Original Article

Who is keeping the peace and who is free-riding? NATO middle powers and Burden Sharing, 1995–2001

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Abstract The objective of this article is to test the free-riding hypothesis submitted by collective action theorists, and to ask the following research questions: What slice of the military burden did middle powers share in NATO's first out-of-area operations in the Balkans between 1995 and2001? And what, if anything, can we infer from this? We concentrate on NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR), Stabilization Force (SFOR) and Kosovo Force (KFOR) operations and show that based on a so-called relative force share index middle powers shouldered a disproportionately high relative share in those peace operations. From this finding we draw a number of inferences for burden sharing studies and show avenues of future research.
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Introduction

The end of the Cold War shifted the tectonic plates of world order. After 1989, geopolitics was no longer about balancing against or bandwagoning with rival powers (c.f. Wohlforth, 1993; Gaddis, 2005; Kaufman *et al,* 2007; Brooks and Wohlforth, 2008). It was about extending a helping hand to former enemies, engaging societies in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) on a socio-political-economic level, practicing politics of enticement to lure those states into the Western community of states (Gheciu, 2005), and cashing in the so-called peace dividend – that is, receiving a partial return of the military investments made during the Cold War as the arrival of pan-European peace rendered extensive military establishments obsolete. International security institutions like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) underwent their own

transformation, changing their mandate from collective defense to international crisis management (c.f. Booth, 2005; Glasius and Kaldor, 2005; Kleinschmidt, 2006; Martin and Kaldor, 2009; Chandler and Hynek, 2010). NATO became a political–military organization (Hauser and Kernic, 2006; Hendrickson, 2006), acquired new roles for managing the security affairs in CEE, and engaged itself in nation-building and out-of-area peace operations (for an excellent historical discussion see Kitchen, 2010). All of these factors transformed NATO's force structure, the provision of collective goods, and rendered large conventional militaries with extensive military hardware and manpower increasingly obsolete.

This shift of global order particularly hit hard middle powers.[1] On the one hand it gave them new prominence in international organizations; on the other hand, it presented them with new roles and responsibilities,[2] especially in the governance of regional order in Europe. They experienced tremendous endogenous institutional pressures, mainly by the major powers, to shoulder a greater share of the Atlantic burden (c.f. Joffe, 1987; Coker, 1990; Bennett *et al,* 1997; Forster and Cimbala, 2005). These 'big players' asserted that for the past 40 years they had disproportionately provided the public good of regional order and security in Europe (New York Times, 1988; Trainor, 1988; Gordon, 1989; Markham, 1989; Fiscarelli, 1990; Winess, 1991), and now that the Cold War was over, it was time for middle powers to assume a larger role in collective defense, security and crisis management (Kupchan and Kupchan, 1991; Joffe, 1992; Asmus *et al,* 1993; Kupchan and Kupchan, 1995; for a critique see Mearsheimer, 1995; Yost, 1998). Against this backdrop, it is puzzling to ask how in the context of the 'new' NATO in the 1990s the collective burden of maintaining regional order in Europe was actually shared? More specifically, what slice of the alliance's military burden did middle powers share in NATO's first out-of-area operations in the Balkans between 1995 and 2001? And what, if anything, can we infer from this?

Collective action theory (c.f. Olson, 1965; Olson and Zeckhauser, 1966; Oneal, 1990b; Sandler and Shimizu, 2002) has hypothesized that middle powers are most likely free-riders, regardless of changing security contexts such as the end of the Cold War that gave NATO a new reason d'être.[3] They are expected to contribute less, if anything, to the public good but receive all of its benefits. This was ear candy for politicians, especially those of NATO's major powers. For example, in his farewell speech as Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates blasted the Europeans for not sharing enough of the NATO burden in Afghanistan and placing caveats on how their forces could be used by the alliance, effectively keeping them out of the fighting (Gates, 2011). The result, he charges, is an emerging two-tiered alliance made up of those who will engage in combat and those that would not. His successor, Leon Panetta, was not much more conciliatory in tone and reminded NATO's European members in 2011 to heed the lessons of the Libyan campaign, to 'not hollow out this alliance' (Panetta, 2011) and that America could not forever pay for Europe's security.

The objective of this article is to empirically test this free-riding hypothesis by focusing on NATO as a defense alliance and to draw inferences therefrom. I argue

that despite limited resources middle powers had joined the institutional activism of the 1990s, contributing a substantial amount to regional order in continental Europe. Contrary to assumptions held by collective action theorists, I argue, middle powers shouldered a disproportionately high *relative* share of NATO's peace operations in the Balkans. They were active and committed agents rather than freeloaders.

To reiterate, the article solely focuses on NATO, *not* the UN. It thus disregards UN peace operations (for example, UNPROFOR) because the UN is not an alliance but an international organization with much broader responsibilities beyond security, and maintains a much larger membership base.[4] Rather, NATO's post-Cold War peace operations in the Balkans (IFOR, SFOR and KFOR) serve as case studies because they were the first occasions where NATO operated militarily outside of its traditional territory in its new role as a crisis manager.[5] The year 2001 was chosen as the end date because the 9/11 attacks ended the commonly known post-Cold War era (Schreer and Noetzel, 2009; Kashmeri, 2011).

