

TÜRKIYE FACTOR IN INDONESIA STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

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Abstract: In recent years, the concept of strategic autonomy has gained significant attention as middle powers try to navigate intensifying great-power competition in their regions. Türkiye, as one of the emerging middle powers, has shown that the enhancement of strategic autonomy can play a key role in navigating both regional and global tension. Against this backdrop, numerous studies have examined how Indonesia's strategic partnership with Türkiye has intensified, especially in terms of defence diplomacy. However, limited attention has been paid to the strategic rationale behind Indonesia's preference for Türkiye and to how that preference affects Indonesia's overall strategic autonomy. This study contends that Indonesia's deepening defence ties with Türkiye are not accidental but are a calculated strategy to enhance strategic autonomy. Indonesia chooses Türkiye not just for arms transactions, but for the opportunity for capacity-building and access to diverse partners. By engaging with Türkiye, a nation that has successfully developed its own indigenous defence industry, Indonesia seeks to replicate this success, securing not just weapons, but the knowledge to build them, thereby insulating its national security from the volatility of great-power politics. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, this study utilises data from official documents, bilateral accords, policy statements, scholarly publications, and media sources.

Keywords: Middle Power, Strategic Autonomy, Foreign Policy, Defense Diplomacy, International Relations, Indonesia-Türkiye Bilateral Relations.

INTRODUCTION

The year 2025 marks a significant milestone in the diplomatic history of the Republic of Indonesia and the Republic of Türkiye: the 75th anniversary of bilateral relations. While these seven decades have been characterised by cordial diplomatic engagement and shared socio-cultural values, the nature of this relationship has undergone a profound transformation in recent years. No longer confined to ceremonial diplomacy or low-level trade, the Jakarta-Ankara connection has rapidly evolved into a strategic partnership defined by substantial defence cooperation. During President Erdoğan of Türkiye's visit to Jakarta, he emphasised that the defence collaboration between Türkiye and Indonesia served a strategic importance in strengthening the national defence and strategic autonomy in the defence

industry of both countries, while also contributing to global peace and security (İletişim Başkanlığı, 2025). Likewise, President Prabowo of Indonesia also stated that the cooperation should be extended to become a model for Global South cooperation and as a strategic partner in the new world order (Sekertaris Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2025).

Hence, this anniversary serves not merely as a celebratory occasion but as a critical juncture at which to analyse a shifting paradigm in the Global South. As the international system becomes increasingly multipolar, the relationship between these two nations exemplifies a broader trend: the rise of inter-middle power cooperation. This phenomenon challenges the traditional reliance on great powers, suggesting a new pathway in which nations like Indonesia seek alternative partners to navigate the complexities of modern geopolitics. In this regard, Indonesian Ambassador to Türkiye Achmad Rizal Purnama evaluates the cooperation between Indonesia and Türkiye, especially in the defence sector, as exceptional, in that it is intended not to cause conflict or threaten others, but rather to contribute to regional and global peace and stability (Anadolu Agency, 2025).

Despite the elevated visibility of this partnership, current academic literature presents a notable gap. Existing scholarship on Indonesia-Türkiye relations predominantly focuses on defence cooperation as a merely diplomatic tool that ties the two countries closer. However, these studies often overlook the underlying strategic rationale: why has Indonesia specifically chosen Türkiye, and how does it impact Indonesia's overall defence policy? In a global arms market dominated by established superpowers like the United States and Russia and emerging giants like China, Indonesia's pivot toward Türkiye is worth a deeper explanation.

The following sections expand these arguments. The literature review describes the existing studies on Indonesia-Türkiye defence collaboration and examines how they overlook the strategic rationale within the partnership. It also explores neoclassical realism as the underpinning framework for the concepts of middle power and strategic autonomy, and how that framework relates to Indonesia's strategy amidst rising tension in the region. The method section then sets out the research approach and its limits. The result and discussion section examines the external and internal factors that shaped Indonesia's policy on the defence industry and how they coincide with Türkiye's policy on arms exports and defence collaboration. A limitations section states what this study cannot establish, and the conclusion answers the research questions and draws out the implications.

Two research questions guide this study. First, how has the Jakarta-Ankara partnership influenced Indonesia's strategic autonomy in the domestic security and foreign-policy domains? Second, to what extent has Indonesia's partnership with Türkiye enabled a diversification of its defence procurement and thereby reduced its strategic dependence on traditional major-power suppliers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past decade, the studies about the relation between Indonesia and Türkiye have increased significantly. Not only has the relation between the two countries become closer, it has also produced substantial outcomes, especially in the defence sector, such as the joint production of the Kaplan tank, also known as the Harimau tank. Scholars in this topic have highlighted that the defence collaboration has succeeded in tying Indonesia and Türkiye closer. Many have argued that Türkiye's success story of building a self-sufficient defence industry has met with Indonesia's ambition to modernise its national mechanism, which would eventually end in a self-sufficient weapon system. For instance, Boran and Priamarizki (n.d.) portray Ankara's renewed approach toward Southeast Asia, as well as Türkiye's advancement in the defence industry, as welcomed by Indonesia's strategic interest and by Prabowo's goal for the modernisation of the Indonesian military (TNI). Similarly, Athirah (2025) contends that, in the long term, cooperation with Türkiye will help Indonesia to enhance technological independence, geopolitical positioning, and a more autonomous foreign policy. In addition, Elisabeth et al. (2021) report that the cooperation between Indonesia and Türkiye, based upon the principles of equality, mutual trust, need, and business, has succeeded in achieving high-level defence cooperation between the two countries.

