

# Good Governance as a Mediating Effect of Political Organization in Enhancing the Acceptance of Lebanese Towards Malaysian Peacekeepers

Nordin N. N. H.<sup>1</sup>, Wan Husin W. N.<sup>2</sup>, Salleh M. Z.<sup>3</sup>, & Harun A. L.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Center of Graduate Studies, National Defence University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> Program of International Relations and Diplomacy, Faculty of Defence Studies and Management, National Defence University of Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup> Department of Strategic Studies, Faculty of Defence Studies and Management, National Defence University of Malaysia, Malaysia

Correspondence: Wan Husin W. N., Program of International Relations and Diplomacy, Faculty of Defence Studies and Management, National Defence University of Malaysia, Sungai Besi Camp, 57000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. E-mail: hasniah@upnm.edu.my

Received: April 4, 2022

Accepted: May 12, 2022

Online Published: May 19, 2022

doi:10.5539/ass.v18n6p16

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v18n6p16>

## Abstract

This paper aims to examine the mediating effect of good governance on the relationship between political organization and the acceptance of the Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers. While previous research has examined the relationship between political organisation and local acceptance, there has been relatively little research on the mediating effects of good governance on this relationship, particularly in the Malaysian context. Data was collected from 532 Lebanese residing in Tebnine and Maarakeh district. The proposed framework was evaluated using SmartPLS. The result shows good governance mediated the relationship between political organizations and the acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers. The conclusion highlights the research's implications for future research and practise.

**Keywords:** political organization, good governance, Malaysian peacekeepers, Lebanese

## 1. Introduction and Objectives of the Study

### 1.1 Introduce the Problem

The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of political organisation on Lebanese acceptance of Malaysian peacekeepers. Good governance is closely examined as a moderator of acceptance. Numerous studies have demonstrated that foreign peacekeepers' understanding of local political organisation has influenced the local population's acceptance. While political organisation and local population acceptance have been studied previously (UNU, 2019; Clement & Smith, 2019; Martin, 2015; Blair, Salvatore, & Smidt, 2020; Cottey, 2008; Coning, 2019), little research has been conducted to ascertain the role of good governance as a mediator. Tebnine and Maarakeh were chosen as the study's location because they were placed under the jurisdiction of Malaysian peacekeepers. This research aims to contribute knowledge to the literature on peacekeeping operations and good governance in the context of Malaysian peacekeepers.

## 2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

A review of the literature was conducted in order to outline and elaborate on the interactions between the three variables, which are political organisation, good governance, and local population acceptance.

### 2.1 Political Organization

In almost every conflicting country, political leaders generally come from the nation's most powerful and highest status groups. Peacekeepers will be significantly more effective in a given area if they recognise that the country's political leaders are linked to and reliant on powerful groups for support (Holmes-Eber, 2016). The majority of political leaders lack the ability to act independently, whether they have ties to powerful families or tribes, dominant ethnic groups, or big commercial or religious organisations. Obligation and reciprocity frequently constrain their options and, consequently, their ability to act in support of the peacekeeping coalition's

goals. Politics is fundamentally cultural in nature, and this goes far beyond the selection of leaders. Cultural ideals also influence how decisions are made, the structure of political groups, and the ability of leaders to influence action. Certain cultures around the world place a premium on collaborative decision-making, preferring that community decisions be made by a council of respected leaders rather than by a single centralised individual (Coning, 2019). In other instances, citizens may prefer a balance of several competing leaders. Political organisation is used in this study to refer to the relationship between peacekeepers and local and international leaders. It was necessary to work with multiple leaders concurrently to resolve tensions and conflicts between the local populace and Malaysian peacekeepers operating in the area.

