

## *Original Paper*

# The Significance of Pre-Deployment Training, Culture Tolerance and Impartiality in Reducing Conflicts during Peacekeeping Operations: Malaysian Experiences

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### ***Abstract***

*Cultural understanding is important in peacekeeping operations since it emphasizes on cooperation of various parties including the cooperation of the local community. Without cultural tolerance from both sides, the operations are difficult to run smoothly and effectively and in fact, this can also lead to a worsen situation, such as the armed conflict between the peacekeeping forces and the local community. Therefore, this study is carried out by using semi-structured interview of 25 officers who have been assigned under United Nations peacekeeping operations and it is centered on three parameters namely pre-deployment training, high level of tolerance and impartiality in discharging their duties. Most officers agree that these parameters are the most significant attributes that could reduce cultural based conflict in the assigned areas.*

### ***Keywords***

*Malaysia, peacekeepers, pre-deployment, culture, tolerance, impartiality*

## **1. Introduction**

Understanding and cultural awareness are often underestimated by some United Nations (UN) peacekeepers, so it has sparked some conflict and undermine the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations (Tomforde, 2010; Paris, 2003). The challenge of cultural differences is increasing as peacekeeping operations become more complex and widespread. Among the cultural challenges often encountered by peacekeepers are the differences in lifestyle and language that make communication with locals difficult. In addition, they are also less knowledgeable in the history, religion and customs

of the local, thus their action and treatment could trigger a conflict with the local community (Sigri & Basar, 2015). Rubinstein and Haddad state that cultural understanding in peacekeeping operations is gaining attention, especially in the academic world, as it contributes whether ideas, views or policies to eradicate any form of conflict that ensued (Rubinstein, 1989; Haddad, 2010). This policy can highlight specific ways to enhance the success of each operation. According to Rubinstein, understanding and knowledge of the culture inherited by a community is important in peacekeeping operations because these operations involve the gathering of military personnel, police and civil servants from different national backgrounds, religions, languages, and education (Rubinstein, 1989). This could easily lead to misunderstandings if it is not effectively addressed.

Malaysia joined United Nations on 17th September 1957, right after the independence from the British government. Within the United Nations organizations, Malaysia able to play such an active role by participating in almost all peacekeeping missions carried out by the organization such as on the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), the Protection Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNPROFOR), the Transition Assistance Group in Namibia (UNTAG), the operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), the mission in East Timor (UNMISET) and the Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Other than that, Malaysia was selected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for four terms, 1965, 1989–1990, 1999–2000 and 2015–2016. In 2015, in response to the crashing of Malaysian Airline Flight MH17, Malaysia submitted a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) draft resolution, which called for the creation of an international criminal tribunal. However, because of the Russia's veto, the resolution failed to go forward. Until today, Malaysia has joined more than 30 peacekeeping operations all around the world and throughout the deployments, Malaysian peacekeepers have managed to avoid any cultural clashes with the local citizens due to several reasons such as attending pre-deployment training, high level of cultural tolerance and remain impartial in every decision and situation.

In order to ensure peacekeepers are properly trained to conduct their duty in missions with the required expertise and skill, therefore pre-deployment training has become an essential element before peacekeepers being deployed to join peacekeeping operations. It is part of the several factors that decide the effectiveness or the failure of their peacekeeping operations. There are three levels of peacekeeping training for the participant, which are pre-deployment training, induction training, and on-going training. To be briefly clarified, pre-deployment training is a generic, advanced and where applicable, mission-specific training based on United Nations requirements that take place prior to the deployment of the personnel (Aubyn et al., 2015). All peacekeeping personnel are recommended to attend pre-deployment training prior to deployment in order to be truly effective and ready to tackle their task right from the beginning of their deployment (Cutillo, 2013). Pre-deployment training trains peacekeepers to rapidly adjust to the operations environments and to provide valuable information prior to deployment regarding on the particular mission context, their anticipated responsibilities and behaviors, cultural understanding, terrain and weather conditions. In addition, pre-deployment training

equipped members with the standardized knowledge on UN peacekeeping operations that helps facilitate common methods and awareness of peacekeeping operations policies and practices in mission areas (Aubyn et al., 2015).

