

Indonesia's Diplomacy Strategy in BRICS: Bridging National Interest and Global Political Balance

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze Indonesia's diplomatic strategy in BRICS as an effort to bridge national interests with the dynamics of global political balance. Indonesia's membership in BRICS, which officially began in January 2025, is a strategic step to strengthen the country's economic, political, and geopolitical position amid the global polarization between the US and China. Economically, BRICS opens up great opportunities for Indonesia to diversify export markets for key commodities such as CPO, coal, rubber and natural gas to non-traditional partners such as India, Russia and Brazil. In addition, Indonesia also utilizes funding from the New Development Bank (NDB) to finance national strategic projects, including infrastructure and green energy transition. However, challenges remain, especially in managing the risk of economic dependence on China which dominates two-thirds of the total BRICS GDP as well as competition with other members in similar commodity sectors. Politically, BRICS membership strengthens Indonesia's position as a "bridge" between the Global South and developed countries, while promoting more inclusive global governance reforms. This research uses a descriptive-analytical approach with qualitative methods to explore Indonesia's diplomacy strategy in BRICS, focusing on economic, political, and soft power aspects. The results show that BRICS membership provides significant benefits for Indonesia, both in terms of market access and geopolitical influence, but also requires caution in maintaining balanced relations with global powers such as the US and the European Union. This research recommends strengthening negotiation capacity across sectors, optimizing the NDB for green projects, and an ASEAN-based inclusive diplomacy strategy to manage internal BRICS tensions, such as Sino-Indian rivalry. Thus, BRICS becomes a multidimensional instrument for Indonesia to strengthen economic sovereignty, political stability, and national security amid increasingly complex global fragmentation.

1. Introduction

The shift in global power from West to East is the dominant phenomenon of the 21st century, driven by economic growth, technological advancement, and the increasing political influence of East Asian countries (Dahiya, 2024). China, as the world's second largest economy, plays a central role in this change, followed by India, Japan, and South Korea (Silver & Rasure, 2025). This growth not only changes the global economic balance, but also triggers strategic competition between the US (as the leader of the Western bloc) and China, especially in the Indo-Pacific region (Saxer, 2024).

BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) emerges as an alternative bloc that challenges the dominance of global institutions such as the IMF and World Bank (Naim & Hasanah, 2024). BRICS aims to create a multipolar order by championing reforms to the international financial system, such as "de-dollarization" efforts and the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB) (ISDP, 2024). This group

is also considered as a representation of the "Global South" countries that are dissatisfied with the inequality in global governance (Patrick, 2024).

Indonesia decided to join BRICS in January 2025 as a strategic move to strengthen its economic interests, politics, and geopolitical positioning (Nan, 2025). Economically, this membership opens access to the BRICS markets which account for 41% of global GDP (based on purchasing power parity) (Permitindo, 2025), enabling export diversification of leading commodities such as CPO, rubber, coal and natural gas, to non-traditional markets (InCorp, 2025). Indonesia also hopes to utilize New Development Bank (NDB) funding to accelerate infrastructure projects and renewable energy transition, reducing dependence on Western financial institutions (Ferani & Mandala, 2025). Politically, BRICS serves as a platform to strengthen Indonesia's position as a "bridge" between the Global South and advanced economies, while promoting more inclusive global governance reforms (Manggala, 2025). This membership also increases Indonesia's influence in advocating strategic issues such as climate change and food security, as well as fighting for fairer voting rights in international institutions (Ruknuddin, 2025). Strategically, this move is in line with the principle of "free-active" foreign policy, maintaining a balance by not siding with the US or China blocs, while utilizing BRICS to strengthen Indonesia's role as a leader in ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific region (Setiawan, 2025).

BRICS membership puts Indonesia in a complex position to take advantage of economic opportunities while maintaining sovereignty amidst polarizing global dynamics (Kemenhan, 2025). Economically, Indonesia is faced with the challenge of maximizing market access and BRICS funding (especially through the New Development Bank) without getting caught up in dependence on China, which accounts for two-thirds of BRICS GDP (Huland, 2025; O'Neill, 2025), and compete with other member countries in similar commodity sectors such as oil and gas (UAE, Russia, Iran) and coal (China, India, Russia, South Africa) (Norman et al., 2024). In terms of security and sovereignty, geopolitical pressure from the US and allies due to perceptions of BRICS as "challengers to the global order" (Chwee & Ahmad, 2025), forcing Indonesia to maintain neutrality, such as its impartial stance in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, while maintaining strategic ties with the West. At the diplomatic level, the main challenge is to optimize BRICS to fight for national interests (e.g. Palestinian issue) without compromising relations with ASEAN and G20 (Pandito, 2025), while managing internal BRICS fragmentation — such as China-India tensions that hamper collective agreements (Klomegah, 2024) — through a bridging diplomacy approach based on the principle of "free-active".

