Japan's PKO Engineer Units:
From Rear-Area Support to Reconstruction Education

－Lessons for Indonesia:
from a Troop Contributor to Capability Provider－

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INTRODUCTION

Japan's participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) represents one of the most important transformations in its post-war security identity. For decades, Japan's pacifist posture—shaped primarily by Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution—restricted the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) from engaging in traditional military activities abroad. However, criticism during the 1991 Gulf War, often described as "checkbook diplomacy," pressured Tokyo to explore new forms of international contribution that would remain consistent with constitutional limits. As a result, engineering units gradually emerged as the core instrument of Japan's PKO participation.

From Cambodia in the early 1990s to Japan's contemporary leadership role in the United Nations Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP), the country's engineering contributions evolved significantly—from basic rear-area reconstruction to advanced capacity-building and reconstruction education. Meanwhile, Indonesia has expanded its role as one of the world's leading troop-contributing countries (TCCs), yet without the same depth of engineering specialization. This contrast raises the central research question of this thesis: **What lessons can Indonesia learn from Japan's engineering-centered PKO model, and how can these lessons enhance Indonesia's future peacekeeping contributions?**

In addressing this question, the thesis not only compares the institutional, operational, and strategic approaches of both countries, but also examines the broader policy implications for Indonesia's PKO modernization. By analyzing Japan's experience and identifying pathways for Indonesian adaptation, the study provides a foundation for developing specialized PKO capabilities and strengthening Indonesia's long-term contribution to international peace and stability.

Previous Research

Academic studies on Japan's PKO participation highlight the legal, political, and institutional constraints shaping its security behavior. Scholars such as Shinoda Tomohito, Urakami Norihisa, and Sato Heigo emphasize how Article 9 and the 1992 International Peace Cooperation Law limited Japan's overseas military role while enabling non-combat participation through engineering, logistics, and humanitarian support.[1] Research on Cambodia underscores Japan's early operational caution, while studies of East Timor highlight the emergence of capacity-building efforts. Analyses of Japan's activities in Haiti identify the KIZUNA Project as a turning point in Japan's education-oriented approach. United Nations and Ministry of Defense

[1] Tomohito Shinoda, *Japan's Peacekeeping Dilemmas* (Tokyo: NIDS Press, 2018); Norihisa Urakami, *SDF and Peace Cooperation* (2016); Heigo Sato, *Security Policy* (2015).

reports further document Japan's shift toward instructor dispatch and capability development under the TPP framework.

In contrast, Indonesian scholarship—represented by authors such as Muradi and Rizal Sukma—focuses primarily on Indonesia's diplomatic motivations and the professional benefits of PKO participation.[2] However, there is limited analysis of Indonesia's engineering capabilities, reconstruction roles, or potential for specialization. Significantly, no study to date has directly compared Japan's engineering evolution with Indonesia's PKO trajectory.

This thesis seeks to fill this gap by presenting the first integrated comparison between Japan's specialized engineering-based PKO model and Indonesia's troop-centered approach.

This study argues that the lessons derived from Japan demonstrate that specialization in peacekeeping is not merely a technical improvement, but a strategic choice that enhances diplomatic influence, national capability, and operational relevance. Indonesia possesses the institutional foundations, regional leadership aspirations, and human capital necessary to become a global provider of specialized peacekeeping capabilities. By integrating Japan's best practices and adapting them to Indonesia's national context—together with the policy measures outlined in Chapter 4—Indonesia can transition from a troop-contributing country to a capability-providing country, thereby strengthening its contribution to international peace and stability.

Research Method and Method of Argument

This study uses a qualitative, multi-layered research design combining:

1. **Legal–institutional analysis**, focusing on Article 9, the PKO Law, and the Five Principles to understand how Japan's legal framework shaped PKO participation.[3]
2. **Historical case studies** of five major missions—Cambodia, East Timor, Iraq, Haiti, and South Sudan—to trace Japan's engineering evolution.
3. **Comparative analysis** of Japan's specialized model and Indonesia's troop-centered PKO approach.
4. **Document analysis** of Ministry of Defense materials, UN doctrines, TPP factsheets, and engineering reports.
5. **Policy analysis** to develop recommendations for Indonesia's future PKO contributions.

The thesis develops its argument in sequence: establishing Japan's legal foundations, examining operational evolution, conducting comparative analysis, and producing policy recommendations.

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[2] Muradi, Indonesia's PKO Diplomacy (2018); Rizal Sukma, Indonesia and Peacekeeping (2011).

[3] Cabinet Legislation Bureau (Japan), "Article 9 Interpretation" (1954); Ministry of Defense (Japan), *PKO Overview*(2020).

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into **four chapters** and a concluding section, each addressing a different dimension of Japan's engineering-centered PKO model and its relevance for Indonesia:

Chapter 1 examines the historical and legal foundations that shaped Japan's engineering-focused approach to peacekeeping. It analyzes Article 9, the PKO Law, and the Five Principles of Participation, demonstrating how constitutional constraints directed Japan toward non-combat engineering roles.

Chapter 2 traces the operational and educational evolution of Japan's engineering units across five major missions—Cambodia, East Timor, Iraq, Haiti, and South Sudan. It explains how Japan transitioned from basic reconstruction tasks to capacity-building and eventually reconstruction education, culminating in initiatives such as the KIZUNA Project and the Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP).

Chapter 3 provides a comparative analysis of Japan and Indonesia, highlighting differences in legal frameworks, strategic cultures, and operational practices. It identifies lessons that Indonesia can adapt, including the importance of specialization and the potential benefits of engineering-centered PKO contributions.

