MODELING A STRONGER U.S.-JAPAN ALLIANCE
ASSESSING U.S. ALLIANCE STRUCTURES

by Jeffrey W. Hornung

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About the Author

Dr. Jeffrey Hornung is the Fellow for the Security and Foreign Affairs Program at Sasakawa USA and an adjunct fellow with the Japan Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Previously, Hornung also worked as an Associate Professor for the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, a Department of Defense executive education facility in Honolulu, Hawaii. From 2009-2010, Hornung served as a Postdoctoral Researcher at The Ohio State University’s East Asian Studies Center, where he taught courses on Japan and East Asia. Previously, he served as a research assistant at George Washington University on the project, “Memory and Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific” and worked for a member of the Japanese Diet during the 2001 House of Councillors election. Hornung was also a Fulbright Fellow at the University of Tokyo, where he was a visiting scholar. He received his Ph.D. in political science from the George Washington University. He also holds an MA in international relations with a concentration in Japan Studies from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and a BA in political science and international affairs from Marquette University, where he graduated magna cum laude.
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<td>ACM</td>
<td>Alliance Coordination Mechanism</td>
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<td>ACT</td>
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<td>ANZUS</td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand, and United States Security Treaty</td>
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<td>BCM</td>
<td>Bilateral Coordination Mechanism</td>
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<td>CDF</td>
<td>Chief of the Defence Force</td>
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<td>CFC</td>
<td>Combined Forces Command</td>
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<td>CJCS</td>
<td>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff</td>
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<td>DCJOPS</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of Joint Operations</td>
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<td>EUCOM</td>
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<td>FAS-IP</td>
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<td>FEO</td>
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<td>FLO</td>
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<td>IMS</td>
<td>International Military Staff</td>
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<td>OPCON</td>
<td>operational control</td>
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<td>Pacific Command</td>
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<td>ROEs</td>
<td>rules of engagement</td>
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<td>ROK</td>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
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<td>SACEUR</td>
<td>Supreme Allied Commander, Europe</td>
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<td>SCM</td>
<td>Security Consultative Meeting</td>
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Modeling a Stronger U.S.-Japan Alliance

Since becoming Japan’s prime minister for a second time in December 2012, Shinzo Abe has pursued changes in Japan’s security policies. Considerable attention has been given to his efforts to strengthen Japan’s security ties with regional countries, create a National Security Strategy, introduce a State Secrets Act, increase defense expenditures, relax rules on exporting arms, and pass a package of security-related bills that make it possible for Japan’s Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to exercise the right of collective self-defense in limited circumstances. All of these efforts are nested in Abe’s larger initiative to make “proactive contributions to peace” throughout the world. Abe’s pursuit of a more proactive Japan sits alongside an effort by U.S. President Barack Obama to “rebalance” America’s focus on the Asia-Pacific region. This policy includes greater cooperation with America’s regional allies and an increase in U.S. military assets in the Asia-Pacific area of responsibility.

These separate efforts will move the allies closer together, both politically and operationally. Abe’s efforts make Japan a more dependable and capable security partner, thereby enabling closer cooperation with the United States in an increasingly dangerous neighborhood. This tightening of the U.S.-Japan alliance coincides with greater U.S. reliance on allies and an increased focus on forward presence in the region. As a result, the allies are redefining their relationship to create a more global and robust alliance.1 Importantly, the allies revised the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation that define their military roles and missions. Yet, despite these closer ties, the U.S.-Japan alliance remains structurally unchanged.

This paper examines the political and military structures the United States shares with other alliances as a prism through which to consider ways to improve the U.S.-Japan alliance. Specifically, the following sections examine the U.S. alliances with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Australia. Each of these alliances benefits from robust political and military structures while the U.S.-Japan alliance lacks a robust military structure. Based on this understanding, the paper closes with recommendations on ways to improve U.S.-Japan alliance structures.

NATO Alliance Structures

NATO is a heavily institutionalized alliance. In addition to the overarching Soviet threat that loomed on Europe’s eastern borders, credit for NATO’s institutionalization is often given to the communist intervention during the Korean War, which motivated the allies to pursue integration. The result is an alliance that tightly links political and military structures and an integrated command.

NATO’s principal political decision-making body is the North Atlantic Council (NAC).² Chaired by the NATO Secretary General, the NAC discusses policy or operational questions on all issues affecting members’ peace and security.³ Importantly, while agenda items and decisions are based on reports and recommendations prepared by subordinate committees and working groups, any NATO member can table an issue for discussion. Because it is the primary venue for discussions and decisions, it meets at least every week at the level of Permanent Representatives (but often more frequently). However, NATO retains the capacity to convene at higher levels, meeting twice a year at the foreign ministers level, three times a year at the defense ministers level, and occasionally at the heads of state level.⁴

The Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) is NATO’s other political decision-making body. However, its authority is limited to NATO’s nuclear policy. Composed of the defense ministers of all member countries (except France) and chaired by the NATO Secretary General, the NPG meets annually to discuss policy issues associated with NATO’s nuclear forces.⁵ The NPG also retains the ability to meet at the level of Permanent Representatives when necessary. The work of the NPG itself is prepared by a Staff Group composed of NATO delegations that generally meets once a week (or more if necessary).⁶ The NPG also has a senior advisory body called the NPG High Level Group that is chaired by the United States and composed of national policymakers and experts that meets several times a year.⁷

