NATO's Post–Cold War Collective Action Problem

Joseph Lepgold

For much of the last decade, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has sought to redefine itself as the core of an enlarged security community in Western and Central Europe and as a tool for managing conflicts in and around these areas. International regime theory, which sees interstate institutions as mechanisms to facilitate cooperation that might otherwise be infeasible, helps explain NATO's eagerness to take on new missions by arguing that institutions are easier to adapt once in place than to build from scratch.[1] We nonetheless lack a framework for anticipating whether these new objectives can be achieved in operational terms. In this article, I develop such a framework and use it to focus on the prospects for successful adaptation in a key area: Can NATO perform multilateral peace operations effectively and reliably? A number of officials have voiced optimism on this issue. In referring to outside support for the 1997 Bosnian elections, NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana thought it "a good lesson" that "different international institutions," including NATO, had "worked together in a peacekeeping operation of this nature."[2] Kofi Annan, then undersecretary general of the United Nations (UN) for peacekeeping operations, suggested that NATO could have a major role in the "peacekeeping with teeth" that he was promoting.[3] This article reaches a different conclusion. I argue that NATO's members will likely be reluctant to use force to manage or settle disputes that do not involve its members' territories. If this occurs, it

Joseph Lepgold is Associate Professor of International Affairs and Government at Georgetown University. He is coeditor of Collective Conflict Management and Changing World Politics *(Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), and is currently working on a book that seeks to reframe various debates dealing with strategic choice in world politics.*

For helpful comments, I thank Mark Boyer, Paul Diehl, David Garnham, Charles King, Charles Kupchan, Alan Lamborn, John Oneal, George Shambaugh, and several anonymous referees for *International Security.*

1. Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984). For an interesting attempt to apply regime theory to NATO, see Robert B. McCalla, "NATO's Persistence after the Cold War," *International Organization*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Summer 1996), pp. 445–475.
2. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS-WEU-251, September 8, 1997, p. 1.
3. Adam Roberts, "The Crisis in UN Peacekeeping," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1996), p. 306.

International Security, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Summer 1998), pp. 78–106

would be politically embarrassing and ultimately perhaps dangerous for NATO, whose leaders have tied its credibility and raison d'être to operations that they in all likelihood will rarely carry out.

My approach to the issue of NATO's capacity for peace operations focuses on whether individual NATO members are likely to behave in ways that would lead to the kinds of outcomes Annan and Solana predict. Using theories of collective action, which focus on whether and when individual actors will contribute toward the provision of nonprivate goods, I find that out-of-area peace operations pose precisely the wrong kinds of incentives for NATO to succeed in this area. Both humanitarian operations and operations designed to affect the political incentives of the actors in a conflict are likely to be seriously undersupplied, which could pose a difficult international problem in view of the need for such operations. Unless NATO members find ways to change dramatically the individual incentives they confront on these issues, the alliance is unlikely to carry out peace operations often or successfully.

At the same time, in creating the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTFs), NATO members have given themselves a slight chance to succeed in carrying out a peace-operations mission. The CJTF proposal, approved in 1994, is designed to give NATO more flexibility in parceling out responsibility for military operations in and beyond Europe in a strategic environment in which NATO members are not focusing their attention on a single, dominant threat. To accomplish this objective, CJTFs allow ad hoc military commands to form for specific operations, using assets assembled across national and service lines. I argue below that the CJTFs' mechanism may help induce the kinds of coalitions needed to carry out peace operations in two ways: by providing individual incentives in the form of valued command responsibilities, and by reducing the number of participants in specific operations enough so that overlapping preferences can be identified and realized more easily. Further, if such incentives lead to the creation of regional capabilities to undertake peace operations that would not ordinarily exist, multilateral action is more likely to be carried out effectively than it would otherwise. The increasing regionalization of international security in the wake of the Cold War makes this scenario at least somewhat plausible, insofar as security problems are defined and dealt with more by groups of states with highly specific incentives to act. Conversely, NATO is not very like to engage in effective peace operations unless something like the CJTFs can induce the behavior needed for the desired outcomes.

The article consists of three major sections. I begin by examining how and why NATO's mandate and tasks have evolved since the end of the Cold War

from an emphasis on deterring Soviet expansion toward a focus on peace operations carried out beyond members' territories. In the second section I use a collective action framework to examine the prospects for this new mission. I then suggest how the underprovision of peace operations that this argument leads one to expect might be partly overcome. The final section draws out conclusions and policy implications that follow from the above analysis.

NATO's Evolving Security Mandate and Tasks

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO's leaders have tried to adapt the alliance by establishing diplomatic and military relationships with former Warsaw Pact states and by stressing that NATO's ability to handle peace operations is a key reason for its continued existence. Peace operations have become NATO's main operational function since the early 1990s, though they have not replaced its traditional functions of nuclear protection, conventional protection, and provision of a security community to its members.

NATO'S NEW RAISON D'ÊTRE

In 1990 and 1991, it was not obvious that NATO would survive. Soon, however, its members concluded that Eurasian strategic conditions were too uncertain for it to be dismantled. The future of Russia, Western Europeans' ability to manage their security alone, the strategic implications of German unity (perhaps including renationalized defense forces in Europe), and the other security problems its members might face in the post–Cold War world were all unknowns.[4] Moreover, as international regime theory suggests, NATO members began to realize that it would be easier to adjust the alliance to new purposes than to build a new institution.[5] As the Persian Gulf War would later confirm, working militarily with well-known partners in a familiar organizational setting is much easier than if such familiarity cannot be taken for granted.