## 2.2 Good Governance

The term "governance" refers to the decision-making and process by which a policy is implemented or not implemented (UNESCAP, 2009). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), it is defined as systems of governance that are competent, reactive, participatory, and transparent. Good governance can help minimise corruption and ensure that minorities' perspectives and the voices of the most vulnerable in society are considered during the decision-making process. Additionally, it is responsive to a society's current and future needs (UNESCAP, 2009). Government is indeed one of the governing actors in a peacekeeping operation, and in remote regions, other actors may include powerful landowners, peasant agricultural organisations, unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, faith groups, financial institutions, political groups, an international force, and the military, among others. International forces can take the form of active armies from other countries, such as those currently deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq, or forces representing the international community, such as United Nations peacekeepers (Peacebuilding Initiatives, 2013). In terms of studies on good governance, few researchers have emphasised United Nation (UN)-led peacekeeping operations. According to the study, the UN is a governance organisation whose inefficiency and injustice stem from its exclusion and inequity, which reflect the international order's underlying inequalities (Philip, 2009). While peacekeeping is critical for world stability and peace restoration, good governance has an effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of peacekeeping forces. Now, the UN is stepping up its efforts to promote good governance, which includes safeguarding human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracies; and increasing transparency and competence in public service (Kofi-Annan, 2011). Effective governance, whether provided by the United Nations or by countries that provide troops, is essential to restoring and preserving peace. Otherwise, peacekeeping operations may prove to be ineffective at protecting indigenous people, leading to their rejection of any further peace missions in the future. To analyse good governance in peacekeeping operations, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) uses several sub-concepts, including *participation, consensus oriented, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness, and rule of law*.

## 2.3 The acceptance of the Lebanese

The researchers chose the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) because it is Malaysia's largest peacekeeping force, consisting of 854 personnel at any given time. Acceptance of foreign peacekeepers by the Lebanese community varies according to troop contributing countries. For instance, Lebanese acceptance of French peacekeepers has been lukewarm from the start. Residents made it abundantly clear that their dispute was with the French contingent alone, and that relations with other contingents were cordial (Karouny, 2010). The Indonesian UNIFIL contingent also earned a favourable reputation among the South Lebanese people as a result of the contingent's Civil Military Coordination (CIMIC) programme. This programme included a variety of community-based activities, such as computer classes for local residents, medical assistance, and technical assistance for the reconstruction of social facilities (Sanra, 2010). India's UNIFIL contingent has undertaken small-scale development projects, operated medical and dental clinics, provided veterinary care for local animals, and also organised children's camps and yoga classes (Andrew, 2007; Jansen, 2010). The Italian contingent provided cooking lessons, the South Korean contingent provided Taekwondo instruction, and the Chinese contingent provided Tai chi instruction (Daragahi, 2008; UNIFIL, 2015). Malaysian peacekeepers are well-accepted by Lebanese residents due to their friendly demeanour while patrolling the troubled area. The Malaysian peacekeepers' smiling and friendly demeanour has set them apart from peacekeepers from other countries, and this has indirectly attracted locals to socialise with the Malaysian peacekeepers. Apart from their friendliness, the local community admires them for their tolerance of the variety of religions and beliefs held and practised.

## 3. Hypothesized Relationship

Local disputes are sometimes exacerbated by the failure of national and regional political and peace processes, as

well as the outbreak of civil war. Because local conflicts are intertwined with national, regional, and global contexts, it is not uncommon for influential political leaders at the national or even regional levels to serve their agendas by exploiting existing local-level tensions such as those between herders and farmers, or exploiting conflicts between customary authorities (Conning, 2016). Peacekeeping missions have political goals and are therefore not impartial, which can cause disputes between peacekeepers and humanitarian organizations eager to maintain the apolitical nature of humanitarian help. Civil affairs officers within operations are encouraged to connect with local populations and authorities, as well as engage with the logistical and political context in which the mission must carry out its mandate (Handbook on United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations, 2003). Too often, mandates and missions are created using templates rather than being adjusted to support situation-specific political initiatives, and technical and military measures are prioritized above improved political efforts (Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, 2015).

Canada, Australia and New Zealand have focused on the achievements to date to give priority to the full equal *participation* and leadership of women in peacekeeping and political processes at all levels. The expansion of their contribution to peacekeeping means that peace that is more lasting can be built. The recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations increased focus on a gender-aware approach. However, the Committee believed that there can still be improvements made to eliminate the obstacles faced by women. The Committee also expressed their support for comprehensive integrated approaches to protect civilians from violence. While encouraged by partnership efforts under way to strengthen early warning and rapid response systems, it is possible to do more to protect civilians from violence (United Nations, 2022).