Culture of tolerance in nutshell is referred to the tolerant attitude on differences in traditional customs, religions, language and other social systems. However, different societies have different levels of acceptance on this tolerant attitude. Forst proposed a theory of tolerance, which states that tolerance is a normatively dependent concept (Forst, 2013). Since the praxis of tolerance is always practiced in culture environment and therefore one cultural values influences on how tolerance is carried out. Cultural tolerance is important in peacekeeping operation. Ban Ki-Moon stressed that tolerance can, and must, be learned by every individual especially peacekeeper because the best pillar for peace and reconciliation is tolerance. People throughout the world have to counter increasing inequality and oppose social inequality that are based on gender, disabilities, sexual identity, and ethnic or religious context in addition to promoting cultural awareness and cultural understanding in every level of life – from kindergarten to parliament (Ban Ki-Moon, 2013).

Neutrality and impartiality concepts are commonly used synonymously, even though they apply to multiple aspects of UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKO). Neutrality corresponds to the essence of the PKO, while impartiality always refers to the conduct of operations and it is an organizational concept (Boulden, 2005). This means that the peacekeepers and their operations should have no bias against the dispute parties and should not affect the course of events (UN Doc, 1992). Neutrality is also an indication of the operation's apolitical character that encourages the granting of consent by those involved in conflict because they are assured that their respective roles are not compromised. It is a feature that differentiates a peacekeeping mission from a peace enforcement one as well. As mentioned above, the Standard Charter (SC) recognized the party responsible for the conflict in peace enforcement and mandates enforcement measure that will affects its rights. No state should stay neutral since it should comply with the required SC decision and aid the UN in enforcing its decision (Article 25 and 2(5) UN Charter). In other terms, the stance of neutrality is unfavorable to membership of the UN and its collective security structure. This shows that peacekeeping does not hold the same justifications as peace enforcement and thus should preserve its neutrality.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

Cultural differences can cause misunderstandings and lead to conflicts. The Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union could also be regarded as a conflict arising from cultural differences. The US is supportive of democratic governments with a free market economy, while the Soviet Union favor's communism and economies controlled by the government. These differences have led to tensions and intense competition between the two countries for nearly 50 years (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

The issue of cultural differences can also give a negative impact on the effectiveness of the assignment if this issue is not addressed strategically. Greene stated that in Somalia, humanitarian aid is also

disrupted when some peacekeepers fail to understand the taboos and sensitivities of the local community (Greene, Dandeker, & Greenberg, 2010). One member of the peacekeeping forces reported that the Somali people often refused any kind of humanitarian assistance offered to them. This action has given the members of the peacekeeping forces a negative perception that it is an act of protest from the Somali community. However, the main reason for the refusal of food aid is because it contains pork. The incident occurred because of the neglect of members of the peacekeeping forces to understand Islam in the local community. In the wake of the event, they acknowledged the importance of understanding and learning the local culture before the security operation was carried out in the assigned country. This understanding can help them to distinguish between rebel factions and refugee groups in need.

So far the Malaysian peacekeeping forces have been able to successfully overcome the challenges of cultural differences with the local community and have successfully dealt with these issues as transpired from the reports of top officials that show Malaysia's security operations teams are less likely to face cultural conflicts during UNPKO (Syed Othman, 1995). This is in contrast to peacekeepers from other countries that often face conflicts and misunderstandings with local communities (McFate, 2005; Greene, Dandeker, & Greenberg, 2010). In light of the above issues, this study is aimed to investigate how they can effectively resolve conflicts in assigned countries, without provoking conflicts with the local communities through attending pre-deployment training, high level of tolerance and remain neutral in every decision and situation.