But what would NATO's new rationale be? At least since 1990, its members have assumed that instability in Central and Eastern Europe is "inseparably linked" to their own security.[6] The reasoning behind this conclusion is partially

4. Ronald D. Asmus, "Double Enlargement: Redefining the Atlantic Partnership after the Cold War," in David C. Gompert and F. Stephen Larrabee, eds., *America and Europe: A Partnership for a New Era* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 35.
5. See Keohane, *After Hegemony*, chap. 6.
6. Michael E. Brown, *European Security: Defining the Debates* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, forthcoming). Quoted material appears on p. 29 of August 1997 draft.

laid out in NATO's revised Strategic Concept, adopted in 1991. This document summarizes NATO's challenges, likely risks, and purposes in post–Cold War Europe. With the demise of the Soviet Union, NATO members now believed that security threats were less likely to come from "calculated aggression against the territory of the Allies" than from "the adverse consequences of instabilities that may arise from the serious economic, social, and political difficulties, including ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes, which are faced by many countries in Central and Eastern Europe." According to the Strategic Concept, such tensions could threaten European stability and peace, and thus "involve outside powers or spill over into NATO countries, [thereby] having a direct effect on the security of the Alliance."[7] In part, the incentive to redefine NATO's security mandate more broadly was being driven by such real-world events as the disintegration of Yugoslavia and instabilities in various parts of the former Warsaw Pact. As one observer put it, "The old strategic distinction between in-area and out-of-area interests and conflicts was becoming increasingly blurred as developments beyond NATO's borders became the top security concerns for many of its members."[8] Accordingly, the Strategic Concept stipulates that peace in Europe now rests on NATO's ability to manage crises successfully.[9]

NATO's evolution since 1991 reflects the development of an institutional personality through which out-of-area peace operations can be carried out. In 1992 NATO agreed on a case-by-case basis to consider enforcing decisions of the UN Security Council and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. This represented a major organizational response to the end of the Cold War, during which NATO members had kept their distance from these intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). Now their broader memberships added legitimacy to NATO's new mission. NATO began monitoring the UN's arms embargo against various parties in the Balkan war in July 1992. In April 1993 it began to enforce a no-fly zone in Bosnia; the next year it promised to protect Sarajevo with air strikes. In February 1994, after warning the parties to the Bosnian conflict to remove heavy weapons from an exclusion zone in

7. These points are found in "The Alliance's Strategic Concept," agreed by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Rome on November 7–8, 1991, reprinted in North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels: NATO Office of Information and Press, 1995), p. 237, Article 10. Hereafter this document will be referred to as the "Strategic Concept."
8. Asmus, "Double Enlargement," p. 37.
9. Strategic Concept, Articles 32, 47(d), pp. 241–245.

Sarajevo, NATO fired its first shots "in anger" to carry out the threat. In part, NATO assumed a peace-operations mandate because there was no UN army upon which to call. By 1995 Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali conceded that the UN was incapable of enforcement: "In the future," he said, "if peace enforcement is needed it should be conducted by countries with the will to do it."[10] As the only multilateral organization with standing forces available for such missions, NATO became the main institutional recipient of this mandate.

A willingness to take on these kinds of tasks marked a profound shift in NATO's mission and rationale.[11] NATO's members are now theoretically willing to use military force to uphold group standards of behavior throughout Europe. But such a change also carries a long-term political risk: NATO's reputation is now on the line as far as peace operations are concerned. I next address the specific objectives that peace operations are designed to achieve, and how such tasks complement NATO's other functions.

PEACE OPERATIONS AND OTHER SECURITY GOODS UNDER NATO'S MANDATE

Peace operations are seen as one way to deal with local instabilities that, if left unchecked, could lead to escalating violence. They can be classified into two broad categories. The first is humanitarian operations, which are designed to provide food, shelter, and medicine directly to victims of conflicts, or to protect relief workers who furnish these goods and services. In extreme cases of repression, including genocide, humanitarian relief involves direct protection of innocent people from harm. Given that these operations are meant to be substantively neutral in the conflict at hand, they are generally considered noncontroversial.[12] This characteristic can yield significant advantages in implementing these operations. If outside forces succeed in alleviating some local suffering even as fighting continues, a humanitarian operation has at least partly succeeded even while other, more politically oriented peace operations have failed.[13] For instance, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)

10. Quoted in Bruce Jentleson, "Who, Why, What, and How: Debates over Post–Cold War Military Intervention," in Robert J. Lieber, ed., *Eagle Adrift: American Foreign Policy at the End of the Century* (New York: Longman, 1997), p. 64.
11. James Goodby, "Can Collective Security Work? Reflections on the European Case," in Crocker, Hampson, and Aall, *Managing Global Chaos*, p. 248.
12. Paul F. Diehl, *International Peacekeeping* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 10–11. In some conflicts, of course, the local parties do not see humanitarian relief as disinterested, even if that is its intention. In fact, the relief supplies can themselves become spoils of war. For a good treatment of these issues in the case of Sudan, see David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 144–147.
13. Stuart Kaufman, "Preventive Peacekeeping, Ethnic Violence, and Macedonia," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1996), p. 232.

troops in Bosnia during the early 1990s helped deliver relief supplies, even though these forces were neither authorized nor equipped to respond to the many instances in which cease-fires broke down.

The second broad category of peace operations consists of those designed to influence the political incentives of the actors in a conflict. This category includes preventive military deployments, traditional peacekeeping, military enforcement of truces, and more ambitious enforcement tasks. These operations serve multiple purposes. One, which can be relevant in either interstate or intrastate conflicts, is to prevent hostilities from breaking out in tense situations. Since January 1993, for example, a preventive-deployment force of just over one thousand troops has patrolled the borders that Macedonia shares with Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; the force maintains a presence at border crossings, customs stations, and in villages where tensions among the region's ethnic groups could become inflamed.

