

# BRICS+

## STUDY GUIDE

#LETSBEEUNITED

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## Letter from the Secretariat

Dear Delegates,

It is with great honor and enthusiasm that I welcome you to ITUMUN 2025, where innovation, diplomacy, and collaboration come together to shape a brighter future. As Secretary-General, it is my privilege to witness the incredible passion and dedication each of you brings to this conference.

For this year's ITUMUN, we challenge you to think beyond borders and redefine the possibilities of multilateral cooperation. As a university rooted in engineering and technical excellence, we have embraced our unique identity by curating committees and agendas that emphasize industrial development, technological advancement, and critical technical issues. Whether debating economic policies, grappling with emerging technologies, or navigating historical turning points, you will be tasked with crafting solutions that not only address the challenges at hand but also inspire progress.

Model United Nations is more than just an academic exercise—it is a platform for you to develop critical thinking, refine your communication skills, and foster a spirit of teamwork. This conference is your opportunity to step into the shoes of world leaders, embracing the responsibility and influence that comes with these roles.

On behalf of the entire ITUMUN team, I wish you the best of luck in your preparations and during the conference itself. We are here to support you every step of the way, ensuring that your ITUMUN experience is both impactful and unforgettable. I look forward to seeing the energy and ideas you bring, and the lasting connections you will forge throughout this journey.

Warm regards,

Roya Alhariri  
Secretary-General  
ITUMUN 2025

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## 1. Letter from the Chairboard

Dear participants,

It is our utmost honor to welcome you all to our committee, BRICS+. We are Reysi Kurtaran from Bahçeşehir University and Abdulla Kikati from Istanbul Technical University; We are proud to serve you as your chairs.

Both of our agenda items are unified under BRICS+'s political frameworks and their political stances as the world's power dynamics change. In this committee, we will discuss the recently highlighted Western governance and its effect on the world, and also we will focus on how to ensure the security of the energy and its resources in the Arctic in political and economic perspectives.

Before wrapping up, we want to thank our honorable Secretary-General Ms. Roya Al-Hariri and her deputy Ms. Eylül Su Karaman for offering this spot for the both of us. In addition, we want to thank our Academic Assistant Efe Mert Karakahya for his valuable contributions during the writing of this document.

We hope you have as much fun as we had preparing this guide while reading, and we're looking forward to meeting you in a few weeks! If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us before, during and after the conference.

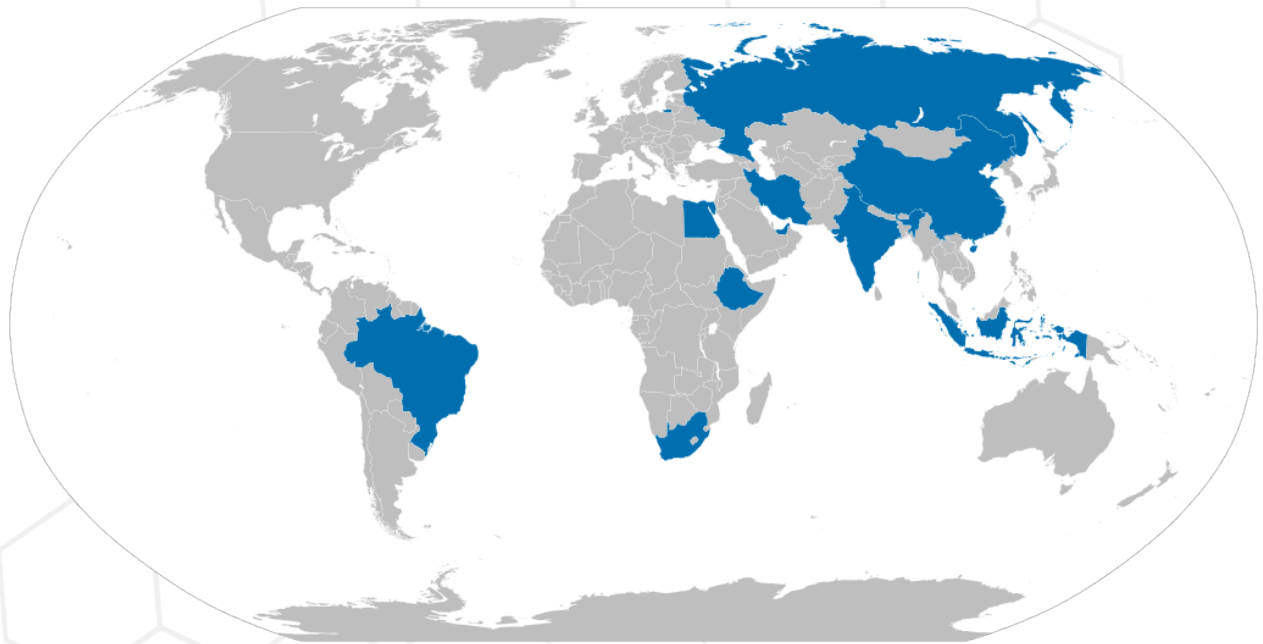
Best Wishes,

Reysi Kurtaran & Abdulla Kikati

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## 2. Introduction to the Committee

**BRICS+** is an intergovernmental organization that now encompasses ten nations: **Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia**. Initially identified to highlight investment opportunities among emerging economies, **BRICS** has since transformed into a cohesive geopolitical bloc. Since 2009, its member governments have met annually at formal summits to coordinate multilateral policies and address pressing global issues.



World Map Showing BRICS+ Current Members (João Felipe C.S, n.d.)

Relations within **BRICS+** are guided by principles of non-interference, equality, and mutual benefit, fostering a collaborative framework that respects sovereignty while advancing shared goals. The original **BRIC** group—**Brazil, Russia, India, and China**—held its first summit in 2009 in Russia. **South Africa** joined in 2010, participating in its first summit in 2011.

The recent inclusion of **Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the UAE**, which attended their inaugural summit as full members in 2024, signals the bloc's evolution into a broader coalition. On the 6th of January 2025, **Indonesia** joined BRICS officially as a full member, making it the first Southeast Asian state to join the bloc, as well as the **10th** member of **BRICS**. Informally referred to as **BRICS+**, this expanded membership aims to enhance the group's influence on global economic and political affairs (Global China Daily, 2025)

In addition to challenging Western-led institutions such as the **G7**, BRICS+ has established its own mechanisms—including the **New Development Bank (NDB)** and **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**—to promote financial independence and **South-South** cooperation. The group’s efforts now extend to exploring alternatives like a shared currency and collaborative security frameworks, underscoring its commitment to reshaping the global order in favor of multipolarity and equitable development.

### 3. Agenda Item I: Countering Western Dominance in Global Affairs

This agenda focuses on reducing the disproportionate influence of Western powers in global governance. You will examine strategies to challenge institutions like G7, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank, and explore alternatives such as a BRICS-led currency, joint security initiatives, and diplomatic alliances.

Key aspects include:

- NATO’s expanding role and its implications for global security.
- The weaponization of sanctions as geopolitical tools.
- The need for economic reforms to counterbalance Western financial hegemony.
- The ongoing expansion of BRICS and new aspiring members

Your task is to formulate actionable, collaborative solutions that bolster the autonomy and influence of BRICS+ nations.

#### 4.2. Key Terms

**Western Dominance:** The prevailing influence of Western nations, particularly the United States and European powers, in global political, economic, and military frameworks.

**Multipolarity:** A global order where multiple nations or blocs hold significant influence, as opposed to a unipolar or bipolar structure.

**Sanctions:** Economic and political penalties imposed by one or more countries to influence the behavior of another state or entity.

**BRICS Currency:** A proposed unified currency for BRICS nations aimed at reducing reliance on the US dollar in trade and finance.

**NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization):** A military alliance of 31 countries from North America and Europe, often seen as a tool of Western hegemony.

**New Development Bank (NDB):** A multilateral development bank operated by BRICS nations to finance infrastructure projects, with a starting capital of \$50 billion and authorized annual lending of up to \$34 billion.

**Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA):** A framework established by BRICS to address global liquidity pressures and provide financial support to member states during crises, functioning as an alternative to the IMF.

**BRICS PAY:** A payment system under development to facilitate transactions in national currencies among BRICS nations, providing an alternative to the SWIFT system.

**MBridge/BRICS Bridge:** A digital payment infrastructure enabling cross-border transactions using central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) among BRICS nations, designed for independence from single-nation dominance.

**Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS):** China's alternative to SWIFT, supporting global financial transactions.

**Structured Financial Messaging System (SFMS):** India's domestic alternative to SWIFT, aimed at enhancing financial independence.

**Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT):** A global messaging network for secure and reliable financial transactions, often criticized for being heavily influenced by Western nations.

**Group of Seven (G7):** A coalition of seven advanced economies—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States—that significantly influence global financial policies and practices.

**De-dollarization:** The process of reducing reliance on the US dollar in international trade and finance to achieve economic sovereignty.

**South-South Cooperation:** Collaboration among developing countries to promote economic growth, exchange resources, and address mutual challenges.

**Global South:** A term referring to nations primarily located in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, often characterized by developing economies and shared goals of achieving equitable global development and reducing Western dominance.