Several missions, including United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and United Nations - African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), have successfully woven the complexities of local conflict dynamics into bigger national analyses and their political strategy for carrying out the mandate. A government's lack of political will to resolve local issues can stymie peacekeeping efforts, particularly in terms of local capacity-building. Furthermore, a lack of authentic, skilled local partners to own local conflict resolution jeopardizes long-term viability. Cross-mission collaboration is critical for guaranteeing complementarity and avoiding duplication of efforts to resolve local conflicts, as well as for building a coherent methodological framework to prioritize local conflict engagement in relation to its potential to undermine political processes. Most missions' collaboration between units is usually ad hoc, and without specific objectives, monitoring and analyzing the efficacy of UN peacekeeping operations' efforts to handle local disputes becomes difficult (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2017). A peacekeeping force is likely to confront increased obstacles if at least one party is unwilling to end hostilities, as has been the case in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Similarly, good relations with the host state are essential for implementing a meaningful peace process and political strategy. In 2018, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres established the Action for Peacekeeping project, which focuses on generating more targeted peacekeeping mandates with clear political agendas, increasing peacekeeper and civilian safety in mission regions, and better training peacekeepers (Felter & Renwick, 2021). Therefore, *consensus oriented* is important in peacekeeping operation in order to enhance the acceptance of local population.

UN decision-making will always be political. Nevertheless, wrongly applied political influence, lack of *transparency* and *accountability* can increase corruption risks damage the reputation of UN peace operations, as well as their ability to deliver their mandates. Given the obvious wider political interests, the UN has been vulnerable in some areas to lobbying from Member States, in some cases leading peacekeeping operations to turn a blind eye to violations. This raises important questions about UN agencies' ability to avoid such influence, including financial influence (Transparency International, 2019). In some cases, Member States have used the withholding or disbursement of funds to influence the direction of the UN's peacekeeping operations. In one instance in 2015, having been exposed by leaked emails, a Member State lobbied the UN to 'turn a blind eye' to the humanitarian situation in Western Sahara (Clarke & Purvis, 2015). This included financial donations to Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in an attempt to influence the body to cancel human rights fact-finding missions and exclude human rights abuse monitoring from the peacekeeping mission.

The social and political spheres are intricately linked. Even though many of them in democracy would like to imagine that political influence and leadership are the product of transparent and fair election, the truth is that political influence and leadership are generally a mirror of social system around the globe. Political elites generally arise from the nation's most influential and highest status groups in almost every nation. In this study, it focused on how good governance affect the local population acceptance based on the political status. The deployment of peacekeepers in specific areas is significant because it binds political leaders to act in accordance with centrally agreed-upon norms. Because the peace process allows former combatants to reinforce their

position, knowledge on how the deal is being implemented is critical to its success. United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) gained credibility by being forthright and not obfuscating glaring flaws. As the political campaign became more serious, UNTAG reported on the radio on September 21, 1989, that political harassment was rampant and growing in the North. Intimidation in the north abated, and the elections were not jeopardized. Peacekeepers also serve as a guarantor of the original agreement as a third party. Security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration initiatives are typical aspects of peace agreements that have a direct impact on the (military) balance of power (Ruggeri, Dorussen, & Gizelis, 2016). This example highlighted the importance of *responsiveness* in peacekeeping operations.

While in Somalia, Malbatt took into account the views and population of tribal leaders and political parties before taking any action. For example, before curfew orders in hotspot areas are implemented, Malaysian peacekeepers first discuss with local chiefs. Apart from that, they also explained and informed about this matter to the locals to avoid chaos and also to get cooperation from the locals. In addition, the Malaysian peacekeeping force has also established several strong points that can assist in supervising and handling the movement of the population in a more organized and controlled manner (Idris, Interview, February 2022). This shows that *inclusiveness* of local participation helps in gaining positive image as well as gaining their cooperation in peacekeeping operations.

