



Indonesia's Defense Diplomacy Towards France in 2019-2023 from Defense Diplomacy Motives Perspective

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Abstract

The dynamics in the regional and global scope encourage countries to implement defense diplomacy to achieve national defense and security interests. Indonesia is one of the countries that has implemented defense diplomacy and cooperated with many partners spread across various countries. However, from 2019 to 2023, Indonesia's defense diplomacy and cooperation strengthened with one country, France. This research aims to find out the motives of Indonesia's defense diplomacy towards France in the 2019-2023 period. This research uses a qualitative method with the concept of defense diplomacy motives from Frega Wenas Inkiriwang. The research uses data from books, journal articles, news, reports, and documents from official websites. The research data collection technique was conducted through literature studies and interviews. The results show that the motives of Indonesia's defense diplomacy towards France focus on the motives of strategic engagement, confidence-building measures, capacity building, and international reputation to overcome problems, such as inadequate defense equipment, limited defense technology, unfulfilled MEF I and II targets, lack of human resources capable of mastering defense technology, and the interests of maintaining the integration of the Republic of Indonesia. This study found that Indonesia should keep developing diplomatic connections with France to strengthen the defense industry's capabilities and the competency of the Indonesian National Military personnel. Nevertheless, the Indonesian government must establish a monitoring mechanism for cooperation in procuring defense equipment and staff training. This guarantees the continuation of the cooperation agreement, which promotes Indonesia's defense capabilities and independence. Indonesia is not intended to become dependent on France due to the ongoing collaboration; instead, it is designed to assist in developing national defense.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the strategic environment encourages the country to design a foreign policy agenda that focuses more on implementing national defense and security protection, both at the global and regional levels (Aulia & Umagapi, 2019). This step is carried out to ensure the preservation of sovereignty, independence, unity, territorial integrity, and national interests from various forms of potential threats (Chiş-Manolache & Chiş, 2019). One of the agendas that can be used to realize the implementation of foreign policy in the defense and security sector is the implementation of a form of diplomacy closely related to military defense policy, namely defense diplomacy (Muniruzzaman, 2020). Defense diplomacy is the peaceful use of armed forces and related infrastructure (in this case, the Ministry of Defense) to achieve national foreign policy and security (Cottey & Forster, 2004). Defense diplomacy has arisen due to political needs and the drive to create a peaceful environment. Through defense cooperation as a form of implementation, defense diplomacy can support the reform and development of a country's defense system, maintain relations between countries from conflicts, and support the maintenance of regional security (Drab, 2018).

Indonesia is one example of a country that has implemented and even established defense diplomacy as part of its total government diplomacy. Defense diplomacy is explained by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia as a tool to defend state sovereignty, maintain the territorial integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, maintain the safety of the nation from threats and disturbances, and maintain world peace (Prihartono, 2022). The Indonesian White Paper on Defense also states that defense diplomacy is crucial for Indonesia since it is a key element in implementing the principles regulating national defense. The development of defense institutions, both military and non-military, must be the focus of this agenda. Additionally, it is one of the most important initiatives that must be completed to the best of its ability because it can improve the country's military defense capabilities.

Indonesia's defense diplomacy efforts typically take many forms, including drafting joint agreements, setting up defense discussion forums or dialogues, acquiring and granting defense equipment, conducting joint education and training, conducting defense research and development, collaborating on humanitarian aid, and deploying Indonesian National Military troops for peace missions (Nanggala et al., 2018). Indonesia's cooperating partners are dispersed throughout other nations, such as Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, France, and the United States of America, which have and/or are still cooperating in the defense field with Indonesia (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015). Indonesia engaged in defense diplomacy with several nations between 2019 and 2023 to improve its defensive position. On the other hand, Indonesia's defense cooperation and diplomacy with France grew more intense.

On May 25, 2019, the French aircraft carrier "Charles de Gaulle" and the Indonesian Navy's KRI 357 Bung Tomo conducted a simultaneous exercise in the Malacca Strait. Then, in July 2019, Indonesia, through a representative of the Inspector General of the Ministry of Defense, Admiral Indonesian National Army Dr. Didit Herdiawan, M.P.A., M.B.A, engaged in a dialogue with the Directorate General of International Relations Strategy, MG Philippe Boutinaud, to address Indo-Pacific regional issues and defense cooperation between Indonesia and France (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2019).