**HDI:** Human Development Index. It incorporates three dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge, and decent living standards. A value above 0.800 is classified as very high, between 0.700 and 0.799 as high, 0.550 to 0.699 as medium, and below 0.550 as low.

**GDP per capita:** Gross domestic product measures the total output created through the production of goods and services in a country during a certain period. It also measures the income earned from that production. GDP per capita of a country is calculated by dividing the total GDP of the country by its total population.

## 4.3 Historical Background

### Origins of Western Dominance in Global Affairs

Western dominance in global affairs traces its roots to the **colonial era**, when European powers like Britain, France, and Spain established vast empires across Asia, Africa, and the Americas. This dominance was further entrenched through economic systems that favored Western **industrialized nations**, such as the establishment of the Bretton Woods institutions—the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank—in 1944. These institutions were designed to **rebuild war-torn economies** after **World War II** but later became instruments for promoting Western economic ideologies, often at the expense of the **Global South** (Bretton Woods Conference, 1944).

The **United States** emerged as the leader of the Western bloc during the **Cold War**, consolidating its power through military alliances such as NATO, the **Marshall Plan** for economic recovery in Europe, **Truman Aids to Turkey and Greece** ; and its influence in shaping international trade policies. The dissolution of the **Soviet Union** in 1991 further cemented the U.S. as the dominant global **superpower**, fostering a unipolar world order



characterized by Western-led interventions, the expansion of NATO, and the use of **sanctions as geopolitical tools** (Huntington, 1991).

## **Pushback Against Western Dominance**

The idea of countering Western dominance gained traction during the **decolonization** movements of the mid-20th century. Newly independent nations sought to establish their **sovereignty** and assert their voices in global governance. The **Non-Aligned Movement** (NAM), founded in 1961, was an early attempt to create an **alternative bloc** that resisted alignment with either the U.S. or the Soviet Union during the Cold War (NAM Summit, 1961).

In the post-Cold War era, dissatisfaction with Western-dominated institutions grew among emerging economies. The **2008 global financial crisis** exposed the vulnerabilities of the Western-led economic order, sparking calls for reform. BRICS emerged as a response to these challenges, uniting Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa later on to advocate for a multipolar world order that reflects the economic and political realities of the 21st century (O'Neill, 2001; BRICS Summit, 2009).

## **Previous BRICS Summits**

### **1. 2009 – Yekaterinburg, Russia:**

- **Agenda:** Initial discussions on reforming global financial institutions and promoting a multipolar world order.
- **Outcome:** Joint declaration advocating for greater representation of emerging economies in the IMF and World Bank.

### **2. 2010 – Brasília, Brazil:**

- **Agenda:** Strengthening economic cooperation among member states.
- **Outcome:** Agreement to explore mechanisms for trade in local currencies to reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar.

### **3. 2011 – Sanya, China:**

- **Agenda:** South Africa joins BRICS; focus on sustainable development.
- **Outcome:** Adoption of the Sanya Declaration, emphasizing global governance reforms and sustainable development.

### **4. 2012 – New Delhi, India:**

- **Agenda:** Economic growth and sustainable development.
- **Outcome:** Agreement on the need for a BRICS development bank.
- 5. **2013 – Durban, South Africa:**
  - **Agenda:** Africa's role in global affairs.
  - **Outcome:** Commitment to establishing the New Development Bank (NDB).
- 6. **2014 – Fortaleza, Brazil:**
  - **Agenda:** Formal establishment of the NDB and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA).
  - **Outcome:** Fortaleza Declaration; steps toward financial autonomy.
- 7. **2015 – Ufa, Russia:**
  - **Agenda:** Strengthening economic partnerships.
  - **Outcome:** Operationalization of the NDB and CRA.
- 8. **2016 – Goa, India:**
  - **Agenda:** Combating terrorism and fostering economic growth.
  - **Outcome:** Emphasis on counterterrorism cooperation.
- 9. **2017 – Xiamen, China:**
  - **Agenda:** BRICS+ concept introduced to include non-member nations.
  - **Outcome:** Xiamen Declaration highlighting BRICS cooperation.
- 10. **2018 – Johannesburg, South Africa:**
  - **Agenda:** Inclusive growth and multilateralism.
  - **Outcome:** Commitment to strengthening intra-BRICS trade.
- 11. **2019 – Brasília, Brazil:**
  - **Agenda:** Economic growth and innovation.
  - **Outcome:** Focus on technology-driven cooperation.
- 12. **2020 – Virtual (Hosted by Russia):**
  - **Agenda:** COVID-19 response and recovery.
  - **Outcome:** Commitment to vaccine development and distribution.
- 13. **2021 – Virtual (Hosted by India):**
  - **Agenda:** Post-pandemic recovery.
  - **Outcome:** Emphasis on sustainable development and climate action.
- 14. **2022 – Beijing, China:**
  - **Agenda:** Strengthening multilateralism.
  - **Outcome:** Proposal for BRICS digital currency discussions.

**15. 2023 – Durban, South Africa:**

- **Agenda:** Deepening financial integration.
- **Outcome:** Agreement to accelerate local currency trade mechanisms.

**16. 2024 – Kazan, Russia:**

- **Agenda:** BRICS expansion, countering Western dominance, and advancing multipolarity.
- **Outcome:** Successful inclusion of Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the UAE into BRICS; discussions on alternative trade systems and reducing dependency on Western financial frameworks.

#### **4.4 Focused Overview**

##### **National Development Bank**

In June 2012, BRICS nations pledged \$75 billion to bolster the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) lending capabilities, contingent upon reforms in IMF voting rights. In March 2013, during the fifth BRICS Summit held in Durban, member states agreed to establish a global financial institution to complement and offer an alternative to the Western-dominated IMF and World Bank. This decision laid the groundwork for the creation of the New Development Bank (NDB), which was planned for launch by 2014.

At a BRICS leaders' meeting in Saint Petersburg in September 2013, commitments toward the reserve pool began to take shape. China pledged \$41 billion, while Brazil, India, and Russia committed \$18 billion each, and South Africa contributed \$5 billion. China's substantial contribution, reflecting its status as the holder of the world's largest foreign exchange reserves, prompted a push for greater managerial influence and for hosting the reserve's headquarters. Later that year, Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov projected the creation of a \$100 billion fund by early 2014, and Brazilian Finance Minister Guido Mantega confirmed plans for its establishment by March 2014. However, delays pushed the finalization of the currency reserve pool and the development bank to 2015.

During the sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil, in July 2014, member states formally signed agreements to establish the New Development Bank, initially valued at \$100 billion, and a reserve currency pool of equal size. Additional agreements covered cooperation among

export credit agencies and innovation collaboration. The Fortaleza summit also facilitated discussions between BRICS and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in Brasília, Brazil.

## **Other Initiatives**

### **Statistical Collaboration:**

Since 2011, BRICS countries have produced an annual joint statistical publication through their respective national statistics institutes. This initiative aims to harmonize methodologies, share data insights, and provide a unified statistical platform for mutual benefit.

### **Telecommunication Initiatives:**

The BRICS Cable, proposed in 2012, envisioned a submarine communication network linking BRICS nations to enhance telecommunications independence and mitigate vulnerabilities such as U.S. surveillance. However, high costs led to the project's abandonment in 2015. Despite this, cooperation in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector continued, with BRICS communication ministers signing a letter of intent in 2019 to advance ICT collaboration.

## **Expansion and Recent Developments**

### **2024 Expansion:**

At the 15th BRICS Summit in August 2023, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the invitation of six nations—Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE—to join the bloc, with full memberships to commence in January 2024. However, political changes in Argentina following its 2023 elections led to the country's withdrawal from the membership process by the end of the year. By January 2024, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE officially joined BRICS, while Saudi Arabia deferred its membership, citing ongoing deliberations.

### **2024 Partner Status Expansion:**

At the 16th BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, in October 2024, thirteen additional nations—including Algeria, Indonesia, and Turkey—were invited as partner countries to engage in BRICS initiatives. While not full members, these partner states were granted opportunities to collaborate with the bloc.

