

Transforming the Combined Forces Command Structure of the Republic of Korea and the United States

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Transforming the Combined Forces Command Structure of the Republic of Korea and the United States, by MAJ Tachyung Kim, The Republic of Korea Army, 49 pages.

Whereas the Republic of Korea and the United States are in turbulent times as they prepare to transition wartime operational control, North Korean threats against the alliance are growing through the development of nuclear weapons and missiles.

The purpose of this monograph is to suggest an appropriate model for the Republic of Korea and the United States combined forces to transform its command structure in order to maintain and enhance capabilities to deter and respond to the North Korean threat even after transition of wartime operational control.

In order to do so, this monograph first reviews the historical background of the two countries' military alliance and its command structure. Then, relevant doctrinal review and case studies are conducted in order to identify the challenges that the alliance currently faces and implications for the future combined command structure.

Based on these analyses, the monograph presents the criteria for the model for transforming the combined command structure after the wartime operational control transition. Then, the monograph suggests the three-stage model that gradually changes from integrated command structure to parallel command structure. Finally, it gives some recommendations for best employing the three-stage model.

Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Acronyms	vii
Illustrations	viii
Tables	viii
Introduction	1
Background on the ROK-US Combined Forces Command Structure	6
The Korean War and ROK military OPCON transition to the UNC	6
The establishment of the ROK-US Combined Forces.....	9
Peacetime OPCON transition back to ROK military	13
Ongoing cooperation for wartime OPCON transition.....	15
Challenges to Transforming the Command Structure	18
Doctrinal description of command structure in multinational operations	18
Current ROK-US Combined Forces command structure	21
Challenges to transforming the command structure	23
Case Studies	26
NATO command structure	26
US-Japan combined command structure	28
Comparison of NATO and US-Japan command structure	31
A Model for Transforming the ROK-US Command Structure	33
Criteria for a model	33
An option currently being discussed	34
Suggestion for a model.....	35
Conclusion.....	44
Summary	44
Recommendations	45
Bibliography	47

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Acronyms

ACC	Air Component Command
ACG	Air Coordination Group
ACM	Alliance Coordination Mechanism
ACO	Allied Command Operations
ACT	Allied Command Transformation
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CIS	Communication and information system
CNIC	Commander-in-Chief
CFC	Combined Forces Command
CJCS	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
CODA	Combined Delegated Authority
DEFCON	Defense Readiness Condition
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DOD	US Department of Defense
EASI	East Asia Strategic Initiative
GCC	Ground Component Command
GCG	Ground Coordination Group
IMS	International Military Staff
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
JFCBS	Joint Forces Command Brunssum
JFCNP	Joint Forces Command Naples
KAMD	Korea Air and Missile Defense
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCC	Naval Component Command
NCMA	National Command and Military Authority

MC	ROK-US Military Committee
MCG	Maritime Coordination Group
MCM	ROK-US Military Committee Meeting
MND	ROK Ministry of National Defense
ROK	Republic of Korea
ROK-US	Republic of Korea and United States
OPCON	Operational Control
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
PACOM	Pacific Command
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SACT	Supreme Allied Commander Transformation
SCM	ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting
SCC	US-Japan Security Consultative Committee
SDC	US-Japan Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation
SUSMOAK	Senior US Military Officer Assigned to Korea
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPCC	Theater Planning and Coordination Center
TPFDD	Time-Phased Force and Deployment Data
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command
USFK	United States Forces in Korea

Illustrations

Figure 1. Research Layout.....	5
Figure 2. Command Structure of the USFK in 1957.....	8
Figure 3. ROK-US Combined Command and Coordination Institutions in 1978.....	11
Figure 4. Command Structure of the CFC in 1978.....	12
Figure 5. Integrated Command Structure	19
Figure 6. Lead Nation Command Structure	20
Figure 7. Parallel Command Structure.....	20
Figure 8. Current ROK-US Combined Command System.....	21
Figure 9. Current CFC Staff Structure.	22
Figure 10. NATO Military Command Structure as of 2017.....	27
Figure 11. US-Japan Combined Command Structure	30
Figure 12. An Agreed ROK and US Command Structure	34
Figure 13. The First Stage: Integrated Command Structure I	35
Figure 14. The Second Stage: Integrated Command Structure II.....	36
Figure 15. The Third Stage: Parallel Command Structure	37

Tables

Table 1. Changes in the OPCON Transition and ROK-US Combined Forces Command Relationship	17
Table 2. The Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Command Structure	21
Table 3. Challenges and Key Factors for a Model	25
Table 4. Comparison of NATO and US-Japan Command Structure.....	31
Table 5. Criteria for the Most Appropriate Model	33

Introduction

Since the Korean War ended with its armistice of July 27, 1953, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), or North Korea, has committed over 3,000 military provocations against the Republic of Korea and the United States (ROK-US) alliance.¹ In 1986, North Korea attempted to assassinate Park Jung-Hee, the then president of the Republic of Korea. They also bombarded Yeonpyeongdo Island in Korea in 2010, which caused eighteen casualties. Furthermore, their torpedo attack against the ROK Ship *Cheonan* killed forty-six Korean sailors in 2011. Currently, North Korea is focusing on developing nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) in order to break the ROK-US combined defense system.² After conducting their sixth nuclear test on September 3, 2017 and an ICBM test launch on July 28, 2017, the DPRK announced that their nuclear and missile capabilities were sufficient to reach the continental United States.³ These are significant threats to both the Republic of Korea and the United States.

The Republic of Korea and the United States are trying to develop effective countermeasures to deter North Korea's nuclear and missile provocations. They have brought North Korea's nuclear and missile issues to the United Nations (UN) Security Council and urged that body to adopt resolutions imposing economic sanctions against North Korea. On August 5, 2017, the Security Council adopted a new resolution that contains a set of unprecedented economic penalties, punctuated by a one-third cut in North Korea's export revenue.⁴ Furthermore,

¹ The ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND), *2016 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: Government Publishing Center, 2016), 251.

² Max Fisher, "North Korea's Nuclear Arms Sustain Drive for 'Final Victory'," *The New York Times*, July 29, 2017, accessed August 4, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/29/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-missile.html>.

³ Steve Herman, "North Korea Conducts Sixth Nuclear Test," *Voice of America*, September 3, 2017, accessed September 4, 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/north-korea-quake-nuclear-test/4013117.html>.

⁴ Adam Taylor, "U.N. Security Council Approves New Sanctions against North Korea," *The Washington Post*, August 7, 2017, accessed August 8, 2017,

the Republic of Korea and the United States have strengthened diplomatic cooperation with other countries to deter North Korean aggression. As a result, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) called for North Korea to comply with United Nations Security Council resolutions on its nuclear program and to make a positive contribution to regional peace.⁵ In addition, the Republic of Korea and the United States have also warned North Korea that the allies would consider all options, including military actions, to counter North Korea's threat. On July 31, 2017, the Republic of Korea, the United States, and Japan flew B-1 bombers, F-2 fighter jets, and F-15 fighter jets in a ten-hour show of force against North Korea.⁶

Meanwhile, the ROK-US combined forces are entering a new phase in their military relations, and have agreed that the ROK military will assume wartime operational control (OPCON) from UN forces while maintaining a stance of mutual readiness to counter North Korea's threat.⁷ Recently, ROK President Moon Jae-in announced that he would advance the plan for the transition of wartime OPCON, which has been the country's long-cherished desire, and finalize it within his term of office.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/08/07/what-the-new-u-n-sanctions-on-north-korea-mean/?utm_term=.00afe167bf17.

⁵ Voice of America, "ASEAN Foreign Ministers Urge North Korea to Comply with UN," August 5, 2017, accessed August 5, 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/asean-foreign-ministers-north-korea-un/3973518.html>.

⁶ Amanda P. Santos, "U.S., Allies Fly Bombers, Fighter Jets in Display of Force against North Korea Following ICBM Test," *NBCNews*, July 21, 2017, accessed August 5, 2017, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-s-allies-fly-bombers-fighter-jets-display-force-against-n787881>.

⁷ The *Department of Defense Law of War Manual* defines the term "war" as "a condition in which a State is prosecuting its rights by military force, usually against another State." Department of Defense, *Department of Defense Law of War Manual* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 18. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines the term "wartime" as "a period during which a war is taking place." Meanwhile, the ROK-US Combined Forces Command uses the term "wartime OPCON" to separate it from peacetime OPCON. The term "wartime" in "wartime OPCON" indicates when Defense Readiness Condition increases to level-III or higher. Both countries currently maintain Defense Readiness Condition level-IV and call it "peacetime," although the two Koreas are in a state of armistice. UN forces currently exercises wartime OPCON over designated ROK and US forces. However, details on designated ROK forces are classified information.

US President Donald Trump also agreed with President Moon's announcement during the US-ROK summit on July 2, 2017.⁸ Accordingly, the ROK and the US militaries are coordinating with each other to make such a transition possible. In order to maintain and exploit the initiative against North Korea, both countries see as paramount the prevention of a security vacuum as operational control is transitioned. However, there are many challenges. Key among these is deciding what type of command structure is most appropriate for the future ROK-US combined forces.

The primary purpose of this monograph is to explore which model is the most appropriate for the ROK-US combined forces command structure after the transition of wartime OPCON, considering the future operational environment on the Korean Peninsula. This question results from the assumption that the current command structure of the ROK-US combined forces will be ineffective after the transition of wartime OPCON. The model can be a single command structure or, if not, it may need several steps of different command structures. Therefore, the ROK-US combined forces must establish a model of implementation for their future command structure that enhances its capabilities to deter and defeat North Korea's threats.

To resolve this primary challenge, this monograph must also address secondary questions: Why did the Republic of Korea and the United States establish the Combined Forces Command? What was its initial command structure, and how has it developed? What kind of challenges do both countries currently have in terms of its command structure after wartime OPCON transition? What lessons can both countries learn from the cases of other multinational command structures? What are the requirements for a future command structure? These questions would contribute to approaching to the solution for this monograph.

⁸ Sang-Ho Yun, "Pres. Moon and Trump agree on early OPCON transfer," *The Dong-A Ilbo*, July 4, 2017, accessed August 6, <http://english.donga.com/Home/3/all/26/979887/1>.

This monograph answers the primary research question by arguing that the most appropriate model for ROK-US combined forces command structure after wartime OPCON transition is a gradual transition of command structure, despite wartime OPCON transition, in order to maintain their capabilities to respond to the North Korean threat. Through analysis of the history of the current structure, this paper recommends a three-stage model: First, Integrated Command Structure I; second, Integrated Command Structure II; and third, Parallel Command Structure. The combined forces need.

To develop the recommended approach, the paper first examines the background on the ROK-US combined forces command structure. This section describes how the ROK-US combined forces command structure has developed in conjunction with the Korean War and the ROK military's transition to UN control, activation of the ROK-US combined forces, peacetime OPCON transition back to the ROK military, and both countries' current cooperation for the anticipated wartime OPCON transition. From this review, this section derives three considerations for an appropriate command structure, which are both governments' national interests, operational environment on the Korean Peninsula, and ROK military capability.

The second section addresses the current challenges with options for future command structure of the Combined Forces after wartime OPCON transition. In order to do that, this section also introduces the doctrinal description of multinational forces command structures based on US joint doctrine and reviews ROK-US combined forces command structure through the lens of that doctrine. In addition, this section examines some challenges in the command structure after wartime OPCON transition and addresses four key factors for an appropriate command structure, which are operational effectiveness and efficiency, equality in the relationship between the two militaries, assurance of automatic US support, compatibility with the ROK future command structure.

The next section analyzes the lessons learned from other multinational forces' command structures through the case studies. The two cases in this section include NATO command and

US-Japan combined command structure. This section reviews the two cases based on the key factors derived from section two in order to learn the relevant lessons for a future ROK-US combined command structure. Then, this section addresses three lessons learned from the two case studies. These lessons include the importance and necessity of unity of effort, coordination mechanism, and integrated structure to the future command structure.

Based on the historical context of the ROK-US command structure, current challenges with it, and the case studies, section four suggests the most appropriate ROK-US command structure after wartime OPCON transition. This section first examines ten criteria, which consist of three considerations from section one, four key factors from section two, and three lessons from section three, for the future command structure. Subsequently, it introduces an option currently being discussed, suggests the three-stage model for the optimal future command structure, and review the model through the lens of ten criteria.

Finally, the conclusion of this monograph reviews the results of the analysis in each section and provides recommendations to the ROK and US militaries in order to realize the three-stage model. That includes forming a consensus between the two countries, establishing a legal basis upon which the model can function, and developing the ROK military's capabilities.

Figure 1 depicts the research layout of this monograph.