Furthermore, in 2020, Indonesian Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto met with French Minister of the Armed Forces Florence Parly in 2020. The two countries strengthened their defense cooperation agreement by creating the Defense Cooperation

Agreement (DCA) (The Jakarta Post, 2020). Defense cooperation between Indonesia and France continues to run and even strengthened in 2022 after Prabowo Subianto and Florence Parly held another meeting on February 10, 2022, and agreed on several new collaborations focusing on the development of the defense industry between the two countries (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2022). In 2023, the two countries are still cooperating by conducting joint exercises between the armed forces (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2023a). The visit of the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia to Paris has also taken place in the context of implementing the 2+2 forum. The forum is used for both countries to discuss various topics and defense issues. On this occasion, it was emphasized that Indonesia is satisfied with and sees good hopes for strategic cooperation with France in the future (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2023b).

The numerous defense-related cooperation between France and Indonesia has produced positive reactions, particularly from Prabowo Subianto, Indonesia's Minister of Defense. He said France and Indonesia had the finest defense collaboration in recent memory (Jaiddin, 2024). According to the justification, this study is intrigued by Indonesia's defense diplomacy with France. This study intends to find the reasons behind strengthening Indonesia's defense diplomacy with France in 2019-2023.

In conducting this research, various previous studies are relevant to this study. Comparisons were also made to find out the novelty of the written discussion. Inkiriwang has previously explained Indonesia's defense diplomacy motives in his journal articles entitled "Garuda shield' vs "Sharp Knife": Operationalising Indonesia's Defense Diplomacy' and 'Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo: Enhancing Indonesia's Multilateral Defense Diplomacy?'. In both journals, Frega Wenas Inkiriwang highlighted joint exercises as a tool that can be used for Indonesia to conduct defense diplomacy both bilaterally and multilaterally. These activities are important because they are part of the defense strategy and implementation of Indonesia's foreign policy achievements. Frega Wenas Inkiriwang also highlighted the existence of 4 motives for Indonesia in carrying out defense diplomacy: strategic engagement, confidence-building measures, capacity building, and international reputation.

Next, related to cooperation as a practice of direct defense diplomacy with France, Utaryo Santiko and Sari have done a partner country that researchers chose. Santiko and Agustien (2022) conducted research titled "Indonesia and France's Defense Industry Cooperation in Meeting the Minimum Essential Force (MEF) of the Indonesian National Army Phase 2 (2015-2019)" explains what efforts are made to fulfill the MEF agenda through defense cooperation between Indonesia and France and the effectiveness of these efforts. The cooperation, a practice of defense diplomacy between the two, is neatly written with research limitations from 2015-2019, based on the MEF II strategic plan period. At the end of the research, both authors agreed that the cooperation implemented was quite effective, although some notes were specific to the sea and air defense sectors. Sari (2023) also discusses defense diplomacy between Indonesia and France, focusing on modernizing Indonesia's defense equipment to prevent traditional and non-traditional threats that Indonesia could experience. The research explains Indonesia's defense diplomacy efforts in the 2019-2023 period, which carried out a lot of defense cooperation with other countries to fulfill MEF. This study explains Indonesia's defense cooperation in procuring French defense equipment and Indonesia's challenges in terms of system integration.

Compared to the previous research, this study focuses more on the implementation of Indonesia's bilateral defense diplomacy towards France, with a limited time frame

from 2019 to 2023, specifically from the perspective of defense diplomacy motives. This study analyzes the motives of Indonesia's defense diplomacy towards France during this time frame by using Frega Wenas Inkiriwang's explanation of defense diplomacy motives in his previous research. The 2019-2023 period was chosen considering that from 2019 to 2024, the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia has been led by Prabowo Subianto, who was recently elected as the President of Indonesia.

METHODS

This study used qualitative research methods, referring to John W. Creswell. Creswell describes qualitative research as a method to explore and understand meaning for individuals or groups of people who are considered to be derived from social or humanitarian issues (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative method was chosen because there is subjectivity and complexity of the problem being studied, namely knowing why the Government of Indonesia strengthened defense diplomacy towards France in the 2019-2023 period.

