

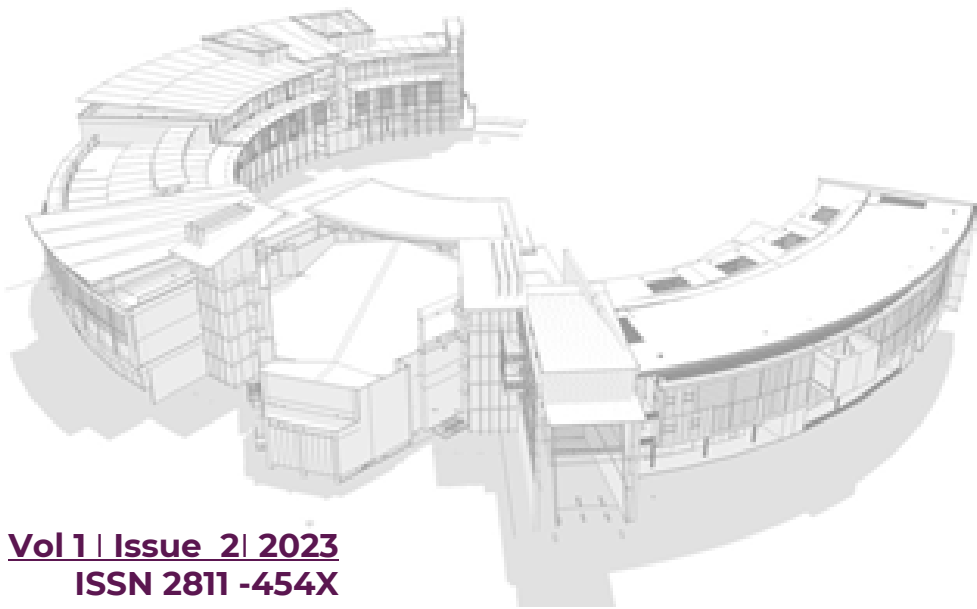


# NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE

NURTURING STRATEGIC THINKERS OF STATESMAN QUALITY

# THE STATESMAN JOURNAL 2023

Malaysia's Elements of National Power



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# **NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE**

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## **NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE** **THE STATESMAN JOURNAL 2023**

### **AIM AND SCOPE**

The Statesman Journal is a product of the National Resilience College (NRC) under the Malaysian Armed Forces and is a prominent platform for academic excellence and thought leadership. This esteemed publication predominantly showcases a variety of original research papers and articles authored by course and faculty members of the NRC. The journal's coverage extends beyond just military or defence issues, delving into a broad spectrum of subjects related to security and strategic studies.

One of the journal's fundamental goals is cultivating a culture of intellectual depth and critical analysis within the Malaysian Armed Forces' ranks and broader academic and strategic circles. The dissemination of research and insights from the NRC enables The Statesman Journal to contribute to shaping and enhancing discussions around national security significantly. Moreover, The Statesman Journal is known for its in-depth, well-researched, and insightful analysis of pertinent topics. Its dedication to maintaining high standards of excellence and relevance elevates it beyond a typical academic journal. It is a valuable resource for a diverse audience, including scholars, strategists, and those engaged in comprehensive study and understanding of strategic issues.

In presenting innovative ideas, diverse perspectives, and potential solutions to contemporary challenges, The Statesman Journal plays a crucial role in enriching the dialogue on national security and strategic matters within Malaysia and in a wider regional context. This makes it an essential contributor to strategic studies, offering rich content that is both informative and thought-provoking.



**NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE**  
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## **COMMANDANT'S PREFACE**

**MAJOR GENERAL DATUK HAJI MOHD NIZAM BIN HAJI JAFFAR**  
**COMMANDANT OF NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE**

I am honoured to introduce this edition of the Statesman Journal, an intellectual repository dedicated to nurturing strategic thinkers of statesman quality. This edition focuses on the 8th pillar of National Security Policy, which is People's Security, a topic of paramount significance in the contemporary geopolitical landscape and strategic outlook.

In an era marked by rapid changes and complex challenges, the role of a statesman transcends conventional boundaries of leadership. It demands an astute understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of national power, encompassing military strength, economic resilience, diplomatic acumen, technological advancement, and cultural influence. This journal seeks to unravel these elements through its rigorous and thought-provoking discourse, offering deep and wide-ranging insights. Our contributors, a distinguished cadre of course members and thought leaders, bring a wealth of expertise and perspectives. Their analyses not only dissect the components of national power but also synthesise these elements in the context of global dynamics and regional intricacies. This approach is particularly relevant for Malaysia, a nation that continues to navigate its path on the global stage with strategic finesse and resilience.

Through my years, I have witnessed firsthand the evolution of national security paradigms and the increasing importance of a holistic understanding of power. This journal serves as a beacon of knowledge, guiding current and future leaders in the art and science of statecraft. It reinforces the ethos of the National Resilience College, where the development of strategic acumen is inextricably linked with a deep appreciation of global affairs and national interests. The articles within this edition cover various topics, from the traditional realms of military strategy and economic policies to the emerging frontiers of cyber power and cultural diplomacy. Each piece contributes to a comprehensive understanding of national power and encourages readers to think critically about Malaysia's role and strategy in an interconnected world.

In conclusion, I hope this edition of the Statesman Journal will inspire and challenge you. May it ignite a passion for strategic thinking and a commitment to the noble pursuit of statesmanship. As we forge ahead in these tumultuous times, let us carry the torch of knowledge and wisdom, mindful of our duty to our nation and the global community.

**Major General Datuk Haji Mohd Nizam bin Haji Jaffar**

Commandant  
National Resilience College

# NATIONAL RESILIENCE COLLEGE

*National Resilience Course*

**The National Resilience College** is the National Centre for Defence Studies senior college of the Malaysian Armed Forces. We provide the capstone to strategic education of those officers of the Armed Forces and in future, equivalent civil servants who have the potential to reach the highest ranks and who must, therefore, understand and be comfortable working at the strategic level across government and in the international environment. The college was established following the strategic vision of the late Yang Amat Berhormat Tun Abdul Razak bin Dato' Hussien's vision of promoting greater understanding between senior military officers, diplomats, civil servants, officials and the corporate sector.

The NRC is a strategic college designed to provide best practices for the highest level of thinking in achieving the nation's grand interest. The course at NRC will be the continuity of studies of the Malaysian Armed Forces Defence College and Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College but with emphasis on high-level studies at the grand strategic level focusing on defence and security of the nation, the region and the world.

Officially, the NRC was established on 31st July 2019 to cater to the professional development of the Malaysian Armed Forces officers of Brigadier General and Colonel in rank or equivalent. The study program is known as the National Resilience Programme, and the academic program is provided in collaboration with the National Defence University of Malaysia (NDUM). The NRC 2024 cohort will span an academic year from 8th January to 8th December 2024 to provide Course Members (CM) with third-level Professional Military Education (PME) in international affairs, security, policy and strategy.

The college course content is designed not entirely on defence studies. Still, the NRC looks at a wide range of factors, including values related to stability, security and prosperity at the national, regional and global levels. The program focuses on the grand national strategic level, at which governments make decisions about their instruments of power as they relate to promoting the nation's national interests.

# DIPLOMATIC, POLITICAL & ECONOMIC STUDIES

## *National Resilience Course*

This section of The Statesman Journal will comprehensively explore Malaysia's National Power structure, emphasising the key elements that contribute to Malaysia's prominence and strength. The topics delve into various determinants of national power, including security, diplomacy, politics, socio-cultural influences, and economic factors, providing a detailed understanding of each aspect.

The content will cover the intricate relationship between security and the state, examining how a state leverages its national power to safeguard its interests. There will be a significant emphasis on academic discourse and policy analysis, offering insights into Malaysia's constitutional framework, core values, and political structure as they stand today. Additionally, it highlights the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and effective communication strategies, particularly in the context of national security and media relations. There is also a focus on strategic leadership, including handling media interactions and press conferences on national security issues.

The topics in this section equip readers with advanced strategic thinking, problem-solving techniques, and decision-making skills. They will also offer guidance on using media effectively to communicate messages to diverse audiences, emphasising the importance of clear and impactful communication in national security.

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## THE PRACTICE OF STATECRAFT BY GREAT POWERS: THE FRENCH IN AN EVOLVING EUROPE

**Captain Sonny Iskandar bin Rasani, RBN**  
National Resilience College, PUSPAHANAS

### Abstract

*To attain the status of a Great Power, a nation must meet a set of pivotal criteria that enable it to wield its capabilities as demonstrations of national strength. France stands among the ranks of these nations, firmly established as a Great Power. France's adeptness at orchestrating its statecraft on regional and global fronts has been repeatedly evident. This study elucidates how France has effectively harnessed the array of national power tools to sustain its status as a prominent global player in contemporary times. The significance of this research lies in establishing that, within an ever-evolving Europe, France adeptly wields its statecraft, underscoring its efficacy as a Great Power. The composition of this article unfolds across four distinct sections. Initially, it delves into France's strategic manoeuvres within the dynamic context of an evolving Europe. Subsequently, it dissects the tools France employs as instruments of its statecraft. Following this, it conducts an in-depth evaluation of the potency of France's statecraft. Lastly, the paper acknowledges the array of challenges France grapples with as it endeavours to wield its statecraft proficiently. The methodology employed in this research encompasses both primary and secondary data sources. Drawing from the insights gained through extensive research and primary data acquisition, a conspicuous conclusion emerges—France unequivocally holds the mantle of a Great Power. Its statecraft is not only skillfully executed but also adeptly navigates the challenges, both domestic and international. This proficiency is further demonstrated by France's capacity to address prevailing issues while concurrently devising long-term solutions.*

**Keywords:** France, Great Power Nation, National Power, Statecraft

### Introduction

Great Power Nations are an elite group of nations in the global system that can flex various economic, military, technological, informational and diplomatic powers. To be classified as a great power, these nations cannot simply rely on a single entity of power. It must have several elements of national power and, more importantly, the nation's ability to exercise these national power elements. As an organisation, the European Union (EU) has been seen as a great power. Only one country Within the EU can be classified as a great power: France.

However, there are contradicting arguments about France as a Great Power. According to Ataman (2021), France is no longer a global power despite its historical significance and role in the EU. However, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace article highlights the value of France's independence and strategic vision, which are highly valuable to the United States. France's stable business climate, educated population, and talented workforce make it an attractive destination for foreign investment.

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The war in Europe has revealed the continent's competence and determination, strengthening the EU and the North Alliance Treaty Organisation (NATO) alliance. However, several questions remain unanswered, and the war's outcome remains uncertain. As a key European player, France is an active member of the EU and NATO. However, France has been critical of these regional organisations in recent years. It has occasionally practised an independent foreign policy posture and defence acquisitions and is increasingly outspoken for increased EU cohesion, highlighted in the recent Strategic Update 2021 (Armées, 2021). The French national identity and culture, together with their value of independence and democracy, are the fundamental cornerstones of the French identity.

France is undoubtedly a great power nation and the only nuclear power in the EU, providing a significant edge over other EU members. Post-BREXIT, after the United Kingdom (UK) left the EU, France is believed to be the only great power in the EU; however, taking its place as one of the leading powers in the EU comes with a plethora of challenges. Its military, political, economic and diplomatic powers have been tested over recent years, where France, the UK, and Germany have been jousting for more influence in Western European Politics. Being a great power is not without its challenges, and a successful great power can exercise its power successfully to protect its national interests. This paper uses France as an example to identify the practice of statecraft of great power, examining how successfully France has exercised its great regional and global influence. This article first examines how France exercises her statecraft in an evolving world. Secondly, it analyses the tools France uses in practising statecraft, followed by an assessment of how effective France's statecraft is. Finally, the paper identifies France's challenges in effectively exercising her statecraft.

### France as a Nation of Great Power

With the UK formally leaving the EU post-BREXIT in 2020, France and Germany were left in a position of power as Europe's two most powerful nations. Of all the members of the EU, Germany is seen as France's closest competitor in many aspects. Notwithstanding this, the UK still dominates in Europe, mainly through NATO. The Anglo-French and German-French nexus is nothing new. The current competition between France, Germany and the UK revolves around economy, defence and diplomacy and is discussed in this article.

France is deemed a great power due to its significant economic, political, and military strengths and cultural influence on the global stage. France's history is marked by grand achievements, a rich cultural heritage, and a solid national identity that has helped France establish its extraordinary global reputation. The French economy is the sixth-largest economy in the world, with a Gross Domestic Product of more than \$2 trillion (World Economics, 2023). As a resource-rich country with a diverse economy dominated by the manufacturing, services, and tourism sectors, France has positioned itself to significantly influence Europe's financial system.

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France is also a leader in several critical high-tech industries, including aerospace, nuclear energy, and high-speed railway technology (Bernard, 2022). With the combination of resources and a prosperous, dynamic industry, France has shown a strong presence in the global marketplace through its diverse multinational companies.

France boasts a rich and extensive political and diplomatic legacy reverberating throughout contemporary global dynamics. As an inaugural constituent of the EU and the United Nations (UN), France commands a permanent seat within the UN Security Council. Furthermore, the nation asserts its active and influential stature within NATO. Under the current stewardship of President Emmanuel Macron, France has notably embarked on a trajectory of EU reform (Strupczewski, 2019), simultaneously augmenting its global sway with varying degrees of efficacy. Evidencing its commitment to international stability, France has exhibited pronounced engagement with the Ukrainian conflict, earnestly endeavouring to broker peace through multiple diplomatic initiatives. Despite the lack of definitive success, France remains resolute in its conviction that the diplomatic avenue holds the potential for resolution (Corbet, 2022). In the military arena, France possesses a powerful military force. With a total defence budget of approximately \$45 billion, accounting for two percent of its national GDP (2023 France Military Strength, 2023), ranking France as the fifth-largest spender on defence in the world (Aben & Fontanel, 2018).

The military capabilities of this nation include advanced fighter jets and submarines, and the only EU member with nuclear weapons. It is vital to note that the country possesses a matured defence industry (Affairs M. O., n.d.), where the French government and industry work closely to ensure their military forces are well-equipped with current equipment and technology. In addition to conventional warfighting assets, the French Armed Forces have also invested heavily in cyberwarfare, and they were amongst the first to realise the growing threat in this new branch of warfare. Finally, France's global cultural influence is undeniable, and the country's cuisine, art, fashion, and cinema are among the most celebrated worldwide (Adleiba & Sakaev, 2019). With its global reach achieved through colonisation, the French language is spoken by more than 300 million people worldwide (Château e Villers-Cotterêts, n.d.). In addition, France remains the top tourist destination, with an estimated 90 million visitors each year to experience the country's culture, food, and history. While France is undoubtedly a great power, she competes with two other European heavyweights: Germany and the UK. Both countries have significant economic, military and political influence in the region and play an essential role in the European Union and NATO.

### France's Competitors

Germany is the largest economy in Europe, with a GDP of more than \$4 trillion (Trading Economics, n.d.) and is a global leader in industries, especially in the automobile and technology sectors. Possessing a formidable military strength, Germany stands as NATO's second-largest contributor, following only the United States of America (USA).

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## THE PRACTICE OF STATECRAFT BY GREAT POWERS: THE FRENCH IN AN EVOLVING EUROPE

Diplomatically and politically, through the stewardship of Chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany has been influential in navigating the EU through numerous crises, such as the Greek financial crisis and the refugee crisis. Germany and France have had several differences within the EU, and the diplomatic relations between both countries have been declining over the years (Schramm & Krotz, 2023).

However, the recent events of the Russian invasion of Ukraine have strengthened France-German ties, especially with France's soft power to bring the EU together. Although decision-making between France and Germany takes time and comes under much scrutiny between the two nations, eventually, both countries arrived at an amicable decision not only to benefit each other but also for the betterment of the EU region. Despite the UK's recent departure from the EU after BREXIT, it remains a significant global power with a strong influence in the EU and even more within NATO. The UK has a strong economy valued at over \$3.2 trillion (World Economics, United Kingdom's Gross Domestic Product, n.d.), and London remains one of the world's leading financial centres. The UK also maintains a powerful, modern, nuclear-armed military that can mobilise its troops globally. Culturally, the UK has a significant cultural impact on the world, with its music, literature, and entertainment industries.

France and the UK have clashed on several recent issues over the UK's decision to leave the EU. This has caused tension and uncertainty between the two nations, where France has been one of the most vocal critics of BREXIT and has taken a hard-line stance in negotiations (Lough, 2019). France and the UK have also clashed over fishing rights in the English Channel and North Sea. French fishermen have accused British boats of overfishing in their waters, while British fishermen have accused the French of unfair competition (Neuman, 2018). In the area of defence, there have been disagreements between France and the UK, particularly concerning the EU's defence policy. France has strongly advocated for increased cooperation between the EU member states, whereas the UK has been more sceptical.

Although both nations have had their differences, they still understand the importance of finding a solution to maintain peace and integrity as members of NATO and for the greater good of the immediate region, especially during these tense times. Despite the competition from Germany and the UK, France is still a great power due to its strong economy, political influence, military strength, and cultural impact. Its competition with Germany and the United Kingdom remains crucial to the European power dynamic. However, despite this competition, the three countries have cooperated closely on numerous issues, such as combating terrorism and addressing climate change, demonstrating the importance of collaboration and cooperation amongst one another to maintain the region's security and importance.

### France's Toolbox

To better understand how the French can maintain their status as a great power, it is pertinent to understand the essential tools France uses to be a key regional and global player.

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To portray this effectively, Hans Morgenthau's theory will be applied. Hans Morgenthau's theory on power politics and the "Elements of National Power Approach" emphasises the importance of a state's security and survival (Jablonsky, 2006). France has applied several of Morgenthau's theories to become a great power in the world.

Geographically expansive, France holds a global identity, transcending its European origins to encompass a multitude of overseas territories spanning the Indian Ocean, the Pacific, Latin America, and its former colonies in Africa. These regions maintain strong economic, cultural, and diplomatic connections with France. This extensive geographical reach further enables France to strategically position its troops worldwide, facilitating swift responses to diverse international situations. In pursuing national interests, Morgenthau penned that states must always act in their self-interest and pursue their national interests above all else (Guzzini, 2018). France has always practised this theory and prioritised its national interests despite global or regional opposition. A vital example is its relationship with Africa, where France has pursued its economic and strategic interests despite criticism from African nations and the international community.

In terms of being a balancing power, Morgenthau believes that states should balance power to ensure their security and survival (Guzzini, 2018). France has pursued a policy of balancing European power through alliances, such as the EU, to maintain its dominant power. Post-BREXIT, France has risen to take its place in the power vacuum created and has pushed the EU to work even closer together. This is to strengthen the organisation from an economic perspective and ensure its security, especially amid the war in Ukraine. Morgenthau states that military force is essential for pursuing a state's interests (Jablonsky, 2006). France has been able to effectively apply this vital tool as it has one of the strongest military forces in Europe. The French have capitalised on using its military might to protect its interests, whether in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan or Africa or in protecting its overseas territories. The fact that France has nuclear weapons is another driving force that brings prestige to the French military and gives them an edge over other EU countries.

In terms of diplomacy, Morgenthau was a firm believer that diplomacy and negotiation are essential components of a state's foreign policy (Jablonsky, 2006). France has used diplomacy effectively by establishing itself as a mediator in regional conflicts, such as the negotiations between Israel and Palestine. It must not be forgotten that France was one of the founding members of the UN, where she has a permanent seat on the Security Council and, regionally, France is also a founding member of the EU and NATO. France is not a nation to sit and watch events evolve, and they have been vocal on many regional and global issues, even if they may go against the collective EU's sentiments.

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## THE PRACTICE OF STATECRAFT BY GREAT POWERS: THE FRENCH IN AN EVOLVING EUROPE

This great nation has utilised Morgenthau's theories to become a great power through its geographical footprint globally and by pursuing its national interests, balancing power, using military force, and practising effective diplomacy. These factors have helped France maintain its position as one of the world's most influential nations, particularly in Europe.

### **Effectiveness of French Statecraft**

France has demonstrated considerable efficacy in deploying its statecraft through multifaceted mechanisms. The Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic (DIME) model is a comprehensive framework to gauge the effectiveness of statecraft. In delineating the proficiency of France's statecraft, the discussion delves into each facet of the DIME model. The sphere of French diplomacy has exhibited remarkable effectiveness, a consequence of its historical acumen and strategic positioning as a foundational member of the United Nations (UN), boasting a permanent seat within the Security Council, and as an integral constituent of the European Union (EU). Renowned for its diplomatic finesse, France has showcased an aptitude for adept negotiation in intricate and delicate scenarios. This prowess is intrinsically linked to the nation's extensive history of diplomacy, endowing it with a wealth of experiential knowledge in navigating international relations.

Additionally, France's geographic centrality within Europe is pivotal in shaping EU policies, affording the nation a vantage point to influence other states and advance its vested interests. France's notable and influential role was evident in the Iran nuclear deal negotiations, recognised as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a landmark accord achieved in 2015. French officials were deeply immersed in protracted and intricate diplomatic endeavours in collaboration with counterparts from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, China, and the European Union. These efforts were meticulously directed towards resolving concerns surrounding Iran's nuclear program, with a paramount objective of forestalling the potential development of nuclear armaments (Affairs, 2022). The agreement constituted a diplomatic triumph for France, which had steadfastly advocated for a comprehensive resolution over an extended period.

Moreover, France's adeptness in diplomacy was prominently displayed in the arduous negotiations that led to the Paris Climate Agreement 2016. By skillfully orchestrating cooperation among over 190 nations, French diplomats facilitated the inception of a global framework for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions (Harvey, 2016). This accord assumed historical significance, with France's leadership acclaimed as instrumental to its fruition. The effectiveness of France's diplomacy can thus be attributed to its historical depth, strategic positioning, and the sagacity of its diplomatic corps, proficiently navigating intricate international dynamics. Consequently, France retains a pivotal role on the global stage and is poised to exert an enduring influence on international affairs.

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## THE PRACTICE OF STATECRAFT BY GREAT POWERS: THE FRENCH IN AN EVOLVING EUROPE

### **Fostering Soft Power: France's Strategic Information Initiatives in the Francophone World**

In gauging effectiveness through the lens of information, France has adroitly harnessed informational strategy to amplify its influence and extend the reach of its soft power, particularly within the Francophone world. As an ardent advocate of the French language and culture, France's historical commitment finds expression in its adept utilisation of diverse communication platforms to disseminate its soft power. A prime embodiment of this strategy is exemplified by the establishment and dissemination of TV5Monde (Adleiba & Sakaev, 2019). As a global television network, TV5Monde diffuses French-language content globally, reaching an impressive 260 million households in over 200 countries. This extensive outreach positions it as one of the most widely distributed broadcasting networks. The strategic utilisation of television augments the projection of French culture, constituting a potent instrument for enhancing France's soft power.

Beyond media avenues, France has strategically cultivated alliances with other nations, exemplified by establishing the International Organisation of La Francophonie (IOF) (Adleiba & Sakaev, 2019). This cooperative union of nations, united by adopting French as an official language, underscores the collective endeavour to promote linguistic and cultural heritage on a global scale. Through these concerted endeavours, these nations collectively foster the propagation of their language and culture, thereby amplifying the expansive influence of French soft power. Equally instrumental in bolstering France's cultural resonance is its substantial commitment to education as an avenue for global outreach. The nation's considerable investments span a network of educational institutions worldwide that offer instruction in French, encompassing primary schools, secondary schools, and even universities (Adleiba & Sakaev, 2019). This initiative transcends geographical boundaries, providing access to French education and cultivating cultural affinity.

Notably, France extends its influence by granting scholarships to international students who seek to immerse themselves in its language and culture, thus fortifying the appeal of its soft power. In effect, France's strategic information endeavours, manifest through the multifaceted initiatives of TV5Monde, collaborative alliances exemplified by IOF, and educational investments, form a cohesive tapestry that advances its influence and soft power prominence, particularly within the Francophone milieu. These deliberate measures collectively orchestrate the dissemination of French cultural influence on a global canvas, elevating France's position as a prominent soft power influencer.

### **Unveiling France's Strategic Military Proficiency in Global Diplomacy**

France's prowess in employing military capabilities as a tool of statecraft stands as a testament to its impactful influence on the international stage. With a rich historical legacy of integrating military force into diplomatic endeavours, France manoeuvres its military-industrial complex to assert its presence and reshape global dynamics.

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## THE PRACTICE OF STATECRAFT BY GREAT POWERS: THE FRENCH IN AN EVOLVING EUROPE

France substantiates its role as a formidable player in international affairs through a multifaceted approach encompassing peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and advanced weapons systems. The confrontation with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) exemplifies France's military effectiveness in statecraft. Emerging as a linchpin in the coalition against this terrorist organisation, France engaged in targeted airstrikes to dismantle its strongholds. Complementing these efforts, the deployment of French special forces in training and assisting local troops underscored the nation's commitment to combating terrorism and fostering stability. This pragmatic utilisation of military assets underscores France's resolve to confront threats and foster security across strategically vital regions. France's dedication to peacekeeping operations on a global scale further underscores its military statecraft prowess.

French troops collaborate with local forces to counter extremist elements and restore stability across various African nations, including its former colonies, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso (Yates, 2018). This hands-on involvement amplifies France's role as a peacemaker and security enabler, spotlighting its readiness to employ military might for constructive ends. Evident in the strategic use of the French Foreign Legion, France showcases its ability to mitigate domestic sensitivities while projecting force globally. A historically rooted establishment, the Legion, composed of non-French citizens, emerges as the vanguard of the French Armed Forces. Swiftly deployable to diverse theatres, this elite unit minimises potential domestic fallout by reducing casualties among French citizens, thus ensuring the nation's diplomatic objectives are pursued with minimal domestic unrest.

