



Indonesian Navy's Post-Defence Modernisation Challenges and Implications

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction.....	4
Indonesia’s Naval Development under Jokowi: A Missed Opportunity	4
Naval Force Structure and Organisational Development.....	7
Challenges and Implications	10
Post-MEF Naval Modernisation: What Next?.....	12
About the Authors.....	13
About the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS).....	14
About the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.....	14

Executive Summary

Indonesia's naval force (TNI AL) missed a crucial opportunity to realise its "green-water navy" ambition through the Minimum Essential Force (MEF) defence modernisation programme, despite notable progress. Multiple factors, including shifting government priorities and aspirations from maritime development towards economic development, budgetary constraints, and sluggish post-pandemic recovery, have negatively affected TNI AL's force modernisation objectives. TNI AL has consistently pursued technology transfer alongside its acquisition of surface combatants and submarines to strengthen local naval industries. While this dual approach appears strategic, it has often compelled the service to prioritise cost-effective deals over long-term strategic imperatives, potentially undermining the service's arms modernisation progress. The persistent influence of the Indonesian armed forces' territorial mindset, the implementation of the current Indonesian government's ambitious national projects, and the absence of a post-MEF force structure development have emerged as the immediate challenges for Indonesia's naval development.

Introduction

Since 2002, the leadership of the Indonesian navy (TNI AL) has aspired to build a “green-water navy” – a force structure above a coastal navy but below a blue-water (ocean-going) navy. This type of force is intended to safeguard Indonesia’s maritime sovereignty and address a broad range of maritime security challenges. The vision was incorporated into the Minimum Essential Force (MEF) modernisation programme of the Indonesian armed forces (TNI), which was initiated in 2010 and initially scheduled for completion by 2024. However, Indonesian authorities have acknowledged that the programme has fallen short of its target, achieving only about 65% of the planned goals.¹ Financial constraints – especially those arising from the COVID-19 pandemic – were cited as the primary obstacle to meeting the 2024 MEF deadline.²

Against this backdrop, this policy report explores Indonesia’s current naval development and potential post-MEF trajectories. It also examines some key challenges that may hinder TNI AL’s ambition of improving its firepower. This report begins by examining Indonesia’s naval development under the Joko Widodo (Jokowi) administration. It then analyses some challenges that could undermine the country’s future naval development.

Indonesia’s Naval Development under Jokowi: A Missed Opportunity

President Jokowi aimed to leverage Indonesia’s geostrategic identity as an archipelagic state straddling the Indian and Pacific Oceans as a major focal point for economic development, foreign policy and defence through his Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) concept.³ Beyond the economic development and foreign policy dimensions, the GMF envisioned the development of a maritime defence force capable of securing Indonesia’s vast maritime domain and addressing a wide range of maritime security challenges, from curbing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing to upholding Indonesia’s sovereignty. The GMF provided strong momentum for increasing resource allocation to the TNI AL and, to a lesser extent, the Indonesian air force (TNI AU). It placed strategic emphasis on modernising the two branches of service, positioning them as the backbone of a maritime-oriented TNI.

Indeed, Indonesia’s defence budget under the Jokowi administration generally showed an upward trend. Between 2015 and 2023, the Indonesian government’s defence expenditure stood at around 5.6% of the entire government budget, making it one of the largest spending components. However, despite the initial statements of commitment to bolstering defence capabilities, defence spending under the Jokowi administration consistently hovered below 1% of GDP (Figure 1), the lowest among

