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Arctic Cooperation Within the Framework of BRICS in the Context of Its Expansion and Transformation of Global Governance for a Changing World[1]

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Abstract

Since 2024, the BRICS Interstate Association of countries with dynamically developing economies has been a platform for the development of multilateral and mutually beneficial cooperation between Russia, China, Brazil, India, the Republic of South Africa, Iran, the UAE, Ethiopia and Egypt, and in 2025 Indonesia joined the BRICS. Saudi Arabia has also shown interest in this association. The second wave of expansion along the South-South track (the first being the accession of South Africa) leads to the establishment of a new format of interaction within the expanded BRICS membership. Considering the accession of such countries as Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the association, we can predict intensified interaction within the framework of the association of even more countries in the future. In this regard, the question arises of searching for possible promising areas for cooperation between countries within the expanded BRICS, one of which may be cooperation in the Arctic – a strategic region for many countries given that climate change affects the interests of those seemingly far from region of the Far North countries. In the current conditions of decreasing efficiency of the regulatory function of the Arctic Council, the agenda includes the study of new international flexible formats for cooperation between countries in the region. In this context, the BRICS format seems quite promising for research in the above-mentioned vein. Within the framework of this article, through the prism of key scientific works and documents, the interests of BRICS countries in the Arctic are examined with an emphasis on the new BRICS member countries through an analysis of their existing or emerging Arctic agendas. Promising areas for their cooperation in the region are identified and a conclusion is formulated that the BRICS format can contribute to the development of cooperation in the Arctic region, especially taking into account the expansion of its composition in the context of the transformation of global governance.

Keywords: BRICS, expansion, the Arctic region, Arctic policy, Russia, China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Iran

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World is on the verge of a new order

The formation of a new geopolitical landscape of the 21st century turned out to be predetermined by the events of the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the bipolar system is reflected in high hopes for an inclusive and just world order. Despite the failure of the project of a fundamentally new international political reality, the world has actually become global, which does not fit into the paradigm of European supremacism and the two poles of power. This thesis is confirmed by the formation of many regional organizations that represent platforms for the coordination and integration of countries with different ranges of goals, from exclusively economic cooperation to the construction of a new international political entity.

One of the "messengers" of the new international order was the creation of the BRIC international quasi-organization [Abashidze, Solncev, 2012], the agenda of which was initially limited solely to economic goal-setting. Initially, the acronym "BRIC" was used by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill in one of the analytical articles [O'Neill, 2001] devoted to the analysis of the development prospects of Russia, China, India and Brazil as a bloc of states with the potential for economic growth. In June 2006, the development trends of the "New Big Four" for the first time received attention at a high political level, receiving discussion at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. In September of the same year, the first BRIC ministerial meeting was held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York on the initiative of Russian President Vladimir Putin. With the expansion of the group of states and the inclusion of South Africa at the end of December 2010. Not only is the name changing, but the authority of the union of states is also significantly increasing, and the inevitable inclusion of a political component in the BRICS agenda is beginning.

Since 2009, the goal of the association has been formally fixed as "the development of consistent, active and open cooperation between the countries." Such principles of activity as non-blocking and non-targeting against third parties were agreed upon; from a formal point of view, all these goals are still relevant. From a political point of view, the BRICS countries are the "poles" of a polycentric world, possessing not only the status of developing centers of political and economic influence, but also concentrating integration potential, each in its own regions.

The GDP of the BRICS countries is growing rapidly, and their role in solving global problems of humanity, which concern the whole world, is only becoming broader. Following the summit held in South Africa in the summer of 2023, it was announced that six new countries – Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Egypt and Argentina – would become full-fledged BRICS members on January 1, 2024. Currently, the BRICS membership is expanding due to the entry of five countries into its ranks; however, the new President of Argentina, Javier Miley, has stopped the process of his country's accession to BRICS [Forbes, 2023, December 29]. One way or another, the expansion speaks to the attractiveness of the association, within which states can find new ways to develop their economies and solve various problems. This also applies to cooperation in the Arctic, which is becoming increasingly promising for many states that have not previously been associated with the implementation of projects in the Far North.

Russia, being the only Arctic state in the association, pays special attention to increasing cooperation with the BRICS partners, as modern relations with the member countries of the Arctic Council are going through difficult times. It is worth considering the increased interest of "non-Arctic" countries in finding new ways of logistics and resource extraction, and it is Russia that acts as a mediator to expand the zone of influence in the Arctic.

The goal of the work is to identify the potential and prospects of BRICS as a platform for the realization of Arctic interests. To what extent can the accession of new BRICS members contribute to the development of cooperation in the Arctic? What is the most effective format of cooperation within the framework of BRICS in the field of the Arctic today? The answers to these questions will be found by identifying the main areas of activity related to the Arctic region, in which all BRICS member countries may be interested.

Institutional liberalism (neoliberalism) and the comparative legal method were chosen as the main theoretical and methodological framework in this research paper. In this paper, through an analysis of the Arctic strategies of the BRICS member states, it is considered how countries can use the potential of both bilateral and multilateral cooperation within the framework of BRICS to realize their interests in the Arctic region.

BRICS and the Arctic: what do they have in common?

The issue of cooperation between the BRICS countries in the Arctic has been of great interest in the scientific community in recent years. Research in this area has been conducted from different angles, both on the direction of bilateral cooperation between the BRICS countries in the Arctic, with an emphasis on different areas of cooperation, and on Russia's role in the BRICS as an Arctic power. Let's consider a number of the most significant works.

A.B. Likhacheva considers BRICS through the prism of ensuring water security, noting that various areas of cooperation for the development of the "water" sector of the Russian Federation, closely linked to the Arctic, can become a driver for deepening BRICS integration [Likhacheva, 2019].

Serious attention is being paid to BRICS maritime cooperation. Thus, H.L. Suarez de Vivero and H.C. Rodriguez Mateos in their work discuss the importance of the marine dimension for the BRICS group even before South Africa was included in it. The maritime policy vector of the BRIC countries is understood as a program closer to naval power (trade and military alliance) than the technological and environmental concept of cooperation (access to ocean possessions, ensuring their ecological functions through innovation, science and technology). This context makes the Arctic route a strategically important area for the development of BRICS cooperation [de Vivero, Mateos, 2010].

In his article, F. Vrey, agreeing with previous authors, notes that it is critically important whether the BRICS can transform the expected economic impact based on access to offshore assets and their reasonable use [Vrey, 2017].