The strengths of UN peacekeeping missions have been demonstrated during the ongoing pandemic, as they continue to carry out their mandates and support peacekeeping processes. Norway counts peace diplomacy, protection of civilians as well as climate and security among its top priorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). There can be no peace without political solutions, adding that a well-functioning political process is key for civilians, as it helps support a protective environment. Efforts by peacekeeping missions to strengthen the *rule of law* and fight impunity are equally important to the protection of civilians, he emphasized, pointing out that seeing justice served builds trust. The effective use of mobile courts to improve the reach of justice institutions, while deploring the continued use of sexual violence as a method of warfare is being highlighted by the Norway government.

In terms of political organization, it is apparent that effective governance has an impact on the acceptance of foreign peacekeepers by the local populace. As a result, the goal of this research is to see how good governance affects Lebanese acceptance of Malaysian peacekeepers based on political organization.

**H<sub>1</sub>** There is a significant relationship between political organization and the acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers.

**H<sub>2</sub>** There is a significant relationship between political organization and good governance.

**H<sub>3</sub>** There is a significant relationship between good governance and the acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers.

#### 4. Methodology and Research Design

##### 4.1 Sampling Design

Table 1. Respondent profile

Characteristics	Number of respondents (n=532)	Percentages (100%)
Gender		
Male	392	73.68
Female	140	26.32
Age		
18-24	34	6.39
25-34	89	16.73
35-44	121	22.74
45-54	201	37.78
55 and above	87	16.36
Religion		
Islam	386	72.56
Christian	72	13.53
Druze	40	7.52
Other	34	6.39

The sample for this study was drawn from the local population of Tebnine and Maarakeh aged 18 and over. Respondents who met the aforementioned criteria were chosen using a stratified random sampling technique until a sample size of 375 was reached (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). The data collection period lasted two months, and a sample size of 532 respondents was obtained. All cases that met predetermined criteria were reviewed using the criterion sampling strategy. This sampling technique enables access to previously unknown populations. Stratified sampling was chosen for this study due to the target population's ease of access in Tebnine and Maarakeh.

Table 1 indicate that the total number of respondents is 532, which consist of 392 (73.68%) male and 140 (26.32%) female. 34 (6.39%) of the respondent age between 18-24, while 89 (16.73%) are between 25-34, 121 (22.74%) age between 35-44, 201 (37.78%) age between 45-54 and the balance 87 (16.36%) are above 55 years old. The majority of the respondent are Muslim, which total up to 386 (72.56%) of total respondent while Christians up to 72 (13.53%), Druze up to 40 (7.52%) and other religions are 34 (6.39%).

#### 4.2 Research Instruments

##### 4.2.1 Political Organization

The research uses United Nations University (2019), Clement and Smith (2019), and Martin (2015) 10-item scale to measure political organization. In particular, the scale measures the elements of political organization. This instrument uses 5-point Likert scale with ranges from 1 as strongly disagree to 5 as strongly agree as incumbent rated.

##### 4.2.2 The Local Population's Acceptance

This study uses Kool (2016), Walter et al. (2020), and United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2013) 10-item scale to measure the level of local acceptance towards peacekeepers. This instrument uses 5-point Likert scale with ranges from 1 as strongly disagree to 5 as strongly agree as incumbent rated.

##### 4.2.3 Good Governance

UNESCAP (2009), Blair (2020), and Seaman (2014) 10-item scale to measure good governance as a mediator in the relationship between political organization and the local acceptance was used in this study. This instrument uses 5-point Likert scale with ranges from 1 as strongly disagree to 5 as strongly agree as incumbent rated.

#### 4.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The SmartPLS was the primary statistical technique used and correlational analysis is the other statistical analysis employed.

### 5. Results

In comparison to covariance-based structural equation modelling, PLS provides a more comprehensive explanation of variable relationships and can accommodate samples with a small sample size and distribution (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). The hypothesised model is tested using the Smart PLS M3 version 3.3 software, using Ringle, Wende, and Becker's (201) previous review of the Structural Equation Model-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS).

#### 5.1 Measurement Reliability and Validation

All constructs were subjected to construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity tests. Table 2 summarises the psychometric properties of all latent constructs. As shown in Table 2, the standardised loadings ( $\lambda$ ) of each reflective measurement item on its corresponding latent construct were all greater than 0.50 and all significant at  $p < 0.01$ , implying that convergent validity was achieved (Hair et al., 2017). Cronbach alpha values ( $\alpha$ ) and composite reliability ( $\rho$ ) for all latent constructs were greater than 0.70, indicating that the multi-item scales were sufficiently reliable (Hair et al., 2017). All average variance extracted (AVE) values were greater than the 0.50 threshold level, indicating the latent constructs' convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2017).

