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LEADERSHIP PSYCHOLOGY, STRATEGIC AUTONOMY, AND SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION: INDONESIA'S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER PRESIDENT PRABOWO SUBIANTO AT THE 2025 BRICS SUMMIT

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Abstract

This article examines Indonesia's foreign policy orientation under President Prabowo Subianto through Indonesia's participation in the 2025 BRICS Summit in Brazil. The main interest analysed is not technical negotiation, but Indonesia's strategy to strengthen economic cooperation, expand strategic autonomy, diversify international partnerships, and enhance its role in South-South Cooperation and Global South diplomacy. This study argues that Indonesia's engagement with BRICS reflects an effort to use multilateral cooperation as an instrument for national development, alternative development financing through the New Development Bank, and greater bargaining power in a multipolar order. The core variables are Indonesia's foreign policy orientation, strategic autonomy, South-South Cooperation, and Prabowo's leadership psychology. Using a descriptive-explanatory qualitative method with content analysis, this research examines official statements, summit documents, policy narratives, and biographical materials. The findings show that Indonesia's BRICS policy is shaped by external opportunities and domestic leadership orientation. BRICS provides opportunities for trade, investment, development finance, technology, and Global South solidarity. Meanwhile, Prabowo's nationalist outlook, military background, and pragmatic leadership influence Indonesia's representation within BRICS. Therefore, Indonesia's participation in BRICS should be understood as a strategy to strengthen cooperation and preserve foreign policy autonomy.

Keywords: Indonesia, Foreign Policy, Prabowo, BRICS Summit, 2025.

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Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji orientasi kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia di bawah Presiden Prabowo Subianto melalui partisipasi Indonesia dalam KTT BRICS 2025 di Brasil. Fokus utama analisis bukanlah negosiasi teknis, melainkan strategi Indonesia untuk memperkuat kerja sama ekonomi, memperluas otonomi strategis, mendiversifikasi kemitraan internasional, dan meningkatkan perannya dalam Kerja Sama Selatan-Selatan dan diplomasi Global Selatan. Studi ini berpendapat bahwa keterlibatan Indonesia dengan BRICS mencerminkan upaya untuk menggunakan kerja sama multilateral sebagai instrumen pembangunan nasional, pembiayaan pembangunan alternatif melalui Bank Pembangunan Baru, dan peningkatan daya tawar dalam tatanan multipolar. Variabel inti adalah orientasi kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia, otonomi strategis, Kerja Sama Selatan-Selatan, dan psikologi kepemimpinan Prabowo. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif-eksplanatori dengan analisis isi, penelitian ini mengkaji pernyataan resmi, dokumen KTT, narasi kebijakan, dan materi biografi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kebijakan BRICS Indonesia dibentuk oleh peluang eksternal dan orientasi kepemimpinan domestik. BRICS memberikan peluang untuk perdagangan, investasi, pembiayaan pembangunan, teknologi, dan solidaritas Global Selatan. Sementara itu, pandangan nasionalis Prabowo, latar belakang militer, dan kepemimpinan pragmatisnya memengaruhi representasi Indonesia di dalam BRICS. Oleh karena itu, partisipasi Indonesia di BRICS harus dipahami sebagai strategi untuk memperkuat kerja sama dan menjaga otonomi kebijakan luar negeri.

Kata Kunci: Indonesia, Kebijakan Luar Negeri, Prabowo, KTT BRICS, 2025.

Introduction

The international system has entered a phase in which the distribution of power, patterns of interdependence, and authority over global governance are no longer organized around a single dominant pole. The consolidation of multipolarity is visible in the growing salience of emerging economies, the fragmentation of consensus in multilateral institutions, and the intensifying contestation over whose preferences and norms shape global rulemaking. In this setting, developing states are not merely reacting to structural change; they are actively searching for institutional arenas that can better accommodate their national priorities while amplifying

collective claims associated with the Global South (Zakharov & Rahimzoda, 2024). BRICS has been treated as one such arena because it combines political signaling with selective institutional innovation aimed at reducing asymmetries embedded in existing global economic governance. BRICS refers to Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. Although originally framed as a category of large emerging economies, it developed into a diplomatic forum and a platform for cooperation. South Africa's accession in 2010 expanded its geographic representational reach (Syam & Alfajri, 2025).

Indonesia's formal entry into BRICS in early January 2025, as the first Southeast Asian member, therefore constitutes a strategically meaningful development. Indonesia had signaled interest earlier. Under President Joko Widodo, Indonesia's engagement was demonstrated by participation in the Johannesburg summit process in August 2023 (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara, 2025). Yet accession was finalized under President Prabowo Subianto after domestic and external considerations matured. The timing is not incidental. It coincides with heightened geopolitical uncertainty, the normalization of protectionist impulses, and shifting configurations of global production and trade. Under such conditions, the search for economic resilience and greater diplomatic room to maneuver becomes more salient for a middle power whose prosperity depends heavily on stable external markets. BRICS offers Indonesia a forum that is less constrained by traditional Western institutional gatekeeping and that provides alternative pathways for development finance, cooperation, and political voice.

