

Indonesia Joins BRICS: What Does It Mean for West Papua?

By [Ali Mirin](#)

Asia-Pacific Research, February 07, 2025
[Green Left](#) 17 January 2025

Region: [South-East Asia](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Intelligence](#)

Indonesia officially joined the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa consortium) on January 6 — marking a significant milestone in its foreign relations. In a statement released on January 7, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasised that this membership reflects Indonesia’s dedication to strengthening multilateral cooperation and its growing influence in global politics. The ministry highlighted that joining BRICS aligns with Indonesia’s independent and proactive foreign policy, which seeks to maintain balanced relations with major powers while prioritising national interests.

This pivotal move showcases Jakarta’s efforts to enhance its international presence as an emerging power within a select group of global influencers. Traditionally, Indonesia has embraced a non-aligned stance while bolstering its military and economic strength through collaborations with Western and Eastern nations, including the United States, China and Russia. By joining BRICS, Indonesia is clearly signalling a shift from its non-aligned status, aligning itself with a coalition of emerging powers poised to challenge and redefine the existing global geopolitical landscape dominated by a Western neoliberal order led by the US.

Supporters of a multipolar world, championed by China, Russia and their allies, may view Indonesia’s entry into BRICS as a significant victory. In contrast, advocates of the US-led unipolar world, often referred to as the “rules-based international order”, might see Indonesia’s decision as a regrettable shift that could trigger retaliatory actions from the US.

The future will determine how Indonesia balances its relations with these two superpowers. However, there is considerable concern about the potential fallout for Indonesia from its long-standing US allies.

The smaller Pacific Island nations, which Indonesia has been endeavouring to win over in a bid to thwart support for West Papuan independence, may also become entangled in the crosshairs of geostrategic rivalries, and their response to Indonesia’s membership in the BRICS alliance will prove critical for the fate of West Papua.

Critical Questions

The crucial questions facing the islanders are perhaps pertaining to the loyalties of these Pacific nations: are they aligning themselves with Beijing or Washington, and in what ways could their decisions influence the delicate balance of power in the ongoing competition between great powers, ultimately altering the destiny of the Papuan people?

For Papuans, Indonesia's membership in BRICS, or any other global or regional forums, is irrelevant as long as the illegal occupation of their land continues driving them toward extinction.

The pressing question for Papuans is which force will ultimately dismantle Indonesia's unlawful hold on their sovereignty. Will Indonesia's BRICS alliance open new paths for Papuan liberation fighters to reengage with the West in ways not seen since the Cold War? Or does this membership indicate a deeper entrenchment of Papuans' fate within China's influence — making any dream of Papuan independence almost impossible?

While forecasting the future with certainty is difficult, nevertheless, it is critical to contemplate this new complex geopolitical landscape, as the ultimate fate of West Papua is what is truly at stake here.

Indonesia's membership in BRICS could augment Indonesia's capacity to frame the West Papuan issue as an internal matter among BRICS members within the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs. Such backing could provide Jakarta with a cushion of diplomatic protection against international censure, particularly from Western nations regarding its policies in West Papua.

However, it is also crucial to note that for more than six decades, despite the Western world priding itself on being a champion of freedom and human rights, no nation has been permitted to voice concerns or hold Indonesia accountable for the atrocities committed against Indigenous Papuans.

The pressing question to consider is what or who silences the 193 member states of the United Nations from intervening to save the Papuans from potential eradication at the hands of Indonesia. Is it the US and its allies, or is it China, Russia and their allies, or the UN itself?

Double Standards and Hypocrisy

Indonesia's support for Palestine bolsters its image as a defender of international law and human rights on global platforms like the UN and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. This commitment was notably highlighted at the BRICS Summit in October, where Indonesia reaffirmed its dedication to Palestinian self-determination and called for global action to address the ongoing conflict in line with international law and UN resolutions, reflecting its constitutional duty to oppose colonialism.

Nonetheless, Indonesia's self-image as a saviour for the Palestinians presents a rather ignoble facade being promoted in the international diplomatic arena, as the Indonesian government engages in precisely the same behaviours it condemns Israel for in Palestine.

Moreover, Indonesia's interaction with Pacific nations serves to perpetuate a facade of double standards — on one hand, it endeavours to portray itself as a burgeoning power and a champion of moral causes concerning security issues, human rights, climate change and development; on the other, it distracts the communities and nations of Oceania, particularly Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, which have long upheld the West Papua independence movement, from holding Indonesia accountable for its transgressions against their compatriots in West Papua.

