

A photograph of an Arctic landscape. In the foreground, there is a large, blue-tinted iceberg floating in the water. In the background, a massive glacier flows down a rocky, snow-dusted slope. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

**BRICS+ as a platform for cooperation  
in the Arctic: Challenges, Prospects  
and Development Scenarios**

# **Geopolitical Dynamics of the Arctic: Emerging Actors and Their Strategies for the Region**

**Focus on China, India, Japan, and Republic of Korea**

The Arctic region is experiencing a surge of strategic interest from both Arctic and non-Arctic states. As the ice melts and new maritime routes and resource access emerge, countries like China, India, Japan, and the Republic of Korea are asserting their presence and influence in the High North.

This presentation will explore the evolving geopolitical dynamics in the Arctic, focusing on the strategies and motivations of these key non-Arctic actors as they seek to shape the future of the region.

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# Overview of the Arctic Region

1

## Environmental Significance

The Arctic is a crucial barometer of global climate change, with its rapidly melting ice and transforming ecosystems having far-reaching environmental implications.

2

## Strategic Importance

The region's geostrategic location and the opening of new maritime routes have made the Arctic a focal point of global power competition and security considerations.

3

## Economic Opportunities

The potential for resource extraction and the development of new shipping corridors have sparked economic interests from many countries around the world.

# Traditional Arctic Governance

## Arctic States

The eight Arctic states - Russia, the United States, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden - have historically dominated the governance of the region.

## Governance Frameworks

Key governance frameworks include the Arctic Council, an intergovernmental forum, and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which establishes legal principles for the region.

## Challenges and Dynamics

The Arctic is facing growing geopolitical tensions and environmental concerns that are challenging the traditional power dynamics and governance structures.



# Emergence of Non-Arctic States

## Introducing the Emerging Actors

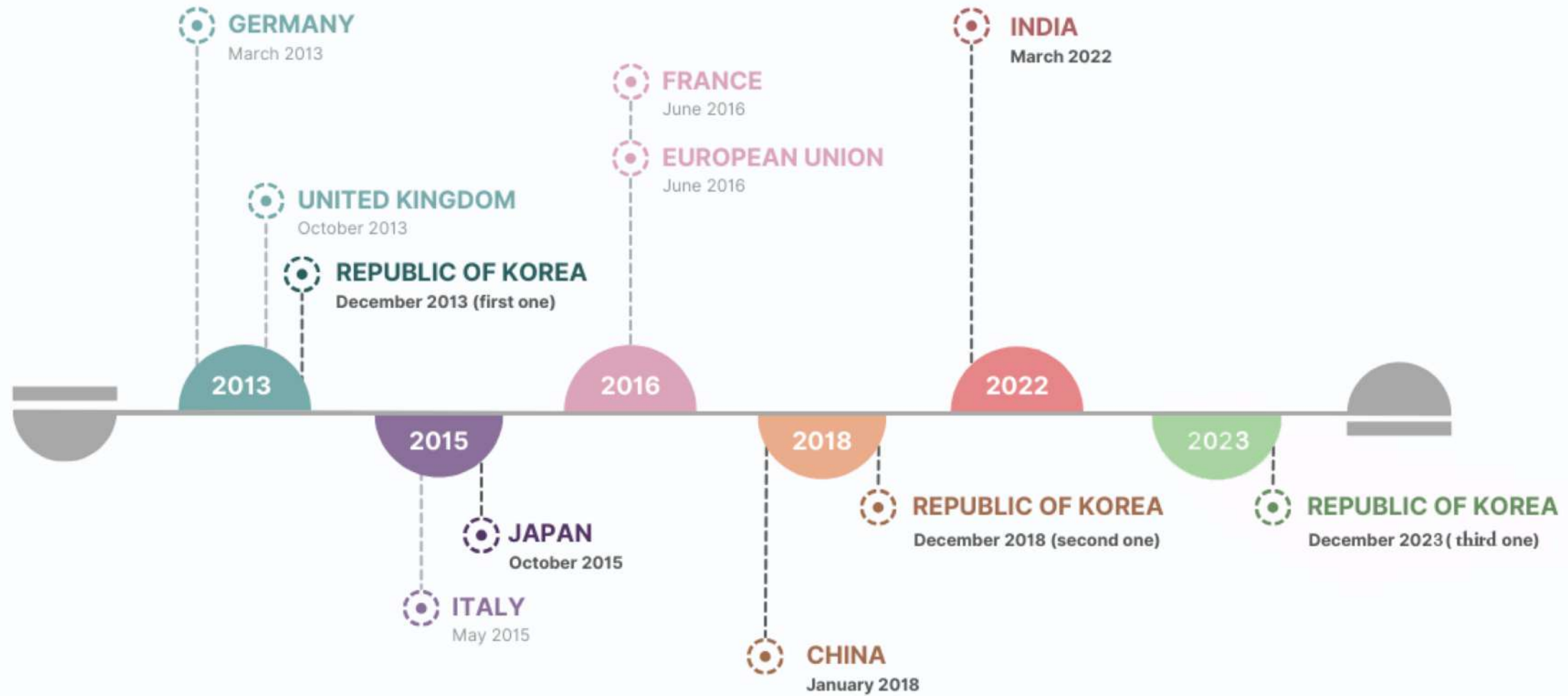
China, India, Japan, and the Republic of Korea are non-Arctic states that have been increasingly asserting their presence and interests in the region, especially in the last decade.