Pre-deployment training typically includes generic, advanced and task-specific training prior to deployment to a peacekeeping area, where applicable. For example, unlike police peacekeepers who served in the UN missions in Darfur and Sudan, police peacekeepers that are deployed to Somalia African Union Mission (AMISOM) describe the content of the course as generalized because it does not react adequately to the realities in Somalia. Although it is important to remember that pre-deployment training is based on UN requirement and is thus designed for UN-led operations, it is similarly significant to mention that during the pre-deployment training, most police officers are also unaware of the task they will be assigned to. It occurs that one year or two years after the pre-deployment preparation, a number of peacekeepers are deployed. This poses a problem when training knowledge seems to be unique to the operations to which they may not have been deployed. Furthermore, one female police officer who had contributed twice in the pre-deployment training clarified that according to her involvements from the pre-deployment training and her deployment in United Nations - African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), certain elements of the training material were somewhat obsolete and did not adequately represent the current operation situation. She suggested, for example, that some of the films currently being used in the training are outdated and need to be replaced (Aubyn et al., 2015).

More than fifty nations have been active in Afghanistan in different capacities over the past sixteen years. Though certain contributing countries have attempted to recognize and understand Afghan

culture, still quite a number of nations are still struggling with the complexities of Afghan cultures. For instance, although uncommon in the early phase of Afghan war, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) troops are now receiving the most basic cultural and language in their pre-deployment training (Afghan Culture and Language Training, 2010). Even though the training has proved to be useful, it focuses excessively on basic customs and procedures (e.g., male peacekeepers prohibited from shaking the local women's hand) and very little on the implementation of those standards on the ground. For examples, the Afghans respect the dignity and privacy of women, but NATO troops have abused it during an unauthorized house searches and kinetic military actions (Lemmon, 2015). The Afghan populations showed the disdain they felt when NATO soldiers enter the mosque with shoes on, burn or taunt the Quran, locked civilian forever, break into homes, destroy belongings during house raids, or kills local people accidentally. Remote incidents such as one in which a United States (US) sergeant went on a spree and killed sixteen local people in their sleep have triggered extensive local people rage (Johnson, 2012).

The goal of UN peacekeeping training is to make it possible for personnel that come from national military forces and police forces to be successful peacekeeping forces and to comply with UN requirements. Training take places at three phases, known as pre-deployment, in mission and ongoing. The results in Carson article indicate that Australian gender pre-deployment training is insufficient because the training is not passed out for all personnel and since 'gender' is commonly interpreted in a very restricted way and is not addressed in relation to the behaviors and attitudes of peacekeepers themselves (Carson, 2016). The discovery of the insufficient of gender training for Australian Defense Force (ADF) military indicates a letdown to comply with UN requirements, the Australian government decide to endorse and obligates a set out in the "Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security". In reality, the absence of consistent and structures training nationally and among foreign troop-contributing countries' causes enormous problems (MacKay, 2005).

The absence of formal training among various types of Australian personnel is symptomatic of the inability of the UN to keeps states accountable. Furthermore, the replies from the respondents recommend that "gender" is interpreted in a restricted approach because the issues of power relations between the genders is not clearly acknowledged, and dye to the concept that generally considered as important in a way of interpreting the peacekeeping task and not specifically applicable to the attitudes and behaviors of the peacekeeping force themselves. These results align in many respects with critiques of the de-politicization of "gender" posed by some development activist, as well as some critical and radical feminist activist (Baden & Goetz, 1997; Jeffrey, 1996; Pearson & Jackson, 1998; Thompson, 1991). Such issues found in pre-deployment training in Australia highlight major issues more generally with gender training.

Cultural intolerance and miscommunication are fueled by tensions between communities. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Portuguese peacekeepers were subjected to much tighter controls than those participating in the subsequent mission of the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor

(UNMISSET). In this respect, with the Portuguese peacekeeping forces to United Nations Transitional Administration East Timor (UNTAET) adhere to tighter regulations than peacekeeping forces under UNMISSET, there seems to have been a shift in the “rules of engagement”. The opposite could be seen with the Australian peacekeeping forces, with a resulting shift in the attitudes and behaviors of the local population towards the respective contingents of peacekeeping force. While progress has been made between the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and UNTAET/UNMISSET, operations that have taken place since the Timor missions have been much more serious in aspects of prostitutions, HIV/AIDS spread and gender insensitivity issues (Aoi, Coning, & Thakur, 2012).