This research aims to analyze Indonesia's diplomatic strategy in BRICS, especially in the aspects of economy (such as the utilization of the New Development Bank/NDB for infrastructure financing and export diversification), politics (Indonesia's position as a bridge builder between the Global South and advanced countries), and soft power. Furthermore, the research will assess the impact of BRICS membership on achieving Indonesia's national interests, including increased market access, mitigating the risk of economic dependence on China, and Indonesia's geopolitical influence amid the US-China rivalry. By combining "free-active" foreign policy analysis and Balance of Power Theory, this research also provides policy recommendations for optimizing Indonesia's role in BRICS, such as strengthening cross-sectoral negotiation capacity, utilizing NDB for green projects, and strategies to manage internal BRICS fragmentation (e.g. China-India tensions) through an ASEAN-based inclusive approach. The results are expected to be a reference for the government in formulating diplomacy that is aligned with national interests and the dynamics of global multipolarity.

2. Literature Review

This literature review integrates three main concepts in international relations. First, multilateral diplomacy and economic diplomacy become the foundation to understand Indonesia's strategy in BRICS. Multilateral diplomacy refers to a state's efforts to achieve national interests through collective forums (Mahbubani, 2022), while economic diplomacy focuses on the use of economic instruments (investment, trade) as a tool of foreign policy (Berridge, 2015; Rana & Chatterjee, 2018; Woolcock & Bayne, 2013). Second, the Balance of Power Theory of the realist school (Giri, 2021; Morgenthau, 2006) explains Indonesia's efforts to avoid the dominance of one bloc (US or China) by joining BRICS. Third, national interest and soft power (Nye, 2004) became the basis for analyzing Indonesia's priorities, such as economic stability and cultural influence, within the framework of BRICS cooperation.

Previous studies on BRICS point to its role as a counterweight to the G7, especially in global governance reforms (Haryono et al., 2024). BRICS is considered a representation of Global South countries that reject Western hegemony, although internal fragmentation (e.g. China-India rivalry) limits its effectiveness (Pasupuleti, 2024; Ferragamo, 2024). On the other hand, Indonesia's diplomacy in multilateral forums such as ASEAN and G20 provide comparative references. For example, Ferragamo (2024) notes that Indonesia uses ASEAN as a platform to maintain neutrality amid the US-China rivalry, while at the G20, Jakarta promoted the issue of energy transition (Setkab, 2024). However, a gap analysis reveals that studies on Indonesia's position in BRICS are limited, especially in the context of global polarization post-Russia-Ukraine War and internal tensions between BRICS countries such as China and India over border conflicts in the Himalayas. This research aims to fill the gap by exploring how Indonesia manages its national interests amidst the complex dynamics of BRICS..

3. Method

This research uses a descriptive-analytical approach with qualitative method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to explore Indonesia's diplomatic strategy in BRICS. A qualitative approach was chosen as it allows in-depth analysis of policy dynamics, interpretation of official documents, and complex global political contexts. This method is suitable for identifying patterns in Indonesia's foreign policy, such as economic priorities and geopolitical positions, without relying on quantitative data. The research focus includes text analysis of official documents and stakeholder statements, which are considered critical in understanding Indonesia's interaction with BRICS. Data analysis was conducted through triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) by combining data from official documents, official statements, international reports and media.