Despite the growing literature on the relationship between Indonesia and Türkiye, current literature on Indonesia-Türkiye bilateral relations largely treats the defence cooperation as a diplomatic tool, something that ties the two countries closer, rather than as a survival strategy. However, limited attention has been directed towards Indonesia's survival strategies embedded in its decision to cooperate with Türkiye. There is less detailed empirical analysis of how exactly Türkiye's engagement influences Indonesia's strategic autonomy.

Ultimately, the aim of a middle power in cooperating with another middle power is to enhance its strategic autonomy, especially amidst great-power rivalry in its backyard. Through this perspective, Indonesia's decision to cooperate with Türkiye should be understood as Indonesia's survival strategy amidst great-power rivalry and as a means to enhance its strategic autonomy. In this regard, limited attention has been put towards how this bilateral engagement modifies Indonesia's overall strategic autonomy posture vis-a-vis major powers or regional dynamics.

Thus, while Indonesia and Türkiye have celebrated 75 years of diplomatic relations, this study turns the focus to the two questions stated in the introduction: how the Jakarta-Ankara partnership has influenced Indonesia's strategic autonomy in the domestic security and foreign-policy domains, and to what extent the partnership has diversified Indonesia's defence procurement and thereby reduced its strategic dependence on traditional major-power suppliers.

Neoclassical Realism As Theoretical Framework

Gideon Rose (1998), who coined the term 'neoclassical realism', observes that foreign policy is work driven by external and internal factors. The external factors, considered as the international structure, define a country's position in the international system in relation to its respective material capabilities, and they also contain systemic pressures to the extent that a country must act. However, the articulation of such systemic pressures and power capabilities must be translated through variant variables at the unit level before being implemented as foreign policy. Ultimately, Rose (1998) insisted that foreign policy choices are made by actual leaders and elites, and that it is their perceptions of relative power that matter. Therefore, neoclassical realists contend that a state's foreign policy is driven primarily by its place in the international system, but that this systemic pressure is filtered through complex domestic political structures before it results in a specific policy action.

Using the framework of neoclassical realism, this study argues that the combination of changes in the international structure and the demands of domestic politics explains why Indonesia has selected Türkiye as a strategic partner while at the same time trying to enhance its strategic autonomy. In this case, a structural realist would argue that Indonesia cooperates with Türkiye simply because it is balancing against United States-China rivalry by diversifying its partners. However, that argument could not explain why, in particular, Indonesia chooses Türkiye as its strategic partner. In other words, using the framework of neoclassical realism, systemic pressure, that is, the growing tension and competition for influence in the Indo-Pacific region, creates the incentive for Indonesia to hedge against great powers, but domestic politics determine the alternative partner that Indonesia takes.

Furthermore, while structural realism often marginalises the role of middle powers in international structures, neoclassical realism accommodates the agency of middle powers by shifting the focus from material quantity to state capacity. A structural realist like Kenneth Waltz (2010) posits that the international structure is defined solely by the distribution of capabilities among the great powers. Consequently, middle powers are conceptually relegated to the status of 'rule-takers', actors who must adapt to the constraints set by great powers rather than shaping them. However, scholars of neoclassical realism like Jeffrey Taliaferro (2009) challenge this view, arguing that a state's role in the international system is not merely defined by its material quantity, but rather by its ability to extract and mobilise resources. In this perspective, the role of a middle power in the international system is acknowledged in the sense that, while middle powers have limited resources, they are still extracting and mobilising their power to gain strategic autonomy against great powers.

For the analysis that follows, the framework is used through three lenses that run through the whole article. The first lens is systemic pressure: the great-power rivalry and maritime security pressures that give Indonesia a motive to diversify. The second lens is domestic filtering: leadership priorities and the defence-industry policy that determine which partner Indonesia selects and on what terms. The third lens is state capacity: the ability to extract

resources and to convert procurement into domestic production through technology transfer and joint production. The result and discussion section is organised around the first two lenses, as external and internal factors, and the third lens is the test applied to the Türkiye partnership itself: whether it builds domestic capacity or merely changes the supplier.

Understanding The Middle Power And Strategic Autonomy

In an increasingly multipolar international system, the discussion about middle powers has increased extensively as they have started to attain a significant position in much of the discussion in the global arena. In this regard, Andrew Carr (2013) posits that the structure of the international system plays a crucial role in shaping the behaviour and influence of middle powers. Furthermore, compared with unipolar and bipolar orders, in which states must act according to great powers, Öniş and Kutlay (2017) examined that middle powers tend to behave more actively in a multipolar order because it gives them better space to act autonomously and to seek alternative powers. Therefore, in such an environment, due to limitations in their material resources and diplomatic leverage, middle powers tend to favour acting through multilateral institutions, hedging strategies, or niche diplomacy to navigate their interests within the international system.