Chapter 4 presents policy implications for Indonesia's PKO modernization. It outlines institutional reforms, capability development pathways, and opportunities for cooperation with Japan, offering a strategic roadmap for Indonesia to become a capability-based peacekeeping contributor.

Conclusion synthesizes the findings of all chapters and presents final strategic recommendations aimed at strengthening Indonesia's long-term role in international peacekeeping.

Scope and Range of the Research

This study focuses on Japan's engineering units in UNPKO between **1992 and 2024**, analyzing missions where engineering played a central role in operational success or capacity-building outcomes. The research excludes non-engineering PKO activities such as medical, logistics, aviation, or police functions, except where they directly relate to engineering doctrine or mission support.

Geographically, the analysis considers Japan's engineering deployments in Cambodia, East Timor, Iraq, Haiti, and South Sudan, while examining Indonesia's PKO contributions at both regional (ASEAN) and global levels.

The study draws exclusively on publicly available sources—UN reports, Ministry of Defense publications, academic studies, and operational records—ensuring transparency and accessibility. Because classified JSDF or TNI documents are not used, the analysis emphasizes **institutional**

patterns, policy trends, and operational practices, rather than individual decision-making at the tactical level.

Significance of the Research

This study contributes to peacekeeping scholarship in both Japan and Indonesia by explaining how Japan's engineering units evolved into a specialized and highly effective PKO asset. It clarifies why engineering became Japan's principal capability under constitutional constraints and how reconstruction education emerged as a distinctive contribution through long-term field experience and multilateral cooperation.

For Indonesia, the research offers concrete insights into the strategic value of specialization. It demonstrates how engineering-focused PKO roles can improve operational effectiveness, strengthen doctrinal development, and enhance Indonesia's reputation within the United Nations. The study also highlights opportunities for Indonesia to develop reconstruction education at [4] Sentul, improve interoperability with UN standards, and deepen defense cooperation with Japan.

Understanding Japan's engineering evolution provides Indonesia with a practical and scalable framework for transitioning from a **troop provider** to a **capability provider**, aligning Indonesia's national defense strategy with global peacekeeping needs and enhancing its role as a responsible and influential actor in international security.

1. Historical and Legal Foundations of Japan's PKO Engineering Contributions

1.1 Introduction

Japan's participation in UNPKO represents one of the most significant transformations in its post-war security posture. Bound by constitutional restrictions and shaped by decades of political debate, Japan has developed a uniquely restrained but highly specialized approach to international security cooperation. Rather than contributing combat forces, Japan has relied primarily on engineering units as its principal tool of peacekeeping engagement. This chapter examines the historical, legal, and institutional foundations of this development. It argues that Japan's engineering-focused model is not accidental; rather, it is the result of deliberate legal interpretation, political compromise, and strategic adaptation to international expectations. Understanding these foundations is essential to appreciating how Japan later evolved into a global provider of reconstruction education, as explored in subsequent chapters.

[4] PMPP (Pusat Misi Pemeliharaan Perdamaian) Sentul refers to Indonesia's national peacekeeping training center operated by the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI). PMPP conducts pre-deployment training, UN certification programs, and international peacekeeping education for military and police personnel assigned to United Nations peacekeeping missions.

1.2 Article 9 and the Constitutional Constraints Shaping Japan's PKO Behavior

Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution of Japan renounces war and prohibits the maintenance of "war potential." At face value, this clause appears to forbid any overseas deployment of military forces. However, from the 1950s onward, successive governments interpreted Article 9 as allowing the minimum necessary force for self-defense. This interpretation justified the establishment of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in 1954, though the use of these forces outside Japan remained politically sensitive and legally constrained.[5]

Japan's constitutional interpretation drew a strict line between self-defense and international military operations. While the government eventually acknowledged that Japan could participate in UN PKO, it maintained that such participation must not involve the use of force beyond individual self-defense. As a result, Japan's peacekeepers were restricted to non-combat roles, which significantly shaped the type of missions Japan could accept and the capabilities it could deploy. Engineering units, which focus on reconstruction, facility repair, and non-combat support, fit comfortably within these constitutional boundaries.

1.3 The 1992 PKO Law and the Five Principles of Participation

The end of the Cold War brought rapid expansion of UN PKO and increased international pressure for Japan to contribute. During the 1991 Gulf War, Japan was criticized for relying primarily on financial contributions—often described as "checkbook diplomacy." In response, the government enacted the International Peace Cooperation Law (PKO Law) in 1992, which established the legal basis for Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping.

To ensure constitutional compliance, the PKO Law established the Five Principles of Participation:

1. Existence of a ceasefire
2. Consent of the parties to the conflict
3. Strict neutrality of the peacekeeping force
4. Withdrawal if the above conditions collapse
5. Use of weapons limited strictly to individual self-defense

These principles mirror traditional UN peacekeeping doctrines but are applied with far greater rigidity in Japan's case.[6] The Five Principles became operational constraints that shaped every aspect of Japan's PKO engagement, including when and where Japan could deploy. Because these principles restrict involvement in violent or unstable contexts, Japan gravitated

[5] Cabinet Legislation Bureau (Japan), "Interpretation of Article 9," Government of Japan (1954).

[6] Ministry of Defense (Japan), *International Peace Cooperation Overview* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2020), pp. 12–18.

towards roles that were inherently non-combat, politically acceptable, and operationally valuable—most notably, engineering functions such as road repair, water supply, camp construction, and humanitarian infrastructure support.

1.4 Why Engineering Became Japan's Core PKO Capability

Engineering became Japan's primary PKO capability for three interrelated reasons. First, engineering tasks are inherently non-combat and therefore entirely compatible with Article 9 and the PKO Law. They allow Japan to contribute meaningfully without violating legal constraints. Second, modern peacekeeping missions increasingly require engineering support to enable mobility, humanitarian assistance, and stabilization of fragile environments. The UN urgently needs engineering units, making Japan's contribution internationally valuable. Third, engineering aligns with Japan's national identity as a peace-oriented state, allowing it to project soft power through reconstruction, humanitarian support, and capacity-building rather than kinetic operations.[7]

Engineering thus became both the most feasible and the most strategically advantageous way for Japan to participate in PKO.

1.5 Institutionalization Through the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS)

Japan's international peace cooperation activities were formally positioned as one of the core missions of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in January 2007. At the same time, Japan established a Stand-by System for international operations, under which specific units were designated for potential overseas deployment. These designated units conducted advance preparation and training based on lessons learned from past PKO missions and were placed on standby so that they could be rapidly deployed upon request. This system enabled systematic unit rotation and improved readiness while allowing Japan to maintain political and legal oversight over each deployment decision. With these institutional conditions in place, Japan registered selected capabilities in the United Nations Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS) in 2016. Importantly, PCRS registration does not obligate automatic deployment; rather, it functions as a framework through which Japan signals preparedness while retaining sovereign discretion consistent with constitutional constraints and the Five Principles of PKO participation.

1.6 Institutional Trends and the Limits of Interpreting a "Shift"

Japan's recent emphasis on capacity-building activities and instructor dispatch may appear to indicate a deliberate shift away from direct unit deployment. However, it is more appropriate to interpret this pattern as a situational outcome rather than an explicit policy or doctrinal transformation. Neither the Japanese government nor the Self-Defense Forces officially

[7] Tomohito Shinoda, *Japan's Peacekeeping Dilemmas* (Tokyo: NIDS Press, 2018), pp. 45–48.

characterize current PKO engagement as a strategic transition from unit deployment to capacity-building. Instead, Japan's present posture can be understood as the result of multiple contextual factors. These include the compatibility of ongoing UN PKO missions with Japan's Five Principles of participation, trade-offs between national interests and overseas deployment, and the sustained increase in security challenges in Japan's surrounding region since the 2010s, which has imposed practical constraints on available deployable forces. Consequently, Japan's current reliance on capacity-building and staff-oriented contributions reflects a balanced response to legal, strategic, and security considerations rather than a permanent departure from unit-based PKO participation.

1.7 Foundations of Japan's Reconstruction Education Model

Japan's reconstruction education model evolved through three stages across different missions. The infrastructure reconstruction stage began in Cambodia, where Japan built roads and facilities but lacked long-term sustainability. The capacity-building stage emerged in East Timor, where Japan began training government officials and community members in basic engineering skills. The education institutionalization stage developed in Haiti with the KIZUNA Project and matured through Japan's leadership in the United Nations Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP).[8]

In East Timor, for example, Japanese engineers taught construction management, surveying, machinery operation, and routine maintenance. They also implemented community-level training by employing local laborers in MSR repair and teaching them essential techniques such as drainage construction and erosion control.[9] These activities were explicitly designed as an exit strategy, addressing lessons from Cambodia where infrastructure deteriorated after Japan's departure.

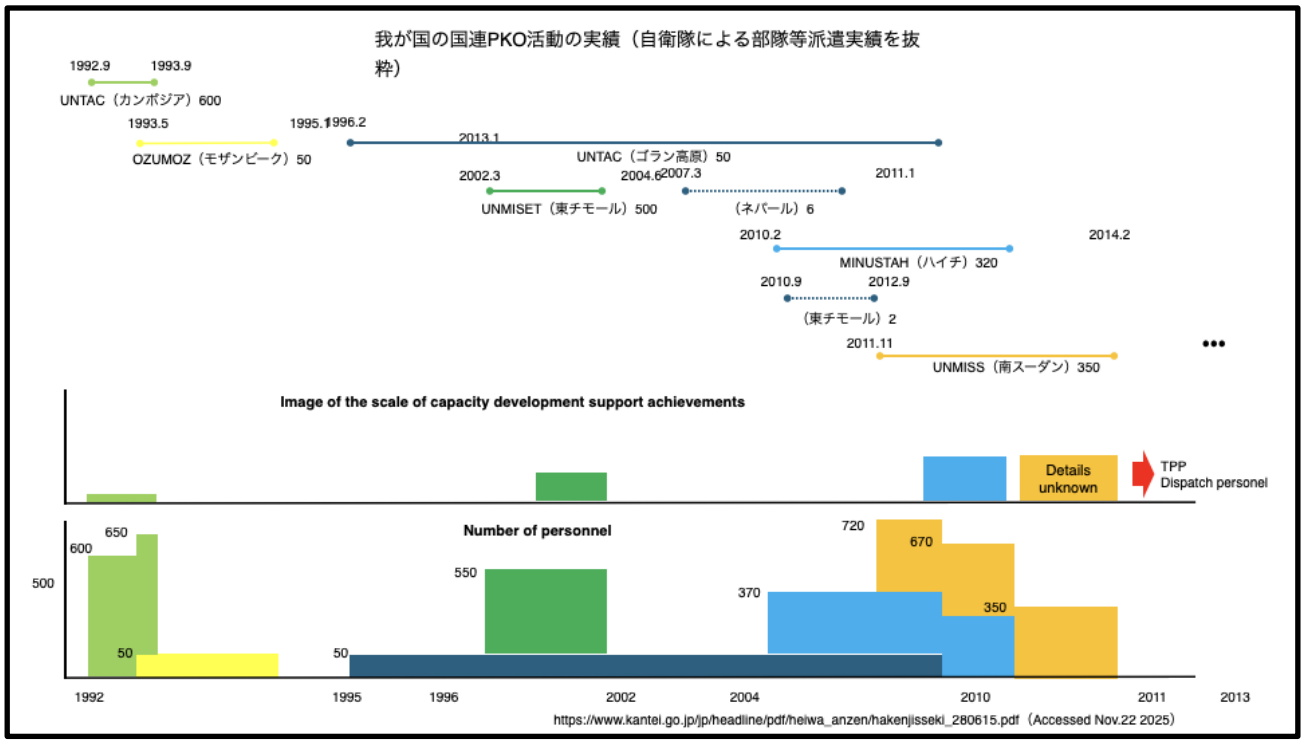
1.8 Strategic Implications

Japan's engineering-focused PKO contribution was therefore not the result of operational preference but the outcome of constitutional constraint, political compromise, and strategic necessity. Engineering allowed Japan to participate responsibly, visibly, and effectively in international security while maintaining its self-image as a peace-oriented nation. The institutional evolution—from field engineering to reconstruction education—demonstrates Japan's ability to adapt within strict legal boundaries.

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[8] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), *KIZUNA Project Final Report* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

[9] Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, East Timor PKO: 4th Engineering Contingent Operational Report (2004), pp. 33–41.



This foundational understanding enables deeper analysis of Japan's operational evolution (Chapter 2) and its relevance for Indonesia's peacekeeping strategy (Chapter 3).

Figure 1. Japan's PKO Deployments and Transition to Capacity-Building Support (1992–2014)

Figure 1 illustrates the chronological transition of Japan's PKO engagement from direct engineering unit deployment toward capacity-building and education-oriented support. The figure visually reinforces the argument that Japan's peacekeeping contribution evolved in response to legal constraints, operational lessons, and changing United Nations requirements, culminating in a reduced emphasis on field deployment and an increased focus on training and instructor dispatch.

2. Operational and Educational Evolution of Japan's PKO Engineering Units

2.1 Introduction

Japan's engineering units have undergone a profound transformation across three decades of UNPKO. From their first deployment in Cambodia in 1992 to their leadership role in the Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP), Japanese engineers have continually adapted to changing mission environments, operational demands, and institutional expectations. What began as a cautious experiment in overseas deployment has evolved into a sophisticated model of

reconstruction support, capacity building, and peacekeeping education. This chapter traces that evolution across five major missions—Cambodia, East Timor, Iraq, Haiti, and South Sudan—and demonstrates how each operation contributed to Japan's eventual emergence as a global educator in peacekeeping engineering.

Country	Dispatch Periods	Number of Dispatches	Total Personnel
Egypt	Nov 2008; May–Jun 2009; Apr 2010; Dec 2012 (4 times)	4	5
Mali	Aug 2009; Mar 2010 (2 times)	2	3
Ghana	Nov 2011 (1 time)	1	1
Kenya	Jul–Aug 2012; Aug–Sep 2013; Oct 2013; Oct 2014 (4 times)	4	4
South Africa	Mar 2013; Mar 2014; Sep 2015 (3 times)	3	3
Ethiopia	Mar–May 2014; Oct 2014; Jun 2015; Oct–Nov 2015; May–Jun 2016; Nov 2016; Mar 2017; Jun 2017; Dec 2017; Jun–Jul 2018; Nov 2018; Mar 2019; Jun–Jul 2019; Nov 2019 (14 times); Mar 2020 (15th); Mar 2022 (16th)	16	19
South Sudan	Aug 2014 (1 time)		
(*Lectures conducted in South Sudan from Kenya PKO Center*)	1	1	
India	Mar–Apr 2015; Mar–Apr 2016 (2 times)	2	2
Indonesia	Aug 2018 (1 time)	1	1
Total	**9 countries**	**34 dispatches**	**39 personnel**

Source: Ministry of Defense (Japan), Dispatch of JSDF Instructors to PKO Training Centers, 2008–2022, Tokyo: MOD.

Figure 2. Dispatch of JSDF Instructors to PKO Training Centers

Figure 2 shows the scale and geographic breadth of Japan's instructor dispatch to PKO training centers between 2008 and 2022. The figure highlights Japan's transition from a field-oriented peacekeeping participant to a global provider of peacekeeping education, demonstrating how engineering expertise was institutionalized and shared across Africa and Asia under the Triangular Partnership Programme framework.

2.2 Cambodia (1992–1993): First Field Deployment and the Limits of Reconstruction

Cambodia marked Japan's first-ever PKO deployment under the 1992 International Peace Cooperation Law. For the Japanese government and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), the mission was a test of whether Japan could contribute meaningfully to international peace efforts while operating strictly within the constraints of Article 9 and the Five Principles of PKO. As a result, the engineering contingent was assigned tasks that were clearly non-combat in nature, such as road rehabilitation, bridge reinforcement, and repairs to essential public facilities.[10]

Through these activities, Japan provided critical logistical support to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). However, the mission also revealed a fundamental problem. After Japan withdrew, many of the facilities and infrastructure repaired by the SDF quickly deteriorated because local authorities lacked the capacity to maintain them. This created a gap between the immediate benefits of engineering work and its long-term sustainability. The Cambodia experience thus taught Japan its first major lesson: engineering support is only effective when the local population possesses the skills to preserve and operate reconstructed infrastructure. This recognition would shape every subsequent mission.

2.3 East Timor (2002–2004): The Shift Toward Capacity Building

When Japan deployed to East Timor, it did so with a conscious intent to address the shortcomings identified in Cambodia. In addition to reconstruction work—such as road repair, site clearing, and public facility maintenance—the SDF introduced a structured program of technical training for local government personnel and residents.[11] This marked the beginning of Japan's shift toward capacity building as an essential component of its PKO engineering activities.

The training provided by Japanese engineers included modules on construction management, surveying, design, and machinery operation. Technical staff were taught not only how to operate heavy equipment but also how to maintain it, with particular emphasis on routine inspections, preventive maintenance, and troubleshooting. Furthermore, Japanese engineers initiated a community-based training approach by employing local laborers for Main Supply Route (MSR) maintenance. In the process, they taught essential engineering skills such as drainage improvement, soil reinforcement, and gabion construction.[12]

This combination of reconstruction and education marked a turning point. East Timor demonstrated that the SDF could contribute to long-term stability by empowering local

[10] United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), Engineering Mission Records, 1993.

[11] Japan Ministry of Defense, East Timor PKO Operational Report: 4th Engineering Contingent, 2004.

[12] Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, East Timor PKO: 4th Engineering Contingent Operational Report (2004), pp. 33–41.

communities rather than merely providing physical infrastructure. The mission represented Japan's first deliberate attempt at integrating engineering with human resource development—an approach that would become the foundation for its later reconstruction education model.

2.4 Iraq (2004–2006): Understanding the Role of Community Engagement

Japan's deployment to Iraq occurred in a politically sensitive environment and under strict non-combat rules. Nevertheless, it produced a critical insight that fundamentally expanded Japan's understanding of engineering in PKO: the success of engineering activities depends heavily on community relations and the management of the civilian population surrounding the mission compound.[13]

In Samawah, Japanese engineers were tasked with humanitarian support such as water purification, road repair, and rehabilitation of public buildings. While these tasks were technical in nature, their impact extended far beyond physical construction. Local employment programs, which provided jobs to residents, reduced tensions and created a sense of shared purpose. Community engagement also contributed to mission security, as the population became more cooperative and less susceptible to influence by armed groups. Through this experience, Japan realized that engineering operations must be closely integrated with social and political considerations. Engineering became not only a technical function but also a tool for shaping perceptions, reducing risk, and stabilizing local environments.

This represented a significant conceptual expansion of Japan's engineering doctrine, proving that reconstruction activities could serve as a platform for civil-military engagement and local confidence-building.

2.5 Haiti (2010–2013): Institutionalizing Reconstruction Education

Japan's deployment to Haiti after the 2010 earthquake marked the emergence of a fully developed reconstruction education model. Under the KIZUNA Project, Japanese engineers provided systematic training to local residents in heavy equipment operation, construction techniques, and facility maintenance.[14] Unlike earlier missions, where training was integrated informally into operational activities, KIZUNA introduced a structured curriculum with defined objectives, standardized modules, and skill certification.

The Haiti mission thus moved Japan beyond ad hoc training toward a deliberate education-based approach. Japanese engineers were no longer only building or repairing infrastructure; they were training future operators, mechanics, and construction supervisors. This transformation aligned

[13] Ministry of Defense (Japan), Iraq Reconstruction Support Activities, 2006.

[14] Ministry of Defense (Japan), "KIZUNA Project Overview," International Peace Cooperation Activities Division, 2011.

with the United Nations' increasing emphasis on sustainability and local empowerment in peacekeeping.

KIZUNA became a symbolic milestone in Japan's PKO evolution and served as the conceptual prototype for Japan's later contribution to the United Nations Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP).

2.6 South Sudan (2011–2017): Engineering Under Complex Humanitarian Conditions

South Sudan presented Japanese engineers with a different type of challenge—one characterized by political instability, humanitarian crises, and large-scale displacement. The SDF contributed to essential infrastructure for the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), including road improvement, runway maintenance, and construction of shelters for internally displaced persons (IDPs).[15] These tasks played an essential role in enabling humanitarian access and maintaining the mobility of UN personnel and relief convoys.

Despite the volatile environment, Japan adhered strictly to the Five Principles, which constrained its ability to participate in broader protection or stabilization tasks. Nevertheless, the mission demonstrated the indispensability of engineering support in modern PKO, especially in environments where humanitarian needs are intertwined with operational logistics. It also highlighted the need for improved training and greater interoperability with international partners, reinforcing Japan's shift toward education-based contributions.

2.7 Becoming a Global Peacekeeping Educator: The Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP)

Following the gradual reduction of its overseas deployments, Japan did not withdraw from UN peacekeeping. Instead, it shifted its focus toward institutional capacity-building, becoming one of the leading countries in the United Nations Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP). Established after the 2014 UN Peacekeeping Summit, TPP connects supporting states, the United Nations, and troop-contributing countries to improve peacekeeping engineering capabilities.

Japan has played a central role by providing experienced engineering instructors, heavy equipment training, operational guidance, and financial support. Between 2008 and 2022, Japan dispatched 39 SDF instructors to PKO training centers in Africa and Asia, including Egypt, Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, India, South Sudan, and Indonesia.[16] This large-scale instructor dispatch reflects Japan's transition from a field participant to a global educator, helping develop the next generation of peacekeeping engineers across continents.

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[15] United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), *Engineering Support Summary* (2017), pp. 4–7.

[16] Ministry of Defense (Japan), Dispatch of JSDF Instructors to PKO Training Centers (2008–2022) (2023).

2.8 Conclusion

The evolution of Japan's PKO engineering units can be understood in three distinct stages. The first stage, beginning in Cambodia, involved basic reconstruction performed under strict legal constraints. The second stage, exemplified by East Timor and Iraq, involved the integration of capacity building and community engagement into engineering operations. The third stage, shaped by Haiti and continued through South Sudan and TPP activities, saw the emergence of a reconstruction education model that transformed Japan from a PKO participant into a global peacekeeping educator.

This transformation demonstrates Japan's ability to adapt its peacekeeping contributions within constitutional limits while responding to evolving United Nations requirements. It also provides valuable lessons for Indonesia, which seeks to enhance its peacekeeping specialization and international influence. These lessons will be examined in Chapter 3.

3. Comparative Analysis and Lessons for Indonesia

3.1 Introduction

Japan and Indonesia are two of Asia's most active contributors to UNPKO, yet their approaches differ fundamentally. Japan, constrained by constitutional and legal frameworks, has built a highly specialized engineering-centered model of PKO participation. Indonesia, by contrast, has become one of the world's largest troop contributors, relying on numerical strength and broad mission versatility. While Indonesia's contributions are respected, the absence of mission-specific specialization limits its strategic influence within the UN system.

This chapter compares the institutional frameworks, operational orientations, and strategic cultures of Japan and Indonesia. It also examines why Indonesia requires specialized PKO missions, the benefits such specialization provides, and the advantages Indonesia may gain from adopting Japan's engineering model. These insights form the foundation for policy-oriented lessons relevant to Indonesia's future PKO development.

3.2 Legal and Institutional Foundations: Constraints vs. Flexibility

Japan's PKO posture is defined by stringent legal constraints—particularly Article 9 of the Constitution and the 1992 International Peace Cooperation Law—which prohibit participation in combat operations and require strict adherence to the Five Principles of PKO Participation.[17] These constraints shaped Japan's reliance on engineering, humanitarian, and logistical roles that are clearly non-combat, politically acceptable, and compatible with domestic legal boundaries.

[17] Cabinet Legislation Bureau (Japan), "Article 9 Interpretation" (1954); Ministry of Defense (Japan), *PKO Overview*(2020).

Indonesia's institutional environment is far more flexible. Law No. 37/1999 and Law No. 34/2004 enable wide-ranging PKO participation, allowing Indonesia to deploy infantry, engineering, military police, aviation, and medical elements. However, this flexibility has resulted in an emphasis on troop quantity rather than distinctive technical capability, limiting Indonesia's recognition as a "capability provider" within the UN.

3.3 Operational Orientation: Specialization vs. Troop Strength

Japan's operational profile reflects its legal constraints and deliberate strategic direction. Engineering units—responsible for infrastructure repair, water supply, construction, and civil–military support—became Japan's primary PKO capability. Over time, Japan moved beyond engineering execution to include capacity-building and reconstruction education, culminating in programs such as the KIZUNA Project and Japan's leadership within the Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP).[18]

Indonesia's operational contributions are broader and more manpower-oriented. Indonesia routinely deploys battalion-sized contingents and diverse support elements across multiple missions. While this versatility is valuable, the absence of concentrated specialization means Indonesia does not yet offer the high-value niche capabilities increasingly sought by the UN.

3.4 Strategic Culture: Peace Identity vs. Global Leadership

Japan's strategic culture is shaped by its post-war identity as a peace-oriented nation. Non-combat roles such as engineering harmonize with domestic expectations and align with Japan's diplomatic narrative. Indonesia's strategic culture, however, prioritizes global leadership, diplomatic credibility, and regional responsibility. PKO participation symbolizes Indonesia's commitment to international peace and enhances its strategic influence. Yet, without specialization, Indonesia risks reaching a plateau where additional troop deployments no longer increase its diplomatic leverage.

3.5 The Need for Indonesian PKO Specialization

Indonesia's development as a major PKO contributor requires a shift from general-purpose deployments to mission-specific specialization. Specialization is increasingly essential for several reasons. First, it enhances professional capability and institutional learning. Technical roles such as engineering, heavy equipment operation, and infrastructure rehabilitation demand mastery of advanced skills, improving unit competence and interoperability.

[18] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), *KIZUNA Final Report* (2013); United Nations Department of Peace Operations (UN DPO), *Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP) Overview* (2016–2022).

Second, specialization increases visibility within the UN. As global missions become more technical, the UN prioritizes capability-based contributions. Countries delivering specialized engineering units, medical teams, or logistics support often receive leadership assignments, operational responsibilities, and greater influence in mandate development.

Third, specialization aligns Indonesia with contemporary PKO requirements. Current missions rely heavily on engineering support, humanitarian logistics, and capacity-building—areas where Indonesia has high potential but has not yet established a distinct identity.

Finally, specialization strengthens Indonesia's diplomatic position. Countries that provide essential technical capabilities gain stronger influence in peacekeeping policy discussions and enjoy greater recognition as indispensable contributors.

3.6 Benefits of Deploying Specialized Indonesian PKO Units

Deploying specialized PKO units creates multiple operational and institutional advantages. Specialized units often accomplish mission tasks more efficiently, with fewer personnel and reduced logistical burden. This contributes to a more effective and economical mission footprint.

Specialized deployments also allow Indonesia to test and refine doctrine in real-world environments. Engineering, logistics, and medical missions expose personnel to complex operational settings, generating lessons that enhance TNI doctrine and training programs.[19] This continuous learning cycle accelerates professionalization and supports modernization objectives.

Additionally, specialization elevates Indonesia's international reputation. Countries known for specific, high-value capabilities are more likely to receive leadership roles such as sector command, engineering coordination, or training instructor assignments. Specialized missions also support the career development of Indonesian officers and NCOs by providing exposure to multinational standards, technical training, and leadership responsibilities.

3.7 Additional Benefits of Adopting Japan's Engineering Model

Adopting Japan's engineering-focused PKO model offers Indonesia further strategic and practical benefits. Japan's system demonstrates how engineering capabilities can evolve into long-term national assets. Indonesia could leverage PKO missions to support its domestic defense industry by deploying heavy equipment produced by state-owned companies, or through cooperative procurement agreements with Japan.[20] These initiatives strengthen industrial capability while supporting international missions.

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[19] TNI Headquarters, UNIFIL/MONUSCO Reports, 2021.

[20] PT Pindad, Defense Industry Export Strategy, 2022.