It has also been difficult for humanitarian organizations to achieve or sustain recognition by Afghan local populations, with some agency employees attributing this to the militarization of restoration and aid strategies. It is obvious and clear that many organizations lack vigorous provision from community leaders that they find in other regions, even though a direct casual link is difficult to prove. Even though fundamentals of this are due to the overall vulnerability of Afghan local population, it also a consequence from the adverse image of NGOs commonly. Minear suggest that this may have emerged during the Taliban era, from the actions of certain members of the humanitarian community itself. In the form of aggressive person and group misconduct, significant lapses in professionalism have also occurred, which have damaged not only their performance, but also their reputations. The commonly reported consumption of alcohol by international personnel, insensitivity to the absence of gender separation in organization living quarters, the high demands of female officials, and the mockery frequently portrayed in public of Taliban population proclamations contribute international humanitarian providers – and the assistance given – a pointlessly confrontational silhouette (Jackson & Giustozzi, 2012).

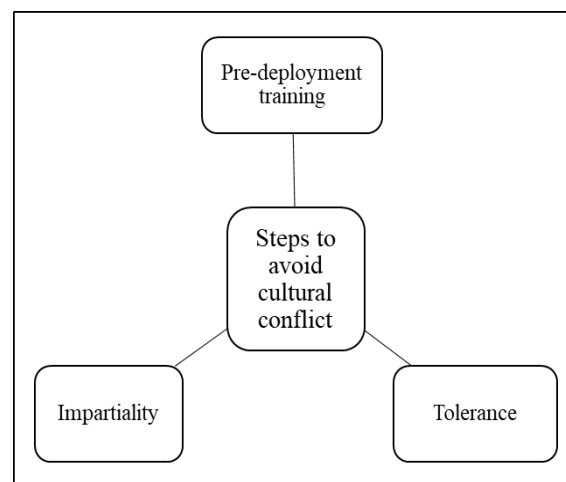
For a long time, the notion of impartiality has occupied the place of an existing and yet somewhat vague concept for peacekeepers to use force. The idea was first clearly spoken by Dag Hammarskjöld in his report on the UN Emergency Force 1 in January 1957, in which he contended that the use of force in a UN peacekeeping operations should be “impartial, in the sense that it does not function as a method to a force settlement, pressuring political disputes or legal issues recognized as contentious to be resolved in the interests of one party”. A lot of complex peacekeeping operations have been prepared frequently for deployment in instable circumstances, whereas, loaded with many responsibilities and confronted with cumulative physical dangers, they were frequently under-resourced and lacked adequate mandate. In addition, and as a straight consequence of this growth, peacekeepers have been in worsening circumstances, always linking humanitarian crises of numerous proportions. UN peacekeeping forces have also been accused of being powerless in the face of genocide and ethnic cleansing such as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda and elsewhere: the burden was on peacekeeping forces for them to do something and anything to relieve civilian deprivation and punish the perpetrators. In response to these two request, UN peacekeeping missions have been increasingly allowed to use appropriate means under Chapter VII of SC. However, the conventional principle of equidistance as

impartiality/m=neutrality just offers a justification for what not to do. Therefore, the issue is that there are varying viewpoints as to the precise nature of the current impartiality. All of it share the necessity for a justification that would allow peacekeeping forces, in certain circumstances, to make some kind of compulsory action without seeming to be on the side of one party to the crisis, but vary in what exactly the justification might mean (Yamashita, 2008).

This study adopted a qualitative approach by choosing purposive sampling since it fits on the focus of the study. The characteristics set out in this study were research participants (RP) must be MAF officers or personnel who had served in UN peacekeeping operations. The selection of these features is appropriate as it could illustrate the experiences of Malaysian peacekeepers. No gender and age limits were placed but the researchers considered other factors such as the duration of the participation in the security operation and the country in which they were assigned to. These factors appear to influence participants in how they deal with issues of cultural differences. Hence, the researchers interviewed 25 MAF's officers and personnel by using a semi-structured interview technique.