Indonesian Defence Ministry official **Brigadier General Mohamad Nafis** unveiled a strategic initiative on October 10, intended to assert sovereignty claims over West Papua.

This plan purports to foster stability across the Pacific Islands through enhanced defence cooperation and safeguarding of territorial integrity.

The efforts to expand influence are characterised by joint military exercises, defence partnerships and assistance programs, all crafted to address common challenges such as terrorism, piracy and natural disasters. However, most critically, Indonesia's engagement with Pacific Island nations aims to undermine the regional solidarity surrounding West Papua's right to self-determination. This involvement encapsulates infrastructure initiatives, defence training and financial diplomacy, nurturing goodwill while aligning the interests of Pacific nations with Indonesia's geopolitical aspirations.

Military Occupation

As Indonesia strives to galvanise international support for its territorial integrity, the military presence in West Papua has intensified significantly, instilling widespread fear among local Papuan communities due to heightened deployments, surveillance and restrictions. Indonesian forces have been mobilised to secure economically strategic regions, including the Grasberg Mine, which holds some of the world's largest gold and copper reserves. These operations have resulted in the displacement of Indigenous communities and substantial environmental degradation.

As of December, approximately 83,295 individuals have been internally displaced in West Papua due to armed conflicts between Indonesian security forces and the West Papua Liberation Army (TPNPB). Recent reports detail new instances of displacement in the Tambrau and Pegunungan Bintang regencies following clashes between the TPNPB and security forces. Villagers have evacuated their homes in fear of further military incursions and confrontations, leaving many in psychological distress.

The significant increase in Indonesia's military presence in West Papua has coincided with demographic shifts that jeopardise the survival of Indigenous Papuans. Government transmigration policies and large-scale agricultural initiatives, such as the food estate project in Merauke, have marginalised Indigenous communities.

These programs, aimed at ensuring national food security, result in land expropriation and cultural erosion, threatening traditional Papuan lifestyles and identities. For more than 63 years, Indonesia has occupied West Papua, subjecting Indigenous communities to systemic marginalisation and brink of extinction. Traditional languages, oral histories and cultural values face obliteration under Indonesia's colonial occupation.

Glimmer of Hope?

Despite these formidable challenges, solidarity movements within the Pacific and global communities persist in their advocacy for West Papua's self-determination. These groups, united by a shared sense of humanity and justice, work tirelessly to maintain hope for West Papua's liberation. Even so, Indonesia's diplomatic engagement with Pacific nations, characterised by eloquent rhetoric and military alliances, represents a calculated endeavour to extinguish this fragile hope for Papuan liberation.

Indonesia's membership in BRICS will either amplify this tiny hope of salvation within the grand vision of a new world re-engineered by Beijing's BRICS and its allies or will it conceal West Papua's independence dream on a path that is even harder and more impossible to

achieve than the one they have been on for 60 years under the US-led unipolar world system.

Most significantly, it might present a new opportunity for Papuan liberation fighters to reengage with the new re-ordering global superpowers — a chance that has eluded them for more than 60 years.

From the 1920s to the 1960s, the tumult of the First and Second World Wars, coupled with the ensuing cries for decolonisation from nations subjugated by Western powers and Cold War tensions, forged the very existence of the nation known as “Indonesia”.

Regardless of the consequences of Indonesia’s BRICS membership, the fundamental existential question for the Papuans is whether they, along with their global solidarity networks, can reinvent themselves while nurturing the fragile hope of restoring West Papua’s sovereignty in a world rife with change and uncertainty.

*

Click the share button below to email/forward this article. Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [X](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost Global Research articles with proper attribution.

Ali Mirin is a West Papuan academic and writer from the Kimyal tribe of the highlands bordering the Star Mountain region of Papua New Guinea.

Featured image: Houses burning in Mangoldogi Village, Kiwirok District, after armed clashes between TPNPB and Indonesian security forces in September 2021. Photo: [humanrightsmonitor.org](#)

Global Research is a reader-funded media. We do not accept any funding from corporations or governments. Help us stay afloat. Click the image below to make a one-time or recurring donation.



The original source of this article is [Green Left](#)
Copyright © [Ali Mirin](#), [Green Left](#), 2025

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: **Ali Mirin**

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). Asia-Pacific Research will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. Asia-Pacific Research grants permission to cross-post Asia-Pacific Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Asia-Pacific Research article. For publication of Asia-Pacific Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: editors@asia-pacificresearch.com

www.asia-pacificresearch.com contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: editors@asia-pacificresearch.com