The label itself needs care, because it has been used to mean different things: a position in a hierarchy of capabilities, a pattern of behaviour, or an identity that states claim for themselves. Chapnick (1999) shows that the middle-power concept has long suffered from this ambiguity, and that treating it as a fixed rank obscures the more useful question of what a state actually does with the space available to it. This study therefore uses the term behaviourally: a middle power is a state with limited material resources relative to great powers that nevertheless pursues autonomy through coalition-building, niche diplomacy, and selective partnerships, rather than through unilateral balancing. That behavioural reading is what makes the Türkiye case informative, because it directs attention to the choices Indonesia makes rather than to its rank in any capability table.

Entering the 21st century, amidst the emerging trend of a multipolar order, the discourse of international relations has been impacted by the wave of great-power competition and how it impacts the international system. As such, the ability of middle powers to navigate their interests and autonomy has been questioned to a great extent. Be that as it may, scholars have noted that, despite structural constraints, middle powers are still able to navigate their quest for autonomy through issue-specific leadership and niche diplomacy (Shin, 2016). Similarly, Keohane and Nye's (2012) theory of complex interdependence highlights that the diffusion of power across multiple channels, economic, institutional, and transnational, creates opportunities for middle powers to manoeuvre independently of strict great-power binaries. These perspectives suggest that structural constraints may limit, but do not eliminate, the space for middle-power autonomy.

Eventually, what a middle power aims for in such a dynamic environment is what is called 'strategic autonomy'. It refers to the capacity of a state to set priorities and make decisions independently while having the institutional, political, and material means to implement them, either alone or in cooperation (Lippert et al., 2019). It integrates dimensions of sovereignty, economic resilience, and geopolitical agency, with emphasis on managing dependencies rather than pursuing absolute independence. In this sense, strategic autonomy is linked to the ability to navigate global interdependencies while protecting core interests and values. Nevertheless, the idea of strategic autonomy should not be confused with complete sovereignty. Being strategically autonomous does not mean that a country is in total isolation and has ultimate self-sufficiency. Rather, it means that a country has the ability to act in international affairs without necessarily severing external ties (Kutlay and Öniş, 2021; Nissen and Larsen, 2021).

After gaining prominence during the Cold War, the idea of strategic autonomy has become the central aspiration for emerging and middle powers. In this context, as a country starts to gain some level of material or political capacity to act in the international arena, pursuing an autonomous foreign policy is seen as the most viable option to navigate its interests amidst great-power competition (Lüthi, 2016). One of the earliest examples would be when Indonesia declined to align itself with major powers, specifically the United States and the USSR, during the Cold War, choosing instead to pursue an autonomous foreign policy through the Non-Aligned Movement, while remaining open to constructive engagement that served its national interests (Umar, 2023).

The traditional way for middle powers to boost their strategic autonomy is through active participation in multilateral forums. This strategy is also widely acknowledged by scholars in middle-power studies as the main behaviour of middle powers because, given their limitation in terms of capability to act unilaterally, middle powers tend to favour seeking leverage through coalition-building and multilateral institutions (Keohane, 1969; Jordaan, 2003; Cooper et al., 1993; Yalçın, n.d.). For instance, Cooper et al. (1993) explain that middle powers could take advantage by having a greater opportunity to be heard within multilateral institutions. In other words, a multilateral mechanism gives middle powers a greater voice opportunity. In a similar vein, a multilateral institution also gives greater opportunity for niche diplomacy, in which middle powers seek 'issue-specific' leadership in the global arena (Cooper, 1997; Shin, 2016). In doing so, it would amplify their international identity and global position against other actors.

Nevertheless, in a global system that is increasingly impacted by great-power rivalry, conventional wisdom has it that a middle power achieves strategic autonomy amidst great-power competition by adopting the strategy of 'hedging'. It refers to a strategy of uncertainty management adopted by states, especially middle powers, when they face competing great powers and cannot fully commit to balancing or bandwagoning (Ciorciari and Haacke, 2019). Hedging involves simultaneously pursuing cooperative and counterbalancing measures to

avoid overdependence on any one major power while keeping multiple strategic options open (Kuik, 2008). On the one hand, a middle power still lacks the military and economic capabilities to balance against great powers. On the other hand, it also refuses bandwagoning with a great power, to avoid pressures from the other great power amidst global rivalry. Hence, in this sense, hedging offers a pragmatic alternative approach to navigating a middle power's interests.