This research has limitations, namely interpretation bias due to the subjectivity of text analysis, limited access to internal BRICS documents, such as meeting minutes, and reliance on secondary data that could potentially lead to inconsistencies between official statements and policy implementation. Triangulation was used to minimize this risk by verifying data across sources.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Application and Expansion Process on BRICS

There is no formal application process to join BRICS, but any country wishing to join must have the full support of all members in order to receive an invitation. The idea of expanding BRICS membership began to be widely discussed in the early 2020s, when leaders and senior diplomats considered adding new members (Ellis, 2022; OCFMA, 2022; Teslova, 2022). At the 15th BRICS Summit in August 2023, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were invited to join from January 1, 2024 (Sharma, 2023). Pakistan applied in November 2023 (Zahid, 2023) and received support from the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia (Kathju, 2024), but did not receive unanimous support from all members (Zahid, 2023). On December 30, 2023, the new government of Argentina rejected the membership previously applied for under the Alberto Fernández administration in 2022, citing changes in foreign policy (DW, 2023). On January 1, 2024, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, and Iran officially became BRICS members (Jütten & Falkenberg, 2024), while Saudi Arabia has yet to respond to its invitation (Korybko, 2025). On September 2, 2024, Turkey applied for membership (Hacaoglu & Kozok, 2024), although the country has been a NATO member since 1952 (Bandow, 2022) and an EU candidate since 2005, with the process frozen in 2019 (Pangalos, 2019). In September 2022, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also expressed Turkey's intention to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Balci & Hacaoglu, 2022), and in July 2024, he confirmed that NATO membership was not a barrier to Turkey's involvement in the organization or in BRICS (O'Connor, 2024). Meanwhile, Algeria, which applied for membership in 2023 (MEMO, 2023), withdrew its application in September 2024, following Argentina's lead (Samedi, 2024). After the 2024 BRICS Summit, Brazil blocked Venezuela's application due to an election dispute and ongoing crisis, which prompted Venezuela to withdraw its ambassador from Brazil (Maduro, 2024). With the addition of new members, BRICS is now often referred to as BRICS+ or BRICS Plus (Jütten & Falkenberg, 2024). Indonesia was initially planned as an observer partner country, but opted to become a full member in January 2025 (Jin, 2025). The nine BRICS partners, which are on their way to full membership, include Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan (Norton, 2025).

4.2. Mapping Indonesia's National Interests in BRICS

Indonesia's membership in BRICS is a strategic step to achieve national interests, especially in the economic, political, and security fields. Economically, BRICS opens access to a market with 54.6% of global population and 42.2% of world GDP (based on purchasing power) (Norton, 2025), which by 2024, Indonesia's trade with BRICS countries will reach around \$150 billion USD, with their main exports being coal, palm oil, natural gas, and rubber (Mai, 2025). Indonesia also utilized the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) for funding 77 national strategic projects for the period 2025-2029 (Bimo, 2025; Invest Indonesia, 2025) consisting of 47 from the previous administration, and 30 new programs including free nutritious meals in schools, construction of 3 million houses (Business Indonesia, 2025), development of the palm oil production chain, and waste power or green energy generation (Invest Indonesia, 2025). In addition, BRICS is the largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) into Indonesia, where overall, the FDI value of BRICS member countries in Indonesia in 2021 was US\$3.2 billion or 10.47 percent of total FDI in Indonesia. This FDI value crept up in 2022 to US\$8.42 billion, and fell slightly in 2023 to US\$7.92 billion. Meanwhile, in the first and second quarters of 2024, the value of FDI from BRICS member countries reached US\$4.14 billion or 14.72 percent of total FDI in Indonesia (Wardah, 2025).

On the political front, Indonesia is championing global governance reforms through BRICS, including increased equitable distribution of voting rights in global institutions such as the IMF and World Bank (Kemenhan, 2025) and advocacy on the issue of Palestinian independence (Supermana, 2025). BRICS membership also strengthens Indonesia's position as a "bridge" between the Global South and developed countries (Putri, 2025), by maintaining the principle of "free and active" foreign policy to avoid US-China polarization (Alunaza et al., 2025).

In the aspect of security, Indonesia can undergo BRICS security cooperation with its members. BRICS will certainly respect the territory of each member country and reduce the risk of intervention of BRICS member countries on the territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. In terms of currency stability, the Indonesian rupiah will also be more stable from the risk of currency fluctuations (speculation and dependence on certain currencies). This can happen with the implementation of local currencies accepted by BRICS member countries (Zainuddin, 2025). Thus, BRICS membership becomes a multidimensional instrument for Indonesia to strengthen economic sovereignty, politics, and national security stability.

4.3. Indonesia's Diplomacy Strategy

After officially joining BRICS, Indonesia will adopt a diplomatic strategy that sticks to the principle of multi-alignment to maintain balanced relations with various global powers. Membership in BRICS provides economic and geopolitical opportunities, but also demands caution not to damage strategic partnerships with Western countries such as the United States and the European Union. Therefore, Indonesia will implement balanced diplomacy by remaining active in Western forums such as the OECD and maintaining its role as a strategic partner to developed countries (Fitriani, 2025).