According to A.A. Sergunin [Sergunin, 2020], the BRICS countries have the potential not only to solve problems, but also to ensure sustainable socio-economic development. As the author notes, considering BRICS solely as a source of economic growth for its participants means missing the point. BRICS can become one of the poles of the emerging multipolar world order. The BRICS countries, even in the context of decentralizing governance, are forming alternative institutions to existing governance mechanisms.

In turn, E. Ananyeva [Ananyeva, 2019] believes that Russia's main interest in the Arctic formally lies in natural resources, including two important issues: sustainable resource development and international cooperation. Their solution becomes even more relevant, given the insufficient infrastructural development of the Russian Arctic. According to the results of the study, multilateral institutions, including the BRICS, are widely used by Russia to express political interests and demonstrate the "goodwill" of Moscow in the region.

E.O. Labeckaja assesses BRICS as a forum that will allow the participating countries to increase and consolidate their growing influence in world politics in the future. The most promising form of expansion of the BRICS activities in the conditional "azimuth" of the two constructed spaces is Transarctic and Transatlantic. Their coupling would provide BRICS with the opportunity to join the development of a global governance model aimed at hedging a number of global risks threatening this group of states [Labeckaja, 2018].

Going beyond the interests of Russia and Russian ideas about BRICS and regional cooperation, there are a number of works devoted exclusively to cooperation and prospects for BRICS cooperation in the Arctic. One of the main works on this topic is the work of M.L. Lagutina, P.B. Casella and A.R.K. Giannattacio [Lagutina et al., 2020], where special attention is paid to the history of the formation of the Arctic agenda within the framework of BRICS. The discussion on oceanic and polar cooperation turned into a fruitful channel at the Third BRICS Ministerial Meeting on Science,

Technology and Innovation in October 2015 in Russia. The BRICS countries adopted the so-called "Moscow Declaration" and defined guidelines for joint research. During the 2017 BRICS Summit, the leaders of the BRICS group declared the Arctic, Antarctica, and outer space to be zones of exclusively peaceful cooperation. Finally, in July 2018, the First meeting of the BRICS Working Group on Oceanic and Polar Science and Technology was held in Brasilia. The countries agreed to identify priority areas of cooperation in oceanic and polar science and technology for subsequent meetings and projects under the BRICS program.

M.A. Maksakova emphasizes the special strategic importance of the Arctic region and the need for Russia to pursue a foreign policy course in order to maintain the status of a strong Arctic power. On this path, Russia faces a number of problems, the solution of which may be the intensification of international cooperation in the field of foreign technologies and investments in the Arctic, primarily with China and India [Maksakova, 2022].

Research articles related to BRICS in the Arctic, both directly and indirectly, include works on innovative cooperation and renewable energy. The study of the potential of BRICS scientific and technical cooperation in the Arctic was reflected in the work by E.N. Bogdanova, S.E. Zhur, I.V. Ershova, I.V. Savelyev and N.A. Chertova [Bogdanova et al., 2019], who identified the following areas for international cooperation in the Arctic:

1) developing natural resource potential with an emphasis on cooperation between Russia and China, Russia and India;

2) developing the transport potential of the region – cooperation in the implementation of the processes of refitting and re-equipping ships of the BRICS countries, joint training of crews for sailing in polar conditions;

3) expanding the educational space and academic scientific cooperation of the BRICS countries in the Arctic region.

In another paper, the authors, considering the specifics of cooperation between Russia and China in the Arctic, note the need for careful development of relations with China and India in order to preserve their sovereignty in the Arctic [Bogdanova et al., 2021]. The invitation of the BRICS countries announced by Russia in 2020 to participate in the implementation of joint oil and gas projects in the Arctic is considered fundamentally important.

Within the framework of the issue under consideration, it is impossible to circumvent the situation in the Arctic Council. S. Sukhanin and P. Whitney Lackenbauer [Sukhanin, Lackenbauer, 2023], analyzing the official discourse of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation following the suspension of Russia's activities in the Arctic Council, came to the following conclusions: 1) any decisions of the Arctic Council taken without Russia's participation are illegitimate; 2) the decision of Western states to 'marginalize' Russia will inevitably lead to a sharp increase in security challenges and disagreements between Russia and other Arctic countries.; 3) if the seven Arctic states continue to ignore Russia, Moscow will be ready to change the format and structure of cooperation in the region, mainly through the involvement of non-Arctic countries; 4) attempts by the West to marginalize Russia in the council are counterproductive; 5) the authors call the BRICS states the main alternative to Western partners for Russia, some of which have significant financial and economic resources and It is capable of replacing Western partners who left the Russian Arctic.

It is also necessary to mention a number of studies that address the analysis of specific opportunities and the existing experience of bilateral cooperation between the BRICS countries and Russia in the Arctic region.

Thus, Yang Nan and Guo Pejczin [Nan', Pejczin, 2022] consider examples of cooperation between Russia and China in the Arctic in the fields of science, tourism, environmental protection, and trade, with an emphasis on the problems hindering the development of cooperation. The authors systematize a number of existing scientific projects and the established joint research centers, the field of which is the Arctic region, and also provide an analysis of promising projects of cooperation between Russia and China in the Arctic, such as the development of Arctic tourism within the framework of the Russian Arctic project and the development of joint scientific projects based on the

Snezhinka research station.

In turn, E.A. Kuklina [Kuklina, 2023], studying possible tracks of BRICS Arctic cooperation, comes to the conclusion that China and India are key partners for the intensification of international cooperation in Russia within BRICS. Analyzing the mineral resource and tourism potential, the author cites examples of successful cooperation between Chinese and Indian companies in the implementation of energy projects in the Russian North, including Yamal LNG and Arctic LNG 2. Despite the fact that Brazil and South Africa are "still on the bench," and projects on Arctic cooperation with these countries lie in the future perspective, nevertheless, in relation to Brazil in 2019, this process started with the signing of a Memorandum on Mutual support for Export Activities and Investment Attraction [Izvestia, 2022, December 23].

The article by I.A. Strelnikova, M.G. Mayorova, D.I. Popova [Strel'nikova et al., 2024] is devoted to the current interests and projects in the field of logistics and shipping in the Arctic within the framework of the already expanded cooperation of the BRICS member countries. Based on the analysis of the Arctic strategies of the BRICS countries, the authors conclude that projects in the field of logistics, development of transport routes, port infrastructure and shipping are among the priorities for Russia, China and India. At the same time, the analysis of the emerging polar agendas of Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE also demonstrates their interest in developing cooperation in the field of logistics and shipping, especially in the area of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and the North–South International Transport Corridor (ITC), which in the future may lead to the formation of a common interregional transport system. within the framework of BRICS.