The data sources used in this research are divided into two sources, namely primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources come from data collected by the author directly from sources selected as research subjects. This study's primary data is obtained from an interview with one of the active staff members of the Directorate of International Defense Cooperation, Directorate General of Defense Strategy, Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia. Then, the second interview with Defense Strategy Institute (KERIS) analysts. Interviews with active staff from the Directorate of International Defense Cooperation provided relevant answers regarding the defense diplomacy and cooperation activities carried out by Indonesia towards France in 2019-2023, according to the data recorded at the Ministry of Defense. Then, the interview also certainly provided answers from the Indonesian Ministry of Defense as a representative of the Indonesian government regarding Indonesia's defense diplomacy motives towards France. The informant, as an active staff from the Directorate of International Defense Cooperation, Ministry of Defense, has relevance, capacity, and a direct role in implementing cooperation with France so that he can provide an in-depth understanding of the motives of Indonesia's defense diplomacy towards that country.

Furthermore, interviews with analysts from the Defense Strategy Institute (KERIS) were conducted because this institution can be a center for strategic studies that explore defense and security issues, including the dynamics of international cooperation. As an analyst, the KERIS resource person has expertise in analyzing the policies and motives of defense diplomacy implemented by Indonesia, especially in relations with France. This relevance is important to obtain an objective and in-depth perspective on implementing Indonesian defense diplomacy in 2019-2023. To maintain the confidentiality of both informants, the reference 'Informant A' will be used for informants from the Ministry of Defense and 'Informant B' from the KERIS Institute. This is done because the resource person wants to keep his identity confidential.

In addition, this study employs the concept of Defense Diplomacy Motives as an analytical tool, as articulated by Frega Wenas Inkiriwang. In defense diplomacy, the state has motives or reasons that underlie agreements on defense activities or cooperation with partner countries. Motives can be based on the achievement of national goals and are carried out based on the problems a country is trying to improve. Regarding the motive of defense diplomacy, Frega Wenas Inkiriwang identified four broader potential motives related to implementing Indonesia's defense diplomacy (Inkiriwang, 2020). These motives include:

1. Strategic Engagement

Defense diplomacy is a broader strategy to improve a country's military and foreign policy practices. Defense diplomacy is important because it facilitates strategic cooperation with major powers or other major international partners. Strong relations between militaries will be formed through the cooperative activities produced by defense diplomacy, and relations between partner countries can be directly improved.

2. Confidence-building Measures

Defense diplomacy cannot be separated from the goal of increasing trust. In addition, it is known that the country is currently conducting defense diplomacy to avoid conflicts or escalating tensions between countries. This is strongly related to defense diplomacy's goals of fostering trust, lowering distrust, resolving common security concerns, and altering strategic alliances between nations. If the level of trust is achieved, joint security handling and strategy adjustment will be easier for partner countries to realize.

3. Capacity Building

Defense diplomacy can develop a country's capacity by assisting with equipment and training resources. Defense diplomacy activities, such as technology exchanges and joint exercises, allow military personnel to learn doctrine and identify gaps for improvement as part of defense modernization. Cooperation in purchasing defense equipment can also occur and be directed to meet the target of achieving the number of defense equipment in a country.

4. International Reputation

In international relations, reputation has been used to determine the competence of a potential partner or competitor. Some countries articulate their international reputation as a global influence when pursuing national security goals. A positive reputation will also attract positive responses from other countries, which can affect the contribution of cooperation in the future. Defense diplomacy activities can build an international reputation related to the professionalism of personnel and the military culture of a country.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia's Strategic Engagement Towards France Through Defense Diplomacy in 2019-2023

Defense diplomacy is recognized as a broader strategy to help strengthen military and foreign policy practices (Cotter & Forster, 2004). Hence, defense diplomacy can be a promising option as it is helpful to facilitate a state's strategic engagement with significant powers or other vital international partners. Through the motive of strategic engagement, a country can create a stable and sustainable long-term strategic relationship, encouraging the formation of mutually beneficial strategic partnerships. Furthermore, strategic engagement is expected to facilitate the achievement of broader national interests. When the relationship between countries is robust, strategic engagement will be formed, making it easier for the state to expand strategies to achieve its foreign policy agenda in defense and security by utilizing the relationships built with these partners (Inkiriwang, 2021).

According to the objectives of defense diplomacy stated by Inkiriwang previously, Indonesia's defense diplomacy with France exemplifies notable strategic engagement attributes. This is seen in Indonesia's endeavors to sustain and enhance military relations with France, a significant global power with considerable influence in the Pacific region.

