



# FRANCE'S DEFENCE STRATEGY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC



**France is a sovereign power of the Indo-Pacific region, where it brings a significant contribution to peace and security.**

## **T**he Rapid Evolution of Strategic Dynamics in the Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific faces a mosaic of tensions, with an increasing complexity due to the contraction of the global geopolitical space. Globalization-induced interdependencies cause unprecedented proximities, even between distant events.

Historical rivalries are both persisting and evolving. Today, the North Korean nuclear crisis, the ongoing tensions in the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East generate rippling effects across the entire Indo-Pacific.

These tensions play out against a backdrop of great power competition, namely between the United States and China, the consequences of which are already visible in South-East Asia, the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific. Repeated use of intimidation further shapes the overall strategic context, at the expense of multilateral efforts and undertakings, and sometimes of the principles of international law.

These evolving dynamics lead regional States to rethink their defence policies. Most of the countries in that region have significantly reinvested in their defence systems, which expand in both scale and sophistication, including in the nuclear domain. This has resulted in increasing tensions, thus putting at risk prevailing regional, as well as international balances.

**France's Armed Forces consider the Indo-Pacific as an area spanning from Africa's eastern façade to French Polynesia. This region encompasses many key international maritime and aviation routes, while also straddling some of the fastest-growing economies in the world.**

**Today, that region faces one of the deepest geostrategic evolution, with potential direct consequences on the interests of France and its allies and partners.**

**It is in this context that France seeks to cement its posture as a regional power of the Indo-Pacific, working to protect its sovereign interests and the security of its citizens, while actively contributing to international stability.**

### **France in the Indo-Pacific**

- **7 overseas territories in the Indian and Pacific Oceans**
- **1.6 million French citizens**
- **Over 200,000 French expatriates**
- **9 of the 11 million sq. km of France's Exclusive Economic Zones (world's second-largest)**

# France's priorities in the Indo-Pacific

**In such a context, France intends to continue carrying out autonomous and sovereign actions from its territories, while actively contributing to multilateral security efforts in the common spaces. In that respect, its priorities include:**

**Protecting French sovereign interests, French nationals and France's EEZ in the Indo-Pacific.** France's armed forces must remain well prepared to respond to the major threats challenging French interests in the Indo-Pacific. These include transnational terrorism, organised crime, and broader attempts to undermine French sovereignty. France's Indo-Pacific policy relies on the continued investment in both its pre-positioned forces as well as in its sovereign territories that, together, are critical to maintaining its strategic depth far away from Europe.

**Contributing to the stability of regional environments through military and security cooperation.** The extent of the threats in the Indo-Pacific constitutes a major challenge, which France looks to respond to beyond its sovereign zones through close cooperation with its partners and allies.

**Preserving – jointly with its partners – free and open access to maritime lines of communication.** Maintaining the integrity of aero-maritime access and land-based interfaces is one of the primary defence concerns for France and Europe more broadly. France recognises that Europe's wider economic and trade security depends on the safeguarding of freedom of navigation and access to maritime lines of communication. It thereby rejects any interpretation of international law adverse to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

**Assisting in maintaining strategic stability through comprehensive and multilateral-based action.** Maintaining strategic stability in the Indo-Pacific requires a continuous effort in the fight against proliferation. Using its military platforms and force presence in the region, France specifically intends to fight against ballistic, nuclear, chemical and biological proliferation networks. Our actions will primarily focus on the respect and implementation of international sanctions, participation in multilateral security operations and the strengthening of our partners' capacities.

**France's engagements are rooted into the political principles underpinning multilateralism:**

- the upholding of democratic values of freedom and human rights
- the promotion of dialogue to settle disputes
- the guarantee of free movement for goods and people, in accordance with international law



## A significant and permanent military presence

French Armed Forces based in various locations in the Indo-Pacific work in tandem with our partners, in support of common interests – including in crisis contexts.

### France's commitments in the Indo-Pacific

- Reinforcing the protection of French nationals across the Indo-Pacific, France's territories and EEZ
- Contributing, alongside our European partners, to stability through the development of multilateral initiatives in the Indo-Pacific
- Promoting peace and security in the region alongside our strategic partners
- Supporting our regional partners, in order to promote collective security and the upholding of international law
- Developing an Indo-Pacific maritime cooperation policy that is consistent and coordinated with strategic partners
- Enhancing cooperation in the environmental security domain

- Five military commands, spreading between three sovereign bases [FAZSOI, FANC, FAPF] and two foreign military bases [FFEAU, FFDj]
- 7000 defence personnel deployed
- 18 Defence Attachés accredited to some 33 countries in the Indo-Pacific

**French military presence** in both **Djibouti (FFDj)** and in the **United Arab Emirates (FFEAU)** guarantees a permanent deployment in the northern Indian Ocean.

The **French Armed Forces in South-western Indian Ocean (FAZSOI)**, deployed in La Réunion and Mayotte, ensure the protection and safety of these French territories, their EEZ and immediate neighbourhoods.

In the South Pacific, the **French Armed Forces in New-Caledonia (FANC)** and in **French Polynesia (FAPF)** ensure the protection and surveillance of French territories as well as French EEZs in the South Pacific.

France's **strategic involvement in South-East and North-East Asia** materializes in regular deployments, alongside long-term bilateral cooperation.

#### Get out more

France's Defence Strategy in the Indo-Pacific  
[www.defense.gouv.fr](http://www.defense.gouv.fr)