The hedging literature also warns against treating the label as an explanation on its own. Haacke (2019) argues that hedging has often been applied loosely to Southeast Asia, and that it needs clearer conceptual and methodological discipline before it can distinguish genuine hedging from ordinary diversification or from alignment that is merely undeclared. Kuik (2016) supplies part of that discipline by showing how weaker states hedge in practice: by combining economic pragmatism, binding engagement, and indirect balancing, rather than by choosing one posture and holding it. Jones and Jenne (2022) add that, in Southeast Asian foreign policy, hedging works as grand strategy only when its component moves are coherent over time, which is why a single purchase or a single agreement is weak evidence of hedging, while a sustained pattern of supplier diversification plus domestic capacity-building is stronger evidence. This study follows that caution: it treats the Indonesia-Türkiye record as hedging only to the extent that the pattern, not any single deal, shows diversification and capacity-building together.

Against this background, this study examines how Indonesia could enhance its strategic autonomy by assuming its role as a middle power, especially amidst great-power rivalry in its region. Scholars have noted that Indonesia has begun its foreign policy diversification by extending its wings across ASEAN, IORA, Indo-Pacific forums, and bilateral partnerships (Anwar, 2020; Laksmana, n.d.). On the bilateral level, Indonesia has notably sought diversification in alternative powers by aligning with other middle-power countries like South Korea, the UAE, Qatar, and Türkiye. While each actor possesses strategic importance for the enhancement of Indonesian strategic autonomy, this study focuses on how Türkiye has participated in Indonesian foreign policy diversification and strategic autonomy enhancement.

METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the impact of Türkiye's defence industry on Indonesia's strategy to enhance strategic autonomy. The study draws upon a diverse set of qualitative data sources, including academic journal articles, news media reports, and official government press releases, together with official documents, bilateral accords, and policy statements, to capture both scholarly interpretations and official positions. These multiple sources of evidence allow for data triangulation, supporting greater reliability and validity in understanding the dynamics of Indonesia's foreign policy under Prabowo's leadership. Through this methodological design, the research aims to provide a

nuanced and contextually grounded account of how Türkiye's defence industry has an impact on Indonesia's defence modernisation and strategic autonomy enhancement.

The analysis proceeds in three steps. First, the partnership is traced chronologically, from the 2010 presidential visit and the 2011 strategic partnership through the joint tank programme and the expanded land, air, and naval cooperation of 2023-2025, so that each claim about diversification or capacity-building can be located at a dated step in the record. Second, each step is read through the neoclassical realist lenses set out in the literature review: systemic pressure as the motive to diversify, domestic filtering as the explanation for why Türkiye in particular was selected, and state capacity as the test of whether procurement builds domestic production. Third, claims from different source types are checked against each other: where a news report, an official statement, and the supplier-share data point in the same direction, the finding is reported with more confidence, and where only a single news report supports a figure, the figure is reported as reported and the limitation is stated rather than smoothed over.

The evidence span needs to be stated plainly. Although the study is framed around the current leadership period, the narrative it examines runs from 2010 to 2025, across three administrations, because the partnership, the 2012 defence-industry law, and the joint production programmes that explain the current position were all established before the current period. The emphasis on the current period is therefore an emphasis on acceleration and scale in 2023-2025, not a claim that the partnership began in that period. No interviews, surveys, or fieldwork were undertaken, and no statistical model is estimated: the study is an interpretive reading of documentary and press sources, and its findings are qualitative judgements about strategy and posture, not measured changes in dependence. The limits that follow from that design are set out in the limitations section.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

External And Internal Factors Of Indonesia's Strategy For Strategic Autonomy

Indonesia's current security landscape is currently being shaped by stacked external pressures that can quietly erode policy freedom. Most notably, the rising tension in the maritime sphere often triggers a security stand-off in the region. Just days after Prabowo Subianto came to the presidency in 2024, Indonesian maritime authorities twice drove a Chinese coast guard vessel out of waters off the Natuna Islands after it disrupted a Pertamina energy survey within Indonesia's exclusive economic zone (Reuters, 2024); this incident spurred Jakarta to reaffirm robust responses to safeguard its maritime sovereignty. Likewise, the announcement of the AUKUS pact (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) in September 2021 created a new security dilemma for Indonesia. While Indonesian officials see this as an opportunity to contain Chinese influence in the region (Haripin and Priamarizki, n.d.), Jakarta's approach is still cautious, in that Indonesia could become a 'transit corridor'

for belligerents in a United States-China rivalry (Liliansa, n.d.). Accordingly, the nuclear-powered submarines included in the AUKUS arrangement are designed for long-endurance and deep-diving operations. If Australian nuclear submarines were to transit between the Indian and Pacific Oceans to contain China through the Sunda or Lombok Straits, which are deep enough for submerged transit, unlike the Malacca Strait, without surfacing, Indonesia would have no way of knowing they were there, thus undermining Indonesia's territorial integrity (Darmawan, n.d.).