D. Sokolan was engaged in research on investment cooperation within the framework of BRICS [Sokolan, 2023]. The author notes that in relation to the Arctic region, the largest deal was concluded by Chinese investors in 2019, when CNPC and CNOOC acquired 10% of the shares in the Arctic LNG 2 project. Another earlier example of investment cooperation is the purchase of a 20% stake in the Yamal LNG project by Chinese CNPC in 2013. Another researcher of this issue, R.V. Badylevich, also comes to the conclusion that Vostok Oil is currently the largest investment project in the field of oil production being implemented in the Russian Arctic [Badylevich, 2023]. The total cost of these three projects is estimated at about 13.5 trillion rubles. All of them involve the largest foreign investors. As the author emphasizes, in the context of complex international turbulence, it is extremely important to focus on attracting partners from friendly countries, forming both bilateral agreements at the state level and on the basis of creating joint public investment funds, including within the framework of BRICS. In general, it should be noted that the priority area for applying foreign investments is the sphere of cooperation in the field of energy, infrastructure or transportation of energy resources in the Arctic [Strel'nikova, 2024]. Other industries in the Arctic remain unattractive for foreign partners.

The implementation of major energy projects in the Russian Arctic as part of joint infrastructure initiatives directly with China and India is considered in detail in the work by K.H. Zoidov, A.A. Medkov [Zoidov, Medkov, 2022]. The authors note that in order to attract foreign investment and technology, the military-strategic and political-economic contradictions of the United States, China, India, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other countries should be used.

In general, summing up the conducted excursion into the most significant studies, a number of features that were noticed in the process of working on materials that encourage continued active research on this issue, should be noted.

First of all, virtually all scientists note that the "Arctic cluster" within the framework of BRICS is the triangle of the RIC – Russia, India, and China.

Secondly, institutional cooperation in a multilateral format within BRICS regarding the Arctic issues remains underdeveloped, and the Arctic agenda itself inevitably turns out to be "blurred" by various related areas of interest (for example, issues of maritime and oceanic cooperation).

Thirdly, the existing cooperation networks among the BRICS countries in the region are closely linked to the Russian Arctic and are distinguished by the primacy of bilateral cooperation between Russia–China and Russia–India. At the same time, while cooperation between Russia and India

remains poorly developed and is noted as the "most promising", cooperation between Russia and China in the region is called the most developed.

Fourthly, the most developed areas of cooperation along the lines outlined in the previous paragraph are issues of economic cooperation and investment in the Russian Arctic energy sector.

Fifthly, the topic of the BRICS presence in the Arctic definitely cannot be considered sufficiently developed, especially in light of the expansion of the BRICS membership from January 1, 2024.

At the same time, all researchers dealing with the BRICS issues in the Arctic have noted the growing status of BRICS in world politics and the increasing demand for a redistribution of global development potential. The development of the Arctic agenda within the forum and the intensification of cooperation in the Arctic is in the interests of all member countries seeking to legalize or conceptualize the foundations of their Arctic policies in one form or another. There is no doubt that the leading position in BRICS in this context remains with the only Arctic state, the Russian Federation, whose actions and initiatives will largely determine the dynamics and form of promotion of the Arctic in the discourse of the group of states. Moreover, the issue of Arctic interests and the potential for developing international cooperation with the new BRICS countries is an urgent field for research.

In general, the main reasons that contributed to the increased interest in the BRICS format as a platform for the development of cooperation in the Arctic include the following.

Firstly, the political turbulence of the past few years and the situation of the Arctic Council's work freeze have led to the need to find an alternative platform to promote the sustainable development agenda.

Secondly, there is the serious economic interest of China and India in the Arctic, the great scientific interest of Brazil and South Africa in the Arctic, and the accession of new states to BRICS.

Thirdly, the flexible mechanism and political weight of BRICS in the international arena and in the field of sustainable development makes the forum an attractive platform for the development of polar cooperation.

Fourthly, the concept of the Russian Federation's foreign policy in 2023 [Ukaz, 2023, March 31] establishes priority areas of activity in the Arctic region – neutralizing the course of “unfriendly states towards the militarization of the region”, observing “the historically established international legal regime of internal sea waters” and the most important thing in this discourse is establishing cooperation with others. interested countries pursuing a constructive policy towards Russia.

Priorities and interests of the expanded membership of the BRICS member countries in the region

In order to identify the priority areas for the development of cooperation between the BRICS member countries in the Arctic at the present stage, it is necessary to briefly consider the key points of the Arctic strategies and other significant documents of these countries. This will make it possible to identify points of intersection of interests and promising areas for the development of both bilateral cooperation in the region and multilateral cooperation within BRICS.

Russia's Arctic Policy

Russia is the member of the Arctic Council, for which the development of the Far East and the Arctic is a key priority. More than 20% of Russia's territory is located beyond the Arctic Circle. The Arctic accounts for about 10% of Russia's GDP, and the region is of great strategic and resource importance.

In this regard, it is obvious that, having the largest area of the polar water area, which is subject to the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the Russian Federation, and more than 50% of the coast of the

entire Arctic Ocean, Russia actively participates in the management of the region, based on the interests of ensuring national security, realizing the transport and resource potential of the region, as well as improving living standards and the welfare of the population. In total, more than 400 fields have been discovered in the Arctic Circle, 60 of them are actively being mined, while about 25% of all fields have not yet been developed. At the same time, 2/3 of the fields under development are located in Russia. Besides, Russia is the country with the strongest icebreaking fleet in the world, whose growing capacities will allow for a planned increase in transit cargo traffic along the Northern Sea Route, and year-round shipping of vessels along this strategic route [MTRF, 2024, February 20].

The Russian Arctic Strategy [Ukaz, 2020, October 26], which replaced the "Arctic Strategy 2020" [SDAZRF, 2013], adopted in 2013, establishes the main directions of state policy in the region: developing the social sphere, economy, infrastructure, especially the NSR [Rasporjazhenie, 2022, August 01]; support for science and technology; environmental protection and environmental safety; international cooperation; ensuring the protection of the population and territories of the Arctic zone from emergencies and ensuring public and military security.

