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Indonesia's Joins BRICS: Balancing Economic Opportunities and Geopolitical Challenges in a Multipolar World

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Abstract: This study explores Indonesia's interest in joining BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and evaluates the economic, geopolitical, and strategic implications of its potential membership. Employing a qualitative methodology, the study examines Indonesia's motivations for aligning with BRICS and assesses the challenges of maintaining balanced foreign relations with both BRICS nations and Western allies. The findings indicate that Indonesia views BRICS membership as a means to diversify economic partnerships, access alternative financial mechanisms, and enhance its influence in global governance. However, membership also poses risks, including potential diplomatic tensions with Western powers and challenges to Indonesia's traditional "bebas aktif" (independent and active) foreign policy. The study further explores the regional implications of Indonesia's BRICS membership, particularly in ASEAN, and considers whether Indonesia could serve as a diplomatic bridge between BRICS and Western-led institutions. While BRICS offers Indonesia economic and political opportunities, the study highlights the complexities of navigating global power shifts in an increasingly multipolar world. Ultimately, Indonesia's decision on BRICS membership will reflect its broader strategy for balancing national interests, economic pragmatism, and geopolitical alignment in a rapidly evolving global order.

Keyword: Indonesia, BRICS, Foreign Policy, Economic Diplomacy, Multipolar World.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Indonesia has demonstrated a growing interest in joining BRICS, a coalition of major emerging economies comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. This ambition aligns with Indonesia's goal of enhancing its global influence and diversifying its economic partnerships, reflecting its aspiration to play a more prominent role in global governance. As the largest economy in Southeast Asia and a G20 member, Indonesia's potential accession to BRICS could significantly impact both regional dynamics and the broader global political and economic landscape (Medina, 2025).

BRICS, initially established as a platform to foster economic collaboration among emerging markets, has evolved into a mechanism for advocating for a multipolar world order. It seeks to challenge the dominance of Western-centric international institutions and promote the interests of developing nations (Indonesia Joins BRICS: 2025). For Indonesia, joining

BRICS offers the promise of accessing alternative financial mechanisms, such as the New Development Bank, and creating new opportunities for trade, investment, and infrastructure development. Moreover, BRICS membership would enable Indonesia to engage more effectively in global decision-making forums, aligning its interests with other emerging powers (da Silva Bezerra, 2020).

However, Indonesia's potential integration into BRICS raises critical questions about its long-standing policy of non-alignment, which has traditionally emphasized maintaining strategic autonomy in international relations (Wardhana & Dharmaputra, 2025). Aligning with BRICS may also affect Indonesia's relationships with Western nations, particularly the United States, and potentially create tensions within ASEAN, where Indonesia plays a pivotal leadership role (Azis, 2024). This paper explores the motivations, implications, and challenges surrounding Indonesia's potential accession to BRICS, evaluating its broader impact on Indonesia's foreign policy and regional leadership in a shifting global order.

This paper aims to analyze the complex interplay of economic, political, and strategic factors that inform Indonesia's interest in BRICS membership. It examines the potential benefits, such as increased trade opportunities and access to alternative financial institutions, as well as the challenges, including the risk of straining relations with Western allies and becoming entangled in geopolitical tensions between BRICS members and the West. By exploring these dynamics, this study contributes to the broader discourse on the changing nature of global power structures and the strategies employed by emerging economies to navigate this evolving landscape. The BRICS nations represent a coalition of emerging economies that have shown substantial growth and influence in the global market. According to Jakovljević et al. (2020), the BRICS countries, along with other emerging markets like Indonesia, are projected to drive a significant portion of global GDP growth. This shift towards a multipolar world order is characterized by the increasing economic clout of emerging markets, which challenges the traditional dominance of Western economies (Jakovljevic et al., 2019).

Indonesia's interest in joining BRICS can be understood within this context of rising economic power among non-Western nations. The country is often categorized alongside other rapidly developing economies, such as Mexico and Turkey, which are collectively referred to as near-BRICS (Öniş & Kutlay, 2015). This classification highlights Indonesia's potential to contribute to and benefit from the collaborative framework established by BRICS.