Indonesia's strategic engagement is establishing enduring partnerships that provide sustained benefits to both nations rather than ephemeral advantages. Indonesia uses diplomatic relations as a means to achieve overarching national goals. The response provided by Informant A from the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia highlights that Indonesia has effectively leveraged its positive relationship with France to secure its position as an observer at the South Pacific Defense Ministers Meeting, a forum focused on security and defense in the South Pacific, of which France is a participant. This activity is focused on fostering positive relations with France as a means to advance broader national interests. The remarks made by Informant A were consistent with the statements of Indonesian Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto during the honorary visit from the French Ambassador to Indonesia on February 21, 2024. Indonesian Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto acknowledged the significant influence of France in the Pacific region and expressed a desire to support and enhance Indonesia's collaboration with other nations in the area (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2024a).

Indonesia's choice of the South Pacific Defense Ministers Meeting (SPDMM) forum as a target indicates a well-organized strategy for executing its defense diplomacy. The partnership with France is a crucial foundation for reaching broader strategic objectives in the Pacific region. France's presence and influence in the Pacific position it as a potential partner for Indonesia in achieving its regional aspirations. The collaboration between the two has the potential to serve as a pathway for Indonesia to enhance its diplomatic standing and bolster its security presence in the Pacific region.

Furthermore, Informant A also said that the South Pacific region has the potential for abundant natural resources and strategic trade routes because it is connected to the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. However, the strong reason underlying Indonesia's urge to play a role in the region is to maintain the sovereignty of the state and the integrity of Indonesian territory, precisely for the Papua region in Eastern Indonesia. In particular, the Indonesian Ministry of Defense, based on the interview with Informant A, said that guarding the Papua region is one of the interests that Indonesia wants to achieve through Indonesia's role as an observer in this SPDMM. Indonesia hopes its role can make more Pacific countries support the Republic of Indonesia's integrity (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2023a), especially the Papua issue, which still requires serious attention. From this, it can be seen that Indonesia's strategic engagement with France has a deep dimension, especially in the context of territorial and national security interests, especially related to the Papua region. Although the South Pacific region has strategic value in terms of natural resources and trade routes, Indonesia's primary motivation in building relations with France focuses more on strengthening state sovereignty. Through its role as an observer in the SPDMM facilitated by good relations with France, Indonesia can strategically utilize strategic engagement to gain a diplomatic platform to build international support for its territorial integrity in the South Pacific. Indonesia comprehensively sees the potential for strengthening strategic relations with France to strengthen the narrative of sovereignty over Papua, build support from Pacific countries, and use the relationship as leverage in long-term defense diplomacy that targets broader national interests.

Indonesia's Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) Motives Towards France Through Defense Diplomacy in 2019-2023

Confidence-building measures (CBMs) are based on transparency and other cooperative activities that can prevent conflict or avoid uncertainty among countries that

could lead to an escalation of hostilities, intentionally or unintentionally (Blake & Spies, 2019). Diplomacy to build confidence-building measures can be carried out with various supporting activities expected to improve good relations, form a perception of common interests, and support the improvement of the countries' defense. Defense diplomacy to build confidence-building measures can be carried out with various supporting activities expected to improve good relations, form a perception of common interests, and support the improvement of the countries' defense (Sembiring et al., 2024). For the character of defense diplomacy as a confidence-building measure, defense diplomacy is usually related to security arrangement activities, ranging from collective, cooperative, and comprehensive security to security community development. In this CBMs character, practically strengthening defense diplomacy can be carried out in several ways, such as state visits, conducting dialogues or consultations between countries, declarations of strategic cooperation, military education, and joint military exercises (Syawfi, 2009). Thus, CBMs are a tool to reduce tensions and a bridge to build deeper, more inclusive, and mutually beneficial diplomatic relations.

The existence of joint exercises, official visits, and even declarations of cooperation in the DCA between Indonesia and France are signs that the CBMs motif is also being pursued. These activities serve as formal diplomatic instruments and mechanisms to build sustainable trust and reduce potential misunderstandings between the two countries. This was confirmed by Informant A from the Indonesian Ministry of Defense. The good relationship between the two also allows the implementation of cooperation to experience no significant obstacles or challenges. This close relationship makes it easier for Indonesia to make agreements and negotiations related to defense cooperation with France, in line with Informant A's explanation regarding France's willingness to cooperate in procuring Rafale aircraft amid Indonesia's defense equipment renewal problems.

