

HUMAN SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARCTIC

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by Anita Parlow, Esq.



Chasing Ice

THANK YOU DAVID. AND THANK YOU ALL. IT'S AN HONOR BE HERE.

To note, as a matter of climate change, geo-strategic considerations, and, war and peace—the headlines and the realities behind them leave little room to pause and think. Press accounts of ISIS, Yemen, waves of refugees—many children—from Syria over the borders to Turkey or Jordan, Yazidi beheadings, or worse, Kurdish separatists bombed, by Turks, yet as they fight ISIS, Royhingas stranded in phantom ships seeking asylum, or hundreds of thousands who cross the deserts of North Africa or the Mediterranean to find hope—there's a seemingly non-stop connectivity amongst all of us who live on this planet.

Seemingly remarkably, in the recent few years, the top of the world—the Arctic—has broken through—receiving attention in its own right. International organizations such as Greenpeace with photogenic submersibles and polar bear suits seek strong climate action by the Arctic states, establishment and management of Marine Protected Areas, improved technologies for petroleum development in the offshore, and protection of marine ecosystems and fish stocks from destructive fishing.

“Kayaktivists” in offshore Seattle recently tried to stop a Royal Dutch Shell drill rig from moving to its Arctic operations in the Chukchi Sea; and again, more recently, in Portland, Oregon, when Shell’s gouged icebreaker returned for repairs.

There’s a global imagery that has dominated the Arctic—be it the pristine, untouched Arctic of Amundsen, Peary, Hudson, Nansen, McKenzie, Bering, or, Chilingarov—or, the land of subsistence practiced by the elders and leadership of the Saami, Nenets, Khanty, Chukchi, Aleut, Yupik, Inuit, Dene, Gwichin, and Iñupiat peoples whose very way of traditional life is on the line. The Arctic appears to teeter between expressions in romantic terms, spiritual powers, or, as Charles Emmerson, who recently quoted Nansen, “the spiritual power to redeem the ills of the modern world,” while in its perhaps opposite, a source of future prosperity in its exploration of oil and gas.

Much has been said and written about the impacts of global warming in the Arctic context. Whether it be melting permafrost, warming waters where fisheries are moving northward, entire communities (like Alaska’s Shishmarif) falling into icy waters—washed away by seas no longer stopped by ice floes—or the potential increased viability of commercial interests: shipping, offshore oil and gas development, over the next several decades, and the potential opening by new fisheries, assuming the marine ecosystem habitats can keep pace with the trajectories of the fish.

The Arctic-wide stories told are generally broad based, large—largely true—but, to some extent, beside the point. For, as we know, there is no one Arctic. There are many Arctics.

So, offshore delineations, whether by customary law or codified in UNCLOS, reflect a longstanding tension between the rights of the coastal state and the freedom of navigation and fishing in the high seas beyond the state controlled waters. Yet, still frozen.

As the 1982 Convention set out the rights and responsibilities of coastal states and non-coastal delineations of internal waters, territorial seas, contiguous zones, exclusive economic zones, and the continental shelf (comprising the seabed and subsoil of the natural prolongation of the coastal states), land over which the coastal state has sovereign rights to exploit the natural resources found there. According to the US Geological Survey, some 80 or 90 percent of all offshore oil and gas lies within the Outer Continental Shelf Regions of the Arctic nations. And the estimated amount of offshore oil and gas counts for about 1/3 of the world's recoverable carbon resources.

With warming and increased use of oceans for fishing, resource exploration, and shipping—the dynamics and issues themselves are changing, which are likely to draw upon a wide range of advice-giving, treaty making and policy making functions regarding oceans. However, the creatures that live in them know little of the political and sovereignty issues of those who maintain jurisdiction. A question for consideration.

Which bring us to terrestrial concerns. While there may be a convergence of pan-Arctic concerns, environmental, commercial, human (Canadian journalist Ed Struzik writes of what he calls the “Post Arctic” world, or more ominously, “the end of the Arctic,” to describe our historical and geopolitical moment).

But, whatever the larger scale geopolitics—and even, perhaps to draw from what former Soviet Premier Gorbachev in his Murmansk speech called a

“zone of peace” that ultimately led to the creation of the Arctic Council—it is the many Arctics—the relationship between federal, state, territorial, provincial, and tribal interests that are certainly impacted, that give the Arctic its real meaning, and real dynamics.

And, despite the fact that the Arctic nations pledge to fully integrate the Arctic part of the Arctic nations in the development of national Arctic policy—be it Canada, the United States, the Russian Federation, Norway, Sweden, Denmark/Greenland, Iceland, or Finland—it is often said to be difficult to find a sympathetic ear.

In the U.S., as President Obama and Secretary State Kerry prepare to meet up with Alaskans and others in the Arctic Circle meeting to be conducted in Alaska, Senator Lisa Murkowski has strongly criticized the administration for its exclusion of Alaska’s Wildlife National Refuge and proposed limits on offshore leasing and in the National Petroleum Reserve as “declaring war on Alaska’s future.”

Balancing opposites is certainly not easy. And not likely to stop.

Our next speakers, Craig Fleener and Anthony Speca, remarkable in their understanding of the Alaskan and Canadian Nunavut contexts, will discuss the regions of the Arctic that unlike Norway, Sweden, Denmark/Greenland, Iceland, and Finland, are far less developed, maintain far less infrastructure, and unlike Russia, far less national focus on the role of the Arctic in the economic and political life of the nation. Quite distinct from the Alaskan and Nunavut points of view we are about to hear.