The unveiling of France's Indo-Pacific Strategy in 2021 underscores its expanding influence in Southeast Asia. By partnering with the USA, Australia, and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Freedom of Navigation Operations within the South China Sea, France manifests its role as a global power with an extensive reach. This strategic foray into the Indo-Pacific region accentuates its prowess in statecraft, reinforcing its position as a significant global player (Defence, n.d). In summation, France's effectiveness in statecraft is founded in its formidable military capabilities. These capabilities enable France to exhibit its leadership on the global stage, intertwining diplomacy with military strength to shape international affairs and champion stability. Through its historical legacy, strategic deployments, and innovative initiatives, France navigates complex geopolitical landscapes with finesse, leaving an indelible mark on global diplomacy.

### **France's Multifaceted Economic Diplomacy: A Global Powerhouse in Action**

France is an essential economic power in Europe and throughout the world. It has a diversified economy focusing on finance, tourism, and professional services. As an economic instrument, the French government uses foreign aid assistance programs, infrastructure financing projects, and economic packages to support its economy and other countries in need. The country also ranks among the globe's leading foreign aid contributors, showcasing its commitment through significant donations.

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In 2020 alone, France extended a substantial €12.15 billion in official development assistance (ODA) to recipient nations (Development, 2022). This assistance takes various forms, such as grants, loans at preferential rates, and technical assistance. The French Development Agency (AFD) is the primary channel for France's development aid. It provides financing for projects related to agriculture, health, education, and infrastructure (Development, 2022). Infrastructure Financing Projects are also critical for France to exercise its statecraft. France has participated in numerous infrastructure financing projects through various channels. One notable example is the European Investment Bank (EIB), which provides financing for infrastructure projects within the EU. France is a member of the EU and thus contributes to these financing efforts. Additionally, France has bilateral agreements with other countries for infrastructure investments. For example, France partnered with Japan to support the construction of a high-speed rail line in India. Besides that, the French government has implemented various economic packages to support its economy during times of crisis or difficulty. Using the DIME model, it is evident that France effectively exercised its statecraft. In all fields of the model, France can stand head-to-head with the other great power nations and can project itself as a prosperous nation. It is evident that if France can maintain its current trends, it will continue to grow and become an increasingly more important player on the global stage.

### Challenges in Exercising Statecraft

France is one of the world's most influential states thanks to its significant role in international politics, economy, and culture. Nevertheless, France faces numerous challenges in exercising its statecraft, which require careful analysis and consideration. The first challenge is domestic. France faces an identity crisis that touches on its fundamental values, heritage, and identity as a nation-state. While some proponents of French nationalism believe that France must adhere to its established cultural values, others argue that France must adopt a multicultural approach that views diversity as a strength. These domestic pressures can constrain France's ability to exercise its statecraft, including issues related to political instability, populist politics, and social unrest (Zwick, 2019). This debate has created a complex situation for France's diplomacy, as France's position on these issues can create tension among various regions, cultures, religions, and ethnic groups worldwide.

The second key challenge is that of French diplomacy. France is grappling with the challenge of diminishing resources for its diplomacy operations. The government of France has been cutting its resources for foreign operations, such as its embassies, consulates, and cultural offices in different parts of the world (Brunet, 2022). This creates significant hurdles in implementing policies and achieving French objectives within the international community. In addition to these diplomatic constraints, France faces challenges as it operates within a global system of alliances, treaties, and regulations that can limit its freedom of action. Despite this, France continues to exercise its diplomatic tools in the interest of its own economic and diplomatic gains when necessary.

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The third challenge is the economy, where France faces the challenge of advancing its economic and commercial interests in a fast-changing global economy. Competing with nations like China, the USA, and other European countries requires extensive efforts to optimise diplomatic efforts to achieve French economic objectives. Intellectual property rights, foreign investment policies, and trade regulations significantly influence how France can advance its commercial interests. Apart from global economic issues, the French also face domestic economic challenges like unemployment and low growth rates that can limit France's ability to pursue its foreign policy aims.

Security is France's fourth challenge with the daunting task of combating terrorism and preventing extremism. France has been a target of numerous terrorist attacks in recent years, and the threat of terrorism remains high. The government of France is actively participating in the international fight against terrorism, but this is not without challenges. The country faces numerous security threats, including terrorism, cyber-security, and organised crime, that require significant resources and strategic planning. Through the coordinated effort between the French Armed Forces and the other national security organisations, France has maintained a high level of security within the country. The fifth challenge is that the nation struggles to maintain its international reputation and influence while maintaining itself as a democratic institution and upholding human rights. France has been criticised for its treatment of refugees, discrimination against ethnic or religious minorities and ever-increasing controversial policing tactics (Human Rights Watch, 2021). These conflicts can create a perception of instability and divisiveness that can negatively impact France's diplomatic efforts worldwide. France must address the immigration challenge by promoting greater integration of refugees and adopting a more holistic approach that includes better development policies for countries that produce migrants.

Finally, France faces the challenge of balancing its interests in its former colonies and its current international interests. France has a significant stake in its former African colonies and its current position in global politics. However, there can be conflicts between these two interests when France is viewed as having a colonialist agenda. These issues require balancing interests and facing the complexities that arise when a great power has deep historical, political, and economic ties to its former colonial possessions. Therefore, France's ability to exercise its statecraft is a complex task requiring extensive knowledge, agility, and the ability to address numerous challenges. These challenges include an identity crisis, diplomacy, advancing economic and commercial interests, combating terrorism, maintaining democratic institutions, and balancing its interests in former colonies versus current global interests. National efforts in exercising statecraft must be strategic and adept in navigating these challenges to support France's continued global influence.

Overall, the challenges faced by France require a delicate balance between domestic pressures and international obligations, strategic planning, and practical implementation.

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### Conclusion

Great Power Nations are elite nations with economic, military, technological, informational, and diplomatic powers. The EU is considered a great power, with France being the only country classified as such. France's independence, strategic vision, stable business climate, educated population, and talented workforce make it an attractive destination for foreign investment. The war in Europe has revealed the continent's competence and determination, strengthening the EU and the North Alliance Treaty Organisation (NATO) alliance. Post-BREXIT, France and Germany are considered the two most powerful nations in Europe, with competition focusing on economy, defence, and diplomacy.

France's strong economy, political influence, military strength, and cultural impact make it a great power due to its geographical expansiveness and strategic positioning. It has pursued a policy of balancing European power through alliances, such as the EU, to maintain its dominant power. Post-BREXIT, France has risen to take its place in the power vacuum and pushed the EU closer together to strengthen its economic perspective and ensure its security. France's diplomacy and negotiation skills have been crucial in its foreign policy, establishing itself as a mediator in regional conflicts and shaping EU policies. France's historical depth, strategic positioning, and diplomatic corps have enabled it to navigate intricate international dynamics, ensuring its pivotal role on the global stage and enduring influence on international affairs. France has effectively utilised informational strategies to expand its soft power, particularly within the Francophone world, through diverse communication platforms and educational investments. This approach led to the establishment of French-language educational institutions worldwide, fostering cultural affinity and granting scholarships to international students. France's strategic military proficiency in global diplomacy is evident in its ability to integrate military force into diplomatic endeavours.

The French Foreign Legion mitigates domestic sensitivities while projecting force globally. The Indo-Pacific Strategy, launched in 2021, further strengthens France's position as a global power by partnering with the USA, Australia, and ASEAN in Freedom of Navigation Operations within the South China Sea. France's diversified economy, focusing on finance, tourism, and professional services, has led to its involvement in foreign aid assistance programs, infrastructure financing projects, and economic packages. However, France faces challenges in exercising its statecraft, including domestic identity crisis, diminishing resources for diplomacy operations, the economy, security threats, immigration, and balancing interests in former colonies and current international interests.

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**Captain Sonny Iskandar bin Rasani**

Captain Sonny Iskandar bin Rasani, Royal Brunei Navy, was commissioned into the Royal Brunei Navy (RBN) as an Executive Branch Officer in 2002 after completing his recruit training at Institute Latihan ABDB and his initial officers training at HMNZS TAMAKI in Auckland, New Zealand. Throughout his career, he has commanded several vessels, most notably the DARUSSALAM CLASS patrol vessel. Prior to attending the National Resilience College, he was the inaugural Defence Advisor for Brunei Darussalam to Australia. Capt Sonny Iskandar, RBN, graduated from the Royal Brunei Armed Forces Command and Staff College in 2015, where he graduated with a Master's in International Security Studies and was also the recipient of the Commandants Award.

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## CITIZEN JOURNALISM AND THE PEOPLE'S SECURITY

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### Abstract

*Across the world, internet use has impacted citizenship and governance, which in some cases has put societal security at stake. Events such as the overthrow of regimes in the Middle East during the Arab Spring and the COVID-19 pandemic, both globally and in Malaysia, have proven the potential of new media platforms as media of change. The proliferation of powerful new technological tools such as social media and other messaging platforms has aided citizens in becoming spreaders of news. These technologies need more editorial oversight to determine what constitutes news. The citizen journalist is not concerned with professionalism and journalistic ethics, which gives journalism a distinctive mission and modus operandi. This article seeks to explore how citizen journalism content has influenced the social security of Malaysians. It is to evaluate the impacts of citizen journalism on people's security in Malaysia to increase awareness and knowledge of the people regarding the risks, preventive measures and other related information. The content of this paper is divided into three sections, namely, the conceptual definitions of citizen journalism, the impacts of misinformation on people's security, and suggestions for curtailing the spread of fake news. Using a systematic library research approach, the findings indicate that the uncontrolled spread of fake news through citizen journalism may result in severe consequences for people's safety and security, both online and offline. However, citizen journalism can provide a valuable and diverse news source and perspectives if adequately engaged. As the media landscape evolves, citizen journalism will likely play an increasingly important role in shaping how we consume and share news and information. As a preliminary study, this paper only uses secondary data collection to address the problem statement.*

**Keywords:** citizen journalism, disinformation; fake news; misinformation; social media

### Introduction

The broad availability of cell phones and internet connections in the current digital era has made it possible for regular people to take on the responsibilities of writers and even journalists to some level. Recent years have seen a significant increase in the popularity of citizen journalism, a phenomenon where non-professional journalists acquire, examine, and disseminate news and information (Friedland, 2009). While many applaud citizen journalism for its potential to democratise information sharing, others are concerned about how it may affect the trustworthiness and integrity of conventional professional journalism. The article explores how citizen journalism affects people's security, the effects of false information on public safety, and recommendations for preventing the spread of fake news. According to Tilak (2020), professional journalism comprises the painstaking collecting, verifying, and distributing information across various media platforms while adhering sternly to high standards of ethics and professionalism.

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Professional journalists are committed to informing the public about topics that are important to and interesting to the general public while upholding ideals like truth, fairness, objectivity, and openness. They also get acquainted with the rules that govern their sector, such as those that deal with privacy, access to information, and the use of defamatory and slanderous language (Tilak, 2020). These journalists work to protect the public from being exposed to incorrect information by keeping a particular degree of neutrality in their reporting.

Protecting the public's right to accurate information is crucial to professional journalism (Special Rapporteurship for Freedom of Expression, 2009). Most journalists in this field work for for-profit news organisations, and it is their responsibility to uphold journalistic ethics while producing information. This dedication to moral principles ensures that the news delivered to the public is based on reality and fact rather than conjecture or prejudice. The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code of Ethics strongly emphasises the value of pursuing the truth and disseminating correct information to the general audience (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014). The methodology of professional journalism differs from the alternate viewpoint citizen journalism provides. While citizen journalists may not have formal training or conventional credentials, they make up for it with their enthusiasm for sharing knowledge and first-hand experiences often unexplored by primary media sources. This community-based method of reporting may provide details about nearby occurrences and problems that would otherwise be missed (Bowman & Willis, 2003); (Chung, Nah & Yamamoto, 2018) & (Domingo et al., 2008).

However, the need for more professional education and supervision in citizen journalism raises concerns about the veracity and integrity of the data presented. Citizen journalists may only sometimes have a consistent framework to follow, which might jeopardise the accuracy of their reporting, in contrast to professional journalists who are constrained by ethical standards that have been established. However, citizen journalism has the potential to be an essential addition to the current landscape of conventional journalism due to its capacity to cover news that more prominent media organisations would overlook (Salve Regina University, 2023).

Therefore, the rise of citizen journalism in the digital age has given professional journalists both possibilities and problems. While professional journalists adhere to strong norms of objectivity and transparency, citizen journalism relies on its grassroots approach and capacity to highlight regional viewpoints. Understanding how citizen journalism affects people's security and differs from professional journalism will help us understand how the media landscape is changing and how crucial it is for modern society to disseminate accurate information. Citizen journalism refers to public members engaging in journalistic activities, such as reporting news and giving out information, often using digital and social media platforms (Friedland, 2009). It involves individuals who are not professional journalists but have access to the tools and technologies necessary to share information with a broader audience. It can be a valuable source of alternative perspectives and first-hand accounts of events that traditional news outlets may not cover.

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Thus, it serves as a counterforce by providing alternative, diverse, and independent sources of information and perspectives that challenge mainstream narratives or propaganda. Citizen journalists usually have access to local or niche knowledge and experiences overlooked or side-lined by traditional media. According to M. Mahamed (2021), citizen journalism has become trendy in recent years due to the widespread availability of social media that allows people to quickly and easily document and share news, information and their observations with others through various blogs, videos, or podcasts. To a certain point, citizen journalists are effective assessors of traditional journalists by challenging them as the mouthpieces of governments or media ownership, but in fact, to serve a broader public audience. People's voices would not have been heard globally without citizen journalists joining the mediascape (Miller, 2019).

Citizen journalism and fake news are two distinct subjects. However, it is often treated as an interconnected phenomenon due to their lack of regulation and how they may impact people's security. Citizen journalism is likely to contribute to producing fake news if it lacks the necessary standards of accuracy, credibility and accountability. Non-professional journalists may not have the training, expertise, or resources to verify the information they gather and report, and they may have biases, interests, or agendas that influence their reporting. This can lead to the spreading of rumours or hoaxes that are not based on factual "evidence" but hearsay or speculation.

Darbo and Skjerdal (2019) supported the argument that citizen journalism has limitations, such as the lack of professional training and resources, which can affect the quality and credibility of their news stories. This paper focuses primarily on fake news, but other related terms, including disinformation, misinformation, and hoax, will also be used. There are distinct differences between these terms. According to Bhattacharyya and Miller (2023), "fake news" refers to intentionally false or misleading information presented as news or factual reporting. It is designed to deceive or manipulate readers or viewers for various purposes, such as spreading propaganda, influencing public opinion, or generating revenue through clickbait headlines.

"Disinformation" describes information intentionally created and disseminated to cause harm to individuals, social groups, organisations, or countries. It is deliberately spreading false or misleading information to deceive or manipulate others. "Misinformation", on the other hand, refers to incorrect information that is not necessarily created with the intent to cause harm. It can result from genuine mistakes, misunderstandings, or the spread of rumours. Unlike "disinformation", "misinformation" is not intentionally deceptive, but it can still have negative consequences by misleading people and influencing their beliefs or actions (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017); (Tandoc, Lim & Ling, 2017).

"Hoax" denotes an act of deception or fraudulence that leads individuals to accept something false and often absurd as genuine. Hoaxes are usually created for amusement, to provoke a reaction, or to spread misinformation.

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They can take various forms, such as fake news stories, fabricated images or videos, or false claims. It is essential to be aware of these terms and their distinctions when discussing the spread of misleading or false information. Understanding the intentions behind creating and disseminating such content can help develop strategies to combat its impact on individuals and society. International Center for Journalists. (2018). A short guide to the history of 'fake news' and disinformation. This guide provides a brief history of fake news and disinformation and their impact on journalism and society (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

### **Implications of Misinformation or Fake News Against People's Security**

When people are driven to have rapid news flashes, the alternative media becomes the go-to place to satisfy the need for sensational news. Meanwhile, the uncontrollable desire in human psychology to share stirring stories has created a perfect storm for the spread of unverified news or fake news. Fake news is intentionally misleading or false information spread through various platforms designed to manipulate public opinion or scatter confusion to gain attention, popularity and sometimes monetary gain (Tandoc, 2018). People also tend to seek out information that confirms their preconceived notions and opinions and thus become more susceptible to accepting fake news that supports their views while rejecting any other news, including true ones that contradict them.

Additionally, the decentralised and often unregulated nature of social media can make it difficult to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information, further complicating the issue. If unchecked and uncontrolled, the inaccuracy and unreliable information can spread quickly, causing panic and confusion and potentially harming people. Therefore, citizen journalism can positively and negatively impact people's security, depending on how it is applied and the specific context in which it occurs. A common theme that reoccurs in the literature of citizen journalism is that it fills a perceived gap in news coverage left by shrinking news resources or biases (Miller, 2019).

To explain how citizen journalism can impact people's security, the paper will explore three scenarios that have taken place both in international and local realms. The three events will expound on the implications of unverified news and information that spread without control and influence people's political, social, and well-being through media misuse as a significant tool for uncertainties. It also highlighted the challenges and risks associated with these social media, including spreading misinformation and propaganda, government hype and repression, and the potential misconception of people's uncertainties and insecurities. Many other studies contribute to the research of fake news. Nielsen and Graves (2017) examine audience perspectives on fake news and identify the factors that contribute to the spread of fake news. Ireton and Posetti (2018) highlight the importance of enhanced professional journalistic skills to compete as a credible alternative to counterfeit news. The Brookings Institution (2017) provides strategies for combating fake news and disinformation, including using public interest algorithms and benchmark datasets for fake news detection.

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Pennycook and Rand (2021) examine the role of psychological and behavioural science in understanding and mitigating the impact of fake news on social media. These academic references provide insights into the definitions and typologies of hoaxes, fake news, and disinformation and their effects on individuals and society. They also highlight the importance of understanding the intentions behind creating and disseminating such content and developing strategies to combat its impact on individuals and society.

### **The Propagation of Misinformation During the 2010-2011 "Arab Spring" Uprisings**

The Arab Spring uprisings of 2010-2011 ignited widespread optimism for democratic transformation across at least six Arab nations, fostering expectations of sweeping political, economic, and social reform throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. However, these aspirations were soon clouded by a deluge of misinformation, disinformation, and hoaxes that infiltrated the internet, sapping the vitality of these movements (The Jakarta Post, 2022).

The upheavals, which originated in Tunisia and reverberated across countries such as Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria, were instigated primarily by a desire for political change, economic equity, and social justice. Rooted in grievances against corruption, poverty, limited political freedoms, and authoritarian rule, as Banaji (2018) argued, these protests swiftly traversed national boundaries, sweeping Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria. The ensuing years saw the toppling of autocratic leaders, including Tunisia's Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (2011), Libya's Muammar Gaddafi (2011), Egypt's Hosni Mubarak (2011), and Yemen's Ali Abdullah Saleh (2012). This wave of transformation triggered substantial uprisings and social unrest, catalysing riots, civil conflicts, and insurgencies in adjacent states due to the contagious effects of these events.

False rumours and exaggerated stories were spread to manipulate public opinion, inflame tensions, and escalating violence. The substance of political disinformation ranges from seemingly credible to completely unbelievable (Smart, 2022). The Arab Spring was greatly aided using social media and other digital technologies, which made it easier for activists and demonstrators to communicate, coordinate, and mobilise. Protestors could organise demonstrations, exchange information and ideas, and document the events in real time using social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. However, Wolfsfeld, Segev, and Sheafer (2013) argued that the impact of social media on the uprisings is debatable. Some argue that social media was crucial in mobilising and organising the protests, while others suggest its impact was overstated.

Due to the frequent censorship or control by authoritarian governments on conventional media outlets, these social media platforms provide an alternative means to bypass them. Their message was amplified, and their cause had significantly gained momentum. In addition to social media, mobile phones have allowed protesters to communicate swiftly and efficiently.

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At the same time, SMS messaging facilitated the spread of bulk text messages to coordinate events and share information (Banaji, 2018). Social media and digital technologies in the Arab Spring demonstrated their potential to facilitate mass mobilisation and political change in previously impossible ways. The spreading of misinformation and disinformation through social media platforms was a significant challenge during the Arab Spring uprisings. Therefore, the spread of misinformation and disinformation during the Arab Spring uprisings highlights the need for media literacy and critical thinking skills. It also underscores the importance of fact-checking and verifying information before sharing it on social media platforms (Pew Research Centre, 2012).

### **The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Spread of Infodemic Hoaxes**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Malaysia experienced an infodemic, which refers to the widespread dissemination of misinformation and disinformation related to the outbreak. The infodemic was fueled by citizen journalists through social media platforms, messaging applications, and other online channels, leading to the rapid spread of fake news. When hoax news broke, it quickly went viral and became an everyday trending topic (Mohamad, Tham, Ayub & Azlan, 2020). This poses a more significant problem because hoax news can disrupt the real news ecosystem, leading to mass anxiety social panic and impeding effective crisis management (WHO, 2022). The impact of the infodemic during the COVID-19 pandemic is not unique to Malaysia. It was a global phenomenon, with false information and conspiracy theories spreading rapidly on social media platforms (Rocha et al., 2021). The spread of false information and rumours on social media platforms also poses a challenge to public health services and has had implications for people's health (Tasnim, Hossain & Mazumder, 2020).

The fight against the infodemic has become a priority in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Clear and definitive public communication is crucial in countering misinformation and providing accurate information. Governments and organisations have recognised the importance of transparent and trustworthy communication to counter disinformation and build public trust. Fact-checking initiatives and media literacy programs have also played a significant role in combating the spread of misinformation. Subsequently, people's security is impacted when false information, such as the effectiveness of specific treatments and remedies for COVID-19, becomes dubious. This has led to individuals using unproven treatments instead of seeking medical attention, which can potentially endanger one's life (Rocha et al., 2021). It may also include excessive panic among the population, resulting in the hoarding of essential goods such as face masks, sanitisers, and food and medical supplies at the expense of the other vulnerable groups.

Meanwhile, a misled population can also demand governments to adopt inconsistent and misguided options neither based on science nor empirical evidence and reject vaccines based on what was preached by those 'self-proclaimed' medical practitioners.

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These uncertainties eventually led the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a global “infodemic”, which is defined as “an overabundance of information that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it” (Siwakoti et al., 2021). The government and health authorities must establish a dedicated portal to provide verified information about the pandemic. At the same time, they are launching public awareness campaigns to promote accurate information and encourage individuals to fact-check before sharing information. Instead of focusing on curing and curbing the spread of the virus, the government and health authorities have wasted valuable time combating the misinformation and false narratives. Laws and regulations were immediately enacted to punish those who spread incorrect information about COVID-19 to safeguard people’s security.

### Disinformation in Malaysia’s General Election

The third scenario is Malaysia’s 14th General Election (GE14), held in 2018. The election saw the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, which had been in power since independence in 1957, defeated by the opposition coalition, Pakatan Harapan (PH) (Daud, 2020). During the election campaign, citizen journalists spread disinformation aimed at discrediting the election commission and opposition candidates and inciting racial and religious tensions in the country through social media platforms.

These fake news stories were largely exploited to manipulate public opinions and stir the stability of the ruling party. It was and still is a significant concern to many Malaysians, as it threatened the integrity of the democratic process. Nonetheless, political disinformation is a phenomenon that has been around for a while in Malaysia (Shaari, 2016). It has always been disseminated through all accessible channels, whether mainstream, alternative, or social media. The spread of disinformation evolves in parallel with the advancement of communication platforms, where the expanse of fake news became greater and faster, as evidenced in the subsequent GE held.

The use of social media, particularly by the competing parties and their supporters, has played a significant role in this victory. There was an allegation that cyber troopers known as the Red Bean Army, funded by one of the contending parties, spread the news to shake voters’ judgement during the election period. They are known for using creative and humorous memes and videos on social media to broaden their political message and counter false information from opponents. The impact of the Red Bean Army on the GE results is challenging to quantify. However, it is widely believed that they helped to energise and mobilise young voters who had previously disengaged from politics (MT Webmaster, 2014).

According to Malaysia Today (2014), the primary purpose of the 800 members of the Red Bean Army, who work in cyberspace for a pay of RM3,000 apiece, is to cause trouble and chaos to the incumbent government, which was Barisan Nasional (BN) at the time. Ramesh Rao, president of Persatuan Minda dan Sosial Prihatin, said that the army targets easily duped citizens who readily accept any propaganda aimed against the government.

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In addition, the Malaysian Election Commission (EC) has been the target of disinformation attacks intended to undermine trust in the country's electoral system and create a negative perception of election officials. For example, during the May 2013 general election, a rumour was that 40,000 Bangladeshi citizens were used as phantom voters (Kamarudin, 2013).

Misinformation also circulated on social media about the EC allowing police and army personnel to vote early and claiming that ballot boxes had been "tampered with and that the election results were fraudulent to benefit the ruling party" (Hazis, 2023). Another viral social media message was about a power blackout during the GE 13 vote counting procedure. The issue was only cleared after a statement issued by Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) that none of the counting sites encountered power outages during the counting process. (TNB, 2018).

The EC continuously works hard to rebuild public trust by initiating strategies to ascertain and secure the EC's independence by increasing polling transparency and consistently combatting misinformation (Hazis, 2023). However, incidents likely had diverse effects on the Malaysian populace, influencing their participation in the democratic process and shaping their perspectives on the nation's political environment. This misinformation and disinformation of the Malaysian Election Commission may have fostered mistrust, generated a sense of ambiguity, and cultivated scepticism within the Malaysian populace.

The 1MDB fiasco also indirectly contributed to the end-game of BN in the 2018 GE, and the sentiment was well exploited through the massive manipulation of citizen journalists to undermine the then government further. Even though the news brought the perpetrators to justice, the effect can be reversed if not cordoned off and controlled via stringent laws and regulations. In response to much of the disinformation, the government passed the Anti-Fake News Act 2018, which criminalised the dissemination of any false information (Buchanan, 2018). Nevertheless, the Act was revoked in 2019 following widespread criticism of its potential impact on freedom of speech and the media. While the Act aimed to combat the spread of disinformation, its revocation was driven by concerns about its potential impact on freedom of speech and the media. The Act's enactment and subsequent revocation reflect the ongoing debate about balancing addressing disinformation and safeguarding democratic principles.

