

INDONESIA'S RATIONALITY IN IMPROVING THE ECONOMY THROUGH BRICS: A WORLD SYSTEM THEORY APPROACH

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DOI: [10.53866/jimi.v5i5.1025](https://doi.org/10.53866/jimi.v5i5.1025)

Abstract

This study analyzes Indonesia's strategic decision to join BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) under the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto on January 6, 2025. This move reflects Indonesia's efforts to strengthen economic growth, global influence, and diplomatic capacity amid the dynamics of a multipolar world. This study uses Immanuel Wallerstein's World-System Theory approach to explain Indonesia's rationale in making this decision. The methods used are qualitative and descriptive through literature and policy analysis to examine the background, Indonesia's economic relations with BRICS, investment, and foreign policy. The results show that Indonesia, as a semi-peripheral country, is trying to move up in the world economic system and expand its trade network by taking advantage of opportunities from BRICS. Indonesia-BRICS trade is valued at USD 150 billion in 2024, while energy dependence remains at 50% on imports and 81% on fossil-based electricity. Through BRICS and institutions such as the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), Indonesia has the potential to access alternative funding and expand its export markets.

Keywords: BRICS; Indonesia; World System Theory; Economic Sovereignty

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis keputusan strategis Indonesia bergabung dengan BRICS (Brasil, Rusia, India, Tiongkok, dan Afrika Selatan) di bawah kepemimpinan Presiden Prabowo Subianto pada 6 Januari 2025. Langkah ini mencerminkan upaya Indonesia untuk memperkuat pertumbuhan ekonomi, pengaruh global, dan kapasitas diplomatik di tengah dinamika dunia multipolar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan Teori Sistem Dunia (World-System Theory) dari Immanuel Wallerstein untuk menjelaskan rasionalitas Indonesia dalam mengambil keputusan tersebut. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode kualitatif dan deskriptif melalui analisis literatur dan kebijakan untuk menelaah latar belakang, hubungan ekonomi Indonesia dengan BRICS, investasi, dan kebijakan luar negeri. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Indonesia sebagai negara semi-periferal, berupaya naik kelas dalam sistem ekonomi dunia dan memperluas jaringan perdagangan dengan memanfaatkan peluang dari BRICS. Nilai perdagangan Indonesia-BRICS mencapai USD 150 miliar pada 2024, sementara ketergantungan energi masih 50% pada impor dan 81% listrik berbasis fosil. Melalui BRICS dan lembaga seperti *New Development Bank* dan *Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)*, Indonesia berpotensi mengakses pendanaan alternatif dan memperluas pasar eksportnya.

Kata Kunci: BRICS; Teori Sistem Dunia; Kedaulatan Ekonomi

1. Introduction

Globalization seeks to blur territorial boundaries, whereby countries around the world will eventually lose their territorial boundaries, making it seem as if a country has no restrictions on interacting with other countries (Mangeda, 2021). Currently, globalization has successfully integrated every country in the world regardless of territorial boundaries and without the need to form agreements with other countries. Globalization has a major impact on human life and international relations, bringing about many changes in various fields, one of which is the economy. Experts who support globalization argue that economic globalization is beneficial to all parties because it has a significant impact on increasing a country's national income. This is because globalization essentially makes economic activities such as trade easier by opening up access between countries (Lubis, 2015). Globalization also has an impact on the international economy, with globalization giving rise to new economic activities such as free trade between countries. Through free markets, every country has the opportunity to simplify economic processes by removing barriers, particularly those related to distance or territorial boundaries in international trade. The main focus of economic globalization is on trade, investment, exports and imports, and technological developments that continue to advance (Maertens et al., 2011). The increase in economic activity then contributes to the growth of state revenue, which ultimately improves the welfare of the community.

Globalization has opened up opportunities for economic growth and facilitated cross-border economic systems. As a result, countries with similar economic goals have been encouraged to form regional cooperation zones or broad trade forums, one of which is BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) is a group of developing countries with significant influence in the global economy. As a new economic powerhouse, BRICS seeks to balance the dominance of Western nations by promoting changes in the international economic system and strengthening cooperation among nations so that the benefits of economic growth can be felt by all countries (Sawal & Anjum, 2023). In addition, BRICS countries have abundant important resources such as oil and gas, which can be utilized to compete with the economic power of the G7 countries that have dominated the global economy and to enhance the role of member countries in international decision-making (Cochrane et al., 2024)

One important step taken by BRICS was the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB), a development bank that aims to finance infrastructure projects and sustainable development in BRICS countries and other developing countries (Aleksia & Bakhtiar, 2023). Unlike Western institutions, the New Development Bank (NBD) does not impose strict conditions on lending, thereby facilitating access for all countries. In addition to the NBD, BRICS has also created the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA), a joint financial reserve system aimed at helping member countries during economic crises to maintain financial stability (Aleksia & Bakhtiar, 2023). Through the NBD and CRA, BRICS promotes the creation of a strong economic system through cooperation between countries and a multipolar world order, namely a world that is not dominated by a single power (Kevin Brave, 2025).

To begin a more in-depth analysis of the rationality of Indonesia joining BRICS in the context of World System Theory, a debate is needed to underpin this research. Asep Setiawan (2025) emphasizes economic diversification as the primary rationale. For him, BRICS offers access to the New Development Bank (NDB), which is more flexible than the IMF, as well as a market of 3 billion people that remains untapped. Data shows that Indonesia-BRICS trade reached \$150 billion in 2024, with potential for energy and agricultural exports (Setiawan, 2025). However, Myajaya (2025) questions whether this is not merely a replacement for Western hegemony. He highlights Indonesia's dependence on Chinese investment, which accounts for 67% of total BRICS investment in Indonesia, risking a repeat of the pattern of exploitation of semi-peripheral countries by core countries (Myajaya, 2025). Therefore, this study aims to address the gap between these two debates by examining the rationality behind Indonesia's decisions, which are integrated with world system theory and an analysis of Indonesia's economic foreign policy, which is also a novelty in this study. Compared to previous studies that used a realist or constructivist approach, this approach allows for the mapping of Indonesia's position in the hierarchy of the global capitalist system, including the dynamics of exploitation between semi-peripheral countries. From the several studies described above, this study attempts to fill the research gap by using a different approach to explain Indonesia's reasons for joining BRICS. by using the world system theory perspective. This approach provides a new and more comprehensive perspective on Indonesia's position in the global capitalist system, which not only explains Indonesia's dependence but also explains the potential for structural change, which differs from the

dependency approach that focuses more on the dependence of developing countries on developed countries, and the realist theory perspective that emphasizes the balance of power between countries. WST categorizes countries into core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral positions. Indonesia, as a semi-peripheral country, has a dual role: it is not entirely dependent on core countries, but it is also not entirely free from their domination.