Although studies on BRICS have developed considerably, the existing literature still tends to focus on the founding members, institutional expansion, economic potential, and the role of BRICS as an alternative platform in global governance. Previous studies have examined BRICS in relation

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to multipolarity, global economic reform, South-South Cooperation, and the collective bargaining power of emerging economies. However, there remains limited scholarly attention to Indonesia's accession to BRICS, particularly under President Prabowo Subianto's leadership and in relation to the 2025 BRICS Summit in Brazil. Existing discussions generally explain Indonesia's BRICS membership from the perspective of economic rationality, geopolitical diversification, or broader Global South dynamics, but they have not sufficiently analyzed presidential leadership, strategic representation, and Indonesia's "free and active" ("*Bebas-Aktif*") foreign policy doctrine interact in shaping Indonesia's position within BRICS. This limitation creates an important research gap. Therefore, this article contributes to existing studies by offering a more specific analysis of Indonesia's BRICS engagement through the combination of South-South Cooperation and the psychological approach to foreign policy, thereby explaining not only Indonesia participates in BRICS, but also President Prabowo represents Indonesia's interests in a changing multipolar order.

Based on this gap, the main research question of this article is: How does President Prabowo Subianto's participation in the 2025 BRICS Summit in Brazil reflect Indonesia's foreign policy orientation, strategic interests, and positioning within the emerging multipolar global order? This main question is further elaborated through two supporting questions: first, how can Indonesia's participation in BRICS be understood through the framework of South-South Cooperation? Second, how does President Prabowo's leadership background and psychological orientation influence Indonesia's representation and strategic approach within BRICS diplomacy? By answering these questions, this article seeks to clarify the relationship between leadership, foreign policy doctrine, and Indonesia's expanding role in Global South cooperation. This research aims to examine the representational strategies through which President

Prabowo Subianto articulates Indonesia's priorities within BRICS diplomacy and to assess those strategies imply for Indonesia's positioning in a multipolar global order. More specifically, this study explains Indonesia's BRICS membership reflects the interaction between national interest, South-South Cooperation, leadership perception, and the long-standing principle of "*Bebas-Aktif*" foreign policy.

Analytical Framework

Psychological Approach in Foreign Policy

The Psychological Approach is one of a key framework in the study of foreign policy, emphasizing that a state's decisions are profoundly influenced by the cognitive processes, perceptions, and personal characteristics of the leader in power. This approach emerged from the idea that states do not act automatically in response to international structures, but rather their behaviours is shaped by leaders interpret complex and often ambiguous international conditions (Hudson, 2005). The psychological approach focuses on understanding leaders perceive threats, opportunities, and the strategic orientation of their country through their personal lens. The psychological approach is selected in this article because the foreign policy under Presidential policy cannot be sufficiently understood only through structural, institutional, or economic explanations. While realist, liberal institutionalist, or political economy frameworks can explain the external incentives behind a country decision to join any international organization. They are less able to emphasize presidential perception, leadership background, strategic worldview, and personal interpretation of global change shape foreign policy choices. When a country tries to accession to economics organizations during certain period of

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Presidential administration, making leadership agency particularly relevant in explaining the government defines its strategic autonomy, interprets multipolarity, and represents national interests within other countries. The psychological approach is used because it allows this study to examine the role of President cognitive orientation, military background, nationalist outlook, and pragmatic leadership style in translating international opportunities into a foreign policy behavior.

Rational choice theory is not relevant for understanding Indonesia's decision to join BRICS because the decision not only as a calculated effort to maximize national benefits and reduce strategic costs. From a rational choice perspective, Indonesia's participation in BRICS reflects a cost-benefit calculation aimed at expanding export markets, diversifying economic partnerships, accessing alternative development financing through the New Development Bank, strengthening bargaining power, and reducing dependence on a single global power bloc. However, rational choice is less sufficient to explain those interests are interpreted, prioritized, and represented by President Prabowo Subianto. Rational choice assumes that decision-makers act based on preference maximization, while the psychological approach allows this study to examine Prabowo's military background, nationalist outlook, perception of strategic autonomy, and leadership style shape the way Indonesia defines its interests within BRICS. Rational choice is treated as a complementary perspective, while the psychological approach is used as the main analytical framework to explain the leadership-mediated process behind Indonesia's foreign policy orientation.

According to Richard C. Snyder, foreign policy cannot be understood without considering the individual making the decisions (Snyder et al., 2002). The leader's perceptions shape

events are interpreted, determine what actions are seen as beneficial, and predict potential risks (Travis et al., 1954). For example, fundamental beliefs (belief systems), past experiences, and leadership style often has significant role in shaping foreign policy preferences. Juliet Kaarbo further emphasizes that the personality traits of leaders and their value orientations significantly impact a country's choices in the international arena (Kaarbo, 2019).