Given the statistical nature of the argument, a note on the sources and methods is required. The financial and economic data relating to NATO Defense was retrieved from NATO headquarters in Brussels and augmented, where necessary, with data from secondary sources including government reports produced by allies, the IISS's *Military Balance*, and SIPRI's military expenditure database. We calculated all statistics found in the tables below, rounded up the numbers to the next decimal, and clustered the aggregated data (for example, percentage of total forces and so on.) in order to allows for an easy cross-level and multi-country comparison. From 1990 to 1998 the NATO average is calculated by dividing the total contributions by 16, recognizing the size of the membership at that time. With the first round of enlargement in 1999, this denominator increased to 19. The 'rank' is calculated in a descendent order to allow cross-indices comparisons whereas the highest placed state is listed at the top. The percentage of the total refers to the percentile that a country shared of the total force burden.

We proceed in three steps. We start off with briefly revisiting the ontological and epistemological assumptions of collective action theory, which is perhaps the best well-known and prominent theoretical framework to study NATO burden sharing. In section two we discuss some theoretical and methodological limitations of this framework. What follows in the third section is testing the free-riding hypothesis of collective action theorists that middle powers were free-riders in the Balkans, including its IFOR, SFOR and the KFOR. The penultimate section offers some preliminary inferences that can be drawn from the data as well as suggestions for future research on burden sharing.

On Burdensharing: Collective Action Theories

Olson and Zeckhauser's seminal study on NATO burden sharing marks the beginning of theorizing collective action of an alliance. It charges that NATO

provides a pure common public good, which is the collective defense of its members (Olson, 1965; Olson and Zeckhauser, 1966). In general, a public good is pure when its benefits are non-rival and non-excludable. More specifically, it is considered non-rival when a unit of that public good can be consumed by a member state without diminishing the benefits for all other members; a good is non-excludable when the cost of keeping non-payers from enjoying the benefits of the good or service is prohibitive (Sandler and Hartley, 1999, p. 29). The collective action model produced two important insights for the debate on NATO burden sharing:

First, Olson and Zeckhauser established a causal link between the level of national defense spending and states' ability to pay measured in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is the index that continues to be in use until this day. They found that in the early years of the Cold War NATO's major powers shouldered disproportionately higher burdens than middle – or small powers – that is, they paid more toward providing the public good than receiving benefits from its provision. In theoretical terms, this phenomenon is known as the 'exploitation hypothesis' of the big by the small (Sandler and Hartley, 1995, Chapter 2). In 1970, for example, the United States shouldered nearly two-thirds of the NATO defense burden (70 per cent) while its counterparts in Europe, particularly in Germany, France and the United Kingdom – each assumed less than 6 per cent of the total burden.[6]

Second, because of the significant power imbalance in the NATO alliance, Olson and Zeckhauser found that middle powers contributed less to the collective benefit of the public good (collective defense) than they receive from it. This free riding, they charge, occurs when non-payers of the public good continue to consume the public good (collective defense) but do not pay for its provision,[7] which is expected to have negative effects for the welfare of the alliance.

However, in spite of this free-riding propensity of smaller NATO allies, Olson (1965) charges that the collective defense good can be provided under two conditions (p. 2, pp. 49–50): First, when certain allies value the collective defense good more than others, which motivated them to contribute more to its provision.[8] Second, the public good of collective defense is easier to provide in a small rather than a big defense community, which suggests that NATO's internal asymmetry can work to its advantage in a way that allies with a surplus of economic and political powers are capable (and willing) to lead the alliance and, at the same time, to force payments upon its members in order to ensure the alliances' effectiveness and robustness (Wolfers, 1962; Gilpin and Gilpin, 1987).[9]

The collective action model was subsequently refined theoretically by the so-called joint product model, which suggests that NATO allies would only share allied burdens if they receive private benefits for doing so (Russett, 1970, pp. 109–10). Private benefits, by definition, are not equally available to all allies. They thus violate the non-excludable and non-rival assumptions of classical collective action theory and make the public good impure. In turn, this suggest that the more private benefits increase, the more likely it is that free-riding behaviors are absent (Sandler and Forbes, 1980).

The list of private benefits is essentially endless, but Hansen *et al* (1990) and his colleagues clustered them into strategic and non-strategic categories or weapon types. The expectation therefore is that some states, while attempting to avoid public perceptions of free-riding behaviors, contribute to the public good either because they receive private benefits (Betts, 2003, pp. 278–79), or because they are promised to receive private goods from major states.[10]

A number of scholars have built on this finding by noting a variation of purity in collective goods (Sandler and Cauley, 1975; Sandler, 1977; Sandler *et al,* 1980; Murdoch and Sandler, 1982). A public good, for example, can be public within a country or private between countries, or it can be impure both within and between countries (Pauly, 1970).