Indonesia, under the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto, officially joined BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) as a full member on January 6, 2025 (Government Brazil, 2025). This decision demonstrates BRICS' motivation to expand its influence, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, and provides Indonesia with the opportunity to play a greater role on the global stage. This membership underscores a significant shift in Indonesia's foreign policy, which previously prioritized relations with Western countries. Over the past decade, Indonesia has emerged as an active middle power in resolving global crises and participating in international forums such as the G-20 (Setiawan, 2025), Indonesia's foreign policy, known for its free and active principle, is reflected in the diplomatic approach taken by former Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi and President Joko Widodo, who focused more on investment and economic gains. Previous President Joko Widodo, in other words, refused to bring his country to BRICS in 2023, saying Jakarta was still weighing the costs and benefits and did not want to rush things (Wesley Rahn, 2025). The new president, Prabowo Subianto, who emerged as the winner of the 2024 general election, has no such concerns.

However, Prabowo Subianto adopted a different approach after being sworn in as President, immediately dispatching Foreign Minister Sugiono to the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, to apply for Indonesia membership (Klaus Heinrich Raditio, 2024). This significant difference can be explained by Prabowo behavior in seeking status in the international arena. Prabowo views status as an important element in Indonesia's foreign policy. In his view, even though Indonesia has limited power, it can enhance its status on the international stage through membership in elite organizations such as BRICS. He seeks to position Indonesia on par with major countries such as the US and China, even though Indonesia does not have the same power as them (Gurjit Singh, 2025).

However, this pursuit of status also carries risks. Indonesia decision to join BRICS has the potential to alienate Western countries, especially the US, which views BRICS as a bloc that is opposed to its interests. The threat of high tariffs against BRICS countries if they use non-dollar currencies, including Indonesia, also indicates the tensions arising from this change (Kevin Brave, 2025). Nevertheless, Indonesia continues to uphold its principle of free and active foreign policy. Indonesia membership in BRICS does not mean that Indonesia sides with one bloc alone. As a country that is also a candidate member of the OECD, Indonesia continues to build relationships with various countries and organizations around the world without being tied to one side (Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents, 2024). This proves that Indonesia can still play a role as a bridge in international relations, remain neutral, and not get caught up in global conflicts involving major powers such as the US and China.

Indonesia membership in BRICS, under Prabowo leadership, reflects a shift toward a more pragmatic foreign policy strategy focused on achieving global status. However, this also poses significant challenges in maintaining a balance in relations with Western nations and other major powers, which will require higher diplomatic expertise to uphold Indonesia position amid international tensions. The existence of international organizations such as BRICS is clear evidence that cooperation between countries on a global scale brings significant benefits, as many trade agreements have been established between developed and developing countries, which in turn can provide fair benefits for both parties. This article aims to review Indonesia rationale for joining BRICS as part of global governance, particularly through economic policies that favor the interests of developing countries. The discussion will use the world system theory as a framework to analyze the background of the consideration of Indonesia participation in BRICS, especially in terms of opportunities for Indonesia to advance its economy in a better direction because global economic cooperation is actually beneficial for all countries involved, not only for developed countries.

2. Method

This study uses library research with a qualitative and descriptive approach. This means that the author describes his own ideas and views, then relates them to theories from experts and previous research results. The aim is to produce more in-depth and relevant thinking on the topic being discussed (Adlini et al., 2022). As explained, the literature review method in qualitative research focuses on collecting and analyzing information from various written sources, such as books, articles, research reports, and other relevant

documents (Norman K. Denzin, 2017). Through this approach, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of a topic by interpreting the meaning and context of the information obtained. The sources used in this study come from various written references that discuss topics relevant to the research focus. This study uses a thematic analysis approach to identify patterns and recurring themes in the data, which involves a systematic approach to policy documents and literature to extract themes relevant to the discussion, such as sustainability inclusivity and global equality. Furthermore, the BRICS countries approach is compared with normative principles to evaluate its alignment with global governance objectives. Additionally, a contextual analysis is conducted to consider broader geopolitical and economic factors that may influence BRICS' strategies and decisions, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the bloc's role in global governance.

This scientific article uses World System Theory as the basis for examining Indonesia strategic reasons for joining BRICS. World System Theory, often referred to as the modern world system, is a development theory proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein. This theory emerged in the 1970s as a reaction to the views of modernization theory and dependency theory that had emerged earlier, which were considered inadequate in understanding the issues of development and poverty in developing countries. According to world system theorists, dependency theory can only explain the phenomenon of underdevelopment, but cannot adequately explain the phenomenon of development in developing countries. In his view, Wallerstein's dependency theory or world-system theory states that wealthy countries have exploited poor countries to obtain resources and labor (Mohammad Maiwan, 2015).

