

MP-IDSA *Commentary*

PM Modi's Visit to Indonesia: Defence Cooperation and Strategic Convergence

Om Prakash Das

August 07, 2026

S*ummary*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Indonesia further strengthens bilateral defence cooperation, with positive implications for overall stability in the Indo-Pacific.

Introduction

India has consistently pursued the strengthening and expansion of its engagement with Southeast Asia in recent decades. The announcement of the ‘Act East Policy’ in 2014 under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi marked a significant turning point in India's regional diplomacy, reflecting a shift from economic engagement to a broader strategic partnership. Prime Minister Modi's recent visit to Indonesia has further reinforced this policy by providing renewed momentum to bilateral and regional cooperation, thereby advancing India's long-term strategic objectives in Southeast Asia.

During the visit, both countries advanced bilateral cooperation in political engagement, defence, maritime safety and countering terrorism. They also pledged to strengthen trade ties and cooperation on critical minerals, the digital economy, healthcare, food and energy security, space technology and cultural exchanges. India and Indonesia are maritime neighbours and strategic partners. The 2018 ‘Shared Vision of India–Indonesia on Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific’ is a vital cornerstone that has enhanced the partnership.

PM Modi’s latest visit also reaffirmed the significance of the multiple layers of institutional cooperation, spanning

the Defence Ministers' Dialogue, regular joint exercises, staff talks, efforts for joint research and co-production of new defence technologies, port calls, peacekeeping activities, information sharing, hydrography, capacity building, cadet training and exchanges, and defence industrial cooperation processes.¹

The joint statement ‘welcomed the elevation of defence cooperation, including through cooperation on the BrahMos Missile System and the Air-to-Air Missile Cooperation Agreement’.² The Joint Statement underlines ‘the continued maritime cooperation, including in the fields of maritime domain awareness (MDA), maritime connectivity, and coastal surveillance’, which ‘contributes to delivering peace, security and prosperity in the region and greater stability in the wider Indo-Pacific region’.³

This visit also witnessed the ‘renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Maritime Safety and Security Cooperation and the conclusion of the Implementing

¹ [“India-Indonesia Joint Statement on the State Visit by Prime Minister of India to Indonesia \(July 06 - 08, 2026\)”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 7 July 2026.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Arrangement between BAKAMLA RI and Indian Coast Guard’.⁴ Collaboration on defence industry and technology has emerged as one of the priority areas of cooperation. Both countries agreed to expand this cooperation for mutual benefit to include ‘joint production of equipment, technology transfer, technical assistance and capacity building, sourcing of defence equipment including cooperation in ship-building’.⁵ The prime minister’s visit therefore strengthens the evolving partnership in a multi-dimensional framework.

Institutionalisation of Strategic Partnership

India’s strategic objective is to be a credible defence manufacturing hub and exporter by promoting the ‘Make in India’ initiative and achieving self-reliance through the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* programme. Defence cooperation between India and Indonesia may include joint production, technology transfer, defence research and development, maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facilities and defence supply chain integration. The Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) signed in 2001⁶ was a departure point for defence relations, which was renewed in 2006.⁷ Moreover, in 2018, India and Indonesia signed a new Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) as part of the elevation of bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).⁸

At the tangible level, Defence Ministers’ Dialogue (DMD) at the ministerial level, Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC)⁹ at the Defence Secretary/Permanent Secretary level,¹⁰ Working Group on Defence Cooperation (WGDC), Working Group on Defence Industries Cooperation (WGDIC),¹¹ Army Staff Talks, Navy Staff Talks, Air Force Staff Talks¹² and Indonesia–India Security Dialogue (IISD)¹³ at the

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ [“India Indonesia Agreement on Defence Cooperation”](#), Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 5 December 2002.

⁷ [“From Naval Exercises to Defence Industry, India-Indonesia Ties Gather Momentum”](#), *DD News*, 6 July 2026.

⁸ [“Bilateral Talks on Defence between India and Indonesia”](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 23 October 2018.