Explanatory Limitations Of This Model Post-1989

This public goods model is very well established in policy and academic circles. As such, it has undoubtedly dominated the thinking on NATO burden sharing. However, with the changing security context at the Cold War's end, the once universally accepted measures for determining Atlantic burdens have lost explanatory value (Zyla, 2009; Zyla, 2015). In the olden days, the most commonly used indicator to calculate the national shares of the Atlantic burden was the total defense expenditure ratio measured as a percentage of the national GDP, assuming that the more forces a country makes available for a collective defense, the better its NATO burden sharing ratio. In fact, this indicator is widely accepted in the literature as an index of national power (Merritt and Zinnes, 1988; Singer, 1988; Oneal and Elrod, 1989; Oneal, 1990a; Palmer, 1991), and politicians until this day continue to refer to it in their public speeches and discussions (for example, Gates, 2011; Panetta, 2011; Rasmussen, 2011).

However, in order to increase the explanatory value of the burden sharing debate and taking stock of the situational contexts of burden sharing practices post-1989, I argue that indices ought to be weighed against the *relative* ability of states to contribute to collective public goods[11] – that is, by calculating the size of the force contributions to particular missions as a share of the states' armed forces duty personnel. A*bsolute* force share scales that are commonly used in NATO burden sharing discussions (for example, Gates, 2011) are *not* weighed against the relative ability of member states to contribute forces, and do not take into account the specific situational contexts of burden sharing practices from which those practices obtained their meaning (Weber and Shils, 1949). Put simple, a country is only able to deploy as many soldiers as it has at its disposal. This relative share then implies that if country X maintains large armed forces but only deploys a small portion of its active military duty personnel to a particular mission, its *relative* burden is lower than that of country Y that exhibits small armed forces but deploys a higher share of its active

duty personnel. A simpler example helps to further illustrate this argument: If a millionaire donates US$100 000 to charity, that donation is lower, relatively speaking, compared with the donation made by say a student who lives on a fixed low income and donates $1000. In the former case, giving away the money is not a financial burden relative to the total ability of the person; for the low-income student it is a high share of that person's relative income. Moreover, the relative value that the student assigns to that cause is greater than that of the millionaire, and the student was *not* exclusively driven by rational cost-benefit calculations when deciding to donate the money to a collective cause.

Returning to the NATO context, this analogy underlines the importance of considering the *relative* ability of social actors to contribute to a collective cause. Moreover, it allows conclusions about the importance that is assigned to a particular social action in a particular context beyond zero-sum game calculations. Moreover, the decision for states to maintain armed forces and determining their extent and size is inherently political. It is made by national governments taking into account factors like the country's strategic culture, security environment, demographic situation, political ideology and domestic political constellations and financial abilities. These variables are almost entirely absent from the literature (for the latest see Sandler and Shimitzu, 2014). In other words, decisions made by allies to share Atlantic burdens *may* or may not depend on a country's financial situation or economic outlook as suggested by the GDP index currently in use (Bennett *et al,* 1994). The United States is a good example in this regard. Given the enormous size of the federal debt and thus resulting policies of fiscal constraints, it is hardly rational for lawmakers in Washington to preserve the type of military it currently maintains. The point is that reducing questions of burden sharing to GDP or GNI indexes produces a very incomplete analysis of burden sharing, excluding a whole range of qualitative factors from the analysis *might* influence states' burden sharing decisions.

The Empirical Testing: NATO's Peace Operations In The Balkans

IFOR

The Dayton Accords signed in Dayton, Ohio on 21 November 1995,[12] gave NATO the responsibility to monitor and, if needed, implement the peace agreement signed between Slobodan Milosevic, Alija Izetbegovic and Franjo Tuđman. It also created the so-called IFOR, NATO's first ever out-of-area operation, replacing the rather unsuccessful UN mission there (UNPROFOR). As Table 1 shows, IFOR was a peace-enforcement operation (*Operation Joint Endeavor*[13]) of more than 52 000 troops from 14 member states. IFOR had received a strong mandate from the UN Security Council (S/RES/1031) on 15 December 1995 under Chapter VII of the UN

Table 1: Absolute and relative force deployments to IFOR, 1996

Country/Year	*1996/ 1997*	*Percentage of total*	*Ranking based on absolute force contributions*	*Percentage of total national force size*	*Rank based on relative force contributions (in %)*
The United Kingdom	10 500	20.1	2	4.7	1
The Netherlands	2000	3.8	6	3.1	2
Denmark	807	1.5	12	2.8	3
Norway	750	1.4	13	2.0	4
Canada	1029	2.0	9	1.6	5
France	7500	14.4	3	1.5	6
Portugal	900	1.7	11	1.2	7
Germany	4000	7.7	4	1.2	8
The United States	18 400	35.2	1	1.2	9
Belgium	420	0.8	14	0.9	10
Spain	1400	2.7	7	0.7	11
Italy	2200	4.2	5	0.5	12
Greece	1000	1.9	10	0.5	13
Turkey	1300	2.5	8	0.2	14
Iceland	0	0.0	15	0.0	15
Luxembourg	0	0.0	16	0.0	16
Total	52 206	100	16	22.1	16
Average	3263	6.3	N/A	1.4	N/A

Source: Military Balance 1996/1997 and World Bank; calculations done by author.

