

VICTORY IN UKRAINE = CLIMATE COOPERATION

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Nations that have territory within the Arctic Circle are neighbors by geography, but they are partners by choice. When Russia invaded Ukraine, the democratic allies of the Arctic Council spoke with one voice to condemn the wanton aggression. Since then, those allies have found ways to cooperate in the northernmost latitudes while isolating Russia.

Russia's global standing has suffered since the invasion and Russia has paid a high price in the Arctic. A victory for Ukraine would be the very best outcome one could envision for Ukraine, Europe and the Arctic Region because it would show would-be aggressors that the costs of invasion are calamitous.

The Arctic Council strives to collaborate on issues of shared importance such as maritime interests, conservation, research and economic development. Military security is explicitly excluded. As a cooperative body that seeks consensus, the Arctic Council was rattled by the Russian attack.

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Russia held the chairmanship of the Arctic Council at the time of the invasion and no mechanism existed to deal with a problematic member. In March 2022, Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the United States acted decisively. The nations issued a joint statement of condemnation and quickly moved to resume work on projects that excluded Russia.

Since the invasion, Norway assumed Chairmanship of the Arctic Council and the organization has found ways to resume its important collaborations.

Member states and Indigenous permanent participants developed guidelines on how to identify new projects, especially those based on environment and sustainable development.

The mission was well stated by Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials, Morten Høglund: *"Multilateral people-to-people cooperation among Indigenous Peoples is integral to the mandate of the Arctic Council, and I am grateful to all participants for the constructive discussions, and for the opportunity to continue to support this cooperation."*

This is good news as it means that the Arctic Council can officially resume its work. One of the key priorities of the Arctic Council for several years has been climate cooperation from working on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response to Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime and Rescue in the Arctic. A commitment to cooperate means pulling together on crisis planning and responding to actual incidents that might occur from the military and industrial sector.

In addition, both the United States and Canada have committed to NORAD modernization which would see \$4.9B invested in the next six years and \$38.6B over the next twenty years. Both countries recognize the need for these investments to include infrastructure in their respective Arctic regions. That infrastructure should be multipurpose so that it benefits the predominately indigenous communities and industries. Attention must be paid not to contribute to global warming through additional emissions, while at the same time making the infrastructure as climate-change proof as possible so that investments are not put at risk due to environmental shifts that include melting permafrost and coastal erosion. Strategic investments that are multipurpose and mitigate climate change could be extremely

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beneficial in helping achieve security in the broadest sense. This is what success could look like – and should ideally be the outcome. The challenge will be whether the bureaucracies of member states can think and act differently to align with stated goals.

Innovation must include governments breaking down their silos and adopting more innovative approaches both with respect to departments learning to work more cooperatively, government working more collaboratively with industry and northern/indigenous stakeholders. This is a tall order and one that won't be easy, but it is necessary. Our northern and indigenous prosperity and security in the polar region depend on it.



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