Beneath the NAC (and NPG) stands the Military Committee (MC), NATO’s senior military authority. The MC provides military policy advice and strategy to the NAC and recommendations to NATO’s political leadership on measures considered necessary for defense.⁸ Likewise, it is responsible for translating the political decisions and guidance received from the NAC (and NPG) into implementable orders to NATO’s two Strategic Commanders. In times of war, it becomes NAC’s main source of information on the military situation, implications, and recommendations on use of force.⁹ The Chairman of the Military Committee is NATO’s most senior military official, a non-U.S. four-star officer (whose deputy is always a U.S. officer). The Chairman serves as not only the principal military advisor to the Secretary General, but also the primary means through which military advice is presented to the NAC (and NPG) and guidance is issued to NATO’s Strategic Commanders and the Director of the

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² This is the only body that was established by the North Atlantic Treaty (Article 9).
⁴ NATO, “North Atlantic Council.”
⁶ NATO, “Nuclear Planning Group.”
⁷ NATO, “Nuclear Planning Group.”
⁹ NATO, “Military Committee.”
International Military Staff. Membership of the MC consists of delegations’ permanent Military Representatives (usually three-star officers) and the MC meets at least once a week after NAC meetings. However, like the NAC, it often meets more frequently and Military Representatives frequently meet informally. The MC also meets three times a year at the chiefs of defense level.

Beneath these bodies sits a large network of committees that meet weekly or daily and report directly to the NAC (some of these are supported by subsidiary working groups). Each NATO member is represented, which is important because these committees do the work not just for the NAC, but for NATO as a whole. While extensive, this committee structure is not static. It has been reviewed and reorganized three times in its history, leading to the creation of new committees and the elimination of obsolete ones.

**Figure 1: Diagram of NATO Alliances Structures**

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12 Since its creation in 1949, the Alliance has undergone three major committee restructurings: 1) 1990-after the end of the Cold War; 2) 2002-following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks; 3) 2010-broad NATO reform effort.
Populating these bodies is the responsibility of member states. All NATO members send delegations to NATO that have a status similar to an embassy.\textsuperscript{13} Each mission is headed by an Ambassador, who is that state’s Permanent Representative to the NAC, and is principally staffed with civil servants from the ministries of foreign affairs and defense. The Permanent Representatives are the primary political link between national governments and NATO. They not only act on instructions from their capitals but also relay NATO developments and decisions back to their capitals. The constant interaction amongst the Permanent Representatives also serves an important information role. They not only inform and explain the views and policy decisions of their government to their colleagues, but they are able to articulate their colleague’s positions to capitals.\textsuperscript{14} This helps keep all members fully informed of domestic politics and other important issues. All missions are housed together, guaranteeing constant interaction and allowing representatives to build trust and work together side-by-side.

A large number of International Staff (IS) and International Military Staff (IMS) support the work of these committees and national delegations. The IS, totaling some 1,000 civil servants, is made up of seven divisions and a number of independent offices.\textsuperscript{15} The IS is responsible for providing advice, guidance, and administrative support to the national delegations that attend the NAC, NPG, and other subsidiary committees. The IS also helps to implement decisions taken by those groups.\textsuperscript{16} The IMS, totaling some 500 civilians and military personnel, is headed by a three-star military officer and assisted by 12 other senior military officers who head up five divisions and support offices.\textsuperscript{17} The IMS is the executive body of the MC and is considered the “essential link” between NATO’s political decision-making bodies and its Strategic Commanders and their staffs.\textsuperscript{18} Like the IS, it is responsible for assisting the Military Representatives that attend the MC by preparing assessments, identifying strategic and operational interests, and proposing courses of action. Similarly, the IMS is responsible for ensuring that military-related decisions are implemented within NATO. Both the IS and IMS liaise closely with one another on a daily basis, guaranteeing free flow of information and opinions.

Decisions taken throughout NATO are made on the basis of consensus. This ensures that decisions are collectively reached and that each member retains sovereignty (and veto power) within the organization. In practice, voting is rare; instead, members engage in extensive

\textsuperscript{14} NATO, “North Atlantic Council.”
\textsuperscript{15} The seven divisions are: Political Affairs and Security Policy, Defense Policy and Planning, Operations, Defense Investment, Emerging Security Challenges, Public Diplomacy, and Executive Management.
\textsuperscript{17} The five divisions are: Intelligence, Operations, Plans and Policy, Cooperation and Regional Security, and Logistics and Resources.

consultations on a continuous basis until a decision is reached that is acceptable to all. These consultations take place formally in the NAC (and its committees) as well as informally via daily interactions between the national delegations, IS, IMS, and representatives of partner countries. This consultation process is considered the “heart of NATO” as it gives all members the opportunity to voice their opinions and official positions to help shape decisions. This does not mean that members cannot disagree. A process for disagreement exists in the “Silence Procedure,” in which the Secretary General distributes an outline of an organizational procedure or policy being considered for implementation for the purpose of holding a silent referendum. Member states can halt the procedure if they “break silence” and voice disagreement. If, however, members do not “break silence,” silence is taken to mean agreement and the procedure or policy moves forward.