Charter, and was equipped with strong political will of NATO members to succeed in bringing peace, security and order back to the region. NATO forces were allowed to use force beyond instances of self-defense in pursuing their objective to monitor the border between Croatia and Bosnia and their 4 km wide zones of separation (ibid). Indeed, NATO peace enforcers physically interpositioned themselves between the belligerents, separated them, provided humanitarian assistance, collect heavy weaponry and demobilized Bosnian and Croatian forces (MacGregor, 2001, p. 95). IFOR also had a civilian component consisting of civilian experts such as lawyers, judges and educators that were deployed along side the military to help build a lasting peace after the civil wars that had raged the Balkan countries since 1990.

It is evident in Table 1 that the United States shared by far the largest *absolute* force burden in IFOR by having deployed 18 400 troops to Bosnia. Compared with other NATO allies, it deployed almost 60 per cent more forces than France, which is considered a major power, and slightly less than the United Kingdom, France and Germany combined (42.2 per cent of combined *absolute* force burden). Undoubtedly, the United States was the supreme allied shareholder, followed by the United Kingdom with 10 500 troops (or 20.1 per cent of the *absolute* force share), France

with 7500 troops (14.4 per cent) and Germany (7.7 per cent). In other words, when considering the *absolute* force share contributions to NATO's very first out-of-area operation (IFOR), these four countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany) subsidized more of NATO's public good than they benefitted from it while the rest of the alliance essentially free-rode on them. According to the collective action model discussed above, this then confirms the free-riding hypothesis.

By contrast, when considering the *relative* force share measured against the active-duty personnel of NATO members, a significantly different picture presents itself. This is visible in Columns 5 and 6 in Table 1. On the basis of this relative force share index a core group of middle powers emerges as top contributors. Among them are the Netherlands with a force share of 3.1 per cent, Denmark with 2.8 per cent, Norway with 2.0 per cent and Canada with having deployed 1.6 per cent of its total armed forces. It suggests that these middle powers did not free-ride but punched above their weight. They also deployed disproportionately more forces to IFOR than France (1.5 per cent) or Germany (1.2 per cent), both of which are commonly considered major powers. The notable exception is the United Kingdom with 4.7 per cent of their total forces deployed to the Balkans. While the United States is conventionally considered NATO's superpower, it does not show when weighing its contribution against its total force size of more than one million soldiers. Indeed, it only sent 1.2 per cent of its GI's as part of NATO's IFOR peace enforcement operations (rank 9 out of 16 NATO allies).

SFOR[14]

In December 1996, the security environment had significantly relaxed, and IFOR was replaced with NATO's SFOR. *Operation Joint Guard*, the name by which the operation went by in NATO circles, also received its mandate from the UN Security Council (S/RES/1088, 12 Dec. 1996), also under Chapter VII.

On first sight, the data in Table 2 again confirms the exploitation hypothesis of collective action theory. According to the *absolute* force contributions, with slightly less than 30 000 troops deployed in total between 1997 and 2001, America was the largest force shareholder in SFOR. While it supplied 22.1 per cent of forces of the entire SFOR operation, its contributions were almost as high as those of France and Germany combined (22.5 per cent). The United Kingdom ranked slightly behind the United States with the second highest *absolute* force share of 14.2 per cent, France (12.1 per cent), Germany (10.4 per cent) and Italy (9.6 per cent). Combined, these three European states furnished 46.3 per cent of the *absolute* force burden while their individual force clearly ranked above the NATO average of 5.2 per cent, which makes them a net contributor rather than free rider. In turn, free-riders essentially were all other NATO allies whose contributions ranked below the NATO

Table 2: Absolute and relative deployments to SFOR (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia), 1997–2001

Country/Year	*1997*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*Total & Percentages*				
						Total 1997–2001	*Percentage of total force*	*Ranking according to absolute force contribution*	*Percentage of total national force size*	*Rank according to relative force contribution (in %)*
The United States	9128	8050	8510	4600	7100	37 388	22.1	1	0.5	15
The United Kingdom	5403	4900	4500	6200	2950	23 953	14.2	2	2.2	5
France	3646	3300	3000	8280	2200	20 426	12.1	3	1.97	11
Germany	2603	2600	2738	7669	1900	17 510	10.4	4	1.08	9
Italy	1825	2500	2313	8040	1500	16 178	9.6	5	0.82	12
Spain	1555	1600	1600	2500	1200	8455	5.0	6	1.03	10
Canada	990	961	2382	2110	1201	7644	4.5	7	2.55	3
Turkey	1522	1300	1300	2250	1201	7573	4.5	8	0.19	17
The Netherlands	1059	1220	1220	2717	1180	7396	4.4	9	2.75	2
Norway	593	743	700	1425	126	3587	2.1	10	2.21	4
Denmark	662	600	630	1325	346	3563	2.1	11	2.8	1
Belgium	135	550	550	1450	660	3345	2.0	12	1.57	7
Portugal	320	351	355	675	331	2032	1.2	13	0.58	14
Poland	N/A	N/A	450	1053	302	1805	1.1	14	0.32	16
The Czech Republic	N/A	N/A	561	720	491	1772	1.0	15	1.14	8
Greece	218	250	250	680	250	1648	1.0	16	0.16	18
Hungary	N/A	N/A	314	639	314	1267	0.8	17	0.84	13
Luxembourg	22	25	23	23	23	116	0.1	18	1.66	6
Iceland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	19	0	19
Total	29 681	28 950	31 396	52 356	23 275	165 658	98.1	19	23.37	19
Average	1855.1	1809.4	1652.4	2755.6	1225.0	8718.8	5.2	N/A	1.23	N/A