The CBM motive in the Indonesia-France defense relationship is then seen to strengthen with the flexibility and openness of France in cooperation in the procurement of defense equipment, especially the Rafale aircraft, said Informant A. France's accommodating attitude regarding funding and providing components shows a high level of trust in Indonesia as a strategic partner. This reflects the success of CBM efforts built previously through various diplomatic and military activities. The implementation of CBMs in this context also acts as a catalyst for the development of broader cooperation. The relationship built is not only limited to conventional defense aspects but also includes technology transfer, defense industry development, and military personnel capacity building. This shows that CBMs have evolved from conflict prevention instruments to a foundation for more comprehensive and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Indonesia's Capacity Building Motives for France Through Defense Diplomacy In 2019-2023

Capacity development, including increasing military strength and technology, is sought by Indonesia, considering its strategic position and national defense interests that must be achieved (Anissa & Djuyandi, 2021). Equipment, resources, professional military education, and training are all part of defense capacity building as a preventive measure against security threats (Gadisya et al., 2024). Indonesia, no exception, has a uniform view of defense capacity building. Written in the Indonesian Defense White Paper, Indonesia's international cooperation can be directed to building defense capacity in improving the professionalism of Indonesian National Army soldiers and the defense industry, which will later be closely related to the primary tool of the national weapon system

(Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2015). Indonesia is currently ranked 13th in the country with the strongest military power in the world (Global Fire Power, 2024). Unfortunately, problems related to defense equipment and the defense industry still occur, and this needs to be handled seriously because it is related to the country's readiness to build a defense system (Anissa & Djuyandi, 2021).

Procurement of Main Equipment for Weapon Systems and Development of Indonesia's Defense Industry

Starting with the problem of defense equipment and the defense industry, Rodon Pedrason, the Director General of Defense Strategy of the Ministry of Defense in 2021, stated that more than 50% of Indonesia's defense and security equipment is old and damaged (Yahya & Dani, 2021). Some fighter aircraft, warships, and other weapon systems are aging, which can significantly deteriorate performance and reliability. This data aligns with the Military Balance report at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, which explains that Indonesian defense equipment ready to be used at the time of operation only travels around 40% of defense equipment (Ramadhan & Yogaswara, 2023).

The main tools of the Indonesian National Army weapon system and all other security defense equipment should be in decent condition because they are closely related to the safety of the nation, state sovereignty, and the level of combat readiness of the Indonesian National Army. The procurement of the main tools of the security system must be improved, considering that defense equipment is a form of force that can be used in dealing with threats and becoming a national competitiveness in the international arena (Andalus & Djuyandi, 2023). In addition, domestic defense technology is inevitably still limited and needs to be redeveloped for more advanced upgrades. Indonesian products still cannot meet the technological specifications needed to make modern security defense equipment. Then, the scope of research and development of defense industry technology is expected to be still insufficient to reach the technology as a whole (Widyatmoko et al., 2022). The Deputy for State Defense Coordination at the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan Evaluation stated that Indonesia's defense industry has not run optimally. The limitations of technology and the necessary materials prevent the domestic defense industry from meeting the needs of the Indonesian National Army defense equipment as a whole. The main tools of strategic weapon systems, such as missiles, Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs), radars, destroyers, and fighter aircraft, are some of the weapons that have not yet been able to support the formation of the national defense industry (Pattisina, 2021).

The selection of France as a defense diplomacy partner can be a solution to the problems mentioned earlier, especially in the procurement of the main tools of the weapon system. Based on data reported by Global Fire Power in 2024, France is ranked 11th out of 145 countries studied regarding its military strength (Global Fire Power, 2024). France also has a strong, self-sustaining defense industry and is experiencing significant development. France has a sophisticated multidomain defense industry, exemplified by companies such as Dassault, Naval Group, and Nexter, with most domestic procurement (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2024).

Based on a statement from Informant B from the KERIS Institute, the French defense industry is willing to give more of what Indonesia wants regarding large-scale acquisitions. France is committed to providing quality defense equipment that is not restrictive, and it has one vision: to develop Indonesia's local industry. This is in line with the statement of Informant A from the Indonesian Ministry of Defense that France has

never provided different qualities in each type of defense equipment. Indonesia is even said to be given an advantage because it can make a "request" for the desired specs related to defense equipment, especially those following the budget allocation.