In addition to this multi-layered system of decision-making sits two strategic commands: Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and Allied Command Operations (ACO). Together, ACT and ACO make up the NATO Command Structure, and both are responsible to the MC. ACT is tasked with leading the transformation of NATO’s military structure, forces, capabilities, and doctrine. ACO is responsible for the planning and execution of NATO operations. ACO is a three-tiered command with headquarters and supporting elements at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. It exercises command and control of static and deployable headquarters as well as joint and combined forces across all of NATO’s military missions. At the strategic level sits the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), which is responsible for preparing, planning, conducting, and executing NATO military operations, missions, and tasks.

SHAPE is headed by the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), who is traditionally a U.S. four-star military officer. In this capacity, the SACEUR reports to the MC and is supported by a Deputy and Chief of Staff (both Europeans), who are also four-star military officers. The SACEUR also serves as Commander of the U.S. European Command (EUCOM). In this capacity, the SACEUR reports to the U.S. Secretary of Defense (SECDEF).

At the operational level sit two standing Joint Force Commands (JFCs) that are responsible for planning and conducting NATO operations. These JFCs have to be able to manage joint operations from their static locations in The Netherlands or Italy, or from a deployed headquarters. The tactical level consists of Single Service Commands (land, maritime, and air)—under SACEUR’s command—that provide expertise and support to the JFCs and report to SHAPE. Despite the integrated decision-making structure in both the political and

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19 NATO, “National Delegations at NATO.”
21 Critics argue that countries, particularly smaller ones, are less willing to “break silence” to halt movement on a policy under discussion because they fear being seen as going against the collective will of the organization.
23 ACO, “Military Command Structure.”
military spheres, member nations exercise independent command and control over their own forces.

**U.S.-Republic of Korea Alliance Structures**

Forged during the Korean War, the U.S.-ROK alliance is becoming increasingly global. The core focus of the alliance, however, remains deterring aggression from North Korea. The alliance structure is robust; the United States and the ROK share an integrated command structure in addition to other venues for political and military leaders to discuss, negotiate, and coordinate.

The political side of the alliance is led by a shared consultative structure called the Security Consultative Meeting (SCM). The SCM is a high-level meeting between the U.S. SECDEF and the ROK Minister of National Defense (MINDEF). The purpose of the meeting is to consult on important issues, discuss strategic policy, and issue guidance to their militaries through the Military Committee Meeting. The work is done via six committees that convene as needed.\(^\text{24}\) Not only do these committees receive guidance from the SCM, they are also responsible for developing measures to implement policy agreements made at the SCM. Similarly, members of these committees provide policy recommendations to the SECDEF and MINDEF for the SCM.

While the SCM remains the pinnacle of the political side of the alliance, in recent years new forums have been created to augment the SCM’s work. In 2010, the first “Two-plus-Two” Meeting was held (only three have been held to date). This venue brings together the U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense and their ROK counterparts to discuss alliance issues and bilateral cooperation on regional and global issues. Similarly, in 2011, the first Korea-U.S. Integrated Defense Dialogue (KIDD) was held. The KIDD is considered the umbrella framework for various U.S.-ROK bilateral initiatives.\(^\text{25}\) Held biannually, the KIDD brings together senior-level policymakers to coordinate alliance issues and directions for future security cooperation.\(^\text{26}\)

The military side of the alliance is led by a Military Committee Meeting (MCM), a committee of the SCM. The MCM consists of two separate meetings, a Plenary and Permanent meeting. The Plenary is held annually with membership consisting of the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), U.S. Commander of Pacific Command (PACOM), ROK Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and ROK Director of Strategy (J5). The Commander of U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC) also attends as a bilateral representative. The Permanent

\(^\text{24}\) These committees are: 1) Policy Review; 2) Security Cooperation; 3) Logistics Cooperation; 4) Defense Technology and Industry Cooperation; 5) Joint Communique; and 6) Military.

\(^\text{25}\) This includes the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee, the Strategic Alliance 2015 Working Group, and the Security Policy Initiative.

meeting is held as needed (and is usually preceded by ad hoc dialogues) and its membership includes the ROK CJCS and a senior U.S. military officer attending on behalf of the U.S. CJCS. Together, the MCM gives strategic and operational guidance to the Commander of U.S.-ROK CFC. Yet, because the Military Committee is one of the SCM’s committees, it is also responsible for providing recommendations and updates on military issues to the SCM and receives strategic guidance from the SCM to turn into policy.

The operational side of the alliance consists of three separate headquarters, all of which are headed by the same U.S. four-star, whose strategic directives and guidance is formulated and coordinated by the MCM and SCM.

The first headquarters is U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), a sub-unified command to PACOM composed of 28,500 troops. USFK is not a warfighting headquarters. Rather, it is responsible for training U.S. troops on the Korean Peninsula, for evacuating U.S. civilians if needed, and for facilitating the reception of troops that would come from outside the ROK in the case of a war.27 The Commander of USFK supports the Armistice Agreement, provides forces to the Commander of the U.S.-ROK CFC and United Nations Command, and provides administrative and logistical support necessary to maintain their readiness.28 The USFK Commander reports directly to the PACOM Commander on matters directly pertaining to USFK areas of responsibility.29