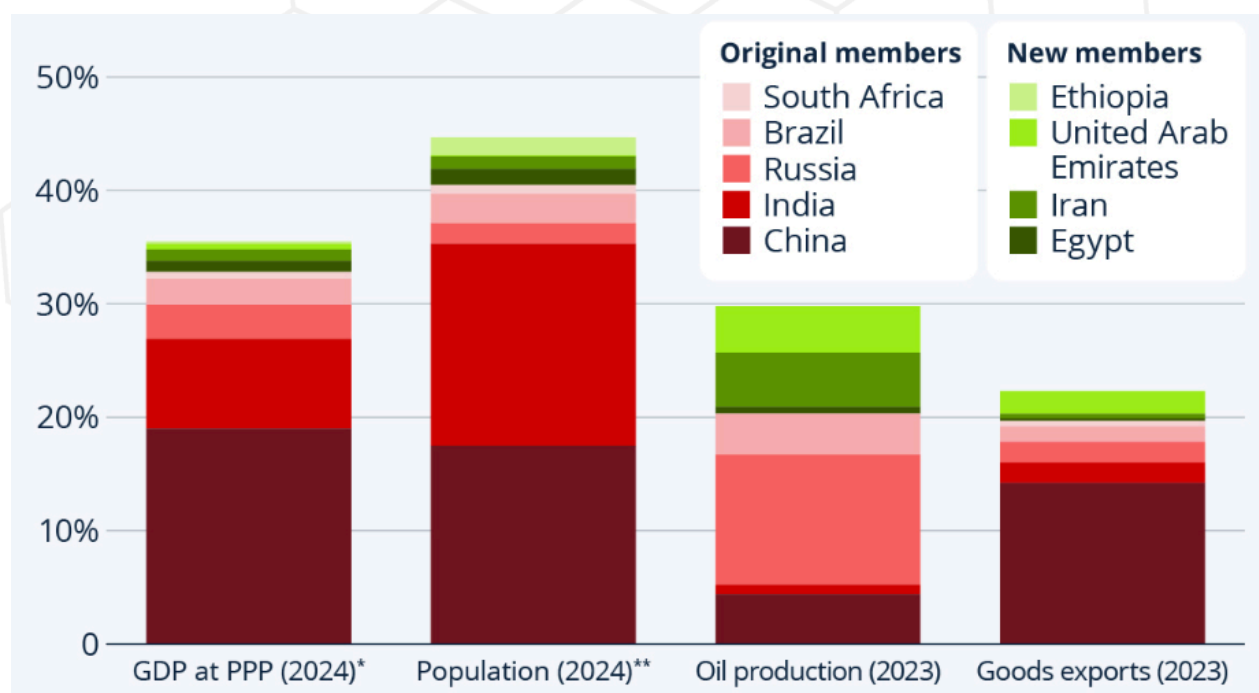
### 2025 Expansion:

Indonesia officially became a BRICS member in January 2025, marking the bloc's growth to ten countries. Indonesian membership followed a successful bid in 2023 and confirmation after its presidential elections in 2024.

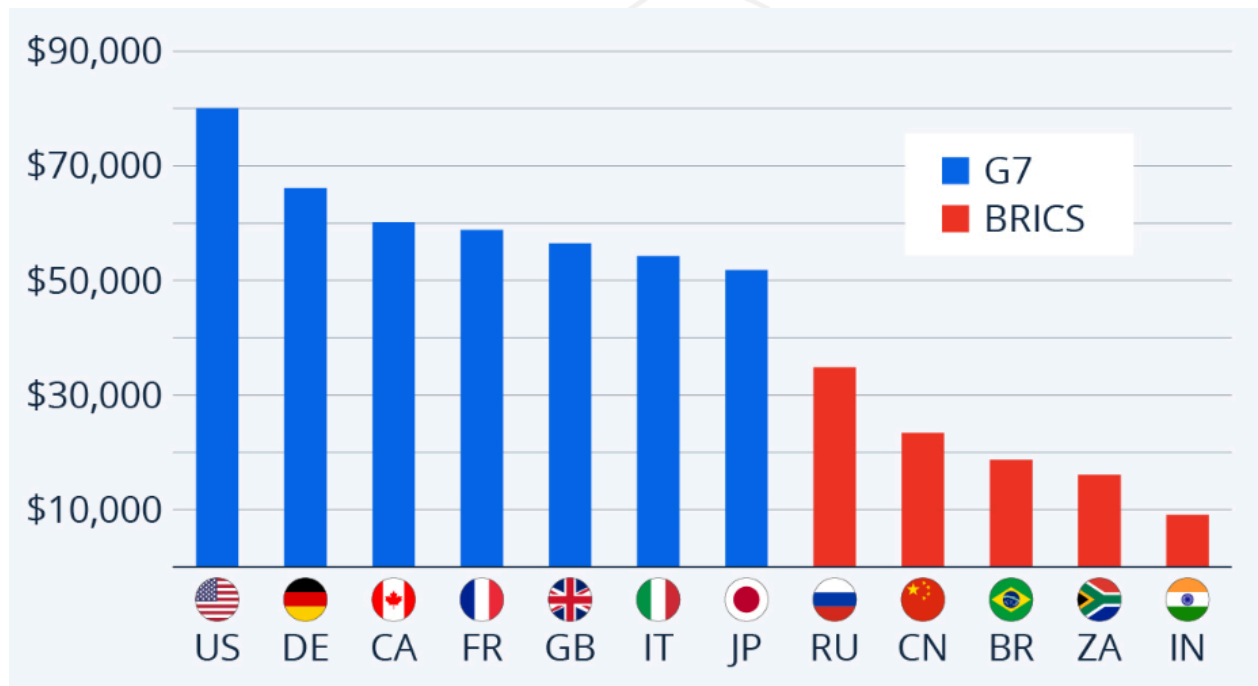
### Economic and Strategic Impact

Currently, BRICS is dominated economically by China, which accounts for approximately 70% of the bloc's GDP. Collectively, BRICS+ represents 46% of the global population, 25% of landmass, and over 35% of the world's GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP). The bloc's oil production contributes to nearly 30% of global output, with China's renminbi accounting for 47% of intra-BRICS trade transactions.

BRICS+ initiatives continue to emphasize building a multipolar global order, fostering South-South cooperation, and reducing reliance on Western financial systems.



BRICS countries' share of global GDP, population, oil production and good exports according to IMF estimates 2024 (Statista, 2024)



G7 and BRICS countries' GDP per capita in 2023 in international dollars at purchasing power parity. (Statista, 2023)

## Internal Challenges and Misunderstandings

Despite shared goals, internal challenges often hinder BRICS+'s effectiveness. Political tensions, such as the ongoing India-China border disputes, risk undermining unity. Economic disparities among members also pose coordination challenges; for example, South Africa's GDP is significantly smaller than that of China or India, affecting its influence within the bloc.

**Divergent Approaches to Countering Western Dominance:** One of the most significant internal challenges is the varying levels of opposition to Western dominance among BRICS+ members. While Russia and China often take hardline stances against Western policies, India and Brazil adopt more moderate or cooperative approaches, reflecting their strategic relationships with Western powers.

- **Russia and China:** These nations are the most vocal about countering Western influence, driven by geopolitical confrontations such as the Ukraine conflict and trade wars with the United States. Both countries advocate for rapid decoupling from Western financial systems, with Russia emphasizing alternatives like the BRICS payment system and China pushing for the Belt and Road Initiative to counterbalance Western trade routes.

- **India:** While India supports the idea of a multipolar world, it maintains strong economic and strategic ties with Western nations, particularly the United States. India's involvement in the Quad alliance alongside the U.S., Japan, and Australia sometimes conflicts with BRICS+ priorities, creating friction in forming a unified stance on Western dominance.
- **Brazil:** Brazil's foreign policy under successive governments has oscillated between alignment with Western economic models and South-South cooperation. This inconsistency often hampers Brazil's ability to fully commit to BRICS+ objectives.
- **South Africa:** As the smallest economy in BRICS+, South Africa often aligns with broader Global South initiatives but lacks the leverage to influence major decisions within the bloc.

**Challenges with New BRICS+ Members:** The inclusion of new members such as the UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Indonesia under the BRICS+ framework introduces additional complexities:

- **UAE:** While the UAE brings significant financial resources and strategic influence in the Middle East, its close ties with Western powers, particularly the United States, could limit its willingness to fully embrace anti-Western initiatives. The UAE's participation in Western-led security frameworks like CENTCOM raises questions about its alignment with BRICS+ goals. The UAE generally opposes the further expansion of the organization.
- **Indonesia:** As a major Southeast Asian economy, Indonesia's focus on regional stability and economic partnerships with both China and Western nations presents a nuanced challenge. Indonesia is hesitant to alienate its trade partners in the West while maintaining its growing ties with BRICS+.
- **Egypt:** Egypt's strategic location and role in African and Middle Eastern politics are valuable to BRICS+. However, its reliance on Western financial aid and military support creates potential conflicts of interest in fully supporting BRICS+ initiatives that counter Western dominance.
- **Ethiopia:** As a rapidly developing African nation, Ethiopia's priorities are focused on domestic development and regional stability. While it aligns with BRICS+ on South-South cooperation, its limited global influence and dependency on Western humanitarian aid may constrain its ability to challenge Western dominance actively.



**Perceived Economic Imbalances:** China's economic dominance within BRICS+ — accounting for nearly 70% of the bloc's GDP—raises concerns about its disproportionate influence. This issue is further exacerbated with the addition of smaller economies like Ethiopia and Egypt, which may feel overshadowed by larger members like China, India, and Russia.

BRICS+ must develop mechanisms to integrate new members effectively, ensuring their interests are represented while maintaining collective goals. Addressing these challenges will be crucial for fostering cohesion and advancing the bloc's vision of a multipolar world order.

## 4.5 Major Parties Involved

### 1. China

China is the most dominant member of BRICS+, contributing approximately 70% of the bloc's total GDP. It holds a pivotal role in shaping the group's financial and geopolitical strategies. Through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has extended its influence across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, positioning itself as a leader in global infrastructure development. Economically, China accounts for 52% of BRICS+ GDP at purchasing power parity (PPP) as of 2024. The Chinese renminbi is also the most utilized currency within the bloc, comprising 47% of intra-BRICS trade transactions.