As illustrated in Table 3, the discriminant validity of each construct was supported by the fact that the AVE was greater than the squared correlation with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, Malhotra, 2010). Supervisory satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviours both had R<sup>2</sup> values of 0.63 and 0.55, indicating large effect sizes (26%).

Table 2. Psychometric properties of the measures

Construct	Items	$\lambda$	t-value	$\alpha$	P	AVE
Political Organization	PO1	0.78	22.45	0.92	0.94	0.60
	PO2	0.79	38.47			
	PO3	0.81	45.59			
	PO4	0.80	28.79			
	PO5	0.76	36.69			
	PO6	0.78	45.59			
	PO7	0.75	38.47			
	PO8	0.70	34.20			
	PO9	0.74	35.63			
	PO10	0.77	24.41			
The Acceptance	AL1	0.74	39.12	0.90	0.94	0.58
	AL2	0.81	25.95			
	AL3	0.80	32.21			
	AL4	0.80	16.91			
	AL5	0.73	16.86			
	AL6	0.74	27.73			
	AL7	0.63	37.01			
	AL8	0.82	37.27			
	AL9	0.83	22.91			
	AL10	0.73	37.75			
Good Governance	GG1	0.80	129.72	0.93	0.96	0.77
	GG2	0.85	135.00			
	GG3	0.78	140.15			
	GG4	0.89	121.10			
	GG5	0.87	130.76			
	GG6	0.86	128.04			
	GG7	0.90	132.20			
	GG8	0.83	136.00			
	GG9	0.84	140.02			
	GG10	0.86	129.64			

Table 3. Correlation and discriminant validity

Construct	PO	AL	GG
Political Organization (PO)	<b>0.798</b>		
Acceptance of Lebanese (AL)	0.726	<b>0.754</b>	
Good Governance (GG)	0.689	0.684	<b>0.864</b>

Table 4. Hypothesis testing

Statement	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	t value	Decision
Political Organization → Acceptance of Lebanese	0.481	0.554	3.663	Accepted
Political Organization → Good Governance	0.412	0.522	3.712	Accepted
Good Governance → Acceptance of Lebanese	0.453	0.503	3.685	Accepted

The outcomes of hypothesised correlations between the variables are summarised in Table 4. Three hypotheses were examined in regards to the relationship between political organisation and Lebanese acceptance of

Malaysian peacekeepers. The relationship between political organisation and local acceptance was found to be significant ( $\beta = 0.554, p < 0.001$ ). The effects of political organisation on good governance ( $\beta = 0.522, p < 0.001$ ) and good governance on Lebanese acceptability ( $\beta = 0.503, p < 0.001$ ) were similarly significant. As a result, all of the hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 were confirmed.

5.2 Mediation Analysis

A mediation analysis was conducted to determine the role of good governance in mediating the relationship between political organisation and Lebanese acceptance of Malaysian peacekeepers. The latent variable scores generated by SmartPLS were analysed using an SPSS routine developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) for generating 95 percentile confidence intervals. The mediation analysis's findings are summarised in Table 4. According to Hair et al. (2017), the strength of mediation is determined by the variance accounted for (VAF) values, with values greater than 80% indicating complete mediation, values between 20% and 80% indicating partial mediation, and values less than 20% indicating no mediation occurs. In the hypothesis tested, Table 3 demonstrates that complementary partial mediation occurred.

The summary of the results for mediation analysis is presented in Table 5, which exhibits the output for the Full Mediation Model for the path of interest, including the value of standardized beta coefficient ( $\beta$ ), and t-value. Based on the decision criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2017), good governance appeared to have partial mediation effects on the relationship between social structure and the acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeeping operations. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported.