The psychological approach also views the international world as inherently uncertain, and leaders often use psychological mechanisms such as selective perception, heuristics, or cognitive biases to interpret the international environment (Jervis, 2017). This process can lead leaders to overestimate threats, underestimate risks, or make bold decisions based on personal interpretations. The psychological approach positions the leader as a key actor who translates international realities through their own psychological perspective.

The development of modern psychology has further reinforced this approach. Research by Kahneman and Tversky demonstrated that humans often rely on cognitive shortcuts, which can result in biases. This concept was adopted by Jervis, who explained that many conflicts arise not due to real threats but because of misperceptions by leaders regarding the intentions of other countries. Juliet Kaarbo also asserts that personality and leadership style significantly influence the direction of foreign policy (Jervis, 2017).

Two leaders, facing the same conditions, can make different decisions because they assess the situation in different ways. This is the psychological approach emerged; it challenges the rationalist assumptions of realism by showing that foreign policy decisions are not solely based on rational calculations but are also shaped by leaders perceive the world through their personal biases and experiences. The psychological approach in

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foreign policy explains that decisions are not merely the result of rational calculations or structural pressures, but also products of leaders understand, feel, and evaluate external conditions through cognitive and emotional processes that are inescapable. It highlights that foreign policy is shaped not only by external realities but also by the internal, subjective interpretations of the leader in power.

The Concept of South-South Cooperation

The development paradigm of South-South Cooperation (SSC) emerged from the need of developing countries to establish relationships that are more equitable and non-hierarchical, contrasting with the traditional North-South relationships that have often been viewed as imbalanced. According to UNFPA, SSC is defined as "a means of development through the exchange of knowledge, experiences, technologies, and information, as well as capacity-building between and among developing countries" (Partners in Population and Development, 2011). The horizontal nature of SSC, where relationships are not based on donor-recipient models but on mutual strengthening of capacities. Similarly, UNDP emphasizes that SSC is a strategy that enables developing countries "to empower themselves to improve the quality of life of their citizens" (UNDP, 2022). This perspective positions SSC as a framework rooted in shared historical experiences and development challenges, with the goal of enhancing the capacity of each country involved (Iswardhana et al., 2022).

The emergence of SSC is also closely tied to dissatisfaction among developing countries with global governance, particularly in international trade. Various documents indicate that Global South countries face structural barriers. These barriers are not merely technical but are deeply embedded in the global institutional structure, which tends to favor developed countries. As a result, SSC developed as a

strategic response to open up development and diplomatic pathways that do not rely solely on international institutions dominated by the Global North (Iswardhana et al., 2023). This is further reinforced in the United Nations (2009), which acknowledges the growing strength of South-South cooperation and affirms that SSC is a complement, not a substitute, for North-South cooperation (UNOSSC, 2019).

In its evolution, SSC has taken two main forms that are particularly relevant for understanding the foreign policy dynamics of developing countries. The first form is cooperation in development, which "capacity building, knowledge exchange, and technical cooperation"(Muhr, 2023). SSC can be used to explain developing countries strengthen each other's technical, institutional, and technological capacities. The second form is political solidarity, which refers to the collaboration that arises from the recognition that developing countries must collectively advocate for shared interests in global governance. Southern countries work together in "collectively advancing common interests in global governance" (The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), 2025), indicating that SSC is not just about development projects, but also a political tool for driving change in the international system.

The concept of South-South Cooperation is directly relevant to BRICS because BRICS represents an institutional platform through which developing and emerging economies seek to strengthen horizontal cooperation, development financing, technological exchange, and collective bargaining power in global governance. BRICS is not only an economic grouping, but also a political forum that reflects the aspiration of Global South countries to reduce dependence on Global North-dominated institutions and to create more inclusive mechanisms for international cooperation. The establishment of the New Development Bank further demonstrates the relevance

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of SSC within BRICS, as it provides an alternative source of development financing for infrastructure, energy, and sustainable development projects among developing countries. BRICS can be understood as a concrete expression of South-South Cooperation because it combines development cooperation, political solidarity, and institutional reform in the pursuit of a more balanced multipolar order. In the context of Indonesia's foreign policy, South-South Cooperation helps explain BRICS is strategically important for President Prabowo Subianto's administration. Indonesia's participation in BRICS reflects its effort to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries, expand access to alternative development partnerships, and increase its diplomatic leverage in issues such as trade, infrastructure, food security, energy transition, and global governance reform. Through BRICS, Indonesia can maintain its "*Bebas-Aktif*" orientation while deepening practical cooperation with Global South partners. SSC is not used merely as a normative concept in this article, but as an analytical framework to understand Indonesia uses BRICS as a vehicle for strengthening cooperation, enhancing strategic autonomy, and positioning itself as an active middle power within the emerging multipolar order.