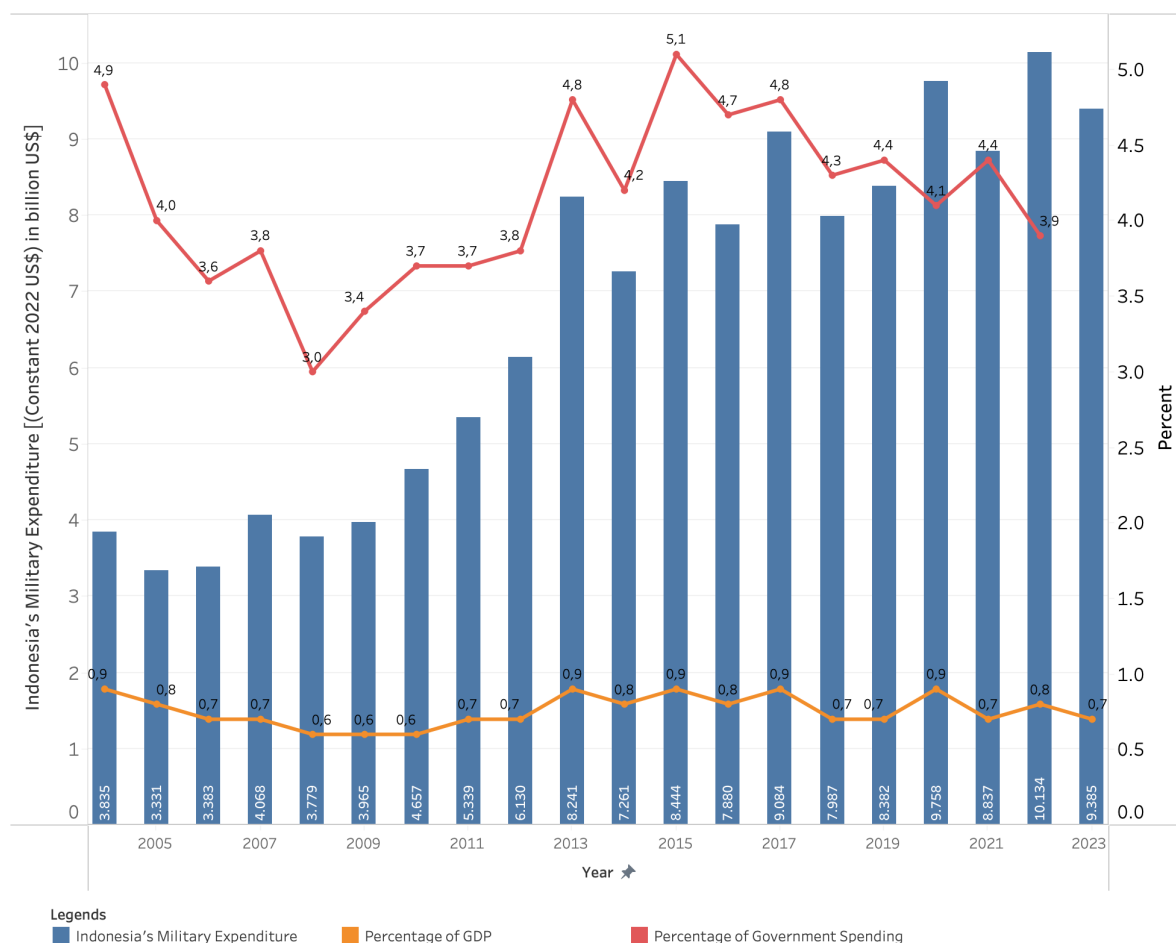
¹ Esra Kriahanta Sembiring, “Challenges in Achieving the TNI’s Minimum Basic Strength Target”, *Kompas*, 18 April 2024, <https://www.kompas.id/baca/english/2024/04/16/en-tantangan-pencapaian-target-kekuatan-pokok-minimal-tni>.

² Kumparan, “Jubir Prabowo Ungkap Alasan MEF Tak Capai Target di 2024: Diinterupsi COVID-19”, *Kumparan*, 5 January 2024, <https://kumparan.com/kumparannews/jubir-prabowo-ungkap-alasan-mef-tak-capai-target-di-2024-diinterupsi-covid-19-21uPGBNwIWJ>.

³ Rendi Witular, “Presenting Maritime Doctrine”, *Jakarta Post*, 14 November 2014.

maritime Southeast Asian countries. President Jokowi pledged to increase the country's defence spending to 1.5% of GDP but Indonesia's stagnating economic growth, at around 5% annually, made it difficult for the government to boost defence spending further. Despite the apparent priority accorded to building Indonesia's maritime defence capabilities, the fact of the matter is that the GMF failed to bring meaningful change to Indonesia's navy. As shown in Figure 2, the Indonesian army (TNI AD) consistently outspent its sister services' modernisation expenditure on several occasions. From 2015 to 2020, the TNI AD modernisation expenditure was consistently higher than that of TNI AL's. More important, TNI AD absorbed most of Indonesia's defence budget given its manpower-intensive territorial command structure, which necessitates spending on welfare and salaries.