Table 5. Results of Hypothesis Testing for Mediation Analysis

Statement	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	t value	Decision	Mediation Type
Political Organization → Good Governance → The Acceptance of Lebanese	0.698	0.79	30.33	Accepted	Complementary Partial Mediation

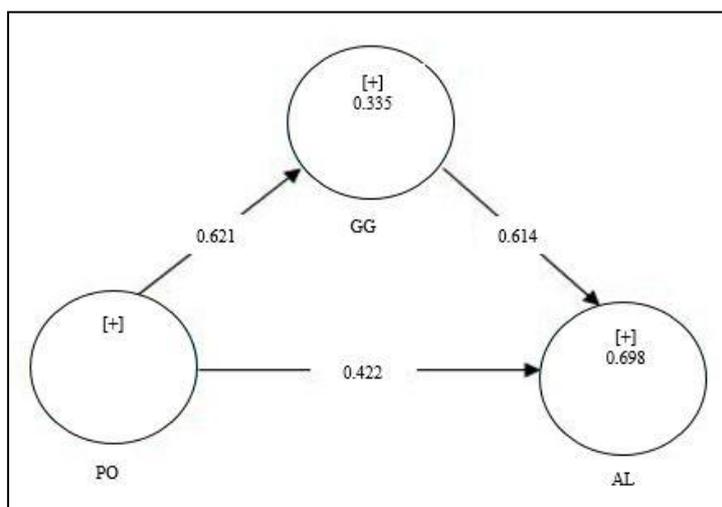


Figure 1. The relationship between political organization and the acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers with good governance as mediator

5.3 Discussion

Figure 1 above shows that good governance provides complementary partial mediation on the relationship between political organisations and the Lebanese people's acceptance of the Malaysian peacekeeping force. The direct effect between political organisation and the acceptance of Lebanese has a value of R<sup>2</sup> 0.335 (34%), while the mediator effect on the relationship causes the value to increase to 0.698 (70%). This has shown that good governance has an influence on the relationship. Apart from that, the results of the interview process with local community leaders have proven that the Malaysian peacekeeping force is well received by local people in terms

of political and organisational elements based on the principles of good governance as highlighted by UNESCAP (2009). The present finding appears to confirm the contention of several researchers that acceptance of foreign peacekeepers by the local populace is highly dependent on the peacekeeper's understanding of the local political organisation (Fortna, 2008; Clement & Smith, 2019; Martin, 2015).

Local politics and rules of laws should be taken into account in every peacekeeping operation. Political structure refers to the method by which power and leadership is divided among the local population, and the way it is enforced according to the social structure of the society (Salmoni & Holmes-Eber, 2014). It is proven that good governance does influence the relationship between political organisations and the acceptance of Lebanese towards Malaysian peacekeepers.

The Malaysian Battalion (MALBATT) 850-9 Commander along with the MALBATT Staff attended the Parade in Conjunction with the Transfer of Authority (TOA) Head of Mission and Force Commander at UNIFIL Headquarters (HQ), Naqoura, Lebanon. The TOA ceremony was witnessed by National Defense Minister Maurice Slim representing Prime Minister Najib Miqati, Member of Parliament Enaya Ezzeddine, Commanders under UNIFIL Troops, Chief Officers of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and also Lebanese dignitaries. The parade was held in conjunction with the exchange of Head of Mission and Force Commander between Major General Stefano Del Col. In the parade, Major General Stefano Del Col handed over the UNIFIL Flag to Major General Aroldo Lazaro Saenz as symbolic of the handover ceremony (MALBATT 850-9 peacekeeper, Interview, February 2022). Such *participation* is in line with the Third Pillar of Commander MALBATT 850-9 in his reign which is "Diplomatic Relations" through Upward Engagement where MALBATT will continue to benefit from good relations with the upper formations namely Sector West and UNIFIL.

Commander MALBATT 850-9 has implemented Key Leader Engagement (KLE) with Mr. Mustafa Shaitoo, Deputy Mayor at the Dayr Ntar Municipality Building. This brief meeting was able to manifest the presence of MALBATT 850-9, which had taken full control of the MALBATT Contingent. The meeting was also used as a platform to discuss the CIMIC program, which can further strengthen relationships and social interaction with the local community. This visit is in line with the Third Thrust of Commander MALBATT 850-9, which is through Lateral Engagement with the KLE Program as well as working visits (Mustafa Shaitoo, Interview, February 2022). This clearly shows that the Malaysian peacekeeping force adheres to the principle of *consensus oriented* in carrying out their respective duties by taking into account the views and consent of the local chiefs before conducting any joint activities with them.