To a great extent, the great-power rivalry between the United States and China in the Indo-Pacific has affected the current security landscape in Indonesia. Therefore, observers have noted that the rise of China has fundamentally reconfigured the regional balance of power, while to some extent it has also affected Indonesia's domestic and regional security challenges (Gindarsah and Priamarizki, 2015; Poling and Natalegawa, 2025). At the same time, Indonesia has refused to believe that the United States and other great powers possess the tools and will to deal with Indonesia's security challenges vis-a-vis the rise of China (Gindarsah and Priamarizki, 2015; Laksmana, n.d.). For this particular reason, Laksmana (n.d.) noted that Indonesia's approach toward great-power management is one of full engagement in various forms of cooperation, while simultaneously maintaining both strategic autonomy and an equal balance with other great powers. In addition, to address security challenges, Indonesia needs to modernise its own defence capabilities to enhance the country's strategic autonomy (Gindarsah and Priamarizki, 2015).

That pattern of engagement without alignment is consistent with how smaller states manage hierarchy in Southeast Asia. Goh (2008) argues that regional security strategies in Southeast Asia are best understood as responses to a hierarchical order in which great powers compete for influence but cannot simply dictate outcomes, because regional states retain choices about whom to engage, on what terms, and in what combination. Indonesia's simultaneous engagement with the United States, China, and alternative middle-power partners fits that account: the point is not to choose a patron but to preserve the ability to choose, and the maritime and AUKUS pressures described above are the concrete reasons why that ability feels threatened rather than abstract.

Regarding the internal factors, Indonesia lays down several strategies designed to make procurement serve capability-building, not just equipment buying, to advance defence modernisation. The backbone of this initiative is initially described in Law No. 16/2012 on the Defense Industry, which frames the defence industry as part of national resilience and explicitly links it to independence of the defence system (Republic of Indonesia, Ministry of Defense, 2012). In practice, this creates a policy imperative to shift Indonesia from being primarily an end-user and importer toward being a producer and integrator of defence systems, at least for priority platforms and subsystems. This law also mandates that, in the case of arms imports, Indonesia should prioritise the transfer of technology (ToT) or joint production in the procurement deals with foreign counterparts (Hanif, 2025). At the same

time, within the context of great-power rivalry, Indonesia needs to diversify its arms suppliers to avoid overreliance on a single power and to navigate great-power management. In short, Indonesia's defence industrialisation is not merely a military modernisation programme, but a hedging strategy designed to secure strategic autonomy. By leveraging its market size to enforce technology transfer, Indonesia attempts to escape the 'client trap' of great-power competition, though it remains constrained by budgetary limitations and technological absorptive capacity.

The acquisition literature gives that legal mandate a practical context. Matthews et al. (2025) examine Indonesia's defence acquisition strategy and show that procurement decisions are shaped by the interaction of strategic, industrial, and budgetary pressures, so that a purchase is rarely only a capability choice: it is also a statement about which industrial relationships Indonesia is willing to build and which dependencies it is willing to accept. That reading supports the argument of this study in one important respect. If acquisition is always also industrial policy, then the preference for a partner willing to transfer technology and to produce jointly is not a secondary preference but the central criterion, and a supplier that refuses those terms fails the test even if its equipment is more advanced. It also explains why budgetary and absorptive constraints matter so much: a transfer that Indonesia cannot absorb does not build autonomy, however generous its terms.

How Türkiye Has Impacted Indonesia Strategic Autonomy

Türkiye's advancement in the defence industry sector has attracted many countries that seek an alternative for arms procurement without relying on the great and traditional arms suppliers. For Indonesia, maintaining a strategic partnership with Türkiye, especially in the defence sector, serves two important roles. First, it gives access to a diverse supplier. In doing so, Türkiye helps Indonesia avoid overreliance on a single supplier and complements engagement with Western and mainstream partners, which is consistent with Indonesia's broader strategy of defence diversification. Second, this cooperation could translate into an institutionalised partnership, in which the rise of Türkiye's defence industry cooperation serves as an element of Indonesia's defence diplomacy toolkit for capacity-building in the defence sector.

Mapping work on the partnership reaches a similar conclusion from the other direction. Robby and Boran (2024) map the potential of the strategic partnership between Indonesia and Türkiye and identify both the opportunities, in complementary industrial ambitions and shared middle-power positioning, and the challenges, in sustaining cooperation beyond headline agreements into production, maintenance, and follow-on orders. Their caution is relevant to the record examined here: the partnership looks strongest where agreements have been converted into joint production and deliveries, and weakest where cooperation remains at the level of announced intent. The chronological record below is therefore organised to

keep that distinction visible, separating signed and delivered steps from reported commitments.