Immanuel Wallerstein divides the world economic system into three main categories: core countries, semi-peripheral countries, and peripheral countries. Core countries are those with economic power, advanced technology, and control over international trade. Semi-peripheral countries act as intermediaries; they are not as powerful as core countries but not as poor as peripheral countries. Semi-peripheral countries have industrial sectors but remain dependent on core markets. Peripheral countries are exploited by core and semi-peripheral countries, providing raw materials and cheap labor. According to Wallerstein, the world has long been governed by a global capitalist system that consistently exploits peripheral countries. Meanwhile, core countries maximize their profits by extracting resources and labor from peripheral countries, thereby creating structural inequalities between rich and poor countries within the world system (Immanuel Wallerstein, 2004). Wallerstein argues that countries can undergo changes in class status, shifting from core countries to semi-peripheral countries and then to peripheral countries, and vice versa. These changes are determined by the dynamics of the world system. Wallerstein formulates three strategies in the process of class ascent, namely: Class ascent can occur by taking advantage of emerging opportunities. Class ascent can occur through invitation. Class ascent can occur when a country implements policies to make itself self-reliant (Benteng & Amar, 2021). These three strategies provide a useful analytical framework for understanding Indonesia's potential reasons for joining BRICS. First, Indonesia may be seeking to capitalize on opportunities arising from a changing global order, in which alternative power blocs such as BRICS are becoming increasingly influential. Second, invitations or signals from BRICS members toward Indonesia inclusion can be seen as a strategic move to expand their geopolitical reach, indicating that Indonesia importance at the regional level is recognized internationally. Third, Indonesia's efforts to pursue economic sovereignty through policies aimed at reducing dependence on dominant Western institutions are consistent with Wallerstein's idea of independence as a path to class advancement. Therefore, Indonesia's interest in BRICS can be interpreted as a strategic effort to improve its position in the world system by combining opportunity, recognition, and autonomy.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Indonesia Position Before Joining BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)

Since gaining independence, Indonesia has pursued a foreign policy known as the principle of free and active neutrality, which means not siding with any bloc but remaining active in cooperating with other countries. This principle has been applied since the Asian-African Conference and the Bandung Conference in 1955, which became the basis for the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (Sabir, 1987). To this day, Indonesia remains consistent in implementing this principle. For example, President Prabowo Subianto emphasized that Indonesia participation in BRICS is a manifestation of active and independent foreign policy, while Foreign Minister Sugiono stated that this step does not mean that Indonesia is being selective, but rather to strengthen its role as a bridge between developed and developing countries (Emedia DPR RI, 2025).

Within the framework of World Systems Theory (WST), Indonesia occupies the position of a semi-

peripheral country, a category that describes the structural complexity of the contemporary global economy. As a semi-peripheral country, Indonesia is positioned between developed and developing countries, with economic activities consisting of a mixture of advanced sectors and sectors that are still dependent on raw materials (Anthony William Donald Anastasi, 2023). Indonesia semi-peripheral characteristics are reflected in its ability to attract significant foreign direct investment, particularly in the mining and manufacturing sectors, while remaining dependent on commodity exports and imported technology (Fajar Hidayat, 2023).

In the context of the global economy, Indonesia has achieved the status of the world eighth largest economy based on GDP PPP with a value of USD 4.66 trillion in 2024. Although this achievement shows significant economic progress, Indonesia semi-peripheral position still reflects a complex structural dependence on developed countries. Indonesia manufacturing sector, which accounts for 74.59% of the country's total exports, still relies on imports of raw materials and technology from core countries (Andrzej Barski, 2025). This condition shows that although Indonesia has developed beyond the status of a purely peripheral country, it has not yet fully achieved the economic autonomy enjoyed by core countries (Raka Putra Paksi, 2020).

Indonesia dependency relationship with developed countries follows the hierarchical pattern described in world-system theory, where economic surpluses flow from semi-peripheral countries to core countries through various structural mechanisms. This dependency manifests itself in the form of colonial dependency, financial industry dependency, and technological dependency (Fajar Hidayat, 2023). In the context of colonial dependence, Indonesia economy still reflects a colonial economy in which the management of key natural resources is under the control of foreign countries through multinational corporations. Indonesia still exports raw materials and does not yet have the capacity to process raw materials independently, so it must import processed products that are much more expensive (Muhardi, 2020).

Indonesia dependence in these three main areas highlights the complexity of its political-economic relations with developed countries. First, foreign direct investment dependence shows a concerning pattern in terms of geographical and sectoral concentration. Data from 2024 shows that the top five countries contributing to foreign investment in Indonesia are Singapore (US\$8.8 billion), China (US\$3.9 billion), Hong Kong (US\$3.8 billion), the United States (US\$2.4 billion), and Japan (US\$1.79 billion) (Ayman Falak Medina, 2024). The dominance of Asian countries, particularly China and Japan as developed countries, shows Indonesia dependence on capital and technology from core countries. Dependence on China is particularly prominent in the mining sector, especially nickel, where Chinese companies dominate Indonesia nickel smelter industry. Chinese investment in Indonesia reached US\$8.2 billion in 2022, nearly double the US\$4.37 billion received in 2021 (Admin Invest Indonesia, 2023).

Second, technological and manufacturing dependency shows the structural weakness of Indonesia economy in developing domestic capabilities. Indonesia faces significant dependency on imports of capital goods and technology, with Indonesia machinery and equipment industry contributing only 0.3% of total GDP or only 1% of total manufacturing industry in 2019 (Andrzej Barski, 2025). This dependency is reflected in the inadequate domestic capacity of the machinery and equipment industry, so that Indonesia still relies on imports of capital goods and machinery. The value of machinery and electronics imports reached \$47 billion in 2019, with China as the largest supplier worth \$20 billion, followed by Japan with \$5.7 billion (Pratiwi & Tarigan, 2023). This technological dependency is also seen in the digital sector, where Indonesia faces challenges in developing domestic technological infrastructure and still relies on foreign technology platforms.

Third, energy dependency shows strategic vulnerabilities that threaten Indonesia economic sovereignty. President Joko Widodo once stated that dependency on fuel imports is very dangerous for Indonesia, with national fuel production only able to meet 50% of needs, while the other 50% relies on imports. Indonesia energy sector still heavily relies on fossil fuel power plants and imported crude oil (Sisdwinugraha et al., 2020). Data shows that fossil fuels still dominate 81% of Indonesia power generation in 2023, resulting in emissions of 287 MtCO_{2e}. This energy dependence creates vulnerabilities in the national energy supply and affects PLN's ability to provide reliable and affordable electricity.