Colonel Azudin bin Hassan, Commander of MALBATT 850-8, paid an official visit to the Resala Civil Defense (RCD) aimed at enhancing bilateral relations between MALBATT and local authorities. The arrival of Colonel Azudin was welcomed by Mr. Mousa Nasrallah, RCD Regional Chief, and Mr. Mostafa Diab, RCD Regional Deputy. The RCD is a voluntary body that provides ambulance and health services to the Lebanese population. During the meeting, both parties discussed the cooperation between MALBATT and RCD in ensuring that MALBATT is *accountable* for the safety and health of the surrounding areas of their responsibility. Mr. Mousa also took Col. Azudin to visit the facilities available in the RCD building, such as the rehabilitation centre, auditorium hall, and mini museum. Colonel Azudin also presented a face mask contribution to the RCD as one of MALBATT's responsibilities in helping to control the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic in South Lebanon (Mousa, Interview, February 2022).

Periodic inspections by the Ration Unit Team, UNIFIL Headquarters, were carried out on the management of CRP and BW MALBATT 850-8. The transparent inspections conducted at Marakah Camp and Tebnine Camp were aimed at determining which CRP and BW were allocated, controlled, and well maintained. Another purpose of this inspection is to ensure that this ration can be used during times of emergency. These inspections are carried out bi-annually, but since Covid-19 hit, the inspections have only been carried out once a year. The team leader was very satisfied with the CRP and BW management methods practised by MALBATT and praised them for maintaining a good level of management. She concluded that the neat and orderly management as demonstrated by MALBATT was in line with UNIFIL specifications (Nitussananon, Interview, February 2022) This is the result of management's actions that place great emphasis on a high level of vigilance and adherence to the principle of *transparency* among members who are performing their duties as peacekeepers in southern Lebanon.

MALBATT 850-9 continues its social responsibility in the Key Leader Engagement (KLE) program in continuing good relations between MALBATT 850-9 and local authorities and communities. The meeting between the MALBATT team and the Mayor of Azrun municipality is a platform to further strengthen the relationship and social interaction with the local community under MALBATT's area of responsibility. This

principle of *responsiveness* is in line with the Fourth Pillar of Commander MALBATT 850-9 which is “Professional and Soldier with the presence of Military Peacekeeper Mentality” has been equipped with thinking and character as a Peacekeeper. The people of the Blue Tigers have been cultured with this character to endure the assignment throughout the Land of Lebanon. To highlight the good reception of the Lebanese people towards the MALBATT Contingent, one of the representatives of the Arzun Community presented a hand embroidery “Thank You Malaysia” to Commander MALBATT (Al-Houseni, Interview, February 2022). The meeting ended with the handing over of a donation of 25 boxes of clothes to Mayor Arzun in alleviating the burden of the people in the Municipality of Arzun who are also affected by the challenges facing the winter at this time.

Commander MALBATT 850-9 performed KLE and Quick Impact Project (QIP) with Mr. Ali Ahmad Naeem, Mayor of Sil'a, at the Sil'a Municipal Building. In a meeting that was held in his office, Commander MALBATT 850-9 and Staff Officer were warmly welcomed into the meeting. The meeting this time was to continue the good relations between MALBATT 850-9 and the authorities as well as the local community. In the meantime, Commander MALBATT 850-9 was invited to inaugurate the Water Well Generator in the village of Sil'a. With this generator, the villagers are grateful and thankful for this contribution, which allows them to get clean water supply more *effectively* and in an orderly manner. This Quick Impact Project is coordinated by CIMIC MALBATT Cell 850-9 with the West Civil Affairs Sector. At the end of this meeting, Mr. Ali Ahmad Naeem gave a positive response and reaction to the existence of MALBATT and hoped that this diplomatic relationship would always be established (Naeem, Interview, February 2022).