Over the past decade, the cooperation on the defence sector between Indonesia and Türkiye has improved significantly. It started notably when the former Indonesian President Yudhoyono visited Ankara in June 2010, when the two countries signed an agreement on defence-industry cooperation, included in the 12 agreements concluded covering political, economic, and cultural cooperation (Beyaz Gazete, 2010). Although this visit did not explicitly result in specific arms and defence procurement, this visit marked the first step towards Indonesia-Türkiye defence collaboration. In the following year, the two countries also agreed to upgrade their relations towards a 'Strategic Partnership', signalling that Türkiye viewed Indonesia as its anchor in Southeast Asia, while Indonesia saw Türkiye as the potential for its interest in defence modernisation (Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

Then, in 2012, President Yudhoyono passed Law No. 16/2012 on the Defense Industry, which shifted Indonesian defence policy and mandated that all defence procurement should include technology transfer and joint production in order to reduce Indonesia's reliance on imports and foster local defence capabilities (Hanif, 2025). As a result, while mainstream Western arms producers were hesitant about technology transfer, Türkiye emerged as the key actor who was willing to share. By 2014, following the elevated relation between Indonesia and Türkiye as well as Indonesia's shift in defence policy, FNSS Savunma Sistemleri from Türkiye and PT Pindad from Indonesia had begun joint projects in the development of a medium tank known as the Harimau tank or Kaplan MT (TRT Haber, 2017). The tank was successfully unveiled in 2017 and was delivered to the Indonesian army for the first time in 2024. Furthermore, the two countries agreed to upgrade this cooperation in 2024 by extending it to the development of 30-ton class armoured personnel carriers known as 'KAPLAN Zirhli Personel Tasiyici (KAPLAN ZPT)' (FNSS, 2025). Accordingly, the first vehicle will be produced at FNSS facilities in Türkiye, while the second vehicle will be produced by PT Pindad in Indonesia, and the first delivery is expected in 2026.

Furthermore, the defence cooperation between Indonesia and Türkiye increased substantively during the Jokowi administration, especially when Prabowo Subianto assumed the role of Indonesian Minister of Defense in 2019. Cooperation expanded from land systems to the aerospace sector. The deliberate success of Türkiye in drone production and its combat-proven success in the Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine wars attracted Indonesia for defence modernisation through drone procurement. Consequently, Indonesia signed a \$300 million contract for 12 ANKA drones from Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) in 2023. This was a major pivot: Indonesia chose the Turkish ANKA over the Chinese CH-4, which it already operated but had reliability issues with in operational performance (Defence Security Asia, 2025). By acquiring new drones from Türkiye, Indonesia reflected its aims to boost collaboration with Türkiye and diversify its military supply chain. At the same time, it also signalled Indonesia's intent to reduce dependence on great-power manufacturers like China.

Moreover, the deal with Türkiye came with capacity-building programmes including training, logistics, and significant technology transfer (Türkiye Today, 2025).

Currently, under the Prabowo administration, the defence relationship between Indonesia and Türkiye has accelerated aggressively. As of mid-2025, Indonesia was reported to have formally committed to purchasing 48 KAAN fighter jets, Türkiye's fifth-generation stealth fighter (Anadolu Ajansı, 2025). Following the \$300 million deal with TAI, Indonesia scaled up its drone cooperation with Türkiye by signing agreements for the joint production of Bayraktar TB3 and Akinci drones in February 2025. At this point, Indonesia views Türkiye not merely as a 'supplier' but rather as a 'building partner' and a 'model' for how a middle-power country can advance its defence industry. In addition, the two countries have also extended their partnership towards development in the navy system. In July 2025, the Indonesian Ministry of Defense signed a deal with the Turkish shipbuilding group TAIS Shipyard for the production of two I-class (Istif-class/Istanbul-class) frigates for the Indonesian Navy (Vavasseur, 2025).

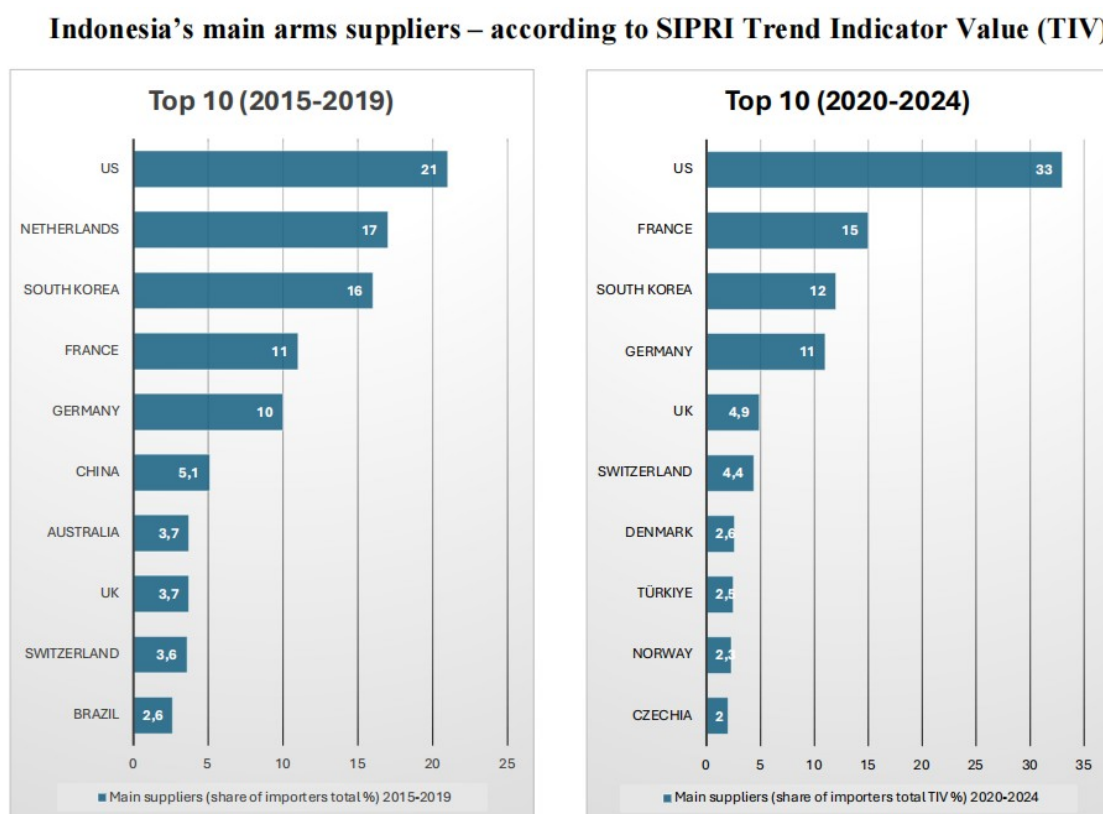
Table 1. Milestones in the Indonesia-Türkiye defence partnership, 2010-2025