One of the primary motivations for Indonesia's interest in BRICS is the potential for enhanced economic cooperation and development. The establishment of the BRICS Development Bank, aimed at funding infrastructure and sustainable development projects, presents a significant opportunity for Indonesia to secure financial resources for its own development goals (Banik & Mawdsley, 2023). The bank's focus on South-South cooperation aligns with Indonesia's aspirations to strengthen its economic ties with other developing nations, thereby reducing reliance on traditional Western financial institutions (Banik & Mawdsley, 2023). Moreover, the economic landscape in Indonesia is characterized by a dual burden of infectious and non-communicable diseases, which poses challenges to its healthcare system (Jakovljević et al., 2020). By joining BRICS, Indonesia could leverage the collective expertise and resources of member countries to address these pressing health issues, thereby improving its overall economic stability and growth prospects.

Beyond economic motivations, Indonesia's interest in BRICS is also driven by political and strategic considerations. The global diffusion of power has led to a reconfiguration of international relations, where emerging economies are seeking to assert their influence on the global stage (Öniş & Kutlay, 2015). Indonesia's participation in BRICS would enhance its diplomatic standing and provide a platform for advocating for the interests of developing nations. Furthermore, the geopolitical landscape is shifting, with increasing competition among major powers. Indonesia's inclusion in BRICS could serve as a counterbalance to the influence of Western powers, allowing it to play a more active role in shaping global governance (Öniş

& Kutlay, 2016). This aligns with the broader trend of emerging economies seeking to redefine international norms and practices, particularly in areas such as trade, investment, and climate change (Banik & Mawdsley, 2023).

Indonesia's growing engagement in South-South cooperation is another critical factor influencing its interest in BRICS. The country has been actively involved in initiatives aimed at fostering collaboration among developing nations, particularly in areas such as trade, technology transfer, and capacity building (Banik & Mawdsley, 2023). Joining BRICS would further solidify Indonesia's commitment to South-South cooperation, enabling it to collaborate with other member states on shared development challenges.

The emphasis on sustainable development within the BRICS framework resonates with Indonesia's own development agenda, which prioritizes environmental sustainability and social equity (Anugrah et al., 2022). By participating in BRICS, Indonesia could benefit from shared knowledge and best practices in sustainable development, thereby enhancing its capacity to address pressing environmental challenges.

Indonesia's robust economic growth trajectory positions it as an attractive destination for investment. The country's large and youthful population, coupled with its abundant natural resources, presents significant opportunities for foreign direct investment (FDI) (Kaur & Kaur, 2015). By joining BRICS, Indonesia could enhance its visibility as an investment destination, attracting capital from other member countries seeking to diversify their portfolios.

Moreover, the BRICS nations have been increasingly looking to invest in each other's economies as part of their strategy to strengthen intra-BRICS trade and investment flows (Kaur & Kaur, 2015). Indonesia's participation in this framework would facilitate greater economic integration and collaboration, ultimately contributing to its long-term economic growth.

While there are numerous benefits associated with Indonesia's potential membership in BRICS, several challenges must be addressed. The country's economic and political landscape is complex, with various internal and external factors influencing its ability to effectively engage with other BRICS nations. For instance, Indonesia's diverse population and regional disparities present challenges in formulating cohesive policies that align with the interests of all stakeholders (Sharma & Popli, 2023).

Additionally, Indonesia must navigate the intricacies of international diplomacy and cooperation, particularly in areas where member countries may have divergent interests. The potential for conflict or competition among BRICS nations could complicate Indonesia's efforts to assert its influence within the group (Öniş & Kutlay, 2016).