The impact of citizen journalists spreading fake news and misinformation on people's security during the GE continued to be a significant concern in Malaysian politics now and in the foreseeable future if efforts to curb the spread are not in place. It will continue to undermine public trust in government institutions, news media, and other authoritative sources of information. This, in turn, can make people more vulnerable to manipulation and disinformation campaigns, further undermining their security.

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### Recommendations to Curtail the Spread of Fake News

With all three scenarios discussed and their impact on people's security, it is imperative to curtail the negativity of citizen journalism. As mentioned, disinformation is not new; it has been regularly produced and disseminated from print to social media, fuelled by innovative technology and new forms of digital communications. Curbing the spread of fake news requires a collaborative effort from individuals, social media platforms, and established news organisations (Femi Olan, 2022). By taking proactive steps to promote media literacy and fact-checking, the impact of fake news on people's security can be reduced, whilst accurate information can be shared. Like any other initiative, it has to start with the people as the means, first to manage the situation, followed by technology to contain the case.

The first step in combating fake news is educating people about prevailing issues. As Nasery, Turel, and Yuan (n.d) argue, the community should learn how to identify and distinguish between real news and fake news and be sceptical of headings that seem too good to be true. Secondly, exercise fact-checking to verify its accuracy through multiple reputable sources before sharing any information, for example, paying particular attention to quotes, references, and dates. This practice should stimulate critical thinking abilities to promote the media literacy community (Li & Chang, 2023). The third is to subscribe to credible news sources known for their reputation for accuracy and impartiality. Never consume or use ambiguous sources known to publish fake news or propaganda.

Next is to practice reporting incidents concerning fake news and channel the report to the relevant authority. Lastly, it is to support reputable news organisations by subscribing to their services or sharing their content to ensure they can continue producing accurate and reliable news. The relevant authority should continue to enact legal measures to address disinformation while keeping pace with the technologies. These legislations will include the Penal Code, the Printing Presses and Publication Act, the Communication and Multimedia Act, the Anti-Fake News Act, and the Emergency Ordinance meant to contain those issues aforesaid (Gomez, 2022). Similarly, a nationwide state of emergency was declared to tackle the spread of COVID-19 in January 2021 via the Emergency (Essential Powers) (No.2) Ordinance. The Emergency Ordinance 2021 was promulgated to establish several criminal offences relating to fake news about the COVID-19 pandemic (Gomez, 2022).

The Ordinance criminalised creating, offering or publishing fake news or publications containing fake news. The Ordinance aimed to tackle rampant fake news related to COVID-19 and help expedite enforcement, investigation, and prosecution by authorities. Although these laws apply to all forms of disinformation, concerns have been expressed by media, academics, and activists that officials could have misused the laws to target political opponents and critics of government policies.

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Ministry of Communications and Multimedia and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), on 14 March 2017, introduced a portal called *Sebenarnya.my*, a fact-checking website (MCMC, 2017). The web portal was designed as a proactive approach by the government as a one-stop centre for citizens to verify the authenticity of online news to ensure netizens receive genuine content. It was a product of the collaboration between multiple ministries, government departments and agencies that work to verify and debunk relevant news or information. The fact-checking website tagline was 'Tak Pasti Jangan Kongsi (when in doubt, do not share)'. Nevertheless, fact-checking initiatives have limitations, especially when dealing with intense fake news circulation. Fact-checking cannot address every piece of information and fake news, particularly those circulated in private groups on social media platforms and messaging applications (Lim, 2018).

Apart from enacting laws and regulations to safeguard people's security, curtailing the spread of fake news will eventually bring back the trust in media. A coordinated and collaborative group of information technology (IT) and media experts, writers, editors, and psychologists should work together to devise measures to crack down on cyberterrorists and counter fake news. Once these are set, people can rely on news sources for accurate and reliable information, leading to a more informed public and a healthier democracy. It will also reduce polarisation and promote civil discourse by inspiring accurate and balanced reporting and encouraging critical thinking (James Geary, 2019).

Therefore, the tension among citizens will be eliminated and replaced by greater social cohesion via fostering a sense of shared values and common purpose. On the other hand, the risk to public security will be improved when false information concerning health crises, misconceptions and different types of emergencies leading to panic and confusion are eradicated. People with access to accurate information are better equipped to make informed decisions about their lives, communities, and government. Curtailing fake news can help ensure people have the information they need for the best possible choices. Promoting accurate and reliable reporting can help ensure that the report is trustworthy and informative.

### **Advantages of Citizen Journalism in the Rapid IT Era**

It is not all gloomy and ominous about citizen journalism. In this rapid digital era, mainstream and citizen journalism should complement each other to continuously provide people with the latest and fresh news (Paulussen, 2007). They should act as a check and balance to prove fairness in news reporting, covering every angle of the stories. For the public, the advantages of having citizen journalism are the diverse standpoint that allows for a variable range of perspectives that might not be represented in traditional media to be heard. As it happens, the immediate reporting of breaking news can be instantly disseminated across social media and mobile technology amid eyewitness accounts as they unfold. This is valuable during emergencies, along with authentic coverage of citizen journalists' bond to the news.

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A greater sense of trust and credibility among audiences is developed as individuals become more involved with an active role in reporting and sharing news. Citizen journalism can be valuable for promoting a more diverse, transparent, and informed media landscape. However, it is essential to note that citizen journalists may sometimes have different training or ethical standards than professional journalists. Their reports should always be verified before being shared or acted upon. Furthermore, the proliferation of fake news and misinformation has made it more difficult to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information.

### Conclusion

People's safety and security will suffer severe consequences if the unconstrained fake news can proliferate through citizen journalism both online and offline. However, if appropriately implemented, citizen journalism can offer a valuable and varied source of news and viewpoints, especially in cases where traditional media outlets might not have the resources or interest to cover specific issues. As an alternative news bearer, it can deliver independent perspectives on events, challenge false or misleading narratives, and help to set the record straight. In addition, citizen journalists can use their platforms to educate the public about the importance of fact-checking and responsible reporting.

Nonetheless, the disinformation in Malaysia is still impacting people's security since existing legal and non-legal measures have not adequately addressed it. Disinformation is hard to be battled by a single method or individual. It necessitates all-encompassing approaches and cooperation from all stakeholders, particularly during large-scale events like GE, disease outbreaks, political disorder, and other affairs that involve the whole nation. However, these efforts should not be overdone to deprive citizens of the freedom to express themselves. Upholding accuracy, fairness, and impartiality is vital to maintaining credibility and avoiding harming others. As the media landscape evolves, citizen journalism will likely play an increasingly important role in shaping how we consume and share news and information.

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**Brigadier General Norli Hisham bin Alwi RMAF**

Brigadier General Norli Hisham bin Alwi RMAF was commissioned as a 2nd Lt on the 9th of February 1991. He then underwent basic and advanced flying course in 1992 at the RMAF College, Alor Star, before continuing his basic and advanced Fighter conversion at No 15 Squadron, Butterworth. Brigadier General Norli Hisham is a pilot by profession, flying mainly on the Hawk Mk108/208 and F/A-18D Hornet from 1993 up until 2008. He served as the operational pilot in No 9, No 6 and No 18 Squadron, respectively. On completion of his staff course, he has held several appointments at the various levels in the RMAF Command Structure. He was a SO 2 Standards and Safety in No 1 Air Division, SO 2 Fighter in Air Warfare Centre (AWC), SO 1 Operations in Air Operation HQ, SO 1 Operations and Doctrine in RMAF HQ Operation and Strategic Division (MTU-BOS), Director of Air Cooperation at MTU-BOS, AWC Commander, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, Planning and Development, in RMAF Headquarters, and he was the Base Commander for Butterworth Air Base in 2022. He holds a Diploma in Strategic Studies (Phase II PME) from Air University, Maxwell AB, a Diploma in Strategic and Defense Studies (UM) and an Executive Diploma in Engineering Management (UTM).

## ADDRESSING CORRUPTION AND ENHANCING GOVERNANCE IN MALAYSIA: NAVIGATING CHALLENGES AND PROPOSALS FOR MILITARY PROJECTS

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### Abstract

*Maintaining good governance is essential to ensuring the absence of corruption in the execution of government projects, whether through open bidding or direct agreements. However, the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) Project did not abide by these principles. This article explores Good Governance, Work Ethics, Corruption, and Integrity, examining each issue relating to the topic of discussion. Southeast Asian countries routinely rank among the most corrupt in the world, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2021, and political corruption is still a significant problem. This research explores the regional systemic prevalence of corruption with a particular emphasis on the Malaysian setting. The investigation highlights patronage networks' complex roles, weak implementation of the rule of law, and inadequate accountability systems in Southeast Asia's corruption dilemma. Exploring prominent corruption instances in Malaysia, such as the notorious 1MDB controversy involving former Prime Minister Najib Razak, is at the core of this investigation. The essay highlights the adverse effects of political interference in military projects. It emphasises the need for government efforts to align with the fundamentals of good governance to protect the populace's interests. It accentuates the wide-ranging effects of improper political influence by using examples of poor governance within military endeavours in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia. The Malaysian government's steps in creating anti-corruption organisations and adopting strict laws and rules are examined. It acknowledges that the battle against corruption continues and calls for constant work from all involved. The importance of integrity within the Malaysian government lies at the heart of the story, as shown by programmes like the National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP) created to strengthen integrity and combat corruption. The essay emphasises the urgent need for more openness, strong responsibility, and unflinching integrity across Southeast Asia—a communal need for guaranteeing the region's sustainability and ongoing advancement.*

**Keywords:** *Corruption, Good Governance, Military Projects, Political Corruption, Southeast Asian Countries*

### Introduction

Good governance is “exercising economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences.” (United Nations Development Programme, 1997). Some indicators of good governance may include accountability, where leaders and public officials are held responsible for their actions and responsibility in decision-making and policy implementation. Another crucial factor is transparency, where governmental actions are conducted openly and transparently, providing citizens access to comprehensive information regarding the government's decisions and undertakings (Gisselquist, 2012).

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Additionally, the efficiency and effectiveness of government policies play a pivotal role, followed closely by the fundamental principle of the rule of law, ensuring that laws and regulations are applied equitably and without bias. Effective governance should be considered for government projects, whether open bidding or direct negotiations, to guarantee they may be completed successfully. However, the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) project diverges from this ideal scenario. Despite the imperative for robust project management practices, the LCS project is a clear exception, characterised by a notable departure from the principles that typically underpin successful military endeavours. In this case, the prevailing circumstances deviate from the established norms of effective governance and project execution. The LCS project's deviations are evident in various aspects, from planning and execution to oversight and political influence. These deviations shadow the project's trajectory and outcomes, highlighting potential shortcomings in critical areas essential for ensuring the project's success and alignment with strategic goals.

The contract between the government and Boustead Naval Shipyard Sdn Bhd (BNS) was given via direct negotiation, and as of 2019, RM6 billion had been paid in total without any ships having been delivered, according to the Public Accounts Committee's (PAC) report. Mismanagement, a lack of transparency, and irregularities by the government are causing history to be repeated, just as they did with 1MDB and Sapura Energy Sdn Bhd (George, 2022). The LCS project presents a case scenario in which the expected best practices have not been adequately realised, prompting the need for an in-depth examination of the factors contributing to this divergence. By scrutinising the specific challenges, decisions, and dynamics that have led to this departure from established norms, valuable insights can be gleaned to prevent similar deviations in future military projects and enhance the overall efficacy of project management and governance.

An article by the New Straits Times (2019) discusses the sudden silence over Malaysia's Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) project and raises questions about transparency and accountability. Responsible parties, which includes the government, should take the LCS scandal as a cue to work towards a more open and efficient procurement system. Even though it is a complicated problem brought on by bureaucracy, the LCS scandal has raised awareness of potential corruption and money-related leaks among more people. Therefore, they should be more apprehensive about what comes next. A functional democracy depends on excellent governance, crucial to advancing social welfare, political stability, and economic prosperity. According to the United Nations (2015), good governance and its components include the importance of accountability, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, and the rule of law in ensuring responsible conduct in public affairs and the management of public resources. It is the principles of corporate governance and the role of good governance in achieving sustainable development.

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## ADDRESSING CORRUPTION AND ENHANCING GOVERNANCE IN MALAYSIA: NAVIGATING CHALLENGES AND PROPOSALS FOR MILITARY PROJECTS

The ramifications of failure in military projects extend beyond financial losses, encompassing the potential loss of human lives, a critical concern for any nation. Numerous factors contribute to the failure of military projects, including technical complexities, subpar planning, insufficient testing, political intervention, and the absence of independent oversight and review mechanisms. Adherence to project management's paramount practices becomes imperative to preempt these risks, involving meticulous planning, rigorous testing, and thorough evaluation. Furthermore, a concerted effort to curb political influence is essential, ensuring that military endeavours remain steered by strategic and operational objectives rather than political agendas. Political corruption is a significant issue in Southeast Asia, with several countries ranked among the most corrupt in the world. Corruption is a systemic problem that affects all levels of government and society, with patronage networks, the weak rule of law, and limited accountability mechanisms as contributing factors.

Malaysia has been entangled in several prominent cases, featuring the 1MDB scandal and the corruption allegations against Rosmah Mansor (Jones, 2020). The nation has also witnessed unsettling episodes like the Felda Investment Corporation (FIC) and Sabah Water Department scandals, casting a shadow of significant financial losses and eroding trust in multiple individuals. The deeply ingrained corruption in Malaysia stems from an intricate interplay of factors. The conspicuous lack of transparency and accountability across various sectors has created fertile ground for these practices to flourish. In tandem, vulnerabilities within the governance systems amplify the issue, creating an environment conducive to the persistence of unethical behaviour. Moreover, the insufficient enforcement of anti-corruption laws perpetuates the cycle of corrupt practices, thwarting efforts to curb their prevalence.

The government has made some efforts as preventive measures to combat the pervasive challenge of corruption. These include establishing specialised anti-corruption agencies and instituting more stringent laws and regulations. However, addressing the issue effectively necessitates consistent and sustained efforts underpinned by unyielding political will, unwavering dedication, and a united collaboration among all stakeholders. An illustrative initiative in this endeavour is the National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP), introduced by the Malaysian government in 2019 to fortify integrity and transparency within the public sector. The plan advocates for multifaceted actions, including enhancing governance and management practices, fortifying institutional and legal frameworks, and heightening public awareness about corruption. Despite these significant strides, achieving success requires dedication and meticulous attention to intricate details.

### Corruption in Southeast Asia

***“Radical Transparency. There is no going backwards. We must ensure that greater transparency will drive the prevention and uncovering of corruption in the years ahead.”***

Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank.

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The issue of political corruption holds considerable significance in Southeast Asia and has attracted extensive scrutiny through various studies and reports. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2021, which assesses perceived corruption levels, highlights the prevalence of corruption in several Southeast Asian nations, positioning them among the world's most corrupt. For instance, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos each scored below 30 out of 100 on the index, signifying substantial corruption levels. An analysis conducted by the Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, titled "Corruption in Southeast Asia: A Review of Research and Literature," underscores that the region's corruption transcends isolated instances, constituting a systemic issue that infiltrates all echelons of governance and society. The study underscores the pivotal roles of patronage networks, a weakened rule of law, and constrained accountability mechanisms in fostering corruption within Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, corruption has persisted, with the country's CPI 2021 rank being 102 out of 180. The nation's Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has played a pivotal role in investigating and prosecuting corruption cases. However, it has encountered challenges from political elites aiming to curtail its authority.

### Corruption in Malaysia

***"Malaysia is a great country and does not deserve this (regressing due to corruption and poor governance). We have capable Malays, Chinese, and Indians who can all work together, as well as those in Sabah and Sarawak... Choose the best (contractors) and reject those who are corrupt."***

Anwar Ibrahim, (2023)

Similarly, in Malaysia, corruption has ingrained itself across all layers of government and society. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index records the fluctuating trajectory of Malaysia's ranking over the years, ranging from a high of 52 in 1996 to a low of 61 in 2020 among 180 countries. Corruption has been a severe issue in Malaysia, with several high-profile cases. One known case is the 1MDB Scandal: The 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal is one of the biggest in Malaysian history. Millions of dollars were reportedly stolen from a public investment fund and utilised for personal advantage by former Prime Minister Najib Razak and his accomplices. Razak was eventually found guilty of multiple charges related to the scandal in July 2020. (Source: Reuters, "Former Malaysian PM Najib Razak Found Guilty of All Charges in 1MDB Trial," July 28, 2020).

Other corruption cases include Datin Sri Rosmah Mansor's corruption charges. Datin Sri Rosmah Mansor, the wife of former Prime Minister Dato Sri Najib Razak, has also faced corruption charges. She was charged with money laundering and receiving bribes concerning a solar power project in Sarawak. She is in court, fighting the allegations mentioned (Reuters, 2018). Next is the Felda Investment Scandal.

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The Felda Investment Corporation (FIC) controversy centred on the mishandling of funds at the Felda investment arm, which was established to assist Malaysia's smallholders. Millions of dollars were lost due to the incident, and numerous people were prosecuted in connection with it. (The Star, 2018). Another issue that came under scrutiny was the Sabah Water Department scandal. The Sabah Water Department scandal involved the embezzlement of millions of ringgits from the department responsible for managing the water supply in Sabah. Several individuals, including the department's former director, were charged with the case. (The Star, 2019).

Some factors contributing to corruption in Malaysia include a lack of transparency and accountability, weak governance systems, and inadequate enforcement of anti-corruption laws. The close relationship between business and politics has also led to conflicts of interest and rent-seeking behaviours. The government has taken several preventive measures to combat corruption, which has long been a significant challenge in Malaysia, including setting up special anti-corruption agencies and implementing stricter laws and regulations.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), established in 2009, is tasked with investigating and prosecuting corruption cases. In addition, the government has also implemented several reforms, such as the introduction of whistleblower protection laws and the establishment of special courts to hear corruption cases. Even with these courses of action by the government, corruption remains a significant issue in the country, and continued efforts are needed to address it effectively. Therefore, the effort to combat corruption efficiently requires political will, commitment, and sustained effort from all stakeholders, including government officials, organisations of civil society, and the general public.

### Political Interest in Military Projects

***“Good people do not need laws to tell them to act responsibly, while bad people will find a way around the laws”***

Plato

Politicians play a pivotal role in the inception, execution, and oversight of governmental initiatives. They are responsible for shaping the policy agenda and allocating resources to cater to the diverse needs of the citizenry. Moreover, politicians frequently collaborate closely with civil servants, contractors, and other stakeholders to ensure government projects' proficient and efficacious implementation. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that politicians wield the potential to exert influence over government projects in a manner that might not align with the utmost welfare of the populace. This influence might manifest in allocating resources to superfluous projects or exploiting government contracts to advance personal interests or those of their supporters. Such tendencies can precipitate the squandering of public resources and the inadvertent exclusion of marginalised segments of society from reaping the advantages of government projects.

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Politicians and government officials are compelled to uphold the tenets of sound governance, encompassing transparency, accountability, and participatory involvement to safeguard the alignment of government projects with the citizens' welfare. This mandates that politicians undertake the responsibility of orchestrating government projects with a disposition towards transparency and active public engagement, fostering a process that embraces openness and inclusivity. Moreover, it is incumbent upon them to diligently oversee the execution of government endeavours, ensuring vigilant monitoring and comprehensive evaluation to ascertain the realisation of stipulated goals and objectives.

Illustrative instances of deficient governance of military projects within the region are discernible. A case in point is Indonesia's endeavour to establish an indigenous fighter jet program, denominated the IFX, in collaboration with South Korea, as declared in 2019. Regrettably, this initiative has been beleaguered by persistent setbacks and financial constraints, compounded by reports underscoring discord between the two nations concerning technology transfer and intellectual property rights (The Diplomat, 2021). Another pertinent example is observed in the Philippines' Frigate Acquisition Project. Initiated in 2016, the Philippine Navy engaged Hyundai Heavy Industries of South Korea to construct two frigates for its military. Regretfully, the execution of this undertaking was marred by controversies surrounding the selection process and allegations of corruption.

Despite eventual project completion, the imbroglio precipitated the resignation of several senior officials within the Filipino Navy, underscoring the deleterious ramifications of such lapses in governance (Defense News 2018). Within the context of Malaysia, the Malaysian LCS Project stands as a paradigmatic illustration emblematic of inadequate governance and systemic corruption. The Malaysian populace is presently cognizant of a conspicuously substantial imbroglio revolving around the Royal Malaysian Navy's ambitious initiative, namely the second-generation patrol vessel known as the LCS project.

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Emanating from revelations made by the Malaysian Parliament Public Accounts Committee (PAC), it is discerned that the nation's most sizable defence procurement endeavour, entailing a substantial RM9 billion investment for the acquisition of six LCS warships, has been marred by glaring deficiencies in governance. The PAC's investigative findings expound that notwithstanding the RMN's predilection for the utilitarian Dutch-designed Sigma-class ships, a preference rooted in their pragmatic viability, this predilection was arbitrarily dismissed.

Compounding this narrative, the contractual stipulations were characterised by laxity and an unfavourable disposition towards the governmental interests, thus culminating in cost overruns amounting to RM1.4 billion. Of paramount concern is the recent development centred on an RM9.2 billion agreement on the LCS, which is conspicuously enshrouded in opacity. Notably, despite the disbursement of 67 percent of the total contract valuation, the project remains bereft of a single ship delivered thus far. Noteworthy is the mode of awarding this agreement, facilitated through direct dialogues between the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) and the entity Boustead Naval Shipyard (BNS), the chosen beneficiary of the contract.

Therefore, to improve transparency and fairness in high-value procurement, infrastructure, and resource concessions, these should be based on open tender and direct appointment awards should be forbidden unless in clearly specified emergencies. Furthermore, the award criteria should be clearly stated, and the reasons for selecting a business for a government contract should be made public. The RMN supports any investigation into the leak of the LCS project as submitted by the PAC recently. RMN's Strategic Communications Branch stated that the acquisition of LCS is critical to preserving national sovereignty and security. They need combat capabilities that align with the development of the regional geostrategic and geopolitical security landscape. Lastly, political influence in military initiatives should be kept to a minimum so that they are driven by strategic and operational objectives rather than political interests.

### **Failure of Military Project on The Country's Development and Sovereignty**

***“Weak governance zones are investment environments in which public sector actors are unable or unwilling to assume their roles and responsibilities in protecting rights, providing basic services and public services, and ensuring that public sector management is efficient and effective. These “government failures” lead to broader failures in political, economic, and civic institutions that are referred to as weak governance”***

OECD, 2006

The ramifications of military project failures encompass both profound financial implications and the potential peril to human lives, as underscored (Sze Fung Ng, 2022). The genesis of such losses resides in a confluence of factors, encompassing technical intricacies, deficient planning, inadequate testing, and political intervention. The milieu of military projects often entails intricate technologies and systems that may evoke challenges in their development and integration.

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Inherent to this complexity, technical hurdles can surface during the design, development, or testing phases, instigating delays and cost overruns. The need for more formulated planning, characterised by overly ambitious timelines or inadequate resource allocation, can prevent the demise of projects. This deficiency is often exacerbated by the manifestation of nebulous or frequently altering project requirements stemming from a need for more precision in planning. The cardinality of testing within military projects cannot be overstated, as it serves as a crucible for identifying anomalies and ensuring system functionality. Shortcomings in testing procedures can culminate in technical malfunctions, impinging gravely upon military operations.

Moreover, the pertinence of political pressures cannot be obviated; such exigencies can engender shifts in project requisites or priorities, inducing a ripple effect of delays, cost overruns, and the deployment of systems misaligned with the requisites and standards of military personnel. To abrogate such contingencies, the adherence to project management best practices, characterised by meticulous planning, rigorous testing, and comprehensive evaluation, assumes paramount significance. Additionally, the imperative of impartial oversight and review in military projects stands salient, ensuring the attainment of objectives, the early identification of challenges, and the prevention of their exacerbation.

### Strengthening Good Governance in Malaysia

***“Fighting corruption is not just good governance. It’s self-defence. It’s patriotism.”***

Joe Biden, June 3 2021

Governance uses economic, political, and administrative power to manage a country’s micro and macro affairs effectively. It includes the organisations, methods, and mechanisms that enable individuals and civil society groups to express themselves, assert their legal and constitutional rights, carry out their responsibilities, and resolve conflicts. To protect people’s interests, advance the rule of law, and progress toward holistic development, development governance must be responsible, participative, responsive, effective, and efficient.

A set of instructions known as the “principles of good governance” has become so popular that it may be dogmatic. Due to the global relevance and acceptance of these principles, pressure is rising on governments all over the globe to follow these fundamental principles of good governance. These principles propose a type of government in which emerging countries rapidly realise the importance of the link between development and efficient governance. According to the unity government sworn in after the 15th General election, Malaysia must proceed with the goal of establishing a Defence Investment Committee to discover and eliminate discrepancies in the acquisition of assets by the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF).

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Before dissolving Parliament, the previous administration contemplated implementing one of the Defence White Paper recommendations: revising the rules for awarding building contracts, as required by the LCS project.

***“There won’t be any more project approvals granted without following the proper tendering procedure”.***

This pledge was made by the new unity government of Pakatan Harapan, headed by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the prime minister. In practice, he has ensured that corruption is no longer pervasive and that there are no more leaks.

***“The problem of procurement and the problem of approval without a tender cannot continue while leaks and corruption are permitted. This has to happen on all levels because it can’t go on any longer. Hence, I want to urge and request that you (public employees) cooperate at this initial stage”***

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Dataran Perdana Putra.

In addition, Strategy 3.1.4 of the National Anti-Corruption Plan 2019–2023 (NACP 2019) presented by the new unity government promotes the implementation of laws to control procurement activities. Malaysia needs a new government procurement Act to update its archaic procurement system. At the moment, no formal laws control procurement practices. The Ministry of Finance has issued treasury instruments that control how the government does business; nevertheless, the instruments lack legal validity. The Financial Process Act of 1957, which governs and handles Malaysia’s public finances, is one example of a law that applies to some parts of government procurement, while the Government Contracts Act of 1949 outlines the procedures required.