France is also known as a country willing to carry out cooperation schemes involving an offset or reciprocal trade agenda. Not only expensive hardware and systems but also knowledge and technology that can potentially improve domestic production capabilities (Guild, 2023). As stated by Informant A, France is indeed flexible in the financing process. This certainly has a positive impact on French partner countries, including Indonesia, which is working on the development of its defense equipment and national defense industry. The choice of France as a defense diplomacy partner is a strategic step in the context of capacity building. The French defense industry's multidomain excellence allows Indonesia to access more advanced defense technology. Moreover, France's accommodating attitude shows a strong commitment to supporting Indonesia's defense capacity building. Another important aspect of this capacity-building motif is France's willingness to support the development of Indonesia's local defense industry. This is particularly relevant given the technological and material limitations faced by Indonesia's domestic defense industry, especially in producing strategic defense equipment such as missiles, UCAVs, radars, destroyers, and fighter aircraft. Through cooperation with France, Indonesia has the opportunity to develop its defense technology capabilities, improve the professionalism of Indonesian National Army soldiers, and strengthen the national defense industry, as stated in the Indonesian Defense White Paper.

Mastery of Defense Technology by the Indonesian Army, Navy, and Air Force

Transitioning to another significant matter, mastery of technology is still one of the Indonesian National Army's weak points. The number of technologists and mechanics who have the capability to achieve high-level technology in the country is still limited. The quality of research and development still needs to be improved, considering that only about 60% of human resources work relatively in their fields. With the existing quantity, the quality of Indonesian National Army personnel needs to be improved in defense capabilities and an understanding of the development and need for military technology for personnel carrying out their duties (Anissa & Djuyandi, 2021). The development of the Indonesian National Army R&D must continue to be intensified to produce and research the military technology needed by the country. Similarly, in terms of military equipment, such as defense equipment, an increase in the competence of human resources is required to understand the technology used appropriately. The role of education has finally become so important because human resources are one of the key factors in development and defense (Sebastian, 2015).

In the defense diplomacy of Indonesia towards France from 2019 to 2023, human resource training is the main thing that is implemented. It is written in the Academic Text of the Draft Law on the Ratification of the Agreement between the Governments of Indonesia and France on Defense Cooperation issued by the Ministry of Law and Human Rights; defense cooperation resulting from the defense diplomacy of Indonesia and France will also be in the scope of education and training, science and technology in the field of the defense industry. The provision of technology and knowledge will be directed to improve Indonesia's defense capabilities (Badan Pembinaan Hukum Nasional Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia, 2023).

Especially for Indonesian National Army personnel, the transfer of knowledge and technology will form a professional Indonesian National Army posture, proficiency in

using combat equipment and military equipment, and ability to perform tasks in a measured manner. Then, the exchange of science and technology will develop the potential for innovation of more modern and advanced military facilities so that it is hoped that improving the quality of human resources, especially Indonesian National Army personnel, can be more easily realized (Badan Pembinaan Hukum Nasional Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia, 2023). Defense cooperation with France provides Indonesia with a "breath of fresh air" for defense capacity, with advanced defense equipment and technology transfer accompanying its procurement. However, until now, there has not been a clear explanation of the types of activities or forms of assistance that France will provide in transferring Rafale aircraft technology. This makes Indonesia need to monitor this matter seriously.

Indonesia's International Reputation Motives Towards France Through Defense Diplomacy in 2019-2023

Reputation has reflected the competence of a country. A positive reputation will attract responses from other countries regarding contribution to cooperation instead of conflict (Inkiriwang, 2020). In this context, Indonesia used defense diplomacy with France during the 2019-2023 period as a strategic effort to enhance its international reputation. Indonesia strengthens cooperation in defense equipment, especially in procuring Rafale fighter aircraft, strengthening its image as a country with modern, strong, and competitive defense capabilities. Defense diplomacy with France has positively improved Indonesia's position in the Indo-Pacific region, a strategic region with various challenges, such as disputes in the South China Sea. Changes in the intensity of national interest conflicts among several countries claiming the SCS have led to considerations for Indonesia to present new defense equipment that can increase Indonesia's influence in the region (Hariyanto et al., 2022). To navigate the complexities of regional geopolitics, Indonesia is strengthening its defense capabilities to ensure its bargaining position remains competitive in Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific (Mardhika et al., 2023). The concrete step of Indonesia's defense diplomacy was realized on February 10, 2022. Through PT Dirgantara Indonesia, Indonesia officially signed an MoU related to the cooperation of offset and technology transfer of 42 units of Rafale fighter aircraft made by Dassault Aviation France (Kementerian Pertahanan Republik Indonesia, 2024b). Director of the Institute for Security and Strategic Studies, Khairul Fahmi, assessed that Rafale could improve the country's defense posture with its sophisticated specifications (BBC, 2022). According to Informant A, in addition to the urgency of the purchase due to Indonesia's deteriorating fighter aircraft readiness, the procurement of Rafale, with its advanced specifications, can be a deterrent effect that can improve Indonesia's bargaining position in regional politics. He said it is essential to show that Indonesia has a qualified force, although it may still need more quantity.