Russia has previously actively cooperated with non-Arctic states in the framework of cooperation to support the sustainable development of the Arctic. However, isolation in the Arctic Council in 2022 and sanctions gave a new impetus to the deepening of such cooperation. BRICS has become one of the platforms for discussing topical issues. There are four main areas in which Russia offers non-Arctic countries to develop cooperation.: 1) scientific research; 2) energy; 3) transport and logistics; 4) climate.

In the field of scientific research and energy cooperation in the Arctic, relations with China and India are the most advanced. The Yamal LNG and Arctic LNG-2 projects are being developed with the participation of Chinese companies. India doubled its imports of liquefied natural gas from Russia in 2023 (423 thousand tons) [Vedomosty, 2024, January 17]. China also became the largest importer of LNG from Russia.

For Russia, the intensification of cooperation with non-Arctic countries is especially important in order to attract foreign direct investment and new technologies to its Arctic zone. V.B. Kashin and D.V. Suslov point out the need to promote cooperation with such states based on the principle of "managed openness". This means that in joint projects with non-Arctic countries, Russia must retain a decisive voice in decision-making processes, as well as ensure the diversification of partners by involving several participants in cooperation at once [Kashin, Suslov, 2022].

China's Arctic Policy

Despite the fact that China has no territories beyond the Arctic Circle, it considers itself a state close to the Arctic ('Near-Arctic state'), and since 2013 it has had observer status in the AC.

China's growing interest in the Arctic is due to a number of reasons. Firstly, it is related to the economic opportunities of the region. China considers the NSR as a shorter strategic route to Europe, and is therefore developing the initiative of the "Ice Silk Road" associated with the NSR. Secondly, with the improvement of technical capabilities, including through the development of the icebreaking fleet.

The official document of the PRC on the Arctic is China's Arctic Policy [CAP (2018)], which was released on January 26, 2018. Key areas of China's Arctic Policy include: regional studies and scientific activities, environmental protection and combating climate change in the Arctic, environmental management, international cooperation and maintenance peace and stability; promoting innovation and building the technological potential of the region for research.

Scientific activity plays a special role in maintaining the sustainable development of the Arctic in the PRC's strategy. Critical areas of China's research in the Arctic include combating climate change, preserving marine ecosystems, and preserving terrestrial ecosystems, as climate change in the region has an impact on agriculture, forestry, and the marine industry in China.

Among all the BRICS member countries, Russian-Chinese cooperation in the Arctic is currently

the most extensive and covers several areas. In 2017, the Russian-Chinese Working Group on Cooperation in the Arctic was established, which operates on a permanent basis. And over the past eight years, not a single official statement by Russia and China on strategic partnership and cooperation has been complete without including issues on cooperation between Russia and China in the Arctic – cooperation in the field of scientific expeditions, polar tourism and environmental protection [Sovmestnoe zayavlenie, 2017, July 4], support for cooperation in the field of scientific research, tourism and ecology [Sovmestnoe zayavlenie, 2018, June 8], climate [Sovmestnoe zayavlenie, 2019, June 5], sustainable development of the Arctic [Russian newspaper, 2022, February 6], maintaining peace, stability and developing constructive cooperation [Sovmestnoe zayavlenie, 2023, March 21].

Russian-Chinese scientific cooperation is developing most intensively. So, in 2016, the first joint Chinese–Russian scientific expedition to the Arctic was conducted under the leadership of the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration with the support of the State Oceanological Administration of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Academy of Sciences. In September 2018, the second joint Chinese-Russian scientific expedition to the Arctic took place, and in August 2020, the third expedition [Nan', Pejczin 2022]. In 2017, a joint Chinese-Russian scientific Research Center for Ocean and Climate Studies was established in Vladivostok [Sputnik, 2017, October 10]. In 2019, China and Russia also established several scientific centers for joint Arctic research, including the Arctic Research Center, whose Russian parent institution is the P.P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Chinese National Laboratory of Marine Sciences and Technology (Qingdao) and the Arctic Blue Economy Research Center based at NArFU. M. V. Lomonosov and Harbin University of Engineering.

In 2022, the Russian-Asian Consortium for Arctic Research was established in order to develop a mechanism for implementing joint project activities, bringing together leading Arctic universities in Russia and China. In 2023, a Protocol on strengthening cooperation in the field of basic scientific research was signed between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Academy of Sciences [Fal'kov, 2023, March 21].

Finally, on May 16, 2024, the last Joint Statement by Russia and China on deepening Comprehensive Partnership and Strategic Cooperation was adopted. It established the importance of preserving the Arctic ecosystem, the need to promote the NSR as one of the important transport corridors, increase cargo transportation along the NSR, cooperation in the field of shipbuilding and the development of logistics infrastructure [Sovmestnoe zayavlenie, 2024, May 16].

Currently, the year-round Arctic Snezhinka station is under construction, where it is planned to conduct research on Arctic climate monitoring, develop and implement technologies in various fields, primarily related to climate change. Harbin Engineering University has become a key partner from the Chinese side [RIA Novosti, 2023, September 17].

In the context of multilateral cooperation between the BRICS countries, it is important to note China's initiative, proposed at the sixth meeting of the BRICS Working Group on Oceanic and Polar Research and Technology, held in Murmansk in June 2024, to establish the BRICS International Research Center for marine resources.

In general, China is the undisputed leader among all BRICS member countries in terms of the total volume of foreign direct investment in the development of infrastructure in the Russian Arctic. Over the past decade, China has invested more than $90 billion in projects related to the extraction and transportation of energy resources in the Russian Arctic, and the state-owned Chinese Ocean Shipping Company is second only to Russian national carriers in terms of navigation in the Arctic Ocean adjacent to Russia [Humpert, 2023, March 23]. In 2023 Chinese partners from Newnew Shipping, despite the risk of secondary sanctions, not only carried out container cargo transportation to China via the NSR, but also delivered a batch of container ships to the NSR line for regular flights along the named route [Maritime news of Russia, 2023, September 13]. This indicates that China is aiming for a permanent presence in the region and that Beijing considers this trade area to be promising

[Strel'nikova et al., 2024].

To continue the narrative about the deepening of the Russian-Chinese partnership in the field of Arctic logistics, shipbuilding and the growth of freight transportation along the NSR, as early as June 2024 within the framework of the SPIEF, Rosatom signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese shipping company Hainan Yangpu Newnew Shipping Co. Ltd. to create a year-round container line between the two countries along the NSR in the Arctic [BRICS PORTAL, 2024, June 29], which provides for the creation of a joint venture for the design and construction of container ships and the joint operation of the shipping line. Vladimir Panov, Rosatom's special representative for Arctic development, said that 12 voyages are planned for 2024. It is planned to build five Arctic-class vessels, which will allow the company to operate on the Northern Sea Route all year round. Panov said that in 2023, Rosatom transported more than 2 million tons of transit cargo, which is a "record" volume; plans for 2024 include transportation of up to 3 million tons.