### Integrity In Malaysia

***“The supreme quality of leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, on a football field, in an army, or in an office”***

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Jan 17 1961

The National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP), which aims to improve integrity and openness in the public sector, was introduced by the Malaysian government in 2019. The strategy calls for actions like enhancing governance and management practices, strengthening institutional and legal frameworks, and raising public awareness of corruption. Nonetheless, despite these initiatives, there are doubts about the Malaysian government’s honesty. According to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), 14,731 corruption and authority abuse accusations were reported in 2020. Therefore, ongoing efforts are needed to promote integrity and fight corruption in government (MACC, 2020).

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In addition to government programmes, civil society groups like Transparency International Malaysia and the Centre to Fight Corruption and Cronyism (C4 Centre) also contribute to fostering integrity and accountability in the public sector. Based on the preceding discourse, the underlying integrity within the Malaysian government is still contentious, albeit with ongoing efforts to fix the situation. Efforts exemplified by the MACC and the NACP underscore commendable endeavours in fostering integrity and eliminating corruption. However, stakeholders bear the responsibility of accentuating the imperative for unwavering diligence and meticulous attention to intricate facets, thereby ensuring the optimal efficacy of these initiatives.

Addressing the exigencies of corruption in Malaysia and fortifying the edifice of good governance, particularly within military projects, necessitates a spectrum of pragmatic recommendations. Firstly, the establishment of robust governance paradigms and comprehensive oversight mechanisms is of paramount importance. To ameliorate the consequences of unwarranted financial influences, a potential imperative lies in imposing constraints on corporate ownership by political entities. Within the military context, the anchoring of resolute governance structures is requisite to engender transparency, accountability, and vigilant surveillance of projects. This encompasses delineated hierarchies of authority, explicitly defined roles and responsibilities, and a regimen of consistent monitoring and reporting protocols.

Augmenting the integrity of procurement processes emerges as another crucial facet. A pivotal consideration is the precision and meticulousness of asset declarations, extending beyond generic assertions and subject to scrupulous independent validation. This purview should extend to assets held through intermediaries and trusts, alongside interests in overseas financial institutions, potentially precipitating the promulgation of legislation on asset disclosure. Encouraging transparent and competitive procurement mechanisms, underpinned by a bias towards open tenders and a discouragement of direct appointment awards, is an instrumental measure to curtail corruption risks. This approach underscores the imperative of meritorious selection, competence, and value for money in contract allocation. Effectual project management methodologies warrant steadfast adoption to preempt prospective setbacks. This necessitates comprehensive planning, realistic scheduling, and judicious resource allocation, engendering the early identification and mitigation of potential contingencies.

Sustaining a culture of professionalism and ethical comportment within the military echelons is paramount. Such a cultural tenor demands a concerted emphasis on adherence to legal and ethical benchmarks, buttressed by unambiguous codes of conduct elucidating anticipated conduct and repercussions for transgressions. Further avenues for reform encompass stringent vigilance over spurious business entities, compelling, thorough scrutiny and even potential prescription, alongside fortified scrutiny by financial institutions to avert money laundering stemming from corrupt conduits.

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Restricting the nomination of board members within Government-Linked Companies (GLCs) and state investment advisory boards, particularly when entwined with political figures, emerges as another salient proposition. Enriching training and educational frameworks assumes centrality, involving comprehensive instruction in project management encompassing planning, risk mitigation, fiscal stewardship, and ethical discernment. Concurrently, cultivating collaborative communication with diverse stakeholders, including industry experts and oversight entities, augments project alignment with strategic imperatives. Undertaking periodic independent audits and reviews assumes significance, facilitating an impartial assessment of project progress, vulnerability identification, and targeted recommendations for enhancement.

This imperative calls for engagement with specialised independent bodies with governance and project evaluation expertise. Encouraging whistleblowing and reporting mechanisms stands indispensable in fostering a culture of accountability. Such mechanisms should encompass safeguards against reprisals, expedited investigation of reported concerns and requisite remedial actions. By realising these multifaceted recommendations, military institutions can effectuate transparency, integrity, and accountability, preempting corruption, averting military project failures, and judiciously expanding national defence and security resources.

### Conclusion

***“Four things support the world: the learning of the wise, the justice of the great, the prayers of the good, and the valour of the brave”***

Prophet Muhammad SAW

Good governance and politics are two separate concepts, but they are closely related. Politics is the process of making decisions and governing a society through elected representatives, while good governance refers to the principles and practices that ensure effective and accountable decision-making. While politics is necessary for any democratic society, it can often be influenced by partisan interests and power struggles. On the other hand, good governance is focused on promoting all citizens' best interests, regardless of political affiliations. Good governance requires a commitment to transparency, accountability, and participation in decision-making and a dedication to ensuring that policies and programs are practical and efficient in achieving their goals. It also requires the separation of powers and the rule of law, providing those in power are held accountable for their actions.

The LCS catastrophe should be a wake-up call for political parties to strive toward a more open and efficient procurement system. Even though it is a complex problem caused by bureaucracy, the LCS incident has increased public awareness of possible corruption and money leakage. The public has every right to be concerned about what happens next. Malaysia's defence procurement procedure must be overhauled to prevent encouraging an atmosphere where unethical practices might arise.

## ADDRESSING CORRUPTION AND ENHANCING GOVERNANCE IN MALAYSIA: NAVIGATING CHALLENGES AND PROPOSALS FOR MILITARY PROJECTS

The Pakatan Harapan Administration has also asked for a Government Procurement Act to curb corruption and power abuse, according to its Shadow Budget for 2023. A more reform-minded administration could fix Malaysia's procurement system flaws and transform the country into a fast-changing global security environment. With all these procedures being in line and advocating, military officers will not have any discrepancies in justifying better military platforms, weapon systems, and military solutions.

Therefore, a concentrated effort must be made to reform governance structures, increase accountability and transparency, and implement anti-corruption laws to combat corruption effectively. All parties involved, including politicians, public servants, members of civil society organisations, and the general public, must have the will, commitment, and perseverance to achieve this. Professor Zaharuddin uses "Kesopanan dan Kesusilaan" to identify morality and politeness in his work "Raksaraya." 2014 (Ahmad Zaharuddin Sani). He also emphasises that these phrases will lead to actions that will lead to discipline and excellent morale. With these ideals implanted in the hearts and thoughts of all parties involved in defence procurement initiatives, better and more successful projects will be ensured. In summary, while politics is the process of making decisions and governing a society, good governance is the principles and practices that ensure those decisions are made in all citizens' best interests, and those in power are held accountable for their actions.

### ***"Good Toys Will Ensure Maximum Protection of The Country"***

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**Colonel Mohammed Firdauz Osman RMAF**

### **A Journey of Perseverance: Towards a Better Statesmanship**

Colonel Mohammed Firdauz Osman RMAF, aka Mok, is an esteemed leader in Malaysia's aerospace and Air Defense. With a decorated career spanning over three decades in the Air Force, Colonel Firdauz has established himself as a visionary and strategic thinker. Known for his unwavering dedication and unparalleled expertise, he has excelled in various high-profile positions, earning the respect and admiration of his peers. Colonel Firdauz's exceptional leadership skills have propelled him to the highest echelons of the Air Defence hierarchy. As an Air Force Colonel, he has commanded critical missions and directed complex operations with precision and composure, ensuring the security and safety of his Airspace monitoring. His strategic acumen and forward-thinking approach have enabled him to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of air warfare, constantly staying ahead of emerging threats and technologies. Beyond his military prowess, Colonel Firdauz is a charismatic and inspirational figure, fostering a culture of excellence and camaraderie among his subordinates. He is known for his approachability, humility, and commitment to developing the next generation of leaders. Through mentoring and guidance, he empowers his team to reach their fullest potential, emphasizing the values of integrity, discipline, and resilience.

He believes the National Resilience Course has the potential to significantly change individuals by expanding their knowledge, enhancing critical thinking and decision-making skills, strengthening leadership abilities, fostering a valuable professional network, and cultivating adaptability and agility. These changes contribute to their growth as strategic thinkers and future leaders within the military and the country. The Mok family a tight-knit unit of five that radiates love and happiness.

**Colonel Mohammed Firdauz Osman RMAF**

Colonel Firdauz, the loving father, is a pillar of strength and guidance, always there to offer support and wisdom. Nora, the nurturing mother, fills their home with warmth and compassion, ensuring everyone feels loved and cared for. Izzul, the oldest sibling, is a responsible and caring young adult, setting a positive example for his younger siblings. Izzatul, the creative middle child, brings joy and imagination to their lives, while Izzat, the youngest, is full of boundless energy and curiosity, keeping the family on their toes.

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## HARNESSING THE NATIONAL DEFENCE INDUSTRY TOWARDS RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

**First Admiral Shaftdean Lufty Rusland**  
National Resilience College, PUSPAHANAS

### Abstract

*Malaysia's National Defence Policy is promulgated with the main objectives of protecting and defending the national interest: safeguarding the nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity and economic prosperity. The fundamentals of Malaysia's defence revolve around self-reliance, regional cooperation and foreign aid. To this, harnessing the National Defence Industry (NDI) is an important national agenda. The defence industry that served the defence sector creates spill-over effects on the economy through various channels, potentially benefiting society. For instance, the defence industry creation helps boost job creation by bringing more people to the place to work, which eventually creates new business opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). A well-developed NDI enables a nation's economic prosperity and sustainable economic development. The study aims to determine the position of Malaysia's Defence Industry compared to other developing countries, discuss the vital roles of NDI and finally suggest policy recommendations in harnessing NDI towards resilience and a sustainable economy. This concept paper embarked on a case study and relevant documentation reviewed, such as policies and relevant articles from established journals, to add to the rigorosity of the study. Content and thematic analyses were made to develop reliable findings based on the research objectives. Hence, obtaining insights for primary data from reliable interviewees is recommended for future research. On the other hand, military Keynesianism mentioned the spill-over effects from the defence industry for economic growth. As such, Malaysia's defence industry advancement and development are still far behind that of the ASEAN members. Furthermore, it is observed that Malaysia's preparedness towards NDI self-reliance is still in the infancy stage. Malaysia's technological expertise in this field is still scarce and limited. Therefore, to build a sustainable and resilient NDI, the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) needs to take a firm stance in enhancing NDI, and the government needs to take up the decision-making. This is vital for the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) to reduce dependency on imported armaments and technology, which are costly and are severely exposed to inflation and volatile currency exchange. A new ecosystem is essential to develop and uplift Malaysia's NDI. Utilising local resources and capabilities may boost the industry's potential to be more competitive and sustainable. Malaysia's NDI is still at an early stage of development that requires strong government assistance. The policy recommendations proposed in this study are financial support for the infant industry, good governance in monitoring NDI, focused education for creating the NDI workforce, and strategic collaborative efforts with credible stakeholders nationally or internationally. A new dynamic proposed NDI ecosystem is expected to uplift Malaysia's defence industry towards resilience and sustainable growth.*

**Keywords:** National Defence Industry, Malaysian Armed Forces, National Security, Resilience Economy, Sustainable Economy

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## HARNESSING THE NATIONAL DEFENCE INDUSTRY TOWARDS RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

### Introduction

Malaysia's announced defence budget for 2023 aspires to modernise the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF). It encourages the National Defence Industry (NDI) to be self-reliant with minimal support or assistance from external parties. It is observed from developed and developing nations that strategic commitment and political will by the government is paramount to boosting those nations' defence industry. For instance, Malaysia's Economic Planning Unit (EPU) of the Ministry of Economy is the leading actor to uplift the defence industry to a better position or level. NDI could be an agent of the country's income generator and should be treated as a 'Government-Owned Company'. NDI is a capital-intensive business that requires substantial financial support. The government should be the leading actor in linking the business to other potential government-owned companies.

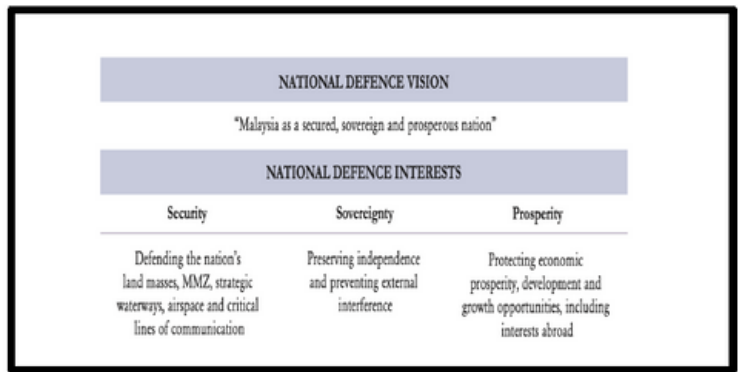
To begin with, the nation needs to embark on a 'whole of government' and a 'whole of society's approach to ensure all the resources are utilised effectively and efficiently. NDI can meet the evolving needs of MAF and be generalised to other sectors or broader society. The 'whole of government' approach will involve the coordination and collaboration among all branches of the government, including defence, finance, trade, foreign affairs and other relevant departments, while the 'whole of society' approach will involve engaging all sectors of society, including academia, industry, civil society, and the general public, to support the development and growth of NDI.

The objective is to ensure that the government policies and programmes will support the development and growth of NDI in a coordinated and efficient manner, and this may include the initiatives, for instance, education and training programmes, research and development (R&D) partnerships, and also outreach activities to promote public awareness and understanding of the importance of NDI. Both of these approaches are important for the development and growth of NDI, as they require coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders. However, Malaysia's NDI needs to learn how to 'crawl' first, followed by 'walking' and consequently 'running', to benefit more. Therefore, the development of Malaysia's NDI can initially begin with establishing services related to defence for exports and subsequently embark on producing hardware and software to contribute to national security.

National Defence is about maintaining national security, defending the nation's strategic interest, and safeguarding sovereignty. In Malaysia's National Defence Policy (NDP), the nation's strategic interests, principles of defence and defence concepts are posited. The fundamentals of Malaysia's defence revolve around self-reliance, regional cooperation and foreign aid (NDP, 2019), and the strategy promulgated primarily overrides the principle of self-reliance. As a sovereign nation, the country must be free and independent in utilising its resources and capabilities, assisted by strategic relations with credible partners, in safeguarding national interest whilst ensuring national and regional security and stability.

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Malaysia’s Defence White Paper that includes National Defence Interests encompasses elements, namely, security, sovereignty and prosperity in achieving the National Defence Vision, “*Malaysia as a secured, sovereign and prosperous nation*”. Those interests highlight the nation’s priority and interrelation between national defence and economy, whereby in “*protecting economic prosperity, development and growth opportunities, including interests abroad*”, the nation needs to beef up the security element “*to defend the nation’s land masses, Malaysia’s Maritime Zone (MMZ), strategic waterways, airspace and critical lines of communication*”, to “*preserve the independence and preventing external interference*” (DWP, 2020) to safeguard the nation’s sovereignty, thus making the nexus of defence and economy is undeniable. It encourages a new paradigm shift of self-reliance on NDI (Figure 1).



**Extracted from: Defence White Paper 2020  
Figure 1: National Defence Framework**

Nonetheless, NDI is closely associated with and related to the civilian economy. It contributes to the growth of the national economy, not only by boosting the domestic defence industry but also due to the vast relationship with other related industries, contributing to job opportunities for citizens, and promoting exports to enhance the nation’s economy further. For example, due to their interrelatedness, NDI and other supporting or related technological industries contributed to defence capabilities and the civilian economy. It can be witnessed with defence procurement of state-of-the-art sensors, weaponries and products, which will contribute massively to the growth of the national economy if the nation has a sound and stable NDI.

Therefore, the NDI role can be determined not only as the main conduit for accessing sophisticated technology because it will also reduce dependency on foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) but also has a broader role towards the nation's social and economic growth and development. In support of this, the National Defence Industry Policy (NDIP) in DWP (2020) further elaborated on the way forward in ensuring human capital development, technology development, and industrial development in the sense of boosting up the defence industry towards self-reliance initiatives, and how the nation will be able to penetrate the global market by exporting those technologies to help prosper our national economy.

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On the other hand, the recent announcement by the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) concerning the 100-day Key Performance Indicator (KPI) (MINDEF, 2023) of ‘Malaysia Madani’s approach, which the Prime Minister announced, emphasises enhancing the nation’s border security (as per Strategy 2), empowering Research and Development (R&D) and enriching the nation’s defence industry (Strategy 3) to protect the national interest by procuring Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) strategic assets (Initiative 5), development of border security posts (Initiative 6), and enhancing the capability level of the domestic defence industry, with the involvement and participation of NDI players (Initiative 7). Hence, NDI is a pertinent element that should be harnessed and managed appropriately in striving towards a nation’s resilience and sustainable economy. The promotion of the Langkawi International Maritime Aerospace Exhibition 2023 (LIMA’23) is another example of a strategy to boost NDI by anticipated collaborative efforts with credible strategic partners to achieve the nation’s objectives (Initiative 8) (refer to Figure 2).



Extracted from: KPI Madani 100 Hari KEMANTAH 2023  
 Figure 2: Ministry of Defence 100 Days KPI

**Malaysia’s Current Performance**

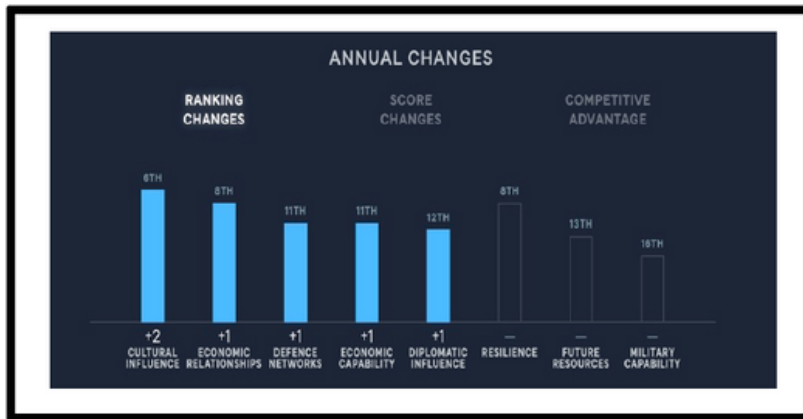
The Comprehensive Power Index by Lowy Institute (2023) encompasses three annual reports. They are the Annual Ranking, Annual Score, and level of Competitive Advantage of a nation’s report. The elements measured for those reports are cultural influences, economic relationships, defence networks, economic capability, diplomatic influence, resilience, future resources, and military capability. This will be translated into performance in the Power Index that is comprehensively measured, taking into account the rigorousness of the study and data, together with the reliability and validity of the methods used. It is critical and of interest to Malaysia as it provides a comprehensive assessment of the National Power and helps Malaysia understand its standing in the global arena.

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To achieve a competitive advantage in the Comprehensive Power Index, Malaysia as a sovereign nation needs to gain the ability to grow and outperform the others. Considering Malaysia’s policy on economic relationships, defence networks, and diplomatic influence, NDI could assist the nation with strategies to differentiate services or products. ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is a diverse and growing market for the defence industry, thus providing opportunities in the market. Regional security challenges and the need for capabilities in areas, for instance, maritime security, counter-terrorism and disaster response, also create demand for defence solutions. If the government is serious about developing NDI, ASEAN will be a readily available market, apart from domestic ones. A relevant systematic education system can nurture knowledge. Skilled workers were inculcated to develop intensive human capital to enable the development of a technological-based defence industry. Malaysia should achieve a competitive advantage, allowing the nation's sustainable economic growth if the requirement is met by focused policy and determination.

**Malaysia’s Ranking in Asia Power Index**

Asia Power Index depicted the annual Ranking Changes for Malaysia in 2023, with ranking for economic relationships, defence networks, economic capability and diplomatic influence gaining +1 place and cultural influence gaining +2 places. However, for resilience, future resources and military capability remain unchanged at the 8th, 13th, and 16th positions.



Source: Lowy Institute, Asia Power Index 2023 Edition  
 Figure 3: Ranking Changes for Malaysia in 2023

Malaysia’s resilience remained unchanged due to its diplomatic approach of nonalignment that ensures state stability, resource security, geo-economic security, and geopolitical security. The new ‘Unity Government’ further supports it, which promotes domestic stability. Resilience, as defined by Lowy Institute (2023), “...is the capacity to deter real or potential external threats to state stability; measured in terms of internal institutional stability, resource security, geo-economic security, geopolitical security and nuclear deterrence”.

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## HARNESSING THE NATIONAL DEFENCE INDUSTRY TOWARDS RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

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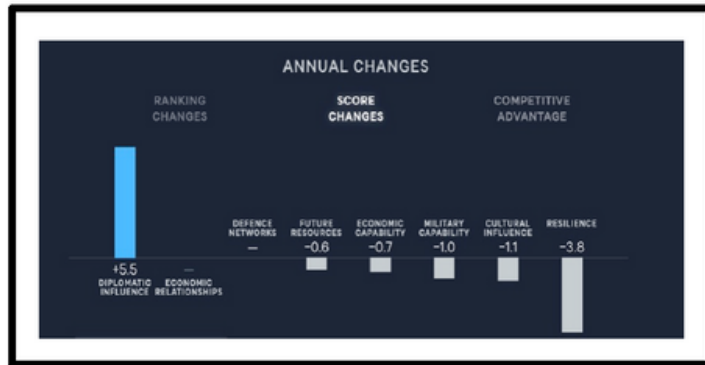
Meanwhile, future resources of Malaysia are associated with "*the projected distribution of future resources and capabilities, i.e. economic, military and demographic resources, which play into perceptions of power today...*" that remained unchanged where they are "*measured in terms of estimated economic, defence and broad resources in 2030, as well as working-age population forecasts in 2050*" (Lowy Institute, 2023). The institute further alluded that military capability is "*conventional military strength; measured in terms of defence spending, armed forces and organisation, weapons and platforms, signature capabilities and Asian military posture*" (Lowy Institute, 2023) that also remained unchanged, based on the defence budget allocation that has not changed at approximately 1% of Malaysian GDP for significant years. From the graph and definitions, Malaysia requires pursuing and improving the management of its future resources with enhanced military capability to produce a credible force to safeguard security and sovereignty and ensure national resilience (refer to Figure 3).

### Malaysia's Score in Asia Power Index

Meanwhile, the Asia Power Index depicted the annual Score Changes, where Malaysia scored and gained a respectable +5.5 for diplomatic influence. Scores for other elements are future resources (-0.6), economic capability (-0.7), military capability (-1.0), and resilience (-3.8) respectively. Economic relationships and defence network scores remained unchanged.

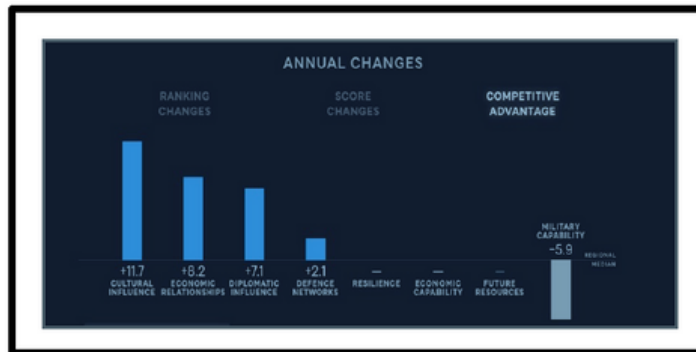
Future resources, i.e. economic, military and demographic resources, are depleting -0.6, which posits that the nation's estimated economic, defence and broad resources in 2030, as well as working-age population forecasts in 2050, will be reduced. Economic capability can be defined as "*core economic strength and the attributes of an economy with the most geopolitical relevance, measured in terms of GDP at purchasing power parity (PPP), international leverage, technological sophistication and global connectivity*" (Lowy Institute, 2023). Malaysia scored -0.7 for economic capability, meaning that Malaysia has weakened economically due to political instability, where government changes have been observed for the last five years, affecting national resilience, which has dropped significantly by -3.8. Military capability is also slipping at -1.0 due to a consistent defence budget quantum. This contributed to a weak economy since defence is closely related to a nation's stability to promote investors' confidence (Figure 4).

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Source: Lowy Institute, Asia Power Index 2023 Edition  
 Figure 4: Score Changes for Malaysia in 2023

**Malaysia’s Competitive Advantage**



Source: Lowy Institute, Asia Power Index 2023 Edition  
 Figure 5: Competitive Advantage for Malaysia in 2023

On the other hand, for annual Competitive Advantage, Malaysia reported a least competitive advantage in military capability with -5.9 points. Malaysia gained +11.7 in cultural influence, +8.2 for economic relationships, +7.1 for diplomatic influence, and +2.1 in defence networks. Meanwhile, Malaysia remained the same for resilience, economic capability, and future resources, scoring close to the regional median. In terms of military capability, Malaysia is below the regional median, which indicates that Malaysia has been left behind compared to Southeast Asia’s neighbouring nations like Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines. This is based on Malaysia’s defence spending, which has not seen a prominent increment to beef up the MAF capabilities to become the armed forces to be reckoned with (refer to Figure 5). Malaysia’s Performance in Power Index Malaysia is considered a middle power in Asia and ranked 11th among 26 countries for Comprehensive Power with an overall score of 18.0 out of 100. It has lost 0.3 points (-2% change) in overall score in 2023 compared to 2022 (Lowy Institute, 2023).

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## HARNESSING THE NATIONAL DEFENCE INDUSTRY TOWARDS RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

It can be observed that Malaysia's economic relationships and diplomatic influence are competitive to benefit the nation. The nation needs to leverage the opportunities of this relationship and influence. One of the measures the nation could take is harnessing NDI, thus creating new job opportunities while ensuring national security with credible MAF and enhancing advanced technology that has always been associated with NDI that can be generalised positively to other sectors. Therefore, to achieve a greater national competitive advantage, defence capability needs to be strengthened to achieve resilience and sustainable economic growth by leveraging and harnessing NDI.

### **Resilience Economy**

Resilience is "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress" (American Psychological Association, 2012). Resilience is thus the ability to adapt or acclimatise with the situation or environment and recover and return strongly from any mishaps or difficult situations. An economic perspective refers to an economy that can face, withstand, endure, survive, and recover from economic turbulences or shocks (Walker, Salt & Reid, 2012), for example, turbulences due to financial crises, natural disasters, or the like of the COVID-19 pandemic is a situation that the world has faced recently.

A resilient economy has characteristics that allow it to adapt to dynamic promptly and constantly changing conditions in the market. They also allow and prepare an economic platform to face any untoward circumstances due to unexpected events (Folke et al., 2010). These characteristics, in the form of economic diversity and flexible economic structure, ensure the ability to minimise the impact of adverse events on the economy to guarantee long-term economic stability (Nelson, 2020). A nation needs to be resilient for its sustainable economic growth. In a nutshell, national resilience is paramount in promoting the economic growth of a country since it allows the nation's economy to withstand any incoming hardship and arm it with the ability to recover from this adversity, which is essential to a nation in ensuring long-term prosperity and stability.

### **Sustainable Economy**

"Sustainability is the practice of ensuring that social, economic, and environmental systems are resilient and able to withstand shocks and stresses while providing for present and future generations" (UNDP, 2019). For sustainable economic growth, a nation needs to take an approach to economic development aimed at achieving its long-term growth while considering social and environmental concerns (Jackson, 2017). Economic growth should be measured not only in terms of financial profit but also in terms of social and environmental impacts. For instance, a strategy for sustainable economic growth might include initiatives for job opportunities and improved income distribution.

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At the same time, the strategy also needs to consider utilising renewable energy and waste reduction. Innovation and technology development are also essential elements of sustainable economic growth. This includes R&D, adoption of new technologies and new business model development that could promote sustainability. Overall, sustainable economic growth requires a holistic approach that considers the interdependent relationships between the economy, society, and the environment, and by balancing them, sustainable economic growth can help create a more equitable and prosperous future for everyone.

### **Economic Growth**

Hence, positive economic growth of a nation can be defined as a nation's economy that has gone through challenges and leveraged the opportunities to achieve a level of resilience and a sustainable economy. There are several ways that NDI can contribute to a sustainable economy. For instance, in the innovation and technology transfer perspective, the defence industry invested heavily in R&D to develop new technologies and products that meet the requirements of the military. These technologies can also be adapted for civilian use, leading to innovations that can improve sustainability and resilience in various sectors, such as transportation, energy, and communication. NDI also contributes to job creation and economic growth of a nation where it is a significant employer, providing jobs to millions worldwide (Sulaiman et al., 2020).

Additionally, the industry can contribute to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) growth by subcontracting work to these companies. NDI can also collaborate with other sectors and stakeholders to promote resilience and a sustainable economy. A good example is when the industry works with academic institutions, research organisations, and NGOs to share knowledge, best practices and new findings that will undoubtedly lead to the betterment of the industries. Often overlooked, the defence industry players, i.e., the companies involved, are major employers and tax generators for the government. As reported by Deloitte and sponsored by the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA), the contribution and financial impact of the U.S. aerospace and defence industry were assessed.

The indirect and induced employment associated with the U.S. aerospace and defence industry is estimated at a minimum of 3.5 million jobs and USD 324 billion in sales revenue. It generated USD 15.6 billion in net income after tax at an average pre-tax reported operating profit margin of 10.5%. These companies also paid USD 5.5 billion in corporate income taxes on their earnings and USD 1.7 billion in state income and similar business taxes. With individual direct employee taxes, the industry generated an estimated USD 37.8 billion in wage and income-based taxes to state and federal government treasuries, not including the taxes paid by indirect and induced industry employment (Bowman, 2012). This is an example of how a nation could leverage NDI for positive economic growth that contributes towards the resilience and sustainable economy of the country.

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## HARNESSING THE NATIONAL DEFENCE INDUSTRY TOWARDS RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

### Malaysia's Defence Industry Outlook

Malaysia has established NDI, with some local companies involved in designing, developing, and manufacturing defence equipment and systems. Some of the companies are Boustead Heavy Industries Corp (BHIC), DRB-HICOM Defence Technologies (DefTech), Sapura Defence, Composite Technology Research Malaysia (CTRM), etc. Additionally, Malaysia also has several R&D centres, as well as academic institutions, that are involved in defence-related research and innovation. Malaysia's defence industry is overseen by the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF), which works closely with these local companies to meet the country's defence needs. NDI can contribute to a nation's economy through its capacity building, creating high value-added products, absorption and utilisation of advanced technology, creating employment opportunities, promoting exports, and many more spill-over effects (Balakrishnan, 2008) that can benefit both the defence and private sectors. Balakrishnan (2008) further added that it was observed that 'latecomer' nations, such as South Africa, Turkey and Argentina, aggressively pursued their NDI to achieve industrial and technological development. In contrast, Malaysia leveraged its NDI for both military and economic reasons.

Malaysia has been importing significant amounts of defence equipment, such as submarines, fighter jets, and tanks, from countries like the United States, South Korea, Montenegro, Switzerland, and Turkey. Malaysia imported USD 27.6 million in defence capability in 2020, ranked 58th largest importer of the capability in the world, and it is the 86th most imported product in Malaysia (Simoes & Hidalgo, 2011). This amount could be further reduced if NDI is taken more seriously and focused on a self-reliance defence to promote resilience and a sustainable economy. Although minimal, Malaysia has also made some strides in developing its defence industry, such as producing small arms, ammunition, and armoured vehicles. Promoting NDI in Malaysia is to become self-reliant regarding spares, maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), modification or upgrades without foreign assistance (Balakrishnan, 2008).

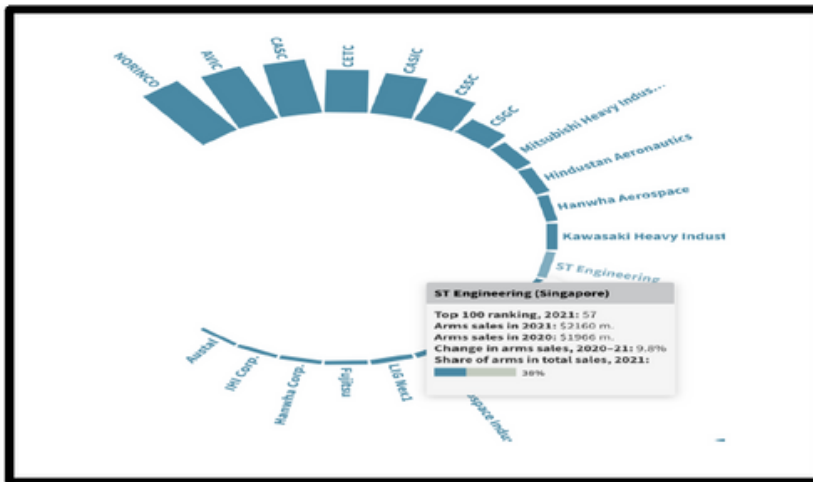
The government should consider NDI as an essential part of self-resilience to a sustainable economy by ensuring a continuous supply chain in times of crisis. A nation's technological capability is also a vital factor in determining the level of its defence industry. Malaysia has made progress in developing its technological capabilities in recent years, including the establishment of a Defence Science Technology Centre (DSTC) that was later known as STRIDE (Science, Technology and Research Institute for Defence) to encourage R&D in the defence sector (Balakrishnan, 2008). Collaboration with other countries is crucial in the defence industry, enabling a country to access advanced technology and knowledge. Malaysia has formed partnerships with other countries, such as Turkiye and South Korea, to develop its defence industry further. In summary, while Malaysia has made some progress in developing its defence industry, it still requires more effort to be at par with other developing countries regarding defence expenditure and technological capability.

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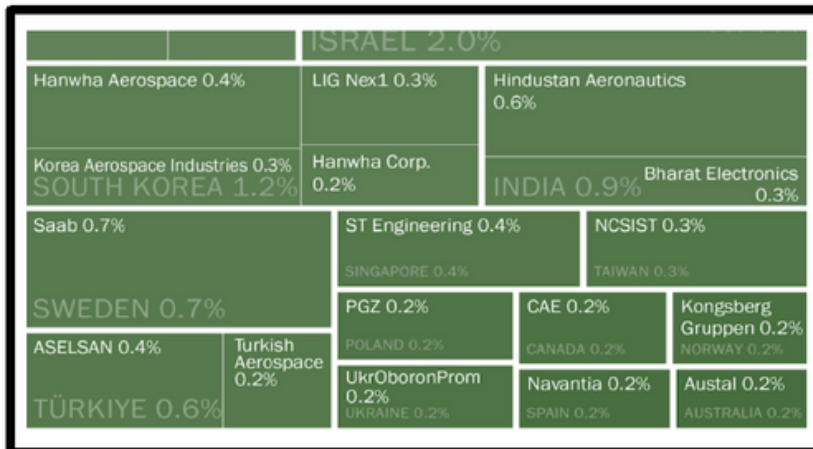
However, Malaysia's collaborations with other countries and its efforts to build its defence industry indicate that it has the potential to grow, a willingness to act and should become more competitive in the future.

**Case Study**

Comparatively, Malaysia's defence industry is still far behind the like of neighbouring countries such as Singapore. Singapore, with its subsidiary company, ST Engineering, placed 57th among the 100 top-ranking defence industries in the world (SIPRI, 2022) (refer to Figure 6).



Source: SIPRI Arms Industry Database, Dec 2022  
 Figure 6: Top 100 Arms Companies 2021 (Asia and Oceania)



Source: SIPRI Arms Industry Database, Dec 2022  
 Figure 7: Top 100 Arms Companies 2021

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Singapore’s arms turnover increased from USD1966 million in 2020 to USD2160 million in 2021, approximately a 9.8% increment. In Asia and Oceania, Singapore is among the powerhouses in the region, together with the likes of China, Japan, Korea, India, and Taiwan, which contribute 0.4% of the world’s arms industry. The percentage is more than that of Poland, Canada, Norway, Ukraine, Spain, and Australia, which registered 0.2%, respectively, and despite that, Malaysia is nowhere to be seen (refer to Figure 7).

MILITARY EXPENDITURE (USD MILLION - constant 2021)										
YEAR	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
INDONESIA	5896.6	7927.7	6984.8	8122.5	7580.2	8738.6	7682.9	8063.0	9387.0	7965.1
MALAYSIA	3793.0	4132.9	4165.0	4484.6	4293.4	3607.8	3292.0	3179.7	3374.6	3682.1
PHILIPPINES	3041.7	3472.2	3221.2	3525.1	3629.3	4604.7	3173.1	3714.9	3732.7	3898.9
SINGAPORE	8624.0	8596.0	8847.2	9436.2	10032.8	10299.9	10390.4	10270.7	9978.6	10683.0
THAILAND	5729.5	5955.7	5999.0	6377.5	6734.4	6942.5	7090.2	7234.0	7268.8	6654.2

Source: SIPRI yearbook 2023  
 Figure 8: Military Expenditure in ASEAN 5 (constant USD price 2021)

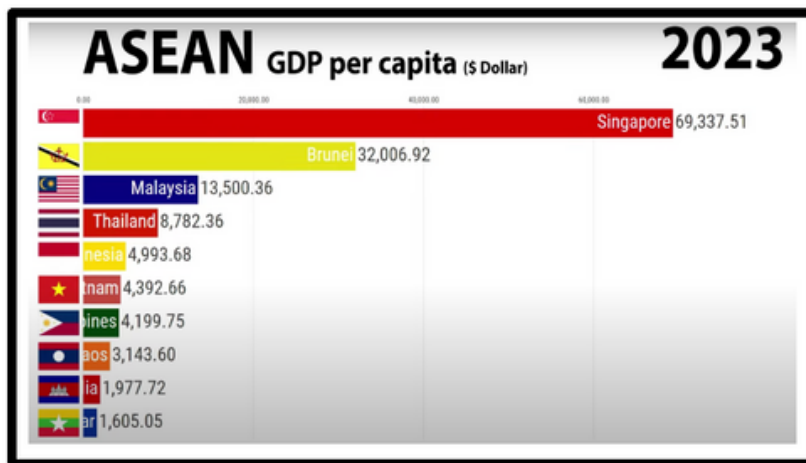
One of the key indicators of a nation’s defence industry is the quantum amount invested. It was reported that Malaysia’s expenditure was less than USD 4 billion from 2017 until 2021. The budget was lower as compared to previous years from 2012 until 2016. However, there was a slight increment in the defence budget in 2022, and in the recent 2023 budget announcement, the defence allocation was USD 3.97 billion.

Comparatively, the amount is far less than Singapore’s defence budget, which amounted to more than USD 10 billion from 2016 until 2021, except for 2020 (USD 9.98 billion) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. USD 13.4 billion was the figure in their recent 2023 defence budget announcement. The latest figure was an increment of 10% over the budget for 2022. This indicates that Singapore is extremely serious regarding the defence industry, establishing ST Engineering in 1967 under Temasek Holdings, which belongs to its government (refer to Figure 8).

Malaysia is a capable nation with plentiful resources. However, taking Singapore as an example, the exports of its electronic manufacturing mainly drive its economy and machinery, which include defence products, financial services, and tourism coupled with it being the world’s busiest cargo seaport, establish it as one of the most stable economies in the world, with no foreign debt, high government revenue and consistently positive surplus. It is shown that Singapore’s GDP per capita is the highest among ASEAN members.

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This is the evidence of good governance, sound policy, and well-planned and well-managed industrial sectors, including the defence industry, that contributed to the nation's economic growth. By achieving a secure economic and stable political environment, Singapore excels as a sovereign nation that attracts more foreign investors to promote the nation's economic development by providing more job opportunities and boosting industrial sectors, thus promoting resilience and a sustainable economy (refer to Figure 9).



Source: IMF - World Economic Outlook 2023  
Figure 9: GDP Per Capita Southeast Asia Countries 2023

Based on current Malaysia's defence industry, defence budget allocation, and GDP, the nation needs to strategise further to encourage and enhance NDI. Theoretically, with a satisfactory GDP, Malaysia should be able to perform. The government should be able to allocate a substantial portion of the budget for defence, which is currently at approximately 1% of GDP. With government financial support and intervention and solid collaborative efforts, Malaysia's NDI can move forward to contribute to the nation's positive economic growth and further propel resilience and a sustainable economy.

### NDI - Enabler of Resilience and Sustainable Economy

The NDI is vital in promoting resilience and a sustainable economy in many ways. The creation of job opportunities in various sectors and high-skilled jobs with high anticipated remunerations in niche industries are among the roles of NDI. Multiple sectors, such as engineering, manufacturing, R&D, logistics, and support services, will benefit from NDI, and by investing in defence industry projects, the government will create those opportunities and boost the nation's economy. Technology introduced and used in NDI can also be applied to other sectors, contributing to innovation and resilience and enhancing sustainable development practices.

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The defence industry often leads the way in developing cutting-edge technologies, such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and advanced materials, and by promoting technology transfer or sharing from defence to civilian industries, governments can foster innovation and support the growth of new initiatives. This will allow more commonalities between the two sectors and benefit NDI and the nation.

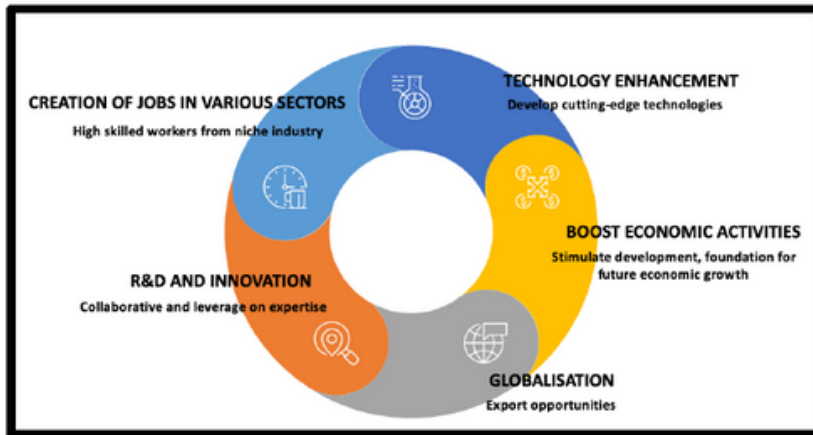


Figure 10: NDI Spill-Over Effects on the Economy

On the other hand, R&D, which is part and parcel of NDI that often delves into or explores fast and vast advancement of technology, is another example. Defence companies often engage in collaborative R&D with universities, other industries, and government agencies. By promoting collaborative R&D, governments can leverage the expertise of multiple organisations, encourage innovation, and support economic growth. Since the defence industry is known for driving innovation, it can assist and harness methods towards developing sustainable technologies and solutions. The government can also support by investing in defence projects and promoting collaboration between the defence industry and other sectors. Defence products and services can be exported to other countries, generating revenue and boosting economic growth in the globalisation era. Therefore, the means for the government to support defence companies in expanding their products or markets by providing incentives, removing trade barriers, and facilitating international partnerships must be increased. In a nutshell, NDI has the potential to help create a more sustainable future for everyone (please refer to Figure 10).

### Policy Recommendations

Economic policy generally aims to achieve four primary goals: stabilising markets, promoting economic prosperity, ensuring business development, and promoting employment. Sometimes, other objectives, like military spending or nationalisation, are essential, but in most cases, they are treated with lesser importance. In Malaysia, there is a lack of appetite for enhancing innovative capability, addressing competitiveness and penetrating the global market within the defence industry sector (Balakrishnan, 2021).

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## HARNESSING THE NATIONAL DEFENCE INDUSTRY TOWARDS RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

For example, R&D spending on defence innovation needs more attention in Malaysia (Balakrishnan & Johar, 2021). Hence, several policy recommendations can be suggested to harness NDI towards resilience and a sustainable nation's economy. The way forward is for the government to support defence companies in their efforts to expand their markets, both at the domestic level and overseas, by providing incentives, removing trade barriers, and facilitating international partnerships. To govern this, the government must establish a body overseeing the processes, including R&D, procurement, training, support services, MRO, etc. The government can duplicate a few other nations' ways of implementing the strategy. For instance, in France, they have a Director General of Armament (DGA) who has this responsibility under their jurisdiction.

Good governance is a must because this will allow transparent and well-governed processes to occur without any political interference that may influence the industries. Malaysia Madani's approach emphasises the great importance of people's values. This new ecosystem supports the government's initiative. It allows the government to contribute by providing new job opportunities to citizens of Malaysia, developing and enhancing their skills in defence industries, boosting economic activities, and establishing a resilient and sustainable economy for the citizens to live in prosperous conditions. Therefore, the new ecosystem will drive NDI towards a more resilient and sustainable future.

### Conclusion

The economic growth of a nation can be achieved by the economic ability to produce goods and services. It is also indicated by the increased quantity of resources used to produce goods. On the other hand, the fundamentals of Malaysia's defence, which has been explained to be quite a vital cog, revolves around self-reliance, regional cooperation and foreign aid, and it is inevitable for a nation to achieve economic prosperity to support this drive. Hence, as a part of self-reliant defence, NDI is how a country can propel economic growth by leveraging its resources and capabilities. Several means and ways were identified to help boost Malaysian NDI, like focused education, financial support, and collaborative efforts, which require government intervention to uplift the industry to the necessary level.

The exertions by the government and collaboration with credible strategic partners in developing NDI, coupled with technology and knowledge transfer, will enhance this potential. Only when there is steady growth can a country's people enjoy higher real income. This will align with Malaysia Madani's goals, emphasising people's values. Therefore, positive economic growth will provide a suitable platform for resilience and a sustainable economy, thus making NDI the preferred choice not just as an essential element in national security but as a significant contributor to growth to achieve economic resilience and sustainability.

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**First Admiral Ts Dr Shaftdean Lufty bin Rusland**

First Admiral Ts Dr Shaftdean Lufty bin Rusland was commissioned as a Sub Lieutenant in the Executive Branch of the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) in 1994, where he received the Best Graduate Officers' Award after completing his training in KD PELANDOK and SAFTI, Singapore. He is a Warfare Officer and Naval Aviator by specialisation, having served onboard KD KRIS, KD LEKIR, KD GANAS, KD RAJA JAROM, and KD LEKIU as the commissioning crew and was appointed as Commanding Officer and Squadron Leader for the 17th Patrol Vessel Squadron onboard KD PERAK in Kota Kinabalu Naval Base. His flying career started with the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) No. 20 Squadron C-130H and No. 16 Squadron Beechcraft.

Subsequently, First Admiral Ts Dr Shaftdean did his rotary wing conversion in the Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) Yeovilton United Kingdom (U.K.) onboard Royal Navy Lynx Mk 8 and became the first RMN Super Lynx Mk 100 crew. He was a Qualified Helicopter Instructor while serving the 501 Super Lynx Squadron. Next, he was appointed as the Chief of Staff for the Naval Air Wing Headquarters and then served as the Commanding Officer of KD RAJAWALI Naval Air Station. He received the Best Student Awards for the Junior Officers' Warfare Course and Basic Navigator Course with the RMAF. He attended the prestigious Naval Command and Staff Course at Naval Command College China, where he received the Best Thesis Award. Academically, he holds a Doctoral Degree in Management from the University Malaya (UM), a Master of Management (UNIRAZAK), an advanced diploma in Military Study (NCC China) and a Diploma in Animal Health and Science Production (UPM). He is also a Chartered Member of the Institute of Logistics and Transport (CMILT) Malaysia and a Professional Technologist (Ts) in the Maritime Industry with the Malaysia Board of Technologists (MBOT).

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Before that, he held several posts in MINDEF as the ADC to the Chief of Navy, SO1 Maritime Operations in the RMAF Air Operations Headquarters, and Navy Directing Staff in the Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College. Before attending the National Resilience Course Cohort 4/23, he was the Director of Human Resource Strategy in the RMN Headquarters.

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## STRATEGIC DEFENCE ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN MALAYSIA

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### Abstract

*Strategic defence issues in Malaysia are crucial in shaping the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) and the Ministry of Defence's (MINDEF) planning and development strategies. Research on national security topics is vital for enhancing the country's defence capabilities, with strategic leadership being a critical factor in navigating these challenges. The Defence White Paper reflects the government's commitment to strengthening national security and protecting its interests. Effective implementation of MINDEF's strategic direction is central to this endeavour, requiring the involvement of various divisions, departments, and stakeholders, including the public and the MAF. The collaborative efforts are essential for achieving MINDEF's vision and mission, underpinned by strategic initiatives and an action plan that demands cooperation and shared vision among all parties. This collaboration ensures continuous progress and encourages the generation of innovative ideas. Success in these efforts relies on careful planning, diligent execution, and thorough monitoring, along with the introduction of fresh approaches to meet defence challenges. This article is structured into three sections, each addressing key aspects of defence leadership and its impact. The first section defines strategic leadership within the defence system, emphasizing its role in driving transformative changes. The second section analyses the strategic issues in national defence, providing an overview of potential threats and challenges. The third section suggests actionable steps to mitigate these challenges, highlighting the importance of strategic leadership in effectively addressing national defence issues. In conclusion, the government's commitment to adequately fund the MAF is crucial for proactively tackling current and future strategic challenges, thereby enhancing Malaysia's security and stability regionally and globally.*

**Keywords:** Defence Industry, Economy, Military, Strategic Leadership

### Introduction

The establishment of the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) and the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF), accompanied by their well-defined organisational structures, constitutes a robust administrative framework. Working in tandem, MINDEF and MAF assume distinct yet interrelated functions and responsibilities, synergistically safeguarding national sovereignty while adhering to established rules and legal frameworks. This collaborative endeavour underscores their dedication to fulfilling their duty effectively. Moreover, the assimilation of specific core values into the identity of Defence Personnel (Warga Kerja Pertahanan) serves as a unifying force, fostering seamless teamwork to address the needs of diverse stakeholders, customers, and strategic partners.

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## STRATEGIC DEFENCE ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN MALAYSIA

Since independence in 1957, Malaysia's defence landscape has experienced transformative shifts. These evolutions have been intricately attuned to internal and external challenges and the fluid geopolitical dynamics at regional and global levels. These fluctuations have profoundly influenced the trajectory of the National Defence Policy and the concurrent evolution of the capabilities of the MAF.

The process of shaping the National Defence Policy has entailed prolonged periods of adjustment, necessitating ongoing adaptations to accommodate a multifaceted array of threats. These threats span conventional dimensions and encompass emerging non-traditional challenges such as terrorism, extremism, maritime illicit activities, cybercrime, human trafficking, and pandemics. This comprehensive perspective acknowledges the potential of such diverse threats to disrupt stability and undermine national security.

Developing a competent national defence force is complex and challenging for any country, including Malaysia. It requires a strategic vision of the country's political hierarchy, civil service, and the government machinery's leadership and support role. Strategic issues that arise must be seriously considered to guarantee constant national defence. Strategic leadership is crucial in decision-making to ensure that every planned development is carried out as effectively as possible.

Proactive measures need to be instituted to ensure the effective allocation of government resources towards defence development. Any country, including Malaysia, faces the complex and challenging task of building a credible defence force. It calls for a strategic view of the country's political system and civil service, as well as the leadership and support functions of government apparatus like the National Security Council, MINDEF, MAF, and the Central Agencies of the Ministry of Finance, the Economic Planning Unit, and the Public Services Department.

Additionally, it calls for strategic planning, policy development, the creation of defence white papers, coordination between the various branches of the MAF, quality and quantity of uniformed personnel, adequate financial and non-financial resource allocation, planning mechanisms, effective and transparent procurement processes for cutting-edge platforms, weapon systems, and military solutions, as well as defence degrees. The MAF and MINDEF Strategic Leadership play a critical role in all of these.

The article's focal point is to discern and cultivate significant strategic priorities that are paramount in shaping a robust defence force for Malaysia within MINDEF and MAF. The article delves into the imperative of addressing the principles of Strategic Leadership within MINDEF and MAF while elucidating how these priorities pave the way for advancing the nation's formidable defence capabilities.