⁹ [“Joint Statement on Five Initiatives for Strengthening the India-Indonesia Strategic Partnership”](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 11 October 2013.

¹⁰ [“Second India- Indonesia Security Dialogue”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 17 March 2022.

¹¹ [“7th India-Indonesia Joint Defence Cooperation Committee Meeting Held in New Delhi”](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 3 May 2024.

¹² [“India-Indonesia Joint Statement During the State Visit of President of Indonesia to India”](#), *PM India*, 12 December 2016.

¹³ [“Second India- Indonesia Security Dialogue”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 17 March 2022.

Coordinating Minister/National Security Adviser level, have institutionalised defence cooperation. Over the last five years, at least two meetings were held under the framework of the DMD, JDCC, WGDC and WGDIC, alongside at least five meetings with each of the arms of the armed forces.

In 2018, India and Indonesia also initiated a Framework Agreement on Space Cooperation, leading to joint working groups (ISRO-LAPAN) for satellite/space technology.¹⁴ This cooperation has also been expanding into relatively new domains like cybersecurity, where both countries are working through formats such as Cyber Dialogue, CERT and the sharing of best practices.¹⁵ Both countries also share real-time maritime intelligence through an Indonesian liaison officer at India's IFC-IOR. The key variables in this process can be traced through various mechanisms, dialogues, defence diplomacy and policy coordination forums.

Operational Cooperation

Joint initiatives like the Sabang port development and the India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) are among the finest examples of operational cooperation.¹⁶ India and Indonesia formally launched cooperation on Sabang Port in May 2018,¹⁷ though implementation has progressed slowly compared with initial estimates. By 2023, the two countries had completed a joint feasibility study, but the project has not been developed on a significant scale.¹⁸ The 46th edition of IND-INDO CORPAT was conducted on 17 May 2026.¹⁹ Indonesian Navy Ship KRI Sultan Thaha Syaifuddin and Indian Naval Ship Kulish participated in the exercise.

The operational deployment of India’s hydrographic vessels, such as INS Sandayak, to Jakarta (July 2025) has been instrumental in supporting marine mapping and safe navigation.²⁰ In addition to this, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

¹⁴ [“Cooperation in the Exploration and Uses of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 28 May 2018.

¹⁵ [“India-Indonesia Joint Statement on the State Visit by Prime Minister of India to Indonesia”](#), Press Information Bureau, Prime Minister’s Office, 7 July 2026.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ [“Indonesian Port for India”](#), Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2400, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2018.

¹⁸ Shashank Mattoo, [“India, Indonesia Complete Joint Report on Sabang Port Feasibility”](#), *Mint*, 29 May 2023.

¹⁹ [“The 46th Edition of IND-INDO CORPAT”](#), Andaman & Nicobar Command, Indian Navy, 20 May 2026.

²⁰ [“INS Sandhayak Displays its Cutting-edge Survey Equipment During Jakarta Visit”](#), *Defence Monitor*, 25 July 2025.

between the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the Indonesian Coast Guard (BAKAMLA RI) is another framework for ensuring maritime safety and security cooperation,²¹ which is strengthened by regular port calls by ICG vessels (e.g., ICGS Shaunak and ICGS Vighra²²) and joint capacity-building exercises.²³

Beyond maritime cooperation, India and Indonesia emphasise significant collaboration on the ground, air and technological domains in their military partnership. Exercise ‘Garuda Shakti’, a joint special forces training programme, focuses on counter-terrorism and jungle warfare.²⁴ The 10th edition of GARUDA SHAKTI was held at the Special Forces Training School, Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh, from 3 December to 12 December 2025.²⁵

Furthermore, the framework also ensures regular Army and Air Force Staff Talks, military medical research, and shared training for multilateral United Nations peacekeeping operations under ASEAN-led mechanisms like ADMM-Plus. The latest round of Army Staff Talks was held in July 2025,²⁶ whereas the latest round of Air Force Staff Talks was held in October 2025.²⁷