Methods

This study uses an explanatory qualitative to answer the research problem. The case study design is selected to enable intensive examination of a bounded empirical episode and to preserve the integrity of contextual factors that shape presidential diplomacy and summit-level signaling (Patton, 2015). Data collection is organized focused on secondary data based on literature and document review, covering official statements, summit speeches, press briefings, policy documents, and relevant institutional outputs (Suryabrata, 2018).

The research process follows a systematic sequence. It begins with problem identification and a focused literature review to establish the conceptual terrain, delimit the unit of analysis, and derive analytic expectations from the two theories used in the manuscript. On that basis, the study specifies the research question, develops an explanatory proposition, and operationalizes the core concepts into observable indicators. Finally, the study deliberately avoids unwarranted generalization: it aims to produce a defensible explanation of a bounded case with conclusions restricted to what the evidence can substantiate (Patton, 2015).

To make the psychological approach more operational, this study also uses documentation derived from President Prabowo Subianto's biographical and autobiographical materials, including personal narratives and documented statements that reflect his political experiences, military background, leadership values, and foreign policy worldview. These materials are important because the psychological approach requires evidence on the leader's perceptions, belief system, past experiences, and strategic preferences influence foreign policy behaviour. In this research, Prabowo's biographical trajectory is not treated merely as background information, but as analytical data to identify his formative experiences, nationalist orientation, security-based worldview, and preference for strategic autonomy contribute to Indonesia's decision to engage BRICS. Therefore, documentation on Prabowo's life history is used to activate the theoretical framework more operationally by connecting leadership psychology with observable foreign policy representation at the 2025 BRICS Summit.

This research applies a descriptive-explanatory qualitative approach supported by content analysis. The descriptive dimension is used to present the empirical context of Indonesia's accession to BRICS, President Prabowo's

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participation in the 2025 BRICS Summit, and Indonesia's broader position within Global South diplomacy. Meanwhile, the explanatory dimension is used to interpret Indonesia's BRICS engagement matters for its foreign policy orientation and presidential leadership shapes the articulation of national interests. Content analysis is employed to examine official speeches, government statements, summit documents, press releases, and biographical materials by identifying recurring themes, narratives, and indicators related to strategic autonomy, South-South Cooperation, "*Bebas-Aktif*"diplomacy, economic resilience, Global South solidarity, and leadership perception. This analytical framework enables the study to connect textual evidence with the theoretical concepts used in the article, particularly the psychological approach and South-South Cooperation.

Discussion

The History and Development of BRICS

There is relevance between BRICS and the historical context of the consolidation of Western influence in post-millenium global governance. The 2008 financial crisis emerges as a critical inflection point because it exposed vulnerabilities in existing governance arrangements and expanded the discursive and political space for Southern agency. Russia tried have significant role in advancing the idea of a renewed Southern economic order in 2009, a move that contributed directly to the emergence of BRICS as a more organized coalition among major non-Western economies. BRICS did not originate as a formal political project but evolved from a concept initially articulated within global financial discourse. The term "BRIC" has sustained growth trajectories of Brazil, Russia, India, and China could significantly increase their relative weight in the world economy and magnify the global market effects of their fiscal and monetary policies (June, 1997; O'Neill, 2021).

The BRICS known as a consequential actor in global politics and political economy, not only as an aggregation of emerging markets but as a potential counterweight to Western dominance and as a vehicle for multipolarity. Russia's initiative in convening the first summit of the four founding states is being closely linked to Moscow's strategic interest in balancing Western influence. The first formal BRIC summit was hosted by Russia in 2009, and South Africa joined in 2010 following an invitation from China, expanding the grouping into BRICS and strengthening its representational narrative beyond the original four. Subsequent expansion illustrates both ambition and complexity. At the 2023 BRICS summit in South Africa, the bloc announced the admission of six states, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Argentina. The evidence records that Argentina later withdrew from the accession process under President Javier Milei, while the remaining five were scheduled to join in 2024, with Saudi Arabia still not having completed its membership process formally. Then, Indonesia joined BRICS on 6 January 2025, marks a significant extension of the bloc into Southeast Asia (Bhargav et al., 2024; de Carvalho et al., 2025; Strangio, 2025).

From the historical formation and institutional development above, can be understood that BRICS are part of South-South Cooperation platform created by major emerging economies outside the traditional North-dominated governance structure. BRICS reflects the core principles of South-South Cooperation because it emphasizes horizontal cooperation among developing and emerging countries, mutual benefit, respect for sovereignty, non-conditional development cooperation, and collective efforts to reform global governance. Unlike traditional North-South cooperation, which often places developing countries in a donor-recipient hierarchy, BRICS presents cooperation among Southern states as a political and economic partnership based on shared development interests

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and common dissatisfaction with unequal global institutions. Therefore, the historical development of BRICS is closely connected to South-South Cooperation because both seek to expand the policy space, bargaining capacity, and institutional voice of developing countries in the international system.