China's assertiveness extends to global governance reforms, advocating for a multipolar world order. However, its economic dominance within BRICS+ raises concerns among smaller members about equitable influence in decision-making. China's significant investments in technology and renewable energy further underscore its leadership role.

### 2. India

India is the second-largest economy in BRICS+ and a key advocate for multipolarity, though it maintains strong ties with Western nations. India's strategic importance lies in its burgeoning technology sector and its leadership in initiatives like the International Solar Alliance. With a GDP of \$3.7 trillion in 2024 and a population of 1.4 billion, India's contributions to BRICS+ include promoting South-South cooperation and addressing global challenges such as climate change and energy security.



India's relationship with China is marked by border disputes and economic competition, which occasionally complicates BRICS+ unity. However, India's position as a bridge between the West and the Global South enhances its strategic importance within the bloc.

### **3. Russia**

Russia plays a central role in BRICS+ security and energy strategies. As a major global energy exporter, Russia's oil and gas production accounts for a significant share of BRICS+'s nearly 30% contribution to global oil output. Geopolitically, Russia emphasizes countering NATO expansion and reducing Western dominance in global affairs.

Despite its influence, Western sanctions following the Ukraine conflict have isolated Russia economically, making BRICS+ a crucial platform for maintaining its global relevance. Russia's advocacy for alternatives to Western financial systems, such as a BRICS payment network, aligns with the bloc's broader goals.

### **4. Brazil**

Brazil is a leader in agriculture and natural resource exports, making it a vital player in BRICS+ economic discussions. With a GDP of \$2.1 trillion in 2024, Brazil represents Latin America's voice in the bloc and promotes sustainable development.

Brazil's foreign policy oscillates between alignment with Western economic models and South-South cooperation, which can create challenges for BRICS+ cohesion. However, Brazil's leadership in regional forums like MERCOSUR strengthens its contributions to the bloc's global agenda.

### **5. South Africa**

South Africa, the smallest economy in BRICS+, represents the African continent within the bloc. Its strategic importance lies in its mineral wealth, including platinum and rare earth elements, which are critical for renewable energy technologies. South Africa also facilitates connections between BRICS+ and African Union initiatives.

South Africa's reliance on Western trade and aid presents challenges in fully aligning with BRICS+'s anti-Western stance. Nonetheless, its leadership in advocating for equitable development positions it as an essential member.

## **6. New Members of BRICS+**

### **United Arab Emirates (UAE):**

The UAE joined BRICS+ in 2024, bringing significant financial resources and strategic influence in the Middle East. As a major oil producer, the UAE contributes to the bloc's energy security. However, its strong economic ties with Western nations may limit its commitment to countering Western dominance.

### **Egypt:**

Egypt's membership enhances BRICS+'s influence in North Africa and the Arab world. Its strategic location along the Suez Canal and its role as a regional power make it a valuable addition. However, Egypt's dependence on Western military aid presents challenges in aligning with BRICS+ objectives.

### **Ethiopia:**

Ethiopia represents the broader African continent within BRICS+ and brings developmental priorities to the bloc's agenda. Its membership underscores BRICS+'s commitment to South-South cooperation. However, Ethiopia's limited economic power and reliance on Western aid may constrain its influence.

### **Indonesia:**

Indonesia officially joined BRICS in 2025 as its 10th member and the first Southeast Asian nation in the bloc. As a major economy with a GDP of \$1.3 trillion, Indonesia strengthens BRICS+'s presence in Asia and its focus on maritime and trade connectivity. However, its geopolitical neutrality may pose challenges in aligning with the bloc's more assertive members.

## **7. Observers and Partner Nations**

In addition to its members, BRICS+ engages with partner countries such as Algeria, Turkey, and Thailand. These nations participate in BRICS initiatives but have not yet achieved full membership. Their involvement highlights the bloc's growing appeal and its potential to expand further.

## Countries with Partner Status

### 1. Belarus

- Capital: Minsk
- Area: 207,595 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population (2024): 9.5 million
- Density: 45.8/km<sup>2</sup>
- GDP per Capita (PPP): \$18,246
- HDI: 0.798
- Currency: Belarusian Ruble (BYR)

### 2. Bolivia

- Capital: Sucre
- Area: 1,098,581 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population (2024): 12.2 million
- Density: 10.4/km<sup>2</sup>
- GDP per Capita (PPP): \$9,933
- HDI: 0.692
- Currency: Boliviano (BOB)

### 3. Cuba

- Capital: Havana
- Area: 109,884 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population (2024): 11 million
- Density: 101.8/km<sup>2</sup>
- GDP per Capita (PPP): \$22,237
- HDI: 0.764
- Currency: Cuban Peso (CUP)

### 4. Kazakhstan

- Capital: Astana
- Area: 2,724,900 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population (2024): 20.1 million

- Density: 7/km<sup>2</sup>
- GDP per Capita (PPP): \$34,534
- HDI: 0.802
- Currency: Tenge (KZT)

## 5. Malaysia

- Capital: Kuala Lumpur
- Area: 330,803 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population (2024): 34.6 million
- Density: 101/km<sup>2</sup>
- GDP per Capita (PPP): \$39,030
- HDI: 0.807
- Currency: Malaysian Ringgit (MYR)

## 6. Nigeria

- Capital: Abuja
- Area: 923,769 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population (2024): 220.2 million
- Density: 237/km<sup>2</sup>
- GDP per Capita (PPP): \$8,005
- HDI: 0.510
- Currency: Nigerian Naira (NGN)

## 7. Thailand

- Capital: Bangkok
- Area: 513,120 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population (2024): 66 million
- Density: 132.1/km<sup>2</sup>
- GDP per Capita (PPP): \$23,401
- HDI: 0.803
- Currency: Thai Baht (THB)

## 8. Uganda

- Capital: Kampala
- Area: 241,038 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population (2024): 49.3 million
- Density: 157.1/km<sup>2</sup>
- GDP per Capita (PPP): \$3,642
- HDI: 0.550
- Currency: Ugandan Shilling (UGX)

## 9. Uzbekistan

- Capital: Tashkent
- Area: 447,400 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population (2024): 37.5 million
- Density: 80.2/km<sup>2</sup>
- GDP per Capita (PPP): \$11,596
- HDI: 0.727
- Currency: Uzbek Sum (UZS)

## Countries in Partnership Evaluation

Four nations were invited to partner with BRICS but had not confirmed their status as of December 2024:

1. Algeria
2. Turkey
3. Vietnam
4. Saudi Arabia

## 4.6 Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

### 1. Creation of the New Development Bank (NDB):

The establishment of the NDB in 2014 during the Fortaleza Summit marked a significant effort to counter Western-dominated financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank. The NDB aimed to finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects in emerging

economies. By 2023, the NDB had approved over 90 projects worth approximately \$33 billion. However, limited capital contributions compared to Western institutions and dependence on existing global financial systems have hindered its transformative potential.

## **2. Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA):**

The CRA was introduced as a financial safety net for BRICS nations, providing liquidity support during economic crises. With a pool of \$100 billion, it serves as an alternative to IMF emergency loans. While the CRA provides a mechanism for reducing financial dependency on the West, its utilization has been minimal due to stringent borrowing conditions and political considerations.

## **3. Advocacy for UN Security Council Reform:**

BRICS nations have consistently called for reforms to the UN Security Council (UNSC) to include permanent seats for emerging powers like India and Brazil. Despite years of advocacy, resistance from current permanent members and lack of consensus among BRICS members themselves have limited progress in this area.

## **4. Promotion of Trade in Local Currencies:**

To reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar, BRICS nations have promoted trade in local currencies. China and Russia have led efforts in this regard, with the renminbi gaining prominence in intra-BRICS trade, accounting for 47% of transactions as of 2024. However, challenges related to currency volatility and trust among members have slowed broader adoption.

## **5. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):**

China's BRI, while not exclusively a BRICS initiative, has aligned with the bloc's goals of creating alternative trade routes and infrastructure. Several BRICS nations, including Russia and South Africa, have participated in BRI projects. However, concerns about debt sustainability and China's outsized influence have created tensions within the bloc.

## **6. Digital and Technological Collaboration:**

BRICS has sought to establish alternatives to Western-dominated technological ecosystems. Initiatives include the development of BRICS Pay, a payment system designed to reduce

reliance on SWIFT, and collaborations in artificial intelligence and green technologies. These efforts, while promising, remain in nascent stages and face significant competition from established Western tech giants.

### **7. Expansion through BRICS+:**

The expansion of BRICS to include nations like the UAE, Egypt, and Indonesia under the BRICS+ framework reflects an effort to amplify the bloc's influence. This initiative aims to create a more inclusive platform for Global South cooperation. However, integrating new members with diverse interests and varying levels of alignment on countering Western dominance poses challenges.

### **8. Regional Cooperation Mechanisms:**

BRICS has engaged in regional partnerships, such as dialogues with the African Union and MERCOSUR, to strengthen ties with the Global South. While these efforts have enhanced BRICS's regional influence, they have not yet translated into a cohesive global strategy.