International reputation is a crucial element in Indonesia's defense policy, given its strategic position as a "core player" in the Southeast Asian region. In this regard, cooperation with France, primarily through procuring Rafale fighter aircraft, not only aims to meet technical defense needs but is also a careful diplomatic move to improve Indonesia's posture and prestige in the international arena. Indonesia's choice to cooperate with France is of special significance in the context of its international reputation. Cooperation with France legitimizes Indonesia's defense modernization as one of the countries with a leading defense industry worldwide. The signing of a memorandum of understanding for procuring 42 units of Rafale fighter aircraft is concrete evidence of Indonesia's commitment to building a modern and globally

competitive defense force. This step directly increases Indonesia's credibility as a military power to be reckoned with in the Indo-Pacific region.

Beyond that, Rafale procurement has broader strategic implications in regional geopolitics. Amid rising tensions in the South China Sea and the geopolitical complexity of the Indo-Pacific region, the possession of advanced defense equipment such as the Rafale is an effective diplomatic instrument to improve Indonesia's bargaining position. This serves as a deterrent to potential threats and opens up opportunities for Indonesia to engage in joint military exercises with countries with similar strategic interests in the region (Yadav, 2021). In a broader context, this bilateral relationship puts strategic pressure on countries that could potentially threaten Indonesia's sovereignty while strengthening Indonesia's image as a significant military power in Southeast Asia. (Mujiburrahman & Effendi, 2022). As a game changer in regional security dynamics, the Rafale acquisition strengthens Indonesia's position in the balancing of power agenda in the Southeast Asian region. It reflects Indonesia's vision as a proactive and capable country that maintains regional stability while affirming its position as a credible partner in international defense cooperation. Thus, defense diplomacy with France has successfully enhanced Indonesia's reputation as a significant regional power capable of contributing substantially to maintaining the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Based on the analysis of Indonesia's defense diplomacy towards France in the 2019-2023 period, it can be concluded that Indonesia conducts its defense diplomacy with France through four main motives that complement each other. First is the strategic engagement motive, where Indonesia utilizes its good relations with France to achieve broader strategic interests, especially in gaining support for the territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia through its presence as an observer at the SPDMM. Second, the motive of confidence-building measures, which is reflected through various activities such as joint exercises, official visits, and declarations of cooperation in the DCA acts, as a formal diplomatic instrument and mechanism to build sustainable trust and reduce the potential for misunderstanding between the two countries, which is then also strengthened by France's flexibility and openness in cooperation on defense equipment procurement. Third, the capacity-building motive is reflected in Indonesia's efforts to take advantage of France's technological and defense industry advantages to overcome limitations in developing national defense forces, including procuring defense equipment and technology transfer through a profitable scheme. Fourth is the motive for international reputation. Indonesia seeks to improve its bargaining position in the region through defense cooperation with France, mainly by acquiring modern defense equipment such as Rafale fighter aircraft that can strengthen Indonesia's image as a dominant military power in Southeast Asia. These four motives show that Indonesia is conducting comprehensive and calculated defense diplomacy with France, which aims to strengthen bilateral relations and achieve broader strategic interests in regional security and defense.

This study recommends that Indonesia continue to strengthen diplomatic relations with France in the defense sector to improve the defense industry's and TNI personnel's capabilities. However, the Indonesian government must also build a strict, structured monitoring system for the Rafale fighter technology transfer process. This can also be implemented in other cooperation related to defense equipment procurement and personnel training. This is done to maintain the suitability of cooperation agreements

that benefit Indonesia's defense capabilities and independence. The ongoing cooperation is to help develop a national defense; Indonesia should not experience dependence on France.

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