Source: Military Balance 1997–2001; calculations done by author.

average; they benefitted more from the provision of the public good than they paid toward it. Middle powers like Canada (4.5 per cent of force share, rank 7), Spain (5 per cent, 6), The Netherlands (4.4 per cent, 9), Norway (2.1 per cent, 10) and Denmark (2.1 per cent, 11) belong to this group of states.

Juxtaposed to this, when considering the percentage of national forces that NATO members made available to SFOR, a very different analysis presents itself. To recall, we charged that no state can deploy more forces to a particular mission – whether it is a national or international operation – than the total size of its armed forces would allow. When examining this index, witnessed in Columns 10 and 11 in Table 2, we can see that America did not deploy the highest percentage of its troops to SFOR. Only 0.5 per cent of its total forces made it to the Balkans; it is thus in good company with countries like Hungary (0.84 per cent), Portugal (0.58 per cent) and Poland (0.32 per cent). Indeed, it is not the supreme allied shareholder. The only exception, once again, is the United Kingdom with having had 1.9 per cent of her nationally available forces deployed to SFOR. Major powers like France, Germany and Italy were free riders: they collected more benefits from the provision of NATO's public goods than they contributed to the provision of those goods, and can thus be classified free-riders.

By contrast, conventional middle powers like Denmark, the Netherlands, Canada and Norway were punching above their weight. While their absolute deployed numbers of SFOR forces may not be higher than those of the United States or other conventionally conceived major power for that matter, when considering the percentage of their total national forces deployed to SFOR, they shared more of the average collective burden of 1.23 per cent, which makes them net contributors.

KFOR[15]

The Kosovo crisis questioned the alliance's reputation as a crisis manager (Roper, 1999, pp. 53–54; Shea, 2002, pp. 77–78), and posed significant political, strategic and operational challenges for the alliance (United States 31 January, 2000; Gnesotto, 2004, pp. 42–45; Kaplan, 2004, pp. 124–26; Marsh, 2006). When the air campaign terminated on 4 June 1999, a ground force was called upon to stabilize the security situation and to maintain order. The international community, once again, turned to NATO and asked it to once again deploy a peace-enforcement operation (IFOR and SFOR). That force, again mandated under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and based on UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (10 June 1999) as well as the Military-Technical Agreement (MTA) reached between NATO, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and Serbia, began to deploy in June 1999. The primary objective of the so-called KFOR was to demine the province of Kosovo and ensure the safety of all ethnic minorities, including Serbs, Bosniac, Roma, Turks and Albanians (Congressional Research Service 8 July, 2003, p. 1). The latter ethnic group not only

composed nearly 90 per cent of the total population of Kosovo; it was also hunted and ethnically cleansed by Serbia's military and police forces.

The analysis of the data shows that similar to NATO's IFOR and SFOR missions, Olson and Zeckhauser's collective action hypothesis can be confirmed when considering NATO members' *absolute* force contributions to KFOR. Unsurprisingly, America ranked at the top with an absolute KFOR force share of 15.7 per cent, followed by France (15.1 per cent of total), Germany (14.7 per cent), Italy (14.5 per cent) and the United Kingdom (9.4 per cent). The latter states can be classified as major powers, because they hold a combined *absolute* force share of 53.7 per cent of KFOR. Canada deployed roughly half of the troops that the United Kingdom made available (Rank 5), followed by The Netherlands (Rank 7), Spain (Rank 9) and Norway (Rank 10). This is consistent with those states' conventionally conceived middle-power status in international politics. To use the words of collective action theorists, these middle powers benefited more from the public good than they contribute to it; they practiced free-riding while the United States shouldered the bulk of the force burden. For example, of all the ammunition used on Serbia in 1999, 83 per cent was provided by the United States.

By contrast, when examining the percentage of national forces NATO members made available to the KFOR missions, displayed in Columns 8 and 9 in Table 3, a very different perspective emerges. When considering the case of Norway, for example, it is apparent that while it only furnished 3.3 per cent of the absolute KFOR mission (3160 soldiers), when weighing this contribution against the size of its armed forces – that is, the total national active military duty personnel – its share of the *relative* NATO burden was higher than those of any other ally. In other words, it contributed more to NATO's collective action than it benefitted from it. This is equally applicable to other conventionally conceived middle powers, including the Netherlands, Denmark, Canada and Belgium. They all shouldered more than the NATO average burden of 1.2 per cent, and thus rank ahead of conventional major powers like France (1.3 per cent), Italy (1.3 per cent), Germany (1.6 per cent) and the United Kingdom (1.5 per cent). This means that they were *not* free rider as collective action theorist might expect; they were net force contributors punching above their weight. In stark contrast, the United States along with France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom can be considered Atlantic free riders. Washington, for example, only deployed 0.4 per cent of its active military duty personnel to KFOR, significantly below the NATO average of 1.2 per cent. In collective action theory terms, America benefitted more from NATO's collective action than it contributed to it.

What Can We (Perhaps) Infer from the Data?

To recall, the objective of this article was to empirically test the free-riding hypothesis and to draw *inferences* from that analysis for future burden sharing

Table 3: Absolute and relative KFOR troop deployments (1999–2001)

Country/Year	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*Total*	*Percentage of total force*	*Ranking absolute force contributions*	*Percentage of national force size*	*Rank according to relative force contribution (in %)*
The United States	5500	5400	5100	16 000	15.7	1	0.4	15
France	5080	5100	5200	15 380	15.1	2	1.3	9
Germany	5300	5100	4600	15 000	14.7	3	1.6	6
Italy	6400	4200	4200	14 800	14.5	4	1.3	8
The United Kingdom	3500	3900	2200	9600	9.4	5	1.5	7
Canada	1450	1450	1450	4350	4.3	6	2.4	4
The Netherlands	1450	1450	1450	4350	4.3	7	2.8	3
Greece	430	1700	1700	3830	3.7	8	0.6	12
Spain	900	1300	1300	3500	3.4	9	0.8	10
Norway	1200	980	980	3160	3.1	10	3.3	1
Turkey	950	940	940	2830	2.8	11	0.1	17
Belgium	900	800	800	2500	2.4	12	2	5
Denmark	900	900	540	2340	2.3	13	3	2
Poland	763	532	574	1869	1.8	14	0.3	16
Hungary	325	325	325	975	1.0	15	0.6	11
Portugal	340	313	313	966	0.9	16	0.5	13
The Czech Republic	160	175	400	735	0.7	17	0.5	14
Iceland	0	0	0	0	0.0	18	0	18
Luxembourg	0	0	0	0	0.00	19	0	19
Total NATO	35 548	34 565	32 072	10 2185	100	19	23	19
NATO Average	1870.95	1819.21	1688.0	5378.16	5.26	N/A	1.2	N/A

Source: Military Balance 1999 and author's calculations.

studies, which is what we will do in this section. Owing to limitations of space available here we will only be able to engage in a selective rather than a full and comprehensive analysis. This limitation needs to be kept in mind for the remainder of the article. We also attempt to make links to contemporary burden sharing debate where possible and space allows.

To start with, the high ranking of middle powers on the *relative* force share index (percentage of their total national forces deployed to NATO operation) and given their limited military capabilities seems to suggest that their practice of shouldering a high share of Atlantic burdens was *not* exclusively driven by rational cost-benefit or zero-sum gain calculations, but also perhaps by ideational or normative values, such as enforcing human and humanitarian rights and freedoms (c.f. Schimmelpfennig, 1999; Christiansen *et al,* 2001; Gheciu, 2005), or stopping acts of genocide and manslaughter in the civil wars that have devastated the Balkans in the 1990s. Other factors such as domestic political constellations might also play a role in states' burden sharing decisions. NATO's Libya operation comes to mind where Germany and Poland, for example, most prominently refused to participate in that operation because of domestic political concerns and constellations in the coalition government.

In turn then, those value rational motivations for sharing collective burdens must be understood from *within* their particular situational contexts of national as well as international political marketplaces. Thus, the literature on burden sharing needs to study qualitative variables like status, prestige, recognition, role, values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and international justice that might help further explain states' motivations for (or against) sharing collective burdens (Dawson, 2013). NATO's Afghanistan campaign might be informative in this regard (Auerswald and Saidman, 2014).

Moreover, the public good of collective defense acquired a new meaning with the end of the Cold War in 1990. NATO's primary objective was no longer exclusively providing collective defense for Europe but also international crisis management. It was given this new responsibility at its seminal London Summit in 1990 (Shea and Sherwen, 1990). The geopolitical situation in Europe and the evolving ethnic conflicts in the Balkans offered ample reinforcements of this shift, and justified the need for expeditionary rather than large conventional forces. NATO took on tasks like preventing genocide, stopping ethnic violence as well as providing stability and governance to evolving democratic societies in Central and Eastern Europe. These tasks became the 'new' public goods that NATO tried to provide, with 'old' force structures and equipment. In consequence, this suggests that if middle powers were motivated by strict cost-benefit designs, they would have chosen to be free riders and not have contributed toward the provisions of the good.