Year	Milestone
2010	Presidential visit to Ankara; defence-industry cooperation agreement among 12 agreements concluded.
2011	Relations upgraded to a strategic partnership.
2012	Law No. 16/2012 on the Defense Industry mandates technology transfer and joint production in procurement.
2014	FNSS and PT Pindad begin the joint medium tank programme (Harimau tank, Kaplan MT).
2017	The joint medium tank is unveiled.
2023	\$300 million contract for 12 ANKA drones from Turkish Aerospace Industries.
2024	First delivery of the joint medium tank to the Indonesian army; cooperation extended to the KAPLAN ZPT armoured personnel carrier.
February 2025	Agreements signed for the joint production of Bayraktar TB3 and Akinci drones.
Mid-2025	Reported formal commitment to purchase 48 KAAN fighter jets.
July 2025	Deal signed with TAIS Shipyard for the production of two I-class frigates.

Note: Milestones are drawn from the sources cited in the text. Contract values, aircraft numbers, and delivery expectations are reported as reported in those sources; they are not reproduced from contracts or official procurement documents, which were not available to this study.

During the preceding decade, Indonesia and Türkiye are reported to have signed more than 15 major agreements in the defence sector, including arms procurement, joint production, and transfer of technology. No list of those agreements is given, so that figure is presented here as reported rather than as an independently verified count, and it should not be read as a substitute for the dated milestones in Table 1. The SIPRI Trend Indicator Value (TIV) data in Figure 1 show that Indonesia continues to maintain relations with its traditional defence partners, primarily the United States, France, and Germany, which consistently dominate the top positions across the period from 2015-2024. However, the latest ranking also demonstrates a notable diversification in Indonesia's arms procurement landscape. Most significantly, Türkiye has risen to become Indonesia's eighth largest arms supplier in the 2020-2024 period, surpassing several long-established European suppliers. This shift reflects the deepening Indonesia-Türkiye defence cooperation. In other words, while Indonesia still maintains relationships with its mainstream partners, the data confirm that Ankara has successfully secured a visible and growing role in Indonesia's procurement ecosystem.

Figure 1. Indonesia's main arms suppliers, by SIPRI Trend Indicator Value share, 2015-2019 and 2020-2024



¹ The SIPRI Trend Indicator Value (TIV) is a standardized metric developed by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) to quantify the volume of international transfers of major conventional arms, focusing on the military capability and resource transfer rather than the financial or market value of the weapons involved.

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, as reported in the study. Note: The dataset vintage and retrieval date for this chart were not stated, and the chart's own footnote explains the Trend Indicator Value as a measure of the

volume of transfers of major conventional arms, based on military capability and resource transfer rather than on financial value. The values shown are reproduced as given, including Türkiye at 2.5 per cent and ranked eighth in 2020-2024.

The supplier-share evidence needs to be read with the same care as the contract figures. Wezeman et al. (2024), in the SIPRI Yearbook chapter on international arms transfers, set out how the Trend Indicator Value works: it is designed to compare volumes of major arms transfers over time, not to measure their financial value, so a rising share means a larger volume of capability transferred, not necessarily larger spending. That distinction matters for this study's argument. Türkiye's rise to eighth place in 2020-2024 is evidence of diversification in volume terms, and it is consistent with the dated record of joint production and drone procurement. It is not, on its own, evidence that Indonesia's overall dependence has fallen by any measured amount, because the chart shows shares among the top ten suppliers only, and because dependence also depends on maintenance, spares, training, and the ability to produce at home, none of which a supplier share captures.

