts a more vigilant stance on its Arctic interests.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND GBA+

There are several areas in which future pre-mortem exercises can be informed by GBA+ to expand and deepen participant analysis. To begin, the organizers may consider working GBA+ elements into the prompts they provide to participants. GBA+ considerations could be enhanced by working factors such as race, sexuality, and gender into discussions about the increasing complexity of Arctic security. This would allow participants to explore, for example, the role of these factors in the information domain, particularly with reference to Russia. Moreover, this would allow workshop participants to reflect on the composition and reach of the governance structures they believe will become outmoded by 2035.

By integrating GBA+ into the earliest stage of research design, the authors will be able to ensure that future foresight exercises capture the human security dynamics of the region. Due to the deductive nature of pre-mortem analytic approaches, the authors may find it difficult to meaningfully include a GBA+ perspective unless these considerations are carefully included in the original research design. As a future research idea, the authors may also elect to revisit the exercise by integrating GBA+ considerations into all existing prompts. This would not only expand the foresight knowledge of human security in the region, but could also provide for a fascinating comparative piece between the first (no GBA+) and second (with GBA+) pre-mortem analyses.

EXTANT RESEARCH ON GENDER AND INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE ARCTIC

Scholars in the field of Arctic security have noted the utility of examining the region through a gendered intersectional lens. Eva-Maria Svensson (2014) notes that bodies of public governance in the Arctic region have frequently neglected discussions of gender equality. This absence means that key issues such as trafficking, gendered violence, and political representation are usually omitted from discussions on Arctic security (Ibid; see also Gjorv 2017). These issues are essential to understanding how the stability and security in the region are impacted at a micro-level of analysis. All states that extend into Arctic territory have an obstinate problem with human trafficking; the issue is likely to worsen with increased globalization (Perry 2019). Likewise, gendered violence is likely to surge in the region with the COVID-19 pandemic, as key resources for women in the region will become even less accessible (Schreiber 2020). These current and future challenges will require research informed by GBA+ analysis.

GBA+ analysis is also essential in examining Russian disinformation campaigns, which have utilized the political underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples and women in the region to paint NATO democracies as illegitimate (Bouffard and Lackenbauer 2020). Integrating GBA+ approaches that capture the human dynamics of the region (alongside the current state-centric approach) could help inform tailored policy solutions to ensure that in the future state adversaries will be less able to use the underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples and women to suggest flaws in NATO democracies.

GENDER, NATO, AND THE RUSSIAN STATE: DIVIDE AND CONQUER?

With this body of research in mind, the working paper includes discussion of several Arctic sovereignty issues of consequence for GBA+. For example, the authors go into detail about Russia's approach towards resource extraction in the Arctic. As the majority of high-paying jobs in the Arctic region, for example within extractive industries, are heavily male-dominated the economy of the Arctic is highly gendered, with women (particularly Indigenous women) placed in positions of economic precarity (see, Oddsdottir 2015). Similarly, the authors discuss the likelihood of Russia and China utilizing targeted disinformation campaigns within "Northern Communities to sow distrust" (14). This implies that enhancing NATO's partnership within these Northern communities would be advantageous but does not suggest how to achieve that end-goal. Whitney Lackenbauer (2013; 2020) has conducted a number of studies on the Canadian Rangers' close relationship within Indigenous communities. His research highlights that engaging with diverse communities in the Arctic has provided invaluable insight to the Canadian Armed Forces, while enriching Indigenous relationships with the Canadian government. Lackenbauer's research will prove useful if the authors continue to explore the relationship between these communities and NATO security forces from a GBA+ perspective.

Finally, the working paper defines NATO's security interests in the Arctic as centered around interstate conflict between NATO members and Russia. While this is an important part of ensuring Arctic security, it minimizes NATO's ongoing efforts to enhance its Human Security program. At the 2019 London Summit, NATO members affirmed their active commitment to increasing the organization's ability to effectively respond to human security issues. Moreover, NATO works closely with the UN on expanding the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and countering human trafficking (NATO 2021). Therefore, focusing solely on great power competition and combat capability omits several topics that are not only important in a GBA+ analysis, but central to the professed security priorities of NATO. By expanding analysis to include NATO's policies on the human security agenda, the working paper's current state-centered approach can be complemented with additional insight into how great power competition informs the day-to-day security of Arctic residents. A human security approach will also allow for a more robust analysis of local Arctic communities and gendered trends in the Arctic economy.

FURTHER QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The paper makes the astute observation that Russia has a strategic interest in protecting newly exposed coastal territory; analysts suggest Russia would be unable to defend its Northern territory if the sea ice melts entirely. This suggests that Arctic security analysis would benefit from a consideration of shared human security priorities in the region, including the preservation of environmental integrity and the gendered impacts of extractive industries working within Arctic territory. This may provide the Government of Canada a useful issue area to improve cooperation through environmental frameworks to forestall the further opening of the Northern Sea Route. This issue area could provide a point of complementarity for future cooperation and integration with otherwise inimical states by moving beyond coercive hard power security strategies.

2. North American understandings of fellow Arctic states are heavily informed by a state-centric paradigm that re-establishes previously defunct Cold War animosities. Reimagining current security challenges while prioritizing the values and experiences of the diverse communities that live in the Arctic coastal states may offer a useful way to begin undercutting the seemingly monolithic power of the state. By increasing engagement with Indigenous community leaders and organizations, the Canadian government can help empower diverse communities in the Arctic territory.

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