## Motivations

These countries are driven by a range of motivations, including economic benefits, strategic advantages, and environmental and scientific interests.

# Evolution of Arctic Strategies:

## A Chronological Overview of Non-Arctic State Policies



# China's Arctic Strategy

## Historical Engagement

China's involvement in the Arctic dates back to the 1920s, when it joined the Spitsbergen Treaty. It has since established the **Yellow River** research station in 2004 in Svalbard and become an observer in the Arctic Council in 2013.

## Key Projects and Investments

China has invested in icebreakers, such as the Xue Long and Xue Long 2, and established the Yellow River Station in Svalbard to support its Arctic research and activities.

1

2

3

## Strategic Goals

China's Arctic strategy focuses on resource utilization, maritime navigation, and scientific research, with a particular emphasis on the development of the "Polar Silk Road" initiative.

# India's Arctic Strategy



## Scientific Research

India has a strong focus on scientific research in the Arctic, including the establishment of the Himadri research station and the deployment of multi-sensor observatories.



## Environmental Sustainability

India's Arctic strategy emphasizes the importance of environmental protection and sustainable development, aligning with its broader global environmental commitments.



## Economic Engagement

India recognizes the potential economic benefits of the Arctic, including the utilization of the Northern Sea Route, while prioritizing responsible and sustainable practices.

# Japan's Arctic Strategy

## Historical Engagement

Japan's involvement in the Arctic dates back to the early 20th century, with its participation in the Spitsbergen Treaty and the establishment of the Arctic research center at the National Institute of Polar Research.

## Strategic Goals

Japan's Arctic strategy focuses on economic advantages, such as the utilization of the Northern Sea Route, as well as scientific research and international cooperation to address environmental challenges.

## Key Projects and Investments

Japan has invested in Arctic research initiatives and is exploring the construction of a new icebreaker to enhance its capabilities in the region.



# Republic of Korea's Arctic Strategy

1

## Scientific Research

The Republic of Korea has prioritized scientific research in the Arctic, supporting the Korea Polar Research Institute and participating in international Arctic research projects.

2

## Economic Cooperation

ROK's Arctic strategy focuses on leveraging economic opportunities, such as the Northern Sea Route, to enhance its trade and logistics capabilities.

3

## Institutional Foundation

The Republic of Korea has established a legal and institutional framework to support its long-term engagement and commitment to the sustainable development of the Arctic.

# Comparative Analysis between the Strategies

## Motivations and Strategies

The non-Arctic states' engagement in the Arctic is driven by a range of economic, environmental, and geopolitical considerations, each with their own unique priorities and approaches.

## Engagement in Arctic Council

As observers in the Arctic Council, these non-Arctic states are actively contributing to the region's governance and sustainable development through various initiatives and collaborations.

## Future Implications

The growing influence of non-Arctic states in the Arctic has significant implications for regional and global security, environmental sustainability, and the future of Arctic governance.

# Future Scenarios and Implications

**1**

## **Cooperative Governance**

Increased multilateral cooperation and the development of robust legal mechanisms to ensure sustainable development and peaceful coexistence in the Arctic.

**2**

## **Competitive Dynamics**

Intensified geopolitical competition for resources and control of strategic maritime routes, potentially leading to regional and global security challenges.

**3**

## **Environmental Sustainability**

The need for international regulations and collaborative efforts to mitigate the environmental impact of increased human activity in the Arctic.

# In Conclusion

## **Economic Opportunities**

The melting of Arctic sea ice has opened up new possibilities for resource extraction and commercial shipping routes, attracting the interest of non-Arctic states. These countries see the Arctic as a potential source of valuable natural resources, from oil and gas to rare earth minerals. Additionally, the Northern Sea Route offers a faster and more economical shipping alternative between Asia and Europe, making it a strategic priority for nations like China and Japan.

## **Geopolitical Positioning**

The geopolitical significance of the Arctic has also drawn in non-Arctic states. As the region's importance grows, these nations seek to establish a presence and influence in the region, both to protect their economic interests and to increase their global strategic influence. This has led to increased investment in scientific research, infrastructure development, and diplomatic engagement with Arctic states.

## **Environmental Concerns**

Alongside economic and geopolitical motives, non-Arctic states are also driven by environmental concerns related to the Arctic. As the effects of climate change become more pronounced, these nations are keen to participate in research, conservation efforts, and policymaking to ensure the sustainable development of the region.

**Thank you for your attention!**

# Q & A