To be sure, this inference is preliminary, and a conclusive verification requires a much deeper analysis of the preference formation of middle powers and their value-rational motivations (Weber and Shils, 1949), which would also help overcome the narrowly focused debates treating burden sharing as a static *outcome* rather than a

policy practice (Pouliot, 2008). In any case, this inference provides new avenues of research. The literature currently considers security threats or risks of alliance abandonment as the primary reason as to why states do share (or not) collective burdens. Such perspective, however, is analytically restrictive (Walt, 1987; Kupchan, 1988; Bennett *et al,* 1994; Snyder, 1997) in order to better understand states' motivations for sharing collective burdens, which is analytically before considering burden sharing as a static outcome. In other words, ontologically speaking collective action theory and thus its sister theories in international relations (notably hegemonic stability theory or power transition theory (Williams, 2013)) do not provide a sufficient explanatory understanding of NATO middle power's burden sharing practices in IFOR, SFOR, or KFOR. This may be because of the fact that their theoretical presumptions and ontological predispositions do not fully account for the human nature of states, the situational contexts of burden sharing practices, and the ethics of national statecraft. As a result, social groupings or societal actors, for example, that undoubtedly influence national burden sharing decisions have no analytical standing in that ontology.

Second, there is the argument of specialization, which holds that the practice of burden sharing should be viewed holistically and across policy fields. States hold comparative advantages in certain issue areas over others. They are not only linked but also traded when time comes to negotiate burden sharing contributions. NATO's most recent military operation in Libya comes to mind where the United States, for example, was in a support role helping its European allies with specific military capabilities (for example, intelligence, refueling and so on.) rather than being the lead nation. The point is that NATO member's share of the burden could vary according to national specialization (or comparative advantage), which NATO's recently adopted 'smart defence' concept somewhat encapsulated (Henius and MacDonald, 2012). It is thus going into the right direction.

Third, collective action theorists seem to employ a number of assumptions that are detached from reality. One of them is that collective defense is a *pure* public good, meaning that it is joint and non-excludable; another is that the NATO produces only *one* single public good (that is, collective defense) rather than multiple as more recent studies have found (Betts, 2003). A third is that collective defense in NATO is equally and efficiently produced among all allies and that the costs for providing this good are exclusively financial. However, political costs, also come to mind, as well as the discussion on member's comparative advantage in certain military capabilities, which suggests that at least theoretically, trading might occur between small-, middle-, and major powers in providing the public good.[16] In sum, the collective action model as well as its refinements (for example, joint products model) is uni-dimensional: it discards the chance that allies might produce more than one public good, and that they trade those goods amongst themselves (Boyer, 1993, p. 32).

Finally, in policy terms, assuming that middle powers are at least partially influenced by societal norms and values in their burden sharing decisions, it does

not automatically follow that the distribution of gains among allies must necessarily be equal. Indeed, the importance of relative gains can be conditional. Thus, rather than asking *whether* relative gains are important, the better question to ask is under what conditions distributional might occur (Keohane and Martin, 1995, pp. 44–45). This slightly different analytical perspective would provide explanations of the value and instrumentally rational motivations that states might have to engage in burden sharing as a practice. Duncan Snidal goes even further and holds that concerns for relative gains 'can be criticized as a misspecification of an argument that could be better expressed in absolute gains terms', that is, in terms of a 'trade-off between short-term absolute gains (i.e., immediate payoffs from cooperation) and long-term absolute gains (i.e., long term security and order)' (Snidal, 1991, p. 704).

Conclusion

The aim of the essay was to test the free-riding hypothesis brought forward by collective action theorists that middle powers are freeloaders. Specifically, it examined the extent of the collective burden that NATO incurred during its various peace operations in the Balkans (IFOR, SFOR, KFOR) from 1995 to 2001. By using a *relative* force share index that calculates deployed troops to a NATO operation as a share of states' active-duty personnel, we found that middle powers carried a disproportionately high share of NATO's burden. They contributed more to NATO's collective peace operations than their conventional major power counterparts (for example, France, Germany). In the words of collective action theorists, middle powers profited less from NATO's public goods than they contributed to it. Policy makers might translate this into saying that without middle powers, NATO's peace operations would have been less successful.

The empirical analysis further suggests that conventional calculations of Atlantic burden sharing based on the GDP/defense spending index hold limited explanatory values. This is particularly important to recognize for the United States where policymakers such as Secretaries of Defense Robert Gates or his successor Leon Panetta do not miss any opportunity to remind the Europeans to address the growing defense gaps in transatlantica and to increase their defense spending. NATO's former Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, argued similarly by pointing out that '[a]s European countries have become richer, they have spent less on defense' (Rasmussen, 2011) and that since the end of the Cold War Europe's defense spending has fallen by about 20 per cent while its GDP grew by roughly 55 per cent. However, these positions, as discussed above, somewhat miss the point: NATO burden sharing is *not* just a static process that is informed by defense spending. Burden sharing has agency; it is a (political) process in which negotiations, consultations and so on take place. This process must be studied and taken more seriously in the burden sharing research program. Moreover, we need to open our analytical eyes to the fact that states

do not always act rationally or exclusively seek relative gains; they can also pursue absolute gains in their foreign policies and are perhaps informed by collective norms, values and logics of appropriateness (March and Olsen, 1989) when deciding for or against sharing collective NATO burdens. These qualitative variables need to be further explored, tested and understood in future burden sharing projects. In sum, what the literature on NATO burden sharing needs is to (i) understand the situational contexts in which burden sharing decisions are made and to incorporate them into our theoretical discussions and empirical assessments of burden sharing practice by not treating burden sharing as a static outcome but as a process; (ii) to gain better access to the value rational motivations driving each member state in their burden sharing decisions; and (iii) to understand the politics of burden sharing that in the context of building a political alliance in the post-Cold War era intersected with building institutions, expanding the economy, promoting values and beliefs.

