

## **Abstract**

The International Politics of Datalink: Prescribing Japan's Policy for Alliance Management

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Under the current Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), connectivity in communications and computers, or datalink, is of the central importance for multinational coalition operation in which the United States exercises leadership over allied forces. Datalink is essential for automatic and high-speed -- quite often real-time or near real-time, processing of tactical data in command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR). This study places its analytical focus on assessing datalink capabilities of U.S. and allied forces and investigating limits as well as opportunities for coalition operation, in an effort to prescribe specific policies designed to retain Japan's military autonomy and political independence.

The capability gap in datalink between the U.S. and major allies has increasingly widened. Allies have suffered from rapidly shrinking defense budgets and are unable to catch up the U.S. which continues aggressive investment in achieving military transformation. Thus the U.S. faces a dilemma in choosing unilateral or multilateral military action, in search of an optimal combination of military effectiveness and efficiency with legitimacy and burden-sharing. To manage this dilemma, the U.S. needs to promote and assist cost-averse allies in enhancing their datalink capability.

This study emphasizes the critical significance of tactical data distribution essential for command & control, weapon- and fire-control, particularly Link-16, in context of the historical evolution of various Links and the current datalink capabilities at the platform level as contrasted with doubtful near-future upgrade plans. The analysis reveals emerging divergence of policy priorities of the U.S. and allies as a resultant of their different military doctrines and the cumulative effects of investment required to implement such doctrines, which mutually reinforce.

In addition to the above affordability factor, this work also stresses the core nature of releasability, or transfer of black-box technologies in codevelopment projects, particularly encryption measures. The examination highlights the Multifunctional Information Distribution System (MIDS) project in which major European allies are U.S. partners and the Cooperative Engagement Capability (CEC) project in which the U.K is an only U.S. partner, while exploring a possibility of applying the Anglo- American model to the U.S.-Japan alliance. It is contended that Japan needs to exercise its own encryption measures on U.S.-made or U.S.-designed Link-16 equipments, or JTIDS (Joint Tactical Information Distribution System), MIDS, or their derivatives.

Given the affordability and releasability factors, this study identifies major sources of potential bilateral conflicts in alliance management. It is urged, at the initial phase efforts, to sequentially execute upgrading Japan's datalink capability as common interest, in which the three services of the Self-Defense Forces establish joint connectivity via Link-11, a legacy system, and a unified SDF command for theater missile defense, while postponing a full-scale acquisition of the U.S. standard datalink system, Link-16, on the commercial off-the-shelf basis. When these conditions are met, Japan is urged to negotiate for concluding a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with the U.S. and thereby to bargain for necessary technology transfers from the U.S., especially information related to Link-16's encryption. Depending on near-future choices of their policies, the U.S. and Japan may strengthen bilateral alliance or significantly reduce its viability.

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