The second headquarters is the United Nations Command (UNC), which is the unified command structure for the multinational military force tasked with the responsibility of ensuring the integrity of the 1953 Armistice.30 The UNC Commander is responsible for the operational control, strategic direction, and combat operations of the UNC member nations’ forces if the armistice is broken.31 The UNC Commander acts in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions and directives but, because the UNC Commander is a U.S. officer, the UNC Commander reports to the U.S. Secretary of Defense via the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but keeps the PACOM Commander informed of any communications with U.S. national authorities.32

The third headquarters is the Combined Forces Command, where the allies have served together since November 1978. The CFC is always commanded by a U.S. four-star military officer while the Deputy Commander is always a Korean of similar rank. This Commander of

29 “Advance Questions for Lieutenant General Curtis Scaparrotti,” 4
CFC retained operational control (OPCON) of U.S. and ROK forces for both armistice and wartime activities from 1978 until 1994. 33 In 1994, the CFC returned day-to-day responsibility for armistice OPCON of ROK forces to Seoul (i.e., patrolling the demilitarized zone; air and sea patrols; manning, training, and equipping ROK soldiers; and ROK readiness). Specifically, this authority rests with the ROK CJCS, who is responsible for the conduct of ROK forces and the defense of the ROK during armistice. This means that, during armistice, the CFC’s responsibility is to train ROK and U.S. forces to ensure their ability to accomplish the combined operational plans agreed to by the allies. 34 The CFC Commander leads U.S.-ROK forces and is responsible to support the Armistice Agreement and deter aggression against the ROK. 35 As noted above, the CFC Commander receives strategic guidance from the Military Committee but keeps the PACOM Commander informed of any communications with U.S. national authorities. 36

33 From 1954 until 1978, ROK operational control was under the United Nations Command.
34 Sharp, “OPCON Transition in Korea,” 2.
If a wartime condition has been entered (or is imminent), OPCON transfers to the CFC Commander, whose responsibility becomes defeating the external threat to the ROK. During wartime, the CFC Commander exercises OPCON of all U.S. and ROK forces through combined component commanders responsible for ground, air, naval, marine, and special operations.\textsuperscript{37} The CFC, however, remains “under the firm direction and guidance of both nations’ political and military leaders in a consultative manner.”\textsuperscript{38} In these circumstances, the ROK transitions to a supporting role to U.S. forces and the ROK military leadership transitions to a headquarters that receives strategic guidance from the ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND) and President, and passes this guidance to the CFC.\textsuperscript{39} Throughout the entire CFC structure, including the component commands, U.S. and Korean officers serve side-by-side to provide for an integrated command structure.

This CFC structure is set to change in the years ahead. The allies decided in 2007 to return wartime OPCON of ROK forces to Seoul, which will give Seoul “greater autonomy and responsibility in managing its own defense.”\textsuperscript{40} However, due to a combination of North Korean aggression and concerns about the ROK’s defense capabilities, OPCON transfer has been delayed twice with a focus now on a conditions-based transfer rather than a specific date.\textsuperscript{41} Under OPCON transfer plans, the CFC structure will be dissolved and replaced by two independent national commands that will serve in parallel, ensuring that national forces remain under the command and operational control of their respective commanders. In addition to peacetime OPCON, the ROK will gain wartime OPCON for the defense of the ROK. The U.S. has considered supporting the ROK through a new U.S. Korea Command warfighting headquarters that would replace the USFK, although no final decision has been made.\textsuperscript{42} Replacing the integrated command structure would be a bilateral Military Cooperation Center for planning military operations, joint military exercises, logistics support, intelligence exchanges, and assisting in the operation of communications, command, control, and computer systems.\textsuperscript{43} The Military Cooperation Center is expected to be composed of an equal number of U.S. and

\textsuperscript{37} The ROK provides leadership for the group component. See “Advance Questions for Lieutenant General Curtis Scaparrotti,” p. 15.


\textsuperscript{39} Sharp, “OPCON Transition in Korea,” 2.


\textsuperscript{41} The initial April 2012 transfer date was postponed in June 2010. The December 2015 transfer date was postponed in April 2014.

\textsuperscript{42} It would still be commanded by a four-star U.S. military officer.

\textsuperscript{43} Mark Manyin, Mary Beth Nikitin, Emma Chanlett-Avery, William Cooper, and Ian Rinehart, “U.S.-South Korea Relations,” Congressional Research Service, June 24, 2014, 17.
ROK staff officers, comprising about ten organizations commanded by separate U.S. and ROK two-stars. This mechanism is expected to become more robust in wartime, although the details have yet to be decided.

**U.S.-Australia Alliance Structures**

Emerging from cooperation during World War II and later Australian and Kiwi fears of a rearmed Japan, the United States signed the ANZUS Security Treaty with Australia and New Zealand in 1951. Although the Treaty was not formally abrogated, it became a bilateral alliance in 1986 following a declaration by New Zealand that it was a nuclear-free zone, refusing to allow U.S. nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered vessels to visit its ports. This freeze between Washington and Wellington lasted until 2010, when leaders in both capitals signaled their readiness to establish a new strategic partnership and cooperate on a wide spectrum of issues, including military matters. Still, despite the thaw, from Washington’s perspective, ANZUS remains a bilateral alliance with Australia.