Figure 1. Indonesia's Military Expenditure, 2004–2023



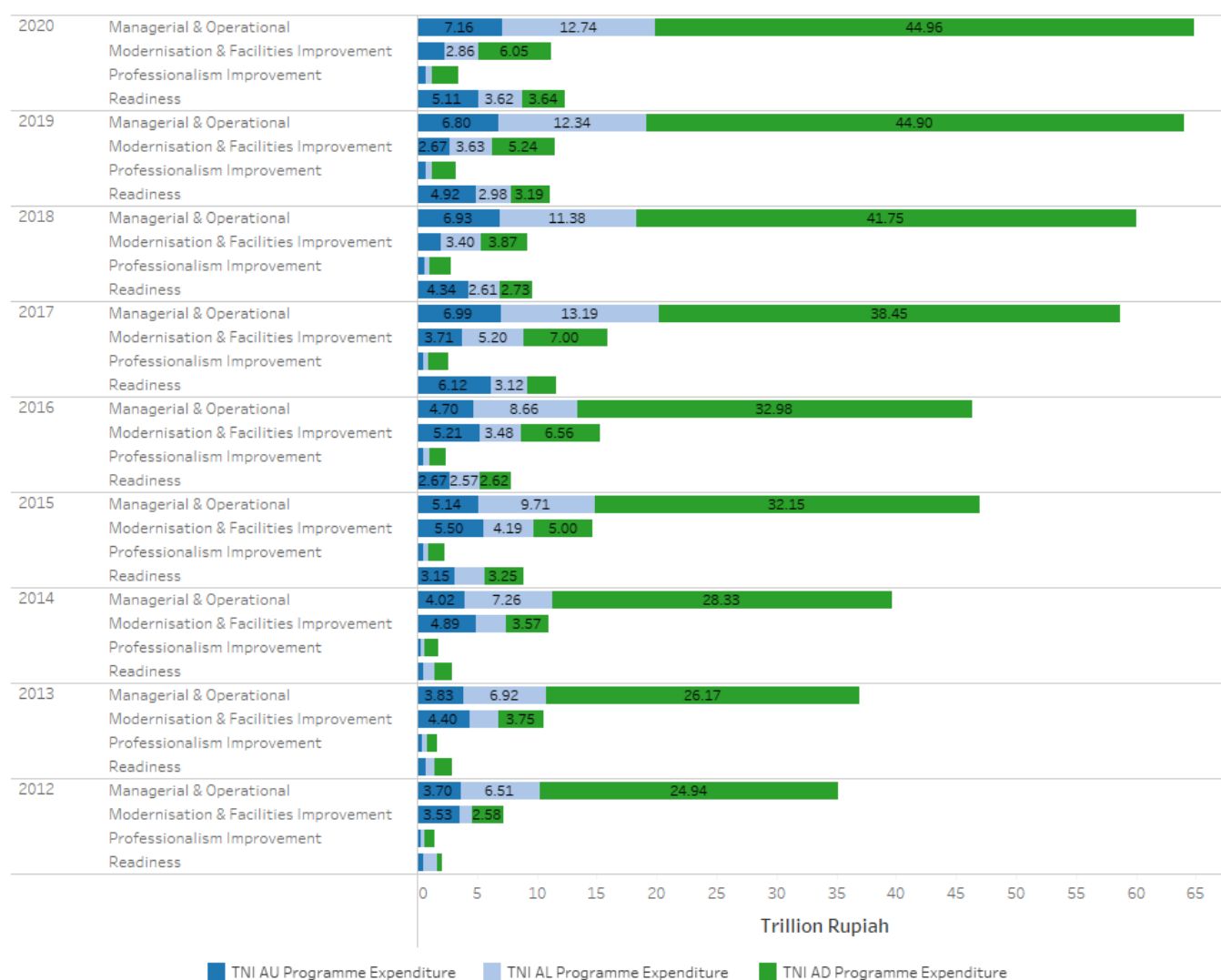
Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Military Expenditure Database, <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>

The lacklustre achievements in other aspects of the GMF, such as maritime infrastructure development, protection of marine resources and foreign policy, led observers to conclude that the Jokowi administration was not committed to the GMF vision. Others argued that President Jokowi had slowly turned his back on the vision.⁴ During the 2019 presidential campaign, the terms “GMF”, “maritime” and “sea” were

⁴ See, for example, I Gusti Bagus Dharma Agastia, “Joko Widodo's Fleeting Maritime Ambitions: An Actor-Specific Analysis of Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum”, *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 8, no. 3 (December 2021): 304–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23477970211039306>; Evan Laksmana, “Indonesia as ‘Global Maritime Fulcrum’: A Post-Mortem Analysis” *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, 20 October 2022.

scarcely mentioned in President Jokowi's election manifesto, nor did they feature prominently in key policy documents during his second term. Some observers remained somewhat optimistic, noting that although the GMF was practically dead, it lived on in spirit. They cited Indonesia's continued efforts in forging maritime cooperation through initiatives such as the Archipelagic and Island States (AIS) Forum and the ASEAN Coast Guard Forum.⁵ Yet, in the defence sector, particularly in naval development, the GMF's impact appears too insignificant, if not non-existent.