This paper offers a novel contribution to the academic discourse on Indonesia's foreign policy and its potential BRICS membership through several key dimensions. First, it provides an up-to-date analysis of Indonesia's foreign policy under the new administration of President Prabowo Subianto, emphasizing strategic shifts and priorities. Second, the paper examines the economic and political implications of BRICS membership for Indonesia, highlighting its impact on relations with both BRICS nations and Western countries. Third, it assesses how Indonesia's inclusion in BRICS could influence ASEAN's regional dynamics and cohesion, addressing potential realignments within Southeast Asia (Oxford Analytica, 2024). Fourth, the study explores BRICS as a vehicle for reshaping global economic governance, analyzing Indonesia's potential role in advancing this transformation. Finally, it investigates Indonesia's capacity to act as a diplomatic bridge between BRICS and Western-led international institutions, fostering constructive dialogue and collaboration in global governance.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative paper methodology to analyze Indonesia's interest in joining BRICS and its potential implications. The paper draws on a comprehensive review of academic literature, policy documents, official statements, and media reports. Key aspects of

the methodology include Document Analysis: Examination of official statements, policy papers, and diplomatic communications related to Indonesia's foreign policy and its stance on BRICS. Comparative Analysis: Comparison of Indonesia's economic and political relationships with BRICS countries and Western nations. Case Study Approach: In-depth analysis of Indonesia's foreign policy decisions and their implications for regional and global dynamics. This qualitative approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the complex factors influencing Indonesia's decision-making process regarding BRICS membership and its potential consequences for the country's international relations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia's interest in joining BRICS reflects a complex interplay of economic aspirations, geopolitical considerations, and the desire to enhance its global standing. Indonesia's primary motivation for considering BRICS membership appears to be economic. The country sees potential benefits in aligning more closely with other major emerging economies, particularly in terms of trade and investment opportunities (Maulidi & Utama, 2024). BRICS countries, especially China, are already significant economic partners for Indonesia. In 2022, Indonesia's trade with BRICS nations was substantial, with exports reaching \$93.16 billion and imports totaling \$85.44 billion (Naim & Hasanah, 2024).

However, the economic benefits of BRICS membership are not straightforward. While closer ties with BRICS could potentially open new markets and investment channels, Indonesia already has robust economic relationships with these countries, particularly China. It suggests that BRICS membership may not necessarily lead to significant additional economic advantages. Moreover, Indonesia's existing participation in platforms like the G20 and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) already provides substantial economic benefits and international standing (Ghozali and Pashya:2024).

One potential economic advantage of BRICS membership is access to the New Development Bank (NDB), which could provide an alternative source of financing for Indonesia's development projects. However, with an initially subscribed capital of US\$50 billion, the NDB trails behind other development banks such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in terms of financial capacity.

This indicates that Indonesia's interest in BRICS is not solely economic but also geopolitical. BRICS is often viewed as a "revisionist" group that seeks to challenge the Western-dominated global order. For Indonesia, joining BRICS could be seen as an opportunity to diversify its international partnerships and reduce dependence on Western-led institutions (Braviano & Heriantomo, 2024).

However, this move comes with significant geopolitical risks. Aligning more closely with BRICS, particularly given the tensions between Russia and the West over the Ukraine conflict, could strain Indonesia's relationships with Western countries, especially the United States (Sulaiman, 2023). In addition, it suggests that Indonesia's traditional foreign policy of "bebas aktif" (independent and active) may be challenged by BRICS membership, as it could be perceived as taking sides in the growing competition between the US and China.

Moreover, BRICS itself is not a homogeneous group, with significant tensions existing between its members, such as the territorial disputes between China and India (Gozali & Pashya, 2024). This internal discord within BRICS could complicate Indonesia's diplomatic positioning and potentially limit the group's effectiveness as a unified bloc.

One of the stated reasons for Indonesia's interest in BRICS is the group's potential to advocate for the interests of the Global South (Dzakwan, 2024). BRICS has positioned itself as a champion for developing countries, pushing for reforms in global governance structures to give emerging economies a greater voice (Naim and Hasanah:2024). For Indonesia, BRICS membership could provide a platform to amplify its advocacy for issues important to developing nations, such as climate change mitigation, sustainable development, and fairer

trade practices. This aligns with Indonesia's ambition to play a more significant role in global affairs and to be seen as a leader among developing countries.