Table 1. Table showing Indonesia's dependence on other countries in several sectors

Area of Dependency	Description	Data
Dependence on Foreign Investment	Indonesia's dependence on foreign investment concentrated in a few countries and sectors. Asian countries, particularly China and Japan, dominate investment and technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Singapore: US\$8,8 miliar (2024) - Tiongkok: US\$3,9 miliar (2024) - Hong Kong: US\$3,8 miliar (2024) - United States: US\$2,4 miliar (2024) - Japan: US\$ 1,79 miliar (2024)
Dependence on Technology and Manufacturing	Indonesia's dependence on imports of capital goods and technology, as well as weaknesses in developing domestic capacity in the machinery and equipment sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indonesia's machinery and equipment sector contributed only 0.3% of GDP (2019) - Value of machinery and electronics imports: US\$47 billion (2019) - China as the largest supplier: US\$20 billion (2019)
Energy Dependency	Indonesia's dependence on energy imports, particularly fossil fuels, threatens its economic sovereignty and creates vulnerability in energy supply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fuel import dependency: 50% of national energy needs (2023) - 81% of Indonesia's power plants still rely on fossil fuels (2023) - CO2 emissions: 287MtCO_{2e} (2023)

Source: Compiled by the author from several sources

The impact of dependency relations on Indonesia economic growth shows a development paradox that is characteristic of semi-peripheral countries. On the one hand, dependence on foreign direct investment has a positive impact on Indonesia economic growth (Istiqomah & Faridatussalam, 2023). Research shows that FDI has a significant positive effect on economic growth in Indonesian provinces, especially in the mining, manufacturing, water, gas and electricity, hotels and restaurants, and real estate sectors. FDI in the manufacturing sector contributes positively and has a significant impact on economic growth (Fazaalloh, 2024). However, dependence on imports of raw materials and capital makes Indonesia vulnerable to exchange rate fluctuations. Research shows that a one percent increase in the exchange rate ratio causes exports to decrease by around 0.65 percent (Febrianti, K. W., & Rosyida, 2022).

The impact of dependence on Indonesia's foreign policy reflects the complexity of geopolitical navigation as a semi-peripheral country in a multipolar international system. Indonesia has adopted a hedging plus strategy in response to global geopolitical dynamics, particularly in the context of US-China rivalry in the Indo-Pacific region (Budiman & Hutama, 2025). This strategy not only avoids risks by not siding completely with one major power, but also actively seeks benefits through diversification of alliances and strategic investments in important sectors. Indonesia strives to maintain a balance between economic cooperation with China and maintaining relations with the Quad to secure its national interests in the face of potential threats in the South China Sea (Walesasi et al., 2022).

Economic dependence also affects Indonesia ability to develop independent multilateral diplomacy. Indonesia strategic dependencies create vulnerabilities in various key sectors that can be exploited by external actors in the context of global geopolitical dynamics. Research shows that Indonesia needs to focus on Strategic Dependencies rather than fully adopting the lexicon of economic security policy that is prevalent around the world (Andrew W. Mantong, Lina A. Alexandra, 2025). This concept emphasizes specific areas where Indonesia economic well-being is most at risk due to heavy dependence on external actors

In the context of regional economic diplomacy, Indonesia is seeking to strengthen its position through membership in multilateral forums such as BRICS. Indonesia interest in joining BRICS demonstrates its efforts to increase its bargaining power in international trade and reduce its dependence on established

markets (Direktorat Akses Industri Internasional, 2025). Through its membership in BRICS, Indonesia has the opportunity to increase its export volume to member countries that have large and rapidly growing markets. The sectors that stand to benefit greatly from this increase in trade include manufacturing, energy, and agriculture, which are the mainstays of Indonesia economy.

The challenges ahead for Indonesia in managing structural dependence require a holistic approach that integrates economic policy, foreign policy, and social development. Indonesia must develop strategies that can leverage the benefits of relationships with developed countries while reducing the vulnerabilities that arise from such dependence. This requires investment in the development of domestic technological capabilities, strengthening economic institutions, and diversifying the broader economic base (Ibrahim et al., 2023). Indonesia economic diplomacy must also be able to balance national interests with the demands of an increasingly complex and competitive global economic system

Indonesia position as a semi-peripheral country in the world system requires a sophisticated navigation strategy in facing global political-economic dynamics. Structural dependence in the areas of investment, technology, and energy creates challenges as well as opportunities for Indonesia to improve its position in the world system hierarchy. Indonesia success in overcoming this dependence will determine the country's ability to achieve sustainable development and strengthen its political-economic sovereignty on the international stage.

3.2 The economies of BRICS countries (Brazil, Rusia, India, China and South Africa)

The BRICS group of countries, consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, has emerged as a key player in global economic dynamics. Despite differences in political and social characteristics among these countries, they share similarities in terms of their status as countries that contribute significantly to global economic growth. BRICS countries have demonstrated promising economic performance, reflected in the growth of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) surpassing that of G7 countries by 2023, as well as in the expansion of international trade and the strengthening of their bargaining positions in multilateral forums such as the G20 and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Firmansyah et al., 2024). This means that nearly a third of global economic activity stems from the contributions of BRICS member states

The BRICS countries, which account for around 40 percent of the world's population and cover approximately a quarter of the Earth's total land area, exhibit striking differences in economic terms. Brazil, as the largest economy in Latin America, has strong agricultural, fishing, and industrial sectors. The country is one of the main exporters of commodities such as soybeans, coffee, meat, and iron ore. Despite facing challenges such as political instability and economic inequality, Brazil continues to play an important role in the global market, particularly in the export of raw materials. On the other hand, Russia is known as one of the world's largest producers and exporters of energy, with oil and natural gas as the pillars of its economy, which also influence its foreign policy (Nurifqi et al., 2024). Despite economic sanctions imposed by Western countries due to the conflict in Ukraine, Russia has demonstrated fiscal resilience through market diversification and strengthened economic ties with Asian countries, particularly China and India