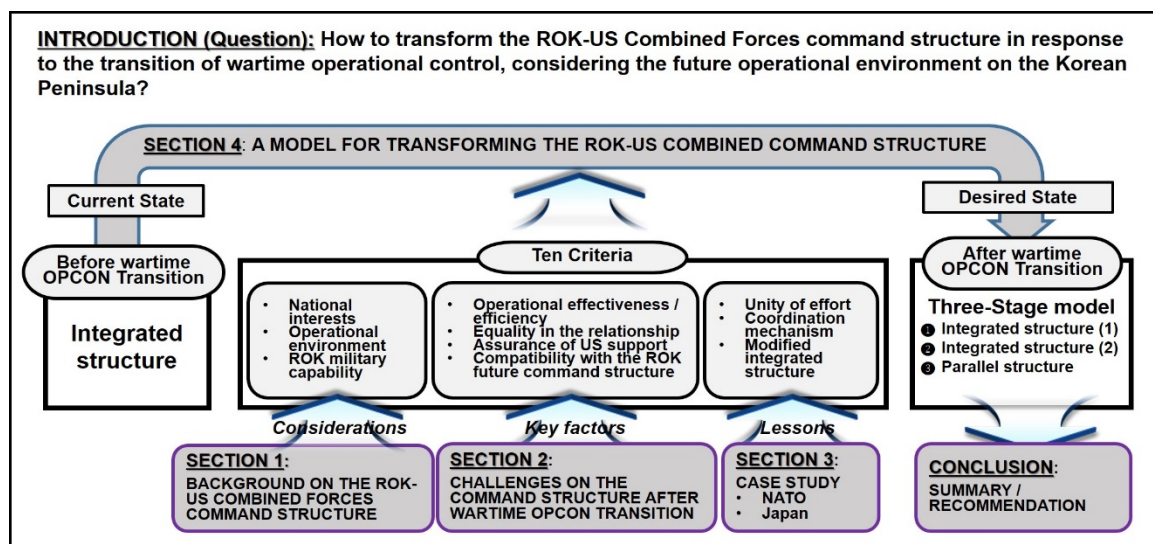


Figure 1. Research Layout. Created by the author.

Background on the ROK-US Combined Forces Command Structure

This section reviews the background on the ROK-US combined forces command structure, from the Korean War to the establishment of the ROK-US Combined Forces, peacetime OPCON transition, and ongoing cooperation for wartime OPCON transition. Since the changes of the OPCON authority have been the most influential factor in the combined forces command structure, this historical review focuses on the changes of the command structure in conjunction with the OPCON authority. Through the historical review, this section addresses three considerations for the future combined forces command structure.

The Korean War and ROK military OPCON transition to the UNC

By the time World War II ended in a victory for the Allies, Soviet forces had invaded the northern area of the Korean Peninsula. On September 8, 1945, the United States sent approximately 72,000 troops to the Peninsula in order to contain Soviet expansion and both sides divided Korea based on the 38th parallel. The Soviets established a communist regime in North Korea while the US Military Assistance Advisory Group established a democratic government in the South. As a result, the Korean Peninsula became an arena of ideological conflict between US democracy and Soviet communism. Ultimately, leading to the Korean War, which began with North Korean invasion of South Korean territory across the 38th parallel on June 25, 1950. The ROK government, on the same day, requested the United Nations assist them in defeating North Korean invasion. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 83 on June 27 and Resolution 84 on July 7, 1950, which recommended members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area. According to these resolutions, the United Nations established the

United Nations Command (UNC) and then the United States sent approximately 72,000 troops to Korea in order to assist the Republic of Korea to defeat the North Korean attack.⁹

President Rhee then sent an official document to General Douglas MacArthur, the first commanding general of the UNC, requesting the US military take all operational command authority over ROK military forces.¹⁰ As a result, the operational command authority of the ROK military forces was transferred to the UNC. The war lasted for three years ending with an armistice on July 27, 1953. President Rhee was concerned about the possibility that the United States might not assist the Republic of Korea against another North Korean provocation if there was no mutual security agreement with the United States. Hence, he requested the US government sign the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty on October 1, 1953. The US government signed the treaty and it became effective on November 18, 1954.¹¹

This treaty had two significant impacts. First, the treaty changed the previous term ‘operational command authority’ to ‘operational control authority,’ which limited the US forces’ authority to operate the ROK military only against the North Korean threat. Thus, the ROK military came to exercise its sole authority for the day-to-day command and control of its forces in terms of force construction and management during peacetime. Second, it changed the period of authority. The previous document stated, “While the current threat continues” but the new treaty stated, “While the UNC takes responsibility for the defense of the Republic of Korea.” Through this treaty, the Republic of Korea has been able to maintain the alliance with the United States until the present.

⁹ The ROK MND, *한미군사관계사: 1817-2002* [The History of the ROK and US Military Relationship: 1871-2002] (Seoul: The MND Military History Study Institute, 2003), 449.

¹⁰ Won-gon Park, “The United Nations Command in Korea: The Past, Present, and Future,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 21, no. 4 (December 2009): 487.

¹¹ The ROK MND, *한미동맹과 주한미군* [ROK-US Alliance and USFK] (Seoul: ROK MND, 2013), 36.

Although the US military took operational control of the ROK military in 1954, there was no specific security cooperation system or military command structure. In order to develop its own military system and, at the same time, a mutual defense system in conjunction with the United States, the ROK military undertook a force improvement plan, as mutually agreed by the governments of the ROK and the US. The ROK Army established two field armies and assigned them to take responsibility of the eastern part and the rear area of the country. It reorganized its three corps under the control of the US Eighth Army, which was responsible for the western part of the peninsula. The ROK Navy and Air Force also reorganized themselves in the 1950s.

Meanwhile, the US Department of Defense (DOD) reformed its military system in the Pacific area as the Japanese government requested the US government reduce US forces in Japan. As a result, the US DOD established United States Forces Korea (USFK) and put it under the command of United States Pacific Command (USPACOM). According to US DOD regulation, the commander of US Eighth Army would also serve as the commander of UNC and USFK.¹²

(See figure 2)

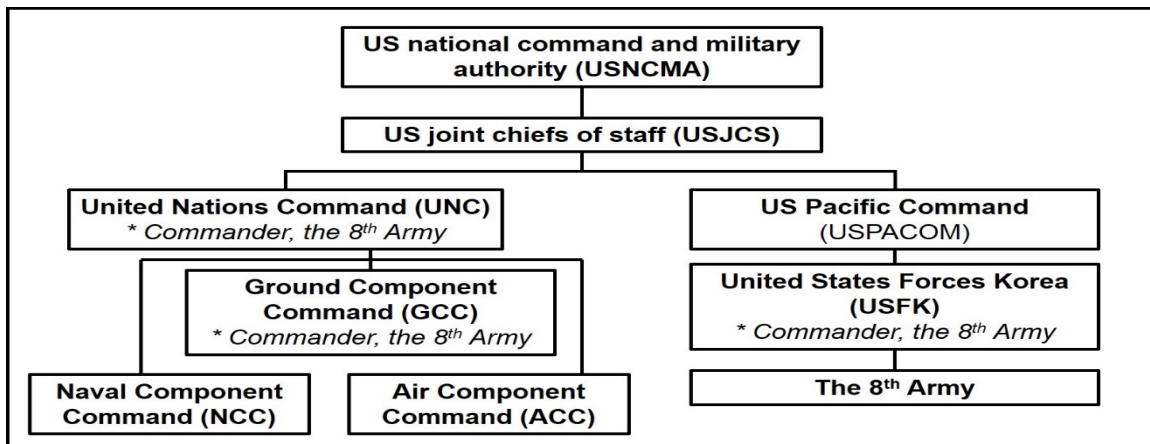


Figure 2. Command Structure of the USFK in 1957. Restructured based on the description from Yong-bum Jung, “한미 연합방위체제의 변화 연구: 전시 작전통제권 전환과 주한미군의 전략적 유연성을 중심으로 [Study on the Changes of the ROK-US Combined Defense System: Wartime OPCON Transfer and USFK Strategic Flexibility]” (PhD diss., Kyonggi University, 2006), 147.

¹² Yong-goo Kim, *한·미 군사지휘관계의 어제와 오늘: 작전통제권 전환을 중심으로* [The Past and Present of the ROK-US military command relationship] (Seoul: The ROK Joint Chief of Staff (JCS), 1993), 20-22.

1968 was a pivotal year to Korea. Many incidents, such as the Blue House raid, the Pueblo incident, and Ulchin-Samcheok landings by 120 North Korean soldiers, increased tensions on the Peninsula. These incidents demanded the ROK and US alliance have a more deliberate effort at security cooperation. Both countries agreed to have a security meeting annually and named the meeting the ‘ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting (SCM)’ in 1974.¹³ Furthermore, the US government recognized the importance of rapid response to North Korean military provocations and therefore acknowledged the ROK military’s OPCON authority when it came to the counterespionage operations. The ROK and US combined security system became more effective and efficient through these processes.

The Establishment of the ROK-US Combined Forces

Currently, the main agent of the ROK-US combined defense system is the ROK-US Combined Forces Command (CFC). Both countries established CFC in order to enhance the combined defense capabilities by responding to the rapidly changing operational environment on the peninsula and the gradual withdrawal of the USFK.¹⁴ The discussion of the CFC began in 1971, two years after US President Richard Nixon announced ‘the Nixon Doctrine,’ which argued that its Asian allies should conduct their own military defense. The Doctrine affected the US DOD’s decision on withdrawal of the 7th Infantry Division from Korea. The ROK government requested the US government establish a temporary military organization in order to supplement the combined the allied forces in filling the immediate security vacuum due to the withdrawal of the USFK.¹⁵ In 1974, the US government suggested the establishment of the CFC to the ROK

¹³ The ROK MND, *Defense White Paper 1997-1998* (Seoul: Government Publishing Center, 1997), 76.

¹⁴ The ROK MND, *한미군사관계사* [The History of the ROK and US Military Relationship], 593.

¹⁵ Bong-jong Baek, “미국의 대한군사정책변화에 관한 연구 [Study on the Change of the US Military Policy toward the ROK]” (PhD diss., Chung-Ang University, 1981), 208.

government. The US government had two significant reasons for this suggestion.¹⁶ First, China became a permanent member of the UN Security Council. As a result, China and the Soviet Union increased demands for the US government to dissolve the UNC and withdraw its forces from Korea increased. Second, it was difficult for the US government to justify the stationing of its forces in Korea after Thailand withdrew its forces in 1972¹⁷. In order to deal with those challenges, it was necessary for the US government to establish the ROK-US CFC.

In 1977, Jimmy Carter took office as the President of the United States and announced he would proceed with the planned withdrawals of US ground combat forces from Korea. His ground troop withdrawal plan directly caused both countries to accelerate the activation of the ROK-US CFC.¹⁸ To compensate the withdrawal of the US ground forces, the Carter administration promised to establish a combined forces command, provide eight million dollars' worth of weapons to Korea, and to enhance the operational capabilities of the ROK-US combined air force.¹⁹

Accordingly, the two countries signed a Terms of Reference (TOR) for the military committee (MC) and ROK-US CFC during the eleventh SCM on July 27, 1978. The TOR prescribed the function and mission of the CFC, as well as the function of the CFC commander. Based on this meeting, the two militaries held the first ROK-US Military Committee Meeting (MCM) and issued Strategic Directive No.1, which was the foundation for establishing the CFC on July 28, 1978.²⁰ Strategic Directive No.1 prescribed not only the tasks and the assigned units

¹⁶ The ROK National Defense University (NDU), *연합작전*[Combined Operations] (Seoul: The ROK NDU, 2006), 118~119.

¹⁷ Thailand was the last foreign force stationed at that time in Korea except for US troops. Ibid., 119.

¹⁸ The ROK MND, *한미군사관계사*[The History of the ROK and US Military Relationship], 594.

¹⁹ Jong Ho Yoon, "Politics of US-South Korean Military Relations, 1961-1979" (PhD diss., Rice University, 1989), 162-164.

²⁰ The ROK MND, *Defense White Paper 1989* (Seoul: Government Publishing Center, 1989), 119.

of the CFC, but also the command authority of the commander by stating, “Commander in Chief, Combined Forces Command (CINC-CFC) will exercise operational control of assigned ROK and US forces.”²¹ Thus, the ROK-US CFC was officially established on November 7, 1978 as both countries signed the Exchange of Note for the Establishment of the ROK-US CFC on October 17, 1978.²² (See figure 3)

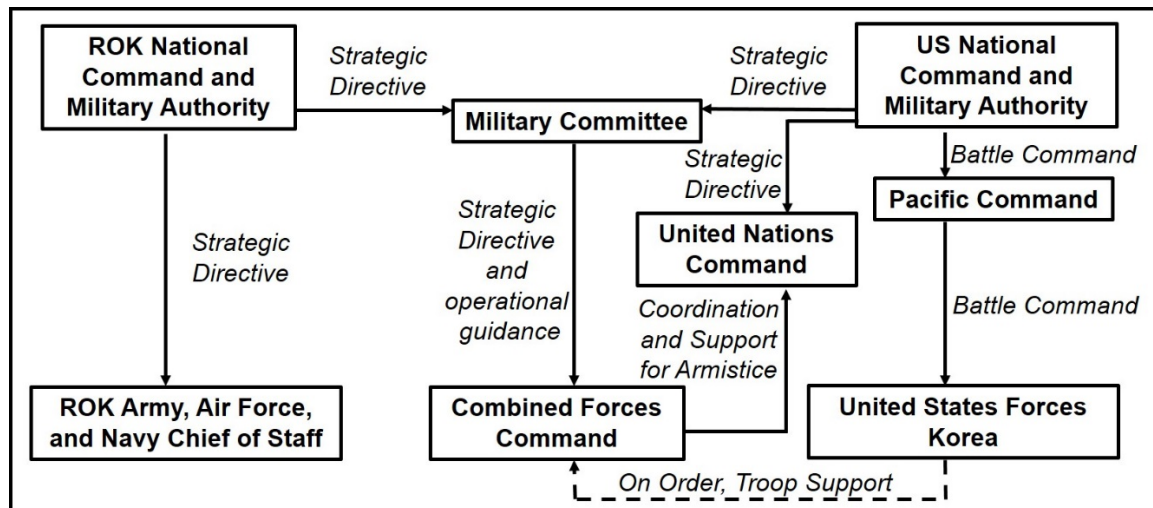


Figure 3. ROK-US Combined Command and Coordination Institutions in 1978. Restructured based on the description from The ROK NDU, *연합작전* [Combined Operations], 121.

The mission statement of the ROK-US CFC is to “deter hostile acts of external aggression against the Republic of Korea by a combined military effort of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea; and in the event deterrence fails, defeat an external armed attack against the Republic of Korea.”²³ To accomplish this mission, the ROK-US CFC takes strategic direction and operational guidance from the MC; the CFC requests military requirements from the MC; and the CINC-CFC commander exercises OPCON over the ROK and US forces

²¹ Jong-cheon Baek, “한미 연합지휘관계 발전방향 [Recommendation for the Development of the ROK-US Combined Command Relationship],” in *The ROK-US Military Cooperation: the Present and Future*, ed. Jong-cheon Baek (Seongnam: Sejong Institute, 1998), 46.

²² Sam-yeol Jang, *The Role and Command Relationship of the USFK in the Changing Security Environment* (Strategy Research Project, Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, April 01, 2001), 25.

²³ The ROK MND, *한미군사관계사* [The History of the ROK and US Military Relationship], 610-611.

designated by the ROK-US national command and military authority (NCMA).²⁴ According to US NCMA guidance, the CINC-CFC serves as the CINC-UNC, USFK commander, and the Senior US Military Officer Assigned to Korea (SUSMOAK) at the same time.

The CFC, with combined staff members, is comprised of a Ground Component Command (GCC), Naval Component Command (NCC), Air Component Command (ACC), and Combined Marine Forces Command (CMFC). (See figure 4) Initially, the CINC-CFC took command of the GCC, but the deputy commander in chief (DCINC)-CFC has taken this role instead of the CINC-CFC since 1992. The commander of the ROK Naval Operations Command took command of NCC in peacetime while the commander of the US 7th Fleet took it for wartime. Meanwhile, the commander of the US 7th Air Force took control for both peacetime and wartime.²⁵

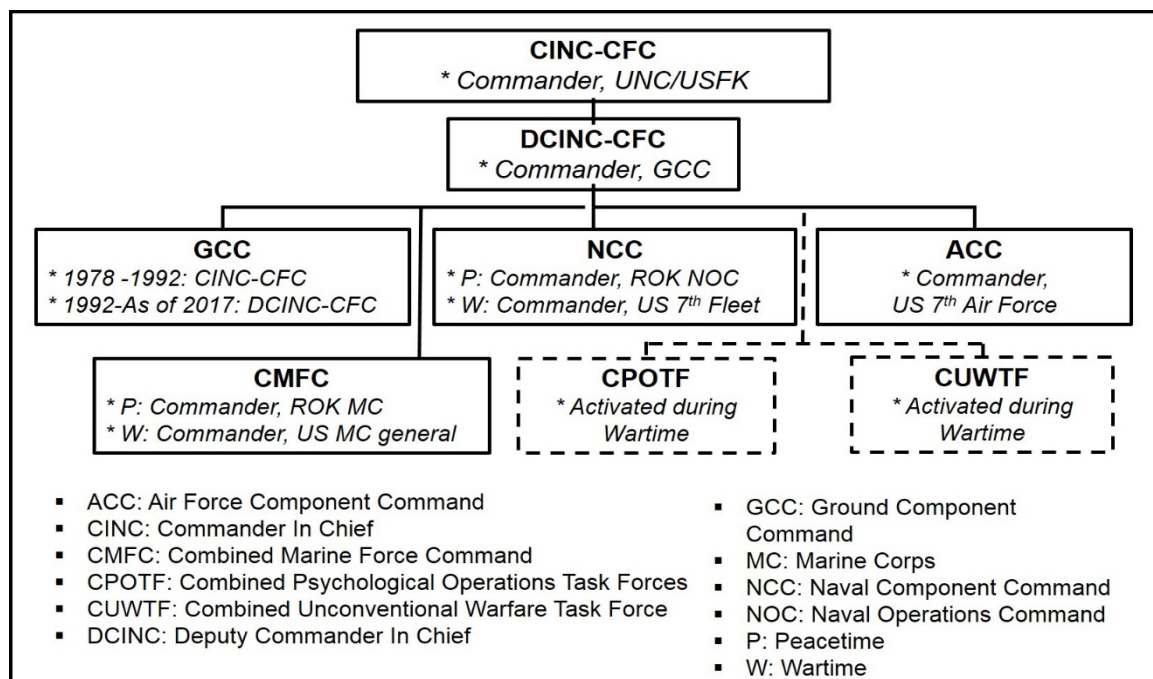


Figure 4. Command Structure of the CFC in 1978. Restructured based on the description from The ROK NDU, *Combined Operations*, 122.

²⁴ Gwang-seok Kim, “한미 군사협력의 발전방안 [Recommendation for the Development of the ROK-US Military Cooperation]” (Master’s thesis, Sogang University, 2001), 15.

²⁵ The ROK MND, *한미/군사관계사* [The History of the ROK and US Military Relationship], 602.

The establishment of the CFC is significant to the ROK-US combined defense system for three reasons. First, it contributed to deterrence against North Korean provocations by showing the firmness of the alliance. Second, it enhanced Korean officers' planning capabilities by providing them an opportunity to be involved in the planning process with US officers. Third, it enabled Korea to influence the exercise of OPCON by CINC-CFC through the ROK NCMA and MC.

Peacetime OPCON Transition Back to ROK Military²⁶

The discussion of the OPCON transition began with the 13th ROK and US SCM in 1981, fueled by deteriorating Korean public sentiment against the United States.²⁷ In Korea, there was a military coup by Chun Doo-hwan in 1979, sparking widespread unrest that led to the Gwangju uprising in 1980. At the same time, there was a rumor that the US government was involved with Chun's coup because of an interest in maintaining a pro-US government in Korea. Public opinion about the USFK was getting worse and sparked a serious wave of anti-American sentiment in Korea. In the 17th SCM, the ROK government requested the US government discuss OPCON transition with them. After that, Roh Tae-woo, the then ROK president, set forth the OPCON transition as one of his main election pledges. The wave of anti-American sentiment in Korea greatly grew as Roh became the president.

At the same time, there were vigorous discussions of the USFK withdrawal in the US, as the Bush administration was inaugurated in 1989 and the Cold War ended in 1990. These discussions led the US Congress to approve the Nunn-Warner Amendment, which addressed the

²⁶ The term 'peacetime' in this context does not mean a period when Korea is not at war, but rather an armistice. The two countries used the term 'peacetime' instead of 'armistice' in order to facilitate the shared understanding of Korean citizens. The ROK JCS, *합참사* [The History of the Joint Chief of Staff] (Seoul: The ROK JCS, 1995), 162.

²⁷ Hyun-kwon Joe, "United Nations Command Armistice Roles on the Korean Peninsula: Is December 2015 the End" (MMAS thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2013), 30.

plan for the gradual reduction of USFK, in 1991.²⁸ In addition, the US Congress approved the East Asia Strategic Initiative (EASI) presented by US DOD, which developed a specific action plan to enact the Nunn-Warner Plan.²⁹ Through the 25th SCM and 15th MCM in 1993, both countries agreed to transfer peacetime OPCON from the CFC to the ROK JCS by December 1, 1994.³⁰ After that, the two governments amended the TOR through the 26th SCM and issued Strategic Directive No.2 through the 16th MCM in 1994. The amended TOR distinguished command authority and responsibility of the CINC-CFC between peacetime and wartime. It prescribed that the ROK CJCS exercise peacetime OPCON and the CINC-CFC exercise wartime OPCON over the ROK forces. In addition, Strategic Directive No.2 prescribed that wartime OPCON transfer from the ROK JCS to the CINC-CFC when Defense Readiness Condition (DEFCON) increases to level-III.³¹

Based on this process, the ROK CJCS is able to exercise his authority regarding ROK military readiness posture, joint exercises, disposition, and security operations during peacetime.³² Although the ROK CJCS exercises peacetime OPCON, it is necessary for the CINC-

²⁸ Richard H. Solomon, "U.S. Relations with East Asia and the Pacific: A New Era," *The DISAM Journal* (Summer 1991): 47, accessed August 18, 2017, http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/Vol%2013_4/Solomon.pdf.

²⁹ Young-nam Jung, "한미 군사동맹의 발전방향 [Recommendation for the Development of the ROK-US Military Alliance]" (Master's thesis, Kyung Hee University, 2004), 30-31.

³⁰ The ROK MND, *한미군사관계사* [The History of the ROK and US Military Relationship], 633-636.

³¹ The ROK MND, *한미군사관계사* [The History of the ROK and US Military Relationship], 613.

³² Yong-sup Han, "미국의 GPR 과 주한미군의 장래 [The US Global Posture Review and the Future of USFK]" in *주한미군의 조정과 동북아 국가의 대응전략* [The Adjustment of USFK and the Counter Strategies of the North East Asian Countries], ed. Yong-sup Han (Seoul: The Institute for National Security Affairs, The ROK NDU, 2004), 79.

CFC to have an authority preparing for war during peacetime. To address this need, the ROK government gave the CINC-CFC Combined Delegated Authority (CODA).³³

Ongoing Cooperation for Wartime OPCON Transition

As mentioned above, the discussion of the OPCON transition began with former ROK president Roh Tae-woo's pledge, which promised to return peacetime OPCON back to the Korean military, and EASI of the US government. After the transition of peacetime OPCON, the two militaries continued efforts to transfer wartime OPCON from the CINC-CFC to the ROK JCS. Conversely, some people argued that it would be premature to transfer wartime OPCON since the North Korean nuclear threat continued to grow. These arguments impeded further progress in the wartime OPCON transfer. The desire to transfer wartime OPCON back to the ROK increased again when Roh Moo-hyun became ROK president in 2003. President Roh Moo-hyun expressed his desire to find a means for a cooperative, self-reliant, defense posture within the next ten years in a National Independence Day commemorative speech on August 15, 2003.³⁴ Accordingly, both countries agreed to accelerate the transfer at the 37th SCM in October 2005 and agreed to complete the transfer after October 15, 2009, but no later than March 15, 2012 at the 38th SCM on October 20, 2006.³⁵ In January 2007, the MC signed the 'TOR on the Operation of the ROK-US Combined Implementation Working Group (CIWG).' On June 28, 2007, the ROK CJCS and the CINC-CFC signed on a Strategic Transition Plan (STP), created by CIWG.³⁶

³³ Donald W. Boose and others, "Recalibrating the US-ROK Alliance" (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, May 2003), 103, accessed August 20, 2017, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/ssi_boose-hwang-morgan-scobell.pdf.

³⁴ Ki-hye Hong, "Self-reliant Defense Posture within the Next 10 years," *Presian*, August 15, 2003, accessed August 21, 2017, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=100&oid=002&aid=0000005957>.

³⁵ Yong-bum Jung, "한미 연합방위체제의 변화 연구: 전시 작전통제권 전환과 주한미군의 전략적 유연성을 중심으로 [Study on the Changes of the ROK-US Combined Defense System: Wartime OPCON Transfer and USFK Strategic Flexibility]" (PhD diss., Kyonggi University, 2006), 71.

³⁶ Young Sul Hwang, *Wartime OPCON Transition and the ROK-US Alliance* (Strategy Research Project, Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, March 01, 2013), 15.

However, this plan made no progress due to unexpected North Korean provocations. The North Koreans claimed success on their first two nuclear weapon tests in 2006 and in 2009.³⁷ In 2010, they launched an attack against the ROK corvette *Cheonan* and shelled Yeonpyeongdo Island.³⁸ After Kim Jong-un became the supreme leader of North Korea in 2011, they accelerated their nuclear and missile tests. Because of the increasing North Korean threat, the two governments agreed to postpone the transfer date to December 2015 at the Summit between the ROK president and the US president on June 26, 2010.³⁹ At the 42nd SCM in October 2010, both countries agreed to the ‘Strategic Alliance 2015,’ which is a comprehensive implementation plan for creating stable conditions for the wartime OPCON transfer.⁴⁰

The two administrations had to postpone the transfer date again due to consistent North Korean threats, such as two long-range missile launches in April and December 2012, and a third nuclear weapon test in February 2013.⁴¹ Both militaries estimated that there would be a high possibility of a misjudgment by Kim Jong-un if they transferred wartime OPCON to Korea in that situation. Thus, at the summit between ROK President Park Geun-hye and US President Barack Obama on May 7, 2013, the two presidents agreed to adjust the timing of the wartime OPCON transfer.⁴² Following that, at the 46th SCM on October 23, 2014, both countries agreed to implement a ‘conditions-based wartime OPCON transition,’ which means that the decision on

³⁷ Amanda Erickson, “A timeline of North Korea’s five nuclear tests and how the U.S. has responded,” *Washington Post*, April 14, 2017, accessed August 21, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/04/14/a-timeline-of-north-koreas-five-nuclear-tests-and-how-the-u-s-has-responded/?utm_term=.16221bd7d2ce.

³⁸ The ROK MND, *2014 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: Government Publishing Center, 2014), 59.

³⁹ Barack Obama, “Remarks by President Obama and President Lee Myung-Bak of the Republic of Korea After Bilateral Meeting” (June 26, 2010), The White House Archive, accessed August 21, 2017, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-and-president-lee-myung-bak-republic-korea-after-bilateral->.

⁴⁰ The ROK MND, *2010 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: Government Publishing Center, 2010), 80-86.

⁴¹ Erickson, “A timeline of North Korea’s five nuclear tests and how the U.S. has responded.”

⁴² The ROK MND, *2014 Defense White Paper*, 114-125.

transfer timing will be based upon whether the conditions both countries agreed to are satisfied, rather than setting a specific date.⁴³

The discussion on the wartime OPCON transition has accelerated again as ROK President Moon Jae-in announced his intent to complete the transition within his term of office in June 2017, which US President Donald Trump agreed to during their summit on July 2, 2017. The two militaries are currently cooperating on establishing the ROK military's key capabilities. These efforts began in 2003. However, in-depth discussions on the combined command structure after OPCON transition are necessary since the efforts have not been sufficient.

In summary, the history of changes in the OPCON transition and the ROK-US combined forces command structure is as shown in table 1. Given the background of the ROK-US combined forces command structure, the command structure has changed in conjunction with three major variables: both countries' strategic interests, the security environment in North East Asia, and the capabilities of the ROK military. This monograph uses these three variables as the considerations for the future combined command structure after wartime OPCON transition in the following sections.

Table 1. Changes in the OPCON transition and ROK-US Combined Forces Command Relationship

Dates	Events	OPCON authority
14 Jul 1950	- ROK president Rhee requested GEN MacArthur to take OPCOM over the ROK forces.	ROK CINC
18 Jul 1950	- ROK government transferred OPCOM over the ROK forces to the US military.	CINC-UNC (OPCOM)
17 Nov 1954	- OPCOM changed to OPCON according to the agreement of both governments.	CINC-UNC (OPCON)
17 Apr 1968	- OPCON in counterespionage operations transferred to the ROK military according to presidents Park-Johnson summit.	
07 Nov 1978	- OPCON transferred to CINC-CFC according to the establishment of CFC.	CINC-CFC
01 Dec 1994	- Peacetime OPCON transferred to the ROK military.	Wartime: CINC-CFC Peacetime:
23 Feb 2007	- Both agreed on wartime OPCON transition by 2012.	
26 Jun 2010	- Both agreed to postpone the transition by 2015.	

⁴³ Ibid., 127-128.

23 Oct 2014	- Both agreed on the condition-based OPCON transition.	ROK CJCS
02 Jul 2017	- Both agreed to complete the transition within five years.	
Considerations for the future combined command structure are: - <i>both countries' strategic interests,</i> - <i>the security environment in North East Asia,</i> - <i>and the capabilities of the ROK military.</i>		

Source: Adapted from The ROK Ministry of National Defense, *한미군사관계사: 1817-2002* [The History of the ROK and US Military Relationship] (Seoul: The MND Military History Study Institute, 2003), 632-635.

Challenges to Transforming the Command Structure

This section addresses the two most significant challenges to transforming the command structure in response to the OPCON transition. First, the change of the combined command structure is essential because the current command structure will not be appropriate after the wartime OPCON transition. Second, it may be difficult for the alliance to apply one of the examples introduced in doctrine directly when both countries' strategic interests, unique security environment of the Korean Peninsula, and ROK military command capabilities are considered. To address these issues, this section first reviews the combined command structures in US doctrine and then introduces the ROK-US combined forces command structure as it is currently exercised. Based on these challenges, this section then addresses four key factors for transforming the command structure.

Doctrinal Description of Command Structure in Multinational Operations

This monograph refers to the concept of multinational forces in the US joint doctrine for the doctrinal review of combined command structures for two reasons. First, the ROK-US combined forces created combined doctrine based on US joint doctrine.⁴⁴ It results from the historical background of ROK-US combined operations since the Korean War. Second, the US military uses the term 'combined forces,' 'coalition forces,' and 'multinational forces'

⁴⁴ Major Kwonyoung Park, "Restoring the Nexus of History-Theory-Doctrine in Military Thought: Implications for the Republic of Korea Army" (SAMS monograph, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2013), 18-22.

interchangeably when referring to forces formed with two or more forces from different countries.⁴⁵ US Joint Publication (JP) 3-16, *Multinational Operations*, defines multinational operations as “operations conducted by forces of two or more nations, usually undertaken within the structure of a coalition or alliance.”⁴⁶ The term ‘alliance’ in the definition of multinational operations is “the relationship that results from a formal agreement between two or more nations for broad, long-term objectives that further the common interests of the members.”⁴⁷ Therefore, it is applicable to the ROK-US alliance, which is based on the agreements from both governments.

JP 3-16 introduces three types of multinational command structures: integrated command structure, lead nation command structure, and parallel command structure.⁴⁸ Figure 5 depicts integrated command structure. Key factors in an integrated command structure are a designated single commander, a staff group composed of representatives from all member nations, and subordinate commands and staffs integrated into the lowest echelon necessary to accomplish the mission.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Stephen A. Carney, *Allied Participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2011), 2.

⁴⁶ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-16, *Multinational Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), I-1.

⁴⁷ US Joint Staff, JP 3-16, *Multinational Operations*, I-1.

⁴⁸ Ibid., II-1 – II-8.

⁴⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) force command structure is an example of the integrated command structure. Section four of this monograph analyzes NATO force command structure.

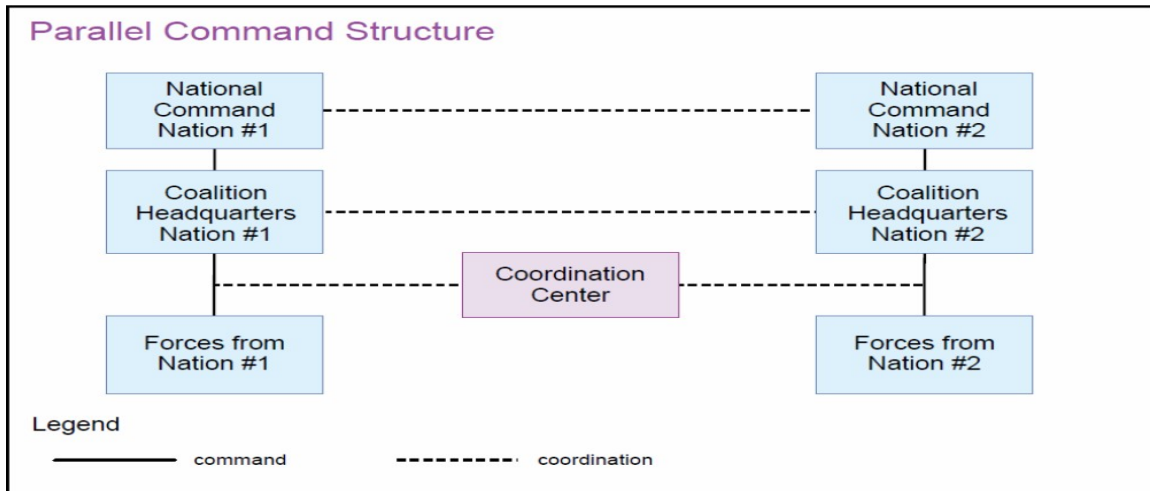


Figure 5. Integrated Command Structure. US Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-16, *Multinational Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), II-5.

Lead nation command structure has the headquarters from one lead country who provides overall military command and control over multinational subordinate commands. In this structure, as shown in Figure 6, all member nations place their forces under the command of one nation. However, it can have an integrated staff.

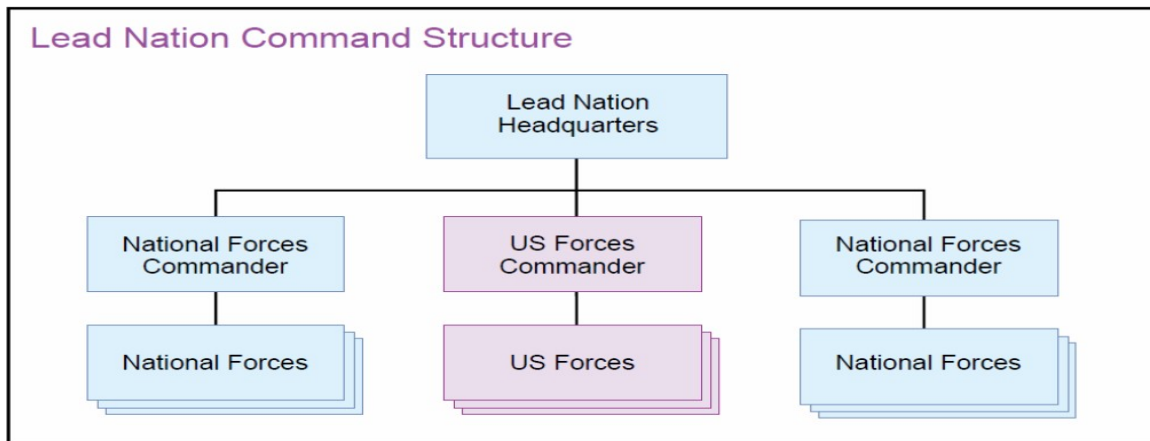


Figure 6. Lead Nation Command Structure. US Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-16, *Multinational Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), II-5.

Parallel command structures do not designate any single force commander. In this command structure, coordination centers are essential for the coalition leadership to achieve unity of effort.⁵⁰ (See figure 7)

⁵⁰ The US-Japan alliance has a similar military command structure to parallel command structure. This monograph also analyzes US-Japan alliance military command structure in section four.

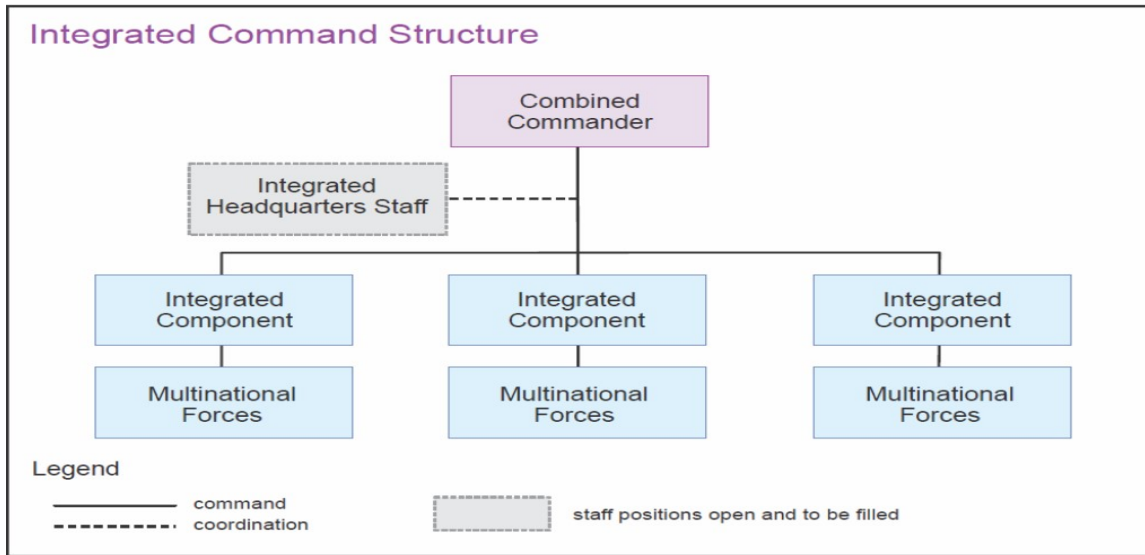


Figure 7. Parallel Command Structure. US Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-16, *Multinational Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), II-6.

The advantages and disadvantages of each command structure are as shown in table 2.

Table 2. The Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Command Structure

Command Structures	Advantages	Disadvantages
Integrated	- Single Combined Commander has either OPCON/ TACON of both U.S. and partner forces (unity of effort). - Command structure allows a commander to draw on expertise from allied forces and allows a greater range of military capabilities and options.	- Larger staff required to ensure coordination is completed among integrated staff members. - Depending upon the level of integration, logistical support might be more difficult.
Lead Nation	- Easy to organize due to less integration. - Smaller Headquarters staff required.	- Legitimacy is suspect because the lead nation is the focal point and seen as the nation making the decisions. - Difficult to share information and intelligence due to lack of integration.
Parallel	- Greater staff effectiveness within each nation's militaries. - Ability to sustain the force easier because each nation is separate and maintains own separate support structure.	- Command structure complicates decision-making process. - Coordination more difficult when synchronizing between U.S. and coalition forces.

Source: Reorganized data from Joint Publication (JP) 3-16, *Multinational Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), II-1 – II-17.

Current ROK-US Combined Forces Command Structure

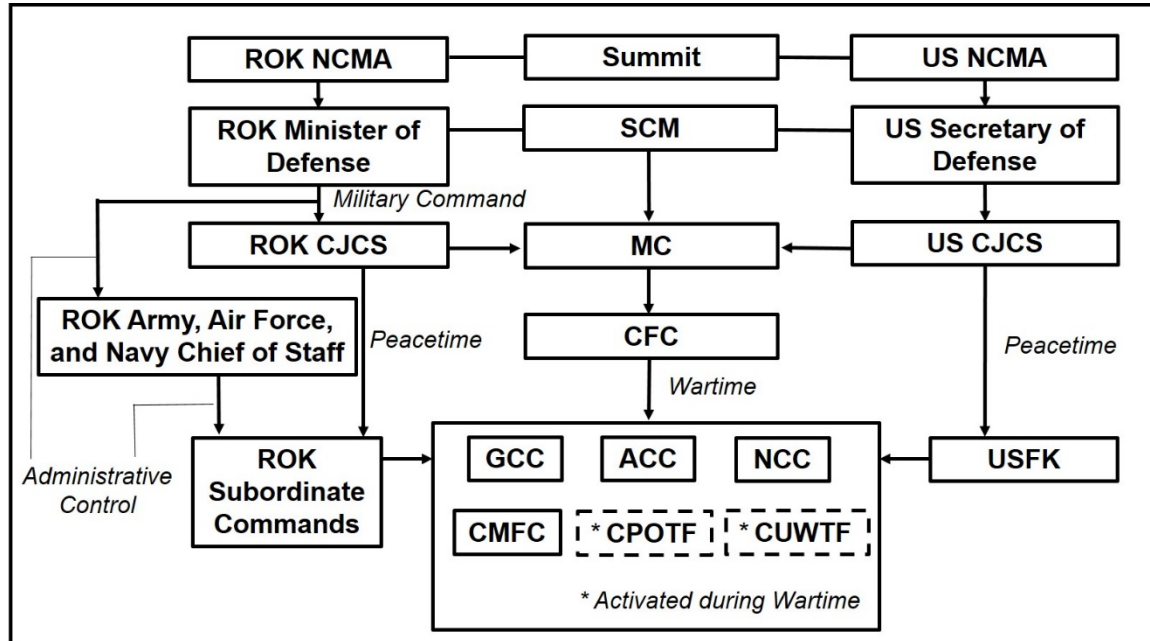


Figure 8. Current ROK-US Combined Command System. Restructured based on the description from In-Kyu Kang, “전시 작전통제권 환수 방안 연구: 한미간 군사지휘 및 협력체계를 중심으로 [Operational Control Authority Transition Plan Study]” (master’s thesis, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, 2009), 76.

The current ROK-US combined forces command structure is close to the integrated command structure. (See figure 8) In terms of command and control authority, CINC-CFC exercises CODA during peacetime and OPCON during wartime. While the ROK CJCS exercises peacetime OPCON, he or she transfers OPCON to CINC-CFC when both NCMAAs agree to do so under the condition of its DEFCON increasing to level 3.⁵¹

Among these organizations in the command structure, the CFC has played the most important role since it was established in 1978. Its staff organization has an integrated structure with designated leads shared between the two countries. So, for instance, while CFC commander has always been a US general, the deputy commander has been a ROK general. As shown in figure 9, the Chief of Staff is a US Lieutenant General, and this officer serves as the Commanding

⁵¹ Il-young Kim and Sung-ryul Cho, *주한미군: 역사, 쟁점, 전망* [USFK: Prospect of Its Historical Issues] (Seoul: Hanul Academy, 2003), 175-176.

General (CG) of the Eighth Army as well as the Chief of Staff, UNC. The Deputy Chief of Staff is a ROK Lieutenant General. Combined staff members also consist of ROK and US officers on even terms so that neither of the two cannot be dominant over the other. However, it is significant that the Assistant Chiefs of Staff for operations and plans are both US Major Generals.

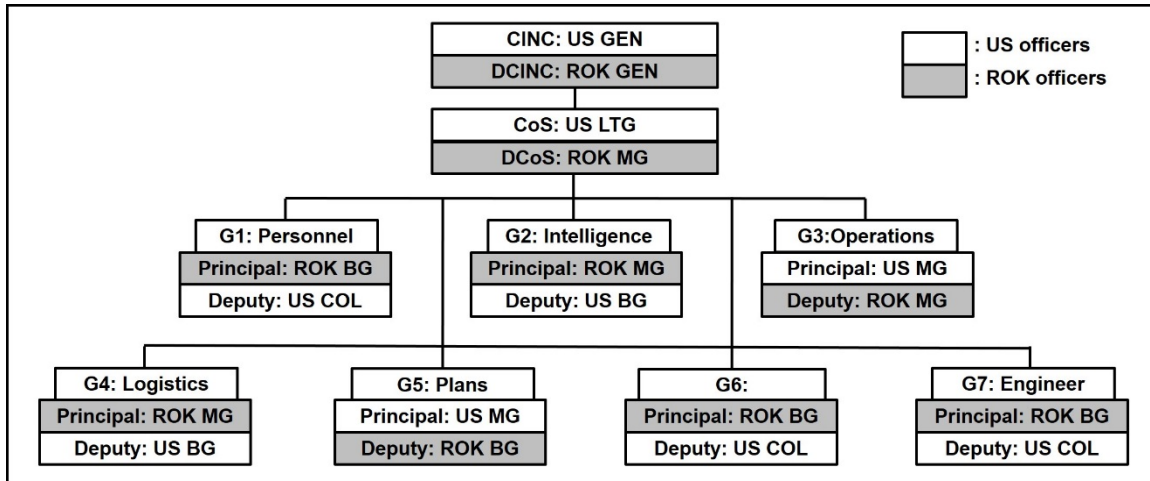


Figure 9. Current CFC Staff Structure. Restructured based on the description from Sam-yeol Jang, *The Role and Command Relationship of the USFK in the Changing Security Environment*, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, April 01, 2001), 11.

Challenges to Transforming the Command Structure

With only a few years to go before the anticipated wartime OPCON transition, there are two significant challenges for the ROK-US alliance regarding transforming the combined command structure. First, the current command structure will not be valid after the wartime OPCON transition. Since the ROK CJCS will have OPCON over the designated ROK and US forces during wartime, CINC of the combined forces will have to be a ROK military officer. However, there is realistically little prospect of the United States placing its troops under foreign control. Therefore, the future combined forces command structure should ultimately be a parallel structure. In order to ensure their operational effectiveness and efficiency in a parallel structure, it is necessary for both militaries to discuss how to restructure their coordinating agencies and the CFC.

Second, the new combined command structure will have to be suitable to both countries' strategic interests, acceptable when considering unique security environment of the Korean Peninsula, and feasible when it comes to the future ROK military command structure. Most importantly, the future combined command structure should satisfy the two countries' strategic interests. ROK president Moon Jae-in was the Chief Presidential Secretary in the Roh Moo-hyun administration. Roh greatly influenced Moon, specifically his policy on self-reliant defense.⁵² President Moon wants to take wartime OPCON as soon as possible and have sufficient military power to deter a North Korean threat without US support. President Trump also concurred with Moon's opinion on the earliest wartime OPCON transition. However, he seems to want to keep US influence on the Peninsula and to maximize US economic interests. The Trump administration's policy toward North Korea is 'maximum pressure and engagement.'⁵³ In order to reflect the intents of both administrations, the future combined command structure should allow neither to dominate in terms of command authority, although the ROK side will take OPCON back. That is why the ultimate combined command structure for both countries should be a parallel structure.

In terms of acceptability, the ROK-US combined security system should be able to manage prudent risks in the uncertain future environment with its new command structure. North Korean threats have largely two forms: conventional threats, and nuclear and missile threats. Since the ROK CJCS took peacetime OPCON, the United States has responded by military action mostly against North Korean nuclear and missile threats. They did not take immediate military action against North Korean conventional threats, which did not directly threaten the continental United States. For example, the US military did not immediately respond with military action

⁵² Hyuk Kim, "Self-Reliance and Sunshine: Previewing President Moon's North Korea Policy," *The Diplomat*, May 10, 2017, accessed August 25, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2017/05/self-reliance-and-sunshine-previewing-president-moons-north-korea-policy/>.

⁵³ Byong-chul Lee, "Challenges Ahead for the US-South Korea Alliance," *38North*, June 13, 2017, accessed August 25, 2017, <http://www.38north.org/2017/06/bclee061317/>.

either when *Cheonan* sank on March 26 or when North Korea bombarded Yeonpyeongdo Island on November 23, 2010. However, the US military conducted show of force operations by using the B-1B Lancer and the USS *Carl Vinson* against North Korea's recent nuclear and missile tests.⁵⁴ Furthermore, China, another key player in North East Asia, is one of the factors that deters US military action in the region. Because of that, some Korean people doubt that US forces will support ROK forces in wartime after the OPCON transition. Therefore, the new command structure should provide the ROK CJCS the authority to control designated US forces based on mutually discussed Time-Phased Force and Deployment Data (TPFDD) in wartime.⁵⁵

In addition, both countries must determine a feasible combined command structure, considering the ROK military command capabilities and its future command structure. The ROK CJCS should be able to command and control designated ROK and US forces in wartime after the wartime OPCON transition. The ROK military devotes significant effort to building that capability. The ROK MND has established the Defense Reform Basic Plan (2014-2030), which primarily includes its command and force structure reforms, force buildup, and defense management reforms. According to the plan, the ROK military will reorganize its JCS, focusing on strengthening its joint and combined operations command and execution capabilities.⁵⁶ Therefore, the new combined command structure should be compatible with the future ROK military command structure.

⁵⁴ Anna Steshenko, "U.S. strategic B-1B bombers conduct joint military drills near North Korea and Pyongyang warns of nuclear war," *National Post*, May 3, 2017, accessed August 26, 2017, <http://nationalpost.com/news/world/u-s-strategic-b-1b-bombers-conduct-joint-military-drills-near-north-korea-and-pyongyang-warns-of-nuclear-war>.

⁵⁵ Time Phased Force Deployment Data" (TPFDD) is the data base portion of an operation plan in the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES). The TPFDD contains data on military units and forces regarding force data as scheduled over time, data for cargo and personnel that are not part of the units, and movement data for the operation plan. US Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-35, *Deployment and Redeployment Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), ix-xx.

⁵⁶ The ROK MND, *2014 Defense White Paper*, 88-91.

This analysis of the challenges demonstrates four key factors for a model for transforming the ROK-US combined command structure: operational effectiveness and efficiency, equality in the relationship, assurance of US military support, and compatibility with the ROK future command structure.

Table 3. Challenges and Key Factors for a Model.

Challenges		Key factors
1. The current command structure will no longer appropriate after the OPCON transition.		- <i>Operational effectiveness and efficiency</i>
2. It will be difficult to apply one of the examples from the doctrine.	a. It should be suitable to both countries' strategic interests.	- <i>Equality in the relationship</i>
	b. It should be acceptable when considering unique security environment of the Korean Peninsula.	- <i>Assurance of the US military support</i>
	c. It should be feasible when it comes to the future ROK military command structure.	- <i>Compatibility with the ROK future command structure</i>

Source: Created by the author.

Case Studies

It is imperative for both militaries to review other countries' examples of multinational forces command structures in order to develop an effective combined command structure. NATO member countries and Japan are notable examples that have military coalition systems with the United States. These examples have different historical and geopolitical backgrounds than the ROK-US alliance. However, there will be some important lessons learned from these examples when it comes to the frame of the military coalition system. Therefore, this section will review the cases of NATO command structure and US-Japan combined command structure, and then will analyze the lessons learned from them. The first three of the four key factors derived from the last section are used for this case study: operational effectiveness and efficiency, equality in the relationship, and assurance of US military support. Finally, this section addresses three lessons learned from the case studies, which are relevant to the ROK-US combined forces.

NATO Command Structure

NATO currently has 29 independent member countries and its organization is an integrated structure.⁵⁷ The key elements of NATO's military organization are the Military Committee (MC), its executive body, the International Military Staff, and the Military Command Structure. Among them, the Military Command Structure consists of Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT).⁵⁸ The Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) commands ACO while the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) commands ACT. ACO, which is responsible for the planning and execution of NATO military operations, includes Joint Forces Command Brunssum (JFCBS), Joint Forces Command Naples (JFCNP), Air Command, Maritime Command, Land Command,

⁵⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "Member Countries," NATO Topics, last modified June 12, 2017, accessed August 28, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm.

⁵⁸ NATO, "Military Organization and Structures," NATO Topics, last modified July 15, 2014, accessed August 27, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49608.htm.

and Communication and Information System (CIS) Group.⁵⁹ It also has the International Military Staff (IMS), which links between the political decision making bodies and the Strategic commanders. The structure is shown in figure 10.

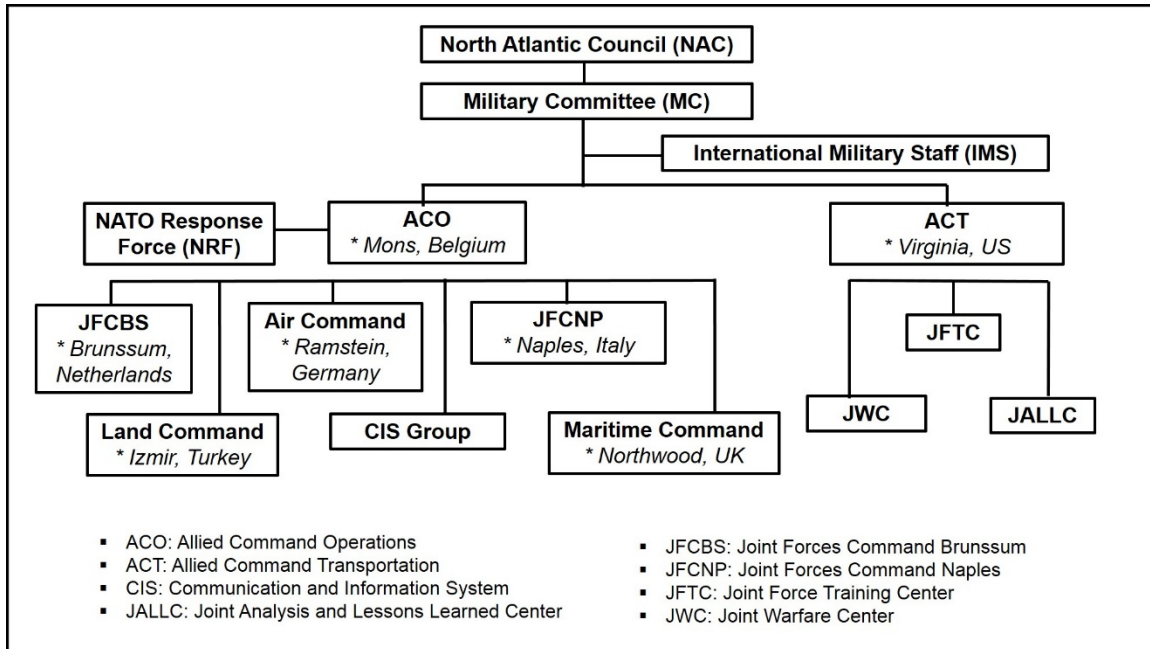


Figure 10. NATO Military Command Structure as of 2017. Structured based on the data from “NATO Structure,” NATO Organization, last modified January 4, 2017, accessed August 27, 2017, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/structure.htm>.

NATO military command structure ensures operational effectiveness and efficiency. As shown in figure 10, the NAC and the MC make decisions for all military organizations. The SACEUR is a commander of ACO and therefore responsible for NATO operations. While all member countries exercise command authorities over their own military forces, the SACEUR takes command authority over the designated forces in wartime. Through such an integrated command structure, NATO forces maximize operational effectiveness and efficiency.

In terms of equality in the relationship, the member country is able to enjoy equal rights with other member countries although the United States is still the dominant country. First, military organizations of NATO are located in diverse places. Furthermore, the commanders of

⁵⁹ NATO, “Allied Command Operations (ACO),” NATO Topics, last modified November 11, 2014, accessed August 27, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52091.htm.

them are from diverse countries. For example, the SACEUR is currently US Army General Curtis M. Scaparrotti while the SACT is French Air Force General Denis Mercier and the commander of JFCBS is Italian Army General Salvatore Farina. Moreover, the IMS consists of military and civilian personnel from all member countries. Therefore, this structure maintains the balance between the member countries while the United States remains first among equals.

Lastly, NATO military command structure ensures military support from the United States in the case of crisis. It is based on NATO's Article 5, which states the principle of collective defense.⁶⁰ In addition, the United States has critical national interests in Europe: to deter and defeat Russian aggression in Eastern Europe.⁶¹ The United States has United States European Command (USEUCOM) in Europe and the Commander USEUCOM is dual-hatted as the SACEUR. Although it is an integrated structure, the European countries recognize the United States as a leading country in NATO military operations since US forces are the essential element in order to deter and defeat Russian aggression. NATO's military command structure represents some positive points of an integrated structure in terms of operational effectiveness and efficiency, equality in the relationship between member countries, and assurance of US military support.

US-Japan Combined Command Structure

The US-Japan combined command structure most closely resembles a parallel structure in doctrine. (See figure 11) During the Korean War, the United States considered the Soviet Union the most significant threat and continued to reconstruct Japan. In September 1951, the United States and Japan signed the Mutual Security Treaty. This treaty developed into the Mutual

⁶⁰ NATO, "Collective defense – Article 5" NATO Topics, last modified March 22, 2017, accessed October 31, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52091.htm.

⁶¹ European Command (EU), "Mission," European Command Home, accessed August 28, 2017, <http://www.eucom.mil/mission>.

Defense Assistance Agreement in March 1954, which focused on defense assistance, and then modified again to the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security in 1960.⁶²

According to the treaty, the two countries established the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee (SCC) in 1960 and the Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation (SDC) under the SCC in 1976. In order to enhance the mutual defense system against a possible armed attack against Japan, the two countries signed the Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation at the 17th SCC in November 1978, which is the same year the ROK-US CFC was established. In 2016, the two countries revised the Guideline in order to expand their capacity to respond to various threats, such as more active military activities of North Korea and China, and new threats including terrorism, space, and cyberspace. Furthermore, they agreed to enhance their cooperation by operating the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) even in the peacetime. The ACM plays a critical role in their combined command structure since they need more close coordination in the parallel command structure.⁶³

In terms of operational effectiveness and efficiency, the US-Japan combined command structure is less effective and efficient relative to the NATO command structure. At the beginning of a conflict, it might be difficult for the two countries to maintain operational effectiveness and efficiency since the parallel command structure does not ensure unity of effort. However, Japan has consistently worked to supplement this weakness by establishing diverse coordinating mechanisms as shown in figure 11. These mechanisms have significant implications to the ROK-US alliance in preparing for the wartime OPCON transition.

⁶² Council on Foreign Relations, “The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance” Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, last modified July 1, 2014, accessed September 1, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-japan-security-alliance>.

⁶³ Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2016* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2016), http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2016/DOJ2016_2-4-2_web.pdf, 230-237.

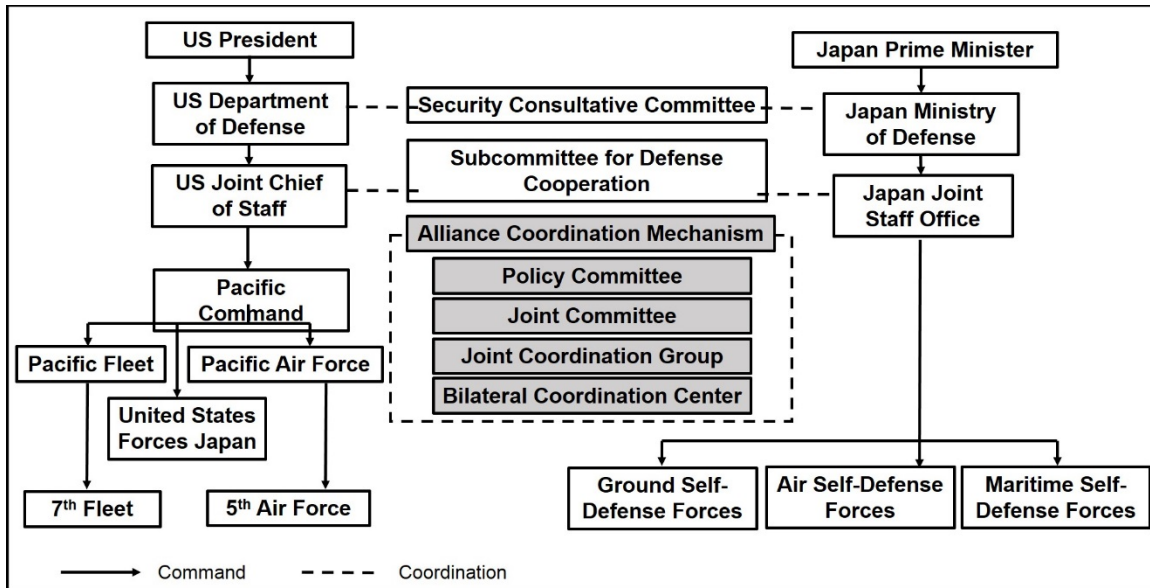


Figure 11. US-Japan Combined Command Structure. Restructured based on the description from Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2016* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2016), http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2016/DOJ2016_2-4-2_web.pdf, 230-237.

Conversely, the two countries enjoy equal rights within this command structure.

Although they seek to plan and implement combined operations, each country exercises the authority to command and control their own military forces. If an armed attack against Japan occurs, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces conduct primarily defensive operations, while the US forces support and supplement the Self-Defense Forces.⁶⁴ In other words, they operate based on a ‘supported and supporting’ relationship.⁶⁵

A potential problem for Japan is whether the US forces will support the Japanese Self-Defense Forces with sufficient combat power, anytime, and at any place that Japan would require. The two governments have steadily enhanced their combined operations capabilities since 1951 and according to the recent Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation addressed in *Defense of Japan 2016*, they will continue to enhance operational coordination and strengthen bilateral

⁶⁴ Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2016*, 233-234.

⁶⁵ In support relationship, the supported commander designates and prioritizes objectives, timing, and duration of the supporting action whereas the supporting commander determines the forces, tactics, methods, procedures, and communications to be employed in providing support. US Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), I-8.

planning.⁶⁶ However, this does not necessarily mean that all of these activities guarantee the support of US forces in the precise manner that Japan expects since neither country has the authority to control the other country's forces. With autonomy of control comes the potential that partners might disagree on ends, ways, and means, and thus the details of operational execution.

Comparison of NATO and US-Japan Command Structure

As discussed above, NATO military command structure is close to an integrated command structure while the US-Japan combined command structure is close to the parallel command structure. US-Japan's parallel command structure has its own strengths and weaknesses whereas NATO military's integrated structure mostly has positive points in terms of operational effectiveness and efficiency, the equality in the relationship, and assurance of US military support. However, this case study is not for choosing one of the two structures, but for getting implications for transforming the ROK-US command structure. The comparison of the two command structures is described in table 4.

Table 4. Comparison of NATO and US-Japan Command Structure

Key factors	NATO military command structure (Integrated structure)	US-Japan command structure (Parallel structure)
Operational effectiveness and efficiency	Effective and efficient based on the unity of effort through the unity of command.	Mitigates its deficiencies through support relationships and coordination mechanisms.
Equality in the relationship	Ensures equality in the relationship although US military is still dominant.	Ensures equality in the relationship.
Assurance of the US military support	Ensures US military support.	Cannot guarantee US military support.
Lessons learned from the case studies (Implications for the ROK-US command structure)	- The future ROK-US combined command structure should support the unity of effort in order to increase the operational effectiveness and efficiency. - The future ROK-US combined command structure should have a coordination mechanism between the two countries in order to achieve the operational effectiveness and efficiency while ensuring equality in the relationship. - The future ROK-US combined command structure should include an integrated structure within a parallel structure in order to ensure the US military support.	

Source: Created by the author.

⁶⁶ Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2016*, 232.

As depicted in table 4, these case studies provide three lessons for the future ROK-US command structure. These lessons learned from the case studies are used as the parts of the criteria for an appropriate model for the future combined command structure in the next section.

A Model for Transforming the ROK-US Command Structure

This section suggests the most appropriate model for transforming ROK-US combined command structure based on the analyses and reviews in the previous sections. In order to do so, the section first reviews the criteria that consist of considerations derived from the historical background, the key factors drawn from the analysis of the challenges in the future combined command structure, and the lessons learned from the case study. This section then introduces an option for the future command structure that the two militaries are currently discussing. Finally, it addresses the most appropriate model for transforming the ROK-US combined command structure after the wartime OPCON transition and validates it through a comprehensive analysis.

Criteria for a Model

The considerations, key factors, and lessons mentioned above constitute the criteria that the two militaries should consider to determine an appropriate model for transforming the future combined command structure. (See table 5.)

Table 5. Criteria for the most appropriate Model

Category	Criteria
Considerations	- <i>Both governments' national interests</i>
	- <i>Operational environment on the Korean Peninsula</i>
	- <i>ROK military capability</i>
Key factors	- <i>Operational effectiveness and efficiency</i>
	- <i>Equality in the relationship between the two militaries</i>
	- <i>Assurance of US support</i>
	- <i>Compatibility with the ROK future command structure</i>
Lessons	- <i>Unity of effort</i>
	- <i>Coordination mechanism</i>
	- <i>Modified integrated structure</i>

Source: Created by the author.

An Option Currently Being Discussed

A combined command structure currently being discussed between the two militaries is classified information. Thus, this study analyzes the command structure provided by open source information. The two militaries agreed to maintain the command similar to the CFC even after wartime OPCON transition at the Shangri-La Dialogue on June 1, 2013 (See figure 12).⁶⁷ However, they agreed to select the commander from ROK military general officers while selecting the deputy commander from US military general officers. After that, the two militaries established a joint task force to examine this issue and the task force has been developing the future combined command structure in the frame that the two militaries agreed at the Shangri-La Dialogue.⁶⁸

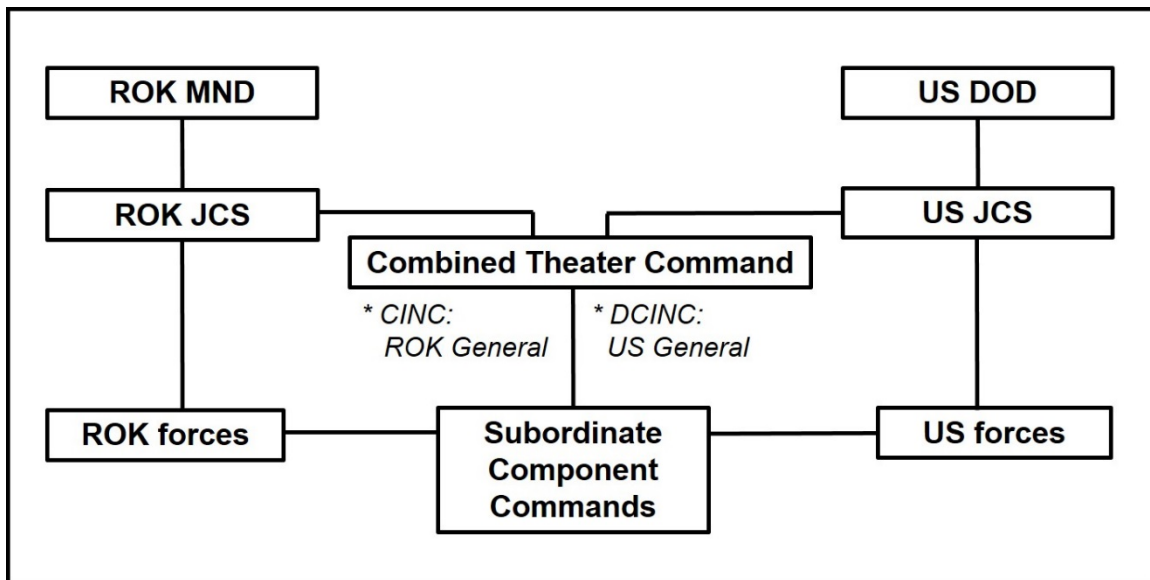


Figure 12. An Agreed ROK and US Command Structure. Restructured based on the description from Hyun-soo Choi, “Activating the Combined Theater Command,” *Kookmin Ilbo*, June 2, 2013, accessed September 9, 2017, <http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0007238145>.

⁶⁷ Ho-joon Kim, “Kim Kwan-jin, ‘The ROK and US consensus on maintaining the combined command system’,” *Yonhap News*, June 1, 2013, accessed September 9, 2017, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=100&oid=001&aid=0006291452>.

⁶⁸ Craig Whitlock, “Handover of U.S. command of South Korean troops still under debate,” *The Washington Post*, September 29, 2013, accessed September 9, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/handover-of-us-command-of-south-korean-troops-still-under-debate/2013/09/29/25a73374-28fb-11e3-83fa-b82b8431dc92_story.html?utm_term=.15ec36a16183.

Suggestion for a Model

The command structure mentioned above is a basic outline. It is fundamental for developing an appropriate combined command structure in detail since the two militaries agreed on this command structure. This monograph suggests the three-stage model for gradual transition and development of the future combined command structure. This suggestion is based on the mutually agreed basic command structure and the criteria.

The first stage begins with a modified integrated command structure, in which the ROK JCS exercises OPCON over the ROK and designated US ground forces. This command structure does not deviate from the mutually agreed command structure since a ROK general officer takes in charge of the Combined Theater Command. In this stage, however, the US 7th Air Force commander takes OPCON over the designated ROK air forces and the US 7th Fleet commander takes OPCON over the designated ROK naval forces since the ROK military currently does not have the capabilities to exercise OPCON over the US air and naval forces. Meanwhile, the ROK military takes the lead for combined planning in order to develop their planning capabilities. (See Figure 13)

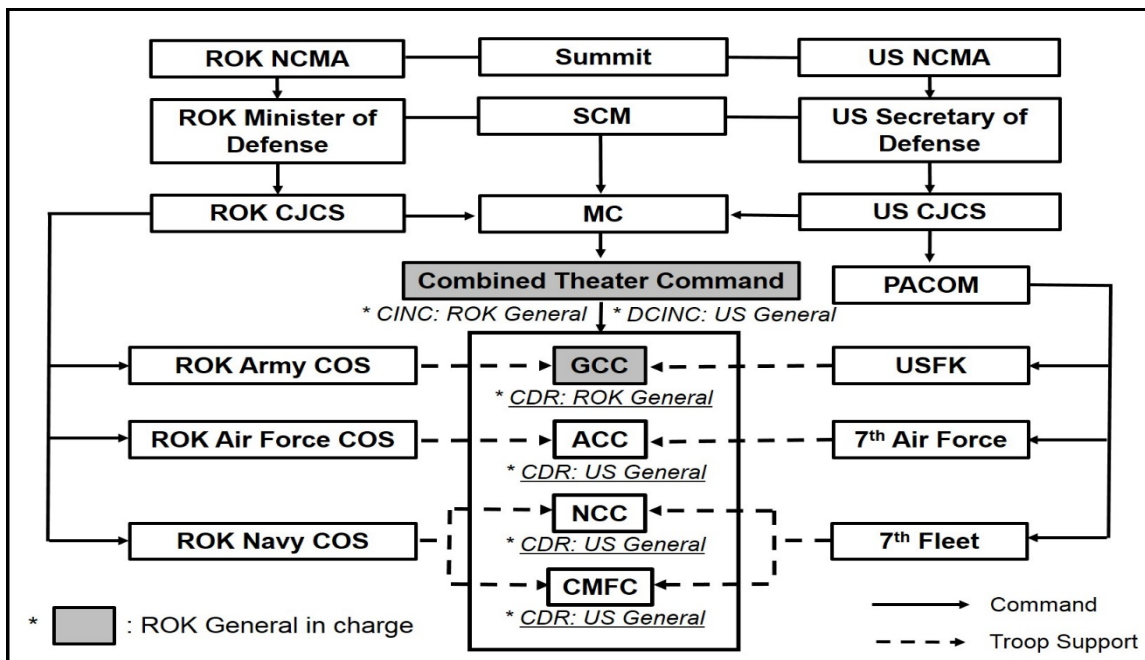


Figure 13. The First Stage: Integrated Command Structure I. Created by the author.

In the long term, the ROK military should have the capabilities to control all the military forces operating within the theater of the Korean Peninsula during wartime. Therefore, the ROK JCS takes OPCON over the ROK air and naval forces as well as the designated US air and naval forces in the second stage. In this case, preparing the ROK military's capabilities to control high-tech weapon systems that the US military possesses is the prerequisite for operational effectiveness and efficiency. Meanwhile, the size of the US forces supporting the ROK forces decreases as the self-reliant defense capabilities of the ROK military increase. This command structure still goes along with the mutually agreed command structure. (See Figure 14)

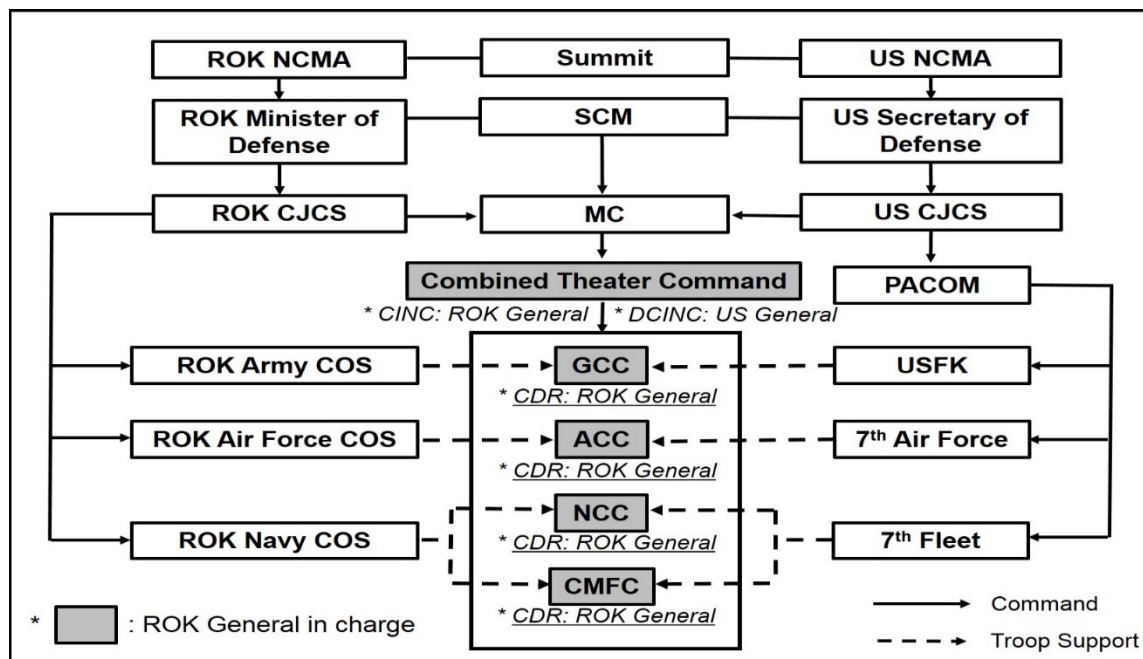


Figure 14 The Second Stage: Integrated Command Structure II. Created by the author.

Finally, the ROK-US combined command structure should develop in the form of a parallel structure. Although this structure is different from the mutually agreed command structure, this change is essential to both countries since it ensures Korea's self-reliant national defense and reduces the United States' burden of sharing expenditures for Korea's national defense and security. This is similar to the US-Japan combined command structure. The US military takes the supporting role while the ROK military takes the supported role. Therefore, the two militaries should consider the ROK military's capabilities in order to transition to the third

stage. The establishment of coordination mechanisms is essential to this final stage of the command structure. The organizations in the mechanism function not only as coordinating centers but also as planning cells. Ultimately, this command structure ensures greater flexibility for both militaries to operate their respective forces. (See Figure 15)

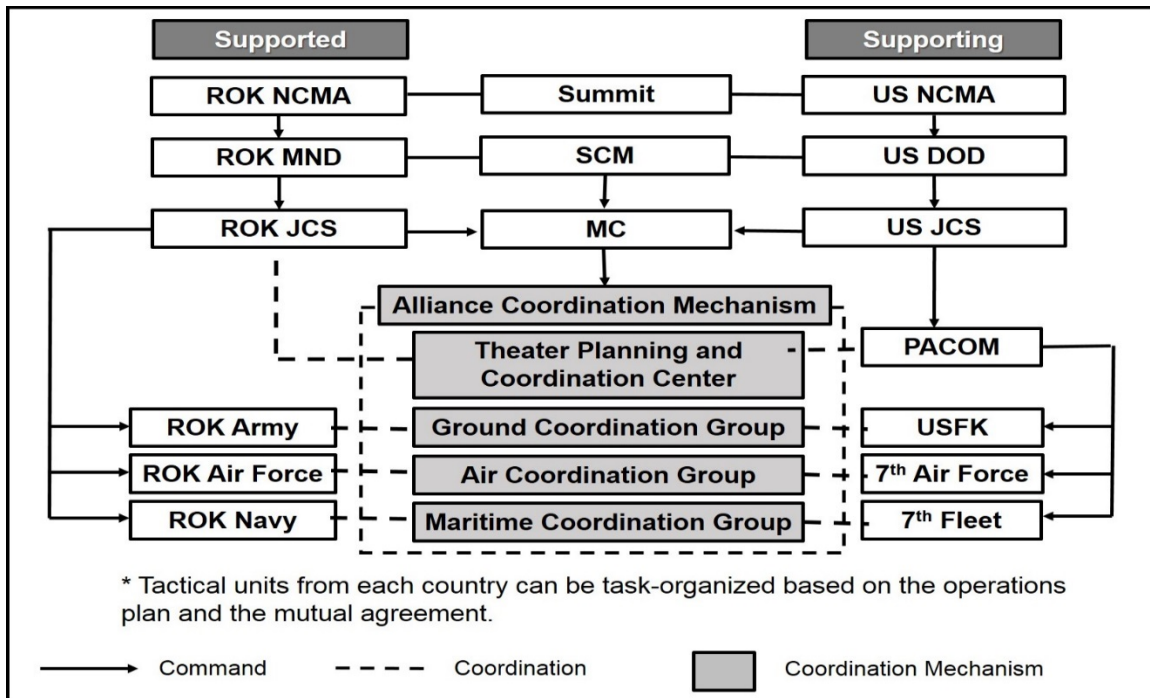


Figure 15 The Third Stage: Parallel Command Structure. Created by the author.

This three-stage model is an appropriate approach that satisfies the ten criteria. First, the model meets both countries' national interests in terms of the mutual alliance. The Republic of Korea seeks to achieve self-reliant defense largely because Korean public sentiment requiring their government to achieve it has been growing steadily, especially after president Moon took office.⁶⁹ The parallel structure as shown in figure 15, the third stage of the model, ensures the ROK military's self-reliant defense. Furthermore, this model also creates sufficient time for the ROK military to develop their capabilities for self-reliant defense. Meanwhile, the United States wants to maintain its influence on the Korean Peninsula in order to deter Chinese aggression in

⁶⁹ *The Korea Herald*, "President Moon vows to build strong, self-reliant defense to ensure peace," August 18, 2017, accessed September 15, 2017, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20170818000327>.

the region, while reducing financial burden.⁷⁰ In this model, the US military maintains its influence in the region during the first and second stages. In addition, the third stage does not necessarily mean that the US military loses its influence if both countries agree to sustain the stationing of USFK on the Peninsula. Since the ROK government will pay more portion of defense burden as the process goes on, the United States' financial burden will gradually decrease.

This model is appropriate to respond to the challenges anticipated in the future operational environment. The alliance is currently facing various North Korean threats from conventional gunfire to unconventional WMD threats, such as nuclear weapons and missiles.⁷¹ Therefore, preventing a potential security vacuum possibly caused by the wartime OPCON transition is critical to the alliance. This gradual approach beginning with the first stage shown in figure 13 will prevent Kim Jong-un's miscalculation in the short term by showing him that the ROK-US alliance is still strong, although the final stage for the combined command structure is the parallel structure.

The ROK military will have sufficient time to develop their self-reliant defense capabilities by adopting the three-stage model. The ROK military has been building the "triad system" which includes "Kill Chain," the Korea Air and Missile Defense (KAMD), and the Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR) in order to deter and defeat North Korea's WMD threats.⁷² According to the ROK military's five-year defense program, they will complete

⁷⁰ Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 16-22.

⁷¹ The ROK MND, *2016 Defense White Paper*, 21-34.

⁷² The triad system is the system that the ROK military seeks to build in order to effectively deter and respond to North Korean nuclear and missile threats. The system consists of the three axes: The Kill Chain, the Korea Air and Missile Defense (KAMD), and the Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR). The Kill Chain is an attack system comprising a series of steps from the real-time detection of enemy missile threats and identifying the target locations to deciding on the most effective means of strike and launching the strike. The KAMD is a multi-tier missile defense system that takes into consideration the battlefield environment of the Korean Peninsula. The KMPR is a non-nuclear response to punish and retaliate against North Korea in the event of a strike against the Republic of Korea by directly targeting its leadership, including its war headquarters, through deployment of missiles capable of simultaneous,

this system by early 2020s in order to take wartime OPCON back by 2022.⁷³ However, many experts believe that it will take more than ten years to construct the complete system since the ROK military is relying heavily on the US military in terms of the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities that are essential to the system.⁷⁴ If the ROK military follows the three-stage model, they will be able to prevent the security vacuum based on strong support from the US military even after the wartime OPCON transition with the beginning of the first stage in 2022. Then, they will be able to complete building the triad system for self-reliant defense before the third stage begins.

In order to maximize the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the combined forces, the three-stage model considers the command capabilities of the ROK military. When considering the current ROK military air and naval assets, the ROK military currently does not have sufficient capabilities to control US air and naval assets. On the other hand, they are capable of controlling the combined ground forces because the commander of GCC has been a ROK general since 1992.⁷⁵ Therefore, the three-stage model suggests that the ROK military take command of the combined air and naval forces at the second stage. The ROK military is developing their air and naval capabilities based on the Defense Reform Plan (DRP) 2014-2030.⁷⁶ By 2030, the ROK

massive-scale precision strikes, and special operations forces. The ROK MND, *2016 Defense White Paper*, 69-73.

⁷³ The ROK MND, "The Five Year Program 2018-2022," The ROK MND Defense Budget, last modified April 25, 2017, accessed September 16, 2017, http://www.mnd.go.kr/user/boardList.action?command=view&page=1&boardId=O_59748&boardSeq=O_167426&titleId=null&siteId=mnd&id=mnd_010403000000.

⁷⁴ Ji-hye Jun, "3 military systems to counter N. Korea: Kill Chain, KAMD, KMPR," *The Korea Herald*, November 1, 2016, accessed September 16, 2017, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/11/205_217259.html.

⁷⁵ The ROK MND, *한미군사관계사* [The History of the ROK and US Military Relationship], 602.

⁷⁶ The ROK MND, Defense Reform, last modified March 12, 2017, accessed September 16, 2017, http://www.mnd.go.kr/mbs/mnd/subview.jsp?id=mnd_010502000000.

military air and naval capabilities will increase while the US air and naval assets supporting the combined forces decrease so that the ROK military can control the combined air and naval forces.

The ROK-US combined command structure should ultimately ensure equal rights to both militaries in the relationship. This perspective results from both countries' public sentiments and that is why the third stage of the model suggests the parallel command structure.⁷⁷ However, it is difficult for both militaries change their combined command structure from the current integrated command structure to the parallel command structure in a short time. The gradual change according to the three stages will allow for course corrections while maintaining deterrence and minimize the mistakes that the two militaries could make if they drastically change the structure. During the first and second stages, the Combined Theater Command and respective subordinate commands keep the mutually integrated staff structures in order to minimize the unequal rights between the two militaries.

Whether the US forces would support the ROK forces in the case of an attack against the Republic of Korea after wartime OPCON transition is another important issue to the ROK military. US military support is crucial to them at least until they develop sufficient capabilities for self-reliant defense, which will be the third stage of the model. Therefore, the first and second stages in the model maintain the current operational plan, mutual agreements, and substructures in the combined command structure, although ROK military generals replace US military generals in some key command positions. It will ensure the consistent stationing of the USFK and the reinforcement of US augmentation forces to the Korean Peninsula based on the mutually agreed Flexible Deterrence Options (FDO) and TPFDD.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Taik-young Hamm, "The Self-Reliant National Defense of South Korea and the Future of the U.S.-ROK Alliance," Nautilus Institute, June 20, 2006, accessed September 16, 2017, <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-policy-forum/the-self-reliant-national-defense-of-south-korea-and-the-future-of-the-u-s-rok-alliance/>.

⁷⁸ The Flexible Deterrence Options (FDO) is a series of political, economic, diplomatic, and military options that are part of the crisis action procedures laid out in the CFC Crisis Actions Standard Operating Procedures, which have to be promptly executed to deter war. The ROK MND, *2016 Defense White Paper*, 52-53.

In addition, this model is compatible with the ROK future command structure. The ROK CJCS currently has the authority to command respective service forces whereas the respective chiefs of the Army, Air Force, and Navy only have military administrative authorities over their respective service forces.⁷⁹ In terms of the command authorities within each service, the ROK Army has the ground component command and three field armies commanded by four-star general officers, whereas the Air Force and the Navy have their operations commands commanded by three-star general officers. Therefore, it is not problematic that the commanders of the US 7th Air Force and 7th Fleet, which are US three-star generals, command the ROK Air Force and Naval forces during the first stage. According to the ROK Command Structure Reform Plan, however, the ROK military will deactivate both operations commands of the Air Force and the Navy and integrate the command authorities with the respective Chiefs of Staffs.⁸⁰ In that case, the problem is that US three-star generals will exercise command authority over ROK four-star generals. The second stage of the model prevents this problem by giving specified ROK four-star generals the authority to control designated US air and naval forces in addition to the ground forces.

Next, this model ensures unity of effort throughout all stages.⁸¹ The first two stages have integrated command structures, which is similar to the NATO military command structure. Since

⁷⁹ The ROK MND, *2016 Defense White Paper*, 98-106.

⁸⁰ The ROK MND, “The Command Structure Reform Plan,” The ROK MND Policy Materials, last modified March 13, 2011, accessed September 17, 2017, http://mnd.go.kr/cop/pblicttn/selectPublicationsUser.do?siteId=mnd&componentId=14&categoryId=25&pageIndex=1&id=mnd_040501000000.

⁸¹ Unity of effort is the coordination and cooperation toward common objectives, even if the participants are not necessarily part of the same command or organization, which is the product of successful unified action. Unity of command is the operation of all forces under a single responsible commander who has the requisite authority to direct and employ those forces in pursuit of common purpose. Unified action is the synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operation to achieve unity of effort. US Joint Staff, JP 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 250-252. JP 3-0, *Joint Operations* depicts that “Enabled by unity of command, military leaders understand the effective mechanisms to achieve military unity of effort. The goal of unified action is to achieve a similar unity of effort between participants.” JP 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), I-9.

the Combined Theater Forces and its subordinate commands will be operating under a single responsible commander during these stages, its unity of command will enable the leaders of the Combined Theater Command to understand the effective mechanisms to achieve unity of effort. The third stage, which is similar to the US-Japan combined command structure, will mitigate the risks of a parallel structure in achieving unity of effort by facilitating unity of command and unified action through the support relationship and the ACM.

Because coordinating organizations are essential to a parallel command structure, the third stage of the model includes the ACM, which is subdivided from the Theater Planning and Coordination Center (TPCC) to each service component's coordination group. In order to establish the ACM effectively, both militaries should utilize currently existing organizations. The CTC during the first two stages will maintain the staff organization of the current CFC and the staff organization will shape the TPCC during the third stage. Furthermore, the third stage will establish the Ground Coordination Group (GCG) based on the staff organizations of the GCC from the first two stages and the ROK-US Combined Division.⁸² The Air Coordination Group (ACG) and Maritime Coordination Group (MCG) will be also established during the third stage based on the staff organizations of the ACC and NCC from the first two stages.

Although the ultimate form of the ROK-US combined forces command structure that this study suggests is the parallel structure, the sub organizations of this suggested organization will be integrated. In the third stage, the ROK military will be the supported force whereas the US military is the supporting force. However, the two militaries will task-organize the tactical units from the ground, air, and naval forces of the respective militaries as necessary. The two militaries should develop plans to integrate the tactical units from each military in order to respond to

⁸² The ROK and US militaries appointed the US 2 Infantry Division as the ROK-US Combined Division and reorganized it with an integrated staff structure in 2015. David Vergun, "U.S. Soldiers Strengthen Alliance, Readiness With South Korean Partners," U.S. Department of Defense, June 8, 2017, accessed September 19, 2017, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1207765/us-soldiers-strengthen-alliance-readiness-with-south-korean-partners/>.

uncertain future operational environment. They should also keep holding combined exercises based on the various operations plans. In addition, the two countries should negotiate national caveats. As a result, the integrated structure within the parallel command structure will increase the operational effectiveness, facilitate support from US forces, and compensate for defect in the unity of command.

In sum, this study has used doctrinally sound criteria and detailed analysis to suggest the three-stage model for the future ROK-US combined forces after wartime OPCON transition. The two militaries will be able to initiate the first stage with the wartime OPCON transition in around 2022. However, subsequent transitions between stages will be based on the meeting of mutually agreed upon conditions.

Conclusion

Summary

Since US forces fought together with ROK forces in the Korean War, the two countries have played the most critical roles to deter and respond to North Korean threats through their mutual security and defense agreement and military alliance. This strong alliance has never been swayed under any circumstances. In particular, both countries maintained their strong alliance even when the ROK military took peacetime OPCON back from the CFC in 1994. Now is another pivotal moment for both militaries since they are preparing for the wartime OPCON transition within the next five years. Developing an appropriate ROK-US combined command structure for the period after the wartime OPCON transition is one of the most important challenges for both militaries.

In order to come up with the most appropriate future combined command structure, this monograph reviewed the background and issues on the ROK-US combined command structure, conducted case studies of the command structures for NATO and US-Japan combined forces, and extracted ten criteria for the future combined command structure from them. Through the analysis

based on the ten criteria, a three-stage model has been suggested. This model seeks gradual changes in the combined command structure. The first stage is an integrated command structure commanded by a ROK general officer. In this structure, the GCC commander is a ROK general officer whereas the commanders of other components are US general officers. In the second stage, ROK general officers replace US general officers at the command of the ACC, NCC, and CMFC within the same structure as the first stage. The ultimate stage of the model is a parallel command structure. The US military supports the ROK military without a command relationship and the ACM plays an important role for detailed coordination between the two militaries. The transitions from one stage to another stage are condition-based. One of the most important conditions for the transitions is the ROK military's capabilities.

Recommendations

Although it is a gradual approach to the future combined command structure, much preparation is required in the process. This study recommends that the two militaries focus on three things during the process of the model: forming a consensus between the two countries, establishing a legal basis upon which the model can function, and developing the ROK military's capabilities.

First, the two countries should form a diplomatic consensus to reform the combined command structure that this study suggested. Both militaries have reached an agreement on the wartime OPCON transition and the basic model of the future combined command structure. In order to reform and develop the future command structure according to the three-stage model, forming a consensus on the criteria is required prior to beginning the process. Then, the two militaries should agree with the final stage of the model in the macro and long-term perspective. Furthermore, they should have confidence in future ROK military capabilities to control US air and naval assets.

Second, both countries should stipulate the details necessary for the mechanism of executing the model. Specifically, refining the respective organizations' command structures and the ACM is essential to the alliance. Since the transitions of the stages are condition-based, the two militaries should determine specific conditions for each transition. At the same time, they should cooperate in planning combined operations and refining the FDO and TPFDD based on the model in order to ensure US military support in the case of external threats to the Republic of Korea.

Finally, the two militaries should cooperate to develop the capabilities of the ROK military in terms of command and control, ISR, counterfire assets, and missile defense assets. The ROK JCS and respective service headquarters should have capabilities to command and control not only the ROK forces but also the designated US forces. In addition, developing ISR, counterfire, and missile capabilities is imperative in order to complete the triad system. It will be difficult for the ROK military to complete these tasks without US support.

The two countries are facing challenges in the new era of alliance. Developing an appropriate combined command structure is one of the fundamental tasks that the two militaries should accomplish in order to retain a strong alliance after the wartime OPCON transition. If the ROK and US militaries closely cooperate in the approach suggested here and put the recommendations into practice, the future of the alliance will be bright.

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