The institutional relevance of BRICS to South-South Cooperation is also reflected in the establishment of the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement. These institutions show that BRICS does not only function as a diplomatic forum, but also as a mechanism to translate South-South solidarity into practical development instruments. The New Development Bank provides an alternative source of development financing for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in emerging and developing economies, while the Contingent Reserve Arrangement aims to provide liquidity support during financial instability. In this sense, BRICS operationalizes South-South Cooperation by connecting political solidarity with development finance, capacity-building, and collective economic resilience. For Indonesia, this makes BRICS relevant not only as a geopolitical coalition, but also as a platform to strengthen development cooperation, diversify financing sources, and increase bargaining power within a multipolar order.

Then, BRICS is part of South-South Cooperation framework because it represents both a political expression of Global South solidarity and an institutional mechanism for strengthening development cooperation among emerging economies. This connection explains Indonesia's accession to BRICS should not be read merely as a diplomatic alignment, but as part of a broader strategy to participate in Southern-led cooperation, expand economic alternatives, and contribute to the reform of global governance.

Assesing The South-South Cooperation in 2025 BRICS Summit

In the current global context, platforms like BRICS are becoming increasingly prominent, SSC is key to understanding the foreign policy orientations of developing countries. Forums like BRICS provide a strategic space to strengthen both of these aspects simultaneously. Through BRICS, the Global South can not only further development goals but also build a cohesive political voice to challenge the dominant structures of global governance.

President Prabowo Subianto's presence in the 2025 BRICS Summit of 6 July 2025 in Brazil was concrete enactment of South–South Cooperation (SSC) within contemporary global politics. BRICS has moved beyond the status of a consultative forum among developing states and increasingly operates as an institutional arena through which Global South actors attempt to consolidate shared interests outside governance arrangements long shaped by Global North preferences. The decision to participate at the head-of-state level is politically salient because SSC, in its core formulation, rests on horizontal relations, sovereign equality, and collective capacity-building rather than hierarchical donor–recipient logics (Iswardhana, 2021). The summit appearance is not merely representational; it signals a strategic commitment to an alternative modality of cooperation that seeks to widen policy space for developing countries.

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Figure 1. Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto attended the 2025 BRICS Summit



Source: (*Prabowo* Subianto, 2025)

Indonesia's presence in BRICS Summit strengthens the profile as a middle power with credible multilateral experience and a long-standing pattern of non-confrontational diplomacy. Indonesia has cultivated a reputation in ASEAN, the G20, and other forums as a constructive broker, often seeking to reduce tensions rather than escalate polarization. BRICS offers an additional arena in which such brokerage may matter, particularly because internal divergences among BRICS members can be substantial and issue specific. Indonesia's comparative advantage lies in its ability to frame cooperation around developmental outcomes and keep negotiations anchored in pragmatic deliverables.

The constraints of BRICS accession is policy coherence across multiple institutional commitments. Indonesia must manage its BRICS agenda alongside obligations and expectations within ASEAN, ongoing partnerships with Western states, and other multilateral engagements, without producing contradictory signals that weaken credibility. Divergent political and security agendas among BRICS members, and intensified rivalry involving Western states, China, and Russia, increase the likelihood that BRICS issues may become entangled in broader strategic contestation. This

elevates the importance of "*Bebas-Aktif*" not as a slogan but as an operational framework for issue-by-issue positioning. Indonesia tried to anticipate external perceptions that interpret BRICS as inherently oppositional to Western interests; mitigating misperception requires consistent communication that Indonesia's approach is pragmatic rather than ideological and that institutional diversification does not imply diplomatic estrangement.

The summit representation is not mere symbolism. It is a performative form of statecraft through which leaders define national interest, signal alignment preferences, shape bargaining space, and seek legitimacy for foreign-policy choices. In Indonesia's case, the issue is further sharpened by the doctrinal expectation that external engagement should reflect the country's long-standing "free and active" (*Bebas-Aktif*) orientation, which emphasizes autonomy, balance, and principled participation in international affairs (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2025).

Within the dimension of cooperation in development, Indonesia's engagement at BRICS 2025 indicates an effort to leverage SSC as an important means for pursuing national development objectives under more flexible terms. BRICS' institutional innovations, the New Development Bank (NDB), can be used to support infrastructure, energy, and strategic industrial sectors in emerging and developing economies. The relevance to SSC lies in the emphasis on technical cooperation, knowledge exchange, and capacity development among developing states, rather than conditionality-heavy financing that often reproduces asymmetric bargaining positions. From Indonesia's perspective, participation at the summit level reinforces the interpretation of BRICS as a strategic tool for advancing long-horizon national projects, including Indonesia's development agenda toward 2045, through cooperation that is

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presented as more equitable and less structurally dependent on Global North-dominated financial governance (Corrêa, 2017).

The NDB was established to finance infrastructure and development projects in member and partner developing countries, with an institutional design often associated with comparatively flexible access. The Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) functions as a pooled liquidity support mechanism intended to strengthen financial stability during periods of external stress (Pambagyo & Herningtyas, 2025). The NDB and CRA illustrate BRICS seeks to convert political critique of existing governance into concrete instruments, even if their long-term systemic effects remain debated.

