

activities.⁹ In certain forms, the environment has always been a part of the traditional understanding of national security, e.g., with regard to how military activities may directly influence the environment.¹⁰ The question of whether environmental degradation can contribute to or independently cause armed conflict, however, has not tended to be a strong element in traditional national security considerations. Nevertheless, this approach allows us to enlarge our understanding of what constitutes national security, but to a considerably lesser degree than demanded by the very broad definition, i.e., overall human well-being, discussed earlier. The Paper uses a definition of national security that is mid-way between the narrow conventional and broader definitions. In effect, the Paper uses the narrow concept as regards effect (because of the emphasis on violence) with a broader causal base (the environmental factor). It is also important to note that the environmental context applies to more than interstate violence. Depending on the nature of the environmental stress, i.e., global or local, the effect of the stress could arise sub-nationally or even more locally. Consequently, the prospect of acute environmental stress in a more restricted locality generating a violent response cannot be excluded.

3. Environmental Stress, Scarcity and National Security

3.1 Environmental Stress and of Resource Scarcity

No-one contests the fact that human activity has almost unlimited potential to alter or damage the environment. Environmental stress is adverse environmental change. Environment stress includes pollution, or the loss of ozone shielding the planet's surface from ultraviolet radiation, but is also more, such as the loss of fertile land. In this regard, a distinction needs to be drawn between environmental stress and the strategic dimension of resources.

Few would contest that the access to resources in their own right may be a cause of national security apprehension. Throughout history, many wars and mass movements of people may be characterized as resource inspired. Colonial wars in many instances were wars motivated by a desire to have sovereign control over natural resources. But these types of resource considerations, i.e., control and

⁹The archetype for traditional national security was the Cold War. From the NATO perspective, this meant national security concerns associated with the threat of an expansionist Soviet Union.

¹⁰Johan Nordenfelt, "Environmental Destruction as Method of Warfare", in Sverre Lodgaard and Anders H. af Ornäs, eds., The Environment and International Security, 1992, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO).