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# Putting “Meat on the Bones” of the U.S.-Japan Alliance Coordination Mechanism

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## Abstract

*U.S.-Japan alliance coordination has historically been hindered by structural challenges, such as the lack of a mutual defense pact or a joint operational command structure, as exist in both the U.S.-South Korea alliance and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Despite longstanding efforts to bolster crisis interoperability and coordination, the alliance continues to lack an optimal structure to organize the planning and execution of complex joint operations. The Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM), detailed in the 2015 Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, is the “next generation” attempt at forging the structures to optimize alliance joint planning. While the ACM outlines key coordination bridges, it is still largely conceptual at the current time. The focus must now turn to “putting meat on the bones” by building out and populating the U.S., Japanese, and bilateral structures, groups, and committees through which the ACM will execute its coordination functions. By focusing on command and control structures, updated scenario*

*planning, and strategic messaging, the ACM can target specific functionalities needed to bolster alliance preparedness. The success of the implementation of the ACM will have important implications for the alliance's ability to conduct increasingly complex joint operations in future years.*

The United States and Japan face an increasingly complex security environment in Northeast Asia with well-known challenges ahead for the alliance. Internally, the allies face budget limitations, concomitant resource limitations, and domestic political constraints. Externally, they must contend with China's growing military capabilities and opaque strategic intentions, as well as North Korea's dangerous combination of erraticism and growing nuclear arsenal. Moreover, it is not clear that the alliance's toolkit is tailored or sufficient to meet the deterrence challenges most salient in the current environment and intra-alliance military relationships continue to be hindered by the lack of joint and parallel command structures.<sup>1</sup> In this context, both the United States and Japan have recognized the need for more and better communication and coordination.

Although this need has become more acute in recent years as the security environment has become more complex, neither the need nor its recognition is new. The allies have worked methodically to bolster coordination in the twenty years since the April 1996 Clinton-Hashimoto Joint Security Declaration. The Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM), detailed in the 2015 Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, is the "next generation" attempt at forging the structures to optimize alliance joint planning. The success of the implementation of the ACM will have important implications for the alliance's ability to conduct increasingly complex joint operations in future years.

## History to Date

The original Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation (the "Guidelines") were signed in 1978. This document provided a division of responsibilities and the foundation for interoperability and contingency planning for the U.S. military and Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF). Its scope was limited to defending an armed attack against Japan at a time when potential threats to Japan were almost exclusively part of a broader Cold War context. Following the 1994–95 Korean peninsula crisis, and with recognition of the need for a post-Cold War update to address an expanded range of scenarios, the Japanese National

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<sup>1</sup> Rapp-Hooper, Mira. "Uncharted Waters: Extended Deterrence and Maritime Disputes." *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2015).

Hornung, Jeffrey W. "Modeling a Stronger U.S.-Japan Alliance: Assessing U.S. Alliance Structures." Center for Strategic and International Studies. November 2015.

Defense Program Outline was revised in November 1995 to give a greater role to the JSDF in the defense of Japan. The Defense Guidelines were revised accordingly in 1997, following the U.S.-Japan Joint Declaration on Security in April 1996. The 1997 Guidelines had broader scope, encompassing (1) cooperation under normal circumstances, (2) actions in response to an armed attack against Japan, and (3) cooperation in situations surrounding Japan. In the final category, Japan's responsibilities expanded to include provision of "rear area support" for U.S. forces as well as JSDF cooperation in "such activities as intelligence gathering, surveillance, and minesweeping."<sup>2</sup>

Given the expanded set of JSDF roles and capabilities, as well as the associated need for greater cooperation with U.S. forces, the 1997 Guidelines introduced the concepts of the "bilateral coordination mechanism" (BCM) and the "comprehensive mechanism" to provide the formal structures for joint planning and crisis response. The Guidelines state, "In order to conduct effective bilateral operations, U.S. Forces and the Self-Defense Forces will closely coordinate operations, intelligence activities, and logistics support through [the bilateral coordination mechanism] including use of a bilateral coordination center." The 1997 Guidelines further instructed U.S. forces and the JSDF to "establish, in advance, [command and coordination] procedures which include those to determine the division of roles and missions and to synchronize their operations." While the BCM was designed to coordinate activities during crises, the comprehensive mechanism was designed to be a broader tool to shape peacetime planning and preparation for contingencies.