### 3. Results

According to the analysis presented, there are three main approaches taken by the Malaysian peacekeeping forces to prevent conflict or misunderstanding with the local communities. Those approaches are pre-deployment training, a high level of tolerance and be impartial all the time as in the Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1. Results of the Analysis**

### 4. Discussion

#### 4.1 Pre-deployment Training

In order to achieve the goals of the UN mandate, peacekeepers need to effectively address cultural differences. Various methods have been implemented by each security team in ensuring that the main mission of the operation is achieved. Most RPs says that pre-settlement training is a key step in solving

cultural differences because, during training, exposure to the country's culture will be detailed. In addition, important information on the conflict is also provided to ensure that each member of the group understands the task assigned to them (Interview with RPs, 2018).

Prior to being sent to work in a conflict area, the Malaysian peacekeeping forces were first deployed to attend pre-deployment training at Malaysian Peacekeeping Centre (MPC), Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. Malaysia's commitment to UN peacekeeping operations was revealed through the establishment of the MPC in 1996, with the aim of training and providing information to MAF, Royal Malaysian Police (RMP) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in each the security mission. With its commitment and commitment, MPC received recognition as a Full Training Capability (FTC) by the United States (US) on December 13, 2013. It has proven Malaysia's commitment in upholding international peace and stability through the participating missions.

In MPC, they are given an explanation and exposure to the causes of conflict as well as the basics of local community culture. This is to ensure that every member of the security team understands what can be done and sensitive issues that offend the local community. The duration of the pre-deployment training varies according to the tasks and countries assigned. Among the exercises required by the security personnel are the Drill Exercise Training (TDX) as well as the Field Training Exercise (FDX) which includes theory, practical, weapons adjustments and responsibility in the area assigned. Some of the educators are those who have deep knowledge about the assigned countries. This method is also emphasized in each module provided to security operations personnel. By using the UN Pre-Deployment Training Standards module, the MPC targeted that all military personnel chosen by the Member States to be deployed as military experts on a UN peacekeeping missions. The Military Experts on Mission are chosen by the Member States and must follow the selection criteria laid down by the Office of Military Affairs (OMA) of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPO). They should be well trained, experienced and possessed the highest professional standards as per requirement (United Nations Peacekeeping Resources Hub, n.d.).

In addition, the members of the Australian Senate Committee also adopted this method where they encouraged any non-governmental organizations to participate in security operations, to attend pre-training exercises related to cultural awareness, human rights and human rights law, before placement. In addition, the committee also considers the importance of each non-governmental body and government body to share ideas, concepts and build a common understanding of the scope of their work (Australian Senate Committee, 2008).

A roundtable discussion organized by the International Peace Institute (IPI) on February 11, 2016 also highlighted the importance of pre-placement training. Improved training and the need for good information collection and analysis is not only needed at the leader level, but also involves every stage of the operation, at the pre-placement training level. In addition, peacekeeping forces patrols need to gather information to increase the people's confidence in their troops. According to Javid Ahmad, some peacekeeping forces in other countries are trying to understand the Afghan people but there are still



peacekeeping forces who find it difficult to understand the complexity of Afghanistan's culture. For this reason, NATO troops to be deployed to Afghanistan now receive basic cultural and language training during pre-deployment.

The importance of pre-deployment training has been taken seriously by some countries. One of them is Ireland where the Irish Defense Force (IDF) has set up its own United Nations Training School Ireland (UNTSI) to increase its level of readiness in order to enable Peace Support Operations to be deployed in the region of the mission. The establishment of the school was a natural consequence of the participation of the Defense Forces in peacekeeping operations and their commitment to the UN operations. The primary goal of UNTSI is to train and prepare personnel from the IDF to serve a wide variety of peace support operations. The overseas battalion will spend two months preparing as part of its pre-deployment training following a Director of Defense Forces Training Circular that specifies what training must be done and at what point. The training is split into four stages of differing degrees of intensity and accountability (Javid Ahmad, 2017).

