

An hourglass-shaped graphic with a globe inside. The top bulb is dark blue, and the bottom bulb is light blue. The globe is centered in the narrow neck of the hourglass. The top bulb has a dark blue cap, and the bottom bulb has a light blue base.

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*NATO Adapts for New Missions: The Berlin Accord and
Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF)*

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Abstract. The NATO Foreign Ministers on June 3, 1996, in Berlin, Germany, agreed in principle on significant new steps that, if implemented, would constitute a major transformation of NATO's missions and methods of operation. The package includes enhancement of the European role in NATO and France's return to NATO's command structure.

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NATO Adapts for New Missions: The Berlin Accord and Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF)

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Summary

The NATO Foreign Ministers, meeting on June 3, 1996 in Berlin, Germany, agreed in principle on significant new steps that, if implemented, would constitute a major transformation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's missions and methods of operation. In January 1994, NATO leaders had approved a U.S. proposal to create Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) headquarters that would allow the allies to prepare to use their forces for a wide variety of different military scenarios. The concept had not been put into action largely because of political differences over how to create the option for European-led CJTFs. At Berlin, the allies agreed that a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) would be created within the framework of the transatlantic alliance by opening the possibility for European officers in the NATO structure to wear their NATO command "hat" and, if necessary, a Western European Union (WEU) command hat. It was also agreed that the NATO structure and assets could, with the agreement of all the allies, including the United States, be made available for future military operations commanded by the WEU. The government of France has said that if such "multiple-hatting" command arrangements and the asset sharing plan are implemented, France will return to full participation in NATO's military command structure. Implementation of the Berlin accord now must be negotiated, and hard bargaining can be expected in the months ahead.

The Berlin Meeting

The U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Robert Hunter, has called the Berlin outcome "the first significant change in the way the alliance does business since 1966, when the French

¹ Research assistance for this report was provided by Michelle Walensky.

left [NATO's] military structure.”² The result did not come easily, and French President Jacques Chirac has noted that “[s]uccess in Berlin was not guaranteed in advance on a subject where the temptation to resist was strong on both sides of the Atlantic.” Until the final hours before the ministers convened, allied officials struggled to piece together an agreement that had almost come unraveled. Press reports suggested that U.S. General George Joulwan, NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), was reluctant to accept the idea that European NATO commanders could wear WEU hats as well, fearing that divided loyalties might weaken NATO's command structure.³

The final compromise was crafted to protect the strengths of the current NATO command structure while making sufficient changes to warrant the French conclusion that they would be joining a new structure, not the one that President de Gaulle had left some 30 years ago. The communique said that adaptation and reform of the Alliance would be guided by three fundamental objectives: to ensure the Alliance's military effectiveness and ability to perform its traditional mission of collective defense while undertaking new military roles; to preserve the transatlantic link, by strengthening NATO as a forum for political consultation and military cooperation; and, to support development of a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) within the Alliance, in particular by creating the possibility for NATO-supported task forces to perform missions under the direction of the WEU nations.⁴

The Berlin accord, when implemented, would allow the Alliance to activate the CJTF concept — an approach originally proposed by the United States in 1993.⁵ The intent was to establish new command arrangements within which U.S. forces **and** those of allied and other nations could be combined in variable formations to take on a wide variety of missions beyond the borders of Alliance countries. The agreement in Berlin to create the possibility for European-led CJTF's is important in its own right, particularly because implementation should bring France back into full military cooperation with the other allies. But the importance of making the CJTF concept operational goes beyond this one aspect. The CJTF concept, as originally conceived and as agreed in Berlin, has three goals:

- to give NATO's force and command structure sufficient flexibility to allow the allies, including the United States, to respond effectively to Alliance security requirements and new missions beyond Article 5 contingencies (in other words, beyond defense of allied nations from direct attack). (*The NATO-led*

² “NATO acquires a European identity,” *The Economist*, June 8, 1996, p. 51.

³ Craig R. Whitney, “After NATO Overtures, France Is Ready to Resume Military Role,” *The New York Times*, June 9, 1996, p. 8.

⁴ The WEU is considered the defense arm of the European Union. The goal of developing a European Security and Defense Identity through WEU was set in the EU's 1991 Treaty of Maastricht. For background see Paul E. Gallis, *The Western European Union*, CRS Report 95-758, June 28, 1995.

⁵ For background on CJTF, see Stanley R. Sloan, *Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) and New Missions for NATO*, CRS Report 95-1176, December 7, 1995.

Implementation Force in Bosnia (IFOR) is a classic example of this aspect of CJTF.)⁶

- to facilitate the dual use of NATO forces and command structures for Alliance and/or Western European Union (WEU) operations, encouraging European nations to undertake missions with forces that are “separable but not separate [from NATO]” in the context of an emerging European Security and Defense Identity. (*The IFOR was not designed as this type of European-heavy CJTF because the allies all judged that U.S. military capabilities and political involvement were essential to the success of the mission.*)
- to permit non-NATO partners to join NATO countries in operations, exercises and training as envisioned in the “Partnership for Peace,” a U.S.-proposed program of military cooperation open to all qualified non-NATO European states that was also initiated at the January 1994 summit. (*The Bosnia operation does demonstrate this aspect of the CJTF concept by associating a wide variety of non-NATO troops, including those of Russia, with the IFOR.*)

The Berlin accord should allow the allies to construct future Combined Joint Task Forces that range (in terms of participation) from operations like the IFOR (with major contributions from the United States, European allies, and non-NATO countries) to presumably less militarily-demanding operations planned and executed by the Western European Union. In between these extremes, a wide range of permutations and combinations of CJTF command, control, and participation options could be planned under the agreed concept. It is widely agreed in NATO that, in the near future, CJTFs will in most cases include rather than exclude the participation of U.S. forces and commanders.

The allies also agreed to create a “Policy Coordination Group” in NATO composed of allied political and military representatives to facilitate coordination of the political goals of a mission and its military implementation. The creation of the group responded to the French belief that NATO’s new missions require closer oversight in the conduct of military operations by political decisionmakers, particularly in rapidly changing and politically complex scenarios like that in Bosnia.

Under the new arrangements, NATO remains the pre-eminent military security organization in Europe, and the role of the United States in this system remains critically important. But the focus of NATO’s mission has grown from the previous emphasis on territorial defense and toward perceived new requirements of the post-Cold War world. The European members of the Alliance have been given an organizational venue for initiatives designed to defend their security interests, but in a way that encourages and presupposes continuing political and military cooperation with their transatlantic allies.

⁶ For an assessment of the post-IFOR issue see: Stanley R. Sloan, *Bosnia After IFOR*, CRS Report 96-344, April 16, 1996.

The Road to Berlin

At the January 1994 Brussels Summit, the NATO heads of government gave broad guidance to the North Atlantic Council (NAC), NATO's senior intergovernmental decisionmaking body, with the advice of NATO military authorities and in coordination with the Western European Union, to "develop this [CJTF] concept and establish the necessary capabilities." But progress was painfully slow. The main problem was the French concern that provisions be made for a greater European responsibility for CJTF operations that largely depended on European forces for implementation. Under President Mitterrand, Paris preferred that the NAC determine the political goals for and continually monitor CJTF operations, wanting to de-emphasize the role of NATO's military decisionmaking bodies. (Since withdrawing from NATO's integrated military command structure in the mid-1960s, France had not taken its seat on the Military Committee and other key NATO military bodies.)

The setting for the debate changed substantially, however, following the election of Jacques Chirac as French President in May 1995. France under Mitterrand had favored creating a European defense system that would parallel the NATO structure. But fiscal constraints on defense spending and differences among France and its European partners concerning the modalities of European defense cooperation led President Chirac to the conclusion that effective European cooperation would be politically and financially possible only in the framework of NATO. The European experience in Bosnia reinforced the perceived need for closer collaboration with the United States. President Chirac therefore decided that French interests called for an accommodation with NATO and, hopefully, allied agreement to amend NATO's military structure to allow France to join a "new" structure taking into account French concerns.

On December 5, 1995, France announced that it would resume participation in the Military Committee and in meetings of the NATO defense ministers. The French return to active participation in NATO's Military Committee served as an "invitation to bargain" on the terms for France's return to unqualified participation in NATO military cooperation. The Chirac position was that the full return of France to NATO's military structure would require fundamental changes in that structure to give real meaning to the idea of a more coherent and responsible European role in the Alliance.

Dual-Hatting Issue

In the second half of 1995, the British government began actively searching for ways to create a European security and defense identity *within* the framework of the Alliance, and in a fashion that would facilitate France's return to full military integration. Early in 1996, both the French and British governments proposed what became known as the "Deputies proposal."⁷ They suggested that the Deputy SACEUR, traditionally a senior European officer, and other European officers in the NATO command structure, wear WEU command hats as well as their NATO and national command hats. This multiple hatting procedure would, without duplication of resources and personnel, permit the

⁷ For a discussion of the concept see: Stanley R. Sloan, *NATO's Future: Beyond Collective Defense*, CRS Report 95-979, September 15, 1995, p. 21-24, 30-32.

Western European Union countries to use the NATO command structure to organize and command a military operation under largely European auspices.

The “Deputies proposal” reportedly raised serious issues for the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and SACEUR General George Joulwan. Senior U.S. military commanders were concerned that the WEU hat might weaken the European commitment to the NATO structure as well as lessen the American commitment to NATO. Other U.S. officials, however, believed that a continued active U.S. role in the Alliance depended on being able to demonstrate to the U.S. Congress and the American public that the European allies were willing and able to take on greater responsibility for military missions both inside Europe and beyond. The reinvolvement of France in the Alliance, with its willingness and ability to participate in military interventions beyond national borders, was seen as the key to the construction of a meaningful and coordinated European contribution to post-Cold War security concerns.

The Berlin accord does not explicitly mention the Deputies proposal, and negotiating the terms under which multiple-hatting arrangements may be implemented could be contentious. The Berlin communique says that “separable but not separate HQs, HQ elements and command positions that would be required to command and conduct WEU-led operations...” should be identified in advance. It also says that the agreed principles imply “double-hatting appropriate personnel within the NATO command structure to perform these functions.” Following the meeting, when asked whether or not the results mean that the Deputy SACEUR would become de facto the military head of the European component of the Alliance, French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette responded “Yes, that is a reasonable proposal you make.” The French government believes that the language of the communique already adds to the nature of the potential responsibilities of European officers in the NATO command structure. But the French interpretation may not be shared by all allied governments or by the SACEUR, and some difficult negotiations on this and other details may be expected in the months to come.

WEU Use of NATO “Assets and Capabilities”

Another difficult issue is the question of how NATO “assets and capabilities” could be “loaned” to the Western European Union when the WEU conducts an operation under the new concept. NATO assets are actually quite limited. They include command and control structures and facilities, but very few weapons systems other than the NATO Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS). Most NATO “capabilities” not controlled by the European allies are U.S. capabilities, such as intelligence systems and heavy airlift. No ally, and the U.S. in particular, is willing to grant a carte blanche for WEU control of capabilities that might be essential to the success of a WEU operation. France and other European allies were concerned that NATO assets and [U.S.] capabilities dedicated to a WEU mission not be withdrawn at some point during the mission, thereby placing both their soldiers and the mission in jeopardy.

The Berlin compromise provided that, when NATO assets and capabilities are dedicated to support a WEU mission, on a case-by-case basis, the North Atlantic Council would monitor the use of those assets “with the advice of the NATO Military Authorities.” During a WEU-run mission, NATO authorities would keep the use of NATO’s assets “under review.” In fact, the final outcome makes extensive provisions for joint NATO-WEU planning in peacetime as well as close cooperation during the conduct of an

operation. The communique noted that "...the Alliance will support the development of the ESDI within NATO by conducting at the request of and in coordination with the WEU, military planning and exercises for illustrative WEU missions identified by the WEU."

Implications for Congress

The Berlin accord was designed to help transform NATO's role for the post-Cold War world, respond to congressional calls for more effective sharing of international security burdens, and accommodate a more cohesive European role in the Alliance. France's new relationship with the Alliance could add important military and political resources for alliance missions, but will also mean greater influence for France in NATO decisionmaking. This might require some difficult adjustments for the United States and other allies. If the program is implemented, NATO could progressively develop military capabilities available for use in a wide variety of contingencies, in and beyond Europe. This would not guarantee that the United States or its allies would make the political decisions to use such capabilities, but policymakers would have a wider variety of credible options for multilateral military intervention than they do at present.

The NATO governments apparently hope to have made significant progress on implementation of the Berlin accord by the time of their regular ministerial meetings in December 1996. The Clinton Administration would then like the outcome to be celebrated at a NATO summit meeting in the first half of 1997 at which time the allies would also issue the initial invitation to certain Central and East European candidates for NATO membership. Members of Congress might wish to consider how the changes agreed at Berlin affect the utility and importance of NATO as an instrument of U.S. policy in the post-Cold War world and what further steps might be needed to complete the transformation process.