As for energy projects, a number of Chinese companies are actively involved in their implementation. Together with PJSC "Rosneft, the Chinese company Sinopec, has been managing the joint venture PJSC Udmurtneft since 2006, which has 33 oil and gas fields under development. The share of the Chinese National Oil and Gas Company (CNPC) in the large-scale integrated Yamal LNG project is 20%, and another 9.9% belongs to the Chinese Silk Road Fund [Kuklina, 2023]. At the same time, in June 2024, the Chinese company Wison New Energies, which was building modules for Arctic LNG-2, announced the suspension of operations in Russia against the background of Western sanctions [RBC, 2024, June 21].

India's Arctic Policy

Like China, India has had observer status in the Arctic Council since 2013. In March 2022, the Indian Ministry of Geosciences published the Indian Arctic Strategy: Building a Partnership for Sustainable Development [IAP, 2022], which actually represents India's Arctic mission, also addressing aspects of economic security, agriculture, and water security.

In its Arctic strategy, India confirms its connection with the Arctic through scientific research in Antarctica and the so-called third pole, the Himalayas, and outlines six priority areas: building national capacity, caring for the environment and monitoring climate change, socio-economic development, establishing international cooperation, improving transport accessibility, and scientific research.

Particular attention should be paid to India's interest in cooperation in the field of maritime regulation, which is motivated by the desire to expand the international North-South transport corridor. With regard to the latter, the Indian government considers it promising [Bisen, 2024] to connect its infrastructure facilities with a Single Deepwater system in the European part of Russia. It is important to clarify that this logistics chain is planned to be expanded to the Arctic [Bisen, 2024]: in practice, this means integrating the infrastructure capacities of the NSR into this project. Taking into account the past experience of cooperation between the USSR and India along the Vladivostok–Chennai corridor and the prospect [ERDS, 2024, January 25] of resuming full-scale cooperation along this route, the Indian concept of an "expanded" Arctic currently promises tangible benefits to both sides from transportation across the Arctic Ocean.

In a joint statement by Vladimir Putin and N. Modi on July 9, 2024, following the results of the XXII Russian-Indian annual summit "Russia-India: Strong and Expanding Partnership", the parties once again confirmed their readiness to work on increasing logistical ties with an emphasis on increasing infrastructure capacity, including for the launch of the Vladivostok sea corridor. Chennai and the North–South International Transport Corridor (ITC), as well as tapping the potential of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) to intensify cooperation in the development of maritime transportation between Russia and India. To this end, they expressed their willingness to create a joint working body within the framework of the ITC to interact with the use of the NSR [Sovmestnoe zayavlenie, 2024, July 9]. Following the talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and continuing the narrative of the Conscientious Statement by the leaders of the two countries, an agreement was signed to intensify cooperation in the Far East and the Arctic [Gazeta, 2024, July 9]. The program is designed for 2024-2029. Its main goals are to increase joint investment projects, search for new areas of cooperation and increase trade turnover between the regions of the Far East and the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation and India. The development of international transport corridors that will connect Russia and India, including the Eastern Sea Corridor (EAC), is being discussed separately.

The expansion of the use of the NSR opens up opportunities for India to cooperate with shipbuilders specializing in ice-class vessels for polar operations, as well as for Indian sailors for crews of ships making Arctic voyages. As the Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways of India, S. Sonoval, stated at a meeting with the Minister for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic, A. Chekunkov, at the Eastern Economic Forum in September 2023: "India is interested in partnering with Russia in the development of the NSR, realizing its potential for expanding transport links and trade." During this meeting, an agreement was reached on the training of Indian sailors in polar and Arctic waters at the Russian Maritime State University named after Nevelsky, which has a complex of ship simulators in Vladivostok [The Arctic, 2023, September 14]. In turn, back in September 2021, at a bilateral summit, an agreement of intent was signed between the Zvezda shipbuilding complex and the Indian Mazagon Dock Limited regarding commercial shipbuilding [AZRF, 2022, September 7].

India has also been expanding energy cooperation with Russia for a long time. Currently, the Indian company Oil and National Gas Corporation is working on the Russian Sakhalin-1 project, where its share is 20%. In 2014, the Russian state oil company Rosneft signed a memorandum of understanding with the Indian OVL on cooperation on the Arctic shelf [RIA Novosti, 2014, December 9]. Later in 2017, Gazprom Neft oil company also signed a memorandum with Indian oil and gas companies [AZRF, 2022, September 7].

As for the scientific track, four specialized Arctic research centers have already been established in India, the key of which is the National Center for Polar and Oceanic Research (NCPOR) of India, and the Joint Statement on the results of the XXII Russian-Indian Annual Summit "Russia-India: Strong and Expanding Partnership" in 2024 emphasizes the importance of expanding scientific and educational cooperation and academic mobility.

During the official visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in July 2024, a Memorandum of Cooperation in the field of scientific research and logistics in the Polar regions was signed between the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute of Russia and the National Center for Polar and Oceanic Research of the Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India [AARI, 2024, July 10]. Currently, scientists are discussing the possibility of creating an international team for research in the Arctic on a unique Russian scientific vessel, the ice–resistant North Pole platform, which allows conducting long-term interdisciplinary scientific research in the high latitudes of the North Pole.

Brazil's Arctic Policy

Although Brazil is not institutionally present in the Arctic region, the Arctic agenda is an important continuation of the state's polar policy. Brazil has a great scientific reserve at the South Pole. Despite its geographical remoteness, the Arctic is among Brazil's interests, especially in the context of climate and water management issues. Brazil has its permanent Comandante Ferras research station and is an advisory party to the Antarctic Treaty. Finally, Brazil carries out research activities at the South Pole within the framework of the PROANTAR program, established in 1982. The presence of a permanent research station in Antarctica allows Brazilian scientists to conduct expeditions, carry out laboratory research to monitor and assess climate change in the region, and share research experience with colleagues from other countries.