## **4.7 Questions to be Addressed**

1. How should the organization approach further expansion?
2. To what extent should the response to economic and political challenges be united/unanimous among member states?
3. How to overcome internal conflicts between member states?
4. How to ensure a competent giant alternative to global payment systems?
5. Should BRICS+ develop a new currency?
6. Should the joint initiatives taken by member states go beyond economic endeavors? (ex. military, energy, security, intelligence, cultural, sports)
7. How to balance countries' national interests and sovereignty with the need for strong clear actions and stances of the organization?
8. How can BRICS+ accelerate its technological collaboration to counter Western dominance in data infrastructure, payment systems, and innovation?
9. What strategies can BRICS+ use to enhance its global image and attract more partners while countering narratives from Western powers?
10. What strategies can BRICS+ employ to reduce dependency on Western financial institutions and the U.S. dollar?

## 4.8 Further Reading

*Note* that you are highly encouraged to read all these suggestions, otherwise you will not be able to fully comprehend the agenda and the dynamics of the organization!

Kazan Declaration (December 2024)

[https://web.archive.org/web/20241207044850/https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/38450/Kazan\\_Declaration\\_Strengthening\\_Multilateralism\\_For\\_Just\\_Global\\_Development\\_And\\_Security](https://web.archive.org/web/20241207044850/https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/38450/Kazan_Declaration_Strengthening_Multilateralism_For_Just_Global_Development_And_Security)

Johannesburg Declaration (August 2023)

[https://web.archive.org/web/20230829042258/https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/CPV/Declaration\\_2408.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20230829042258/https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/CPV/Declaration_2408.pdf)

Beijing Declaration (June 2022)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220623180746/https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/35435/XIV+BRICS+Summit+Beijing+Declaration>

New Delhi Declaration (September 2021)

[https://web.archive.org/web/20210909174738/https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/34236/XIII\\_BRICS\\_Summit\\_New\\_Delhi\\_Declaration](https://web.archive.org/web/20210909174738/https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/34236/XIII_BRICS_Summit_New_Delhi_Declaration)

Moscow Declaration (November 2020)

[http://brics2022.mfa.gov.cn/eng/hywj/ODS/202203/t20220308\\_10649500.html#:~:text=We%20reaffirm%20the%20principles%20of,against%20the%20territorial%20integrity%20or](http://brics2022.mfa.gov.cn/eng/hywj/ODS/202203/t20220308_10649500.html#:~:text=We%20reaffirm%20the%20principles%20of,against%20the%20territorial%20integrity%20or)

BRICS amidst India-China Rivalry

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1758-5899.12977>



Why BRICS is a counterweight to 'Group of Seven' rich nations

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/explainers/2024/Oct/27/why-brics-is-a-counterweight-to-group-of-seven-rich-nations>



## 5. Agenda Item II: Strategic BRICS+ Engagement in the Arctic and Antarctica: Securing Energy and Resource Exploration Rights

### 5.1: Introduction to the Agenda Item II

As it is a well known fact, Antarctica is a continent where human living does not exist except the scientists living for scientific and research purposes. It is located in the earth's southernmost part, covered with an Antarctic ice sheet and surrounded by the Antarctic Ocean (Wikipedia, n.d.). Being the world's largest desert, it is rich in oil, rare earth minerals, natural gas and other natural energy resources. Moreover, since the Arctic is the least-populated continent in the world, its resources and other places remain untapped. Therefore, the region is being commanded on strict regulations and laws in order to engage regulated trade and mineral exploitation with the Antarctic Treaty System.

In today's world, technology in a variety of areas are being developed day by day and global competition and demands are being increased globally, BRICS+ nations aim to assert their role in these regions within each other. BRICS+ nations have distinctive policies and interests in the Arctic, but specifically since Russia has a vast coastline reaching to Antarctica, also having a well-developed technology in resource exploitation, has a great domination around the area compared to other members of the BRICS and partner members. By utilizing legal frameworks like UNCLOS, BRICS+ works towards having equity in geopolitical ambitions within its members, ensuring environmental sustainability in the area.

### 5.2. Key Terms

**Antarctic Treaty System:** agreements that aim to regulate international relations with respect to Antarctica.

**Rare Earth Minerals:** the minerals that are hard to find and used in renewable energy, electronics and defense technologies.

**UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea):** a framework that is established by the United Nations to reign in maritime and resource laws and regulations.

**Deep Sea Mining:** investigation and extraction of minerals and resources from the ocean floor or close to the ocean floor.

**Polar Research Stations:** Facilities that are built to control and decrease the gas emissions and adapt to the effects of climate changes in the Arctic.

**Ice Breaker Ships:** Sea vehicles that are designed for the navigation through the ice-covered waters and create pathways in the Arctic.

**Natural Resources:** any mineral or aesthetic asset afforded by nature without human intervention that can be used for some type of benefit.

**Ilulissat Declaration:** document that highlights the significance of efforts and responsibility in response to the potential harmful effects of climate change towards melting Arctic iced areas.

**Green Imperialism:** the term that is used for when environmental goals and strategic interests of a country intertwines with each other.

### 5.3. Historical Background

#### Geopolitical Importance of the Arctic and Antarctica

According to history, Antarctica as a continent was first found by the Russian, British and American explorers during expeditions in the 19th century. Yet, due to its harsh weather conditions and inaccessibility caused significant delay on Antarctica's full discovery until the middle of the 20th century. Then, it was symbolized as a domain of scientific research and peace. In 1959, the Antarctic Treaty was signed during the Cold War in order to ensure the fact that the continent is used specifically for scientific purposes and remove military activity. Later in 1991, the Protocol on Environmental Protection was adopted and Antarctica was declared as a protected region, minimizing the resource exploitation to the lowest.

The Arctic and Antarctica itself has become an important point for its environmental factors, geopolitical interests, and untouched rich natural resources. During the Cold War, the Arctic became a zone that was militarized because of its geopolitical location between the Soviet Union and the United States of America. After the war, Antarctica's energy potential was discovered and an exploitation competition has started between the countries who have a vast area near the Arctic. In 1996, the Arctic Council was established as a high-level intergovernmental council that marks the obstacles the Arctic nations and indigenous people of the Arctic Region are facing.

As a matter of fact, it was found that the Arctic is estimated to have 13% of the world's undiscovered oil reserves and 30% of untapped natural gas (U.S. Geological Survey). Russia and Norway, who have the dominant power in technology for energy exploitation, turned this region into a hotspot to exploit energy resources. In addition to its rich natural energy

resources, ice melting in Antarctica due to climate change has opened new pathways for shipping. One of the most compelling pathways that has been unveiled is the Northern Sea Route, which has become a shortcut way to travel between Europe and Asia.

### **Historical Shifts in Global Energy Markets and Their Impact on Polar Regions**

The strategic value of polar areas, especially the Arctic and Antarctica, has been greatly shaped by the shift of global energy markets throughout the past century. Originally disregarded because of their severe temperatures and lack of access, these areas have drawn greater interest as resource conflict and global energy demand have increased. Powered by industrial growth in Western countries and subsequently in developing economies, the aftermath of World War II signaled the start of a worldwide financial crisis typified by a skyrocketing energy consumption. Energy demands were mostly satisfied at this time by traditional oil reserves in the Middle East and North America, but tensions in oil-producing areas combined with resource constraints caused major nations to start looking at other energy sources. The Arctic, with its massive hydrocarbon reserves, appeared as a possible response to the situation, but a lack of suitable technology and significantly increased financial expenses connected with polar exploration posed substantial limitations to large-scale exploitation in the mid-20th century.

### **Energy Crises of the 1970s and Polar Exploration**

Global energy policy suffered a major change with the 1970s' energy crisis, primarily the 1973 oil embargo directed by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Responding politically, the embargo was implemented in reaction to Western backing for Israel during the Yom Kippur War, therefore restricting oil supply to the United States and many European countries. Substantial shortages, soaring oil costs, and general economic upheaval followed from this. By way of example, for a few months oil prices tripled from \$3 per barrel to around \$12, causing inflation, decreased industrial activity, and even shortages in numerous nations (History.com, 2022). In response, President Richard Nixon set up a limitation scheme meant to preserve American oil supply and guarantee ongoing low prices. The policies of Nixon contributed to fuel station shortages. For little supplies, Americans queued at pumps, and participated in a national debate on the danger of "foreign oil" and the country's dependence on petroleum. Simultaneously, the U.S. economy experienced both

inflation and recession (termed stagflation), thereby erasing American faith in the stability and reputation of the country both at home and abroad (Beasley, 2023).

With the crises happening, also Arctic nations Canada and Norway emerged as some key players as they recognize their northern resources' importance and focus on developing them. Canada, developed their exploration efforts and invested in icebreaker technologies and cold-weather drilling systems especially in Beaufort Sea and Mackenzie Delta. Norway, on the other hand, started off to explore the continental shelf in the North Sea and the Arctic Ocean and discovered Ekofisk oil in 1969. Following this founding, Snøhvit gas was found and this development positioned Norway as a leading Arctic energy provider by the late 1970s.