Indonesia also stands to benefit from technology transfer. Cooperation with Japan can provide knowledge in machinery operation, maintenance systems, construction standards, engineering curriculum development, and reconstruction education methodology. Such expertise would significantly enhance Indonesia's institutional capacity in both military and civilian sectors.

Furthermore, applying Japan's reconstruction education model could elevate PMPP Sentul as a regional or global hub for engineering and capacity-building training. Hosting TPP courses or introducing Indonesian-led engineering modules would increase Indonesia's visibility and leadership within PKO training networks.

Japan's emphasis on sustainability—training local populations to maintain infrastructure—offers Indonesia a path to producing long-lasting mission outcomes. Adopting this model would strengthen Indonesia's reputation for delivering impactful, community-centered peacekeeping operations.

Ultimately, Japan's engineering model provides Indonesia with a blueprint for building a distinctive PKO identity focused on humanitarian engineering, disaster response, and reconstruction support—an identity well aligned with Indonesia's diplomatic principles and regional responsibilities.

3.8 Conclusion

Japan's engineering-centered PKO model offers Indonesia a strategic and practical reference for enhancing its own peacekeeping role. Japan's strict legal constraints led to innovation, specialization, and the development of high-value capabilities now recognized worldwide. Indonesia, operating with greater flexibility, can selectively adopt elements of this model to elevate itself from a troop provider to a capability provider. Specialization enhances operational efficiency, supports national defense industry growth, strengthens diplomacy, and improves Indonesia's long-term relevance within the UN system.

Indonesia has the capacity, ambition, and institutional foundations to become a leading provider of specialized PKO capabilities. By integrating lessons from Japan—particularly in engineering, reconstruction education, and community-based capacity-building—Indonesia can contribute more strategically to global peace and shape the future landscape of peacekeeping in the Indo-Pacific region.

4. Policy Implications for Indonesia's PKO Modernization

4.1 Introduction

Building upon the comparative analysis in Chapter 3, this chapter outlines the policy implications for Indonesia as it seeks to modernize its participation in UNPKO. Japan's engineering-centered model demonstrates how a country can transform legal constraints into strategic strengths, develop specialized capabilities, and build an international reputation through consistent professionalism and innovation. Indonesia—already one of the world's largest troop contributors—stands at a pivotal moment. To elevate its influence, Indonesia must transition from a manpower-based contributor to a capability-based contributor. This requires policy reforms that strengthen specialization, institutional capacity, human resource development, and international cooperation.

The following sections present a strategic pathway for Indonesia to enhance its PKO performance by applying lessons from Japan's experience.

4.2 Strengthening Legal and Institutional Foundations

Indonesia possesses legal flexibility for PKO deployment, but the current framework does not strongly incentivize specialization. Japan's experience shows that clear legal mandates—such as those embedded in its PKO Law and the Five Principles—provide a stable foundation for capability development. Indonesia does not need restrictive laws like Japan; however, **a formal national framework for PKO specialization** would support long-term planning.

This framework should:

1. Define priority specialization areas (e.g., engineering, medical, aviation, explosive ordnance, water purification).
6. Mandate consistent investment in capability development.
7. Establish performance standards aligned with UN requirements.
8. Integrate PKO assignments with TNI modernization programs.

A clearer institutional vision would allow Indonesian PKO units to develop coherent capabilities rather than adapting ad hoc to each mission. It would also support strategic coordination between the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Armed Forces.

4.3 Expanding Engineering and Technical Capabilities

Japan's engineering evolution—from reconstruction to reconstruction education—illustrates how technical capabilities can shape national identity within PKO. Indonesia can apply this lesson by **prioritizing engineering specialization** as a core component of its future PKO strategy.

This requires:

- Investment in engineering training centers
- Acquisition of heavy equipment and technical tools
- Development of standardized operating procedures for engineering missions
- Continuous field exercises linking TNI engineers with civilian agencies
- Adoption of Japan's reconstruction education approach

Indonesia's engineering units currently perform well but lack a unified framework and long-term capability roadmap. By adapting Japan's model, Indonesia can elevate its engineering units to internationally recognized proficiency.

4.4 Developing Reconstruction Education and Capacity-Building Roles

One of Japan's most impactful contributions to the UN is the emphasis on **teaching**, not just **doing**. The KIZUNA Project and Japan's leadership in the Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP) highlight the value of training local communities and foreign contingents in engineering skills.

Indonesia can strengthen its PKO reputation by adopting a similar approach. PMPP Sentul already conducts various UN training programs, but it does not yet have a specialized curriculum focused on engineering or reconstruction education.

Indonesia should:

1. Develop engineering education modules at PMPP.
2. Train TNI instructors in Japan's engineering pedagogy.
3. Establish a certification pathway for UN engineering instructors.
4. Integrate local capacity-building into field mission planning.

By shifting from a troop-providing model to a capability-building model, Indonesia will increase mission sustainability and enhance its global reputation.

4.5 Enhancing Interoperability With UN Standards

Indonesia's operational effectiveness in PKO missions depends heavily on interoperability with UN doctrine and partner nations. Specialized units, such as engineering teams, require an understanding of UN construction standards, environmental guidelines, safety management systems, and coordination procedures.

Japan's long experience in technical PKO roles makes it an ideal partner for Indonesia to improve interoperability. Joint training programs, doctrine exchanges, and technical workshops would help Indonesian contingents meet or exceed UN performance benchmarks.

Improved interoperability also positions Indonesia for leadership roles within missions, such as sector command or engineering coordination.

4.6 Building Human Resource Excellence

Japan's PKO model has consistently invested in human resource development through training, instructor dispatch, and structured career progression. Indonesia can adopt a similar approach by creating pathways for specialization within the TNI.