In the economic aspect, Indonesia will utilize BRICS for market diversification and investment. By strengthening exports to BRICS countries such as China, India, Russia and Brazil, Indonesia can reduce dependence on traditional markets in the West. In addition, access to the BRICS Bank (New Development Bank) can be utilized for funding infrastructure and development projects. However, challenges such as dependence on the US dollar and protection of intellectual property rights in technology cooperation with BRICS countries must be carefully managed. As the de facto leader of ASEAN, Indonesia must also ensure that its membership in BRICS does not diminish its central role in Southeast Asia. ASEAN-centric diplomacy will remain a priority so that Indonesia's cooperation in BRICS actually strengthens ASEAN's position on the global stage. Jakarta can encourage BRICS to cooperate with ASEAN on economic and infrastructure projects, while maintaining regional stability from the impact of geopolitical tensions between BRICS members such as China and India (Fitriani, 2025).

In addition to economics, Indonesia will also implement technology and security diplomacy to protect its national interests. Cooperation with BRICS in technology transfer should be structured with mechanisms that ensure the protection of intellectual property rights. On security issues, Indonesia needs to remain cautious that its involvement in BRICS does not damage relations with traditional partners such as the United States and Europe, especially on sensitive issues such as the South China Sea (Fitriani, 2025).

As the largest economy in ASEAN, Indonesia has the potential to play a role as a bridge between BRICS, ASEAN, and the West. By adopting a pragmatic and flexible diplomacy strategy, Indonesia can utilize BRICS to increase its global influence without getting caught up in geopolitical rivalry. The key to the success of this strategy lies in Indonesia's diplomatic ability to balance national interests with increasingly complex global dynamics (Fitriani, 2025).

4.4. Global Political Balance

4.4.1. Indonesia's Response to Sensitive Issues

Indonesia maintains a neutral stance in the Russia-Ukraine conflict as a form of consistency with the principle of "free-active" foreign policy (Saryono et al., 2022). Despite supporting the UN resolution condemning Russia's invasion, Indonesia refused to join Western sanctions and emphasized the importance of peaceful dialogue (Wardhani & Dharmaputra, 2024). President Joko Widodo even visited Kyiv in 2022 to call for guarantees of Ukraine's food export security, given that Indonesia imports 25% of its wheat from the country (Engel, 2022). This stance reflects Indonesia's efforts to balance national interests (such as food security) with global geopolitical pressures, while maintaining good relations with both parties. However, this neutrality is tested by public opinion dynamics that tend to be sympathetic towards Russia, partly due to strong anti-Western narratives among elites and academics (Wardhani & Dharmaputra, 2024).

4.4.2. Internal Dynamics of BRICS

The dynamics of China-India tensions on the Himalayan border (AA, 2025) and the competition for influence in the Indo-Pacific region (Lemhanas, 2024) pose a serious challenge to BRICS cohesiveness, although currently, relations between the two countries are improving (Santosa, 2025). As a new member, Indonesia could potentially get caught up in this rivalry, especially in China-funded infrastructure projects or maritime cooperation with India. For example, mainland China accounts for the third largest foreign investment after Singapore and Hong Kong at US\$8.1 billion in Indonesia (Yonatan, 2025), while India is Indonesia's main CPO export partner (BPS, 2025). To reduce the risk of dependency, Indonesia can propose the establishment of a trilateral working group (Indonesia-China-India) which is a framework for cooperation mainly in the fields of trade, maritime, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy (Pashya et al., 2024) aimed at preventing conflict escalation. This strategy is in line with Indonesia's position as a "bridge" between the major powers, although its effectiveness is still limited due to the fundamental differences of interest between Beijing and New Delhi.

