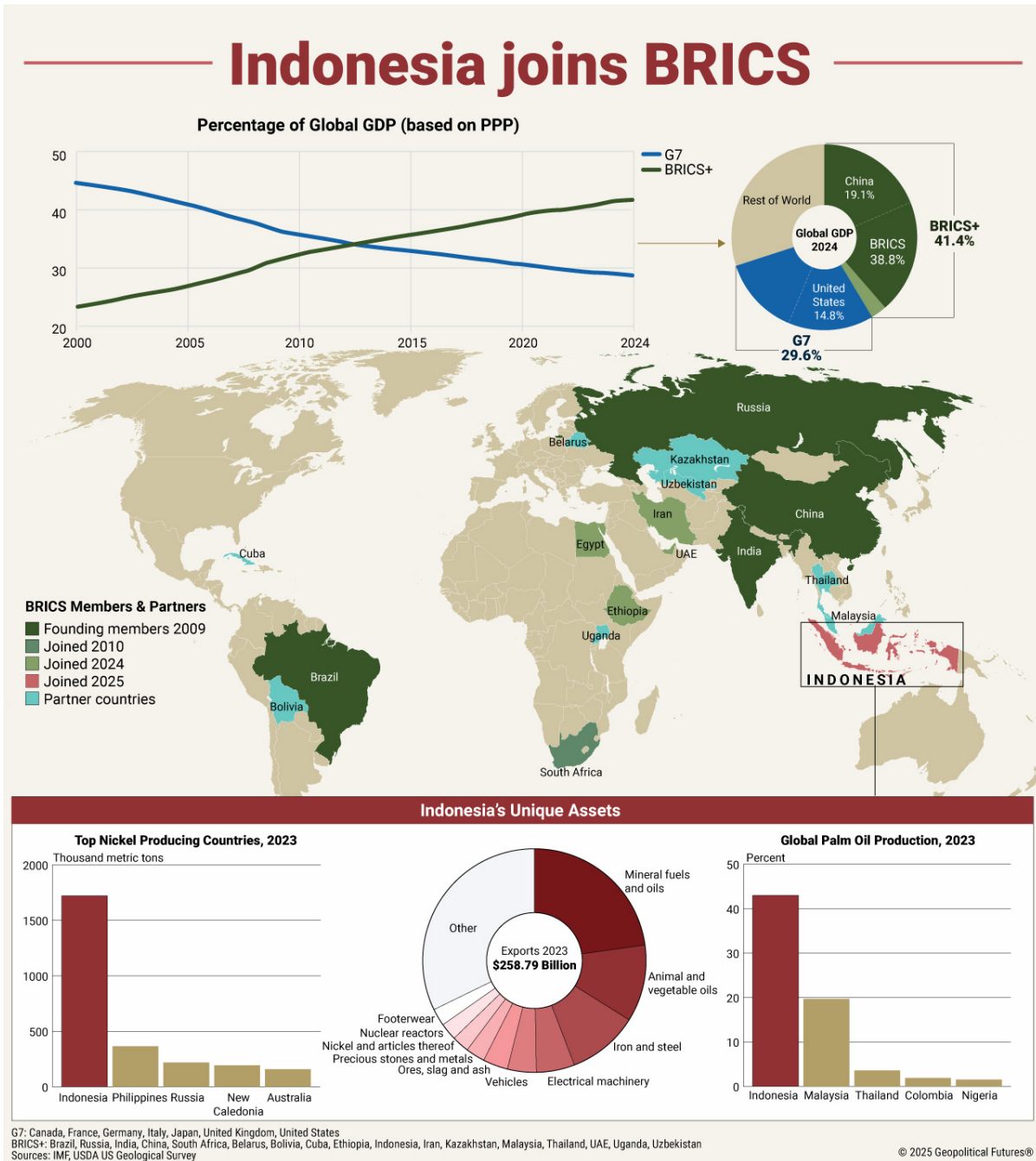


BRICS Add a Member

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The collection of countries known as the BRICS, despite announcing a pause on expansion last year, admitted Indonesia as a full member on Jan. 6, ending its 15-year candidacy. Indonesia, the largest economy and most populous nation in Southeast Asia, is now the first from the region to join the BRICS. Indonesia's accession reflects the priorities of President Prabowo Subianto, who took office in 2024. Unlike his predecessor, Joko Widodo, who was wary of joining a group counting Russia, China and India among its founding members, Subianto sees membership as a way to bolster Indonesia's role in the global south. With the help of the bloc's financial institutions and partnerships, he aims to diversify his country's trade and economy.

However, joining the BRICS is still risky. Historically nonaligned, Indonesia could see its relations with the West suffer as a result of its BRICS membership, particularly as the incoming U.S. administration could interpret the move as a direct challenge to U.S. interests in Southeast Asia. President-elect Donald Trump has previously threatened BRICS countries with 100 percent tariffs if they pursue an alternative to the U.S. dollar. Should trade frictions worsen and the two blocs pull further apart, it could destabilize the BRICS and its members.

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