India has emerged as a service-oriented economy, with rapid development in the information technology sector. The IT sector in India includes the software industry, information technology-enabled services (ITES), and business process outsourcing (BPO). India's economic growth is driven by a large young population, a growing middle class, and advances in digitalization. Although the country still faces challenges such as high unemployment and social inequality, India has made significant progress in infrastructure development and the implementation of economic reform policies (Asiva Noor Rachmayani, 2015). On the other hand, China is the largest economy among the BRICS countries and has the second-largest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the world. China serves as a global manufacturing hub and records a significant trade surplus. Since the economic reforms of the 1980s, China has transformed from an isolated economy into one of the world's largest trading powers. However, the transition toward a more consumption- and innovation-driven economy now poses a unique challenge in maintaining stable growth. South Africa, despite having a smaller economy compared to other BRICS members, plays a crucial role as the gateway to Africa's economy (Gao Bai, 2024). The country has a highly developed mining sector, particularly in the production of gold, platinum, and coal. However, South Africa's economy also faces serious challenges such as high unemployment, racial-economic inequality, and inadequate infrastructure

As a developing country and member of the G20, Indonesia shares similarities with BRICS countries in terms of economic structure and development challenges. Indonesia has significant economic potential, supported by abundant natural resources, such as coal, nickel, copper, natural gas, petroleum, iron, and gold, as well as a large population that serves as a market force. The existence of these resources makes Indonesia an important partner for major countries and offers great potential to become one of the influential developing economies, especially with its strategic geographical position in the Indo-Pacific region and its membership in various regional organizations such as ASEAN. In recent years, Indonesia has shown relatively stable economic growth, despite experiencing a decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Indonesian government continues to promote infrastructure development, industrial down streaming, and digital transformation as part of its strategy to strengthen the long-term economy (Permatasari & Jaya, 2024). In this comparison, it can be seen that Indonesia has similarities with the BRICS countries, both in terms of development challenges, economic potential, and growth strategies (Kemenhan, 2025). However, Indonesia has not yet formally joined BRICS, although some circles have voiced the potential for its future participation. In the global context, economic cooperation between Indonesia and BRICS could present a significant opportunity to strengthen South-South economic ties, expand export markets, and promote technology transfer and investment. By considering the dynamics and characteristics of each country, discussions on the economies of BRICS countries and Indonesia open up space for strategic reflection on how developing countries can consolidate their economic strength in the face of global economic dominance long controlled by developed nations.

3.3 The Process of Indonesia Entry Into BRICS

Indonesia decision to join BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) is a strategic step that cannot be separated from global dynamics and Indonesia position in the world economic system. In the eyes of World Systems Theory (WST) developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, Indonesia is included in the category of semi-peripheral countries, namely countries that are in the middle between developed countries (core) and developing countries that are still lagging behind (periphery). In its position as a semi-peripheral country, Indonesia faces a structural dilemma. On the one hand, Indonesia has the ability to export primary commodities and attract foreign investment, in order to strengthen its position by establishing new cooperation that can open up wider economic and political opportunities, especially in the mining and manufacturing sectors (Mahendra, 2024). However, on the other hand, Indonesia still depends on technology, capital, and influence from core countries such as the United States, Japan, and Western European countries (Sabilla et al., 2025). This dependence shows that although Indonesia is not part of the periphery, this country has not been able to completely escape the structure of subordination in the global capitalist system. This is the beginning of the process for Indonesia to consider its interests in joining BRICS.

Indonesia move to join BRICS is a reflection of Wallerstein's typical semi-peripheral country strategy, namely, trying to increase bargaining power and increase economic surplus through new alliances that are not entirely within the orbit of core countries. Initially, Indonesia showed a cautious attitude towards BRICS, considering that Indonesia is a semi-peripheral country, which means that it is very possible for Indonesia to be trapped in dual dependency (Syamsudin, 2025). Until in the process at the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, which was held in August 2023 in South Africa, President Joko Widodo said that Indonesia had not officially applied to join because at that time the government was still reviewing the impact and benefits of BRICS membership. This is an important part of the process of Indonesia entry into BRICS because of the need to maintain a balance in international relations, especially because Indonesia is also exploring opportunities to join organizations of developed countries such as the OECD (Translation, 2023). However, the direction of foreign policy changed more rapidly when the new government under President Prabowo Subianto came to run. President Prabowo has shown greater interest in cooperation with Global South countries such as those in BRICS, which could accelerate the process of Indonesia joining BRICS (Utama, 2025).

In October 2024, at the BRICS Plus forum in Kazan, Russia, Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono officially expressed Indonesia interest in joining BRICS (Riyaz ul Khaliq, 2025). This was a major step for Indonesia, showing that Indonesia wanted to be more active in an alternative global economic forum that was not dominated by Western countries (Hao Nan, 2025). Until a few months later, precisely on January 6, 2025, Indonesia was officially announced as a full member of BRICS by Brazil, which was then the chairman of

BRICS. This announcement made Indonesia the first Southeast Asian country to join BRICS, while strengthening the group's position in the Asia-Pacific region (Lauren Mai, 2025). With Indonesia entry, the number of BRICS members increased to eleven countries, including several major economic powers in the Global South. Participation in BRICS gives Indonesia the opportunity to strengthen economic cooperation with countries that are also in semi-peripheral positions or even moving towards the core, such as China and India (Stewart Patrick, Erica Hogan, 2025). This strategy is in line with Wallerstein's theory, which emphasizes that semi-peripheral countries have the flexibility to move up a class in the world system by forming alternative economic and political networks

Through this membership, Indonesia can expand market access, increase economic cooperation, and seek alternative sources of development financing. And this is seen as a response to the limited space for semi-peripheral countries in an economic system dominated by the core. In Wallerstein's view, semi-peripheral countries are often trapped in a double dependency from above (core countries) and below (peripheral countries) (Anthony William Donald Anastasi, 2023). In 2024, Indonesia trade value with BRICS countries was recorded at around USD 150 billion, mainly from exports of palm oil, coal, natural gas, and rubber. This shows great potential in expanding non-traditional markets, reducing dependence on developed countries, and strengthening national economic competitiveness

In addition to trade, Indonesia joining BRICS allows Indonesia to build alternative funding access through the New Development Bank, a development bank owned by BRICS. This bank is expected to be an alternative to global financial institutions such as the IMF or the World Bank, which are more influenced by Western countries (Pandu Utama Manggala, 2025). Funds from the NDB can be used for energy transition projects, infrastructure, and sustainable development in Indonesia. However, there are also concerns that new dependencies could emerge, especially on China, which dominates the BRICS economy

Overall, Indonesia process to join BRICS shows how a semi-peripheral country is trying to move up a class in a world system that has tended to be unequal. Within the framework of World Systems Theory developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, Indonesia considerations and decisions can be seen as part of the process and efforts of Indonesia to strengthen its position by establishing strategic alliances outside the influence of core countries. Indonesia not only wants to expand its market and economic cooperation, but also seeks new, more equal space to move at the global level. By joining BRICS, Indonesia is trying to open alternative paths in trade, investment, and diplomacy that do not depend entirely on the global order dominated by the West. This shows the typical dynamics of a semi-peripheral country that wants to expand its influence by exploiting gaps in the hierarchical world structure.

