



Japan's UN PKO Policy: An Empirical Study of Its Evolution on the Institutional Significance of the UN Triangular Partnership Programme (UNTPP)

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to empirically examine the evolution of Japan's policy toward United Nations peacekeeping operations (hereafter “PKO”) by using the United Nations Triangular Partnership Programme (UNTPP) as an analytical lens. In the post–Cold War era, PKO mandates have shifted from traditional ceasefire monitoring toward “multidimensional” missions that include civilian protection, state-building, and humanitarian assistance. Alongside this shift, “capability gaps” regarding equipment, training, and specialized personnel have become increasingly evident in the field. Against the backdrop of these environmental changes and Japan's domestic institutional constraints, Japan's approach to contributing to PKO has also moved from a model centered on the deployment of contingents to one that emphasizes knowledge-driven contributions, such as training support and standard-setting. To empirically assess this process, the paper adopts a middle-power diplomacy perspective to illustrate the mechanism through which Japan exercises its capabilities and influences international frameworks by engaging in UN institutional design, and it offers implications for a contribution model by middle powers.

Keywords: *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKO), United Nations Triangular Partnership Programme (UNTPP), Middle Power Diplomacy, Japan's PKO Policy*

Японы Энхийг сахиулах ажиллагааны бодлого: НҮБ-ын гурван талт түншлэлийн хөтөлбөр (UNTPP)-ийн ач холбогдол болон бодлогын хувьслыг судалсан эмпирик судалгаа

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ХУРААНГУЙ

Энэхүү өгүүлэл нь НҮБ-ын Гурван талт түншлэлийн хөтөлбөрт дүн шинжилгээ хийх замаар Япон Улсын НҮБ-ын энхийг сахиулах ажиллагаа (ЭСА)-ны бодлогын хувьсал, хөгжлийг эмпирик аргаар судлахыг зорьсон болно. Хүйтэн дайны дараах үед ЭСА-ны мандат нь уламжлалт гал зогсоох дэглэмийг хянах үйл ажиллагаанаас тэлж, энгийн номхон иргэдийг хамгаалах, төрийг цогцлоон байгуулах болон хүмүүнлэгийн тусламж үзүүлэх зэргийг багтаасан олон талт ажиллагаа руу шилжих болсон. Энэхүү өөрчлөлтийг дагаад ажиллагааны талбарт тоног төхөөрөмж, сургалт бэлтгэл, нарийн мэргэжлийн боловсон хүчний зэрэг “чадавхын дутагдал” улам бүр илт мэдрэгдэх болов. Эдгээр нөхцөл байдал болон Японы дотоод эрх зүйн орчны хязгаарлалтуудын улмаас тус улсын ЭСА-ны оролцооны чиг хандлагад өөрчлөлт гарснаар цэргийн бие бүрэлдэхүүн илгээх загвараас сургалтын дэмжлэг үзүүлэх, стандарт боловсруулах зэрэг мэдлэгт суурилсан загвар руу шилжсэн байна. Энэхүү өгүүлэлд Япон Улсын жишээн дээр тулгуурлан дунд гүрнүүд дипломат бодлого болон НҮБ-ын институцийн үйл ажиллагаанд оролцох замаар өөрсдийн олон улсын байр суурь, чадавхыг хэрхэн бэхжүүлж буйг судлан, олон улсын харилцаанд оруулж буй хувь нэмрийг шинжилсэн болно.

Түлхүүр үгс: НҮБ-ын энхийг сахиулах ажиллагаа (UN PKO), НҮБ-ын Гурвалсан түншлэлийн хөтөлбөр (UNTPP), дунд гүрний дипломат бодлого, Японы энхийг сахиулах ажиллагааны бодлого

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research Question and Objective

1.1.1 Post–Cold War Changes in PKO and the Emergence of Capability Gaps

The end of the Cold War brought about fundamental changes in the nature and scale of PKO. During the Cold War, PKO primarily took the form of missions focused on ceasefire monitoring and the interposition of forces in interstate conflicts (so-called “first-generation” PKO).([United Nations, 1996](#)) By contrast, in the post–Cold War period, the character of conflict in the international community shifted from conventional interstate wars to complex armed conflicts—including civil wars and those involving non-state actors—often driven by weakened state governance and ethnic or religious confrontation. This structural transformation compelled a qualitative reconfiguration of PKO mandates and required capabilities, becoming a key factor behind the shift from ceasefire-monitoring-centered operations toward multidimensional PKO that includes state reconstruction and the protection of civilians.