Figure 2. Indonesian Military's Programme Expenditure by Service Branch, 2012–2020



Source: Compiled from Indonesia's annual budget statements between 2015 and 2024, published by the Ministry of Finance, <https://www.kemenkeu.go.id/informasi-publik/keuangan-negara/uu-apbn-dan-nota-keuangan>.

⁵ Muhammad Habib Abiyan Dzakwan, "Is This the Twilight of Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum?", *The Diplomat*, 4 November 2019.

Naval Force Structure and Organisational Development

TNI AL's green-water navy blueprint envisioned a force structure comprising 274 ships – divided into a strike force (110 ships), patrol force (66 ships) and supporting force (98 ships) – 137 aircraft, 890 combat vehicles, three-division-equivalent marine forces and 11 primary naval bases spread across the Indonesian archipelago.⁶ By 2023, it became increasingly evident that TNI AL had achieved only about 60% of the target, as acknowledged by TNI AL Chief of Staff Admiral Muhammad Ali.⁷ The TNI AL leadership later revised the minimum baseline target to be achieved by 2024 to consist of 154 ships, 54 aircraft and 333 combat vehicles.⁸

Naval development under Jokowi's presidency built upon the progress made during the Yudhoyono administration but was relatively less successful, especially during Jokowi's first term (2014–2019). For instance, the Nagapasa-class submarine acquisition programme was effectively discontinued as Jakarta ceased payments on the second batch of three additional submarines of the class. The root causes were never formally disclosed, but it appeared that the submarines failed to meet operational requirements.⁹ In 2021, Indonesia signed a deal with Fincantieri of Italy for six new FREMM frigates for TNI AL. Indonesia had shown strong interest in procuring follow-on frigates to the Martadinata-class guided-missile frigates and had shortlisted other designs, including an improved variant of the Dutch SIGMA 10514 design, the Japanese 30FFM, and the British Arrowhead-140.¹⁰ Yet, the FREMM contract remained unrealised even until the end of Jokowi's presidency.

Despite these setbacks, naval power development made a comeback during the second half of Jokowi's second term (2019–2024), with a renewed focus on accelerating its follow-on frigate programme. The first major acquisition programme is the *Fregat Merah Putih* ("Red and White" Frigate or FMP), commissioned by the Indonesian Ministry of Defence and awarded to PT PAL, Indonesia's state-owned shipbuilder. The contract, signed in 2020 and effective the following year, covers the construction of two general-purpose frigates. In September 2021, PT PAL announced a design licensing agreement with Babcock for the Arrowhead-140 frigate design, based on the Danish Navy's Iver Huitfeldt-class frigate. Crucially, the licensing

⁶ Evan Laksmana, "Rebalancing Indonesia's Naval Force: Trends, Nature, and Drivers", in *Naval Modernisation in South-East Asia: Nature, Causes and Consequences*, ed. Geoffrey Till and Jane Chan (London: Routledge, 2014), 175–203.

⁷ Nirmala Maulana Achmad and Krisiandi, "KSAL Sebut Capaian MEF TNI AL Belum Sesuai Target Karena Masalah Anggaran", *Kompas*, 26 October 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2023/10/26/13395901/ksal-sebut-capaian-mef-tni-al-belum-sesuai-target-karena-masalah-anggaran>; Willy Medi Christian Nababan, "MEF Dinilai Sulit Terpenuhi, Militer Butuh Strategi Baru", *Kompas*, 17 March 2023, <https://www.kompas.id/baca/polhuk/2023/03/17/mef-dinilai-sulit-terpenuhi-militer-butuh-strategi-baru>.

⁸ Andi Raihanah Ashar and Amanda Shafira Callista, "Panglima Baru Kesempatan Emas Bagi TNI AL?", *Media Indonesia*, 27 December 2022, <https://mediaindonesia.com/opini/547364/panglima-baru-kesempatan-emas-bagi-tni-al>.

⁹ Ridzwan Rahmat, "Indonesia Re-Thinks USD900 Million Submarine Contract with South Korea", *Janes*, 2 April 2020, <https://www.janes.com/osint-insights/defence-news/indonesia-re-thinks-usd900-million-submarine-contract-with-south-korea>.

