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A Strategic Convergence Indonesia–Türkiye Relations

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During his visit to Türkiye in early April 2025, President Prabowo Subianto made agreements with the Turkish government on various sectors, notably the economy and defence. These agreements not only indicate an attempt by the two countries to forge closer relations, but also a convergence of strategic interests between Türkiye and Indonesia.



Indonesia's acquisition of the Bayraktar AKINCI drones is a reflection of the growing relations between Türkiye and Indonesia. *Image from Wikimedia Commons.*

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto conducted a two-day state visit to Türkiye in early April 2025, where he visited [Ankara](#) to meet Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Antalya to attend the [Antalya](#) Diplomacy Forum. During the visit, the two countries signed [various agreements](#) on trade, energy, higher education, religious affairs, and the defence industry. This cooperation indicates a strategic convergence between Jakarta and Ankara. For Türkiye, it serves as a significant building block for its pivot to Asia under its [Asia Anew Initiative](#) (*Yeniden Asya*). For Indonesia, it is an opportunity to fulfil its strategic interests, particularly in military modernisation.

Türkiye's Pivot to Asia

In 2019, Türkiye's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu introduced the Asia Anew Initiative, a new foreign policy framework rooted in Türkiye's unique geographical position and its deep historical and cultural ties with Asia. It was officially launched in August 2019 to enhance relations with Asian countries through a comprehensive approach that includes collaboration across tourism, finance, the defence industry, infrastructure, transport, logistics, green energy, and sustainable development.

Nonetheless, Türkiye's limited economic competitiveness and soft power capacity have significantly undermined the [initiative](#)'s effectiveness. To improve the scheme's efficacy, Türkiye must recalibrate the initiative. A more targeted strategic engagement can be key.

The cooperation with Indonesia showcases how Ankara's specific expertise can fulfil the counterpart's needs in the defence industry. This will consequently improve Türkiye's stature in the region. Besides merely fulfilling military needs, the collaboration also offers Türkiye a platform to extend its influence among other Asian countries seeking to avoid entanglement in great power rivalries — particularly in the realm of defence industry cooperation.

Moreover, garnering specific bilateral engagements, such as the one with Indonesia, can help Türkiye realise its ambition to become [a top-tier global defence producer](#). The collaboration with Indonesia has already reaped notable outcomes. In [2023](#), Indonesia signed a deal to acquire 12 Turkish ANKA drones, with six to be assembled locally by Indonesian Aerospace (PT DI). In [February 2024](#), another agreement was signed to export 60 Bayraktar TB3 drones and 9 Bayraktar AKINCI drones to Indonesia, with provisions for technology transfer to facilitate local production. During President Prabowo's visit to Türkiye in [April 2025](#), Indonesia further expressed interest in collaborating with Türkiye on developing fifth-generation fighter jets.

Indonesia's Strategic Interests

President Prabowo's visit to Türkiye was part of a broader Middle East tour, which included stops in the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Qatar, and Jordan. He claimed that his visit to Türkiye had yielded some positive [results](#). The signing of various agreements hints at an attempt by the president to forge a closer relationship with Türkiye and benefit from the relations. First, the cooperation aligns with Prabowo's goal to explore [new economic opportunities](#), especially to mitigate the potential negative impacts of [Trump's tariffs](#). Both Erdogan and Prabowo committed to expanding market access and removing trade barriers between their countries, which

marked the initial step towards establishing the [Türkiye-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement \(CEPA\)](#). In addition to Türkiye, Indonesia aims [to establish CEPA with the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Union](#).

Second, the cooperation indicates Prabowo's continued ambition to modernise the Indonesian military (TNI). Since his time as defence minister, he has been positioning his [international activism](#) to support Indonesia's military modernisation agenda. Meanwhile, [the global rise of Türkiye's defence industry](#) has certainly put Ankara on Indonesia's radar as one of TNI's potential defence suppliers. Closer cooperation with Türkiye can be an opportunity for Indonesia to continue its military modernisation project, following the conclusion of the Minimum Essential Force (MEF) arms modernisation programme in 2024. The adoption of Turkish defence system products by the TNI revolves not only around military platforms but also combat systems. For example, in [2024](#), Indonesia's defence ministry announced that the Navy's two future ["Red White" frigates](#), including missiles, will use Turkish combat systems. The procurement of Turkish defence products indicates Indonesia's attempt to avoid dependency on arms supply, even as Indonesia's continued [mixed bag of tools defence procurement approach](#) could create a logistics nightmare.

Conclusion

Türkiye's Asia Anew Initiative presents a unique opportunity for countries like Indonesia that seek to maintain a "free and active" foreign policy. This is largely due to Türkiye's increasingly flexible foreign policy posture. Furthermore, Türkiye's recent developmental strides in the defence industry sector position Ankara as a potentially significant defence supplier to support Indonesia's military modernisation agenda.

In addition, the Türkiye-Indonesia cooperation can serve as a model for the Asia Anew Initiative scheme. Conceptually, the initiative appears to be a demand-driven policy oriented towards addressing the specific needs of regional actors. However, despite its holistic vision, effective engagement requires a nuanced and in-depth understanding of Asia's complex and diverse landscape.

Türkiye may benefit from developing tailored bilateral relations with individual countries rather than approaching the continent as a monolithic entity. One possible strategy could involve segmenting Asia into more manageable subregions — such as through the creation of distinct initiatives like a "Southeast Asia Initiative", "Central Asia Initiative", or "South Asia Initiative." This approach would not only allow Türkiye to provide more targeted and strategic engagement but also help regional actors better understand the relevance and scope of the Asia Anew Initiative in the context of their own national and regional interests.

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