4.4.3. Impact of BRICS Membership on Indonesia-US/EU Relations

The US and EU may see Indonesia's membership of BRICS as a step away especially on the issues of "de-dollarization" and traditional partnership. (Syafitri, 2025). The US had threatened to impose 100% import tariffs on BRICS countries' products, this could impact Indonesia's nickel exports which are also threatened by the import tariffs (Dewi, 2025). In addition to pursuing a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) with the US in an effort to "lower tariffs" on Indonesian products (Yuniar, 2025), Indonesia responded with market diversification beyond the US as evidenced by an increase in non-oil and gas exports to India of US\$1.65 billion in February 2025 or an increase of 35.05% compared to the previous month (January 2025). In the same period, non-oil and gas exports to China amounted to US\$4.29 billion and was the export destination country with the first largest value (Sasangka, 2025). Indonesia also seeks to expand cooperation with the European Union by continuing to strengthen trade and investment relations with a focus on accelerating the completion of IEU-CEPA negotiations to open up more trade and investment opportunities. Indonesia's main exports to the EU are palm oil and its derivatives, copper ore, industrial fats, footwear, and solid residues from the food industry. The EU is Indonesia's main trading partner, being the 5th largest export destination and 3rd largest source of imports (Palmoilmagazine, 2025). On the other hand, BRICS membership strengthens Indonesia's bargaining position in negotiations with the West, such as pushing for a more inclusive and equitable global order (Mangala, 2025). From this description, Jakarta still maintains relations with the US/EU as a strategic partner, showing that BRICS membership is not a binary choice, but a tool to expand diplomatic networks. Thus, Indonesia has successfully utilized BRICS as an instrument to balance economic and political interests, without sacrificing relations with traditional

powers. The challenge ahead is to maintain neutrality amidst BRICS internal fragmentation and increasingly complex global pressures.

5. Conclusion

This research highlights Indonesia's diplomatic strategy in BRICS as an effort to bridge national interests with the dynamics of global political balance. Indonesia's membership in BRICS, which officially began in January 2025, is a strategic move aimed at strengthening the country's economic, political, and geopolitical position amid the increasingly intense global polarization between the US and China. In the economic aspect, BRICS opens up great opportunities for Indonesia to diversify its export markets and reduce dependence on traditional Western markets. With access to BRICS markets that account for 42.2% of world GDP (based on purchasing power parity), Indonesia can expand exports of key commodities such as CPO, coal, rubber and natural gas to non-traditional partners such as India, Russia and Brazil. In addition, Indonesia is also utilizing funding from the New Development Bank (NDB) to finance national strategic projects, including infrastructure and green energy transition. However, challenges remain, especially in managing the risk of economic dependence on China which dominates two-thirds of the total BRICS GDP as well as competition with other members in similar commodity sectors. Therefore, Indonesia needs to formulate a careful diplomatic strategy to maximize economic benefits without getting caught up in the complex internal dynamics of BRICS.

Politically, Indonesia's membership in BRICS strengthens its position as a "bridge" between the Global South and developed countries, while pushing for more inclusive global governance reforms. As a new member, Indonesia seeks to utilize the BRICS platform to champion strategic issues such as climate change, food security, and fairer voting rights in international institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. The principle of "free-active" foreign policy is the main guide in maintaining balanced relations with global powers, including the US and EU, without getting entangled in bloc rivalry. In the midst of internal BRICS dynamics, such as tensions between China and India over the Himalayan border, Indonesia can play a mediating role through an ASEAN-based inclusive diplomacy approach. For example, Indonesia can propose the establishment of a trilateral cooperation framework (Indonesia-China-India) in the fields of trade, maritime, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy to prevent conflict escalation. In addition, Indonesia should also ensure that its membership in BRICS does not diminish its central role in ASEAN, but rather strengthens the synergy between the two forums in facing regional and global challenges.

The impact of BRICS membership on Indonesia's relations with the US and EU is also an important focus of this study. Although the US and EU may view Indonesia's move to join BRICS as a deviation from traditional alliances, Jakarta has managed to maintain strategic relations with both parties through a balancing diplomacy approach. For example, Indonesia continues to pursue a free trade agreement (FTA) with the US to lower import tariffs on Indonesian products, while expanding export markets to BRICS countries such as China and India. On the other hand, BRICS membership strengthens Indonesia's bargaining position in negotiations with the West, such as pushing for more equitable and inclusive global governance. Thus, BRICS is not a binary choice that isolates Indonesia from traditional powers, but rather a tool to expand diplomacy networks and increase global influence. The challenge ahead is to maintain neutrality amid BRICS internal fragmentation and increasingly complex global geopolitical pressures. This research recommends strengthening cross-sector negotiation capacity, optimizing the NDB for green projects, and an inclusive diplomacy strategy to manage internal BRICS tensions, so that Indonesia can make the most of its membership in the national interest.

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