¹⁰ Ridzwan Rahmat, "Indonesia Selects FREMM Design for Frigate Programme but Questions Remain over Funding", *Janes*, 10 June 2021, <https://www.janes.com/osint-insights/defence-news/indonesia-selects-fremm-design-for-frigate-programme-but-questions-remain-over-funding>.

agreement enabled the Surabaya-based shipyard to construct both frigates domestically and implement bespoke modifications – hence the name “Red and White”, symbolising a national programme.¹¹

PT PAL laid keel to the first and second FMP frigates ahead of schedule in 2023 and 2024, respectively. Based on the current projection, both FMPs are expected to be fully operational and ready to enter service as early as 2028.¹² The FMPs represent a significant leap for Indonesia’s indigenous shipbuilding industry, being the largest and most advanced surface combatants to be locally produced. As general-purpose frigates, the FMP will possess a range of capabilities, including surface-to-surface, anti-submarine, surface-to-air and electronic warfare. The Ministry of Defence decided to equip the vessels with Turkish combat management and vertical launch systems, diverging from the initial plan to incorporate components from a range of suppliers.¹³ The selection marked a departure from TNI AL’s convention of using French systems, such as Thales’ combat management systems and MBDA’s Exocet missiles, which were installed in the Martadinata-class frigates and Diponegoro-class corvettes. The preference for Turkish systems over traditional suppliers suggests a growing influence of the Ministry of Defence in shaping the TNI’s capabilities development.

The second frigate acquisition programme, though arguably less ambitious, still warrants some discussion. In March 2024, Italian shipbuilder Fincantieri announced a US\$1.27 billion deal with Indonesia’s Ministry of Defence for two Pattugliatore Polivalente d’Altura-class (PPA) multi-role offshore patrol vessels, which will be reclassified as frigates. Due to a short delivery timeline, Fincantieri redirected two PPAs originally destined for the Italian navy to fulfil the order.¹⁴ The two ships arrived in Indonesia on 29 January 2025 and were named KRI *Brawijaya*-320 and KRI *Prabu Siliwangi*-321. The TNI AL is expected to begin deploying them in 2025.¹⁵

In addition to developing its fleet of surface combatants, Indonesia is actively seeking an alternative design to the Nagapasa-class submarines to strengthen its existing submarine force. In its initial planning, the Ministry of Defence explored several submarine options from Turkey, Germany, France and Italy. In January 2020, then Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto met his French counterpart, Florence Parly, and expressed interest in procuring a range of French military equipment, including Scorpène submarines. By February 2022, a decision was made to pursue the acquisition of French equipment, with PT PAL and France’s Naval Group signing a memorandum of understanding for two diesel-electric Scorpène-class submarines, which was

¹¹ Xavier Vavasseur, “DSEI 2021: Babcock Sells Arrowhead 140 Frigate Design Licence to Indonesia”, *Naval News*, 16 September 2021, <https://www.navalnews.com/event-news/dsei-2021/2021/09/dsei-2021-babcock-sells-arrowhead-140-frigate-design-licence-to-indonesia/>.

¹² Nirmala Maulana Achmad and Ihsanuddin, “Dua Kapal Fregat Merah Putih TNI AL Diharapkan Bisa Beroperasi Pada 2028”, *Kompas*, 2 July 2024, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2024/07/02/10023991/dua-kapal-fregat-merah-putih-tni-al-diharapkan-bisa-beroperasi-pada-2028>.

¹³ Ridzwan Rahmat, “Indonesia Proposes to Equip ‘Red White’ Frigates with Turkish Missiles”, *Janes*, 12 June 2024, <https://www.janes.com/osint-insights/defence-news/sea/indonesia-proposes-to-equip-red-white-frigates-with-turkish-missiles>.

¹⁴ Ridzwan Rahmat, “Fincantieri Announces Indonesian Contract for Two PPAs amid Funding Uncertainties”, *Janes*, 29 March 2024, <https://www.janes.com/osint-insights/defence-news/sea/fincantieri-announces-indonesian-contract-for-two-ppas-amid-funding-uncertainties>.

¹⁵ Edna Caroline Pattisina, “TNI AL Akan Terima Dua Kapal Patroli Terbesar”, *Kompas*, 30 January 2025, https://www.kompas.id/artikel/tni-al-akan-terima-dua-kapal-patroli-terbesar?open_from=Politik_&_Hukum_Page.

announced in conjunction with Indonesia's decision to purchase 42 Dassault Rafale fighters.¹⁶

In March 2024, Indonesia signed a US\$2.16 billion contract for the two Scorpène-class submarines, which will be fully constructed at PT PAL's shipyard in Surabaya. Each submarine will measure 72 metres in length with a surface displacement of 1,600–2,000 tonnes, slightly larger than the Nagapasa-class. Designed to carry a crew of 31 and up to 18 weapons, including submarine-launched missiles, the submarines can dive to 300 metres and reach submerged speeds of 20 knots.¹⁷

More importantly, Indonesia's variant – dubbed Scorpène Evolved – will be the first to feature lithium-ion batteries, offering an endurance of 80 days, a submerged duration of over 12 days, and a range of 8,000 nautical miles.¹⁸ This feature marks a significant leap in capability compared to the Scorpènes operated by Chile, Malaysia, Brazil and India.