A second purpose applies to enforcement operations. It may be that the stronger party in a conflict will have no reason to bargain in good faith until the playing field is leveled somewhat. Significantly, peace operations begun for other reasons—in Somalia, for example, the initial mission was to deliver relief supplies—may come to favor one of the states involved, or one internal claimant for power, if that actor is seen as less obstructionist.[14] For instance, the Dayton accords that ended the Balkan war could not have been crafted had the Serbs not lost power over the preceding two years to the Croats and Muslims, in part as a result of NATO's air strikes and then its members' willingness to back the accord with force if needed.

A third purpose of peace operations designed to affect the incentives of local actors is to guarantee "ethnic contracts." These specify the rights, responsibilities, political privileges, and access to resources of each ethnic group in a multinational state.[15] As was demonstrated in Lebanon in the 1970s and Yugoslavia two decades later, ethnic war erupts when these contracts break down or when groups fear that they will erode in the future.[16] Guarantees supplied by outsiders, with the implied willingness to use force to back them up, compensate for the absence of credible commitments among the parties them-

14. David Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall 1996), p. 67.
15. David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, *Ethnic Fears and Global Engagement: The International Spread and Management of Ethnic Conflict* (Berkeley: Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California, 1996), pp. 12, 39–42; and Lake and Rothchild, "Containing Fear," pp. 67–68.
16. Lake and Rothchild, "Containing Fear," pp. 43–44.

selves. For such guarantees to be effective, those who intervene must be seen to have the stamina to stay on as long as needed. Otherwise, groups are likely to continue fighting if they fear for their future at the hands of other groups.

It is important that political leaders understand at the outset how much coercion is likely to be needed to accomplish a particular mission. A traditional peacekeeping force, for instance, cannot itself establish constitutional guarantees or build trust among the parties; it can only provide a thin tripwire against violations of a cease-fire. If the situation demands more than this—if it requires that a pause in ongoing hostilities be imposed selectively where a cease-fire breaks down—more numerous and heavily armed troops will be needed.[17] For example, a multinational panel of military leaders that explored the lessons of the Rwandan civil war claimed that a peace-enforcement contingent of five thousand troops (including air power, adequate communications, and logistics support) might have prevented considerable bloodshed in that situation. According to this panel, if such a force had intervened immediately after the political assassinations that triggered the conflict, hundreds of thousands of deaths might have been averted.[18]

Peace operations do not, however, have NATO members' undivided attention. Even though the end of the Cold War has diminished the salience of NATO's traditional functions, three such purposes continue to be part of its mandate. The first is nuclear protection, although the end of the Cold War has relegated it to the distant background of day-to-day planning.[19] The second purpose is conventional protection—in essence, a hedge against a reemergence of the Russian threat. According to the Strategic Concept, conventional forces help prevent war in Europe "by ensuring that no potential aggressor could contemplate a quick or easy victory, or territorial gains, by conventional means."[20] The third of these traditional purposes helps to justify NATO expansion by suggesting how the introduction of new members can work to pacify an ever-widening swath of Eurasia. As it did during the Cold War, NATO helps provide a security community to its members: an environment in which stra-

17. Joseph Lepgold and Thomas G. Weiss, "Collective Conflict Management and Changing World Politics: An Overview," in Lepgold and Weiss, eds., *Collective Conflict Management and Changing World Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 27–30.
18. Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Preventing Deadly Conflict* (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1997), p. 6.
19. A succinct statement of current U.S. policy on this issue is found in Walter Slocombe, "Is There Still a Role for Nuclear Deterrence?" *NATO Review*, Vol. 45, No. 6 (November/December 1997), p. 25.
20. Ibid.

tegic rivalries are attenuated and the use of force within the group is highly unlikely.[21] While decades of Western European political integration have also contributed to this result, NATO allows the United States implicitly to protect Western Europeans from one another, in addition to protecting them from outside threats, through its active involvement in mutual defense planning and military operations.[22] NATO's integrated command keeps Western Europeans from pursuing nationalistic defense strategies and creates a climate in which members' policy processes become mutually transparent. NATO thus helps moderate the security competitiveness that might exist if its members believed that they had to treat one another as potential strategic rivals. The military rivalry between Greece and Turkey is a counterexample; this rivalry would likely be worse, however, if both were not NATO members.

Peace operations, then, have become a major part of NATO's post–Cold War mandate, and convincing strategic as well as altruistic reasons can be given for undertaking them. They nevertheless differ from the alliance's traditional functions in three ways. Unlike NATO's mutual defense tasks, peace operations are politically and legally discretionary. Unless the strategic conditions change drastically in Western and Central Europe, peace operations are not expected to be needed on members' territories. Finally, because they do not involve members' territorial or political integrity, the stakes that NATO member states have in their success is likely to be fairly low as compared to territorial protection. The question, then, is whether NATO can carry out these operations successfully.

NATO's Suitability to Undertake Peace Operations

On its face, NATO should be well positioned to deal with devastating internal conflicts, bring recalcitrant parties to the bargaining table, help guarantee any resulting settlements, and deliver humanitarian assistance. Governments that see benefits in discretionary military operations but are unwilling to assume the costs and risks on their own might be more likely to participate if others were to join them.[23] This is so in part because NATO, which will have eighteen members by 1999 (assuming that Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic

21. For a discussion of the concept of security communities, see Karl Deutsch, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957).
22. Charles Glaser, "Future Security Arrangements for Europe," in George W. Downs, ed., *Collective Security beyond the Cold War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 230.
23. Ibid., p. 231.

are admitted), is a fairly large alliance. In nonmarket situations, an increase in the size of a group may over time lower costs for those already in the group.[24] For example, if the capabilities required for peace operations entail additional or different military forces than those needed for traditional defense and deterrence, as I argue below that they do to some extent, coordinating the acquisition and use of such extra forces multilaterally could be seen as a way to reduce the economic costs of peace operations.[25] The widespread use in NATO of interoperable weapons, one feature of the integrated command, makes such a scenario plausible.