Colonel Azudin interacts with the local community within the MALBATT area of responsibility. During this Key Leader Engagement (KLE) activity, he had the opportunity to meet with Mayor Dyar Ames at his office. This meeting is to ensure good relations continue with local leaders. Apart from conducting discussions, Commander MALBATT 850-8 also presented a donation of 3,000 face masks and hand sanitizers to be distributed to the indigent residents of Dyar Ames. A total of 50 bottles of herbicide were also handed over to control the growth of weeds and grass. It is in preparation to prevent a ‘bushfire’ that can cause loss of property and lives. The handover of these donations is part of the MALBATT 850-8 Contingent’s efforts through the Civil-Military Cooperation Cell (CIMIC) to help underprivileged local communities and ensure no one is left behind (Dbokk, Interview, February 2022). This small contribution is one of the “Low Cost, High Impact” approaches that will bring MALBATT closer to the community in its area of responsibility. This clearly shows that Malaysian peacekeepers in Lebanon were following the principles of *equity and inclusiveness* when they were stationed there.

The implementation of Counter Rocket Launching Operation (CRLO) patrols across the MALBATT area of duty continued as part of MALBATT's Coordinated Activity with Lebanese Armed Forces (COAWL). The CRLO is a joint patrol with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) that aims to prevent and deter irresponsible parties from launching rockets. The operation's goal is to acquire intelligence and ensure security in the area of responsibility by prohibiting irresponsible parties from engaging in actions that could jeopardise the peace while creating a tight working relationship with the LAF. LAF is in charge of the task's execution, while MALBATT serves as a support or defence/protection group (Force Protection). The Bravo MALBATT 850-8 Company, led by Capt Amzar Mu'az bin Tamit, was part of the CRLO patrol this time (Saad, Interview, February 2022). This action, in addition to ensuring peace and prosperity in southern Lebanon, is one of the ways to demonstrate that MALBATT's presence in the area of responsibility is consistent with the principle *rule of law* and fulfils the UNIFIL's mandate. This sustained cooperation with the LAF is in line with the role entrusted to it by UN Resolution 1701 to fulfil the mandate.

## 6. Conclusion

The mediating effect of good governance was specifically investigated to determine how the variable can strengthen or weaken the relationship between political organisation and Lebanese acceptance of Malaysian peacekeepers. The acceptance of the indigenous population is intended as an outcome variable in this study in order to elicit political support for enhancing UN peacekeeping operations. It provides compelling statistical evidence and support for the argument that peacekeepers who understand the local population's political organisation and practises of good governance are more likely to be welcomed by the locals, thereby lowering the risk of conflict with them. The article contributes to the theoretical framework that underpins subsequent research on governance, political organisation, and conflict relationships. The findings indicate that Malaysian peacekeepers are welcomed by the Maarakeh and Tebnine indigenous peoples despite their cultural differences, owing to their understanding and tolerance of local political organisations and ideas throughout their deployment. Even if these practises of understanding and tolerance do not resolve the conflict immediately, they should be incorporated into more comprehensive conflict resolution strategies that include impartiality and respect.

## 7. Implication

The findings of this study may help peacekeepers gain a better understanding of the relationships between political organisation and local population acceptance. Political organisation and good governance should be viewed as tools that contribute to the acceptance of foreign peacekeepers in conflict zones, not as a justification for rejections. Pre-deployment training and mentoring can help peacekeepers gain a better understanding of local political organisations. With the assistance of good governance as a mediator, peacekeepers are able to recognise the value of the knowledge held by local political organisations and provide the best and most equitable solutions required by conflicting parties.

## 8. Contribution and Direction for Future Research

In several ways, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge about political organisation in peacekeeping operations and good governance research. To begin, the model establishes a foundation for incorporating a sizable and diverse body of research. By making reference to a peacekeeping operation, the model can serve as a conceptual foundation for research on the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and political comprehension. In the future, research should attempt to incorporate additional organisations, such as police officers, humanitarian assistance, or civilian workers, that are more indicative of the outcomes of peacekeeping operations.

## Acknowledgments

The researchers wish to offer our gratitude for the opportunity extended by the Trust Fund of the Centre for Research Management and Innovation, National Defence University of Malaysia. We also wish to thank for the opportunity extended by the Embassy of Lebanon in Malaysia and the Malaysian Joint Force Headquarters for allowing us to conduct this research.

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