However, with a lead time of 5–7 years, the submarines will not be operational in the near term. To bridge the gap, the TNI AL is exploring interim acquisitions, proposing four additional submarines in two phases: two between 2025 and 2029 and two more between 2035 and 2039, subject to funding. Current candidates include the Italian U212 NFS, German Type 214, Chinese S26T (Yuan-class) and Turkish Type 209 and 214 designs.¹⁹

Beyond fleet expansion, the Jokowi administration emphasised organisational reform within TNI AL. As part of the green-water navy blueprint, the leadership proposed transitioning from a regionally based structure – established in 1985 – to a unified, numbered fleet system under a national fleet command.²⁰ This shift aims to enhance operational coordination and strategic flexibility.

Although the fleet reorganisation blueprint was adopted under the MEF programme, its implementation occurred during the Jokowi administration. In 2018, TNI AL expanded its fleet structure from a territorial model to a numbered system aligned with the Joint Regional Defence Command (*Kogabwilhan*). TNI AL's former Western and Eastern Fleets were restructured into Fleet Commands (*Koarmada*) I, II, and III, covering the western, central, and eastern regions of the Indonesian archipelago.

The Marine Corps (*Kormar*) was also expanded to a three-division force. In 2019, Presidential Regulation No. 66/2019 established the Indonesian Fleet Command (*Koarmada RI*) as a unified command overseeing all three *Koarmada*. Its primary role is

¹⁶ Jon Grevatt, "Indonesia, France Line-up Collaboration on Scorpène Submarines", *Janes*, 11 February 2022, <https://www.janes.com/osint-insights/defence-news/industry/indonesia-france-line-up-collaboration-on-scorpene-submarines>.

¹⁷ Ridzwan Rahmat, "Naval Group Bags Contract for Two Scorpene Evolved Submarines", *Janes*, April 2, 2024, <https://www.janes.com/osint-insights/defence-news/sea/naval-group-bags-contract-for-two-scorpene-evolved-submarines>.

¹⁸ Fauzan Malufti, "Indonesia Moving Closer to 'Scorpene Evolved' Submarine Deal", *Naval News*, 29 March 2024, <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2024/03/indonesia-moving-closer-to-scorpene-evolved-submarine-deal/>.

¹⁹ Fauzan Malufti, "Indonesia and France Discuss Key Details on Scorpène Evolved Submarines", *Naval News*, 20 September 2024, <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2024/09/indonesia-and-france-discuss-key-details-on-scorpene-evolved-submarines/>.

²⁰ Laksmana, "Rebalancing Indonesia's Naval Force: Trends, Nature, and Drivers."

to coordinate large-scale defensive operations across the archipelago, utilising fleet assets under the direction of the TNI commander. *Koarmada RI* was formally inaugurated in January 2022.

Challenges and Implications

Although the MEF programme was not successful in realising the TNI AL's green-water navy blueprint in its 15-year timeframe, it significantly improved Indonesia's naval capabilities. Nonetheless, some challenges remain, beginning with the persistent influence of a territorial mindset within TNI. There is no doubt that the Indonesian army holds considerable veto power in driving the defence transformation of the Indonesian military.²¹ In February 2024, TNI Commander Gen. Agus Subiyanto proposed the formation of TNI AL Maritime Regional Command (*Kodamar*), which will be headed by a two-star admiral. TNI AL's primary naval bases (*Lantamal*) will be gradually transformed into *Kodamar*, starting from critical regions, such as near archipelagic sea lanes and the new capital Nusantara (IKN), as well as primary naval bases that are infrastructurally sufficient.²² The *Kodamar* concept in reality mirrors the army's Military Territorial Command (*Kodam*) idea, in which each command oversees a specific land area or region. In the case of *Kodamar*, the primary functions are coastal defence and territorial management.