Finally, the findings show that, while the international structure, that is, great-power rivalry, pushes Indonesia to develop strategic autonomy, particularly in the defence sector, domestic factors such as leaders' perspectives and Indonesia's policy on the defence industry drive policymakers to choose Türkiye as a partner, due to two major factors. First, Türkiye offers NATO-standard quality defence equipment without the heavy political strings, which paved the way for diversification in Indonesia's defence policy and avoided overreliance on mainstream defence producers. Second, while Türkiye stands as an alternative partner for arms procurement, it also emerged as a capacity-building partner willing to accept technology transfer and joint production along the cooperation. This aligns with the policy of Indonesia's defence industry, which aims to foster local defence production capabilities.

LIMITATIONS

Four limitations qualify everything claimed above. First, the study is documentary and interpretive: it uses published scholarship, news reports, and official statements, and it has no corpus list, no stated corpus size, and no formal inclusion and exclusion criteria against which a reader could reproduce the source selection. The chronological tracing and cross-checking across source types reduce, but do not remove, the risk that the record examined here over-represents headline agreements and under-represents routine procurement. Second, the headline figures that carry the empirical narrative, the \$300 million drone contract, the 48-aircraft KAAN commitment, the two-frigate arrangement, and the expected 2026 delivery of the KAPLAN vehicle, each rest on a single news report or on a reported official statement, not on a contract or procurement document reproduced in full. They are therefore reported as reported, and the distinction between a reported commitment and a signed contract, which matters most for the KAAN item, cannot be settled from the sources used here. Third, the supplier-share chart cannot be re-derived from the study: its dataset vintage and retrieval date were not stated, and only the top ten suppliers are shown, so no before-and-after

measure of dependence can be computed from it. Fourth, the dependence claim itself is qualitative. The study shows diversification of suppliers and a consistent preference for technology transfer and joint production, but it does not measure dependence, and it cannot say by how much dependence on any single supplier has fallen. Any use of this study for procurement or policy decisions should therefore treat its conclusions as an assessment of strategic posture, not as a verified measurement of autonomy.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the complex interplay between Indonesia's defence posture and its survival strategies amidst great-power rivalry. As demonstrated, the cooperation with Türkiye was not merely a reaction to security threats, but a calculated move to establish strategic autonomy. Theoretically, this contributes to the middle-power debate by showing that, while external pressure creates a tendency for a country to react, it is the calculated decision-making process by domestic and internal actors that determines in what particular ways the country will react. It also set out to analyse how inter-middle power cooperation helps middle powers to navigate security challenges and avoid overreliance on major powers.

On the first research question, concerning how the Jakarta-Ankara partnership has influenced Indonesia's strategic autonomy in the domestic security and foreign-policy domains, the answer is that it has influenced autonomy mainly through the domestic route. Externally, maritime incidents and the dilemmas created by rival great-power arrangements gave Indonesia a strong motive to avoid being fixed to a single patron. Domestically, leadership priorities and the 2012 defence-industry law converted that motive into a specific choice: a partner that would accept technology transfer and joint production as the price of procurement. The partnership therefore strengthened autonomy less by changing Indonesia's external alignments than by giving its domestic industrial policy a workable partner, and its effect on foreign policy is best described as a widening of options rather than a reorientation away from any existing partner.

On the second research question, concerning the extent to which the partnership has diversified defence procurement and thereby reduced strategic dependence on traditional major-power suppliers, the answer is partial and must be stated as such. Diversification is demonstrated: the dated record moves from a single cooperation agreement in 2010 through joint tank production to drone procurement, joint drone production, and a frigate programme, and the supplier-share chart places Türkiye eighth among Indonesia's suppliers in 2020-2024, ahead of several long-established European suppliers. A measured reduction in dependence, however, is not demonstrated, because no dependence metric is computed and the chart alone cannot supply one. What can be claimed is that Indonesia now has an additional, capable supplier that is also a capacity-building partner, which reduces the risk of overreliance even though the size of that reduction remains unquantified.

Therefore, this study argues that Türkiye played two roles in advancing Indonesia's strategic autonomy. First, it presents as an alternative power that can offer reliable quality defence materials without heavy political strings, and therefore it allows Indonesia to diversify its strategic partners in the defence sector. Second, Türkiye is more open to collaboration based on capacity-building, in terms of joint production and technology transfer, and hence it aligns with Indonesia's strategic interest in developing the capability to produce armaments locally. It also explains why Türkiye has risen significantly among Indonesia's arms suppliers, surpassing several long-established European suppliers.

Three recommendations follow from these findings, each tied to a finding above. First, because the capacity-building claim is the strongest part of the case, future procurement should be judged primarily on the transfer and joint-production terms it secures and on whether those terms are absorbed into domestic production, rather than on headline platform numbers alone. Second, because the dependence claim remains unmeasured, Indonesia's defence planners should publish or commission a simple, repeatable dependence measure, covering supplier shares, maintenance and spares dependence, and domestic production content, so that future claims about autonomy can be tested rather than asserted. Third, because headline figures in this field currently rest on single news reports, future assessments should require that any reported commitment be checked against an official or contractual source before it is used as evidence of a change in posture. Taken together, these steps would turn a plausible strategy of diversification into a verifiable one, which is the difference between appearing autonomous and being able to demonstrate it.

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