Since the 1990s, PKO has increasingly been required to carry out diverse and complex tasks in an integrated manner—beyond ceasefire monitoring—including post-conflict state-building, election monitoring, humanitarian assistance, interim administration, and the protection of civilians. ([United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations](#)

& Department of Field Support, 2008) This expansion of mandates has entailed both qualitative and quantitative changes in the capabilities demanded of PKO personnel.

The 2000 “Brahimi Report” highlighted challenges facing PKO—such as the lack of rapid deployment capacity, increasingly complex and ambiguous mandates, and shortfalls in training and equipment—and pointed to directions for reform.(United Nations, 2000) In the 2010s, moreover, operational environments further deteriorated. In Mali, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and elsewhere, non-state actors such as terrorist organizations, militias, and private military companies gained prominence, exposing contingents engaged in PKO to higher levels of threat than before.(United Nations, 2015) This was also underscored in the Cruz Report, which made the security of peacekeepers a central issue of UN reform and warned that “without change, casualties will continue.”(United Nations, 2017).

In this environment, achieving both mandate implementation and the protection of personnel requires¹ recognition of the indispensability of enabler capabilities—namely, foundational functions that indirectly support mandate execution, such as engineering (infrastructure), medical support, C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), and transportation.(United Nations, 2009; Hosokawa, 2025)

At the September 2014 “High-level Meeting on UN Peacekeeping,” Member States were asked to present new pledges (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.-a), and the September 2015 Leaders’ Summit on Peacekeeping was positioned as a venue to consolidate and visualize such pledges². At that time, under the political leadership of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (then), Japan set capacity-building support—including the UN Project for African Rapid Deployment of Engineering Capabilities (ARDEC)—as a central pillar of its contribution, foregrounding institutional responses in line with the broader momentum of UN PKO reform (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.-b).

The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), established in 2015, once again underscored structural challenges confronting PKO, including a deteriorating security environment, increasingly complex mandates, and shortages of resources and capabilities. It emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation among Member States, regional organizations, and the UN Secretariat, expanding partnerships, and enhancing personnel capacity.(United Nations, 2015) The HIPPO report explicitly stated that “the success of peace operations depends on personnel who are sufficiently trained and properly equipped,” and recommended standardizing and improving the quality of pre-deployment training as well as providing capacity-building support to troop- and police-contributing countries.(United Nations, 2015) In response, the UN positioned capacity-building support as a core policy area, and the UN Triangular

¹ A “mandate” refers to the official authorization and assignment of tasks (scope of authority and responsibilities)—i.e., what a UN body (the Security Council) formally allows a PKO mission to do, where, to what extent, and under what authority.

² In September 2014, at the initiative of the United States, a “High-level Meeting on UN Peacekeeping” was convened, calling on Member States to present new contributions (“pledges”). The UN Peacekeeping Summit (Leaders’ Summit on Peacekeeping) held in September 2015 was positioned as a venue to consolidate and make visible such pledges; Japan’s early-deployment support initiatives that later evolved into UNTPP (including ARDEC: The UN Project for African Rapid Deployment of Engineering Capabilities) can be understood within this context.

Partnership Programme (UNTPP) was launched in the same year.

In September 2018, the “Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations (Action for Peacekeeping)” (hereafter the “A4P Declaration”), announced by Secretary-General António Guterres and endorsed by more than 150 countries, explicitly committed troop- and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs) to capacity-building: “We commit to jointly work on improving preparedness, training and equipping of our military and police personnel by pursuing innovative approaches, including triangular partnerships and co-deployment.”(United Nations, 2018) This indicates that UNTPP was explicitly positioned within a document of political commitment by Member States, thereby conferring institutional legitimacy on the implementation of capacity-building support (especially training). Accordingly, triangular cooperation came to be institutionalized—beyond a mere aggregation of bilateral initiatives—as a means of operationalizing capacity-building within the context of PKO reform, marking an important turning point that has since functioned as a reference frame for subsequent developments.

1.1.2 The Evolution of Japan's PKO Policy

Japan's participation in PKO was institutionally enabled by the enactment in June 1992 of the Act on Cooperation with United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations (the so-called PKO Cooperation Act).(Act on Cooperation, 1992) While the Act made it possible to dispatch the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to PKO, it also stipulated strict requirements known as the “Five Principles for Participation” (the existence of a ceasefire agreement; consent of the host country; strict impartiality; withdrawal if the conditions are not met; and minimizing the use of weapons). This framework can be understood as demarcating the conditions for engagement and the scope of authority under Japan's domestic legal constraints, thereby institutionalizing Japan's participation in PKO.

In September 1992, Japan dispatched approximately 600 engineering personnel to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC)³ and thereby achieved its first full-scale participation in PKO.(Japan Defense Agency, 1993; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023) The activities in Cambodia focused on infrastructure restoration such as road repair, bridge construction, and water supply support, providing an opportunity to demonstrate Japan's high engineering capabilities to the international community. At the same time, however, Japan also experienced a tragic incident in which a civilian police officer was killed in the line of duty, highlighting both the risks of PKO participation and the constraints of Japan's domestic legal framework.(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.-c)

In September 2015, following the enactment of Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security, the PKO Cooperation Act was amended to authorize new tasks such as “rush-to-aid” (kaketsuke-keigo) and “joint protection of camps.”(Act for the Development of Peace and Security Legislation, 2015) However, since Japan's withdrawal from the South Sudan PKO in 2017,⁴ the scale of Japan's contingent deployments has declined substantially. As of 2025, Japan's personnel contribution consists of only six staff officers at the UNMISS headquarters in South Sudan. This situation indicates that

³ United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC).

⁴ United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS).

Japan's PKO policy has been shifting its emphasis from contributions centered on contingent deployments toward institution-building contributions. Specifically, in place of large-scale deployments, institutional contributions have come to the fore, including: (1) capacity-building support (training provision) through frameworks such as UNTPP; (2) dispatching staff officers to PKO missions and UN Headquarters; and (3) intellectual contributions to establishing training standards and revising manuals (e.g., engagement in the revision of the UN engineering unit manual).([Cabinet Office of Japan, PKO Secretariat, 2025](#))

1.1.3 Purpose and Significance of This Study

The purpose of this study is to empirically analyze, with UNTPP as an entry point, the process through which Japan's PKO policy has shifted from a “contingent-deployment-centered” approach to one centered on “institutional contributions,” while also organizing the institutional significance of UNTPP and examining whether these findings can be generalized as a model of institutional contribution by middle powers. (Ishida, 2026) Specifically, this paper clarifies the following three points.

First, it elucidates the factors behind the formation of UNTPP in light of the theoretical framework of triangular cooperation. UNTPP is a cooperative model in which the UN, supporting countries, and beneficiary countries bring different resources and functions to the table and work together under a division of roles. Analyzing the conditions for its establishment and the factors that shape its sustainability as an institution offers implications that can be applied not only to the PKO domain but also to other international cooperation frameworks.

Second, it analyzes the structure and characteristics of Japan's contributions to UNTPP through three pillars: (1) training for enabler capabilities, (2) training standardization (quality assurance), and (3) strategic communication.([United Nations, 2021](#)) Since the enactment of the PKO Cooperation Act, Japan has built an institutional framework for participating in international peace cooperation and has, in institutional terms, prepared an environment that could enable deployments of a certain scale. On the other hand, given the increasing complexity and threat level of contemporary PKO operational environments, together with domestic legal constraints (including mission requirements and limitations on the exercise of authority such as the Basic Principles of Japan's Participation in PKO), it is difficult, as a comprehensive judgment, to foresee the sustained and routine implementation of large-scale deployments like UNMISS. Under these conditions, Japan has leveraged its comparative advantage—technical expertise and training know-how accumulated mainly in the engineering field—to develop a distinct role within UNTPP as a training-support country. Examining the mechanism and effects of these contributions offers effective options and conditions for other middle powers seeking to engage in international institutions under resource constraints.

Third, it situates Japan's policy shift from the theoretical perspective of middle-power diplomacy. Middle powers, while constrained in military and economic power compared with superpowers, are often understood to be able to mobilize expertise and diplomatic resources to participate in building and sustaining international frameworks and to influence norm-formation processes.([Higgott & Cooper, 1990](#)) This study views

Japan’s participation in UNTPP as a concrete case of “exercising influence through institutions” and, by examining its enabling conditions (success factors) and limitations (challenges), deepens understanding of the mechanisms by which middle powers can build influence through institutional contributions. While many prior studies have discussed the distinctive nature of PKO training and the importance of partnerships, there remains insufficient research on the division of roles among supporting countries and the mechanisms of interaction. By empirically demonstrating the institutional significance of UNTPP through Japan’s experience, this paper offers new insights for the study of international peace cooperation.

1.2 Structure of the Paper

This paper is structured as follows. Chapter 2 presents a review of prior research and the theoretical framework. It organizes existing studies on the distinctive nature of PKO training and enabler capabilities, and, from the perspective of middle-power diplomacy, presents the analytical framework used in this study. Chapter 3 provides an empirical analysis of UNTPP’s institutional design and Japan’s contributions from the perspectives of the factors behind institutional formation, Japan’s comparative advantages, intellectual contributions to training standardization, and strategic communication. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings and presents policy implications as a model of institutional contribution by middle powers.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework and Review of Previous Studies

2.1 The Distinctive Nature of PKO Training and Enabler Capabilities

2.1.1 The Uniqueness and Evolution of PKO Training

The distinctive nature of training in UN PKO has, since the Cold War era, been defined as something that differs from standard military training, based on PKO’s political and non-military character. In particular, in early ceasefire-monitoring missions, emphasis was placed on rules of behavior that do not presuppose the use of force and on maintaining neutrality—elements that shaped the foundation of PKO training. After the Cold War, as PKO mandates became increasingly multifunctional from the “second generation” onward, the content of training also underwent qualitative transformation. The 2000 “Brahimi Report”(United Nations, 2000) pointed out that insufficient training directly leads to mission failure, and it encouraged the systematization of “non-military skills” such as negotiation, mediation, and the protection of civilians.

Since 2009, the UN has promoted the standardization of pre-deployment training and established an institutional framework that requires all personnel to share common codes of conduct and professional skills by developing the CPTM (Core Pre-deployment Training Materials). Furthermore, following the 2015 HIPPO Report and the 2017 Cruz Report,(United Nations, 2015; United Nations, 2017) training can be said to have deepened from mere knowledge acquisition to the pursuit of specialized skills that enable the accomplishment of mandates and the assurance of safety under harsh environments. In this way, PKO training has come to embody the characteristics of “responding to non-combat tasks” and “standardization in a multinational environment.”

2.1.2 The Importance of Enabler Capabilities

In the implementation of PKO, the importance of enabler capabilities has increased

in recent years. Enabler capabilities refer to support functions that indirectly sustain the mandate, distinct from combat units that are directly involved in enforcement. Specifically, they include: (1) infrastructure/engineering functions for the construction and repair of roads and bridges; (2) medical support (field hospitals and hygiene management); (3) C4ISR (command, communications, and information collection); and (4) transportation and logistics.

Garland H. Williams characterized the role of military engineers in post-conflict reconstruction as “engineering peace,” emphasizing the role that infrastructure development plays in restoring security and building trust among local populations. (Williams, 2005) Tomoaki Honda analyzes the activities of Japan’s engineering units in PKO participation and evaluates that, while non-combat in nature, they fulfill roles indispensable to mandate implementation. (Honda, 2016) The UN, too, has explicitly identified shortages of enabler capabilities as a structural issue in its “Current and Emerging Uniformed Capability Requirements for United Nations Peacekeeping” published in 2017 and 2019, calling on Member States to provide specialized capabilities. (United Nations, 2019) In particular, heavy equipment operation, medical support, and communications/information are regarded as areas in which capability gaps among contributing countries are large and in which there is a strong need for training support by supporting countries.

Thus, the distinctive nature of PKO training and the importance of enabler capabilities have been widely recognized among the UN, Member States, and researchers, and the significance of capacity-building support through institutional frameworks such as UNTPP is supported both theoretically and practically.

2.2 A Middle-Power Diplomacy Perspective

Cooperation among Member States in PKO has developed as an institutional means of linking the UN’s resource constraints with the specialized capabilities of Member States. In recent years in particular, for “middle powers” that do not stand out in terms of military or economic power, contributing through multilateral frameworks has become a strategic choice to secure presence and norm-shaping capacity in the international community. The diplomatic characteristics of middle powers can be found not in the exercise of physical coercion, such as large-scale troop deployments, but in the exercise of “institutional influence” that leverages expertise in specific fields. This is a strategy of maximizing limited resources by concentrating them in niche areas and taking the lead in international rule-making and standardization.

UNTPP, the focus of this paper, takes the form of triangular cooperation in which the UN (legitimacy), supporting countries (specialized skills and funding), and beneficiary countries (personnel) complement one another. The fact that Japan has led training standardization in the specific skill domain of engineering can be positioned precisely as the practice of an “institutional contribution model,” through which a middle power seeks to contribute to maintaining the international order via an institutional framework and to establish its own standing.

Chapter 3 UNTPP and Japan’s Institutional Contributions

3.1 UNTPP’s Institutional Design and Factors Behind Its Formation

UNTPP is a “triangular cooperation” framework in which the UN, supporting

countries, and beneficiary countries collaborate.⁵ Its formation can be explained by three factors. First, it reflects the UN’s progress in training standardization, and UNTPP functions as an implementation mechanism for that policy. Second, it reflects a “niche specialization” strategy by supporting countries (e.g., Japan, Switzerland, and Canada). By specializing each country’s contribution in areas of comparative advantage—such as engineering, medical support, and WPS—UNTPP enabled complementary contributions while avoiding duplication. Third, it reflects the “institutional demand” of beneficiary countries. For emerging troop-contributing countries seeking to improve their PKO deployment record, acquiring internationally standardized technical skills constituted a structural need directly linked to enhancing military professionalism.

3.2 Japan’s Contribution (1): Institutional Development of Enabler Capability Support

Japan has positioned the engineering expertise it has accumulated since its 1992 deployment to UNTAC (Cambodia) as one of its primary contribution areas within UNTPP. Heavy equipment operation training at training hubs such as Kenya’s IPSTC⁶ can be understood not merely as a transfer of technology, but as a contribution that underpins the foundational capabilities necessary for PKO missions—namely, deployment capacity and safety assurance. Enabler capability support strengthens core functions that sustain PKO missions’ mobility, sustainability, and safety, promotes beneficiary countries’ autonomous capability enhancement, and simultaneously institutionalizes supporting countries’ expertise within an established framework. Japan’s contribution is not confined to technical transfer; rather, it supports role-sharing and norm formation within an institutional framework and can thus be positioned as one form of institutional contribution by a middle power.

3.3 Japan’s Contribution (2): Intellectual Contributions to Institutional Design and Training Standardization

The formation process of UNTPP can be situated within the stream of requests for “new pledges” raised at the U.S.-led High-level Meeting on UN Peacekeeping held in September 2014. The UN Peacekeeping Summit (Leaders’ Summit on Peacekeeping) in September 2015 was designed as a venue to consolidate and visualize Member States’ contributions; Japan’s early-deployment support initiatives (including ARDEC) announced at that summit constituted part of the institutionalization of a “capacity-building support” orientation that later connected to UNTPP. This also suggests that Japan has played an important role—at least in the engineering field—in the practical launch and direction-setting of the programme. Against this background, Japan has continued to engage in UNTPP not only through delivering training, but also through institutional design such as formulating training standards and developing instructors (Training of Trainers: TOT).⁷

⁵ UNTPP was positioned in the 2018 Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) Declaration as one of the “innovative approaches” within UN PKO reform. In addition, the UN Secretariat presented seven priority areas in the “Action for Peacekeeping+ Plan” as a framework to operationalize A4P (2018). In that document, triangular partnerships (TPP), including UNTPP, are explicitly listed under “3 Capabilities and mindset.”

⁶ The training facility in Kenya is the International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC).

⁷ TOT (Training of Trainers) is a framework for training instructors in beneficiary countries in order to

In 2014, Japan also served as chair in the revision process of the UN engineering manual, incorporating into international standards the SDF's approaches to construction management, safety standards, and training methodologies. Such intellectual contributions (1) enhance the overall quality of the UN PKO training system itself; (2) provide opportunities to embed Japan's values (e.g., safety emphasis, transparency, and humanitarian considerations) into international norms; and (3) demonstrate the potential for middle powers to play leading roles in institutional design. In particular, systematizing TOT programmes directly contributes to establishing beneficiary countries' self-sustaining training capacity and is key to sustainable capacity-building support. Moreover, engagement in training standardization enables influence that does not rely on military or financial power, and it merits attention as a concrete example of the roles middle powers can play within international frameworks.

3.4 Japan's Contribution (3): Expanding Institutional Influence through Strategic Communication (SC)

The effectiveness of institutional contributions depends not only on engagement in training and standardization per se, but also on whether the outcomes are appropriately shared within and beyond the institution and become embedded in a repeatable form of cooperation among relevant actors. In this regard, the United Nations positions strategic communication (SC) within its training materials as part of the competencies required of peacekeeping personnel ([United Nations Department of Peace Operations, Integrated Training Service, 2025](#)). In international peace cooperation, SC can be conceptualized as a framework for integratively operating information gathering, network-building, and external outreach to shape perceptions and collaboration in ways consistent with policy objectives. Accordingly, for actors undertaking institutional contributions, SC is an operational instrument not limited to public relations; it is a complementary element that enhances the effects of institutional contributions through the visualization of achievements and the cultivation of relationships. As discussed below, Japan likewise exhibits efforts to connect SC to its institutional contributions through personnel placements in the UN Secretariat and training hubs, as well as multilayered outreach.

Within UNTPP, Japan has advanced access to information hubs and the building of human networks through the dispatch of personnel to the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the Regional Service Centre Entebbe (RSCE)⁸, and training centers (including the International Peace Support Training Centre: IPSTC). It has also pursued multilayered communication (to the international community, domestically, and to beneficiary countries) from the standpoints of making training outcomes visible, ensuring accountability to the public, and fostering trust with beneficiary countries.

Such deployment of SC produces multiple effects: it enables the international community to recognize the outcomes of institutional contributions, deepens cooperative relationships with the UN and other states, and, at the same time, strengthens the domestic basis of policy support. In particular, outreach to younger generations and linkages with education contribute to future human resource development and the cultivation of a culture of international contribution, and can therefore be positioned as elements that

internalize training capacity domestically.

⁸ A UN facility located in Entebbe, Uganda (RSCE: Regional Service Centre Entebbe).

enhance the sustainability of institutional contributions.

SC is a strategic instrument through which middle powers can maximize influence under resource constraints, and Japan's practice within UNTPP can be positioned as an illustrative case demonstrating its effectiveness.

3.5 Summary

Chapter 3's analysis demonstrates that Japan's contributions within UNTPP are not limited to training support or technology transfer. Rather, they exhibit a three-layered structure: engagement with institutional mechanisms that implement the UN's training standardization policy; role consolidation through niche specialization in specific domains; and the sustaining of influence through strategic communication.

This indicates that even without deploying contingents, a middle power can shape the operation of UN-administered institutions and associated processes of norm formation. For Japan, UNTPP should be understood not as an alternative to PKO participation, but as a turning point toward an engagement modality centered on institutional contributions.

Chapter 4 Conclusion and Policy Implications

4.1 Summary of Findings

This paper analyzed UNTPP as an empirical case to examine how Japan's UN PKO policy has shifted from a mode of engagement centered on contingent deployments to one that emphasizes institutional contributions. The analysis yields the following three principal findings.

First, UNTPP is not an accidental or temporary framework of cooperation; it is an institution that has been formed and consolidated as a result of converging institutional interests among three actors: the UN, supporting countries, and beneficiary countries. For the UN, it serves as an implementation mechanism to address structural challenges such as PKO training standardization and capability shortfalls. For supporting countries, it provides an arena for engagement that leverages national comparative advantages. For beneficiary countries, it constitutes an opportunity to enhance capabilities based on international standards. UNTPP is characterized by its institutionalization on the basis of such mutually complementary relationships.

Second, Japan's contributions within UNTPP exhibit a replicable structure composed of three elements: (1) training for enabler capabilities; (2) intellectual contributions to training standardization; and (3) strategic communication (SC). While placing its expertise in engineering and medical support at the core, Japan has participated not only in the delivery of training but also in institutional design through engagement in the formulation of training standards and manuals. Moreover, through personnel placements and information dissemination, Japan has sought to visualize the outcomes of its institutional contributions and sustain influence over time.