Given that Indonesia is a vast archipelagic nation, the Indonesian navy is invested with the monumental task of securing its maritime domain, primarily its archipelagic waters, the three archipelagic sea lanes and its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Moreover, the TNI AL's constabulary function requires it to participate in maritime security operations to tackle a wide spectrum of threats, including piracy, IUU fishing, illegal transshipment and human trafficking, to name a few. Considering how taxing these duties are, TNI AL is under-resourced and not adequately equipped to perform them in an effective manner. The implementation of the *Kodamar* concept potentially adds to the navy's primary operational scope, not to mention the potential intensification of territorial management (*pembinaan teritorial*) duties as well, which would stretch its resources further.²³

At a parliamentary hearing in 2021, Then Defence Minister Prabowo introduced the concept of *Perisai Trisula Nusantara* (or *Nusantara Trident Shield*), a 25-year force modernisation follow-on to the MEF in a parliamentary hearing in 2021. The post-MEF 25-year military modernisation concept tentatively aims to bolster the TNI AL's capabilities by adding throughout the archipelago a total of 12 FMPs with 120-km range surface-to-air missiles and 180-km range surface-to-surface missiles; 14 missile-armed fast attack vessels; two diesel-electric attack submarines and several autonomous interceptor submarines; long-range cruise missiles for shore defence; and a slew of surface and submarine monitoring systems. More likely than not, the plan will

²¹ Aditya Batara Gunawan, "Under the Shadow of Army Domination: Defense Transformation in Indonesia", PhD Dissertation, Heidelberg University, 2021.

²² Antara, "KSAL Sebut Kodamar Bakal Dipimpin Perwira Tinggi Bintang Dua", Antara, 8 March 2024, [https://www.antaranews.com/berita/4002231/ksal-sebut-kodamar-bakal-dipimpin-perwira-tinggi-bintang-dua#:~:text=Pembentukan%20Komando%20Daerah%20Maritim%20\(Kodamar,Pimpinan%20TNI%20Polri%20Tahun%202024](https://www.antaranews.com/berita/4002231/ksal-sebut-kodamar-bakal-dipimpin-perwira-tinggi-bintang-dua#:~:text=Pembentukan%20Komando%20Daerah%20Maritim%20(Kodamar,Pimpinan%20TNI%20Polri%20Tahun%202024).

²³ Territorial management refers to TNI's efforts to strengthen its presence within society in order to foster unity between the military and the people (*kemanunggalan TNI dan rakyat*), primarily through civic missions.

be retained by the Prabowo administration. Regardless of any change in the plan, it requires substantial funding support. The recent budget refocusing, which is likely to carry over to the following financial years, will undoubtedly impact this ambitious programme in different ways.

Another knock-on effect of the ambitious programmes pertains to the focus and utilisation of TNI AL's resources. TNI AL plans to establish 96 public kitchens across the archipelago to support Prabowo's Free Nutritious Programme (MBG).²⁴ Indonesian navy officers, including those from its marine forces, are deployed to support MBG's food distribution.²⁵ TNI AL is involved in the government's food estate programme by deploying its infrastructure, notably land assets. In addition, Navy Commander Admiral Muhammad Ali outlined the intention for the service to work with local fishery agencies to support the food estate programme.²⁶ Involvement in these mega projects will absorb and overstretch TNI AL's limited resources while also adding to its daily operational routines. Participation in such programmes runs the risk of shifting the focus of the navy's operations, which could affect its military readiness in the long run.

Another challenge to the TNI AL's naval development lies in the uncertainty of Indonesia's defence modernisation agenda. The absence of a post-MEF programme raised the question of what a future TNI AL posture would look like. During the run-up to the 2024 presidential election, presidential and vice-presidential candidate Anies Baswedan and his running mate, Muhaimin Iskandar, proposed the expansion of the Indonesian navy from a green-water navy to a blue-water navy.²⁷ The officer ranks within TNI AL have long espoused a desire for the navy to become a world-class navy in the long term, one that is able to respond to any threats to the sovereignty of the republic as well as play an active role in international commitments (i.e., UN peacekeeping).²⁸ However, without a concrete plan for achieving this ambition, the TNI AL would end up developing in a haphazard manner, risking strategic vulnerabilities such as lack of logistical support overseas or at sea.

The KRI *Nanggala* accident of 2021 is illustrative of this risk. Despite TNI AL's modernisation of its submarine fleet, which includes the procurement of three additional submarines and a full refit of the *Nanggala* and *Cakra* in South Korea, TNI AL did not plan to equip itself with submarine recovery vessels. The procurement of a rescue vessel in 2024 was an afterthought, arising as a consequence of the accident.²⁹ This incident also highlights one of the perennial challenges of the Indonesian

²⁴ Rahel Narda Chaterine and Bagus Santosa, "TNI AL Targetkan 96 Dapur Umum untuk Makan Bergizi Gratis, yang Sudah Siap 18", *Kompas*, 20 December 2024, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2024/12/20/17440451/tni-al-targetkan-96-dapur-umum-untuk-makanan-bergizi-gratis-yang-sudah-siap>.