3.4 The Rationale Behind Indonesia Joining BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, And South Africa)

On January 6, 2025, Indonesia officially became a full member of BRICS, an economic and diplomatic cooperation bloc that now includes major countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (Reuters, 2024). This step is a strategic decision taken by Indonesia to strengthen its national position amidst the dynamics of the evolving global order. Indonesia joining BRICS did not happen spontaneously, but was driven by various economic, geopolitical, and diplomatic considerations.

From an economic perspective, the government sees Indonesia membership in BRICS as a great opportunity to expand its network of trading partners and open access to alternative sources of funding (Humas, 2025). BRICS has its own financial institution, the New Development Bank (NDB), which is designed to provide development loans to developing countries without the strict conditions usually imposed by the World Bank and the IMF. With a high debt interest payment burden, which is around 47% of the state budget, membership in the NDB is seen as a way to help Indonesia finance important infrastructure projects without exacerbating its foreign debt burden (Salma, 2025). BRICS membership also opens up great opportunities for Indonesia to access large markets such as India and China. Currently, BRICS Plus member countries cover almost half of the world's population and contribute around 40% of global trade. By joining, Indonesia has the potential to enjoy various trade benefits, such as reduced import tariffs or expanded export markets, especially for energy, agricultural, and manufacturing products. In addition, investment flows from BRICS member countries, especially India and China, in strategic sectors such as energy and infrastructure are expected to increase and drive national economic growth (Mayara Souto, 2025). No less importantly, this membership allows Indonesia to reduce its dependence on conventional markets such as the United States and Europe, which tend to be unstable and implement protectionist policies (Sulaiman, 2024). Economists believe that this

diversification will provide long-term economic stability and increase Indonesia competitiveness in the global market.

Geopolitically, Indonesia joining BRICS reflects Indonesia adjustment to the new reality of an increasingly multipolar world. BRICS presents an alternative to the dominance of Western countries in global decision-making. For Indonesia, this membership is a means to strengthen its strategic role on the international stage without being trapped in a particular power bloc. Foreign Minister Sugiono emphasized that this step is in line with the principle of Indonesia free and active foreign policy. This means that Indonesia maintains good relations with all major world powers, both West and East, without siding exclusively with one of them. At the same time, Indonesia is also exploring the process of joining the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), which shows that Indonesia approach remains open and inclusive (Setiawan, 2025). As the largest developing country in Southeast Asia, Indonesia is now seen as a balancing force between developed and developing countries (Kemenhan, 2025). The government positions Indonesia as a bridge that can bridge the interests of the Global South and the Indo-Pacific region, especially amidst increasingly heated geopolitical competition. This role allows Indonesia to continue to play a strategic position in maintaining regional stability while fighting for national interests.

In the field of diplomacy, BRICS membership broadens Indonesia scope to play an active role in global forums. BRICS is known as a forum for developing countries to voice common interests, and Indonesia wants to be part of that common voice. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized that Indonesia position as a member of BRICS will strengthen Indonesia diplomatic role, especially in encouraging reform of international institutions to be more just and inclusive (Elsa Emiria Leba, 2025). The Brazilian government, as the current chair of BRICS, welcomes Indonesia presence and believes that Indonesia has the same spirit in fighting for a more representative global governance system (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2025). With Indonesia entry, it is hoped that cooperation among developing countries in BRICS will be even more solid, especially on issues such as climate change, sustainable development, and energy security. This membership also gives Indonesia access to non-traditional forums outside the G20, APEC, or IPEF. In the BRICS forum, Indonesia can promote its national agenda, including energy independence through renewable technology, natural resource management, and strengthening the digital economy. In addition, Indonesia along history of diplomacy that consistently prioritizes dialogue and peaceful solutions positions Indonesia as a potential mediator between BRICS countries and Western powers, bridging often conflicting interests.

Indonesia decision to join BRICS is not merely a political symbol, but a strategic choice rooted in long-term national interests. Economically, this step paves the way for alternative financing and access to new markets. Geopolitically, BRICS membership allows Indonesia to play an important role in the multipolar era without abandoning the principle of free and active diplomacy. Diplomatically, Indonesia now has a new platform to advocate for the voices of developing countries and contribute to global governance reform. With this strategy, Indonesia is further strengthening its position as a new power from the Global South a sovereign and independent nation ready to expand its influence on the global stage.

Indonesia entry into BRICS is in line with the principle of non-alignment and Indonesia free and independent foreign policy. The Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the objectives and priorities of BRICS are in line with the work program of the Red and White Cabinet, especially on issues such as food security, energy security, poverty alleviation, and human resource development. Through BRICS, Indonesia hopes to be able to advocate the common interests of developing countries or the Global South more effectively. At the same time, Indonesia also continues its participation in other international forums and remains open to dialogue with developed countries (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2025). According to Musa Maliki from the Veteran National Development University in Jakarta, Indonesia decision to join BRICS is President Prabowo's strategy to avoid dependence on developed countries (Daffa Shiddiq, 2024). Musa explained that BRICS reflects the spirit of Global South cooperation, namely cooperation among developing countries to support each other in facing the global crisis. He also highlighted several concrete benefits of BRICS membership. First, a more intensive trade flow will be created, making Indonesia more resilient to the global crisis. Second, BRICS countries are generally immune to economic embargoes imposed by developed countries, so their economies are more stable. As more developing countries join BRICS, the economic order will be more stable.