Third, constraints on Japan's contingent deployments within its PKO policy do not necessarily imply a contraction of international contributions; rather, they have functioned as conditions that encouraged a shift toward institutional engagement. Factors such as legal constraints and the increasing complexity of operational environments have made the sustained continuation of large-scale deployments difficult, while simultaneously providing incentives to pursue capacity-building support and participation in institutional

design. Japan's engagement in UNTPP is an empirical case demonstrating that, even under such constraints, a middle power can exert influence on international institutions.

4.2 Policy Implications: An Institutional Contribution Model for Middle Powers

This analysis does not claim that institutional contributions through UNTPP constitute a universal model that holds unconditionally. Rather, UNTPP is best understood as a “conditional model” that functions effectively when certain requirements are met.

The first condition is that supporting countries clearly identify specialized domains in which they possess comparative advantages and delimit their areas of contribution. In Japan's case, technological capabilities and training know-how in engineering and medical support formed a clear core, enabling niche-focused engagement. Concentrating expertise rather than diffusing contributions facilitates role consolidation within the institution and the acquisition of trust.

The second condition is that the UN has policy intent to institutionalize and standardize the relevant domain. UNTPP is situated along the trajectory of PKO reform policies that emphasize training standardization and capacity-building support (e.g., the HIPPO Report and A4P). Only when alignment with such higher-level policies is secured can supporting countries' contributions become consolidated as institutional influence.

The third condition is that beneficiary countries possess institutional demand for internalizing capabilities. For emerging troop-contributing countries seeking to improve their deployment records and gain international recognition, training based on international standards constitutes an acute need, and this demand underpins UNTPP's sustainability.

When these three conditions overlap, middle powers can exercise sustained influence by participating in the design and operation of institutions without committing large-scale military or financial resources. Japan's participation in UNTPP should be viewed less as a case that was possible “because Japan is a middle power,” and more as a demonstration of an institutional contribution model that can be realized by middle powers when these conditions are in place.

4.3 Regional Cooperation

Institutional contributions through UNTPP have a significant feature: they can mediate horizontal cooperation among middle powers (South–South cooperation) under the UN framework, going beyond bilateral donor–recipient relationships. Japan's experience can serve as a reference point for other middle powers as they incrementally form roles as training-support countries through similar arrangements.

For example, countries that have accumulated experience in PKO deployments may, in the future, develop new niches within UNTPP by engaging in training support and instructor development in specific domains. Such cooperation among middle powers can not only diversify capacity-building support but also contribute to improving the overall sustainability of UN PKO.

Moreover, in the context of regional cooperation, UNTPP-type arrangements carry strategic implications as practical means of implementing non-military elements such as the rule of law, institution-building, and capacity development. While UNTPP is not a framework that directly proclaims normative principles, it can nonetheless, in practice, perform functions that contribute to stabilizing regional order through norm formation

and capacity-building support.

For these reasons, UNTPP can be positioned as a practical platform through which middle powers collaborate via the UN as a multilateral institution and expand their roles in international peace cooperation.

Concluding Remarks

Using UNTPP as an analytical lens, this paper examined the process through which Japan's PKO policy has shifted from a mode centered on contingent deployments to one based on institutional contributions. The analysis clarified that UNTPP is an institution that was formed and consolidated amid the convergence of three sets of interests: the UN's training standardization policy, supporting countries' niche-specialization strategies, and beneficiary countries' institutional demand. It also showed that Japan's contributions have a replicable structure consisting of enabler capability training, intellectual engagement in training standardization, and strategic communication. Furthermore, it confirmed that domestic legal constraints and operational environments that limit contingent deployments did not reduce Japan's international contributions; rather, they functioned as conditions that encouraged engagement at the stages of institutional design and operation. These findings indicate that UNTPP represents a conditional model of institutional contributions for middle powers—one whose effectiveness depends on when and why it functions—and Japan's experience offers important implications for considering how other middle powers might contribute to international peace cooperation.

Future research should address the following issues. First, comparative analysis with other supporting countries (e.g., Canada, Switzerland, and the Republic of Korea) is needed to clarify the diversity of contribution modalities among supporting countries and differences in institutional influence.

Second, from the perspective of beneficiary countries, empirical examination is required regarding the acceptance, effects, and processes of institutional internalization of training support.

Third, there remains scope for theoretical and empirical inquiry into applying insights from UNTPP to non-UN-led missions, such as the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the African Union's peace support operations (PSO).

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