In subsequent years, the alliance took incremental steps to support coordination initiatives. In February 2005, the cabinet-level Security Consultative Committee (SCC)—consisting of representatives from the "2 plus 2" (U.S. Departments of State and Defense plus Japan's Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense)—published a joint statement enumerating Common Strategic Objectives and identifying the need to define the respective "roles, missions, and capabilities" of the JSDF and U.S. military. The SCC published a follow-up document in October 2005, which "reaffirmed the need to improve the effectiveness of the comprehensive mechanism and bilateral coordination mechanism under the 1997 Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation by streamlining their functions."<sup>3</sup> While these statements reflected alliance coordination needs, the implementation of these efforts lost momentum in the final years of the Bush administration. In subsequent years, as attention turned to other initiatives, limited attention

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. "Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation." September 23, 1997. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/guideline2.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. "Security Consultative Committee Document, U.S.-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future." October 29, 2005. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/scc/doc0510.html>.

was devoted to assessing why the alliance had not achieved major progress in implementing the 2005 plans.<sup>4</sup>

In response to the evolving security environment in Northeast Asia, the Japanese government under the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has taken several significant steps to increase Japan's flexibility and ability to respond to security risks. In 2013, Japan created a National Security Council (analogous to that of the United States) and published the National Security Strategy, the Medium Term Defense Program, and the revised National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) with a focus on a "Dynamic Joint Defense Force" capable of responding with speed and flexibility to the most pressing contingencies.<sup>5</sup> These steps created several of the structural elements and strategies necessary for the heightened alliance interoperability required in complex joint planning. They demonstrated concrete progress and built a foundation for stronger alliance coordination, even if applications of the concept of "proactive contribution to peace based on the principle of international cooperation" have not always matched expectations.<sup>6</sup>

In October 2013, the SCC issued a Joint Statement announcing the coming revision of the 1997 Guidelines, and outlining the objective of "enhancing Alliance mechanisms for consultation and coordination to make them more flexible, timely, and responsive and to enable seamless bilateral cooperation in all situations."<sup>7</sup> This statement was followed by a July 2014 cabinet decision announcing the development of new Japanese security legislation broadening the scope of allowable JSDF operational activity. In 2015, the revised Defense Guidelines were published and the new security legislation was passed, providing the framework and legislative authorization for operationalizing the ACM. While the ACM creates key structural coordination bridges, it is still largely conceptual. The focus must now turn to "putting meat on the bones" by building out and populating the U.S., Japanese, and bilateral structures, groups, and committees through which the ACM will execute its coordination functions.

A primary feature of the ACM is that it is a "standing" mechanism designed to function on a continuous basis. Both alliance partners realized that the bar was set too high

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<sup>4</sup> Schoff, James. "Realigning Priorities: The U.S.-Japan Alliance & the Future of Extended Deterrence." *The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis*, March 2009, 58. <http://www.ifpa.org/pdf/RealignPriorities.pdf>.

Tatsumi, Yuki. "US-Japan '2+2' Statement – Breaking New Ground?" *PacNet*, no. 77 (October 10, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> The National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS). "Japan: New Development of National Security Policy." in *East Asian Strategic Review 2014*, 41–65. Tokyo: Japan Times, 2014. <http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/east-asian/e2014.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Hornung, Jeffrey W. "Gauging Abe's 'Proactive Contributions to Peace'." *The Diplomat*, October 27, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/gauging-japans-proactive-contributions-to-peace/>.

<sup>7</sup> United States Department of State. "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee: Toward a More Robust Alliance and Greater Shared Responsibilities." October 3, 2013. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/10/215070.htm>.

for the initiation of the BCM, after they hesitated to initiate this mechanism during the response to the 3-11 disaster, in part because of concerns that triggering it would panic the Japanese public. As a result, reviewing the BCM was “at the top of the U.S. list” of lessons learned from the bilateral response to the disaster.<sup>8</sup> A Japanese government review initiated in 2012 agreed that the high bar for initiation rendered the BCM ineffective.<sup>9</sup> To remedy this, 2015 Guidelines structure the ACM to operate at all times and avoid the problems of a politically controversial triggering of high-level security cooperation.

The second notable characteristic of the ACM is its breadth of functionality. The 2015 Guidelines state that the ACM will be utilized in “any situation that affects Japan’s peace and security or any other situation that may require an Alliance response.”<sup>10</sup> Given its wide set of roles, missions, and capabilities, the ACM is expected to be the coordination mechanism for everything from ballistic missile defense to humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and gray zone responses. The ACM is also to be the focal point of a “whole-of-government approach” and strategic messaging coordination.

Although the ACM was described in the revised Defense Guidelines in April 2015, it was officially established by the Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation (SDC) in November 2015. According to the Ministry of Defense (MOD), the ACM will function on three levels: (1) a coordinating group to work out security policy (the Alliance Coordination Group); (2) a center for discussion of joint operations involving the JSDF and the U.S. military (the Bilateral Operations Coordination Center); and (3) a center to coordinate specific divisions, such as land, sea, and air forces (Component Coordination Centers).<sup>11</sup> There will also be a Joint Committee for consultations regarding implementation. Perhaps as a demonstration of the seriousness of alliance intentions to implement the ACM without delay, U.S. and Japanese officials publicly revealed that they utilized the ACM for coordination after the North Korean nuclear test in January 2016.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Samuels, Richard J. *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Liff, Adam P. “The 2015 US-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation: Toward ‘A More Balanced and Effective Alliance’.” *PacNet*, no. 27 (April 23, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Defense of Japan. “Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation.” April 27, 2015. [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/ampo/shishin\\_20150427e.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/ampo/shishin_20150427e.html).

<sup>11</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense. “Dōmē Chōsē Mekanizumu (ACM) no Kōsē” [The Organization of the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM)]. November 3, 2015. [http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/youjin/2015/11/03\\_acm.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/youjin/2015/11/03_acm.pdf).

Tajima, Yukio. “Defense Coordination Extended to Peacetime.” *Nikkei Asian Review*. November 4, 2015. <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Defense-coordination-extended-to-peacetime>.

<sup>12</sup> United States Department of Defense. “Readout of Secretary of Defense Carter’s Call with Japan Defense Minister Nakatani.” January 8, 2016. <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/642034/readout-of-secretary-of-defense-carters-call-with-japan-defense-minister-nakata>.

Ministry of Defense of Japan. “Extra Press Conference by the Defense Minister Nakatani.” January 8, 2016. <http://www.mod.go.jp/e/pressconf/2016/01/160108a.html>.

However, given that the substantive structures of the ACM have yet to be operationalized, these references were more symbolic than evidence of new coordination capability.

The 2015 security legislation passed by the Diet delineated an expanded universe of allowable roles for the JSDF. The legislation—passed by the Diet in September 2015, with the expectation that it would be effective in March 2016 and operational by approximately March 2017—contains collective self-defense provisions that allow the JSDF to use force in defense of allies under attack in specific circumstances.<sup>13</sup> In the past, alliance joint planning was complicated by JSDF incapacity to exercise collective self-defense. Although scholars such as Satoru Mori of Hosei University have attempted to “demystify the new legislation,” uncertainty remains about the detailed implications of the legislation and how the minutiae of the collective self-defense provisions will affect alliance joint planning and operations.<sup>14</sup> The revised Defense Guidelines outlining the ACM and framework for alliance coordination were published before the security legislation, leaving the contours of the ACM conditional on how content of the legislation bounded JSDF activities. Because policy planners need to understand the specific range of JSDF operational potential, it will be difficult to operationalize the ACM before the security legislation is fully operationalized and understood, in practice.

The ACM has elicited mixed reactions from experts and close observers. According to Admiral Yoji Koda, former Commander-in-Chief of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and an adviser to Japan’s National Security Secretariat, the “ACM elevates the Japan-U.S. alliance to NATO’s level, where all necessary coordination is maintained on a 24/7 basis.”<sup>15</sup> Others are more skeptical. The recent report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), *Asia-Pacific Rebalance 2025*, expresses concern that ACM “lacks the command and control elements necessary for a rapid combined and joint response to potential crises or conflicts. . . . As a result, there is concern in both Tokyo and Washington that existing command and control arrangements are not sufficient for the type of complex, high-intensity warfare that the allies must be prepared to conduct.”<sup>16</sup> Indiana University’s Adam Liff has written that “[t]he lack of a joint, combined command coupled with separate chains-of-command limit interoperability [in

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<sup>13</sup> Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA, “Collective Self-Defense.” October 27, 2015. <http://spfusa.org/research/collective-self-defense/>.

<sup>14</sup> Mori, Satoru. “The New Security Legislation and Japanese Public Reaction.” The Tokyo Foundation. December 2, 2015. <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2015/security-legislation-and-public-reaction>.

<sup>15</sup> Koda, Yoji. “The Case for Japan’s New Security Strategy.” *East Asia Forum* (November 28, 2015). <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2015/11/28/the-case-for-japans-new-security-strategy/>.

<sup>16</sup> Green, Michael, et al. “Asia-Pacific Rebalance 2025: Capabilities, Presence, and Partnerships.” Center for Strategic and International Studies. January 2016. [http://csis.org/files/publication/160119\\_Green\\_AsiaPacificRebalance2025\\_Web\\_0.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/160119_Green_AsiaPacificRebalance2025_Web_0.pdf).

the alliance]. Though the new ACM may partially plug this hole, its ultimate form and efficacy are uncertain.”<sup>17</sup>

## What Creates the Need for the ACM Today?

The U.S. security model is evolving to ask for greater involvement from partner nations as it faces constrained budgets and broad global responsibilities.<sup>18</sup> Against this backdrop and as potential security threats in Northeast Asia have grown, the JSDF has developed greater capabilities for larger and more complex operations. Japan has taken significant steps to augment its capability to contribute to alliance defense needs and communicate to the United States and the world that it is ready to do so, albeit on terms that are consistent with Japanese constitutional restrictions and domestic political concerns. These evolving conditions and responsibilities have created a growing need for increased alliance coordination.