Indonesia entry into the BRICS Plus forum can basically be seen as a form of strategic articulation from a semi-peripheral country that wants to expand its space within the global capitalist system. BRICS, which

originally consisted of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, represents a group of developing countries that want to challenge the economic hegemony of core countries, especially countries that are members of the G7 (such as the United States, England, Japan, and Germany) (Stewart Patrick, Erica Hogan, 2025). The expansion of BRICS into BRICS Plus, with Indonesia as one of the new partners, opens up opportunities for semi-peripheral countries like Indonesia to strengthen their position in the global system. In Wallerstein's view, the opportunity and invitation given to Indonesia to join BRICS Plus reflect a shift in the dynamics of the world system. Indonesia joining BRICS in early 2025 is a phenomenon that can be understood in depth through the logic of thinking of World Systems Theory (WST), especially in the context of structural mobility mechanisms that allow for changes in a country's position in the hierarchy of the world system (Pandu Utama Manggala, 2025). WST logic of thinking teaches that the position of a country in the world system is not static, but rather dynamic and can experience structural transformation through various complex mechanisms. In this framework, Indonesia membership in BRICS is not merely a pragmatic foreign policy decision, but a representation of a systematic effort by a semi-peripheral country to change its structural position in the global political-economic hierarchy (Efrén & Ruvalcaba, 2013). Indonesia, as a semi-peripheral country, exhibits mixed characteristics between high-value-added and low-value-added economic activities, which provides potential for structural transformation toward a stronger position.

Indonesia membership in BRICS can be analyzed as a structural mobility strategy that is in line with the mechanism of position change in WST. Indonesia joining process shows a transition from a cautious attitude under the Jokowi administration that focused more on integration with Western institutions to a different orientation under Prabowo, who prioritizes BRICS membership (Khakim S Zubaidi, 2024). This change in orientation reflects Indonesia efforts to take advantage of the multipolar geopolitical momentum in changing its structural position (Lauren Mai, 2025). As the world's 8th largest economy based on GDP PPP, Indonesia has the material base necessary for structural mobility, but still faces dependence on commodity exports and imported technology that is characteristic of a semi-peripheral country.

Structural transformation in WST occurs through economic diversification, technological capacity development, and changes in the global division of labor. BRICS membership gives Indonesia access to a platform that enables the acceleration of this transformation through several key mechanisms. First, access to a wider market with a total population of more than 3 billion people provides opportunities for the expansion of Indonesia leading products (Indonesia Business Post, 2024). Second, access to the New Development Bank (NDB) with \$100 billion in capital provides alternative funding for structural transformation projects, including renewable energy and infrastructure development (Jayanty Nada Shofa, 2025). Third, this membership facilitates technology transfer and cooperation in the development of creative industries that can bring Indonesia to a stronger semi-peripheral position, as Wallerstein stated that creative economic capabilities can change a country's position in the world system (Gómez & Wall, 2022).

The logic of WST thinking suggests that the structural mobility of semi-peripheral countries occurs through the exploitation of opportunities in the hegemonic cycle and the restructuring of the global division of labor. Indonesia is taking advantage of the momentum of changes in the increasingly multipolar global order to reposition itself. BRICS membership provides Indonesia with a platform to participate in reshaping global governance to be more inclusive and representative of the interests of developing countries. In this context, Indonesia is not merely a passive recipient of core country policies, but plays an active role in forming an alternative global order that can change the core-periphery dynamics.

The economic diversification strategy through BRICS is in line with the structural mobility mechanism in the WST, which emphasizes the importance of reducing dependence on raw commodity exports (Oyebanji Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2016). Indonesia manufacturing sector, which contributes 74.59 percent of total national exports, still relies on imports of raw materials and technology from developed countries, reflecting a semi-peripheral position that is still vulnerable (Herlambang et al., 2023). Through BRICS, Indonesia can access technology and investment from member countries, especially China and India, which have large investment capacity and interests in investing in developing countries. This cooperation enables Indonesia to develop high-value-added industries and reduce dependence on raw material exports (Ayman Falak Medina, 2024). Structural mobility in WST also occurs through changes in geopolitical positions and states' ability to influence the dynamics of the world system. Indonesia membership in BRICS provides significant geopolitical leverage in the context of the United States and China rivalry in the Indo Pacific region. Indonesia can leverage its position as the only full BRICS member from Southeast Asia to strengthen its role as a mediator in regional dynamics.

This strategy is in line with the characteristics of semi-peripheral countries that act as a link between the core and the periphery, while trying to strengthen their position in the hierarchy of the world system.

The structural transformation facilitated by BRICS membership also includes developing the capacity to accumulate surplus value through technological innovation and the development of creative economy sectors (Nagano, 2019). Indonesia can leverage cooperation with India in the digitalization sector and with China in the technology sector to develop domestic capabilities. This opportunity gives Indonesia the chance to reduce its technological dependency, which is one of the main characteristics of its semi-peripheral position (Ramadhan & Haura, 2025). The development of the machinery and equipment industry, which currently only contributes 0.3 percent of total GDP, can be accelerated through technology transfer and investment from BRICS countries.

However, the WST logic of thinking also warns that structural mobility is not an automatic process and faces various structural obstacles. Indonesia must manage the risk of new dependencies, especially China's dominance, which controls two-thirds of BRICS total GDP. This challenge reflects the complexity of structural mobility in the world system, where efforts to reduce dependence on one set of core countries may create new dependencies on other core countries. Indonesia must develop a strategy that allows it to take advantage of the benefits of BRICS membership while maintaining strategic independence. The structural mobility mechanism in WST also emphasizes the importance of timing and historical context in the transformation of state positions. Indonesia membership in BRICS occurred at the right moment when the world system was undergoing a transition towards multipolarity, and the legitimacy of Western-dominated institutions was declining. This momentum provides a window of opportunity for semi-peripheral countries to restructure their positions in the global hierarchy. Indonesia is taking advantage of this momentum not only to access new markets and investments but also to participate in the formation of an alternative global order that is more beneficial for developing countries.