From the perspective of political solidarity, President Prabowo's presence at BRICS 2025 as Indonesia's entry into a broader Global South political dynamic that is increasingly organized around critiques of structural inequality in global governance. SSC associated to broaden global decision-making spaces that remain dominated by the Global North and to reinforce claims for a more multipolar order (Muhr, 2023).

President Prabowo's attendance as a signal that Indonesia is no longer relying exclusively on Western-centered forums to pursue either national interests or broader developing-country concerns. BRICS is used as a site for consolidating Global South solidarity in ways that can strengthen Indonesia's bargaining position on issues such as WTO reform, agricultural trade equity, and the legitimacy of policy instruments required for industrial upgrading. Within an SSC frame, this reflects an attempt to construct collective capacity as a response to entrenched asymmetries in the global system (UNDP, 2022). The relationship between the BRICS summit and SSC is understood through BRICS' dual function: linking development cooperation instruments such as the NDB with a politics of solidarity aimed at widening voice and influence for developing states. President Prabowo's

participation suggests that Indonesia is increasingly treating SSC not only as a normative vocabulary but as an operational approach within foreign policy practice, combining developmental objectives with a deliberate effort to enhance political leverage in an international order that remains structurally unequal (Muhr, 2023; UNOSSC, 2019).

Prabowo Subianto's Psychological as a Determining Factor in Indonesia's Joining BRICS

In foreign policy decision-making, state behaviour cannot be reduced to systemic pressures and material interests alone. A substantial strand of Foreign Policy Analysis holds that leaders matter because choices are filtered through cognition, emotion, risk perception, and self-concept. Policy outcomes reflect not only external constraints but also decision-makers interpret those constraints, assign salience to threats and opportunities, and translate national interest into concrete strategies.

The use of the psychological approach in this section requires stronger empirical grounding because leadership psychology cannot be inferred only from general assumptions about President Prabowo Subianto's political position. In Foreign Policy Analysis, psychological explanation must be supported by observable evidence such as personal biography, leadership formation, public speeches, political decisions, strategic narratives, and repeated patterns of policy preference. This section analyzes Prabowo's leadership psychology through several empirical indicators: his military socialization, his long political experience, his nationalist discourse, his emphasis on strategic autonomy, his preference for strong state capacity, and his repeated framing of Indonesia as a country that must stand independently while maintaining cooperation with all sides. These indicators allow the psychological approach to be applied more operationally rather than merely descriptively.

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This argument is also supported by the literature on leader-centered foreign policy analysis, which emphasizes that leaders' belief systems, operational codes, perceptions of threat, and images of national role influence foreign policy choices are formulated. Hudson (2005) argues that foreign policy cannot be separated from actor-specific explanations because leaders interpret international constraints before transforming them into policy decisions (Hudson, 2005). Jervis (2017) similarly explains that perception and misperception shape decision-makers understand opportunities and risks in international politics (Jervis, 2017). Kaarbo (2019) further demonstrates that leadership style and personality are important in explaining foreign policy variation, particularly when states face uncertainty, institutional transition, or strategic ambiguity (Kaarbo, 2019). Based on this literature, President Prabowo's decision to place Indonesia within BRICS can be interpreted not only as a structural response to multipolarity, but also as a leadership-mediated choice shaped by his strategic worldview, perception of national dignity, and preference for widening Indonesia's diplomatic autonomy.

On the contrary, rational choice is not sufficient to explain this policy preference is interpreted, framed, and represented by President Prabowo Subianto. Rational choice explains BRICS is useful for Indonesia's material and strategic interests, while the psychological approach explains Prabowo's leadership background, nationalist outlook, security-oriented worldview, and preference for strategic autonomy shape the way Indonesia defines and communicates those interests. The psychological approach can explains more about the reason from the leadership perception behind the articulation of Indonesia's foreign policy toward BRICS.

This perspective tried to examining Indonesia's decision to join BRICS under President Prabowo Subianto, because the move is plausibly shaped by a leadership image that privileges

strategic autonomy, national resilience, and the pursuit of status and influence through selective multilateralism. President Prabowo's formative background helps explain the cognitive and symbolic repertoire through which he approaches foreign policy. He emerged from a politically connected, state-oriented milieu and spent significant periods of schooling abroad, an experience that tends to cultivate comparative awareness of international hierarchies while also sharpening sensitivities to recognition and national positioning.

Multiple biographical accounts indicate that his education included institutions in Kuala Lumpur, Zurich, and London, before his return to Indonesia for military training (Sihombing, 2025). Prabowo subsequent socialization at the Indonesian Military Academy, graduating in 1974, and his early career in elite special forces units, anchored his worldview in the discipline of security institutions and in a strategic culture attentive to hard power, command responsibility, and operational risk (Britannica, 2025). Prabowo personal trajectory is analytically important because military institutional environments tend to reward decisiveness, control of uncertainty, and threat-oriented reasoning, while also legitimizing national strength as a prerequisite for sovereignty and bargaining credibility.