Some police officers deployed Sudan's peacekeeping operation rate pre-deployment training at 95% to 100% relevant (Irish Defense Force, n.d.). They clarified that mission climate is entirely different from what one is often used to before the deployment, but the preparations offer insight into what to be expected from the host country as well as other peacekeepers in the mission in terms of weather conditions and cultures. Sudan, for example, is well known for having two severe weather circumstances (which extremely hot during the day and extremely cold during the nights) but the exercise enlightened personnel to prepare sufficiently to adapt easily. One respondent intimated that: "we were warned about the 'Haboob' (whirlwind) during the pre-deployment training with some video footage and other training materials. This information was very useful and prepared us adequately for the harsh weather conditions in Sudan". Other interview sessions showed that aside from providing peacekeepers an overview of what to expect in the mission region, the pre-deployment training also served to update the police staffs' general knowledge base. During the pre-deployment training lessons taken on cultural sensitivity and cultural diversity enabled the Ghanaian police peacekeepers to respect the culture of the local country and to communicate diligently with other police officers in the mission region. Sudan, for example, is a predominantly Muslim culture, so men and women are not expected to associate in any form with local woman. The locals confronted, attacked or targeted some officers who violated these laws.

#### *4.2 High Level of Cultural Tolerance*

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) through Programmed of Action for a Culture of Peace have adopted the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance in 1995, which refers tolerance as a proactive behavior rather than a passive acceptance. Conferring to Chen Haiming, certain US academicians have argued that ethnic disputes and clashes of civilizations can be traced to the tensions and conflicts around the world among people from varying religions, customs and cultures (David, 2005). Not all-individual exercise cultural tolerance in everyday life. Certain people, possibly

because they suffered from a sense of cultural supremacy, are culturally intolerant. These individuals are also disrespectful and discriminate against individuals from different cultures, creating barriers in communications and hostility. The root cause of xenophobia, bigotry and unilateralism is cultural intolerance, which also results in regional and global tensions. Culture and nature are linked. Cultural diversity is as important as biodiversity is for nature according to UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Not only can cultural diversity make communities more resilient and innovative, but they also allow people to cope better with change. There is a need for people to follow the concept of cultural diversity in order to reinforce social cohesion and foster greater cooperation in the international community. Culture tolerance means not discriminating against persons from other societies. The exercise of tolerating other culture is encouraging to expand shared understanding and building trust, in addition to motivating cultural interactions amid citizens of different states, which in sequence may reinforce global peace and security.

Apart from pre-deployment training, high tolerance also plays a role in overcoming cultural differences. This is emphasized by several RPs (Chen, 2019). Atif states that in this era of globalization, the world has changed in many cultures. Therefore, the harmony and tolerance of each other is important. Without high tolerance, world peace cannot be maintained and loyalty to one another cannot be established. Lack of tolerance led to clashes, violence and eventually destroyed universal peace. Ban Ki-moon in his speech in conjunction with International Tolerance Day said he also emphasized the importance of practicing tolerance so that peace operations can be implemented effectively (Ban Ki-Moon, 2013). Parker emphasized the value of religious educations in schools to encourage harmony and understanding in order to resolve the vulnerability of peacekeeping operations (Parker, 2014).