The Act East Policy and growth in the bilateral relations between India and Indonesia have also been instrumental in a shift towards defence industrial collaboration. For instance, the Indonesian firm Pindad has been working with the Tata group to provide armoured vehicles to the Indonesian armed forces. Tata and Pindad launched a ‘jointly manufactured’ water cannon unit eight years ago.²⁸ India and Indonesia have committed to expand defence-industrial collaboration and joint capability development, going forward.²⁹

²¹ [“Signing of MoU Between Indian Coast Guard and Indonesia Coast Guard”](#), Indian Coast Guard, 6 July 2020.

²² [“ICGS Vighra Undertakes Operational Visit to Indonesia as Part of Its Overseas Deployment to ASEAN Countries”](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 3 December 2025.

²³ [“ICG and Indonesian Coast Guard Renew MoU for Another Three Years”](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 28 January 2025.

²⁴ [“6th Garuda Shakti Exercise Commences in Bandung Between Special Forces of India and Indonesia”](#), Embassy of India, Jakarta, 19 February 2018.

²⁵ [“India- Indonesia Joint Special Forces Exercise Garuda Shakti Commences in Himachal Pradesh”](#), Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 4 December 2025.

²⁶ [“India-Indonesia Army Staff Talks Conclude in Bali; Both Reaffirm Commitment to Regional Peace, Stability”](#), ANI, 11 July 2026.

²⁷ [“Indonesia, India Step Up Air Defense Cooperation in Bali Talks”](#), Antara, 13 October 2025.

²⁸ [“Indonesia & India Boost Stronger Defence Industry Cooperation”](#), Siaran Pers, Pindad.

²⁹ [“India Can Play Bigger Role in Its Defence Modernisation Drive: Indonesia”](#), *The Economic Times*, 5 July 2026.

Strategic Convergence and Way Forward

India and Indonesia are situated at pivotal geostrategic positions at either end of the eastern Indian Ocean. This makes defence cooperation between them indispensable for a free, open, inclusive and stable Indo-Pacific. The defence ties between India and Indonesia must be analysed beyond the prism of bilateral relations because this collaborative framework also suggests a wider convergence of common and key strategic variables of the Indo-Pacific security architecture. Both countries are vital stakeholders and partners in ensuring a rules-based maritime order and freedom of navigation across critical sea lanes.

A close partnership and the operational integration of India and Indonesia provide a counterweight to unilateral assertiveness and a sustainable power equilibrium in the region and across the Indo-Pacific.³⁰ Furthermore, both countries are focusing on the Sabang-Great Nicobar strategic corridor because it serves common interests.³¹ Better management of this corridor would strengthen regional resilience, which is critical to peace, stability and sustainable economic prosperity across the Indo-Pacific region. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), meanwhile, operates a vital telemetry, tracking and command (TTC) facility on Biak Island in eastern Indonesia. The station monitors rocket launches and tracks satellites.

While both India and Indonesia have clearly articulated their strategic intent for enhanced defence cooperation, translating these high-level commitments into tangible outcomes within a defined timeframe will be keenly watched. The procurement of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles and discussions on other advanced defence systems will further strengthen defence cooperation and strategic engagement.

³⁰ Karthik Nachiappan, [“India-Indonesia Relations: Breaking Barriers in the Indo-Pacific”](#), ISAS, National University of Singapore, 8 May 2024.

³¹ Rouhin DebThukaram Lakkireddy, [“India & Indo-Pacific Ascendancy: The Architecture of a Stabilising Power”](#), *Business Standard*, 21 July 2026.

About the Author



Mr. Om Prakash Das is Research Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses is a non-partisan, autonomous body dedicated to objective research and policy relevant studies on all aspects of defence and security. Its mission is to promote national and international security through the generation and dissemination of knowledge on defence and security-related issues.

Disclaimer: Views expressed in Manohar Parrikar IDSA's publications and on its website are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Manohar Parrikar IDSA or the Government of India.

© Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) 2026