On the other hand, collective action problems could spoil this optimistic scenario. Even if the members of some group agree on an objective, individual incentives often encourage easy or free riding. These terms refer respectively to strong individual incentives to pay few, if any, of the costs of producing some good that will benefit a larger group.[26] Free or easy riding occurs for two reasons. First, an actor may hope or believe that others will do the job that the actor would like to see done. As NATO officials admit, the diversity of risks and tasks its members now face suggests that they need a "wide range" of conventional response options.[27] Such an extensive menu may be seen as a luxury in an era of fiscal stringency. In addition, contemporary Western societies are extremely averse to casualties, further decreasing the likelihood that risky, discretionary operations will get the commitment they need. As Lawrence Freedman notes, "Politicians have always balked at the sort of force levels military commanders say they need for an imposed solution by the international community."[28] Second, an actor may fear that if one contributes toward the common good, others will ride free on that actor's efforts.[29] It was precisely these sorts of calculations that gave the key Western governments incentives to abdicate responsibility for intervention in the Balkans between

24. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 36–39.
25. Glaser, "Future Security Arrangements for Europe," pp. 230–231.
26. Richard Cornes and Todd Sandler distinguish between "free" and "easy" riding in "Easy Riders, Joint Production, and Public Goods," *Economic Journal*, Vol. 94, No. 375 (September 1984), p. 580, fn. 2. They note that "free" riding implies no contribution at all to a collective good and is thus a polar type. "Easy" riding, which implies some contribution short of what would be the optimum from a group perspective, is presumably more typical. I use both terms to leave open the possibility that either can occur within NATO.
27. Strategic Concept, Article 39, p. 243.
28. Lawrence Freedman, "Bosnia: Does Peace Support Make Any Sense?" *NATO Review*, Vol. 43, No. 6 (November 1995), p. 19.
29. These two possibilities are taken from Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 50–51.

1991 and 1994.[30] Moreover, NATO members may value the good to be gained from a particular operation only very slightly, if at all. In speaking about Somalia, for example, the U.S. ambassador to that country noted that it was "not a critical piece of real estate for anybody in the post–Cold War world."[31] For a multilateral operation to take place in this kind of situation, the value of the collective good is no inducement at all; instead, purely private incentives must themselves induce an ad hoc coalition to take action.

To analyze NATO members' willingness to carry out peace operations, we thus need to explore their incentives to supply the various goods involved. Collective action theory allows us to highlight these incentives by identifying the distinct strategic and political problems associated with the production of different security goods. Following on this analysis, I argue that such problems, where they pose otherwise insuperable barriers to group action, may be partially overcome through a set of selective incentives to the relevant actors.

SECURITY GOODS AND BEHAVIORAL INCENTIVES: A COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMEWORK

Security goods, like other goods, fall at various points on a public-private continuum. A (pure) public good, such as an adequately amplified, open-air lecture, is totally nonrival in consumption (meaning that consumption by one actor does not diminish the amount available for consumption by others) and completely nonexcludable (once it is provided, no one can be kept from consuming it). By contrast, a (pure) private good, such as a fixed quantity of food, is totally rival (meaning that consumption by one actor decreases the amount available to others by an equal amount) and excludable (meaning that those who do not pay for or contribute toward the good can be kept from consuming it). Nonexcludability often disinclines actors to provide a good, or to supply as much of it as is needed, because they cannot charge others for using it. We can also distinguish among various types of "impure" public goods that exhibit varying degrees of rivalry or excludability. One type of impure public good has benefits that are excludable but at least partially nonrival.[32] A university lecture course taken for credit (or even by auditors, if they are charged for the privilege) is an example of an impure public good: those who do not pay can be excluded, but any number of paying students

30. Goodby, "Can Collective Security Work?" p. 238.
31. Jentleson, "Who, Why, What and How?" p. 52.
32. These are called "club goods." See Todd Sandler, *Collective Action* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982), pp. 6–7.

can attend (assuming adequate room capacity). Another type of impure public good has benefits that are nonexcludable (or that impose major costs or difficulties on those who would try to exclude actors from their consumption), but are at the same time limited in quantity and thus rival in consumption. Open-access stocks of migratory animals are an example.[33]

In carrying out their traditional functions, NATO members provide excludable and largely nonrival goods to one another. Membership is the exclusion mechanism: Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty defines an attack on any member as an attack on all and binds each one to take any action deemed necessary to repel it. Many states in Central and Eastern Europe want to join NATO precisely because this pledge covers only members. NATO has also established stiff conditions that states must satisfy before they can be seriously considered for membership, including transparent defense-budget processes, settlement of all extant border disputes, and development of military forces that can operate inside NATO's integrated command. Yet even if every condition is satisfied, NATO members can reject any applicant.

How do the features of excludability and nonrivalness affect NATO members' incentives in carrying out the alliance's traditional functions? Consider first the protection provided by nuclear weapons. This nuclear umbrella was a key component of NATO's Cold War strategy and today operates residually to dissuade any use of weapons of mass destruction against its members. It may be withheld from nonmembers, but is nonrival within NATO because additional allies can share its benefits without diminishing the protection consumed by existing allies.[34] (This would not necessarily be true if new allies needed protection against a different adversary.) As such, once anything more than a minimum nuclear deterrent force is provided, it can often be "extended" to others at little cost. The United States thus has not hesitated in covering, albeit often implicitly, many states with its nuclear umbrella.

---

33. These goods are known as "common pool resources." See Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 30–33. For a typology of the four principal types of goods (nonrival and nonexcludable, rival and excludable, nonrival and excludable, rival and nonexcludable), see J. Samuel Barkin and George E. Shambaugh, "Hypotheses on the International Politics of Common Pool Resources," in Barkin and Shambaugh, *Anarchy and the Environment: The International Relations of Common Pool Resources* (Albany: State University of New York Press, forthcoming), chap. 1.