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## STRATEGIC DEFENCE ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN MALAYSIA

Therefore, strategic leaders must be cognizant of the complexity of the strategic environment, balance the competing needs of internal and external groups, and provide guidance (decisions) to advance the organisation (Carlisle Barracks, 2017). Vast and intricate organisations comprise elaborate networks, including personnel, operational components, and functional units. These elements collaboratively engage with intricate external entities and among themselves to achieve organisational goals. A strategic leader assumes the role of overseeing both internal organisational dynamics and acting as the representative of their entity when engaging with the multifaceted array of external entities constituting their organisational environment. To guide internal and external dynamics towards a cohesive trajectory, organisational and strategic leaders must conceptualise an optimal future state for their entities (Meiser, 2020).

As a result, the organisational resourcing, structure, and operational performance are all affected directly or indirectly by the internal and external complexity of the strategic leadership environment. The dynamics of a changing threat, shifting international coalitions, shifting public opinion, quickening technological development, the election of new governments, fluctuating national budgets, and the emergence of new missions make strategic leadership challenges all the more challenging (Galvin, 2019). The only constant in the strategic environment is the ongoing acceleration of the rate of change, which increases uncertainty. Pinpointing the origins and underlying causes of external influences presents a formidable challenge, predominantly due to the intricate nature of the strategic environment (Hao, 2022).

The magnitude and swiftness of external shifts intensify the complexity of this environment, consequently amplifying organisational uncertainty. The multifarious alterations within this milieu invariably exert their impact on an organisation. However, a robust strategic leadership framework becomes imperative to effectively navigate and harness these transformations' potential benefits. Without such leadership, the potential advantages for the organisation within this dynamic environment remain unrealised.

Furthermore, the efficacy of a strategic leader hinges upon their capacity to cultivate extensive networks of contacts at operational levels, thereby engendering the proliferation of such networks throughout the external landscape, akin to the propagation of a root system (Schaedler, 2022). The ability of a strategic leader to orchestrate external events is contingent upon timely access to pertinent information, coupled with a nuanced comprehension of its contextual significance. Equally crucial is their adeptness in identifying precise leverage points where educational efforts and persuasive tactics can be employed to sway events in favour of the organisation.

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The complexity of the strategic environment and the rapidity and scale of external changes underscore the imperative of strategic leadership. A strategic leader can effectively engage with the intricate external network through adept networking, informed decision-making, and targeted influence strategies, thereby navigating uncertainties and steering the organisation toward favourable outcomes. The strategic leader can effectively influence the external environment with the aid of an understanding of it and the creation of an established network within it. The strategic leader uses the access provided by his or her position and the communicative arts of education and persuasion to exert such influence. To make accomplishing a strategic vision and related organisational goals a reality, the strategic leader must gradually win over critical stakeholders (Grier, 2012).

The strategic leader must be prepared to compromise when engaging in consensus-building. Partial organisational goal achievement is preferable to no goal achievement. Usually, as the external environment's dynamics change favourably, the full achievement can be attained later. The strategic leader's inalienable duty in this complex environment is to master information and influence. The strategic leader must be aware of what is going on in the cross currents of the organisation's external environment (Metz, 2020). To influence such events to advance organisational objectives, the leader must also be aware of the dynamics underlying why they occur and remain vigilant at all times. A network of knowledgeable people in those outside organisations and entities that influence the organisation must become familiar with and like the strategic leader.

### **The Strategic Issues in Internal and External Environments**

In comparison to previous decades, the global security environment has changed dramatically. Global and regional geopolitical changes, the need to control natural resources and technological progress have created new threats and challenges that can jeopardise the country's interests and security (Shatilo, 2020). The analysis of the country's security environment is divided into three factors: the uncertainty of great power relations, the complex neighbourhood of the Southeast Asian region, and non-traditional security threats. Suppose issues related to the security environment are not accurately analysed and dealt with carefully and quickly. In that case, this situation can lead to conflict and impact national stability and economic well-being.

### **Human Capital in Defence**

The highest level of alertness and defence capability is required to protect the country's interests and sovereignty. MINDEF and MAF human capital must adjust to Malaysia's constantly shifting threat environment. Malaysia will require different skills in its future military operations.

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## STRATEGIC DEFENCE ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN MALAYSIA

By the end of 2021, a Defence Capacity Action Plan (RTKP) was supposed to be written and presented, outlining specific strategies for the MAF and the Ministry to recruit new talent or, as necessary, develop it among those already in the services (MSP, 2021). Due to the demands, opportunities, and threats presented by the informatisation of all aspects of life, Malaysia's Future Force is predicted to be highly technological. This will necessitate a knowledgeable, skilled, and capable workforce with the smart soldier concept and other capabilities. The services must be delivered by personnel with the necessary skills and qualifications.

National defence is an unbreakable national agenda. The MAF is responsible for defending territorial integrity, sovereignty, and national interests from internal and external threats (DWP, 2019). In this regard, the MAF capability development and comprehensive defence strengthening must be prioritised to ensure that the MAF serves as a shield for national security and is always prepared to face various uncertain threats. Sustaining the utmost readiness of the MAF necessitates the strategic prioritisation of three pivotal factors: human resource capacity (man), the acquisition of novel assets (machine), and the implementation of contemporary operational methodologies or systems (method).

The cohesive alignment of these tripartite components is imperative for establishing an integrated, adaptable, and focused Future Force. The government's unwavering commitment towards developmental initiatives and substantial investments are essential to realising this objective. These efforts substantiate the consistent preparedness and optimal operational functionality of the MAF.

In cultivating the MAF, prominent critical focal points warrant careful consideration. Foremost among these are the domains of readiness and capability development, the enhancement of human capital within the defence framework, the intricacies of civil-military relations, and the strategic advancement of the national defence industry. These facets collectively constitute the crux of issues demanding astute attention in the holistic evolution of the MAF.

### **Readiness and Capability Development**

Modernising the MAF to counter new and developing threats like cyberwarfare, urban warfare, and rising marine difficulties is a significant focus. The Army's Army4NextGen, the Navy's 15-to-5 Transformation Program, and the Air Force's CAP55 all had service-centric capabilities programs before the DWP was introduced. The leading organisation in charge of these initiatives was the Four Dimension MAF, or "4D MAF" (DWP, 2019). Unfortunately, neither a budget nor a presentation of these initiatives to the Government or the Parliament has been made.

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## STRATEGIC DEFENCE ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN MALAYSIA

A comprehensive cooperative capability development plan across the three services is required to guarantee that the most outdated equipment is phased out and replaced promptly. Serviceable platforms must be maintained in good condition in the meantime. The Future Force in the Malaysia DWP chapter on new mission imperatives may require further streamlining these concepts. The Defence Investment National Plan will be the format for this strategy (Pelan Pelaburan Pertahanan Negara or 3PN).

Such a strategy aims to offer a comprehensive and cogent defence investment plan that should specify precisely which key areas and pieces of gear should be prioritised and give an estimated time frame for when capabilities should be fully realised (DWP, 2019). It would be crucial to have such a plan, which would also have support and agreement from the legislative and executive arms of government, in addition to being necessary for the transparency of public policy.

### **Civil-Military Relations**

Malaysia's current civil-military relations must be re-evaluated to implement these policy changes. Open days and public roadshows for the public to explain the role of the MAF and the visions of the DWP were among the numerous activities and initiatives that promoted better communication between military personnel and civilian citizens that were planned (DWP, 2019). Even more crucially, efforts must be made to enable cross-party contact with the military at the political and legislative levels. It was suggested that both right and left-leaning members of parliament should receive invitations to public military events and that escorted camp tours should be scheduled. This should make it easier for lawmakers to comprehend the essential concerns of military personnel at the local level and pave the way for more discussions on defence issues in parliament and select committees (MSP, 2021). Engagement with professional military education institutions at a higher level, such as the Staff College, Defence College, and National Resilience College, would also help foster an understanding of strategic defence issues.

### **National Defence Industry**

The DWP's fundamental tenet is to reform the whole sector to improve the quality of life for all. Vendor-driven projects that have overcharged taxpayers and provided too little to soldiers in the field have long dominated military procurement (DWP, 2019). Military capability development must be carefully managed to be sustainable and produce desired national results. Significant defence acquisitions must be planned so that the government can receive adequate financial support for defence development. To implement defence procurement and build domestic capabilities, it is necessary to establish clear principles, policies, and guidelines that involve a thorough action plan in the National Defense Industry Policy.

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Malaysia should focus on developing a supply chain with a high level of added value in specialised industries with dual-use capabilities, such as information technology and electronics, as well as a certain level of self-sufficiency in basic military hardware. Long-term economic benefits will also result as more high-paying jobs are created.

### **The Strategic Action Plan to Addressing the Issues**

At the strategic level, an organisation's vision is developed and communicated compellingly and clearly. Concentrating efforts and moving towards the ideal future, or what should be, that strategic vision can help. While a picture of the future, the vision also serves as the organisation's process to direct its future development. To ensure that a vision is realised, it must also have an implementation strategy or plan to address the issues.

Strategic leadership is the focal point of the collaborative process that produces the vision. Strategic leadership has the unique responsibility and opportunity to define the organisation's long-term strategic intent and objectives due to its competencies and the authority of its position. Numerous steps can be taken to address the issue, such as increased readiness and defence capability in protecting national interests, strengthening of competent defence capacity, strengthening of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) for comprehensive defence and Development of Science, Technology and Defence Industry.

### **Increased Readiness and Defence Capability in Protecting National Interests**

In ensuring that the level of alertness and capability of the MAF is at the highest level, efforts must be focused on the development of the MAF to create an integrated, agile and focused team capable of responding to any threat during peace or conflict, with a high level of alertness for carrying out military operations. The main objective is to ensure a stable financial allocation and then be able to plan and manage assets more efficiently to increase the MAF alertness level to better protect against security threats.

The government's commitment to a stable defence will ensure that the MAF is at a high level of alertness and has the appropriate capabilities to implement the integrated deterrence strategy in all three layers of the country's strategic areas, i.e., the core, advanced and forward areas. In this issue, the MINDEF needs to obtain enough annual allocation of Management Expenses (Non-Personnel Emolument - NPE) considering the inflation rate of 2% every year. In addition, the preparation of a priority setting for defence asset acquisition for the consideration of the Defence Transformation Committee to develop the MAF capabilities and achieve commonality and interoperability.

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## **STRATEGIC DEFENCE ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN MALAYSIA**

### **Strengthening of Competent Defence Capacity**

Central to the production of proficient Defence Personnel (WKP) is the accentuation of behavioural and technical competencies, which are indispensable constituents. These competencies collectively ensure the adept execution of responsibilities to the highest standards. Within behavioural competence, the components entail cognitive proficiencies and personality attributes, encompassing facets such as analytical cognitive acumen, intellectual dexterity, interpersonal adeptness, and a pronounced proclivity for initiative. In parallel, technical competence emanates from immersive, hands-on training, effectively cultivating the technical prowess requisite for efficiently discharging tasks.

This pursuit is inextricably linked to the imperative of heightening the nation's internal resilience through comprehensive defence strategies. This priority assumes paramount significance, underscored by its potential to fortify the nation's capacity to navigate multifarious challenges effectively. This can be achieved through efficient human resource management, including developing new policies and improving existing policies, strengthening the cooperative relationship between the Civilians and the MAF, and appreciating common values among Defence Workers, distancing from the influence of the ever-changing work environment. Emphasis on both aspects in this core will significantly impact the legitimacy, acceptability and reliability of the MAF members and organisations and reduce incidents related to incompetence among Defence Personnel.

### **Strengthening of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) For Comprehensive Defence**

Strengthening civil-military cooperation (civil-military cooperation - CIMIC) for the sake of comprehensive defence will focus on increasing awareness among the community regarding their role and responsibilities in defending the country. Initiatives planned through this core will enhance the people's and the community's involvement in national defence and security. This objective is to improve resilience in the country through Comprehensive Defence (HANRUH) using a whole government and whole society approach. At the same time, media elements also play a role in disseminating the function of the MAF and the people in strengthening national defence. This core success can increase people's awareness and trust in the MAF and encourage their involvement in national security and defence.

### **Development of Science, Technology and Defence Industry**

The development of science, technology and the defence industry outlines the development efforts of science, technology and the defence industry towards adapting to Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0).

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## STRATEGIC DEFENCE ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN MALAYSIA

This development aims to emphasise the defence industry as an economic catalyst through progressive programs to advance science, technology, and the local defence industry and further support the MAF principle of independent defence. The result of the ongoing development of local science, technology and industry is the ability to increase local expertise and reduce dependence on original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and foreign expertise. Next, the potential of the defence industry can be expanded as a catalyst for the country's economy and aspirations towards the realisation of independent defence measures.

### Conclusion

In summation, safeguarding Malaysia's security and sovereign interests necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses strategic defence concerns and leverages the full spectrum of strategic leadership. Geographically situated in Southeast Asia, Malaysia is confronted with a spectrum of regional security complexities and territorial disputes, notably exemplified by challenges within the South China Sea. Navigating these intricacies mandates a steadfast commitment to upholding territorial integrity and cultivating harmonious relations with neighbouring nations. The significance of strategic leadership in this endeavour cannot be overstated.

This strategic leadership is fundamental to synchronising the Ministry's trajectory with the government's unwavering dedication to fortifying national defence, as delineated in the comprehensive Defense White Paper (KPP). Embracing strategic initiatives within an integrated action blueprint is pivotal in manifesting the Ministry's overarching vision and mission. However, it is imperative to underscore that the successful realisation of this strategic blueprint hinges upon a spirit of collaborative commitment and steadfast support from the populace and the MAF, spanning all organisational divisions and units. The advancement of a unified approach and the circumvention of isolated efforts are integral to achieving tangible outcomes. The nation can transcend its defence challenges with heightened efficacy by synergising endeavours and optimising resources.

To sustain progress and propel the trajectory of achievement, the continuity of plan implementation is equally crucial, accompanied by a conducive environment that catalyses the emergence of novel, innovative concepts. The unceasing commitment to seeking inventive solutions and embracing progressive ideation will amplify the impact of this strategic undertaking, thereby paving the way for future advancements. Prudent planning and resolutely enacting strategic measures will be instrumental in successfully executing the blueprint. Equally pivotal is the meticulous oversight of progress and results, permitting the calibration of approaches for optimised efficacy.

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Furthermore, investment in research and development, technological progress, and the cultivation of a proficient and motivated workforce collectively contribute to the comprehensive triumph of this defence development strategy. By nurturing an atmosphere of ingenuity and assimilating avant-garde methodologies, Malaysia can position itself at the forefront of regional defence capabilities. The government's commitment to judiciously allocating resources remains a foundational pillar in this strategic odyssey. Through circumspect resource distribution and transparent accountability, the government can ensure the consistent evolution of a robust and adept defence force, securing the nation's security interests while fostering regional equilibrium. Incorporating strategic leadership, meticulous planning, innovative ideation, and judicious resource allocation into a symbiotic framework is quintessential to Malaysia's pursuit of defence excellence. By adhering to this all-encompassing approach, Malaysia can forge a resilient and nimble defence infrastructure sentinel of regional security, empowering the nation to confront contemporary and prospective challenges with steadfast fortitude.

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### **Brigadier General Haji Abdul Jalal Zaidi bin Abdul Majid**

Brig Gen Haji Abdul Jalal Zaidi bin Abdul Majid was born on 13th March 1967 in Ipoh, Perak. He joined the Cadet School at Royal Military College Sungai Besi Kuala Lumpur in August 1985. He was commissioned to the Royal Malay Regiment on August 15, 1987, and reported to the 9th RMR at Kepala Batas Alor Setar Kedah as his first unit. He served at various appointments throughout his career in the army, as Commanding Officer 8 RMR at Kuala Lipis Pahang, Chief of Staff Operation at Joint Task Force 2 in Tawau Sabah, Director of Operation at Army HQ Kuala Lumpur, Chief of Staff at the 2nd Infantry Division HQ in Pulau Pinang. In July 2021, he was promoted to Brigadier General and commanded the 31st Infantry Brigade at Sibul Sarawak. On academic qualification, he earned a Diploma in Strategic and Defence Studies (UM) from MAFSC in 2003 and a master's in Supply Engineering and Logistics from the University of Warwick, United Kingdom in 2006. He also attended Joint Services Command & Staff College Shrivenham, United Kingdom, in 2011. He is married to Hajjah Bashrah binti Ali and blessed with one daughter and two sons.

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## THE POWER OF MEDIA IN SHAPING POLITICS: A CASE STUDY OF THE MALAYSIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS

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**The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Indeed a servant will utter a word thoughtlessly, and by it will he fall into the fire deeper than the distance between the east and the west.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]; “Are people dragged to hell on their faces on account of other than their tongues?”**

Tirmidhi

### Abstract

Particularly during election seasons, conventional and social media play a crucial role in influencing political results and forming public opinion. This essay delves into the profound impact of both traditional and social media on political outcomes, specifically focusing on their role in shaping public opinion and influencing voter behaviour during election seasons in Malaysia. It offers an insightful analysis of how these media platforms have come to play a pivotal role in Malaysian politics, particularly in the context of the general elections. The discussion is methodically segmented into key areas: the overarching influence of media in the Malaysian socio-political landscape, the intricacies of Malaysian politics, and the efforts by the government to mitigate the potential negative impacts of media. Central to this study is the recognition that conventional media, especially television, continues to be a primary source of information for Malaysian voters. The enduring significance of traditional media in disseminating information and influencing public discourse is thoroughly examined. Concurrently, the essay highlights the rising prominence of social media as a potent tool, increasingly favoured by younger demographics. It underscores political parties' and candidates' strategic use of social media to effectively communicate with voters, disseminate information, and engage in a more interactive and direct political discourse. Employing a qualitative library research methodology, the study comprehensively analyses and interprets secondary data to understand the media's role in Malaysian politics. The research explores the nuanced ways traditional and digital media contribute to forming political opinions and decisions among the electorate. It further discusses the evolving landscape of political communication in Malaysia, marked by the growing influence of digital platforms. This essay explores the interplay between media and politics in Malaysia, revealing how these platforms are instrumental in shaping the political narrative and influencing the democratic process. The findings underscore the evolving nature of political communication in the digital era, offering critical insights into the complex dynamics of media influence in contemporary politics.

**Keywords:** Digital Media, Malaysian Politics, Media Influence, Political Communication, Social Media

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### Introduction

Public opinion is significantly shaped by the media and social media, especially during election seasons. The media influences public opinion and conveys information through facts, opinions, and even fabricated news. Malaysia is not immune to media operations like the rest of the world. This paper's central argument is to analyse the power of media in Malaysia and how it shapes the political landscape in the country. It aims to discuss how social media and the media impacted the Malaysian general elections.

Media coverage can influence political decision-making, as politicians often rely on the media to gauge public sentiment and prioritise issues (Iyengar, 1991). By informing the public, the media may serve as a watchdog, making politicians responsible for the consequences of their deeds and choices (Schudson, 2008). Politicians and other powerful people often express their views, policies, and accomplishments to the public via the media, impacting their social standing and electoral success (Bennett, 2012). Consequently, the media can influence public opinion, foster favourable or unfavourable perceptions of certain groups or individuals, and disseminate propaganda and disinformation (McCombs & Shaw, 1972); (Arias, 2019). Kingdon (1995) stressed that political agendas might be shaped by the media's capacity to draw attention to certain problems and define their importance in public discourse. For instance, the US opioid epidemic received widespread media coverage, which improved public knowledge of the problem, increased government attention, and resulted in legislative reforms to address it. (Niederdeppe et al., 2013).

Voters' opinions and preferences may be influenced by news reports on campaigns and candidates in politics, which can impact election results. (Iyengar & Simon, 2000). For example, the US presidential election 2016 shows how Donald Trump was extensively covered in the media, including his contentious remarks and deeds, which helped him win the election (Patterson, 2016). Therefore, the media's framing of issues can shape public perceptions and influence political decision-making (Entman, 2004). For instance, the media's coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe framed the security and cultural threats issue, influencing political decisions to tighten border controls and implement stricter immigration policies (Berry et al., 2015).

In times of war or conflict, media can demoralise enemy forces, rally support for one's side, and shape the international community's perception of the conflict (Rai, 2000). Media can manipulate perceptions in peacetime, just as during conflict or war. In a democratic society, the media informs the public and shapes opinions. However, media outlets can also distort information or present it in a biased manner to manipulate perceptions. It can influence perceptions by selectively reporting facts or events that support a particular viewpoint while ignoring or downplaying contradictory information.

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Guarino (2015) gave an example when he mentioned that two sets of photographs of two individuals wading through water while carrying bags of food were captured during Hurricane Katrina. Both white and black individuals were mentioned in the news, but in quite different ways. The white male was said to have “found food for survival,” while the black man was said to have “looted” a grocery store. The media’s portrayal of the black guy as doing wrongdoing in contrast to the white man’s “finding things to survive” revealed the inherent prejudice. In elections, Davison (2023) argued that media attention might motivate people who previously had just a little inclination for one particular candidate or party to not only take the bother to vote but also to provide money or other support to a party organisation. Political candidates often rely on the media to get their message out to voters, and media outlets can promote specific political agendas or shape public opinion on particular issues.

### **The Power of Media in Malaysia**

The proliferation of false news or misinformation has become a growing concern globally, with Malaysia no exception. The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) has taken various steps to address misinformation. About 30 million people have been using the Internet in Malaysia since the beginning of 2022, making the digital platform susceptible to threats like the mass distribution of false news (MCMC, 2022). This literature review aims to provide an overview of scholarly research on these subjects in the context of misinformation and the power of media.

Media in Malaysia comprises traditional outlets such as print newspapers, television, radio and digital platforms like social media, blogs, and online news portals. Media outlets in Malaysia can influence public opinion on various issues, such as politics, social concerns, and economic development. They can frame issues in certain ways, highlight specific aspects of a story, and present diverse viewpoints, shaping the public’s perception and understanding (Hepp, Krotz, & Lingenberg, 2015). Therefore, the power of media in Malaysia is significant. Social media and the widespread use of the Internet have aided Malaysia in keeping up with other industrialised nations.

However, Malaysia must still ensure its mixed populace lives peacefully and harmoniously. The Malaysian government exercises control over the media through various laws and regulations like the Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA), the Film Censorship Act, the Broadcasting Act, and the Communication and Multimedia Act (CMA). Similar to traditional media, new media is also vulnerable to government control via techniques including Internet censorship, content removal, and blocking and filtering (Wok & Mohamed 2017).

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As a public information tool, the media is a primary source for Malaysians, providing news, analysis, and insights on local, national, and international events. Access to accurate and reliable information is crucial for citizens to make informed decisions, participate in political processes, and hold government institutions accountable (Mustafa & Anuar, 2016). Politicians often rely on the media to gauge public sentiment and prioritise issues. Furthermore, investigative journalism can expose corruption, misconduct, and abuse of power, prompting political action and reform (George, 2005). Other than that, the media can function to reflect cultural diversity. Malaysia is a culturally diverse country, and the media plays a role in reflecting and promoting this diversity.

Media outlets can showcase various cultures, traditions, and languages, fostering social cohesion and mutual understanding among ethnic and religious groups (Hepp, Krotz, & Lingenberg, 2015). These sites present alternate sources of info, promote civic engagement, and give chances for citizen journalism. Undoubtedly, social media has evolved into a powerful instrument for grassroots movements, activism, and political campaigns (Kaur & Mohamad, 2016). However, the media environment in Malaysia does confront several difficulties, including media ownership concentration, censorship, and self-censorship, which may restrict the range of viewpoints and information that the general people can access (Mustafa & Anuar, 2016).

A study by Ismail and Noor (2020) found that the media in Malaysia is highly politicised, with media organisations often aligning themselves with political parties and interests. This politicisation of the media has led to the propagation of biased and partisan reporting, which has influenced public opinion and undermined the media's credibility. For the audience to make an educated decision about whether or not to support the news, free media must guarantee that they are not reliant on a single source or predetermined viewpoint on the problems. The issue is the media's assertion that they have a legal right to information access based on the public's right to know. A negative media narrative might lose the administration's crucial popular support, and losing the public's support for any form of government may have serious, long-lasting effects.

Government, crime, health, consumerism, and security are among the common false news subjects that the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) has tackled. According to the MCMC report, fake news concerning the government ranks at the top overall, accounting for 37% of the total. Crime and health-related concerns, registering 14%, are ranked second. Scams, fraudulent activities, kidnapping, abduction, and human organ trafficking are some crime-related misleading news. Regarding health, examples include pandemic problems (H1N1, SARS, and COVID-19) and reports of confirmed COVID-19 infections in certain regions.

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Consumerism-related concerns came in second on the top five list with a total of 13%. Halal concerns, tainted food, unregistered goods, and unannounced cosmetics are a few consumer-related issues. According to MCMC, security, at 9%, is also in the top five. Examples include concerns about illegal immigrants entering the country via national boundaries and the application of the Movement Control Order (MCO) (MCMC, 2022). Fake news, hate speech, manipulation, and disinformation heavily permeated all social media platforms during the 15th General Elections in 2022.

Political parties engaged in campaigns alongside politicians who distributed false information about rival parties, utilising a variety of media outlets to convince and ask people to join in public conversation and provocation. Pennycook and Rand (2021) debated that a lack of thorough thinking, relevant information, reliance on source heuristics, and familiarity contribute to poor truth detection regarding information consumption among people. In addition to using media to gain support and interest, some Malaysian political parties used TikTok influencers during General Election 15 to promote their candidates and solicit favour from young voters (Sukumaran & Althabhwari, 2022).

### **The Media, Malaysian Politics and General Elections**

Traditional media, including newspapers, television, and radio, have been Malaysian voters' primary sources of information for many years. Television was the most used source of election information among Malaysians, followed by newspapers and radio. Using traditional media was positively associated with political participation, as voters who relied on traditional media were likelier to participate in the electoral process.

The media shaped public opinion during the 2013 Malaysian General Elections. The study showed that newspapers and television were the most influential sources of information for Malaysian voters and that the coverage of election-related news in these mediums significantly impacted voter attitudes. The government has employed various media strategies, including propaganda, to influence public opinion and maintain political control in Malaysia.

