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Book Review:
Salleh, A., & Idris, A. (2021). *Malaysia's United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (1960—2010)*. Springer, 231 p.

Gabriel Joel P. Honrada  

RUDN University, Moscow, Russian Federation

 khonrada-g@rudn.ru

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Г. Дж. П. Хонрада  

Российский университет дружбы народов, Москва, Российская Федерация

 khonrada-g@rudn.ru

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The book *Malaysia's United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (1960—2010)* (Salleh & Idris, 2021) by Professor Asri Salleh and Professor Asmady Idris explores the often-overlooked topic of Malaysia's participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO), providing deep insights into how a small power like Malaysia situates itself within the international system and attempts to influence it to its benefit with soft power via participation in UNPKOs.

The book consists of eight chapters. The authors excellently juxtapose the discussion of Malaysia's UNPKO participation with systemic changes in the international system from 1960 to 2010 alongside the domestic imperatives of its

Prime Ministers during the same period, showing the complex interplay between those variables.

Its main idea is that Malaysia, as a small power, cannot affect systemic changes in the international system but is an attempt to influence the system through its participation in UNPKOs. It posits that when systemic-external pressures in the international system and the Malaysian state's extractive power in terms of nationalism, ideology, and public support are high, Malaysia tends to join UNPKOs.

Chapter 1 gives a historical overview of Malaysia's participation in UNPKOs. It mentions that Malaysia needs a coherent strategy for its UNPKO participation, given its more extensive participation in UNPKOs involving its

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non-strategic interests zone (NSIZ) compared to its strategic interests zone (SIZ). Finally, it analyzes Malaysia's UNPKO participation from 1960 to 2010 using the lens of neoclassical realism to explain the dynamics of Malaysia's decision-making processes in its UNPKO participation.

Chapter 2 justifies the reason for choosing neoclassical realism as the analytical framework for viewing Malaysia's UNPKO participation. Malaysia's international overtures are reactions to the international security environment, with the indirect relationship between the international security environment and Malaysia's actions filtered by its political elite. It presents six hypotheses determining Malaysia's participation in UNPKOs. Finally, it uses neoclassical realism to identify the systemic-domestic imperatives driving Malaysia's UNPKO participation, emphasizing that its foreign policy is critical to understanding its decisions.

Chapter 3 discusses UNPKO structure and processes and how Malaysia navigates these in its participation. First, it frames UNPKOs as a conflict resolution mechanism and discusses their doctrine, relevant authorities, financing, authorization process, and state participation. It contrasts those points with Malaysia's National Defense Policy and Malaysia's decision-making process on whether to participate in UNPKO. It then discusses the key features of Malaysia's foreign policy in UNPKO, which include neutrality, pro-Western posture, neutrality, and globalization.

Chapter 4 discusses the strategic dynamics affecting UNPKO operations, specifically the interplay between the interests of the permanent members of the UN Security Council. It also discusses how geostrategic factors affect UNPKOs, mentioning that they serve as critical regulators of the international system that serve the interests of major powers. Finally, it discusses the impact of UNPKO in terms of systemic self-preservation of the international system and power politics balancing between great powers.

Chapter 5 discusses the domestic and internal pressures influencing Malaysia's approach to UNPKOs. Central to Malaysia's participation in UNPKOs are the personal values and perceptions

of its Prime Ministers and the concept of "middlepowermanship," in which the country exhibits a certain level of soft power. It also discusses the internal benefits of UNPKOs to Malaysia, such as consolidating the power of the Prime Minister, driving military modernization and professionalization, and cultivating a favorable view of Malaysia to domestic and international audiences.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of Malaysia's participation in UNPKOs from the Cold War to 2010, providing a timeline framed according to the country's SIZs and NSIZs. During the Cold War, Malaysia attempted to use UNPKOs to maintain an equidistant foreign policy between the US and the Soviet Union. Afterward, it used UNPKOs to portray itself as a dependable US partner and to forward its interests. It also discusses some factors identifying the scope of Malaysia's participation in UNPKOs, such as trade incentives, distance, logistics, and health risks.

Chapter 7 discusses the evolution of Malaysia's UNPKO participation through the lenses of Prime Ministers Tunku Abdul Rahman (1957—1970), Tun Abdul Razak Hussein (1970—1976), Tun Hussein Onn (1976—1981), Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammed (1981—2003), and Tun Abdullah Badawi (2003—2009). It contrasts the domestic political situation of these Malaysian Prime Ministers with the international situation during their tenure, then mentions how these factors affect Malaysia's participation in UNPKOs.

Chapter 8 summarizes the key findings in the book. It reiterates that systemic pressures in the international system with the domestic situation and personal values and ideologies of Malaysia's Prime Ministers determine the country's UNPKO participation. It mentions UNPKOs as a means to an end, with major powers approving only when there is a collusion of interests and small powers if there are tangible gains. It also notes that international pressures, such as strong US influence in the multipolar world, can override the influence of the Malaysian Prime Minister in determining UNPKO participation. It also emphasizes that peace is a byproduct of states' efforts to achieve security and not an end in itself.

In sum, the book extensively discusses Malaysia's UNPKO participation within its specified time. While the book is focused on Malaysia, many of its insights can be used to guide short, medium, and long-term plans and decision-making processes to develop the ASEAN Peacekeeping Centers Network (APCN), whose relevance is timely more than ever. This urgency is due to ASEAN's need to share best

practices to come up with conflict resolution mechanisms in light of the various non-traditional security threats in Southeast Asia which threatens ASEAN's credibility and integrity, and the organization's drive to increase its strategic relevance and strengthen its much-cherished centrality by establishing working mechanisms with other organizations, particularly the UN.

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About the author: *Honrada Gabriel Joel Pastor* — Assistant Lecturer, Department of Theory and History of International Relations, RUDN University; ORCID: 0000-0001-6810-2650; e-mail: khonrada-g@rudn.ru

Сведения об авторе: *Хонрада Габриэль Джоэл Пастор* — ассистент кафедры теории и истории международных отношений, Российский университет дружбы народов; ORCID: 0000-0001-6810-2650; e-mail: khonrada-g@rudn.ru