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Paco Milhiet and Adhi Priamarizki



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SYNOPSIS

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto was the guest of honour at the Bastille Day military parade in Paris on 14 July 2025. The visit signals a growing partnership between France and Indonesia.

COMMENTARY

In July 2025, French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed his Indonesian counterpart, Prabowo Subianto, as the guest of honour at the Bastille Day military parade. On that occasion, nearly 500 Indonesian troops [led](#) the ceremony on the Champs-Élysées – a symbolic gesture that underscored the growing military ties between the two countries. Just a few weeks earlier, Macron had paid a [state visit](#) to Indonesia. This rapid diplomatic sequence, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of bilateral relations, reflects a maturing strategic partnership, grounded in expanding defence cooperation and bolstered by shared geopolitical visions.

A Strategic Partnership Driven by Defence Cooperation

Following the establishment of a [strategic partnership](#) in 2011, France and Indonesia have significantly deepened their defence and security cooperation. The French defence industry has widely benefited from Indonesia's sustained efforts to [modernise](#) its military capabilities. Since 2021, Indonesia has acquired 42 Rafale fighter jets from Dassault Aviation, two Scorpène-class submarines from Naval Group (built locally by PT PAL with substantial technology transfers), 13 Ground Master-400 long-range radars from Thales, and two Airbus A400M transport aircraft. Today, Indonesia stands as France's second-largest defence customer in the Indo-Pacific region, just behind India, and further contracts might be on the way. During Macron's state visit in May,

the two countries signed a [letter of intent](#) for the future acquisition of additional Rafale aircraft, frigates and submarines, and self-propelled cannons.

The two countries' intensifying defence cooperation is also reflected in growing interoperable capabilities. Indonesia is now a regular stopover for France's [Pégase](#) air projection missions. In 2023 and again in 2025, the two countries conducted a joint land exercise named [Garuda Guerrier](#). In 2025, a French frigate took part in Indonesia's [Komodo](#) multilateral naval exercise. Indonesia's continued procurement of French-made military platforms is likely to add greater significance to France-Indonesia military exercises. The growing frequency of joint military exercises is not only likely to boost the Indonesian military's mastery of its new equipment but also to test French-made platforms in potentially novel environments and battle scenarios. On external operations, both nations are key contributors to UN peacekeeping missions, including the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon ([UNIFIL](#)), where operational coordination has steadily increased.

A symbolic milestone in this expanding partnership was the February 2025 [port call](#) of the French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* in Lombok – the first such visit to Indonesia. On that occasion, French Armed Forces Minister Sébastien Lecornu travelled to the archipelago and hosted his Indonesian counterpart, Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, aboard the flagship vessel.

Defence cooperation with France symbolises Indonesia's ambition to modernise its military and enhance the national defence industry. The procurement of the aforementioned defence products reflects Indonesia's intention to boost its mastery of priority [programmes](#) within its defence sector. This intention is reinforced by [the recent proposal](#) to increase Indonesia's defence budget to 245.2 trillion IDR (approximately US\$15.1 billion), representing about 1.1% of the country's 2024 GDP. Over the past decades, [Indonesia's defence budget](#) has consistently hovered around 0.6% to 0.9% of GDP. The intention to raise the defence budget reflects Prabowo's strong emphasis on defence modernisation, which he has consistently voiced in his speeches and campaign [manifesto](#) for the 2024 presidential election.



On 14 July 2025, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto attended the Bastille Day military parade as guest of honour. Indonesia's contribution of its own contingent to the parade symbolises its deepening ties with France. Image source: [BPMI Setpres/Laily Rachev](#).

A Shared Vision of the International Order

Beyond defence, the partnership is underpinned by a shared vision of international relations. For Indonesia, France is not only a key European partner and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, but also a lever for strategic diversification, in line with its long-standing posture of non-alignment. Jakarta's *bebas aktif* doctrine – a foreign policy of active, independent engagement rooted in strategic balance – aligns closely with Macron's notion of [strategic autonomy](#), envisioned as the foundation for a "[coalition of independents](#)" bridging Europe and Asia, as stated in his keynote address at the Shangri-La Dialogue 2025. The shared vision can be a focal point for the two countries' long-term relationship.

[Maintenance of strategic autonomy](#) amid the geopolitical competition between great powers is also crucial for Indonesia. Moreover, President Prabowo's "[good neighbour](#)" foreign policy concept, which refers to the effort to build good relations and cooperation with all countries, hints at the importance of garnering international cooperation to reap mutual benefits.

This conceptual convergence has translated into concrete diplomatic mechanisms. Since 2023, France and Indonesia have institutionalised a strategic [2+2 dialogue](#), involving their foreign and defence ministers. This format reflects a shared ambition to deepen cooperation on major international issues, notably in the Indo-Pacific region.

Expanding Indo-Pacific Partnerships

France and Indonesia share an inclusive and multilateral vision of the international order, grounded in mutual respect for national sovereignty as well as a common ambition to uphold regional stability and prosperity. This convergence is clearly reflected in their respective doctrinal frameworks: [France's Indo-Pacific Strategy](#) (2018) and the [ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific](#) (AOIP) (2019), with Indonesian diplomacy playing an active role in the formulation of the AOIP.

As leading actors within their respective regional organisations, the European Union and ASEAN, France and Indonesia are poised to encourage more cooperation between the two regions. Macron's pledge of a "[third way](#)", as a means to avoid taking sides between the United States and China, is a call for broader engagement between France and its Southeast Asian partners, aligning with the core principle of ASEAN centrality.

The two countries already cooperate closely within several multilateral platforms across the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+), where France participates as an [observer](#).

This momentum may extend further into the Pacific. Indonesia has sought to deepen its diplomatic presence in Oceania – it has been an associate member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) since 2015 and now seeks observer status in the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM). Indonesia perceives the necessity of a stable and free Indo-Pacific to ensure peace and prosperity in the region. Back in [2018](#), then-Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Retno Marsudi stressed

the importance of strong positive cooperation with all countries in the region to establish an ecosystem of peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

In this outreach, Jakarta [sees](#) Paris as a key partner in the region – a less polarising actor than either China or the United States. Diversification of international partners and avoidance of dependency on one side can help smoothen Indonesia's implementation of its sacrosanct free and active foreign policy.

Conclusion

While the overall relationship between the two countries remains modest in scale, the Joint Declaration issued during Macron's visit to Indonesia in May 2025, titled [Horizon 2050](#), signals a clear engagement for wider cooperation. Its 68 points span an extensive agenda: from global governance and food security to energy transition, maritime cooperation, biodiversity, higher education, culture, sports, and the rule of law. Prabowo's ambitious plans, such as [8% economic growth](#), free nutritious meal [programme](#) and [defence modernisation](#), certainly require considerable resources. The wide range of areas covered by the Franco-Indonesian partnership could be an important springboard to achieve those ambitions.

All of these converging dynamics point to a deepening of the Franco-Indonesian partnership in the years to come.

Paco Milhiet is a Visiting Fellow with the South Asia Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). **Adhi Priamarizki** is Research Fellow with the Indonesia Programme, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS).

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