However, the study also highlights skepticism about whether BRICS can effectively represent the diverse interests of the Global South. Some analysts argue that the group's focus on challenging Western hegemony may overshadow genuine concerns of developing nations. Indonesia's potential BRICS membership has implications for regional dynamics, particularly within ASEAN. As the largest economy in Southeast Asia, Indonesia's closer alignment with BRICS could influence ASEAN's collective stance on global issues (Sulaiman:2023).

This indicates that Indonesia's move towards BRICS has prompted other ASEAN countries, such as Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, to also consider closer ties with the group. This trend could potentially shift the balance of power within ASEAN and affect the region's relationships with both BRICS countries and Western nations. However, there are concerns that Indonesia's BRICS membership could complicate ASEAN's unity, especially given the diverse foreign policy orientations of its member states. Indonesia may need to carefully balance its BRICS aspirations with its commitments and leadership role within ASEAN.

A significant finding of the paper is the challenge Indonesia faces in balancing its relationships with BRICS countries and Western nations. While BRICS membership offers potential benefits, it also risks alienating traditional partners, particularly the United States (Sulaiman:2023). Indonesia has long maintained a delicate balance in its foreign relations, engaging with both China and the US while avoiding explicit alignment with either power. BRICS membership could be perceived as tilting towards China and Russia, potentially complicating Indonesia's security partnerships with Western countries.

It is a suggestion that Indonesia's decision on BRICS membership will be influenced by broader geopolitical developments, including the outcome of the 2024 US presidential election and the evolution of US-China relations. The study also reveals ongoing debates within Indonesia's policy circles regarding the merits of BRICS membership. While some officials, like Foreign Minister Sugiono, have expressed enthusiasm for joining BRICS, others, including key economic advisors, have shown more caution (Dzakwan:2024).

These internal debates reflect broader discussions about Indonesia's foreign policy direction under President Prabowo Subianto's administration. The study indicates that while there is interest in expanding Indonesia's global influence, there is also recognition of the need to maintain strategic flexibility and avoid overcommitment to any single bloc. An intriguing finding of the paper is the potential for Indonesia to play a bridge-building role between BRICS and Western-led institutions. Some analysts suggest that Indonesia's participation in BRICS could provide an opportunity to moderate the group's more confrontational stances and facilitate dialogue between BRICS and Western countries.

This potential role aligns with Indonesia's historical efforts to act as a mediator in international conflicts and its participation in forums like MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia), which aims to act as a "constructive multilateralist" and "bridge-builder" (Ruleland:2023). This study highlights the multifaceted nature of Indonesia's interest in BRICS membership and the complex considerations that inform this potential foreign policy shift. This discussion will explore the implications of these findings, contextualize them within broader debates about global governance and the changing international order, and consider the potential consequences of Indonesia's decision. Indonesia's interest in BRICS membership can be seen as part of a broader effort to redefine its role on the global stage. As the world's fourth most populous country and a rising economic power, Indonesia has long sought to increase its influence in international affairs. It seems that BRICS membership is viewed by some Indonesian policymakers as a means to achieve this goal.

However, this ambition must be balanced against Indonesia's traditional foreign policy principles, particularly its commitment to non-alignment and strategic autonomy. The "bebas aktif" policy has been a cornerstone of Indonesian diplomacy since independence, allowing the

country to navigate complex international dynamics without becoming overly dependent on any single power or bloc (Sulaiman:2023).

The challenge for Indonesia lies in reconciling its BRICS aspirations with these established principles. Can Indonesia maintain its strategic autonomy while aligning more closely with BRICS? This question is particularly pertinent given the perception of BRICS as a counterweight to Western-dominated international institutions. The study reveals a tension between economic pragmatism and geopolitical risk in Indonesia's consideration of BRICS membership. On one hand, closer alignment with BRICS, particularly China, offers potential economic benefits through increased trade and investment opportunities. On the other hand, this alignment carries geopolitical risks, potentially straining relationships with Western partners and complicating Indonesia's strategic positioning.