Experts have argued, however, that ANZUS is not legally enforceable and does not require the allies to send armed forces to fight on each other’s behalf. Instead, the Treaty requires the allies to “consult together” when they feel a threat (Article III) and to “act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes” (Article IV). Since the treaty does not specify what action should be taken, the unspecified action which would be taken to meet the common danger has been the focus of interpretation. This is different from Articles IV and V of the North Atlantic Treaty, which explicitly require both consultation and assistance to any signatory nation under attack to include the use of armed force. In fact, ANZUS has only been invoked once, and that was in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on

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45 The ANZUS Treaty was signed on September 1, 1951 but came into force on April 29, 1952.


47 Australia is still bound to New Zealand in the Treaty as well as to the United States.


the United States. Even then, Prime Minister John Howard stated that it put Australia and the United States into consultation rather than invoking a military commitment.  

The U.S.-Australia alliance does not have an integrated command. Unlike Europe and the Republic of Korea, Australia houses no major U.S. bases and is home to only a small number of U.S. troops. Still, the allies hold regular political and military consultations through an extensive range of ministerial, senior officer, and working-level meetings and exchanges. The political sphere is dominated by the annual Australia-U.S. Ministerial (AUSMIN) meeting, which was established in Article VII of the Treaty. The AUSMIN meeting is the core of the ANZUS alliance. It is attended by the U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense and their Australian counterparts (essentially a 2+2 Meeting). AUSMIN’s purpose is to discuss macro-policy, including pressing alliance issues (both military and non-military), and to agree on overall strategy and the broad contours of the relationship.

Negotiations over these issues occur at lower levels before rising to the AUSMIN level. Specifically, the Military Representatives (MILREPS) meeting, the Staff Level Meeting (SLM), and the SLM’s working groups. MILREPS is the primary formal linkage between military and political leadership. Meeting once a year, it is attended by the PACOM Commander and Australia’s Chief of the Defence Force (CDF). While MILREPS is considered an important strategic forum to maintain and improve cooperation and interoperability between the Australian Defence Force and PACOM, the MILREPS themselves have essentially two responsibilities. The first responsibility is to act as military advisors on AUSMIN meeting issues. Toward this end, MILREPS discussions focus on defense and security issues of mutual concern. The second responsibility of the MILREPS is to discuss AUSMIN communiques for the purpose of implementing bilateral military-related policies.

The tasks generated by MILREPS discussions become the responsibility of the Staff Level Meeting. The SLM is a senior working-level forum that meets twice a year (or more, if necessary) with the responsibility of managing the military relationship. The SLM is co-chaired by two-star military officers, with the U.S. side represented by the head of the J5 Directorate in PACOM and the Australian side by the Deputy Chief of Joint Operations (DCJOPS) as well as the First Assistant Secretary of the International Policy Division (FAS-IP). Beneath the SLM are

51 “Fact Check,” ABC News.
52 The U.S. Marines in Darwin are not permanently based there; rather, they are rotating through Darwin on six-month deployments.
53 When ANZUS was a trilateral treaty, the three countries held an annual ANZUS Council of Foreign Ministers meeting.
three working groups that not only work out the details of the SLM policy guidance for implementation, but also examine operational procedures and exercises; operational logistics; and communications, command, and control systems interoperability.\textsuperscript{56}

\textit{Figure 3: Diagram of U.S.-Australia Alliance Structures}

The allies do not share an integrated command structure, a combined joint headquarters, or a bilateral coordination mechanism. The lack of these linkages does not hurt bilateral coordination in operations, however, because of the widespread co-location of officers within each other’s militaries. Not only are there an average of 520 Australian personnel in the United States (with about 35-40 in Hawaii alone, including the Deputy Commander of U.S. Army Pacific and the deputies for the J2 and J5 Directorates at PACOM), there are roughly 200 Americans co-located in Australia.\textsuperscript{57} In addition to the rotational deployment of a Marine Air Ground Task Force at Robertson Barracks in Darwin and rotations of U.S. Air Force fighter, tanker, and potentially bomber capabilities at RAAF Tindal and RAAF Darwin, the allies share facilities responsible for intelligence collection, early warning of ballistic missile launches,


\textsuperscript{57}Data obtained through the Australian Consulate, Honolulu, April 2015.
communications with U.S. submarines, and satellite tracking, most notably the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap and Naval Communication Station Harold E. Holt.\(^{58}\)

This co-location pays dividends for operational purposes by enabling a large number of personnel to intimately understand the decision-making processes of their ally. Importantly, it enables the host country to have ready-access to their ally’s perspective on potentially contentious issues, including a better understanding of how their publics would react to policy decisions. This daily interaction creates a vast network of personal relationships throughout the alliance and builds trust on all levels. Trust is particularly important when it comes to wartime cooperation. Since the allies lack integrated commands or bilateral coordination mechanisms, the allies need open communication to ensure seamless cooperation. Toward this end, and indicative of the high level of mutual trust between the United States and Australia, the allies share sensitive plans with one another. The United States shares its theater campaign plan and, in return, Australia shares its “regional campaign plan.” This enhances bilateral cooperation by helping to avoid redundancies and ensures joint pursuit of shared goals. Importantly, the details of these plans become the basis for bilateral exercises, which stand as opportunities for the allies to practice operational coordination.

**Recommendations for the U.S.-Japan Alliance**

Five recommendations arise from the preceding discussion of alliance structures and assessments of their applicability to the U.S. Japan alliance. First, the United States and Japan should not integrate their commands. Second, Washington and Tokyo should install more flexibility into operational responses. Third, the allies should co-locate personnel throughout their defense establishments. Fourth, leaders in both capitals should institutionalize regular interagency coordination meetings. Fifth and finally, the allies should raise the profile of annual military-military meetings. Each recommendation is described in greater detail below.