34. James C. Murdoch and Todd Sandler, "A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis of NATO," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (June 1982), p. 240. This is the case because the capability of the deterring state or organization to carry out a threat of retaliation is a function of its capacity to cover a target set in some other state, not the size of the territory being protected.

Consider next the protection provided by conventional forces, which includes both deterrence (to prevent attack) and a damage-limiting function (in event of attack). In terms of deterrence, conventional forces within NATO are nonrival. An attack against any NATO forces implicates the entire alliance in defense of the state that has been attacked. In the damage-limiting sense, however, conventional forces are rival because they are subject to thinning effects. A fixed arsenal spread over a longer perimeter or a greater surface area affords less protection.[35] The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, for instance, resisted enlarging the no-fly and no-drive zones in Iraq in early 1998 because it was estimated that such an enlargement would tie up three to four times as many aircraft as the existing commitment.[36] Conventionally provided damage limitation, then, is roughly proportional to one's ability to cover a particular area with well-prepared forces. Not surprisingly, therefore, the United States has been stingier about providing conventional as opposed to nuclear protection to its European allies. Since the 1960s it has insisted that they deploy enough conventional troops to make early use of nuclear weapons unnecessary, and for more than a decade has published detailed annual reports that describe through various measures how each ally is sharing the common security burden.[37]

The third traditional NATO function, provision of a security community to its members, is also excludable but nonrival. Outsiders cannot enjoy it, but it is largely nonrival within NATO. Adding new members, provided they meet the kinds of conditions listed above, presumably has little effect on the feelings of community enjoyed by existing members.

NATO's three traditional functions have not disappeared; they have, however, receded in political and strategic importance as compared to the two types of peace-operations tasks: humanitarian operations and operations designed to affect the political incentives of the actors in a conflict. This change in its operational priorities may put NATO in a difficult collective action

35. Sandler, *Collective Action*, pp. 100–101; and Murdoch and Sandler, "A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis of NATO," p. 242.
36. Eric Schmitt, "The G.O.P. Is Urging Hussein's Ouster," *New York Times*, February 17, 1998, p. A6.
37. In 1977 and 1978 NATO members agreed to increase their defense budgets 3 percent annually in real terms. Beginning in the 1980s, the U.S. Congress required the executive branch to report annually whether other members were carrying out this commitment. In general, these reports found that, except in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, few non-U.S. members met their pledge. See Phil Williams, *U.S. Troops in Europe*, Chatham House Papers No. 25, Royal Institute of International Affairs (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 60.

position. To be sure, collective action problems are nothing new in NATO's history.[38] Yet in three respects, NATO's collective action problem with regard to peace-operations missions is sharper now than its comparable collective action problem was during the Cold War.

First, given that each of its traditional functions involves an excludable good, NATO members can control who consumes these goods and the conditions under which they do so. Because the benefits provided by out-of-area peace operations are not excludable, serious burden-sharing issues may arise. Peace operations are of course discretionary. But *if* NATO members carry them out, they cannot feasibly exclude those who do not contribute from consuming the good(s) that these operations produce. For this reason, it can be very difficult to force noncontributors to share the burden. The United States functioned rather successfully as a kind of multinational tax collector during the Persian Gulf War, but the political and strategic conditions during this operation were rather unusual. U.S. leaders had an enormous stake in the operation's success and had individual leverage with a number of potential free or easy riders.[39] No such mechanism for inducing politically sustainable burden-sharing may exist when it is needed in future operations.

Second, in the absence of a stark external threat, it may be hard even for leaders who wish to undertake peace operations to mobilize the internal resources and political will needed to do so. Taking nontrivial risks and paying substantial costs to protect the lives and homes of relative strangers is much less popular than defending one's own people or close allies. Given the way American military forces are structured and the significant post–Cold War cuts in U.S. force structure, this may be a particularly formidable constraint for U.S. leaders. Any future sizable involvement of U.S. troops in a peace operation will require mobilizing reserve forces, a decision American presidents are likely to be very reluctant to make. Such mobilizations could be required even for fairly small involvement, because some specialized operations, such as civil

38. On this point, see Mancur Olson, Jr. and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances," *Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (August 1966), p. 266; James C. Murdoch and Todd Sandler, "Complementarity, Free Riding, and the Military Expenditures of NATO Allies," *Journal of Public Economics*, Vol. 25, No. 1/2 (November 1984), pp. 83–101; John R. Oneal and Paul F. Diehl, "The Theory of Collective Action and NATO Defense Burdens: New Empirical Tests," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (June 1994), pp. 373–396; and Glenn Palmer, "Corralling the Free Rider: Deterrence and the Western Alliance," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (June 1990), pp. 147–164.

39. Andrew Bennett, Joseph Lepgold, and Danny Unger, "Burden-Sharing in the Persian Gulf War," *International Organization*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Winter 1994), pp. 44–45, 62–70.

affairs, are entirely the function of reserve forces.[40] Consequently, without the kind of global enemy that often made remote locations seem strategically valuable during the Cold War, the United States and other NATO members may lack incentives to carry out costly and risky peace operations.[41]

One result of these contemporary difficulties in summoning the requisite resources and political resolve for military interventions is that developing crises are now harder to deter than they were during the Cold War, because external involvement is seen as much more discretionary.[42] Seldom are troops put in place before trouble begins. As Lawrence Freedman put it, "until the decisions are taken, nobody can be sure, including potential adversaries, whether any action is going to be taken."[43]