In this context, several scholars have explored the relationship between media propaganda and political control in the country. George (2005) examines the impact of the Internet on the political landscape in Malaysia and Singapore. The author argues that the Malaysian government has attempted to control and manipulate online content, employing various tactics to influence public opinion and maintain political control.

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TWeiss (2012) added how the Malaysian government has used new media platforms to promote its political agenda and manage public opinion. As people lack the means to check on their politicians, new media has improved the Fourth Estate's watchdog function by holding authorities and political entities responsible by observing their actions and looking into potential misuse (Curran, 1991); (Iyengar & McGrady, 2007). This is due to the development of the Fifth Estate in the 21st century, which consists of blog writers, independent reporters, and social networking sites that report through the Internet and digital media. Academics say the Fifth Estate helps democracy by increasing political, governmental, and other accountability requirements. (Dutton, 2009; Newman, Dutton & Blank, 2012).

Malaysia's 14th General Election (GE) results in 2018 showed that democracy is growing. Nevertheless, it is not overstating to suggest that, as a consequence of shifting voting patterns, individuals have entered a new political phase, one markedly different from the Malaysian race-based politics previously practised. Taib and Vivian (2022) asserted that it was evident that the media is crucial in influencing political change, especially in educating voters before the declaration of election results. Also, media serves as a counterbalance for changes in political participation, not only among certain races but also across ethnic and age divides. According to Moten (2013), analysis of election and polling results reveals that short-term variables influence most Malaysian voters.

In addition to using the media, the parties' top leadership had a considerable influence in shifting people's votes from one candidate to the other in the last three elections, namely GE 13, 14 and 15, even if economic reasons were a factor. To support this, Surin (2010) argued that the most significant journalism-related event that took place was when *Malaysiakini* was launched with support from the Southeast Asian Press Alliance. Since then, politicians have become increasingly aware that they have less influence over the message in Malaysia (Lumsden, 2013).

### **Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion in Malaysia**

Social media has emerged as a new platform for political communication and has the potential to influence public opinion. In Malaysia, the use of social media has increased rapidly in recent years, particularly among young people. Social media played a significant role in shaping public opinion during the 2013 Malaysian General Elections. Political parties and candidates widely use social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to disseminate information and engage with voters. Social media positively influenced political participation, as voters who used social media to access election-related information were likelier to participate in the electoral process.

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In this age of technological innovation, practically anybody may access the Internet thanks to smartphones and other digital gadgets. Social media warfare in Malaysia involves manipulating and exploiting social media platforms to achieve political or ideological objectives. Scholars have increasingly recognised this phenomenon as a significant concern in the country. Fake news or conflicts involving pundits or influential individuals may create chaos and draw large crowds of people, particularly on social networking platforms. Malaysia's 14th General Election (GE14) occurred on the 9th of May 2018. After 61 years, Malaysians finally pushed Barisan Nasional (BN) to cede power in what was regarded as the tensest general election in history.

Social media had a part since it was finally utilised to manipulate public opinion and was potent enough to stir up political hatred, claim Chinnasamy & Manaf (2018). A textual analysis of 187 news pieces from six online news stations' social media platforms was published during the campaign's 11 days. The study found that issues like the Goods and Service Tax (GST), politicians' reputations, and the 1 Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) debacle are the leading causes of political hatred on social media platforms. Ahmad and Anuar (2016) investigated the use of social media in political communication during the 2013 Malaysian General Election. The authors argue that social media platforms were utilised as a battleground for political warfare, with government and opposition parties employing various strategies to manipulate public opinion and gain support.

Lilleker et al. (2020) argued that fake news and disinformation campaigns in global politics could be related to social media warfare in Malaysia. The authors contend that spreading false information and fake news on social media sites may erode democracy and fuel political unrest. Tandoc et al.'s (2018) thorough categorisation of incorrect information provided a foundation for comprehending Malaysia's social media battle. The writers also underline social media sites' role in disseminating fabrications, which may be used as an instrument of warfare in disputes over politics and ideologies.

### **The Government is Affected by Multiple Social Media Manipulation**

Globally, social media exploitation has become a significant issue with various implications for governments. Bradshaw and Howard (2019) examined globally orchestrated social media manipulation. The authors contend that such manipulation impacts governments by eroding public confidence, affecting political judgment, and promoting division. Vosoughi et al. (2018) look at how information spreads online and emphasise the effects of incorrect information on governments. The authors stress the impact of misleading information on political instability, public distrust of government institutions, and policy errors. Additionally, Tucker et al. (2018) made the case that social media manipulations might skew policy discussions, obstruct democratic procedures, and amplify societal divides.

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A study by Maréchal (2017) examines the idea of a networked dictatorship concerning Russian internet regulation. The author emphasises how social media manipulation shapes public policy, supports official narratives, and furthers geopolitical objectives. Therefore, by disseminating false information, magnifying divisive narratives, and undermining democratic norms, social media manipulation endangers the stability and efficacy of governments (Hook & Verdeja, 2022). To continue to protect democratic processes and guarantee the strength and effectiveness of governmental institutions, addressing the challenges posed by misinformation, disinformation, and other forms of online manipulation is crucial. These references highlight the significant effects that social media manipulation has on governments.

The use of social media for criminal behaviour has grown significantly in recent years. Holt and Bossler (2014) highlighted social media's contribution to several criminal acts, such as online harassment, phishing, and identity theft. Research by Van der Walt et al. (2018) focused on text-mining approaches for detecting cyberbullying on social media. The researchers strongly focus on how social media platforms have contributed to the rise in cyberbullying in recent years. Reyns et al. (2014) investigated the risk variables for college students who engage in sexting. According to the authors, social media raises the possibility of privacy violations, the unintentional spread of explicit information, and new chances for digital deviance. Detecting criminal groups in smartphone instant messaging apps, particularly those connected to social media platforms, was the subject of a study by Alqahtani et al. (2016). According to the report, social media supports organised crime, such as drug trafficking, financial crimes, and terrorist operations. Weimann (2015) thoroughly examines cyberterrorism, highlighting how radical organisations have used social media sites for recruiting, PSYOPS, propaganda, and coordination. These references highlight the necessity for ongoing study, legislative changes, and technical advancements to address these dangers and protect people and communities by shedding light on numerous illegal activities made possible by social media.

### **The Initiatives of the Malaysian Government**

Globally, governments are becoming more aware of the need to confront the challenges that social media and the Internet offer to their capacity to retain control. According to West (2017), governments must create detailed strategies to control the hazards related to social media and the Internet. These plans must include actions to increase citizen involvement, provide public services more effectively, and safeguard national security. Governments must collaborate closely with Internet service providers to create legislation and regulations that ensure the responsible use of social media and the Internet, according to Taddeo and Floridi (2018). Threats from false information, cybercrime, and privacy breaches may be addressed using this teamwork.

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On the other hand, Brenner (2017) discusses governments' difficulties when dealing with cyber threats, especially those brought on by social media and the Internet. The author emphasises creating national cybersecurity plans to secure individuals' rights, protect essential infrastructure, and retain authority. Social media's participation in the Arab Spring and its implications for governmental control were addressed by Howard and Hussain (2013). The authors contend that governments must create proactive methods to control the potentially unstable impacts of social media and the Internet on political institutions. According to Lim (2017), social media has contributed to the emergence of tribal nationalism in Indonesia, underscoring governments' need to address the possible security risks that these platforms may pose. The author also advocated for government initiatives to establish inclusive online communities, suppress hate speech, and encourage tolerance.

### **Develop A Social Media Policy Strategy**

Developing a social media policy strategy to prevent fake news and online crimes requires a multifaceted approach involving various stakeholders, including governments, private sector organisations, and the general public. States must implement a national social media policy to combat people's detrimental social media use. With the help of this strategy, states could seize chances to safeguard their strategic interests (Bertot, Jaeger & Hansen, 2012). It would eventually act as a crucial facilitator that uses social media effectively and ethically. Also, the guideline would clarify what is and is not permissible to social media site users.

In the case of Malaysia, the government has taken several initiatives to counter social media manipulation. Malaysia has already implemented The National Cyber Security Policy (NCSP) to ensure the Critical National Information Infrastructure (CNII) is protected to a level commensurate with the risks faced. George (2018) highlights Malaysia's efforts to counter social media manipulation, including the introduction of legislation to combat the spread of fake news and hate speech. The author emphasises the importance of balancing between countering manipulation and preserving freedom of expression. Lim (2020) argued that Malaysia's regional collaboration with other Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia, to counter social media manipulation by sharing best practices and coordinating efforts is crucial for effectively addressing online disinformation and manipulation across borders. Mustafa and Ibrahim (2017) described how the Malaysian government had used strategic communication initiatives to promote a positive national image and counter online manipulation. The authors focus on the "1 Malaysia" national strategic policy, which encourages unity and inclusiveness.

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In the Malaysian government's efforts to strengthen national cybersecurity infrastructure to counter social media manipulation and other cyber threats, Hamid and Idris (2015) highlighted the importance of developing robust cyber defence capabilities to protect critical information systems and ensure national security. At the same time, Hasan and Ahmed (2019) gave a general outline of the Malaysian government's difficulties in combating false information on social media. The authors address several government strategies to stop disseminating false information and disinformation, such as public awareness campaigns, legislative actions, and partnerships with social media sites.

These references provide light on the steps taken by the Malaysian government to combat social media manipulation. The government's initiatives include passing laws, creating regional cooperation, encouraging strategic communication, and bolstering the nation's cybersecurity infrastructure. Additionally, it emphasises the need for government initiatives to counteract the dangers of social media and the Internet. Governments may more effectively maintain control and protect the interests of their citizens by developing comprehensive policies that address misinformation, cybercrime, privacy concerns, and potential destabilisation.

### Conclusion

The general elections in Malaysia served as a potent illustration of the influence of media and social media on politics. The polls were fiercely fought, and the media greatly impacted the formation of public opinion and the determination of the results. Social media sites often spread news, viewpoints, and election-related information. These platforms were used by political parties and politicians to interact with people, convey their messages, and rally support. This increased political involvement and participation, particularly among young people. It is also necessary to pay attention to the importance of conventional media, such as television and newspapers. They offered voters access to information on the platforms and programmes of the various political parties and provided in-depth coverage of the election.

The media and social media did, however, also have some detrimental influence on the election. Social media was rife with fake news and misinformation, which polarised and occasionally divided people and affected how they saw issues. In conclusion, the last three general elections in Malaysia demonstrated the considerable influence that the media and social media have on politics. They can sway public opinion, rally support, and affect electoral results. However, there are also detrimental effects to be aware of, like the proliferation of false information. Media literacy and critical thinking abilities are necessary to understand the complicated and sometimes deceptive information offered in and on social media.

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**Colonel Mohd Hakimi Bin Mohd Anuar RMAF**

Colonel Mohd Hakimi Bin Mohd Anuar RMAF was born in Rembau, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, on 3rd January 1969. Upon completing his secondary education, he joined the Royal Malaysian Airforce as a Cadet Officer in the Royal Malaysian Airforce Cadets School in Kinrara, Malaysia. He then undergoes basic flying training in 1 Flying Training School (1 FTC) in Alor Setar, Kedah, Malaysia. Col Mohd Hakimi has served on various bases and squadrons such as Light Attack Squadron (LAS) as a Forward Air Controller Pilot, No 6 Squadron as a Combat pilot, No 15 Squadron as an Instructor pilot and 1 FTC (Flying Training School) as an 'A' Category instructor pilot. He commanded a few organisations, such as the Commanding Officer of 1 FTC, Commandant of PESAMA and ACOS of Airforce Communication and Electronic Headquarters. For international missions, he served as Tactical Air Command Party (TACP) in Bosnia Herzegovina in 1993 and as Chief of Staff in the International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Mindanao, Philippines.

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## IS THE ABSENCE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE SEVERE IN MALAYSIAN BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT?

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### Abstract

*The quality of a country's public administration and governance is a key factor in its economic performance and the well-being of its citizens. Governance is about respecting the rule of law, voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality and control of corruption. Governance is the main factor in all management, whether in the public or private sector. Without good governance, much misuse of power, corruption, lack of transparency and other issues will result in loss to the industry and the country's development. In Malaysia, a few cases related to governance failures, such as MISC Bhd (2018), Tabung Haji RM9 Billion Shortfall (2017), Immigration Department Migrant Scandal (2016), Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) (2008), Sabah Water Department (2015) and the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) (2015) Scandal shows the absence of good governance in Malaysia's business environment. This paper will focus on the 1MDB Scandal and examine the lack of good governance. This paper will highlight the weaknesses in the governance of 1MDB and identify the solution to overcome the problem. It also will focus on firstly the degree of internal governance mechanism practises. Secondly, to analyse the absence of an external governance mechanism in 1MDB and propose recommendations for enhancing good governance in the Malaysian business environment.*

**Keywords:** Governance, 1MDB, Internal Governance Mechanism, External Governance Mechanism

### Introduction

Governance refers to the mechanisms and processes through which societies, organisations, and communities make decisions and manage their affairs. The concept of governance has been widely studied and discussed in various fields, including political science, economics, sociology, and public administration. One commonly cited definition of governance is provided by the World Bank, which defines it as "the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences" (World Bank, 1992).

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in the concept of "good governance," which is generally understood to refer to a set of principles and practices that promote transparency, accountability, participation, and the rule of law.

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The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has identified eight key characteristics of good governance: participation, the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability (UNDP, 1997). These broad definitions and principles of governance can be studied and analysed in various specific contexts, such as corporate governance, public governance, and global governance. The study of governance involves examining the structures, processes, and actors involved in decision-making and policy implementation, as well as the outcomes and impacts of these processes on various stakeholders.

The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) is an annual report published by Transparency International, a non-governmental organisation that monitors and measures levels of corruption around the world. The CPI ranks countries based on how corrupt their public and private sector is perceived. The index is based on expert assessments and surveys of business people and analysts who are asked about corruption in a particular country. Cases related to governance failures such as MISC Bhd (2018), Tabung Haji RM9 Billion Shortfall (2017), Immigration Department Migrant Scandal (2016), Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) (2008), Sabah Water Department (2015) and the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB)(2015) Scandal contributed to the CPI. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2021, Malaysia scored 51 out of 100 and ranked 57th out of 180 countries surveyed (Table 1).

The table shows that Malaysia's CPI score is higher than those of some neighbouring countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh but lower than that of Singapore, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. In the case of Malaysia, the CPI measures the perceived level of corruption in the country's public sector. A higher score indicates a lower level of perceived corruption, while a lower score indicates a higher level of perceived corruption. The CPI score can indicate the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts in a country and is a tool for policymakers and citizens to identify areas where improvements can be made to address corruption.

### **Governance in Management**

Governance refers to how public institutions and individuals in positions of authority manage public affairs and resources. It is characterised by transparency, accountability, participation, the rule of law, and responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of the people. Good governance ensures that public institutions are transparent and accountable in their decision-making processes and adhere to the rule of law. It also promotes the participation of citizens in the governance process, ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.

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Country	Rank	CPI Score
Singapore	4	85
Japan	19	73
Taiwan	28	68
South Korea	39	60
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>51</b>
Thailand	104	36
Indonesia	105	35
Philippines	115	34
Vietnam	119	33
India	139	30
Pakistan	144	28
Bangladesh	155	26
Myanmar	157	26
Afghanistan	170	15
North Korea	180	0

**Table 1**

**Source: Transparency International. (2021). Corruption Perception Index 2021.  
Retrieved from <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/nzl>**

Malaysia has established rules and regulations to improve internal quality control and risk assessment, such as the Malaysian Code of Corporate Governance (MCCG), Companies Act 1965, Security Commission of Malaysian (SCM), Companies Commission of Malaysia (CCM), Bursa Malaysia and Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA). In 1998, the Malaysian Institute of Corporate Governance (MICG) focused on corporate governance matters. The MCCG's latest update in 2021 provided clear and easy guidelines for companies to ensure compliance and adaptability with a strong emphasis on disclosure.

Good governance ensures that public resources are managed efficiently, effectively, and in the people's best interest. This includes the equitable distribution of resources and the provision of essential services such as health care, education, and social protection. The benefits of good governance are numerous. It promotes economic development, reduces poverty, improves public services, and enhances the overall quality of life. It also reduces corruption, ensures that public institutions are effective, and fosters public trust and confidence in government.

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To achieve good governance, it is essential to have strong institutions, effective regulations, and an engaged and informed citizenry. This requires a commitment from governments, civil society, and the private sector to work together to promote transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. The absence of good governance can have severe consequences for society and the economy. It can lead to corruption, mismanagement of resources, social and economic inequality, and a lack of trust in government. Public institutions may need good governance to be more efficient, effective, and corrupt. This can result in the mismanagement of public funds and resources, leading to a lack of essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. This can lead to social unrest as citizens become frustrated with the government's inability to provide for their basic needs.

The absence of good governance can also result in economic stagnation, as businesses and investors may be reluctant to invest in a country with a weak governance framework. This can lead to a lack of job opportunities, low productivity, and a stagnant economy. Furthermore, good governance is necessary to maintain the rule of law and human rights. It can lead to a lack of accountability and transparency in decision-making, violating citizens' rights and freedoms. The absence of good governance can severely affect a country's development and prosperity. Governments and society need to work together to promote good governance and ensure that public institutions are transparent, accountable, and responsive to the needs of citizens.

### **The Absence of Internal Governance Mechanism in the 1MDB Scandal**

The 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal, which involved allegations of corruption and mismanagement in the Malaysian government's sovereign wealth fund, highlighted the importance of strong internal governance mechanisms in preventing financial misconduct. The scandal, uncovered in 2015, resulted in investigations and legal proceedings in several countries, including Malaysia, the United States, and Switzerland. Several reports and analyses of the 1MDB scandal have pointed to weaknesses in the fund's internal governance mechanisms.

A Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report found that 1MDB had "inadequate management controls and governance processes," contributing to financial irregularities and mismanagement. The report also noted that the fund's board of directors had "failed to carry out its fiduciary duties" and that there was "a lack of transparency and accountability" in the fund's operations (PAC's Report, 2015). The 1MDB involved multiple parties, including former Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who was accused of receiving and laundering funds from the fund. One of the critical problems in the internal governance mechanism of 1MDB was the need for more oversight and accountability. The Prime Minister's Office appointed the fund's board of directors and needed to include independent experts who could provide checks and balances.

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This lack of independence made it easier for the board and management to engage in corrupt practices and misuse of funds without being detected. The PAC's report also noted that the fund's management had engaged in "a pattern of misappropriation and embezzlement" of funds. The 1MDB scandal highlights the importance of strong internal governance mechanisms in preventing financial misconduct. The lack of transparency, accountability, and oversight in the fund's operations allowed for the mismanagement and misappropriation of funds.

Another problem was the need for more transparency in the fund's operations. The fund was not subject to regular audits or public disclosure requirements, which made it difficult for outsiders to scrutinise its activities. This lack of transparency allowed the fund's management to engage in questionable transactions without detection. Furthermore, there were also allegations of conflicts of interest within the fund's management. Some individuals involved in the fund were also involved in other business ventures that may have conflicted with their duties at the fund. This created opportunities for self-dealing and other forms of corruption. Overall, the internal governance mechanism of 1MDB needed to be stronger and more effective in preventing corruption and misuse of funds. To prevent similar scandals from happening in the future, it is crucial to strengthen governance mechanisms in state-owned enterprises and ensure greater transparency and accountability in their operations.

### **The Absence of an External Governance Mechanism in the 1MDB Scandal**

The 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal was not only caused by internal governance problems but also by external governance issues. These external governance problems contributed to the failure of oversight mechanisms, allowing fraud and corruption to continue. One of the main external governance problems was the need for more oversight and enforcement by external regulators. The regulatory authorities responsible for overseeing the financial industry, such as the Securities Commission and the Central Bank of Malaysia, failed to detect and prevent fraudulent activities within 1MDB. This was due to a lack of resources, expertise, and political will to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the scandal.

A report by the US Department of Justice (DOJ) noted that the regulatory authorities in Malaysia, including the central bank and the Securities Commission, failed to detect and prevent the misappropriation of 1MDB funds. Similarly, a report by the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA) found that the Swiss banks involved in the scandal had "serious deficiencies in their anti-money laundering controls" and that FINMA had "failed to supervise" the banks (FINMA, 2016) correctly.

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Another external governance mechanism that was absent in the 1MDB scandal was practical international cooperation. The scandal involved complex financial transactions and money laundering schemes that spanned several countries and required international cooperation to uncover and prosecute. However, limited cooperation and information sharing between the relevant authorities in different countries hindered the investigations and legal proceedings. For example, the DOJ noted that the Malaysian authorities had obstructed the investigation by refusing to cooperate and seizing assets subject to forfeiture (Reuter, 2018).

The absence of effective external governance mechanisms in the 1MDB scandal highlights the need for stronger regulatory oversight and international cooperation in preventing and addressing financial misconduct. It also underscores the importance of holding individuals and institutions accountable for their actions and the need for transparency and accountability in all aspects of governance. The lack of transparency and accountability in the international financial transactions involving 1MDB also contributed to the bad governance of 1MDB's financial activities. The lack of transparency made it difficult for external auditors and investigators to identify and investigate fraudulent activities. It also enabled those involved in the scandal to hide their activities from the public and regulatory authorities. In addition, the involvement of foreign banks and financial institutions in the scandal highlighted the weaknesses in the global financial system's regulatory framework. These institutions facilitated the transfer of funds and the issuance of bonds for 1MDB despite concerns about the legality and transparency of these transactions.

Malaysia has strengthened its regulatory framework and improved its oversight mechanisms to address these external governance issues. This includes establishing a new agency to oversee the financial industry and introducing stricter regulations for financial institutions. Malaysia has also worked with foreign governments and regulatory authorities to investigate and prosecute those involved in the scandal. However, the 1MDB scandal highlights the need for greater international cooperation and coordination in regulating the global financial system. The scandal also underscores the importance of transparency and accountability in financial transactions to prevent future abuses of power and corruption.

### **Recommendations for Enhancing Good Governance**

Reforming governance towards greater transparency must be implemented in Malaysia in public and private services. The 1MDB scandal highlighted the importance of strong internal and external governance mechanisms to prevent financial misconduct. Based on the lessons learned from the scandal, here are some recommendations for improving governance mechanisms.

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Fighting corruption through education is a multi-faceted approach that addresses corruption's supply and demand sides. Long-term measures that can be taken to fight corruption through education are promoting transparency and encouraging transparency in government institutions, businesses, and other organisations by ensuring that information is easily accessible to the public. Educate people on the importance of ethical behaviour and the consequences of corrupt practices. This can be done in schools, universities and the workplace.

Foster a culture of integrity by encouraging individuals and organisations to prioritize integrity and ethical behaviour. Work with civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to develop partnerships that promote transparency, accountability, and integrity. The government must also encourage whistle-blowing by creating an environment where people feel safe to report corruption without fear of retaliation. Strengthen Internal Governance Mechanisms. A clear and robust internal governance framework with policies, procedures, and controls should be provided to prevent fraudulent activities. Political appointees in the Government Link Companies (GLCs) should be avoided. The Board of Directors should be free from political influences, the Key stakeholders should be held accountable for their actions, and regular audits and reviews should be conducted to ensure compliance.

To increase transparency, there should be precise disclosure requirements for all financial transactions and dealings involving government entities and their subsidiaries. This includes requiring public disclosure of beneficial ownership of companies and their ultimate beneficiaries. There should also be greater accountability, with penalties and consequences for non-compliance or fraudulent activities. Ensure that corrupt individuals are held accountable for their actions. This can be done through strong legal and regulatory frameworks that provide consequences for engaging in corrupt practices.

There should be an improvement in regulatory oversight. Regulators should have sufficient resources, expertise, and independence to carry out their oversight duties effectively. Regular inspections, audits and timely enforcement actions should be taken against wrongdoing. The regulators should also collaborate with other regulators and international organisations to share information and best practices. Strengthen the Role of External Auditors. External auditors should be held to higher standards of accountability and transparency. They should be required to disclose their audit findings clearly and transparently, and there should be consequences for collusion or malpractice. The Malaysia Auditor General should be responsible for overseeing this audit process. The audit findings should be free from any disturbance of the political master.

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### **Strengthen Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC)**

To prevent corruption, strict anti-corruption laws should be in place, with severe penalties for offenders on both the supply and demand sides of corruption. This includes measures to protect whistle-blowers and increase public awareness of the dangers of corruption. The Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission must have absolute power and be free from the influence of the political master. Lastly, it enhances international Cooperation and Collaboration. Greater international cooperation and collaboration should be needed to combat corruption and money laundering. Method for exchanging information internationally must be in place. This includes working with other governments, international organisations, and the private sector to share information and best practices and promote greater transparency and accountability.

By implementing these recommendations, it is possible to promote a culture of good governance that involves transparency, accountability, and integrity and can help combat corruption. Changing a culture of good governance is a long-term process. Financial institutions and regulators need to promote good governance and prevent scandals like the 1MDB from happening in the future. It is important to note that the implementation of these recommendations requires a commitment from all stakeholders, including governments, financial institutions, and regulators, to work together to strengthen the financial system's integrity and restore public trust. It will take time and effort to rebuild public trust, but it can be done with a clear commitment from the government of the day to promote a culture of good governance and transparency.

### **Conclusion**

Good governance is essential because it promotes sustainable economic and social development, improves public services, and fosters public trust and confidence in government. Good governance supports economic growth and development by providing businesses with a stable and predictable environment. It ensures public funds are used efficiently, effectively, transparent, and accountable. Good governance can help reduce poverty by ensuring that public resources are used to provide essential services such as health care, education, and social protection. It also promotes economic growth, which creates jobs, improves living standards, and reduces poverty.

Besides, good governance encourages transparency and accountability in public funds, which can help reduce waste and improve service delivery. It promotes transparency and accountability, building public trust and confidence in government institutions. This can lead to greater public participation in governance and increased government and civil society cooperation.