Brazil is a regional leader in South America and one of the world leaders, so it is interested in the Arctic as a region that has an impact on the whole world. However, Brazil's interest was limited

only to Antarctica for a long time. For example, there was only a short section on the Arctic in the strategy "Antarctic Science for Brazil: An action plan for the 2013-2022 period" published in 2013 [ASFB, 2013] and the main influence was given to the South Pole. This strategy stated that Brazil is interested in developing cooperation with scientists working in the Arctic, as the interconnectedness of the two poles has become apparent in recent years. The dramatic changes that are taking place in the Arctic these days, especially the melting of glaciers and the subsequent rise in sea levels, have an impact on the entire planet. These processes should be studied to prevent a repeat of this scenario in Antarctica. In pursuit of this goal, Brazil also applied and expressed a desire to become an observer in the Arctic Council, but it has not succeeded so far.

Confirming its interest in the documents, Brazil issued the so-called "Antarctic Plan" for 10 years in 2023. (Ten Year Plan for Antarctic Science in Brazil 2023–2032) [TYPASB, 2023]. In this document, the Arctic was awarded a separate section, which deals with the fact that melting glaciers and other climatic changes at the North Pole have consequences for the whole world. Brazil's key interests in the Arctic and Antarctic include the following:

1) exchanging research experience;

2) prospects for international scientific cooperation;

3) expanding the horizons of national scientific activity, mainly in the field of climate change and water resources management;

4) possibility of exploring gas and oil on the Arctic shelf, taking into account Brazil's experience both in oil production and in cooperation with Arctic countries. For example, the Brazilian mining company Vale has experience in mining in the Canadian Arctic territories.

In general, it is necessary to conclude that Brazil's cooperation with Russia on Arctic projects should still be considered as a promising area. Cooperation with Brazilian companies for the development of continental shelf deposits may be most in demand, and the possibility of importing appropriate equipment is being discussed [Kachelin, 2023]. Currently, a memorandum has been signed by the Russia–Brazil Business Council and the Brazilian Export and Investment Promotion Agency on mutual support for export activities and investment attraction, as well as the use of the minerals extracted in the Russian Arctic by Latin American partners [Kachelin, 2023]. Brazil does not exclude the possibility of regular supplies of Russian LNG to Brazil, as well as participation in the construction of gas storage facilities.

South Africa's Arctic Policy

South Africa is the most geographically remote country from the North Pole of all the BRICS countries, as a result of which it does not have a national Arctic policy, but is involved through its Polar activities.

South Africa is active at the South Pole, and South Africa's Antarctic policy is anchored by the National Antarctic Program (SANAP)[1]. For example, South Africa has experience in polar research in Antarctica and has its own icebreaking polar vessel, S.A. Agulhas II. In 1959, the first South African station, SANAE IV, began operating in Antarctica.

South Africa's key interests in the polar region include ocean and marine ecosystem research in the face of climate change, monitoring of the terrestrial ecosystem, studying biodiversity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. As in the case of Brazil, participation in Arctic projects is still one of the promising areas of cooperation between South Africa and Russia. However, back in 2017, Rosgeologiya JSC and the South African state oil and gas company PetroSA signed an agreement for the exploration and development of blocks 9 and 11 of the southern continental shelf of South Africa [RBC, 2017, September 4]. In the future, the South African partner will have a growing interest in the Arctic region, due to the need to gain access to innovative exploration and oil production technologies

[1] South African National Antarctic Programme. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20090109040456/http://www.sanap.ac.za/ (accessed 3 June 2024)

used in the Arctic [Kachelin, 2023]. Therefore, an influx of South African investments in research and infrastructure projects for the development of the Arctic cannot be ruled out in the future.

Iran's Arctic Policy

As a new member of BRICS since January 2024, Iran is focusing more on the development of the North-South transport corridor, science and education, as well as environmental protection, marine resources and the ecosystem.

Iran is interested in developing logistics, and the possibility of implementing projects within the North-South transport corridor, which is a multimodal route between Russia and India through Iran, is being considered.

Iran also supports the development of oceanographic research. Thus, in 1992, the Iranian National Institute of Oceanography and Atmospheric Sciences was established, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology with the following objectives:

- basic oceanographic research;
- planning long-term programs for the protection and promotion of marine ecosystems, their optimal use;
- promoting scientific developments in various fields of oceanography;
- developing cooperation between relevant national and international organizations to enhance the role of marine resources in economic, social, political and cultural development.

In 2023 the Iranian National Research Institute implemented the project “Assessment of the overall economic benefits of the presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Antarctica” [Madani, Hemmings, 2023, October 19]. As a result of the conducted research, Iran's interests in Antarctica were formulated as economic and strategic, and among the latter there are three separate categories: renewable resources, non-renewable resources and “non-exploitable” resources, which are understood as scientific interests. Thus, Iran has already started its scientific research activities in Antarctica. The Antarctic research plan was approved by the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. In prospect, Iran's future polar agenda includes joining the Antarctic Treaty; developing and implementing the Iranian polar roadmap in accordance with international law; analyzing the international legal regime of Antarctica, in particular environmental protection; and the relationship between Antarctic science and Antarctic policy [Madani, 2015].

Special attention should be paid to scientific cooperation between the Iranian National Institute of Oceanography and Atmospheric Sciences and leading Russian scientific centers, including the P.P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In particular, the priority topics of joint research in the Arctic include the development of technologies for forecasting and modeling climate change in the region, oceanographic research and issues of conservation of biodiversity in the Arctic.

Iran does not have a regional strategy, however, back in early 2017, the Iranian ambassador to the Russian Federation visited the Russian Arctic, in particular, the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District, to assess possible joint investment projects in the field of fuel and energy [TASS, 2017, February 20]. The Iranian representatives were also interested in this aspect when signing the agreement between the University of Technology. Sharif and Tyumen Industrial University in 2019. [Cever-Press, 2019, September 19].

Cooperation in the fuel and energy sectors is also linked to the development of transport infrastructure, but much more important for Iran in the Arctic track is the proximity to the North–South international transport corridor, which is key for Tehran. By including Iran, it will link several BRICS countries together at once, which would meet the private economic interests of the Islamic Republic [CCIRF, 2023, July 28], and would carry the unifying potential for the Russian Federation, India and Iran. In March 2024, a bilateral Russian-Iranian agreement was signed to support special economic zones within the framework of this transport corridor. Taking into account India's vision of the future of logistics chains, Iran will thus have the opportunity to indirectly influence the

development of Arctic logistics [Strel'nikova et al., 2024].

UAE`s Arctic Policy

In recent years, it has become particularly important for the UAE to develop cooperation in areas such as combating climate change, which is a cornerstone for other new BRICS member countries, as well as energy and logistics.