President Prabowo post-military political career further reinforces a leadership profile characterized by persistence, ambition, and long time-horizon goal pursuit. After leaving active service and later entering party politics, Prabowo experienced repeated electoral defeats before ultimately winning the presidency. The period as Minister of Defense under President Joko Widodo is consequential in this regard because it provided executive experience in managing external partnerships while maintaining a nationalist framing of security and development.

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As defense minister, Prabowo shows a leadership style that combines hard-power orientation with a pragmatic preference for cooperation when it advances national capability. This pattern is consistent with a strategic logic that treats partnerships instrumentally, prioritizing capability gains and stability outcomes rather than ideological proximity (Prihandoko, 2025; Suoneto & Evander, 2021). It also indicates that a nationalist security outlook does not preclude multilateral or minilateral engagement; instead, cooperation is framed as a means of strengthening autonomy and deterrence.

Within this leadership-psychological frame, Indonesia's decision to join BRICS can be interpreted as the extension of a broader cognitive schema rather than an isolated policy episode. BRICS membership offers a platform aligned with three recurring elements visible in Prabowo's public positioning: autonomy through diversification, cooperation for capacity-building, and international role enlargement. In a widely circulated address at the World Governments Summit in February 2025, Prabowo explicitly placed Indonesia's BRICS engagement alongside other institutional tracks and framed Indonesia as seeking balanced partnerships while maintaining a bridging function between North and South (Sekretariat Presiden, 2025). A leader whose self-image stresses national strength and strategic independence is likely to value institutional diversification as a way to expand options under uncertainty, reduce dependence on any single external pole, and enhance bargaining leverage. The decision to join BRICS can be read as a leadership-mediated response to a changing global environment. Structural multipolarity and geopolitical fragmentation create incentives for middle powers to hedge, but whether hedging becomes policy depends on leaders interpret risk and opportunity.

Table 1. Indonesian Interest in Joining BRICS

Topic of Interest	Benefit Joining BRICS	Further Implementation
Global Trade	Increases Indonesia's market opportunities	Promotes further economic cooperation
International Security	Strengthens Indonesia's role in global security	Maintains a neutral yet active stance
Technology and Innovation	Indonesia's technology used in BRICS Members	Collaborates in agriculture and health
Climate Change and Environment	Strengthens Indonesia's policies on climate change	Actively participates in global green initiatives

Source: Processed from various sources

President Prabowo's presence at the 2025 BRICS Summit in Brazil is important for achieve Indonesia's strategic interests in several key areas. First, in the realm of global trade, Indonesia aims to expand its market opportunities, and Prabowo's engagement with BRICS members will foster further economic cooperation, enhancing Indonesia's role in regional and global trade networks. Regarding international security, Prabowo's participation reinforces Indonesia's commitment to maintaining a neutral yet active role in global security discussions, particularly considering increasing geopolitical tensions. His involvement also aligns with Indonesia's goals in technology and innovation, as he seeks to strengthen collaborations in research and development, particularly with BRICS countries known for their technological advancements. Additionally, Indonesia's stance on climate change and environmental issues will be highlighted as Prabowo advocates for stronger

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participation in global green initiatives, reflecting Indonesia's proactive approach to environmental preservation and sustainable development. Through these engagements, President Prabowo's presence at the summit will not only enhance Indonesia's foreign policy objectives but also position the country as an influential actor within the global South.

In this case, Prabowo's background in security institutions, his long pursuit of political authority, and his demonstrated preference for cooperative capability-building provide plausible mechanisms through BRICS is framed not as an ideological pivot, but as an instrument to widen Indonesia's room for manoeuvre and elevate its standing within the Global South while preserving the operational meaning of "*Bebas-Aktif*". The implication for the analysis is that Indonesia's BRICS accession is not only a material strategy but also a representational project shaped by leadership psychology, where status, autonomy, and coalition-building are treated as mutually reinforcing components of foreign policy choice.

President Prabowo Subianto's participation in the 2025 BRICS Summit in Brazil marked a significant strategic moment for Indonesia as the country's evolving foreign policy in the context of a multipolar global order. Prabowo's approach to representing Indonesia's interests was reflected in strategic narratives, concrete policy agendas, economic diplomacy, and a reaffirmation of Indonesia's position on global peace and governance reform. This multifaceted approach underscores Indonesia's active, moderate, and influential role among Global South nations.

First, Prabowo used a strategic narrative to underline Indonesia's value as a new BRICS member. Prabowo emphasized that the expansion of BRICS membership, including Indonesia's accession, increased BRICS' global GDP share from 34% to 40% and expanded its demographic reach to 56% of the global population (Kementerian Koordinator Bidang

Perekonomian, 2025). Moreover, based on purchasing power parity (PPP) metrics, BRICS has now surpassed the G7 in global economic weight. Through this data, Prabowo constructed a narrative that Indonesia is not merely a new participant but a crucial contributor that enhances the legitimacy and economic clout of BRICS on the global stage.