Western decision making about a response to the Balkan war bears out this analysis. From the beginning, President George Bush disclaimed U.S. interest in intervening despite a clear humanitarian need, arguing that the conflict was Europe's responsibility. And because the Europeans did not have the military capabilities to intervene decisively on their own, Washington saw itself as the main contributor of forces should it become involved. For their part, the Europeans were wary of being trapped by American unpredictability. They worried that if they went in with the United States, Washington would offer air power but no ground troops to do the "dirty work."[44] The result was three years of collective buck-passing until NATO intervened in 1994 by threatening and then carrying out air strikes. Even this did not put an end to burden-sharing conflicts. Congress's insistence that the Europeans assume full responsibility for the Bosnian operation after U.S. troops eventually leave is inconsistent with Europeans' determination that they will not again stand alone militarily in Bosnia.[45]

A third way in which NATO's collective action problem is now sharper than it was during the Cold War concerns the nature of the forces required by peace operations. The forces are often fairly infungible in terms of the functions they can perform and highly rival in terms of the terrain they can effectively cover. For example, even though NATO's coercion from the air helped bring the

40. Donald M. Snow, *National Security*, 4th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 213.
41. Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992), pp. 67–68; and Lake and Rothchild, "Containing Fear," p. 68.
42. Freedman, "Bosnia: Does Peace Support Make Any Sense?" p. 19.
43. Ibid.
44. Goodby, "Can Collective Security Work?" p. 238.
45. Ivo Daalder, "Bosnia after SFOR," *Survival*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Winter 1997–98), pp. 5, 6, 9.

Bosnian Serbs to the bargaining table, a successful Croatian ground offensive likely had a larger impact.[46] In general, peace operations require many more special forces—including those qualified to perform civil-affairs operations, personnel who speak multiple languages, and those trained in psychological operations—than traditional combat operations.[47] As one analyst concluded, the sheer variety of potential tasks makes it unlikely that a given force would be ready for all challenges.[48] For this reason, the numbers, types of forces, and their effective operational capacity on the ground matter decisively for peace operations. Recruiting, training, and equipping enough troops with the correct expertise and discipline for peacekeeping and humanitarian tasks is not easy,[49] especially as military spending has dropped significantly in most states as a percentage of gross domestic product. Moreover, very few of the extant peacekeeping training programs worldwide incorporate instruction in the kinds of specific "contact" skills that peace operations typically require.[50]

Many examples show how situation-specific peace-operations assets can be and how rival in consumption the goods produced by the operations can also be. A thousand peacekeepers have sufficed to protect Macedonia so long as Serbs and Albanians have refrained from serious provocation in that tense area. But should the Serbs intervene in Kosovo, so few soldiers would be militarily useless.[51] Similarly, "peacekeepers in the Congo deployed thinly for monitoring functions became vulnerable when the UN force started to employ coercion. . . . [The] forces had neither the agreement necessary for a peacekeeping operation, nor the force levels and commitment necessary for a partisan intervention."[52] Finally, regarding the UNPROFOR operation in Bosnia, it is often claimed that mixing an aid-distribution operation with a safe-haven protection mission is inherently unworkable. Yet the problem in Bosnia may

---

46. Joseph C. Cyrulik, "So We Control the Air," *Washington Post*, February 3, 1998, p. A17.
47. David T. Burbach, "Ready for Action? European Capabilities for Peace Operations," *Breakthroughs*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 10–19.
48. Roberts, "The Crisis in UN Peacekeeping," p. 316.
49. Adam Roberts, *Humanitarian Action in War*, Adelphi Paper No. 305 (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1996, for the International Institute for Strategic Studies), p. 37.
50. Committee on Techniques for the Enhancement of Human Performance, Daniel Druckman, Jerome Singer, and Harold Van Cott, eds., *Enhancing Organizational Performance* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences Press, 1997), chap. 7, pp. 168–169. The analysis concludes that "a gap exists between the skills being trained and the activities that occur in peackeeping and related missions" (p. 169).
51. Kaufman, "Preventive Peacekeeping, Ethnic Violence, and Macedonia," p. 240.
52. Robert Cooper and Mats Berdal, "Outside Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts," in Michael E. Brown, ed., *Ethnic Conflict and International Security* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 201.

simply have been too few troops for the task: "There was nothing intrinsically preposterous about adding on safe areas to UNPROFOR's task if only extra forces had been provided at the time. What was preposterous was trying to handle a demanding new role without extra forces. . . . the UN Secretary-General asked for—but failed to receive—7,500 new troops."[53]

These strategic circumstances and military requirements have put NATO members in a much more difficult situation than they were during the Cold War. At that time, NATO dealt with its collective action problem—an apparent undersupply of conventional forces in Europe—mainly through extended nuclear deterrence. Nuclear deterrence could fulfill this task because NATO's military mission at this time involved the long-term defense of a fixed territory against comparably equipped and trained forces. Any form of military protection that covered this terrain was thus functionally appropriate to the task. In providing such coverage, nuclear forces had a key advantage apart from their relatively low cost and reasonably high fungibility in deterring major provocations. Unless the purpose of nuclear weapons is to fight and prevail in a nuclear war of attrition—a goal that was never unambiguously accepted at NATO's highest political levels, despite war plans and some public discussion that suggested the opposite—the protection they offer, above the number needed to furnish some level of minimum deterrence, is largely nonrival.[54] This policy thus allowed NATO's European members to understate their preferences for nonnuclear protection by riding easily on U.S. nuclear protection.