The crisis revealed the flaws in depending mostly on Middle Eastern oil, which forces countries to change their perspectives of energy security. In response, Energy-importing countries started to diversify their supplies of gas and oil as a reaction, hence, lessening reliance on OPEC countries. Beyond known oil reserves in North America and the North Sea, this diversification included more isolated and unusual areas like the Arctic. Both governments and oil corporations understood the strategic importance of reserves in geopolitically secure regions, which aroused increased curiosity in the Arctic's unrealized possibilities. As countries gave energy independence first priority above conventional sources, this change prepared the way for polar exploration.

## **Historical Presence and Policies of BRICS+ Members in the Arctic and Antarctica**

### **Russia's Arctic Dominance and Its Strategic Implications**

Using its geographical advantage and past knowledge of cold-region resource management, Russia has repeatedly positioned itself as the major operator in the Arctic. With the help of centuries of exploration and colonization, Russia's historical presence in the Arctic is unmatched among the BRICS+ countries. Driven by the fur trade and the hunt for alternative trade routes, the Russian Empire started spreading into the Arctic in the 16th and 17th century. Mapping large areas of the Arctic coast, Russian explorers like Semyon Dezhnyov and Vitus Bering confirmed Russia's claims to the territory. Under the Soviet Union, the Arctic became a pillar of state policy. To maximize the economic and geopolitical possibilities of the USSR, it built ports, military bases, and research stations among other massive infrastructure projects. Resources like minerals, gas, and oil were transported mostly

via the Northern Sea Route (NSR), a shipping path along Russia's Arctic coast. With major projects in regions like the Yamal Peninsula, the Soviet Union also pioneered Arctic oil and gas development. Russia remains Arctic dominant in current times.

In modern times, based on the "Arctic Strategy," which prioritizes resource development, national security, and international collaboration, the Kremlin governs Russia's Arctic policy. Having almost 53% of the Arctic coast, Russia has built a lot of infrastructure to fulfill its Arctic aspirations including ports, LNG facilities, and a growing fleet of icebreakers—the biggest in the world. Mainly liquefied natural gas (LNG) from projects like Yamal LNG and Arctic LNG 2, this infrastructure allows Russia to efficiently extract and export resources. Particularly in regard to constraints placed after the Russian takeover of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, these advancements are fundamental to Russia's economic resilience.

Russia's Arctic competence offers BRICS+ countries chances for cooperation, especially in terms of infrastructure and energy development. For important Arctic projects, China, for illustration, has collaborated with Russia offering funding and technical assistance. Under the Yamal LNG project, which is the foundation of Russia's Arctic policy and an essential component of China's energy security, the two countries cooperated. India has also interacted with Russia to investigate opportunities for Arctic resource exploitation, therefore indicating its desire in broadening its energy sources and taking part in the international Arctic conversation.

### **China's Strategic Engagement in the Arctic**

China became involved in Antarctica in 1983 when they entered the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS). Since then, Great Wall Station and Kunlun Station among other five research stations have been created. Emphasizing climate change, geology, and marine ecosystems, these stations assist China's strong polar research initiatives. China's increasing involvement in Antarctica demonstrates its desire to have an active role in conversations about the continent's future administration and resource possibilities. Their involvement with the polar areas is very new, but extremely important. In the Arctic, China announced themselves as a "near-Arctic state," underlining the region's global economic and environmental importance. China's engagement with the agenda commenced in the early 2000s, when they formed alliances with Arctic governments such as Norway, Iceland, and Russia.



China's Arctic strategy is explained in its 2018 white paper, which points out their engagement in Arctic administration, scientific research, and the building of the Polar Silk Road as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. The Polar Silk Road seeks to make use of melting sea ice to provide easier maritime routes between Europe and Asia, dramatically lowering travel times. Chinese firms have also invested in Arctic LNG projects, such as the Yamal LNG facility in cooperation with Russia.

### **India's Presence as Scientific and Diplomatic Contributor in the Arctic and Antarctica**

India's polar contribution is based on its dedication to scientific research and international collaboration. In 1983, the government became a consultative member of the ATS and created three Antarctic research stations: Dakshin Gangotri (currently deactivated), Maitri, and Bharati. These stations allow India to do research on glaciology, climate change, and biodiversity. Furthermore, India has also become a member of the Arctic Council in 2013 as an observer state. Established with a scientific mission to Ny-Ålesund in 2007, India's scientific involvement in the Arctic began. India built its first research station, Himadri—meaning snow mountain in Hindi—at the International Arctic Research base in Svalbard, Norway in 2008 (Srivastava, 2023). While India's Arctic actions are mostly scientific in the Arctic and Antarctica, the nation recently expressed a willingness in pursuing commercial potential, such as energy resource collaborations with Russia.

### **South Africa as a Gateway to Antarctica**

South Africa's polar activity has always been linked to its geographical proximity to Antarctica. The country's strategic position near Africa's southern tip creates the essential starting point for Antarctic investigations. South Africa joined the ATS in 1960, operating the SANAE (South African National Antarctic Expedition) research post in Queen Maud Land. The present-day SANAE IV station investigates space weather, geology, and biodiversity. South Africa also has a significant part in international Antarctic activities by their ports, most notably Cape Town, which acts as a logistics center for nations performing research in Antarctica. South Africa has no Arctic presence, but they actively engage in global discussions on polar governance, pointing out the need for inclusive and ecologically sustainable policies.

### **Brazil's Arctic Presence**

Brazil's affiance in the area is mostly revolved around Antarctica, where it prolonged its continuous presence since joining the Antarctic Treaty System in 1975. In 1984, Brazil established their first research facility which is Comandante Ferraz, located in King George Island in Antarctica. This institution's research is based on marine biodiversity, atmospheric studies and climate change. Brazil perceives its presence in Antarctica as vital to strengthen its prominence in global polar region administration.

Notwithstanding, Brazil lacks direct engagement due to its geographical location, they have shown great keenness in Arctic research within the context of comprehensive worldwide climate studies. Their partnerships with the Arctic nations and their participation in the global events related to the agenda indicates its rising acknowledgement between the Arctic nations and global environmental challenges, especially the emerging excessive ice melting in Antarctica.

## **5.4. Current Situation / Focused Overview**

### **Globalization and the Increasing Demand for Polar Resources**

In today's world, the need for rare earth minerals, oil and gas are increasing more than ever. Although there are several frameworks that officially state the Arctic and Antarctica are non-militarized areas and declared as a safe continent that will only be used for research purposes, NATO, Russia and China as a corporation are heavily demanding on the area's resources and converting the area to be militarized once again. As a result of the melting ice in the Arctic and the Antarctica, the continent became a transpolar bridge merging the precise trade locations of Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, also this situation caused it to emerge as a competitive strategic arena between the Arctic states, and one non-Arctic state, which is China (Gosnell & Jensen, 2024). As the technologies of military and resource exploration enhanced, climate change melting the ice caps and capitalism started to rule the world, the demand for the polar resources has increased as well. Furthermore, this situation generated geopolitical complexities, environmental and economic obstacles that involved BRICS+ countries, NATO member states and other key stakeholders of the area.

The Arctic resources became more important than ever when countries started to diversify their energy resources and reduce their dependence on Middle Eastern regions which are politically unstable. Russia perceived Arctic energy resources as a key component to its



economy and worldwide energy exports, especially to their major energy consumers which are China and India.

Under the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), resource extraction is restricted to a limited amount. Additionally, the Protocol on Environment Protection to the Antarctic Treaty has forbidden the nations to mine and exploit mineral resources. However, the demand for the rare earth minerals and other critical minerals increased too much and this circumstance led some stakeholders to reconsider some of these restrictions. As for the BRICS+ nations, China and India strategically located their scientific research stations (Kunlun and Taishan for China; Maitri and Bharati for India) to gain sufficient information about potential resource distribution and to have a better understanding of the Arctic geology.

NATO, other Western alliances and the European Union also play a vital role, and they have increased their contribution in Arctic administration due to the region's strategic value. Their Arctic policy involves strengthening the defensive assets of NATO member states and safeguarding the security of Arctic routes of trade which directly involve its member states. NATO member states -especially countries such as the United States of America, Canada and Norway- have expanded their military activities and enhanced their surveillance systems in the Arctic since they have been alleging worries regarding increased Russian militarization and the increased Chinese influence over the area. Nevertheless, NATO's strategy on the Arctic has created controversy among the BRICS+ countries, especially Russia and China, who regarded these activities as a threat to their strategic interests.

These conflicts not only caused instability in international relations among the countries, but it also had environmental and human rights concerns for indigenous people. Increased industrial activity and melting ice creating pathways for the ships started to threaten a fragile livelihood like the Arctic, which involves indigenous communities under its territory. Russia and China have received high criticism due to prioritizing their economic developments more than these communities' lives. For example, Yamal LNG -which is a large-scale energy project- are located in or near the surroundings that belong to the indigenous communities and this project, with its oil spillings, highly harms their water supplies or fish stocks. On the other side, NATO and EU member states are presented as the representatives of the sustainability and environmental protection of the polar regions, however, countries that oppose their policies argue that these member states use environmental concerns to limit their access to the polar resources to reinforce NATO's and EU's geopolitical domination in the area. As a consequence, "green imperialism" arose with these events.