**Do not integrate commands.** The primary advantage the allies enjoy from their integrated command structures in NATO and the U.S.-ROK alliance is seamless integration of combat forces and operations. Arguably, this would be beneficial for the U.S.-Japan alliance in a conflict situation as it would streamline decision-making and provide unity of command in operations. Yet, for the reasons given below, it is best for the U.S.-Japan alliance not to integrate commands.

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United States Forces Japan (USFJ) is not a warfighting command; rather, USFJ is a subordinate unified command whose primary missions are to administer the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), maintain close relations and constant communication with Japan, and train and exercise U.S. forces stationed in Japan to improve their combat readiness. In other words, USFJ is largely focused on policy and administrative roles in support of the alliance. Although the USFJ Commander is responsible for developing plans for the defense of Japan and must be prepared, if contingencies arise, to assume OPCON of assigned and attached U.S. forces for the execution of those plans, the Commander does not have standing OPCON of the forces in Japan nor the standing authority to deploy troops in Japan for an operation. Instead, based on the mission, the Commander has to receive authority from the PACOM Commander to stand up a Joint Task Force (JTF) and command assigned forces. In the case of a Korean Peninsula scenario, given the explicit threat from North Korea, the role the USFK Commander would play is clear. In the case of Japan, a range of possible contingencies are possible and USFJ’s role is less obvious.

An additional impediment to integration is the fact that USFJ does not have the necessary funding, personnel, and equipment to execute a high-end conflict. For any integration of command with Japan to make sense, USFJ would need a larger staff to man the headquarters, in addition to a large influx of personnel and equipment, and the establishment of larger departments responsible for operations, training, and exercising for a high-end conflict. Given U.S. focus on global troop reductions and base closures driven by a concern over political sustainability and fiscal responsibility, it is highly unlikely that the United States will increase its presence in Japan by establishing a warfighting command. As long as this is the case, command integration will be difficult.

Integrated commands would complicate the alliance relationship. Japan’s military is smaller but has the responsibility to defend Japan. The United States maintains a broader aperture, responsible for both Japan’s defense as well as broader regional security. If commands were integrated, commanders would be subject to national guidance from both nations. This could stress the alliance. In a defense of Japan scenario, if Japan wanted to take a more aggressive approach against a potential threat while the United States desired a more cautious approach, U.S. reluctance could potentially constrain Japan’s ability to respond. If the United States wanted to respond to a regional threat, being integrated with Japan could potentially constrain its freedom of action as U.S. forces would be devoted to Japan’s defense and Tokyo could push for those forces to remain in Japan. In both scenarios, commanders would have to choose between their national directives and their ally’s requests, with the potential for both scenarios to cause damage to the alliance as the allies do not share similar capabilities or responsibilities.

Integrated commands work well when both sides agree on which side is in charge and, importantly, trust that authority to not squander lives and resources. It is not clear the requisite trust exists between the allies for an integrated command to work. Trust between the U.S. and Japan is deep as they have exercised and worked together for decades. However, unlike the other U.S. alliances, the United States and Japan have not worked together in combat operations (although they have cooperated in reconstruction and humanitarian relief operations). As such, there are bound to be questions about how a Japanese commander would utilize U.S. troops in such operations. Even with the passage of Japan’s security legislation in September 2015, because Japan does not currently utilize the SDF in combat operations, it will be difficult for Japan to build the operational trust needed for an integrated command to succeed. Furthermore, Japan lacks the capabilities needed to take command, to include the necessary plans; communications; sealift; airlift; and intelligence collection, processing, exploitation, and dissemination needed for high-end contingencies. As a result, Japan would have to depend on the United States in a high-end conflict, making it difficult for Japan to command in any real sense.

Therefore, the current parallel command structure is optimal for the U.S.-Japan alliance. The SDF is a very capable force and is capable of operating with the U.S. military when needed (i.e., Operation Tomodachi) and, after sixty years of a formal alliance, Japanese commanders are familiar with the U.S. command structure. Despite the lack of an integrated command, the two forces work well together and often engage in joint training and exercising, reducing the unity of command challenges that would arise in a real-world operation. Moreover, the current structure allows for differences in mission sets without complicating the alliance relationship. Without a sufficiently compelling forcing function, there is a little rationale to integrate commands.

**Instill more flexibility into operational responses.** Coordinating responses during contingencies poses fewer challenges in NATO or the U.S.-ROK alliance—compared to the U.S.-Japan (or even U.S.-Australia) alliance—given their integrated command structures. As noted above, looming threats proved to be highly motivating factors for the integrated command structures of both alliances. For NATO, it was the overarching Soviet threat compounded by the communist intervention during the Korean War. For U.S.-ROK, it was the Korean War itself and the subsequent tensions with North Korea. If the challenges posed by China or North Korea to Japan increase to levels on par with the existential threats faced by NATO and the ROK during the Cold War, it may compel a reexamination of the assumptions underlying separate command structures in the U.S.-Japan alliance. In this situation, the allies should consider two options.