²⁵ Pasukan Marinir 1, "Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG), Prajurit Brigif 1 Marinir Laksanakan Dengan Semangat Petarung", *Pasmar1.tnial.mil.id*, 30 January 2025, <https://pasmar1.tnial.mil.id/post/program-makan-bergizi-gratis-mbg-prajurit-brigif-1-marinir-laksanakan-dengan-semangat-petarung>.

²⁶ Indonesia Defense, "KSAL Bahas Ketahanan Pangan Bersama Purnawirawan TNI AL", *Indonesiadefense.com*, 7 January 2025, <https://indonesiadefense.com/ksal-bahas-ketahanan-pangan-bersama-purnawirawan-tni-al/>.

²⁷ Muhammad Teguh Ariffaiz Nasution, "Does Indonesia need a blue water navy?", *Antara*, 6 January 2024, <https://en.antaranews.com/news/302541/does-indonesia-need-a-blue-water-navy#:~:text=Under%20this%20system%2C%20navies%20ranked,upper%20end%20of%20the%20scale>.

²⁸ Tunggal Susilo, "TNI AL Aims to be World-Class Navy", *Antara Jatim*, 13 May 2013, <https://jatim.antaranews.com/berita/110235/tni-al-aims-to-be-world-class-navy>.

²⁹ Straits Times, "Indonesia Buys UK Submarine Rescue Vessel in \$100 Million Deal", *Straits Times*, 14 November 2024, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/indonesia-buys-uk-submarine-rescue-vessel-in-100-million-deal>.

government and the TNI – that of focusing on and prioritising the procurement of big-ticket items.

TNI AL's reported interest in procuring an aircraft carrier to enhance non-combat military operations may prove to be another instance of such short-sightedness. Although the navy did not specify what sort of aircraft carrier it is targeting, rumours are swirling that it is particularly interested in acquiring ITS *Giuseppe Garibaldi*, the recently retired Italian aircraft carrier.³⁰ Such a procurement would be a major financial constraint on the navy as it would need to account for training, maintenance, protection and expansion of current infrastructure, aside from the expense incurred in the procurement of the asset itself.

Post-MEF Naval Modernisation: What Next?

The MEF programme, which ended in 2024, raised the question of TNI AL's future development. Although TNI AL did not manage to complete its MEF objective by 2024, its recent development has brought it closer to its vision of a green-water navy. The future challenge for TNI AL now is to lay down plans for a post-MEF programme. Then Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto had outlined *Perisai Trisula Nusantara*, a long-term force modernisation follow-on to the MEF programme, which the Prabowo administration will now retain. Based on the targeted equipment, *Perisai Trisula Nusantara*'s TNI AL-specific sub-programme aims to bolster its surface, sub-surface, sea-denial and monitoring capabilities. While the shopping list might change in the future in response to a broad category of challenges, these areas seem to be the overall force modernisation objectives that the Prabowo administration has in mind for the TNI AL.

Equally important to the TNI AL's force modernisation programme is a clear blueprint for future modernisation to ensure that its post-MEF modernisation is not done haphazardly and free from capricious defence acquisition decisions, such as reflected in the recent news that Admiral Muhammad Ali is eyeing to procure an aircraft carrier for the navy to support its operations, particularly disaster relief, which falls under the category of military operations other than war.³¹ It remains to be seen whether the Ministry of Defence under the Prabowo administration will present a white paper or a strategic document guiding future defence modernisation. As defence minister, Prabowo was not inclined to publish one.³² Defence acquisitions, when arbitrarily done, not only overstretch TNI AL's limited financial resources but may also be counterproductive to the development of TNI AL's capabilities. Although it was confirmed that arms acquisition will not be affected by the current government's budget efficiency concerns, the resources to properly maintain and train the forces needed to operate new assets and develop new military infrastructure may come under strain.

³⁰ Guy Toremans, "Indonesia Interested in Italian Carrier ITS Giuseppe Garibaldi", *Janes*, 6 March 2025, <https://www.janes.com/osint-insights/defence-news/sea/indonesia-interested-in-italian-carrier-its-giuseppe-garibaldi>.

³¹ Rio F and Tegar Nurfitra, "Navy Mulls Purchase of Aircraft Carrier for Non-War Operations", *Antara*, 6 February 2025, <https://en.antaranews.com/news/344009/navy-mulls-purchase-of-aircraft-carrier-for-non-war-operations>.

³² Nirmala Maulana Achmad and Bagus Santosa, "Prabowo: Prabowo: Pada Saatnya kalau Kita Perlu, Kita Bikin Buku Putih Pertahanan", *Kompas*, 29 October 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2023/10/29/18092231/prabowo-pada-saatnya-kalau-kita-perlu-kita-bikin-buku-putih-pertahanan>.

About the Authors



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