Having said this, we need to be reminded of the natural limitations that this article carried. Above all, space limitations did not allow a longitudinal analysis beyond 2001 – that is, including NATO's Afghanistan and Libya operation into the analysis – , which runs the risk of overstating the importance of the *relative* force share index discussed above. Future studies thus need to further test this index for NATO peace operations post-2001 to either confirm the preliminary findings here.[17] What comes to mind, of course, are NATO's Afghanistan and Libya operations where Canada, for example, as a commonly conceived middle power shouldered a significant portion of the force burden. Others like Denmark, Norway and Belgium together destroyed as many military targets as France did as the lead nation (Panetta, 2011). American policymakers, on the other hand, have complained that America contributed 70 per cent of the total ISAF force in Afghanistan while the other 46 nations contributing to the operation only accounted for the remaining 30 per cent.[18] There is thus plenty of 'new' empirical material available to further test the findings of this article.

A similar study should also open the investigation to other international organizations such as the UN or the OSCE who also have conducted peace operations during the 1990s and thereafter. More work also needs to be done to understand the domestic politics of each of the NATO member states *vis-à-vis* burden sharing. This would generate additional comparative data and show how much middle powers shared collective burdens, why, who of the member states is willing to use force (or not), or who will assist in limited air combat operations. It would also allow researchers to further explore Boyer's argument about trading public goods, and specifically under which conditions they are traded and at what price.

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Notes

1 For a definition of middle powers see (Chapnick, 2005).
2 The middle power concept has gone through distinct cycles of popularity (c.f. Ravenhill, 1998) and refers to a group of states that rank below the great powers in terms of their material capabilities and ability to project power internationally. They have an impact either in specific regions or issue areas, as well as the 'tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems', 'to embrace compromise positions in international disputes', and 'to embrace notions of 'good international citizenship' to guide diplomacy' through international institutions (Keohane, 1969, p. 298; Holbraad, 1984; Cooper *et al*, 1993, p. 19).
3 'The Alliance's New Strategic Concept', 7–8 November 1991, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_23847.htm.
4 I thank Todd Sandler for encouraging me to make this point stronger.
5 To be clear, this article does not contribute to the literature on international political economy as it does not employ economic theories of burden sharing, and thus does not speak the language of economists. For a discussion of economic theories applied to NATO burden sharing see (Sandler and Hartley, 1999).
6 The primary data of NATO's defense spending is published in various reports and press releases, for example, by the Defense Planning Committee. A full list of the available data could be found here: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49198.htm, accessed 8 April 2010.
7 Domestic politics could also be a factor that may lead states to free ride despite being dependent on the alliance for delivering a public good (Bennett *et al*, 1994, p. 70; Bennett *et al*, 1997).
8 Olson calls this the 'privileged group'. For a recent application of Olson see (Ringsmose, 2010).
9 Here the burden sharing literature intersects with that on international regimes, which for purposes of space cannot be discussed here further. See (Zyla, 2015) for an introduction.
10 A good overview of this variant of collective action theory can be found in (Hartley and Sandler, 1999; Betts, 2003).
11 To be sure, I am not suggesting that collective action theorists have *not* used relative indicators. They have by calculating defense spending as a share of GDP.
12 The peace agreement was formally signed during an official ceremony in Paris on 14 December 1995.
13 The list of non-NATO countries participating in the IFOR mission include states from the NATO's Partnership for Peace program: Albania, Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sweden and the Ukraine. Of particular note is that IFOR ground troops were augmented by a 2200-strong Russian contingent serving under a NATO command. IFOR AFSOUTH Fact Sheet, 1 March 1996.
14 The period this study concentrates on is from 1995–2001, which excludes the years for SFOR *after* 2001. This also applies to the KFOR operation in the sections below.

15 To be sure, the purpose here is to summarize rather than discuss the history of the Kosovo war in detail, which can be found in (Judah, 2002; Judah, 2005–2006). Also, the limitations expressed in Note 13 apply.
16 While Sandler and Hartley (2001) point out that a joint products model exists when defense provision gives rise of multiple outputs, Boyer goes further and emphasizes that trading of these private benefits is possible.
17 For example, Auerswald and Saideman (2014) as well as Williams (2013) have produced some interesting work on burden sharing in Afghanistan that could be further built upon.
18 See, for example, Kay Bailey Hutchingson's speech to the US Senate on 15 June 2011.

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