Alliance crisis coordination efforts have historically been hindered by structural challenges, such as the lack of a mutual defense pact or a joint operational command structure, as exist in both the U.S.-South Korea alliance and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).<sup>19</sup> In case of conflict, command of U.S. forces will be managed by Pacific Command (PACOM) —headquartered in Hawaii—while Japanese forces will be managed through the JSDF chain-of-command, which, notably, does not utilize a joint operational command structure. Because of mismatches in command structures, U.S.-Japan joint planning and operational execution have needed to surmount structural hurdles not encountered by the U.S.-South Korea or NATO alliances.<sup>20</sup>

The alliance has historically planned for “black or white” scenarios, in which Japan was either at peace or under armed attack. Yet the most pressing, current challenges from potential adversaries do not fit these extremes. The alliance’s coordination

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<sup>17</sup> Liff, Adam P. “Japan’s Defense Policy: Abe the Evolutionary.” *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 79-99.

<sup>18</sup> Cronin, Patrick, and Audrey Kirth Cronin. “A New Model of U.S. Defense Cooperation.” *War on the Rocks*. March 05, 2015. <http://warontherocks.com/2015/03/a-new-model-of-u-s-defense-cooperation/>.

<sup>19</sup> Takahashi, Sugio. “Upgrading the Japan-U.S. Defense Guidelines: Toward a New Phase of Operational Coordination.” *Project 2049*. June 7, 2013. [https://project2049.net/documents/japan\\_us\\_defense\\_guidelines\\_takahashi.pdf](https://project2049.net/documents/japan_us_defense_guidelines_takahashi.pdf).

Green, Michael. “The Challenges of Managing U.S.-Japan Security Relations after the Cold War.” *In New Perspectives on U.S.-Japan Relations*, edited by Gerald L. Curtis, 241-64. Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2000. [http://www.jcie.org/researchpdfs/NewPerspectives/new\\_green.pdf](http://www.jcie.org/researchpdfs/NewPerspectives/new_green.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Hornung, Jeffrey W. “Modeling a Stronger U.S.-Japan Alliance: Assessing U.S. Alliance Structures.” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. November 2015.

mechanisms need more bandwidth for lower-level contingencies, which require a new approach to coordination.

At the center of such concerns are China's actions in what is known as the "gray zone" between peace and conflict. These actions have prompted a reevaluation of the alliance's spectrum of preparedness requirements. Scholars and policymakers continue to struggle to formulate an assessment of China's strategic intentions and the parameters of an acceptable *modus vivendi* in the eyes of Chinese leadership.<sup>21</sup> Whether China's behavior is guided by an overarching "grand strategy" or is the product of ad hoc decisions, upon which outside analysts have superimposed a grand design, remains uncertain.<sup>22</sup> Even labelling relations with China—from the model of China, advanced by the Harvard Kennedy School's Robert Zoellick, as a "responsible stakeholder," to Xi Jinping's controversial "new type of great-power relations"—has been a source of dispute.<sup>23</sup> At a less theoretical level, China's actions in support of sovereignty claims in the region are forcing the alliance to formulate updated plans to deter and, if necessary, respond to Chinese impingements on Japan's air space, maritime domain, and administered territories explicitly protected under the U.S.-Japan security treaty. An assessment of China's strategic intentions and the alliance's relationship with China is a prerequisite for crafting a coherent strategy to defend alliance interests and for determining the capabilities necessary to implement such a strategy.

China's gray zone strategies—interchangeably described as "creeping expansionism," "tailored coercion," and the "Scarborough Model" (based on China's 2012 standoff with the Philippines at Scarborough Reef)—raise challenges not addressed by the alliance's historical, binary peacetime/conflict approach to security planning.<sup>24</sup> Yet

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<sup>21</sup> Yamaguchi, Shinji. "China's Perspective on International Order." *NIDS Commentary*, no. 46 (May 15, 2015). <http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/commentary/pdf/commentary046e.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Christensen, Thomas J. "The Advantages of an Assertive China: Responding to Beijing's Abrasive Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (March/April 2011)

———. *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015. 279-280.

<sup>23</sup> See also Andrew Erickson's concept of "competitive coexistence": Erickson, Andrew S. "America's Security Role in the South China Sea." *Naval War College Review* 69, vol. 1 (Winter 2016).

Erickson, Andrew S., and Adam P. Liff. "Not-So-Empty Talk: The Danger of China's 'New Type of Great-Power Relations' Slogan." *Foreign Affairs*. October 9, 2014.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2014-10-09/not-so-empty-talk>.

<sup>24</sup> Roberts, Brad. "Extended Deterrence and Strategic Stability in Northeast Asia." The National Institute of Defense Studies (NIDS). August 2013. <http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/visiting/pdf/01.pdf>.

Cronin, Patrick M., et al., "Tailored Coercion: Competition and Risk in Maritime Asia." Center for a New American Security. March 2014.

Ratner, Ely. "Learning the Lessons of Scarborough Reef." *The National Interest*. November 21, 2013.

<http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/learning-the-lessons-scarborough-reef-9442>.



alliance officials continue to regard contingency planning largely in terms of combat and conflict readiness, through a lens which does not adequately encompass the challenges the alliance faces, most conspicuously from China. In addition, the alliance does not have the necessary structural relationships and tools to provide the “seamless, robust, flexible, and effective bilateral responses” envisioned by the revised Guidelines to respond to gray zone challenges and associated escalation ladders.<sup>25</sup>

Despite efforts to bolster crisis interoperability and coordination, the alliance continues to lack an optimal structure to organize the planning and execution of defense operations. The 1997 Guidelines recognized the structural coordination deficiencies and attempted to create a partial solution in the form of the BCM and comprehensive mechanism. Proving its insufficiency as a coordination structure, the BCM was never initiated—even following the 3-11 disaster during Operation Tomodachi or following North Korean missile tests in recent years.<sup>26</sup> Operation Tomodachi was effective in spite of major coordination problems, rather than as a product of many years of crisis coordination efforts. That these problems arose while coordinating a humanitarian assistance/disaster relief response was a reminder that significant, additional measures are required to prepare for coordination challenges in a conflict scenario with an attacking adversary.<sup>27</sup>

## Recommendations for the ACM Build-out

Alliance officials should focus on three main areas in the coming years as they implement the ACM and the derivative elements necessary to make it a highly effective mechanism.

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<sup>25</sup> Rapp-Hooper, Mira. “Uncharted Waters: Extended Deterrence and Maritime Disputes.” *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2015).

Brooks, Linton, and Mira Rapp-Hooper. “Extended Deterrence, Assurance, and Reassurance in the Pacific during the Second Nuclear Age.” In *Strategic Asia 2013-14: Asia in the Second Nuclear Age*, edited by Ashley J. Tellis et al., 281–83. Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2013.

Kotani, Tetsuo. “U.S.-Japan Allied Maritime Strategy: Balancing the Rise of Maritime China.” In *Strategic Japan: New Approaches to Foreign Policy and the U.S.-Japan Alliance*, edited by Michael J. Green and Zack Cooper, 59. Lanham: CSIS/Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Samuels. 3.11. 97-98, 104-105.

<sup>27</sup> McNerney, Jim, et al., “Partnership for Recovery and a Stronger Future: Standing with Japan after 3-11.” Center for Strategic and International Studies. November 2011. <http://csis.org/publication/partnership-recovery-and-stronger-future>.

## Recommendation 1: Adapt Command and Control Structures to Streamline Coordination

First, primary focus should be given to establishing parallel, functionally interoperable command and control structures. While the ACM can provide a coordination bridge, these additional structural adjustments are required to address the alliance's needs for joint command planning and execution in complex operations. Some of the necessary changes and new structures may not be formal parts of the ACM build-out, but are nonetheless functional prerequisites for the ACM to accomplish its objectives. The CSIS *Asia-Pacific Rebalance 2025* report—published in January 2016 under congressional mandate from the Department of Defense to seek an independent assessment of U.S. strategy and force posture in the Asia-Pacific—advocates two specific reforms to remedy structural coordination deficiencies: (1) the creation of a standing U.S. Joint Task Force for the Western Pacific and (2) the creation of a Joint Operations Command for Japan, similar to the model employed by Australia. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation-CSIS Bilateral Commission on the Future of the Alliance seconded these recommendations as part of its vision for the alliance through 2030.<sup>28</sup> The United States and Japan should operationalize the recommendations in conjunction with the implementation of the ACM.

The CSIS report referenced the now-dissolved Joint Task Force 519 as a model for a new standing joint task force. Coordinated with PACOM, Joint Task Force 519 was designed to lead crisis response in Northeast Asia for U.S. forces. It was “deployable aboard a ship and capable of command and control of Pacific and stateside assets in a war or natural disaster.”<sup>29</sup> A new standing joint task force would provide continuing command relationships and be based either in-theatre or with pre-designated, in-theatre contingency command facilities.

The idea of a standing task force has not been universally embraced. When asked about the concept during a CSIS panel discussion presenting the findings of the report, Admiral Jonathan Greenert, USN (ret.), former Chief of Naval Operations, described the history of Joint Task Force 519 and suggested that a new standing task force would lack a *raison d'être*:

*Joint Task Force 519 was instigated and put together really for conflict, and so it would stand up as things were evolving or devolving... Then the aperture opened and [we] said, “Well, wait a minute, we're into a phase zero. Can we use 519 for that?” It was determined, “Not really,*

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<sup>28</sup> U.S.-Japan Commission on the Future of the Alliance. “The U.S.-Japan Alliance to 2030: Power and Principle.” Sasakawa Peace Foundation and Center for Strategic and International Studies. February 29, 2016. <http://spfusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/US-Japan-Commission-Full-Report.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Gittler, Juliana. “Terminal Fury will Test Teamwork in the Pacific.” *Stars and Stripes*. December 6, 2015. <http://www.stripes.com/news/terminal-fury-will-test-teamwork-in-the-pacific-1.42058>.

*because people have day jobs.” [So] at PACOM, [they] then said, “I’ll tell you what: I’m going to run the China campaign; I will absorb the attributes ... of this 519.” ... It’s not a standing task force, per se, but a broader campaign, and the focus became more how to prevent a conflict and make sure we’re getting the phase zero right... [A joint task force] can’t stand the whole time; that’s why we have COCOM [Unified Combatant Command] in the theatre.<sup>30</sup>*

After a lecture at CSIS the following week, Admiral Harry Harris, Commander, PACOM, was also skeptical when asked if a standing joint task force was needed for the Western Pacific:

*I think we have one already, and it’s called PACOM. We have a theory of fighting conflict at PACOM and that theory—we call it there the “living C2 [command and control],” where I intend to fight from Hawaii, and I think we can do it. But in the Western Pacific, rather than stand up joint task forces to do everything, I have a different approach to doing it; I think this limits it to a construct where we’re going to do it through maritime component, air component, and land component commanders. I think [it] will work. With that said, U.S. 7th Fleet, forward based in Japan, is a JTF [Joint Task Force]-certified command—3-star command. As is III MEF [III Marine Expeditionary Force] in Okinawa, and I Corps in Washington. So if we needed to do something that was short of a major theatre of conflict, if you will, then I think we have the nucleus of what we need to stand up a joint task force. You know, we have the long-term view of the area, the expertise, the relationships with the countries there already in place with I Corps, III MEF, and 7th Fleet. We also have, if it’s a bigger conflict, USARPAC [U.S. Army Pacific], a 4-star Army command in Hawaii, PACFLT [U.S. Pacific Fleet], a 4-star Navy fleet in Hawaii, so I think we have what’s necessary and what’s needed to fight any size conflict in Asia, without having to go down the path of a standing joint task force.<sup>31</sup>*

While Admirals Greenert and Harris affirm that the U.S. military continues to be prepared to “fight any size conflict in Asia” —independently, if necessary—they leave unresolved the structural relationship and coordination challenges created by the current

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<sup>30</sup> Greenert, Jonathan. "Asia-Pacific Rebalance 2025: Capabilities, Presence, and Partnerships." Panel, Washington, D.C., January 20, 2016. <https://csis.org/multimedia/audio-asia-pacific-rebalance-2025-capabilities-presence-and-partnerships-panel>.

<sup>31</sup> Harris, Harry. "Strategic Opportunities in the Indo-Asia-Pacific." Lecture, Washington, D.C., January 27, 2016. <http://csis.org/event/strategic-opportunities-indo-asia-pacific-admiral-harry-b-harris>.

U.S.-Japan command structures. The “phase zero” operations referenced by Admiral Greenert illustrate the high priority placed on sub-conflict strategic shaping. Structural changes are required in order to optimize coordination of U.S. and Japanese forces—both independently and jointly—in sub-conflict scenarios, such as gray zone provocations. If U.S. military officials conclude that a standing joint task force is not the optimal way of solving these issues, they must provide an alternate path to achieve analogous functionality. In any case, addressing the recommendation for a standing joint task force should be a top, near-term priority.

The recommendation for a joint operations command for Japan aligns with a stated priority of many Japanese scholars and officials. In the words of highly regarded, recently deceased Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) General Eiji Kimizuka, Commander of the North Eastern Army and leader of Joint Task Force–Tohoku during the 3-11 response, “We need to use the same brain and the same body.”<sup>32</sup> With its emphasis on the concept of a Dynamic Joint Defense Force, the 2013 NDPG took steps along this path, but the establishment of a joint operations command structure would provide the formal structure to optimize Japan’s side of alliance command relationships.<sup>33</sup> The Tokyo Foundation’s 2014 Policy Proposals for a National Security Strategy recommend that a “joint command for JSDF operations should be achieved through the establishment of a unified C4ISR [Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance] system, implementation of joint exercises, and the joint formulation of a common maritime strategy.”<sup>34</sup> In a speech in Tokyo on March 1, 2016, Admiral Katsutoshi Kawano, Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff of the JSDF, announced his intention to study the establishment of a permanent joint operations command headquarters and affirmed the need for enhanced operational coordination for the JSDF.<sup>35</sup>

The alliance’s command and control requirements will become increasingly complicated in upcoming years, particularly as Japan deploys a significant array of JSDF forces, radar stations, and anti-air/anti-ship batteries to the Ryukyu Islands.<sup>36</sup> While the

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<sup>32</sup> Samuels. 3.11. 99.

<sup>33</sup> NIDS. 2014 *East Asia Review*. 64-68.

<sup>34</sup> “Maritime Security and the Right of Self-Defense in Peacetime: Proposals for a National Security Strategy and the New National Defense Program Guidelines.” The Tokyo Foundation. May 12, 2014. <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2014/maritime-security-and-self-defense-in-peace-time>.

<sup>35</sup> “Jiētai Sēfukugumi Toppu ‘Tōgō Shirēbu Shinsetsu wo Kentō’” [Top JSDF Official: We will Consider the Establishment of a New Integrated Headquarters]. *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*. March 1, 2016. [http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXLASFS01H4J\\_R00C16A3PP8000/](http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXLASFS01H4J_R00C16A3PP8000/).

<sup>36</sup> Kelly, Tim. “Japan Eyes Defense Budget Hike to Fortify Island Chain facing China.” *Reuters*. August 31, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-defense-budget-idUSKCN0R00HX20150831>

McCurry, Justin. “Japan Steps up Military Presence in East China Sea.” *The Guardian*. December 18, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/18/japan-steps-up-military-presence-east-china-sea>.

ACM can be a bridge between U.S. and Japanese command and control structures, it will not fix the need for parallel structures and pre-existing command relationships.

## Recommendation 2: Use the Alliance Coordination Group to Reexamine Joint Scenario Planning

The second main area of focus should be joint scenario planning by the Alliance Coordination Group. This group will be used to coordinate officials representing the Japanese National Security Council, MOD, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and JSDF with the U.S. National Security Council, State Department, Defense Department, Joint Chiefs of Staff, PACOM, and U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ).<sup>37</sup> It must reexamine alliance contingency plans in light of the revised Guidelines and security legislation, with the goal of seamless, joint response capability for the complex range of scenarios the alliance could encounter. It should be a primary goal of this group to create a robust set of plans for both gray zone contingencies and major conflicts.

This planning group should work towards a shared understanding of potential escalation ladders in contingency scenarios. As James Schoff of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace observed in his 2009 study of extended deterrence policy, there was “surprisingly little agreement among defense planners and policy makers in both countries regarding what different conflict-escalation ladders might look like, how they might be controlled, or even how tall (or short) they are. Some assumed that conflicts would escalate rather quickly, while others perceived a longer series of rungs that the allies could potentially climb up or down.”<sup>38</sup> Updated scenario planning should incorporate the “flexible deterrent options” referenced—though not defined—in the revised Guidelines. According to the Japanese National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), flexible deterrent options “strengthen deterrence by swiftly conducting military operations, including exercises in response to the development of a situation, in order to send a signal to the other party.”<sup>39</sup> The Alliance Coordination Group should develop a joint understanding of potential escalation ladders stemming from such operations.

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Yoshihara, Toshi. *Going Anti-Access at Sea: How Japan Can Turn the Tables on China*. Maritime Strategy. Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, 2014.

[http://www.cnas.org/sites/default/files/publications-pdf/CNAS\\_Maritime2\\_Yoshihara.pdf](http://www.cnas.org/sites/default/files/publications-pdf/CNAS_Maritime2_Yoshihara.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> “Japan, U.S. to Unify Defense Operations under New Body, Action Plan.” *The Japan Times*. November 3, 2015. <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/11/03/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-u-s-unify-defense-operations-new-body-action-plan/>.

<sup>38</sup> Schoff. “Realigning Priorities.” 61.

<sup>39</sup> NIDS. *2014 East Asia Review*. 61.

———. “Japan: Revising Security Legislation and the Japan-US Defense Cooperation Guidelines.” In *East Asian Strategic Review 2015*, 55. 2015. <http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/east-asian/e2015.html>.

The Alliance Coordination Group should also study how to incorporate the “whole-of-government” approach cited in the revised Defense Guidelines. In a threat environment that includes Chinese use of “three warfares” (using psychological, media, and legal operations), the alliance must be ready to use all of the tools at its disposal.<sup>40</sup> As Schoff wrote in recommending a potential “Deterrence Policy Group” (DPG) in his 2009 study, “the DPG would consider a wider array of deterrence components, perhaps even including joint studies of the efficacy of signaling economic sanctions or diplomatic steps to deter unwanted actions.”<sup>41</sup> The Alliance Coordination Group should evaluate and utilize a similar array of deterrence tools to counter complex, non-kinetic challenges.