First, the alliance could establish a flexing bilateral coordination mechanism. Under the current system, in a situation in areas surrounding Japan (SIAS-J) or an attack on Japan, a Bilateral Coordination Mechanism (BCM) composed of a Joint Coordination Group and Bilateral Coordination Center will be established. However, this is extremely restrictive. Proof of this is in the fact that even after March 11, 2011, the BCM lay dormant. In the April 2015 revised Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation, the allies agreed to establish an Alliance
Coordination Mechanism (ACM) that is meant to strengthen coordination between their militaries in all phases from peacetime to contingencies. Beyond this, no details of the command and control elements were provided. Fleshing out these details is critical. To ensure coordination between parallel commands, the allies need to scrap the current BCM system and establish a permanent, standing ACM in peacetime that flexes as conditions change (i.e. an organization capable of adapting to changing membership and varying seniority levels). This would allow the allies to respond to events that are short of contingencies but nevertheless require a bilateral response.

A second option would be for the alliance to adopt a sliding integration of command based on the different phases of an operation. In a situation involving Japan in Phases 0-1 (i.e. shaping and deterring), parallel commands can work given the long history of combined training, exercising, and non-combat cooperation. However, as a situation escalates into Phases 2-3 and beyond (i.e. seize initiative, dominate, stabilize, and enable civil authority), the United States will need to be in charge because it will have a preponderance of the forces and capabilities needed to successfully execute a high-end conflict. In other words, the allies need to consider whether and how they can create a conditions-based approach to integration.

However, as noted earlier, given the nature of USFJ, it is not in a position to handle these high-end conflicts. Nor is it guaranteed that the USFJ Commander would be tasked as a JTF Commander. These facts complicate planning of a sliding integrated command structure. However, the allies could prepare for this possibility by discussing and agreeing to a predefined set of circumstances that would demand integration, building these into contingency plans, and then exercising accordingly. Such an arrangement would be challenging given the large number of unknown variables and the need to have political buy-in on both sides of the Pacific. Another option would be for the U.S. to establish a standing Joint Task Force trained to respond to a Northeast Asia contingency. The challenges with this option would be identifying the appropriate task force lead and obtaining Japanese involvement. With either option, if the challenges could be minimized, the payoffs would be quickly felt in streamlined decision-making and unity of command in a high-end operation.

**Co-locate personnel throughout each defense establishment.** All three U.S. alliances examined in this paper benefit from systems that enable daily consultation and discussion. NATO has the NAC and MC with military and civilian personnel stationed in one headquarters and serving together in an integrated command. The U.S.-ROK alliance has the CFC and personnel work side-by-side throughout the entire combined command. The U.S.-Australia alliance has personnel co-located in each other’s defense establishments, including the Deputy Commander at U.S. Army Pacific. These arrangements enable constant interaction and facilitate decision-

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making and operational responsiveness. In the long-term, it would be desirable for U.S. forces in Japan to be fully co-located with their Japanese hosts on Japanese bases. An important step in the short to medium term would be the co-location of personnel. The U.S.-Japan alliance could benefit from co-locating personnel, particularly because the United States is increasingly focused on cooperation and collaboration with allies. However, co-location is not as simple as immediately putting personnel in each other’s chains of command. While they currently enjoy limited Foreign Liaison Officer (FLO) exchanges, the allies should push for Foreign Exchange Officer (FEO).

Both FLOs and FEOs help create shared perspectives and mutual understanding, build personal networks, and aid trust building. The difference between them is that FEOs fall under the authority of their host government while FLOs are only responsible to their parent government. FLOs help facilitate communications between allies. They are used as a resource by the host country to get information about their ally’s responses to issues and policies, and gain better insight into domestic views. At the same time, FLOs pass on information from their host country to their capital. They do not replace U.S. service member in the job to which they have been assigned. FEOs, on the other hand, are full participants in the entire process, linked into the planning and decision-making—even accessing classified information—as well as having an operational role. They often replace a member of the U.S. armed forces who would normally do whatever job they have been assigned.

Both countries enjoy limited numbers of FLOs in various commands. Increasing these numbers in each ally’s defense establishments would help increase communication and foster greater understanding. Importantly, it will also help expose officers in both countries to their ally’s military culture, helping Americans to better appreciate and understand the idiosyncrasies of Japanese security policies and helping Japanese to better understand the global context within which the United States makes security decisions. More FLOs in Japan would also help train a cadre of American officers with Japanese language skills. Because FLOs are not linked into decision-making streams, increasing their numbers can be done relatively easily. More Americans should be placed in Tokyo’s Ministry of Defense and throughout Japan while more Japanese should be placed in at PACOM, USFJ, and the Pentagon.

Increasing the number of FEOs is a prerequisite for deeper decision-making integration. For this co-location to occur, however, both countries have to understand and accept their separate rules of engagement (ROEs), which govern military operations in any given situation. On top of this, they have to find ways to overcome policy differences that would challenge greater decision-making integration. For example, the SDF has constitutional restrictions on the use of force while the United States remains more willing to engage in preemptive self-defense. If an imminent military action was likely, both countries would have to not only be confident in how their ally would respond, but cooperation in that response. Currently, if the United States decided to preemptively engage its military, Japanese political and constitutional difficulties
would arise, especially for a Japanese FEO taking part in the U.S. decision-making process. In such a situation, alliance tensions would complicate operational decision-making and stress the alliance relationship.