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In promoting transparency and accountability, good governance ensures that public officials are held accountable for their actions and that adequate mechanisms are in place to investigate and prosecute corrupt activities.

In summary, good governance is essential for sustainable economic and social development, the provision of public services, and the promotion of public trust and confidence in government institutions. The absence of good governance can have negative consequences for individuals, communities, and societies. When governance is poor, more transparency, accountability, and participation in decision-making processes are often needed. This can lead to corruption, the misuse of public resources, and a disregard for the rule of law. Moreover, the absence of good governance can undermine economic development, as investors may hesitate to invest in countries with little transparency, accountability, or respect for the rule of law. This can result in a lack of job opportunities, reduced economic growth, and increased poverty. In extreme cases, the absence of good governance can lead to state failure, civil unrest, and even conflict. Without effective institutions and regulations, societies can become vulnerable to corruption, crime, and violence.

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**Colonel Mohammad Jafri Bin Suboh RMAF**

Colonel Mohammad Jafri Bin Suboh RMAF (372520) was born on 25 Feb 1974 at Alor Gajah, Melaka. He joined the Sekolah Pegawai Kadet TUDM in 1992 and was selected to undergo a Basic Flying Course at Airforce College, Alor Setar. He was selected as a transport aircraft pilot. He flew Cessna 402B and C130H transport aircraft in No 4 Squadron, Subang Airbase. In 1997, he served No 20 Squadron as Co- Pilot and Aircraft Commander until 2004. Subsequently, he served in No 14 Squadron, another C130H squadron at Labuan Airbase. He was selected to undergo an Instructor Pilot Course at Airforce College, Alor Setar. He served at No 1 Flying Training Centre, Alor Setar, till 2010. Subsequently, he served in the No 20 Squadron in Subang Airbase as a C130H Instructor Pilot and a Squadron Executive Officer. In 2014, he served as the Commanding Officer till 2016. Then, he served as Base Executive Officer for Subang Airbase and as Commander of Kuching Airbase in 2022. He was involved in various international HADR/ Evacuation missions such as Ops Tsunami, Ops Jerebu, Ops Pyramid, and Ops Murni and as Mission Commander for Ops Yaman and Ops SAR MH 370 in Australia. In Professional Military Education, Col Mohammad Jafri RMAF attended the Indonesian Air Force Command and Staff College in Bandung, Indonesia 2013. He attended the Malaysian Armed Forces Defence College in 2017 with a Master in Social Science in Defence Study (UKM).

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## TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE BENEFITS OF ICT TO BE AN INFLUENTIAL PLAYER IN THE CONDUCT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**Colonel Zamri Othman**

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### **Abstract**

*Advances in communications technology are fundamentally changing the traditional landscape of international relations, encouraging transparency, pushing aside secrecy, igniting a global social movement, and elevating diplomacy in an era where states are now connected via fibre optics to millions of people, communication technology advancements have fundamentally altered the traditional context of international relations. The increased number of foreign missions and diplomats worldwide, including Malaysia, demonstrates the widespread understanding of the critical duties played by the diplomatic service in the information age. COVID-19, for instance, has shown the need to investigate fresh avenues for safeguarding diplomatic activity around the globe. As a developing nation, Malaysia must modify its diplomatic practices to utilize the advanced communication technologies of the twenty-first century. Developed countries like the USA, UK, Canada, and France are now using this opportunity. To attain its foreign policy goals, Malaysia must keep up with the evolving reality and complexity of the linked domain. Failing to do so would result in loss of ground to states with more sophisticated technology. This paper addressed the following questions: 1) Has ICT, in essence, improved the practice of diplomacy in international affairs? 2) What is the benefit of ICT in international affairs? 3) Has the utilisation of ICT made Malaysia an influential player in its international affairs? This research aims to comprehend and explain the function of ICT in improving international affairs, including its benefits. Other than that, to evaluate how the Malaysian government utilises ICT in managing its international affairs. To address these questions, this paper implemented a qualitative research methodology based on data gathered primarily from secondary sources, such as journals, articles, books, and the perspectives of various scholars on the use of ICT in diplomacy in international affairs.*

**Keywords:** *Information and communications technology (ICT), diplomacy, international affairs, e-diplomacy, national security*

### **Introduction**

The rapid development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has led to drastic changes in the nature and conduct of diplomacy and diplomatic services in contemporary times. The revolution of ICT has changed how diplomacy is conducted. It has challenged how states relate to each other and has practically forced states to embrace other non-state actors in determining and managing their relations with foreign stakeholders. Concerning this, Rendon (cited in (Kalathil & Firestone, 2014)) observes that "Our challenge is to understand how to take 21st century statecraft and turn it into 21st century statecraft".

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## TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE BENEFITS OF ICT TO BE AN INFLUENTIAL PLAYER IN THE CONDUCT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Social media has properties that, in theory, should facilitate more opportunities for civic and political engagement for its users. Its ubiquity, affordability, high speed, ease of use, and interactivity remove the need for much of the resources usually required for mobilisation – time, money, civic skills, and co-presence of organisers and participants (Earl & Kimport, 2011). Some scholars argue that social media platforms create new repertoires of contention by permitting large-scale action without formal organization or leadership – critical features normally associated with traditional social movement organisations (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Chadwick, 2017; Lim, 2012).

Participants can personalise their engagement with the movement by framing and shaping its identity through self-created content like memes and videos. This ‘self-actualising’ style of communication, with preferences for non-hierarchical, personalised, and open forms of communication should be particularly attractive to young people – the most fervent users of social media – whose participation in formal politics has long been in decline in much of the developed world (Freelon, 2011).

In the current debate on the Internet and its effects on democracy, the former is argued to affect the latter on at least two levels. First, the Internet might facilitate expressing and forming citizens’ opinions. Second, the Internet might lower (and in some instances remove) the costs associated with engaging in political influence (Sinpeng, 2020). This article aims to engage with these two contradictory global trends – the rise of social media-fuelled political participation, on the one hand, and growing state censorship online, on the other – through an in-depth study of Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia. At the same time, there will be a discussion on how Malaysia can take advantage of the benefits of ICT to be an influential player in international affairs.

### Literature review

Information and communications technology (ICT) is commonly believed to be crucial to a nation's development. Therefore, governments in several developing countries have made significant commitments to ICT and have cultivated to perceive it as a key factor in industrialisation and economic growth (Sein & Harindranath, 2004).

Advances in communication technology change the traditional international relations environment by fostering transparency, pushing aside secrecy, promoting a global social uprising, and elevating diplomacy to a more crucial role in international relations. States are now connected to millions of people via fibre optics, satellite, and wireless in a complex network. These changes have sparked much speculative thinking about the future of diplomacy. Most countries are seen as losing their ability to regulate and affect the flow of information across their borders and what their inhabitants see, hear, and think (Deibert, 2000).

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A growing number of civil society organisations and other non-state actors (NSAs) can strengthen their influence and wrest control of the initiative away from governments due to network technology, particularly the Internet. However, in a world where decisive individuality is declining, and compact globalisation is successfully gaining momentum, the requirement for a diplomatically sound world becomes crucial. States must negotiate and cultivate tolerance as borders become increasingly permeable and interconnected in many socio-economic ways. However, diplomacy must consider the new communications environment (Ehiane & Mosud, 2013).

As international affairs have changed with the times, from the development of parchment to the click of an email, the impact of communication technologies on the circulation of knowledge has been pivotal to diplomacy's evolution (Black, 2010; Hamilton & Langhorne, 2010; Jönsson & Hall, 2005; Roberts, 2016). Unsurprisingly, the impact of globalisation and digitisation on twenty-first-century society has awakened much interest in what these changes may mean for the future of diplomacy (Bjola & Holmes, 2015; Manor, 2016; Pamment, 2014; Riordan, 2016).

The key concept for these changes is digital diplomacy. By 2016, 90 per cent of all United Nations (UN) member states had developed some official social media presence. Of these, Twitter is a dominant platform for policy engagement, featuring nearly 800 accounts belonging to heads of state and governments (Manor & Pamment, 2019). Questions of relative influence, power and prestige have come to the fore, for example, in annual rankings of these accounts' audience size, audience engagement, connectivity and so on. There has been an irrefutable increase in national governments establishing a digital presence supporting their diplomatic objectives, which demands greater attention.

### **Research methodologies**

This research aims to comprehend and explain the function of ICT in improving international affairs, including its benefits. At the same time, evaluate how the Malaysian government utilises ICT in managing its international affairs. This will lead to exploring the issue of maximising digital diplomacy to its fullest extent. In completing this paper, a qualitative research methodology is employed, and all data collected was based on references from mostly secondary sources such as journals, articles, books, and views from different scholars on the use of ICT in the practice of diplomacy by the countries including Malaysia in their international affairs. All collected data will be analysed before the possible results and findings are specified.

## **TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE BENEFITS OF ICT TO BE AN INFLUENTIAL PLAYER IN THE CONDUCT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

### **Result and discussion**

Due to the fast improvements in information and communication technologies, the techniques, forms, and substance of diplomacy have all changed. Diplomats and Foreign Service personnel deal with a vast amount of information. In recent decades, ICT has changed the collection and processing of information. In recent years, diplomatic information processing has become more analytical. Diplomatic practice has shown that the Internet and social media may work together despite their incompatibility. The use of ICT by a foreign ministry is a means and/or communication tool, not an end. Innovative ICT and diplomatic innovation will influence the future of diplomacy.

The economic disruption caused by liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation has altered diplomacy. As a consequence of this transition, the demand for information, transparency, and open democratic procedures has strengthened. The evolution has expanded the number of international participants and influenced the nature of diplomacy. The fast growth of ICT in modern society has transformed social, economic, and political interactions. Information accessibility and oversight boost indirect influence and enhance non-state players in international relations in digital politics. On the other hand, greater duties, desire for more involvement and responsibility, scarce resources, and a multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary global marketplace are significant threats to the modern diplomatic service.

### **Function of ICT in Improving International Affairs**

ICT is intricately linked with national or international affairs, international relations, and diplomacy. The proliferation of ICT has also increased the human capacity to create social and political destruction. Hence, ensuring world peace is a dilemma for international relations and diplomacy. ICT has introduced new instruments for governments to compete without turning to open conflict as they endeavour to improve their standing in the world compared to other countries. Diplomacy is not only the art of negotiating and protecting one's interests or expanding one's influence in international affairs, as the new phase demonstrates.

Diplomacy and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) have evolved to be key tools for managing international affairs and international relations in every nation with independent rule, projecting the essence of protecting national security and the national power it has (Timur, 2017). Todhunter (2013) found that diplomacy plays an integral role in bringing foreign policies into practice by fostering bilateral relationships, providing diplomatic assistance, establishing relationships with various nations, and participating in communication.

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Murray et al. (2011) also believed that diplomacy entails the implementation of initiatives to realise the outcome and associated communications that take place around these initiatives and outcomes, even though the policies provide direction and outline the outcomes to be achieved through diplomatic relationships. Ministers in the MFA (Ministry Of Foreign Affairs) oversee an array of international obligations, such as receiving foreign leaders from various continents and participating in state assemblies in other countries (Baxter & Stewart, 2008). Governments have recently implemented new approaches to engaging with other nations, significantly changing how MFAs handle foreign affairs (Hanson, 2010).

It has been pointed out that foreign ministries are progressively utilising technology to its fullest potential (Ehiane & Mosud, 2013; Hocking & Melissen, 2015). Based on Heeks and Bailur (2007), ICT has permeated every part of society and has evolved into an essential instrument for providing government services in an open, accountable, and auditable manner. Foreign ministries are also decreasing the intricacy of general operations via ICT frameworks (Bátora, 2008; Hanson, 2010), and otherwise, Ehiane and Mosud (2013) found that technological infrastructures have been perpetually updated periodically to increase the effectiveness of foreign ministries' computing networks. To support the numerous roles of diplomats, e-diplomacy started to challenge and replace conventional diplomacy techniques in the past several years. However, until recently, the application of ICT in foreign ministries primarily concentrated on internal operations (Al-Muftah et al., 2018).

Greater access to information, increased contact between individuals and organisations, and increased transparency are the primary distinctions from traditional public diplomacy (Chakraborty, 2013). Foreign ministries, embassies, and representatives of international organisations are increasingly establishing websites. Foreign ministry websites elucidate and document national foreign policy and debunk unwanted acts or claims by other countries (Barston, 2019). Social media have become additional essential diplomatic weapons. This unprecedented worldwide use of Internet communications has brought unparalleled openness and transparency. Social media provides a platform for unrestricted communication and has become the most effective instrument for communicators.

International players use the most popular social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Periscope, and Snapchat. The Twiplomacy (2016) report has revealed that the most popular online social media platform for Government Officials is Twitter, with just under 800 Governmental Accounts representing 90% of the United Nations (U.N) member states. Figure 1 shows the Number of Governmental Accounts per Social Media Platform.

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Figure 1: Number of Governmental Accounts per Social Media Platform



Adapted from Twiplomacy (2016)

Social media platforms have become fundamental tools for managing international relations, portraying the fundamentals of safeguarding national security and the national power it possesses. Rashica (2018) outlines several goals and functions of ICT in IR, as depicted in Table 1.

### The Benefit of ICT In International Affairs

The period of globalisation is characterised by a proliferation and intensity of political, economic, and cultural contacts that transcend national borders (Salmon & Imber, 2008). International politics in the twenty-first century involve many international actors, including states, ethno-nationalist factors, multinational corporations, intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, and even individuals. A network of worldwide organisations of all sizes and various types participates individuals from every continent. The fast expansion of this network and its intensifying and expanding communication and interaction are evidence of increased international interdependence. These organisations, for their part, provide the route that maintains the international order together to a certain degree, even when leaders and circumstances change and even when norms are weakened by unforeseen shifts in power relations (Rashica, 2018).

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Table 1.1: Goal and Function of ICT in International Affairs

Goal	Function
<b>Knowledge management</b>	To harness departmental and whole of government knowledge, so that it is retained, shared and its use optimized in pursuit of national interests abroad;
<b>Public diplomacy</b>	To maintain contact with audiences as they migrate online and to harness new communications tools to listen to and target important audiences with key messages and to influence major online influencers;
<b>Information management</b>	To help aggregate the overwhelming flow of information and to use this to better inform policymaking and to help anticipate and respond to emerging social and political movements;
<b>Consular communications and response</b>	To create direct, personal communications channels with citizens travelling overseas, with manageable communications in crisis situations;
<b>Disaster response</b>	To harness the power of connective technologies in disaster response situations;
<b>Internet freedom</b>	Creation of technologies to keep the internet free and open. This has the related objectives of promoting freedom of speech and democracy as well as undermining authoritarian regimes;
<b>External resources</b>	Creating digital mechanisms to draw on and harness external expertise to advance national goals;
<b>Policy planning</b>	To allow for effective oversight, coordination and planning of international policy across government, in response to the internationalisation of the bureaucracy.

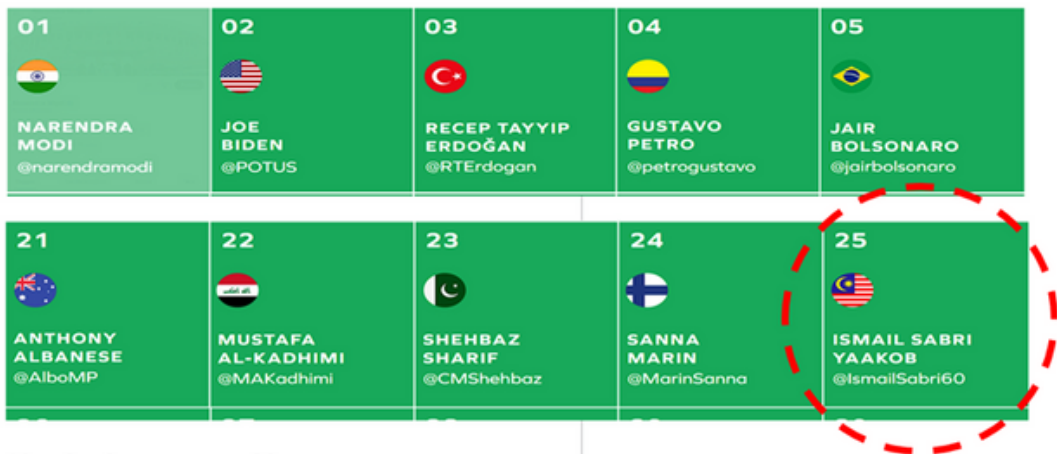
Adapted from Rashica (2018)

However, diplomacy in the postmodern period is not new. It has taken on numerous forms today, but sending ambassadors to another state is outdated and common among multiple cultures (Chan, 2017). Digital diplomacy cannot replace conventional diplomacy but may expedite and improve the state's efforts in international affairs. Today, it is an essential component of foreign policy. Digital diplomacy significantly promotes its foreign policy objectives, increases international alignment, and influences those who have never set foot in any of the world's embassies. Direct public connection and the participation of non-state actors compel governments to utilise social media and digital diplomacy to preserve legitimacy and create or deepen ties in a constantly changing world (Deos, 2015).

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The use of social media in diplomacy could be one of several entry points into this discussion. In East Asia and Europe, governments, foreign ministries, international organisations, and civil society actors use social media platforms in various diplomatic contexts, from Westphalian-style geopolitical rivalry to postmodern crowdsourcing. Political leaders are the most noticeable. As shown in Figure 2, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has amassed more than 88.3 million followers on Twitter, while Ismail Sabri Yaakob is in 25th rank with 498.8K followers (Twiplomacy, 2022). During his official visit to the United States in September 2015, Chinese President Xi witnessed the responses of the top ten CEOs of American technology companies to his invitation for a brief photo opportunity (Hocking et al., 2016).

**Figure 2: World Leader Power Ranking in Twitter 2022**



Adapted from Twiplomacy (2022)

Hocking et al. (2016) also found that there have been numerous instances of social media surfacing in international debate in recent years. The crash of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 in Ukraine prompted Dutch and Russian cabinet ministers and politicians to engage in hostile online discussions on Facebook. Digital technologies are very valuable for obtaining and analysing information on diplomatic activities, as well as for expedient communication in emergency circumstances. They allow governments to consider the impact of global events on their nation. For instance, in times of crisis, embassies may build WhatsApp groups that include the ambassador, consular officer, press secretary, staff who gathers online information, diplomats from headquarters, and personnel addressing citizens' internet-based inquiries. This group may serve as a crisis management cell and facilitate real-time data collection, decision-making, and information distribution. People who live under authoritarian regimes that seek to restrict their ability to communicate internally and internationally can circumvent this limitation due to digital technologies, enabling the free expression of objections to specific issues and contributing to the minimization of authoritarianism (McGlinchey, 2022).

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Media coverage is almost immediate, not just because of the media but also because of smartphones and social media. Authoritarian countries find it impossible to regulate the flow of information, as the Arab Spring of 2011 demonstrated. Regular interactions and information sharing foster long-lasting ties among international players and facilitate the coordination of their shared interests (Memon & Alhajj, 2010). Like other kinds of technology, social media makes societies much more democratic, providing them with new control mechanisms.

### **Utilising ICT In Managing International Affairs: The Malaysian Government Perspective**

The Malaysian government has established various ICT-related policies since the 1990s to remain highly competitive globally. Tun Mahathir, Malaysia's former prime minister, launched the Wawasan 2020 or 'Vision 2020' plan to make Malaysia a fully developed nation by 2020. The vision emphasised both economic and social components of success. One was the utilisation of information and communication technologies. The Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) represents the most significant information and communications technology advancement. Founded in 1996, the MSC is the biggest initiative of the National Information Technology Centre (NITC). The mission of the MSC, a high-profile ICT initiative, is to create a world-class technology environment that promotes Malaysia's transition towards a knowledge-based society by recruiting and fostering innovative and world-class firms.

Muhammad (2015) found that the government expects the MSC to be the catalyst that drives Malaysia farther up the economic value chain, away from the limitations of low-wage, low-added-value IT hardware manufacturing. Yet the MSC's ambitions go considerably deeper than these economic objectives. The government enacted the Bill of Guarantee, Article 7 to encourage the technology, which guarantees that Internet material would not be controlled. These offerings attracted large foreign corporations; Intel, AMD, and DHL established regional offices there and assisted local businesses in strengthening their economic standing so they could compete with multinational corporations (Holst, 2017). This created employment opportunities for Malaysians. According to reports, the MSC project potentially created 10,000 technology-related jobs, and it was proven that in 2005, government income expanded almost ninefold from \$1.2 billion to \$9.4 billion (Salman, 2010).

ICT contributes to development as both a producing sector and a catalyst for socioeconomic progress (Markle, 2001). In this scenario, the development-enabling roles of ICT have often centred on issues such as health, education, and the environment (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2019).

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Using a gravity model and a variety of ICT infrastructure variables, Ahmad et al. (2011) analysed the impact of ICT infrastructure on trade in goods and services in Malaysia. Using panel data from 36 trading partner countries from 1980 to 2008, it was proven that mobile and fixed-line telephone subscribers, personal computers and internet users are significant variables positively related to the value of one-way goods trade between Malaysia and its trading partners. Yi et al. (2021) firmly believed that establishing priority areas for regional cooperation and collaboration in ICT, such as regulatory measures, infrastructure development, and digital inclusion, is a significant barrier to expanding the export of services. A greater level of ICT infrastructure in each state in the region would increase Malaysia's regional service exports. Malaysia needs a sustained and improved regional IT collaboration programme for collective benefit.

In the crisis of MH370, Howell (2015) remarked that regulating the message in the 'new media ecosystem' of the present day is the most challenging aspect of digital crisis communication. She highlights crisis communicators' difficulties during an information void and uses the term 'Black Swan' to describe the unpredictability, magnitude of impact, and 'shock value' of MH370 as a disaster. On the other hand, Zafra and Maydell (2018) contended that the lack of accurate information surrounding the disappearance of Flight MH370 paved the way for misinformation and online falsehoods to spread rapidly on social media, as shown in Figure 3. These actions spawned new online publics capable of inflicting reputational harm using social platforms.

**Figure 3: Screenshot of fake information posted on Twitter during the MH370 crisis**



Adapted from Zafra and Maydell (2018)

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In other cases, like in the COVID-19 outbreak, as far as Malaysia's health system is concerned, the capacity to face the COVID-19 crisis is far better than in any other developing country. The government is pressured by the social aspect of COVID-19 when it comes to social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp group versions of the pandemic. Social media are intimately linked to the current ICT age, as described by many. ICT has significantly impacted a nation's political viability and security, particularly in the news broadcast. Before the end of the twentieth century, the government in Malaysia restricted freedom of speech. With the introduction of ICT, many social activities, including space freedom, have been expedited. For instance, the most recent version or status of the pandemic in the nation is accessible through various social media types or platforms.

To prevent falling behind or being neglected by society, traditional media like Awani YouTube News, RTM News, and TV3 Facebook Live are also accessible using social media. Whether through campaigns on social media, the government has played down many slogans, including "Kita Jaga Kita," "Stay at Home," "Flattening the Curve," and "Sayangi Diri Anda," to increase societal awareness of the severity of the Covid-19 threat. Simultaneously to the growth of ICT, various types of private social media news have emerged, such as "Benar News," "Kelantan Today's," "Malaysia Kini," "Malaysia Today's," "Malaysia Gazette," "Sarawak Report," and "Sabah News," among several others (Othman et al., 2021).

### Conclusion

The advantages of new media and ICT may be achieved with the proper ICT policies so they can be used for development. The Malaysian government has progressed in using Information and Communication Technology for development. The MSC has created the infrastructure support for ICT adoption. The significance of ICT, particularly for rural areas, cannot be taken lightly. Considering the political and economic responses of "global actors" to this demand is equally crucial. Educating users to become a mature and critical "online audience" is a challenge that cannot be understated - even in the West - and must be addressed for people to be in charge of ICT rather than being dominated by it.

In a culture with a "controlled" media system, the capacity to analyse information gained from the Internet, where sources are impossible to verify, is a skill that must be mastered. Although digital diplomacy cannot replace conventional diplomacy, it may expedite and improve the state's efforts in international affairs. Therefore, in the long run, Malaysia could use the ICT platform for economic and social development and diplomacy components. On the other hand, the mandate and mission of the MSC, a high-profile ICT initiative, is to create a world-class technology environment that promotes Malaysia's transition towards a knowledge-based society.

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**Colonel Zamri bin Othman**

Colonel Zamri bin Othman was born on 2nd June 1969 in Pendang, Kedah. He was commissioned into the Royal Malay Regiment on the 29th of July 1989. Throughout his career in the Malaysian Army, he attended various courses, including the Young Officer Tactic Course (1990), the Company Commander Course (1998), and the All Arms Tactic Course (1999) in the Army Combat Training Centre (PULADA). He also attended the Command & Staff Course (MAFSC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 2005. He is an alumnus of the Malaysian Armed Forces Defence College (MAFDC), Course 37/2017. He obtained his Diploma in Logistic Science Management from the National University of Malaysia (UKM), Diploma in Strategic and Defence Studies from the University of Malaya (UM) and Master's Degree in Social Science (Defence Studies) from the National University of Malaysia (UKM). Throughout his career, he has served in several Infantry Battalion as a Platoon Commander, Mortar Commander, Company Commander, Op Officer, and Battalion Second in Command, including as a Commanding Officer in the 20th Royal Malay Regiment (RMR). For the staff appointment, he has served in several HQs: in Personnel Service Division (BPA) - MAF HQ (So1 Admin), Army Field Command HQ (ADC to The Commander of Army Field Command and So3 Op), HQ of 1st Inf Bgd (So2 Op). He has experience as a directing staff member in the Army Combat Training Centre (PULADA). He is also a Head of Staff and Tactic Division, Officer's College, Army Academy, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan. His last appointment before attending the National Resilience Course in National Resilience College (NRC) was as a Chief Directing Staff/Directing Staff Army at Malaysian Armed Forces Defence College (MAFDC).





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