### Recommendation 3: Focus on Messaging to Relieve Concerns of the Japanese Public and Externally Communicate Alliance Coordination Capability

The third recommended focus area is messaging, with attention to shaping messaging for both domestic and external audiences. According to political scientist Richard Samuels at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, when the Japanese government elected not to initiate the BCM after the March 2012 North Korean missile test, because, *inter alia*, it “was unwilling to risk sowing panic among the public,” U.S. officials believed they had lost an opportunity to accustom the Japanese public to high-level security coordination.<sup>42</sup> It is essential that messaging to the Japanese public regarding the ACM calm anxieties about security coordination by conveying the requirements of the regional security environment and the fact that alliance plans appropriately use the minimum force necessary to defend Japan.

While public support for the alliance is high in both the U.S. and Japan, the controversy surrounding the debate over the 2015 security legislation is a reminder that segments of the Japanese population are highly sensitive to the use of force, in even limited cases. This sensitivity is particularly pronounced when use of force is perceived to be in conflict with the constitution. Scholars such as the Stimson Center’s Yuki Tatsumi have criticized the Japanese government’s handling of public messaging on the security legislation as overly legalistic and failing to emphasize the needs of Japan’s modern security environment. Tatsumi worries that “the division within Japan . . . is likely to come back to haunt the Japanese government when it finds itself in the position of having to

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<sup>40</sup> Navarro, Peter. “China’s Non-Kinetic ‘Three Warfares’ Against America.” *The National Interest*. January 5, 2016. <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/chinas-non-kinetic-three-warfares-against-america-14808>.

<sup>41</sup> Schoff. “Realigning Priorities.” 61.

<sup>42</sup> Samuels. *3.11*. 104-105.

utilize the new laws.”<sup>43</sup> Alliance managers must devote significant attention to assuaging the concerns of the Japanese public in order to ensure support when it is most needed.

External messaging should also be sculpted with deterrence implications in mind. The deterrence value of the ACM will flow from the signaling of functional capabilities to potential adversaries—removing doubt about the alliance’s ability and intention to respond in a joint and seamless manner to provocations and causes of conflict. The clear existence of plans, matching capabilities, and the ability to coordinate execution sends a strong signal about the alliance’s wherewithal to respond to probing or fait accompli strategies. In short, without compromising confidential policy plans, the ACM has the potential to provide significant deterrence value without increasing tension in regional relations.

## Conclusions

The ACM can be the foundation of an improved coordination structure that fills many of the alliance’s structural gaps. By focusing on command and control structures, updated scenario planning, and strategic messaging, the ACM can target specific functionalities to bolster alliance preparedness. While it would be imprudent to expect too much from the ACM too soon, there is a pressing need to increase coordination for scenarios requiring complex joint planning, which should compel alliance managers to be methodically aggressive in implementing the ACM and its constituent elements.

Successful build-out and implementation of the ACM will have important assurance and deterrence implications. It will add credibility to U.S. commitments and alliance capability to respond to a broad range of security contingencies. It will also cement Japan’s efforts to play a significant role in joint operations and make a “proactive contribution to peace”—a centerpiece of Prime Minister Abe’s security platform. For all of these reasons, alliance managers must maintain momentum in ACM implementation. Positive deterrence value only comes from successful establishment of the ACM and the strengthening of alliance coordination. There is negative deterrence value if the ACM is established in concept only, and the underlying structures and constituent elements do not become a functional reality.

In coming years, the United States and Japan will face growing difficulties resourcing the strategies to counter a challenging security environment in Northeast Asia and beyond. If U.S. budgets continue to be constrained and the economic foundation of Prime Minister Abe’s strategy is undermined by contagion from Chinese economic weakness, the allies will be hard-pressed to provide policy planners with the appropriate

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<sup>43</sup> Tatsumi, Yuki. “Japan’s New Security Legislation: A Missed Opportunity.” *The Diplomat*. July 16, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/japans-new-security-legislation-a-missed-opportunity/>.

tools to execute their plans. In this context, it is even more important to optimize alliance planning and execution in order to maximize the efficiency of the resources at the disposal of the alliance. The alliance faces this challenge from a position of strength, having invested many years of effort to cultivate relationships and coordination tools. Those efforts will be the building blocks of a highly effective ACM.

The importance of improving alliance coordination cannot be overstated—continued gaps in command and control relationships, gray zone contingency planning, and shared understanding of escalation ladders will beget vulnerability to adversaries who attempt to expose holes in alliance coordination and readiness. Implementing the ACM and associated measures provides a major opportunity to remove this vulnerability.

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## Abbreviations

ACM	Alliance Coordination Mechanism
BCM	Bilateral Coordination Mechanism
C2	Command & Control
C4ISR	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
JGSDF	Japan Ground Self-Defense Force
JMSDF	Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force
JSDF	Japan Self-Defense Forces
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOD	Ministry of Defense
NDPG	National Defense Program Guidelines
PACOM	Pacific Command
SCC	Security Consultative Committee
SDC	Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation
USFJ	U.S. Forces Japan