For this reason, near-term co-location of high-ranking FEOs would be difficult. The allies simply do not understand and accept each other’s ROEs, nor do they comprehend the impact of policy idiosyncrasies on operational flexibility. As a result, it is necessary to co-locate at lower levels, which could pay dividends in the long-term. Importantly, because Japan passed the State Secrecy Act in 2014, the legal framework now exists for the United States to trust Japan with classified information that is accessed at decision-making meetings.

Arguably, it makes sense for co-location of FEOs to begin at the mid-career officer (O-4/O-5) level. U.S. experience co-locating personnel makes possible co-locating Japanese FEOs at PACOM, particularly because USFJ is a subordinate unified command of PACOM. Choosing the directorate to co-locate is important, however. Because the United States guards intelligence closely and is hesitant to reveal its sources of information, even amongst allies, the intelligence directorate (J2) is not an option. Likewise, given the expected challenges that will arise from operational differences, policies disagreements, and uncertainties in ROEs, the operations directorate (J3) is also not an option. The directorate focused on command, control, communications, computers, and cyber (J6), may also prove difficult given sensitivity of command, control, and communications. Similarly, the manpower and personnel directorate (J1), may prove problematic because people filling billets in this directorate require a tremendous amount of technical knowledge of manpower systems. The directorate that focuses on Pacific outreach (J9), is also not a good fit because it focuses on facilitating domestic interagency coordination and a Japanese officer is unlikely to have the requisite knowledge. This leaves the exercises directorate (J37, formerly J7); logistics, engineering, and security cooperation (J4); strategic planning and policy (J5); and resources and assessment (J8). Any one of these would seem relatively trouble free to begin co-location of Japanese FEOs. Given the importance of alliance exercising and training, the J37 office would perhaps prove the best starting point.

Over a longer-period of time, as Japan expands its experience with co-location and the allies build greater trust, particularly in ROEs, they should move to co-locate American FEOs in Japan’s Joint Staff Office and Japanese FEOs in USFJ. In the long-term, once the allies mutually co-locate on a regular basis, they will need to establish a process by which to ensure a future stream of capable O-4/O-5 officers by introducing O-3 and mid-to-senior enlisted level (E-6 to E-8) personnel into a small number of FEO billets in both countries. This would help junior officers and senior enlisted build the familiarity that is required to execute operations and build language skills critical to full interoperability. In the even longer term, if Japan were to someday loosen restrictions on its military to enable it to engage in a wider array of operations, co-location could move to the general and flag officer level and a wider number of directorates could be considered.
Institutionalize regular interagency coordination meetings. Like the three other alliances examined in this paper, the U.S.-Japan alliance enjoys a large number of formal venues for dialogue. This includes the Security Consultative Committee, Security Subcommittee, Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation, the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee, and the Bilateral Planning Committee. Similarly, the U.S.-Japan alliance enjoys informal consultations between both civilian and military personnel. The alliance, in other words, does not suffer from a lack of venues for consultation and dialogue.

What is lacking is a formalized structure to ensure an integrated information flow within all relevant bureaus in the foreign and defense agencies. This means there is a danger that information travelling through multiple channels could introduce confusion into alliance communications. As such, the alliance would benefit greatly if (like NATO’s IS and IMS) the allies held a weekly interagency coordination meeting to ensure the regular flow of information amongst all relevant actors. This would ensure that decision-makers in both governments have a venue in which to inform their domestic colleagues and allied counterparts of actions taken over the past week. This type of forum would allow all parties to transmit decisions taken at any level throughout both governments and to save time on having to coordinate the transmission of information. Unless the allies are willing to formally establish a new structure to codify this framework (which this author believes is unnecessary), the National Security Council of each country should be tasked with coordinating these meetings, which would have the added benefit of strengthening the cooperative relationship between these two agencies.

Raise the profile of annual military-military meetings. The current alliance system is dominated by civilian committees and designed largely for broad policy decisions. There is nothing in Japan like the NATO MC, the U.S.-ROK MCM, or the U.S.-Australia MILREPS. Military-to-military meetings do exist, especially at the level of planning and weekly operational issues. In fact, the USFJ staff meets with Japan’s Joint Staff on a regular basis. Yet, at senior levels, meetings are much more ad hoc and certainly not as visible. For example, meetings occur between Japan’s Chief of Staff and the U.S. CJCS or PACOM Commander, or between Japan’s Vice Chief of Staff and the USFJ Vice Commander, but these are not widely publicized.

While these meetings are important for the discussions that take place, they also are extremely symbolically important because they showcase the military aspects of the alliance. After all, it is a military alliance at its core. This sends a powerful message to potential regional challengers or countries that question the closeness or utility of the alliance, as well as to domestic audiences that remain unconvinced of the value of the alliance or continued U.S. presence in Japan. Aside from the symbolism, raising the profile of these meetings—particularly including Japan’s Chief of Staff and the U.S. CJCS or PACOM Commander—is meaningful because it provides a regularized forum to discuss the implications of consultations taking place at lower levels and to improve cooperation between organizations. Importantly, if coupled with the SCC, such a meeting could be used to provide civilian bosses with military advice as well as
to discuss and coordinate SCC guidance. Given that the U.S.-Japan alliance is becoming much more global, particularly in the military sphere, raising the profile of military-to-military meetings would greatly strengthen alliance coordination.