In a scientific study by a group of scientists from the UAE, "A Roadmap for Policy-Relevant Sea-Level Rise Research in the United Arab Emirates" [Melville-Rea et al., 2021] the problem of warming, cataclysms and melting of sea ice is becoming relevant [WMO, 2021]. In June 2022, the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, in cooperation with the Arctic Circle, launched the Third Pole program[2]. On January 18-19, 2023, the Third Pole - Himalayas and the Arctic Model forum was held in the UAE; he scientific methods developed in the Arctic and the possibilities of their application at the "third pole", where the scale of climate change effects is not fully understood due to a lack of scientific data, were discussed. Arctic-Antarctic-Himalayan climate cooperation is currently seen as extremely promising, and a large number of countries are interested in intensifying such cooperation. Currently, the problem of climate change is a cornerstone, and in this regard, the exchange of experience, methodology, monitoring data and other scientific developments can be extremely useful in the context of increasing problems with water and food security.

Another key priority in the UAE's future polar agenda is definitely energy and logistics. This is due to the fact that the UAE positions itself as a maritime state and a shipping center. Access to the Arctic shipping region will allow us to gain a foothold in a rapidly developing, strategically important maritime region, and strengthen our position as a global trade and logistics center.

In this context, it is necessary to highlight the activities of the leading state logistics company DP World (Dubai Worlds Ports), which has been developing cooperation with Russian partners in the field of polar shipping since the early 2020s. The first agreement between DP World and Rosatom was signed in November 2021, it stipulated the design of a fleet of container ships for such routes and the joint development of port infrastructure on the Russian coast of the Arctic Ocean [Ivanovskiy, 2021, November 30]. The second agreement between DP World and the state-owned Rosatom company on cooperation in the development and operation of maritime transportation on the route between Asia and Europe was signed in 2023. Rosatom, as the operator of the NSR, and DP World will jointly design a fleet of ice-class container ships, which will then be deployed on the NSR in 2025 [Rosatom, 2023, December 07]. The agreement is aimed at improving the efficiency of commodity exchange, primarily between the BRICS countries and their partners, as well as the formation of sustainable global transport and logistics chains.

In 2017, the UAE developed the 2050 Energy Strategy [UAE, 2017], aimed at developing renewable energy sources and investing between 150 and 200 billion dirhams by 2030 to meet the country's growing energy demand as a result of a rapidly growing economy, taking into account environmental commitments. In turn, in 2019, the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company or ADNOC also signed a strategic partnership agreement with the Russian company Gazprom Neft [Gazprom-neft, 2019, October 16].

In general, cooperation with the UAE not only strengthens Russia's influence in the Persian Gulf region and global energy markets, but also reduces dependence on countries such as China to develop its Far North, diversifying the pool of investor partners and reducing potential technological dependence.

Egypt's Arctic Policy

[2] The Arctic Circle – UAE: Third Pole Process Available at: https://www.arcticcircle.org/third-pole-process (accessed 18.07.2024).

Perhaps, of all the new BRICS member countries, Egypt and Ethiopia are the least active in shaping their polar agenda in the future. Both of these countries are interested in addressing the threats of climate change and the development of renewable energy sources; in this regard, climate change and green energy issues should be considered as a possible area of cooperation with Egypt and Ethiopia within the framework of the potential Polar Agenda of BRICS.

Historically, Egypt has always been interested in developing its climate agenda, as its geographical location predetermined the presence of significant climate risks. That is why the development of measures to combat climate change within the framework of global action has always been on the agenda. Egypt prepared its first National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (2011-2031) [ENSACC, 2011] in 2011, and a Low–emission Development Strategy was published in 2018, which was prepared in accordance with the Sustainable Development Strategy - Vision of Egypt until 2030 [SDS, 2016]. In order to make the issue of climate change more important, the National Council on Climate Change (NCCC) requested the development of the first comprehensive national climate change strategy for Egypt until 2050 year – Egypt National Climate Change Strategy (NCCS) 2050 [NCCS, 2022].

Another direction for cooperation in the polar regions may be the direction of the development of renewable energy sources, to which Egypt has declared its commitment [IRENA, 2018]. To meet the growing demand for energy, the Egyptian government is implementing an energy diversification strategy known as the Integrated Sustainable Energy Strategy (ISES) until 2035. [ISES, 2015] This strategy involves the intensification of the development of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, partly due to active rehabilitation and maintenance programs in the energy sector.

Ethiopia's Arctic Policy

Ethiopia's polar agenda has not been formed, but at the same time, the country demonstrates a special interest in expanding its capabilities to combat climate change and overcome environmental crises. Ethiopia's interests in combating climate change related to the development of renewable energy sources are in direct correlation with the interests of all other BRICS countries, which provides good ground for the gradual development of cooperation in this area. Ethiopia is currently one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change.

Early warning and rapid response systems have proven to be one of the best tools in the face of hunger. They represent a "no regrets" strategy: instead of responding to an emergency, the Ethiopian Government begins to respond proportionally to the likelihood of its occurrence, which allows for a proactive response to signs of crisis in advance.

Saudi Arabia's Arctic Policy

For Saudi Arabia, energy, logistics and climate may become priority areas of cooperation with both Russia and other BRICS members, which is reflected in a number of official documents. Therefore, the formation of Saudi Arabia's Arctic agenda is possible through the focus and expansion of international cooperation in these areas. Economic sanctions created a difficult environment for multinational oil and gas companies operating in the Russian Arctic region, and Saudi Arabia can also act as an investor partner in the region on mutually beneficial terms.

An interesting fact in the light of the issues under consideration is that Saudi Arabia can become a center for cooperation between the Gulf states on Arctic issues using the Svalbard Treaty of 1920. In total, about 50 countries have equal access to the natural resources of Svalbard, and Saudi Arabia (which joined the treaty in 1925 as the Kingdom of Hejaz) is one of them. Given the global role that Riyadh aspires to play, a presence in the Arctic region makes sense.

The key strategic framework on the basis of which Saudi Arabia's Arctic agenda can be formed

in the near future is Saudi Vision 2030[3], which defines Saudi Arabia's overall approach to the development and maintenance of possible areas of interaction in the polar regions. These areas include energy, the IT sector (as an element of the logistics management system development), the green economy, and climate. To fulfill its responsibilities, Saudi Arabia plans to protect the environment by improving waste management efficiency, reducing all types of pollution, combating desertification, making optimal use of water resources, and using treated and renewable water resources. Saudi Arabia's energy policy and the goals reflected in Saudi Vision 2030 are in close correlation with Saudi Arabia's climate policy [Matar et al., 2023]. According to this document, Saudi Arabia plans to build a unique regional logistics hub. In addition to significant government investments in the construction of ports, railways and airports, it is also planned to attract investments to optimize and interface logistics infrastructure both domestically and abroad. Saudi Arabia can become the largest logistics center, a kind of gateway to three continents.