Most of the Malaysian peacekeeping forces that have been deployed overseas have responded that members of the Malaysian team have a high degree of tolerance (Interview with RPs, 2018). As such, Malaysia has no record of conflict or concern with the local community because of cultural diversity. According to RP 2 the majority of Malaysians have a high degree of tolerance and this has made it easier for them to seek cooperation from the various parties involved. RP 5 also agreed to this view and he thanked the Malaysian government for revealing to Malaysians how to live in harmony in a multiracial and religious country. Because of the government's efforts, this has given him a high level of tolerance to practice while on assignment overseas. Meanwhile, RP 11 said that the tolerance shown by the Malaysian peacekeeping forces made them accessible and beloved to the local community. Indirectly, the displayed tolerance has successfully prevented misunderstandings and conflicts from occurring. Similarly, RP 15, which states that the level of tolerance plays an important role in a security operation. This tolerance also prevents Malaysia from being exposed to a variety of problems, whether small or large. According to RP 24 the tolerance displayed by Malaysians has made it easier for the Malaysian peacekeeping forces to carry out their day-to-day tasks apart from seeking cooperation from the local community. As a result, it worked out as best it could.

In 2019, the population of Malaysia is expected to be 32.6 million, rising from 32.4 million compared

to 2018. 29.4 million (90.2%) residents and 3.2 million (9.8%) non-residents compose the overall population. Malaysia is formed by a combination of several races which are Malays, Chinese, Indians and other minority groups. The Malays and Bumiputeras comprised a total of 69.3% of the total population, Chinese 22.8%, Indians 6.9% and 1.0% others ethnicity (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019). Despite various religion and race, Malaysian lives in harmony and serenity. Every celebration is celebrated by all Malaysians regardless of race and religion such as Aidilfitri, Chinese New Year and Deepavali. In addition, religious practices like Buddhism and Hinduism are practiced without interruption and restrictions. The secret to prosperity and stability in the country is tolerance as practiced by all Malaysian, said Tun Dr, Mahathir Mohamad, former Prime Minister of Malaysia. He added that the people in Malaysia were not hostile towards each other, despite being a multi-racial and multi-religious nation, but instead were cooperative in celebrating their cultural and religious festivals together (Dr M: Tolerance is key to development and peace in Malaysia, 2019). Therefore, Malaysian peacekeepers have no problem maintaining a high level of tolerance when deployed to conflicting countries.

According to Rubinstein, because of their unique history, awareness is needed regarding the meanings that local communities attach to actions, artifacts, places and symbols (Rubinstein, 1989). Symbols gave specific significance, and their meaning goes beyond the basic observance of peacekeepers. Yet, lost or misinterpreting symbols can accidentally trigger glitches. Symbols represent political parties in certain countries for example, so that people can vote knowledgeably without having to be literate. Popular objects, such as flowers, birds or colors, are also symbols. Different colors or symbols worn by foreign organization may be perceived as endorsing one or the other, causing misunderstanding and tensions. It can be difficult to achieve this understanding, but not knowing the symbols correctly couple with poor tolerance can have a disastrous effect on peacekeeping operations, expressing just the opposite of the intended messages about power, respect and partnership.

#### *4.3 Impartiality*

UNPKO has a reputation as a powerful and extensive instrument for the UN to assist member countries in the sense of internal and external conflicts when facing difficulties. For most disputes occurring these days, impartiality, inoffensive deployment, and reciprocal acceptance by each stakeholder has ensured that the UNPKO retains its role as the most effective and reliable mediator. The UNPKO has significantly shifted over time from traditional infantry forces into a well-equipped force consisting of armored personnel carriers, aircrafts and warships, in line with developments in the conventional scenario. Among the steps taken by the Malaysian peacekeeping forces in addressing cultural differences is to maintain impartial throughout their assignment (Interviews with RPs, 2018). Impartiality refers to the value of justice that the peacekeeping forces impose on each party, without discriminating against any party in making a decision. RP 4 states that as a monitor, he should always be impartial in all kinds of situations. If there are certain events that can lead to large-scale conflicts, he maintains as a neutral attitude and will not favor either party.

According to RP 9, the impartial attitude highlighted by the Malaysian peacekeeping forces made the local people confident in their honesty to help. This attitude, therefore, helped the peacekeeping forces to gain cooperation with all parties. RP 17 also agreed that the impartiality shown by the peacekeeping forces to assist Malaysia in preventing conflict. For RP 23, Malaysia adopts a neutral attitude throughout its assignment abroad. This has helped the peacekeeping forces in thinking about the best decision. The attitude of impartiality presented by Malaysian peacekeeping forces is in accord with Malaysia's foreign policy, which is authoritatively grounded on the principle of impartiality and preserving diplomatic ties with other countries, irrespective of the political system. The government attaches high urgency to the Southeast Asia's security and stability, and pursues to further establish ties with other states in the region.