This includes:

- Specialized PKO career tracks
- Incentives for officers and NCOs to pursue technical expertise
- Exchange programs with Japan and other advanced PKO contributors
- Professional military education incorporating PKO engineering doctrine

Human capital development is essential for sustaining Indonesia's transition toward capability-based PKO contributions.

4.7 Technology Transfer and Defense Industrial Development

Japan's engineering model demonstrates how PKO missions can support domestic industrial development. Indonesia can benefit from sending heavy machinery produced by state-owned companies (e.g., PT Pindad, PT Dirgantara) or by developing joint procurement frameworks with Japan.

Engineering-focused PKO missions require:

- Bulldozers
- Excavators
- Water purification systems
- Mobile workshops
- Modular bridges
- Heavy transport vehicles

When Indonesia deploys machines it produces domestically, it generates demand, enhances product credibility, and strengthens strategic industries. Collaboration with Japan enables Indonesia to improve machinery quality, maintenance systems, and operator training.

This synergy between PKO and defense industry development contributes to national economic growth and technological advancement.

4.8 Strengthening PMPP Sentul as a Regional PKO Hub

PMPP Sentul is well positioned to become ASEAN's leading PKO training center. To achieve this role, Indonesia should expand PMPP's mandate to include:

- Engineering certification programs
- Reconstruction education modules
- Joint training with Japan under TPP

- Regional courses for ASEAN and African partners
- Heavy equipment operation programs

By transforming PMPP into a technical PKO hub, Indonesia increases its international visibility, reinforces diplomatic leadership, and supports regional peacekeeping capacity.

4.9 Toward a Distinct Indonesian PKO Identity

Japan's engineering specialization has shaped a recognizable PKO identity: disciplined, technical, precise, and education-oriented. Indonesia can cultivate its own identity by integrating engineering specialization, community-based capacity-building, and regional leadership.

A clear identity improves Indonesia's diplomatic leverage and mission credibility. It also aligns with Indonesia's foreign policy goals as a middle power committed to peace, humanitarianism, and international cooperation.

4.10 Conclusion

Japan's engineering-centered PKO model offers Indonesia a practical and strategic framework for modernizing its peacekeeping contributions. By strengthening institutional foundations, investing in engineering capability, enhancing interoperability, prioritizing human resource development, and deepening cooperation with Japan, Indonesia can transition from a troop provider to a capability provider. This shift aligns Indonesia with global PKO trends and reinforces its role as a responsible and influential actor in the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

Indonesia possesses the capacity, ambition, and institutional infrastructure to lead in specialized PKO missions. Chapter 4 provides a roadmap for achieving this vision, linking Japan's experience with Indonesia's strategic trajectory toward becoming a global leader in peacekeeping.

CONCLUSION

Strategic Recommendations and Final Assessment

Japan's experience in UNPKO demonstrates that meaningful contributions do not depend solely on military strength, but on strategic specialization, legal adaptation, and sustained institutional development. Japan's strict constitutional constraints—particularly Article 9 and the PKO Law—compelled the Self-Defense Forces to innovate and focus on non-combat engineering roles. Over three decades, these engineering activities evolved from basic reconstruction tasks into an advanced system of reconstruction education, exemplified by the KIZUNA Project and Japan's leadership in the Triangular Partnership Programme (TPP). Japan's transformation from a cautious participant to a global peacekeeping educator offers important lessons for states seeking to increase the quality and impact of their PKO contributions.

Indonesia has already established itself as one of the world's most significant troop-contributing countries, reflecting its diplomatic ambitions and long-standing commitment to international peace. However, to elevate its strategic influence within the United Nations, Indonesia must move beyond manpower-based contributions and pursue deeper specialization. Engineering specialization provides a clear and achievable pathway for this transition. It enhances operational efficiency, strengthens doctrinal development, and enables Indonesia to operate with greater precision and effectiveness in increasingly complex mission environments.

This study examined the evolution of Japan's engineering units in UNPKO between 1992 and 2024, focusing on missions in Cambodia, East Timor, Iraq, Haiti, and South Sudan where engineering played a central operational role. The analysis was deliberately limited to engineering-related activities and excluded non-engineering PKO functions such as medical, aviation, logistics, or police operations, except where they directly supported engineering missions. Drawing exclusively on publicly available United Nations documents, Japanese Ministry of Defense materials, and academic studies, the research emphasized institutional patterns, operational trends, and policy implications rather than tactical-level decision-making. Within this defined scope, the study demonstrated that Japan's engineering-centered model—particularly its emphasis on reconstruction education and capacity-building—represents a strategic adaptation to legal constraints with significant implications for Indonesia's future peacekeeping modernization.

Adopting Japan's engineering model offers Indonesia further long-term advantages. As discussed in Chapter 4, specialization supports defense-industrial development through the deployment of domestically produced heavy equipment, enables technology transfer from Japan, and accelerates the transformation of PMPP Sentul into a regional training hub. More importantly, Indonesia's adoption of reconstruction education and community-based capacity-building would improve the sustainability of mission outcomes and strengthen Indonesia's reputation as a responsible and forward-thinking peacekeeping nation.

The lessons derived from Japan show that specialization is not simply a technical improvement but a strategic choice that enhances diplomatic influence, national capability, and operational relevance. Indonesia possesses the institutional foundation, regional leadership aspirations, and human capital required to become a global provider of specialized peacekeeping capabilities. By integrating Japan's best practices and adapting them to Indonesia's context—complemented by the policy measures outlined in Chapter 4—Indonesia can transition from a troop provider to a capability provider. In doing so, Indonesia will strengthen its contribution to international peace and reinforce its role as a key shaping force in global and regional stability.