Russia recognizes the importance [Pervyj kanal, 2024, January 10] of Saudi Arabia's potential contribution to the development of the Northern Sea Route. Despite its geographical remoteness, the promising format of strategic investments in the infrastructure of the Russian Arctic, mentioned by the head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), will allow Saudi Arabia to contribute to the development of logistics cooperation between the BRICS countries in the region. Having experience working with Maersk, the largest logistics company in the world, through its Saudi Arabian subsidiary Kanoo Terminal Services Ltd[4] makes official Riyadh an important stakeholder in logistics issues at both the regional and global levels.

Against the background of joining BRICS, the "Arctic issue" is beginning to worry the country's leadership more and more, and in the future we can expect more specifics and certainty on it. Saudi Arabia is close to cooperating with the UAE and other BRICS member countries, at least in the initiative of the Third Pole Process project. In addition, it is important to prioritize building sustainable logistics chains.

Summarizing the specifics of the Arctic strategies of the traditional and new BRICS countries, the following should be noted. Russia, China, and India have developed detailed Arctic strategies. The main priorities of Brazil's Arctic agenda since 2023 have also been formalized. South Africa does not have an officially adopted Arctic Strategy, however, it has a well-developed Antarctic policy, consolidated in the form of a National Antarctic Program.

For the new participating states, the Arctic area is considered as one of the promising areas of cooperation. Among the possible bonuses: building an interregional logistics system, creating prospects for the formation of a common platform for combating climate change, and developing a joint research infrastructure. The UAE and Iran have the most developed Arctic agenda. The Arctic agenda of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia has not been formed and is in its infancy, but certain areas of interest significantly correlate with the policies of other BRICS countries.

BRICS as a platform for cooperation in the Arctic?

The analysis of the scientific literature, Arctic strategies and other relevant documents of the expanded membership of the BRICS member countries allows us to conclude that the BRICS countries have a lot in common in terms of their interests and priorities. Promising areas of BRICS cooperation in the field of sustainable development of the Arctic region may include: environmental protection and combating climate change; science and education; Arctic resource development; green energy; support for indigenous peoples; transport and logistics; and tourism development.

Despite the fact that BRICS is an informal association of states, this structure has certain

[3] Saudi Vision 2030. Available at: https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/media/rc0b5oy1/saudi_vision203.pdf (accessed 24 June 2024)

[4] Transportation and Logistic Services. Kanoo Terminal Services Ltd. Available at: https://www.kanooterminals.com/transportation-and-logistics-services (accessed 17.07.2024).

prospects in the context of the formation of a world of regions and a polycentric world order. Each BRICS member is a leading regional power and ensures its representation in various regions of the world, from the Arctic to the Asia–Pacific region [Lagutina, 2019]. In this regard, the BRICS format can make it possible to successfully implement a number of areas within the framework of international cooperation in the Arctic.

At the same time, it should be noted that within the framework of BRICS today, the bilateral format of cooperation still prevails over the multilateral one. According to experts, "the uncertain legal status of BRICS, the lack of coherence on a number of issues, conflicts within the group and the lack of common military and strategic goals in the context of international security make its subjectivity blurred, and the possibility of collective action situational [Lagutina, 2019]. There is also some concern that, despite the positive dynamics, China and India continue to support their traditionally promoted concept of the "Arctic as a universal human heritage," which would normally be an unacceptable precedent for Russia. The idea of internationalization of the Arctic, which is extremely popular among non-regional states, is in conflict with the interests of the Russian Federation and other Arctic states.

The BRICS countries face a number of challenges on the Arctic agenda. Given that the official unified approach has not yet been developed by the association, we can talk about a number of issues. First of all, it is necessary to take into account some obvious unequal positions of the countries, since the Russian Federation is the only Arctic power, this may lead to Russia's dominance in decision-making and the dependence of the BRICS countries on Moscow's policy in the region. It is important to take into account the geographical spread of the BRICS countries and the different levels of interaction between the countries and the region. While Russia, China, and India are already actively creating and developing Arctic projects, establishing bilateral supply chains, and setting up multilateral Working Groups and research centers, the new BRICS members have yet to shape their policies. The uneven distribution of forces creates different speeds on the way to cooperation. At the same time, each of the BRICS countries also has its own national interests, which may prevail over the interests of cooperation between the group of countries.

However, the main difficulty in expanding cooperation between countries within the framework of the BRICS is still the insufficient involvement of countries in the formation of multilateral projects and the small number of such projects in general. The solution to this is seen, among other things, in expanding the potential BRICS agenda from a purely Arctic to a broader polar one, covering multilateral projects and developing international cooperation across all three poles (Arctic-Antarctic-Himalayas), which is particularly relevant in the context of the expansion of the BRICS membership in January 2024. This will open a window of opportunity for cooperation for all BRICS member countries in as many promising areas as possible.

However, in the future, BRICS may become an extremely promising platform not only for bilateral, but also for multilateral cooperation in the Arctic in the context of its expansion and transformation of global governance in the changing world. BRICS unites states that, based on an analysis of their Arctic agendas and other key documents, have either been engaged in activities in the region for a long time or have great prospects of joining such activities in the near future. BRICS can create conditions for member countries to more intensively discuss issues of economic development of the Arctic region in terms of mining, primarily oil and natural gas, which play a major role for the developing economies of the BRICS countries, as well as the development of the NSR as a promising additional alternative to existing sea routes. At the same time, BRICS has a good chance to become a platform for scientific research that can provide the world community with a breakthrough in environmental protection and the preservation of the unique ecosystem of the Arctic region.

And taking into account the expansion of the BRICS since January 2024, issues of international cooperation between the BRICS countries are on the agenda not only in the context of one Arctic region, but also in the context of cooperation within all three poles.

The comprehensive cooperation of all BRICS countries, which have their own unique technological resources, accumulated knowledge and experience in researching problems in all three

polar regions, will make it possible to build a system of productive international cooperation in the new geopolitical realities as effectively as possible, and, possibly, in the future, to form a common effective Polar agenda of the BRICS countries.

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