The structural transformation enabled by BRICS membership also includes changes in trade and investment patterns that can reduce dependence on traditional markets. Data shows that Indonesia trade with BRICS countries will reach around \$150 billion in 2024, with the main exports being palm oil, coal, natural gas, and rubber. This diversification is in line with the structural mobility strategy in WST, which emphasizes the importance of reducing dependence on certain core countries (Myajaya, 2025). Through BRICS, Indonesia can reduce its dependence on the United States and European markets, which tend to be volatile and are often influenced by protectionist policies. WST logic of thinking shows that structural mobility also requires transformation in institutional capacity and governance. BRICS membership gives Indonesia access to best practices in economic management and development policies from member countries that have successfully carried out structural transformation. Brazil and India can provide lessons on industrialization strategies and economic diversification, while China and Russia can share experiences in infrastructure and technology development, this knowledge transfer is crucial to Indonesia ability to manage structural transformation effectively.

Indonesia membership in BRICS also reflects an effort to change the dynamics of unequal exchange, which is a fundamental characteristic of the capitalist world system. Through the BRICS platform, Indonesia can advocate for a fairer trading system and reduce the exploitation of semi-peripheral countries by core countries. The de-dollarization initiative promoted by BRICS, although Indonesia does not fully support this agenda, provides an option to reduce dependence on the US-dominated monetary system. This strategy is in line with structural mobility efforts to reduce vulnerability to core country policies (Dony Aprian, 2025). Structural transformation through BRICS also allows Indonesia to develop its role as a stronger regional power in the context of Southeast Asia. As the only ASEAN country that is a full member of BRICS, Indonesia has a unique position to be a bridge between BRICS and other regional institutions (Riaz Khokhar, 2025). This role can strengthen Indonesia position in the regional and global hierarchy, in line with the characteristics of a semi-peripheral country that has the potential for upward mobility. Indonesia ability to mediate between various power blocs can increase its influence in the formation of regional and global order.

However, WST logic of thinking also reminds us that structural mobility requires sustainable and comprehensive transformation. Indonesia must develop a long-term strategy that integrates BRICS membership with its domestic development agenda, including achieving an ambitious 8 percent economic growth target. This transformation requires investment in human resource development, strengthening economic institutions, and diversifying the broader economic base. It is only through this holistic approach that Indonesia can leverage BRICS membership for sustainable structural mobility. Analysis through the logic of thinking WST shows that

Indonesia membership in BRICS represents a systematic effort for structural mobility in the world system. The facts behind this decision can be "sewn" into the design of WST as a strategy of semi-peripheral countries to take advantage of opportunities in the global hegemonic cycle, economic diversification, and transformation of structural positions. The success of this strategy will determine Indonesia ability to move from a dependent semi-peripheral position to a more independent and influential position in the hierarchy of the world system. This process requires careful management of the risks of new dependencies while maximizing the opportunities for structural transformation offered by the BRICS platform.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion of this journal confirms that Indonesia decision to join BRICS on January 6, 2025, is a strategic step driven by economic, geopolitical, and diplomatic considerations. From the perspective of Immanuel Wallerstein's World System Theory (WST), Indonesia as a semi-peripheral country has a unique position: not fully dependent on core countries but also not yet fully free from the subordination structure of the global capitalist system. BRICS membership is an instrument for Indonesia to strengthen its bargaining position, reduce dependence on Western financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, and open access to markets and alternative funding sources through the New Development Bank (NDB) and Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA). Economically, BRICS offers great opportunities for Indonesia to expand trade networks, increase exports to member countries with large and growing markets, and attract investment in strategic sectors such as energy, infrastructure, and manufacturing. Thus, Indonesia can reduce dependence on traditional markets such as the United States and Europe, which are vulnerable to fluctuations and protectionist policies. However, the journal also warns of the risk of new dependence, especially on China, which dominates the BRICS economy.

From a geopolitical perspective, BRICS membership reflects Indonesia adjustment to the reality of an increasingly multipolar world. Indonesia seeks to strengthen its strategic role on the international stage without being tied to a particular power bloc, while still upholding the principle of a free and active foreign policy. Indonesia also has the potential to become a bridge between developing and developed countries, as well as a mediator in regional and global dynamics.

Diplomatically, BRICS becomes a new platform for Indonesia to strengthen the voice of developing countries on global issues such as international financial institution reform, energy transition, and sustainable development. This membership expands Indonesia space to move in international forums outside the G20, APEC, or IPEF, while strengthening Indonesia role in fighting for a more just and inclusive global governance. Overall, Indonesia membership in BRICS is a systematic effort to carry out structural mobility in the hierarchy of the world system, take advantage of the momentum of global multipolarity, and strengthen Indonesia economic sovereignty and bargaining position. However, this strategy requires careful management of the risks of new dependencies and holistic integration of domestic policies so that structural transformation can be sustainable and have a positive impact on national development.

For policy recommendations on how Indonesia should develop policies aimed at utilizing funding sources from BRICS, particularly those obtained through the New Development Bank (NDB), these funds can be used to build infrastructure and facilitate energy transition, thereby reducing dependence on financial institutions that often impose burdensome borrowing conditions. Furthermore, Indonesia must also strengthen its diplomatic position in the economic field, especially with BRICS member countries, particularly in the energy, manufacturing, and digitalization sectors, which are expected to open the door to greater exports and attract investment that will have an impact on Indonesia's economic competitiveness in the global market. Given China's strong position in the economic sector, Indonesia can take advantage of this proximity to learn about the Chinese economy, which can be applied to the local market in Indonesia by encouraging diversification of trading partners.

This study is expected to lead to further research exploring the long-term implications of Indonesia's membership in BRICS on domestic economic resilience and socio-political structures, including new dependencies on BRICS member countries. In addition, research related to Indonesia's role as an economic mediator in relations between developing and developed countries needs to be further developed, given Indonesia's unique and strategic position as a leader in South-South cooperation, which is also relevant to maintaining the balance of power in an increasingly multipolar global landscape. Thus, research on the impact of BRICS on Indonesia's foreign policy, particularly in the context of maintaining a free and active foreign

policy and a more inclusive diplomatic strategy, could be an important area to consider in responding to increasingly complex global challenges.

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