In conclusion, the intersection of the rise of globalization emerged environmental concerns, and indigenous rights in the Arctic areas underlines the importance of equitable and inclusive government. While BRICS+ countries such as Russia and China receive criticism for promoting resource exploitation, Western parties confront their own difficulties in dealing with accusations of ulterior goals. This combination makes polar governance a controversial issue, requiring all parties to negotiate the complicated interaction of development, sustainability, and human rights. Without careful coordination and appropriate regulations, the rush for Arctic resources has the potential to increase environmental harm, socioeconomic disparities, and geopolitical conflicts.

### **Natural Resources and Resource Potential of the Arctic Region**

The United States Geological Survey identified that in the Arctic region, there lie 13% of the world's undiscovered oil reserves and 30% of natural gas reserves. In total, it includes 90 billion barrels of oil and 47 trillion cubic meters of natural gas. Adding to the poignancy of this issue is the fact that the deposits of these hydrocarbons are found in such prodigious amounts, located in regions such as the Barents Sea, Chukchi Sea and Beaufort Sea, natural resources on which the long-range strategic imperative of diversifying the world's energy supplies does not end. ( United States Geological Survey (USGS), Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle, 2008). These include minerals such as gold, copper, iron ore, nickel, and platinum. They are everywhere and not only to be mined but also sited in the territories of countries like Russia, Canada, or Greenland, among others. The Arctic has a great selection of minerals including neodymium and dysprosium, which are both used in making high technical products, wind turbines, and electric cars. China's control over the output of rare earth elements has also raised further interest in Arctic reserves (European Commission, Critical Raw Materials Resilience: Charting a Path towards Greater Security and Sustainability, 2020). Melting ice has turned the Arctic into a key passageway in international trade. For example, the shipping distance of exports from Asia to Europe has been cut by 30-40% with passages like the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage. The maritime and energy transport routes via the Arctic are generally more favorable and cost-effective. Be that as it may, ships pose an emerging environmental and security threat (Arctic Institute, The Future of Arctic Shipping: A New Silk Road on Ice?, 2018).

Extraction of natural resources in the Arctic involves not only the potential risks to the environment but also political debates. The whole region is very fragile and is exposed to

high susceptibility to human activities and the spill of oil, maritime traffic, and mining operations with countries over the Arctic waters, including namely Russia, Canada, Norway, the United States, and Denmark, which claim the resources of the region in the context of generally accepted equipment of international law. This itself has become controversial, especially now that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is already in place (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 2019, Maritime Boundaries in the Arctic Region).

### **Natural Resources of Antarctica Region**

The minerals presently known to occur in Antarctica include gold, copper, iron ore, nickel, coal, and uranium, which are all economically valuable. Indeed, the Prince Charles Mountains of East Antarctica are particularly rich in iron ore and other metals. Deposits of coal and some strategic minerals have also been found in other areas of the continent. Mineral finds in Antarctica have been reported since the middle of the 20th century. However, the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, also known as the Madrid Protocol, prohibits any commercial extraction and has been in force since 1991. Motivated by environmental sustainability concerns, this protocol does not allow the exploitation of Antarctic mineral resources for whatever commercial purposes until at least 2048 (Antarctic Treaty Secretariat, Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, 1991.).

Geological surveys have supported the presence of hydrocarbon reserves in Antarctica, especially around the Ross Sea and the Weddell Sea. Scientific estimates have suggested that the geological structures beneath the seabed are rich in petroleum and natural gas reserves. Some studies indicate that there are vast deposits of oil and gas beneath the oceanic floor around the continent; however, extraction of such resources is not viable at this time because of the costs and ecological implications. Furthermore, such exploitation has been prohibited under the Antarctic Treaty based on environmental protection laws. The fragility of the Antarctic environment, as well as environmental policy influences from the globe on the continent, has meant that any discussion of extraction of energy resources has been extremely limited (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Environmental Governance and Resource Management in the Polar Regions, 2021.).

### **Reasons for the Increasing Demand for Natural Resources in Polar Regions**

With an increasing global population, the demand for energy is also growing rapidly. The major factors contributing to the increase in global energy demand include industrialization

and urbanization, as well as dependence on energy-intensive technologies. According to the United States Geological Survey, the Arctic is estimated to contain 13% of the world's undiscovered oil and 30% of its undiscovered natural gas. This makes the Arctic a popular region among nations that pursue energy diversification and security policies (United States Geological Survey (USGS), Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle, 2008). Due to the extreme climate conditions in the polar regions, resource development in the Arctic was not possible until recently. However, with improvements in modern drilling techniques and deep-sea and satellite-based mapping systems, exploration for natural resources has become possible. These technologies have turned the underwater reserves in the Arctic exploitable, thereby raising the interest of companies in such regions significantly (International Association of Oil & Gas Producers, Advances in Arctic Resource Exploration Technologies, 2020.).

Global warming is a factor that makes every respect of polar regions more accessible due to the melting of glaciers. A meltdown in the Arctic Ocean's ice cover has cleared the path for navigation through new shipping routes, facilitating trade and transportation of energy with more ease. In the meantime, undersea oil and gas reserves are getting more accessible. However, it is also considered a threat to environmental balance in general. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate" presented in 2019. With the development of technology, the demand for rare earth elements began to rise, like neodymium and dysprosium. Electric cars, wind turbines, and smartphones in general, high-tech products depend on those elements. The Arctic is supposed to be a potential source for such strategic minerals. Leading positions of China in this respect generated attempts of other economies to find alternative sources for the raw materials in question (European Commission, Critical Raw Materials Resilience: Charting a Path towards Greater Security and Sustainability, 2020.). Access to energy resources is not only important economically but also has strategic importance for states. The opening Arctic is being seen as an opportunity to enhance energy security and competitiveness at the international level. Countries like Russia, the United States, Canada, and Norway take strategic steps with the aim of firming up territorial claims over the resources. This has come to be the critical geopolitical driver for resources demand in polar regions (Arctic Council, Arctic Resilience Report, 2016).

## Technological and Scientific Advancements in Resource Exploration

Monitoring Arctic sea ice is essential in understanding how accessible natural resources are within the region and how climate change is affecting it. Satellites like NASA's ICESat-2 and the European Space Agency's CryoSat-2 monitor the thickness of sea ice and measure the rate at which the ice is melting. The information provided by these satellites helps in observing how the seas in the Arctic will open up and also allows the study of the speed at which the ice is melting, thus helping energy exploration. Additionally, these studies give valuable information to enhance the efficiency of maritime transport in the polar region. (NASA, Cryosphere Science: ICESat-2 Mission, 2023; ESA, CryoSat Mission Overview, 202.) The structure underlying the Arctic forms a major part in the occurrence of natural resources. Geological mapping is done to determine their actual location. Magnetic and gravimetric data are used to acquire information regarding the structures that are buried beneath the seabed of the area concerned. This type of information is very useful in predicting the reserves of oil and gas in offshore locations. These types of mapping techniques created by the USGS provide an idea of the reserves of petroleum and natural gas, giving worldwide references ( US Geological Survey, Assessment of Undiscovered Oil and Gas Resources in the Arctic, 2023). It is pretty challenging to explore and extract resources in the Arctic due to ice layers with severities in weather conditions. Companies are starting to invest in robotic drilling systems to adapt to challenges. These systems use robots and autonomous vehicles that can work in very extreme environments to locate underground resources with much greater efficiency. Major energy companies, such as Shell and Rosneft, are developing and testing equipment capable of drilling in icy conditions in the polar regions (Science Magazine, Advancements in Arctic Drilling Technology, 2022). Resource extraction in the Arctic region is difficult because of thick layers of ice. Special types of ships, called icebreaker ships, are designed to break through the layers of ice. Russia facilitates access to the polar region with its Arktika-class nuclear-powered icebreakers. These ships break through thick ice layers, making it possible to reach natural resources. These icebreakers are also equipped with environmentally friendly technology aimed at reducing carbon emissions (Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, Arctic Climate Issues 2022, 2022).