This dilemma reflects broader debates about the changing nature of global economic governance. As emerging economies like those in BRICS gain economic clout, they are increasingly challenging the Western-dominated economic order. Indonesia's decision on BRICS membership will signal its stance in this evolving landscape.

It suggests that the economic benefits of BRICS membership may be overstated, given Indonesia's existing economic ties with BRICS countries and its participation in other multilateral forums. This raises questions about whether the potential economic gains outweigh the geopolitical risks of closer BRICS alignment. Indonesia's BRICS deliberations are taking place against the backdrop of intensifying great power competition, particularly between the United States and China. Indonesia's decision will be influenced by, and in turn influence, its relationships with these major powers.

By joining BRICS, Indonesia could be seen as tilting towards China and Russia, potentially complicating its relationship with the United States and other Western allies. This is particularly significant given Indonesia's strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific region and its role in ASEAN.

However, the study also suggests that Indonesia may see BRICS membership as a way to hedge against overdependence on any single power. By diversifying its international partnerships, Indonesia could potentially increase its strategic autonomy and bargaining power in dealings with both BRICS and Western countries. This balancing act reflects the challenges faced by many middle powers in an increasingly multipolar world. Indonesia's decision on BRICS will be closely watched as an indicator of how emerging economies navigate the complexities of great power competition.

One of the stated motivations for Indonesia's interest in BRICS is the group's potential to advocate for the interests of the Global South. This aspect of the findings raises important questions about the nature of Global South representation in international forums and the effectiveness of BRICS in this role. While BRICS has positioned itself as a champion for developing countries, it reveals skepticism about whether the group can effectively represent the diverse interests of the Global South. The internal divisions within BRICS, such as the tensions between China and India, may limit its ability to present a unified front on issues important to developing nations.

Moreover, there are questions about whether BRICS' focus on challenging Western hegemony aligns with the more immediate developmental concerns of many Global South countries. Indonesia's potential role in BRICS could be significant in this regard, potentially bringing a more nuanced perspective on development issues to the group. The paper findings highlight the potential impact of Indonesia's BRICS decision on regional dynamics, particularly within ASEAN. As the largest economy in Southeast Asia and a key player in.

CONCLUSION

Indonesia's interest in BRICS membership encapsulates its ambition to expand its role in global governance while addressing its domestic economic and developmental needs. As one

of the largest emerging economies and a key G20 member, Indonesia's potential accession to BRICS reflects its desire to align with like-minded nations that challenge the traditional Western-dominated global order. The research underscores the multifaceted nature of Indonesia's BRICS aspirations, integrating economic, geopolitical, and strategic dimensions.

Economically, BRICS membership offers Indonesia potential access to alternative financial mechanisms and increased trade and investment opportunities. Politically, it could enhance Indonesia's position as a representative of the Global South and provide a platform to advocate for reform in global governance structures. However, Indonesia must navigate significant challenges, such as reconciling its strategic autonomy under its traditional "bebas aktif" policy and managing relationships with Western countries while aligning with BRICS.

The contribution of this research lies in its comprehensive analysis of Indonesia's motivations and challenges regarding BRICS membership. It provides an updated understanding of Indonesia's foreign policy shifts under its current administration, highlights the economic and political implications of joining BRICS, and examines the potential consequences for ASEAN's cohesion and regional dynamics. Furthermore, it explores Indonesia's potential role as a diplomatic bridge between BRICS and Western-led institutions, contributing to a nuanced perspective on Indonesia's strategic positioning.

This study advances academic discourse by contextualizing Indonesia's BRICS ambitions within broader trends of global power reconfiguration, offering insights into how emerging economies like Indonesia navigate the complexities of a multipolar world order. The findings underscore the critical balance Indonesia must strike between economic pragmatism and geopolitical strategy, making its BRICS decision a significant marker of its evolving global role.

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