Second, Prabowo tried to articulated Indonesia's strategic interests through policy agenda aligned with the nation's long-term development goals. During his participation in plenary sessions and bilateral meetings, Prabowo raised key issues such as energy transition, strengthening mineral supply chains, food security, health technologies, and development finance. He highlighted Indonesia's strategic mineral resources, including nickel, copper, and bauxite, as critical commodities in the electric vehicle and clean energy industries. Additionally, Prabowo advocated for the NDB to provide increased financing for Indonesia's economic transformation projects. This foreign policy demonstrates that Indonesia views BRICS not only as a political forum but also as a practical tool to strengthen its national development foundation.

Third, Prabowo framed Indonesia as a diplomatic bridge between ASEAN and the Global South. In multilateral diplomacy, he emphasized that Indonesia's participation in BRICS was not aimed at creating a confrontational bloc but at expanding more equitable and inclusive cooperation. Adhering to the "*Bebas-Aktif*" principle, Indonesia can maintain balanced relations with major global powers while advancing Southeast Asia's interests. This stance reinforces Indonesia's consistent role as a stabilizing force in the region and an active participant in global issues.

Fourth, Prabowo reinforced Indonesia's position as a proponent of the voices and aspirations of the Global South. He underscored the need for a more equitable global order, advocating for better access to technology, financing, and

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decision-making power within international organizations. This aligns with BRICS' growing economic strength, which now allows it to rival the influence of advanced economies. By positioning Indonesia as a leader of the Global South's collective voice, Prabowo portrayed Indonesia not only as a defender of national interests but also as a champion of the broader developing world.

Fifth, Indonesia's representation at the BRICS Summit also underscored its commitment to global peace and adherence to international law. Indonesia's commitment to supporting a multilateral world order, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the maintenance of international stability. Prabowo rejected war, condemned acts of aggression, and criticized the double standards employed by major powers in the global order. Indonesian statement aligns with the stance of most BRICS participants advocate for multilateral reform and greater representation of the Global South in global governance, particularly within institutions such as the United Nations.

Sixth, Prabowo portrayed Indonesia as a nation that is not only economically focused but also holds a normative commitment to global peace and justice. Indonesia's role as an advocate for UN reform, a critic of double standards, and a supporter of inclusive multilateralism strengthens its image as a responsible global actor capable of taking a moral stance in the shifting global dynamics. Prabowo's representation at the 2025 BRICS Summit reflects a combination of national interests, global aspirations, and long-term diplomatic strategy. Through strong economic policies, concrete agendas, a pro-peace stance, and a push for global governance reform, Prabowo successfully presented Indonesia as a relevant, visionary, and ready-to-act nation in a rapidly changing global architecture. Indonesia not only participated in BRICS but also became a significant member in shaping the BRICS's future trajectory.

Conclusions

President Prabowo Subianto's participation in the 2025 BRICS Summit in Brazil represents a significant strategic interest for Indonesia in the context of a global transformation toward a multipolar system. Indonesia's membership in BRICS is not merely symbolic; but rather to expand diplomatic space, strengthen economic bargaining power, and enhance Indonesia's role as a key actor among the countries of the Global South. The strategic positioning within BRICS aligns with Indonesia's long-term foreign policy goals of broadening economic cooperation, diversifying trade partnerships, and boosting collaboration in vital sectors such as energy, infrastructure, and resource management.

Through BRICS, Indonesia tried to maximize cooperation in economic development, particularly in securing access to alternative financing through the NDB. Indonesia seeks to expand its export markets, diversify its trade relationships, and enhance its participation in critical development sectors, all while staying aligned with its pragmatic foreign policy orientation focused on long-term national interests. The decision to join BRICS reflects Indonesia's commitment to these strategic objectives, all while adhering to the principles of its foreign policy, specifically the "*Bebas-Aktif*" doctrine, which seeks to maintain Indonesia's autonomy without aligning with any particular political bloc.

The concept of South–South Cooperation (SSC) could understanding Indonesia's position within BRICS as part of a broader effort to foster equal, horizontal, and mutually beneficial collaboration among developing countries. BRICS serves as an institutional platform through which Indonesia strengthens political solidarity within the Global South while simultaneously enhancing collective bargaining power in a global governance system still largely dominated by the Global North. Indonesia's active role in BRICS highlights that SSC is not

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merely a normative ideal but a concrete strategy in foreign policy, aimed at advancing both national and collective interests in the global arena.

Moreover, the psychological approach could explain President Prabowo's background, experiences, and leadership style contribute to Indonesia's decision to join BRICS. Prabowo's pragmatic leadership, combined with his nationalist sentiment and focus on collaboration, tried to position Indonesia as an active, independent middle power capable of bridging the interests of both developed and developing nations. These explains Indonesia's decision to integrate with BRICS is not only driven by global structural factors but also by the personal perspectives and strategic orientations of its national leaders.

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