By contrast, nuclear weapons are not pertinent sources of power for peace operations. For at least a generation, "professional military people . . . [have agreed] . . . that small military operations are simply out of bounds so far as concerns the use of nuclear weapons."[55] There also seems to be a strong, albeit implicit, global norm proscribing nuclear attack against a nonnuclear opponent. For these reasons, nuclear forces can rarely if ever be plausibly used to bring parties in conflicts to the bargaining table, enforce ethnic contracts, or deliver humanitarian relief.[56] States that wish to undertake the kinds of operations discussed here must instead deploy enough conventionally armed troops

53. Freedman, "Bosnia: Does Peace Support Make Any Sense?" p. 21.
54. Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), chap. 1.
55. Bernard Brodie, *Escalation and the Nuclear Option* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 105.
56. The one apparent exception would seem to be the use of nuclear weapons to retaliate for the use of weapons of mass destruction by some state or other actor. For an argument that there is an implicit norm proscribing nuclear attack against a nonnuclear actor, see Richard Price and Nina

or civilian personnel to cover all of the relevant territory, equip those forces precisely for the tasks at hand, and expose them to a higher risk of everyday casualties than was typical before 1989. As one analyst put it, "Military forces in post–Cold War Europe are, paradoxically, now used in a more military way, i.e., in open wars or in an intervention mode aimed at establishing stability and containing islands of conflict."[57]

Another Balkans example illustrates the free/easy riding as well as the force-thinning and force-infungibility aspects of NATO's contemporary collective action problem. The Pentagon as well as military organizations in other NATO countries for many months strenuously opposed using NATO-led Peace Implementation Force (IFOR) or follow-on Stabilization Force (SFOR) troops in Bosnia to track down and arrest indicted war criminals, despite a mandate from the Hague International Tribunal to do so. Until July 1997 even those below the top leadership levels were not pursued. Military officers fear that their personnel would get bogged down in retaliatory guerrilla attacks if they were to assume this task. As a result, even after NATO forces seized police stations and television transmitters controlled by forces loyal to Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić, one of the most notorious war criminals, NATO commanders shrank from decisive action as soon as Karadžić's forces resisted them.[58] Beneath these immediate incentives is an aversion, especially strong among U.S. officers, to "nonmilitary tasks," including countercriminal, counternarcotics, and civilian reconstruction missions.[59] Consequently, top Bosnian Serb war criminals have been under NATO surveillance but have been able to move about completely unhindered. American officials wanted to create a special paramilitary force to capture these individuals, but NATO's response to this idea has been mixed at best. When NATO forces in Bosnia shrank from the 60,000 of IFOR to the 31,000 of SFOR in 1996 this reluctance to pursue war criminals seemed to grow, because fewer troops meant less support for any

---

Tannenwald, "Norms and Deterrence: The Nuclear and Chemical Weapons Taboos," in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 134–143.

57. Bertel Heurlin, *Military Command Structures in the Baltic Sea Area* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Affairs, 1997), p. 3.

58. Chris Hedges, "Bosnia Jitters: West Fearful of Having to Use Force," *New York Times*, September 11, 1997, p. A6.

59. Rick Atkinson, "Warriors without a War," *Washington Post*, April 14, 1997; and Ralph Peters, "After the Revolution," *Parameters*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Summer 1995), pp. 7–14.

paramilitary force that might be created to apprehend the individuals in question.[60]

Based on this analysis, depending on the circumstances, out-of-area humanitarian operations can be either nonexcludable and nonrival or nonexcludable and rival, or consist of a series of purely private goods. A humanitarian operation approximates a (pure) public good if it is sufficiently small in scope or temporary in duration to be immune from major force-thinning constraints. If, however, force thinning is a major constraint, a humanitarian operation is effectively nonexcludable but rival in consumption. A humanitarian operation constitutes a series of private goods if the actors that undertake it do not share the same substantive objectives. This could occur, for instance, if some NATO members acted militarily in an out-of-area operation to protect their citizens, others went in to protect UN troops, while perhaps others were most concerned about uncontrolled flows of refugees.

Likewise, peace operations designed to affect the political incentives of the actors in a conflict may be one of two types of goods. I assume, for reasons discussed earlier, that serious force-thinning and force-infungibility problems may well occur in these operations. Thus, if actors have the same preferences over outcomes, these operations are effectively nonexcludable but rival in consumption; if they do not share the same preferences, such operations constitute a series of private goods.

Goods that are nonexcludable yet rival, such as peace operations designed to influence the political incentives of actors in a conflict, pose quite different incentives as compared to either public or private goods. Because public goods are nonexcludable, there is an incentive to underprovide them. However, because they are also nonrival (i.e., exist in limitless supply), there is no incentive to overconsume them. On the other hand, because private goods are excludable, those who consume them can be charged for their use. This in turn means that there is no incentive either to underprovide them (relative to perceived effective demand) or to overconsume them, because no one presumably would be inclined to hoard goods against himself. By contrast, goods that are nonexcludable but rival produce the worst of both worlds. They tend to be undersupplied because they are nonexcludable, but they *also* tend to be

60. William Drodziak, "U.S. Urges Formation of Special Police Unit for War Crimes Duty," *Washington Post*, December 18, 1996, p. A25; Steven Erlanger, "U.S. Ponders Special Force to Arrest War Suspects," *New York Times*, December 19, 1996, p. A11; and Philip Shenon, "Nominee to Lead Joint Chiefs Faces Tough Bosnia Questions," *New York Times*, September 10, 1997, p. A18.

overconsumed because they are rival in consumption. The "tragedy of the commons" metaphor, in which a fenced-in area available to all villagers for grazing their herds is repeatedly overused and eventually rendered nonfunctional, captures the problem. As this metaphor suggests, once discernible scarcity sets in or can be anticipated with respect to some fixed resource, individual actors have strong incentives to claim for themselves a greater proportion of the limited resource through purposive overconsumption.[61]

A combination of nonexcludability and rivalness thus implies stronger individual incentives for actors to consume irresponsibly than if the goods in question were either purely public or private.[62] Some actors may recognize the problem created by rivalness in consumption yet feel no responsibility to alter their behavior; others simply may not understand the situation.[63] For these reasons, it is not surprising that UN-authorized peace operations were approved fairly indiscriminately in the early 1990s, once it was evident that the Security Council's Cold War deadlock on conflict management had disappeared. Between 1991 and 1993 alone, twelve new operations were approved.[64] Governments were always somewhat reluctant to commit troops in advance for these operations, as Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's futile plea for standby peace-enforcement units illustrates. Constant demands for troops to be used in specific operations made potential donors even more reluctant to contribute them.[65] NATO, of course, is not in exactly the same position as the United Nations, because it has standing forces that are available in principle for such tasks. Nevertheless, there is no reason to expect that the incentives confronting NATO members when they make force-procurement, training, or intervention decisions will differ from those that have confronted UN members, because the structure of the strategic situations the actors face is largely