Several scholars have emphasized this neutralization, for example according to Tsagourias, peacekeeping operations are based on principles of consent, neutrality and even the use of force as self-defense. It also presented the UN's views on the same method of handling a crisis (Tsagourias, 2006). However, to Guida (n.d.), she prefers impartiality instead of neutrality. Impartiality, she notes, does not mean neutrality or inactivity. It refers to the fact that if they negotiate with the parties involved in conflicts, peacekeepers must remain impartial. They have an implementation mandate and must resolve the tensions and aggressive acts taken by both parties in breach of the mandates and international norms and principles. In order to preserve good ties and to encourage broad support among the local community, at home and internationally, impartiality is important. Just as a successful arbitrator is neutral, but may punish offenses, a peacekeeping operation does not condone act by parties that breach peace process undertakings or the international standards and values upheld by a UN peacekeeper.

Neutrality and impartiality concepts have always been intertwined, but they have distinct meanings and significance. In general, neutrality means that peacekeeping forces should not taking sides conflicting parties and impartiality applies to non-discrimination and proportionality (Weiss, 1999). Positivity and silence are also synonymous with neutrality (Donald, 2002; Thakur, 1998). Traditionally, the ideals of neutrality and impartiality have been considered important for every UN peacekeeping operation. A peacekeeping operation must rigorously avoid activities that could undermine its reputation of impartiality, despite the need to develop and maintain good relations with the warring parties. For fear of misinterpretation or retribution, a peacekeeping force should not shy away from a robust implementation of the concept of impartiality. Failure to do so might undermine the integrity and legitimacy of the peacekeeping activity and may contribute to the withdrawal of consent by one or more of the parties to its presence. UN peacekeeping operations are thus unbiased, but they will never be neutral (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.). Dag Hammarskjöld, second Secretary-General of the UN, announced impartiality in peacekeeping means that peacekeepers "cannot be used to implement any particular political solution to the pending issues or to manipulate the political balance that is decisive for such a solution". The principle of neutrality was instantly related to this definition, as

peacekeepers prevented any destabilization of the balance of power in their deployment area and thus handled all the warring parties equally. Both neutrality and impartiality advocated a minimal use of force except in cases of self-defense, which completely distorted the difference between these two. Neutral peacekeeping, however is only feasible in peacetime or when both belligerents agree to stop the fight in a given conflict (Yamashita, 2008).

## 5. Conclusions

Malaysian peacekeeping forces have successfully reduced the risk of cultural collision in several approaches. Those approaches are pre-deployment training, maintaining a high level of tolerance and being impartial in every action and decision made. Pre-deployment training allows peacekeepers to rapidly adapt to the operating conditions and provide valuable information on the particular context of the mission. The Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials (CPTM) symbolize the vital information needed to work effectively in a UN peacekeeping missions by all peacekeeping personnel either military, police or civilians. The materials can be used to deliver a common understanding of the core principles, values and protocols of UN peacekeeping operations. As they conduct essential tasks to assist countries in the transition from war to peace, these principles may guide the peacekeepers. Culture is dynamic that has been shown to play a significant role in assessing the success or failure of conflict resolution mechanism in peacekeeping intervention. In order to remain an effective tool for management of contemporary conflicts, peacekeeping operations must make greater efforts to consider cultural problems at all levels of interpersonal interactions and during the process of implementation. High level of cultural tolerance ensures good relationship with the local citizens in order to gain accurate information that benefits the operations. Impartiality give advantages to Malaysian peacekeepers in maintaining the troop from getting involve in cultural conflicts. These approaches have been proven by the Malaysian peacekeeping forces in every peacekeeping operation joined by low rates of involvement in cultural conflicts with the locals.

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