The subglacial lakes of Antarctica have been isolated for millions of years and unique ecosystems have developed within them. For the first time, new avenues of importance to biotechnology and astrobiology could be opened; for instance, large lakes such as Lake Vostok will provide opportunities for gaining new knowledge about the microbiota living in



such environments. These microorganisms could act as a model to understand whether similar life conditions might be present on other planets. In addition, the ancient water inside these lakes is thought to provide further information regarding the history of climate in Antarctica (Christner, B. C., et al., Subglacial Antarctic Lake Exploration: Accessing and Sampling Subglacial Aquatic Environments, Science Magazine, 2014). Although commercial resource extraction is prohibited in Antarctica, various methods are underway to map mineral and mining potential of the region by scientists. Researchers are utilizing satellite imaging and radar technologies to study the geological structure beneath the ice sheets and identify minerals and other resources that might be available. These studies contribute to the knowledge about subsurface resources of Antarctica for the years to come (Cavaliere, F., et al., Geological Features Beneath Antarctica's Ice Sheet, Nature Geoscience, 2021). Research in Antarctica relies on robotic vehicles for subglacial life and geological structures studies. For example, NASA's autonomous submarines undertaking the Icefin project can submerge into sub-ice environments. These autonomously guided submarines beneath the ice sheet gather data and allow scientists to gain information that has not previously been accessible. Such technologies can be applied not only for scientific purposes but also for finding resources that might potentially be exploited (NASA, Icefin: Exploring Under Antarctic Ice, 2023). Radar technology has been developed to gather data on the thickness and structure of Antarctica's ice sheets. These radar systems provide valuable information by examining both the surface and subsurface structures, helping to identify the locations of resources in Antarctica. Additionally, these radars are critical for studying the impacts of climate change (IPCC, Polar Regions and Climate Change, 2023)

## **5.5. Major Parties Involved**

### **Brazil**

Through the Comandante Ferraz Antarctic Station acting as a base for scientific investigation, Brazil's commitment to polar concerns predominantly concentrate on Antarctic research. Consistent with Brazil's larger environmental and sustainable development goals, its research programs emphasize on the impact of climate change, marine ecosystems and biodiversity, and ecosystem surveillance. Brazil, a signatory to the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), has

actively participated in diplomatic negotiations to guarantee that the Antarctic government is consistent with ideas of peace and scientific cooperation. Brazil's increasing interest in the worldwide administration of polar areas demonstrates its dedication to multilateralism and sustainable utilization of common resources.

## **Russia**

Russia has been a dominant nation among the BRICS+ and on a global level thanks to its geographic location. Over half of the Arctic coastline is under its power, thereby making it the largest Arctic state. The Arctic area has a notable economic impact on Russia, contributing for around 20% of its GDP and 22% of overall exports. Its Arctic strategy is strengthened by the aggressive expansion of energy initiatives, with a particular emphasis on oils and natural gas. Their liquefied natural gas (LNG) sectors have their core on the Yamal Peninsula. Yamal Peninsula is located in the northwestern Siberia region of Russia, which is very near to the Arctic and has similar conditions with the Arctic region. Involving alliances with international companies like France's TotalEnergies and China's CNPC, the Yamal LNG project represents Russia's dedication to using Arctic resources. Furthermore, with the objective to facilitate year-round navigation and extraction activities in the harsh Arctic surroundings, Russia has made significant investments in a vast fleet of nuclear-powered polar icebreakers. In addition, it has made significant territorial claims to the Arctic seabed under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), promoting the expansion of sovereign rights in the resource-rich area. In addition to economic interests, Russia has militarized its Arctic territories by constructing bases and deploying advanced missile systems, which is indicative of its overarching geopolitical aspiration to dominate the Arctic in both a strategic and economic capacity.

## **India**

Considering India's larger dedication to solve climate change, like Brazil, India's Arctic involvement in the Arctic and Antarctica centers on scientific research and environmental management. Emphasizing climate investigations, marine science, and ecosystems, the nation runs the Himadri research station in Svalbard, Norway. As an observer state, India has actively engaged in Arctic Council discussions underlining the need of striking a balance between environmental protection and the development of resources. Strengthening India's Arctic projects, which complement worldwide efforts to track the consequences of climate

change on sensitive ecosystems, depends critically on the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR). Although India's Arctic presence is mostly motivated by science, its active participation indicates its awareness of the area's increasing geopolitical and commercial relevance.

## **China**

Defining themselves as a "near-Arctic state" in their 2018 white paper on Arctic policy, China has progressively positioned itself as a major participant in Arctic activities. Under the "Polar Silk Road" framework, this designation emphasizes its long-term strategic interest in the area, considered as a necessary expansion of its Belt and Road Initiative. Among China's Arctic operations are massive investments in facilities, research locations and icebreakers, such as the sophisticated vessel "Xuelong 2." The collaboration with Russia, especially cooperative LNG projects, shows even further China's desire to guarantee the accessibility of Arctic resources. On top of that, China has made investments in Greenland's rare earth mining operations, indicating the desire to secure vital minerals necessary for its technical and industrial sectors. Although China is not an Arctic state, it has used its observer status in the Arctic Council to increase its influence, supporting scientific cooperation and sustainable development while consequently safeguarding its strategic and commercial interests.

## **South Africa**

The main focus of South Africa's contribution to polar matters is Antarctica, where it runs the SANAE IV research station. Supporting research on space climate, environmental systems, and marine ecosystems, this institution advances worldwide knowledge of polar science. Promoting the ethical and sustainable use of Antarctica's resources, South Africa is a collaborative member of the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS). Its strategic relevance in Antarctic logistics and scientific cooperation is enhanced by its geographical location as a gateway to the Southern Ocean.

Despite South Africa having no direct interest in the Arctic, its dedication to multilateral cooperation and environmental preservation fulfills the BRICS+ nations' objectives of fair resource management. South Africa's expertise in international diplomacy—especially inside the ATS—positioned it as an important supporter of sustainable practices in polar regions.

## **Arctic Nations (Canada and Norway)**



Canada's policies as an Arctic nation relies on sovereignty, sustainability and the integrity indigenous communities. With their enormous northern territory, Canada perceives the Arctic and its policies as vital to their security and national character. They have primarily invested on safeguarding techniques for protection, with the military infrastructures such as radar systems or Arctic patrol vessels. Canada also perceives a cooperative approach with the indigenous communities living around these areas as a key component by respecting their traditional knowledge, while ensuring sustainability in resource development and exploration. The Arctic and Northern Policy Framework of Canada presents an objective that integrates economic growth, climate resilience and developed international cooperation with their allies. Norway, as one of the founding members of the Arctic Council, is one of the key nations that pioneers in the Arctic's environmental protection and scientific collaboration. For illustration, Norway's oil and gas exploration projects in the Barents Sea, which is located between Russia and Norway as a part of the Arctic Ocean, show their rigorous regulation to balance the economic development and ecological preservation. Moreover, Norway also is a strong nation in terms of military investments to ensure the security of the area and securing their Arctic interest though the rising tensions on geopolitical terms, with their advanced submarines and surveillance systems around the territory.

## **5.6 Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue and Analysis**

### **1. International Agreements**

- a. Arctic Council: The Arctic Council is an international platform addressing the environmental, economic, social and cultural problems of the Arctic region. Established in 1996, this council was formed by eight Arctic coastal countries: Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. The main aim of the Arctic Council is to ensure the environmental sustainability of the Arctic region and to develop policies concerning this region.
- b. UNCLOS: The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is an international agreement that determines the legal status of the seas and regulates the rules on the use of marine resources. This convention, adopted in 1982, covers issues such as the use of the seas, determination of international maritime boundaries, management of submarine resources and protection of the marine environment.

UNCLOS provides an important framework for resolving maritime border disputes between coastal countries by determining the boundaries of maritime areas.

- c. AEPS: Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy is an international strategy that aims to protect the environmental sustainability of the Arctic region. This strategy was created in 1991 to protect the natural environment in the Arctic region and take measures against environmental threats. Prior to the establishment of the Arctic Council, AEPS served as a global cooperation platform for the protection of the Arctic environment.
- d. Antarctic Treaty (1959): The Antarctic Treaty is an agreement that designates the Antarctic continent as an area for peace and international cooperation. This agreement, signed on December 1, 1959, was created to limit strategic and scientific competition during the Cold War and entered into force in 1961. The treaty made Antarctica an international scientific research center and prohibited the use of the continent for military and economic purposes.
- e. Madrid Protocol (1991): The Madrid Protocol (Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty) is an additional protocol that strengthens the environmental protection dimension of the Antarctic Treaty. It was signed on October 4, 1991 and came into force in 1998. This protocol introduced strict environmental regulations to protect Antarctica's natural environment.

## **2. International Cooperation and Scientific Research**

- a. International Polar Year: IPY, held in 2007-2008, is a major research initiative promoting international scientific cooperation in the polar regions. In this project, hundreds of scientists investigated climate change, biodiversity and human impacts in the poles.
- b. Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research: SCAR is an international organization founded in 1958 to promote, coordinate and direct scientific research in Antarctica and surrounding regions. SCAR operates under the International Science Council (ISC) and provides a platform that strengthens interdisciplinary cooperation on the poles.

## 5.7 Questions to be Addressed

- i. How can the tensions be eased in the militarized areas of the Arctic and Antarctica and promote higher levels of stability in the area?
- ii. What other technological advancements can be suggested to decrease the over militarization, the security and optimize energy extraction and resource development of the area?
- iii. How can new fields or frameworks be established among BRICS+ nations for different purposes? – e.g: for scientific exploration, sovereignty, equitable resource extraction.
- iv. How can BRICS+ nations navigate through existing international frameworks (UNCLOS, ATS) to ensure equitable resource exploration rights?
- v. What can BRICS+ nations do to respect and include the rights and interests of the indigenous peoples and local communities living in Arctic regions?
- vi. In what ways BRICS+ nations can advocate new multilateral agreements that balance the economic ambitions with ecological preservation while respecting every country's policies?
- vii. What can BRICS+ nations suggest for the climate change impacts seen in the Arctic and Antarctica? – e.g: melting ice caps, rising sea levels.
- viii. What actions can BRICS+ nations take to ensure sustainable resource exploration in polar regions while minimizing environmental damages to the area?

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