61. This paragraph draws on J. Samuel Barkin and George E. Shambaugh, "Common Pool Resources and International Environmental Politics," *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Autumn 1996), p. 433. For the original tragedy-of-the commons argument, see Garret Hardin, *Science*, Vol. 162 (December 1968), pp. 1243–1248.
62. Barkin and Shambaugh, "Common Pool Resources and International Environmental Politics," p. 433.
63. Harvey Starr, *Anarchy, Order, and Integration* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 38.
64. Thomas G. Weiss, David P. Forsythe, and Roger A. Coate, *The United Nations and Changing World Politics*, 2d ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), p. 66.
65. Brian Urquhart, "Who Will Police the World?" *New York Review of Books*, May 12, 1994, p. 31. The result, in the words of one analysis, is that "having gone from feast to famine in the mid-1990s, the United Nations had a bad case of institutional indigestion." See Weiss, Forsythe, and Coate, *The United Nations and Changing World Politics*, p. 91.

Table 1. Security Goods Relevant to NATO.

Specific Good	Type of Good
Protection provided by nuclear weapons	Excludable and nonrival
Protection provided by conventional weapons	
Deterrent function	Excludable and nonrival
Damage-limiting function	Excludable and rival
Nondeterrent benefits of NATO's security community	Excludable and nonrival
Out-of-area peace operations	
Humanitarian operations	Nonexcludable and possibly nonrival (the latter only if thinning effects produce no significant rivalness in consumption) or a series of private goods (if the actors that undertake these operations do not have the same substantive objectives)
Operations designed to affect the incentives of the actors in a conflict	Nonexcludable and rival (if the actors that undertake these operations have the same substantive objectives) or a series of private goods (if the actors that undertake these operations do not have the same substantive objectives)

the same. The security goods relevant to NATO, classified by type of good, are laid out in Table 1.

This analysis suggests several strategic and political problems that are likely to accompany a mandate to carry out peace operations. First, it is doubtful whether NATO governments will be inclined to furnish enough forces of the right kinds for these tasks. For any but small humanitarian operations, the specialized nature of these tasks is likely to make force thinning and force infungibility significant problems. Yet even with tens of billions of dollars earmarked to pay for the costs of NATO expansion, many analysts doubt whether investments will be made in the personnel and equipment that NATO members will need to act in areas likeliest to see conflict.[66] At the least, because the benefits from these operations are nonexcludable, nasty burden-sharing squabbles are likely to arise. For example, the U.S. ambassador to NATO

66. William Drozdiak, "Instability to the South Worries U.S. Forces in Europe," *Washington Post Foreign Service* (www.washingtonpost.com), May 19, 1997, p. A02.

warned that unless European governments expand their force-projection capabilities to relieve some of the pressure on U.S. forces outside Europe, Americans would view their allies as free riders, and support for the alliance would erode.[67] Second, it is equally unclear whether NATO governments will be able to avoid serious buck-passing problems at the very moment a peace operation might do some good. As one Western diplomat put it when NATO SFOR forces in Bosnia pulled back from a decisive effort to cripple Karadžić's forces, "Either we are happy to pour millions of dollars into Bosnia and get nothing out of it, or we take a step that may mean that some soldiers here lose their lives. Is it worth losing a life to stand up to genocide? I think it would be, but I don't know if we are ready to make that decision."[68]

Having said this, there is a slight basis for some optimism. Collective action theory suggests that overconsumption of limited resources may be at least somewhat discouraged by making particular actors exclusively responsible for managing specific geographic areas. As the next section suggests, this idea could be applied within NATO. In addition, the underprovision of goods with public qualities can at times be partially overcome by selective, private incentives that *are* excludable. Just as workers often join unions voluntarily to gain benefits not otherwise obtainable, NATO political and military leaders may undertake discretionary operations as a way to justify or gain approval within their governments of military equipment or valued command responsibilities for their citizens that they would not otherwise have. Furthermore, if many such operations are carried out at the regional or subregional level, it may be possible to target at least some of the benefits to small groups, thus making those benefits more excludable. Finally, in situations where various purely private interests are at stake, ad hoc groups of alliance members may be assembled on the basis of some combination of purely private incentives.

In their Strategic Concept, NATO leaders seemed to anticipate at least some of the reasoning laid out here. They recognized that in contrast to the Cold War, many security goods relevant to Central and Eastern Europe would for the foreseeable future be largely private, or at least would not be shared by the alliance as a whole.[69] From the standpoint of collective action theory, this has significant implications. Such a disparity in individual preferences among group members may not only facilitate case-by-case coalitions, but it may also

67. William Drozdiak, "European Allies Balk at Expanded Role for NATO," *Washington Post*, February 22, 1998, p. A27.
68. Hedges, "Bosnia Jitters."
69. Strategic Concept, Article 10, p. 237.

help drive down the incidence of free or easy riding insofar as it promotes the acquisition capabilities to pursue these private goods.[70]

PARTIAL SOLUTIONS TO NATO'S COLLECTIVE ACTION PROBLEMS

Two sets of developments may help to ameliorate NATO's collective action problems. First, NATO has reorganized its military force units so as to make them more suitable for peace operations. The major result of this reorganization is the CJTF program. This program allows groups of states within the alliance to operate together on specific missions other than defense of members' territories, such as peacekeeping, truce enforcement, and protection of refugees. Using assets drawn from particular states and military service branches, depending on the task at hand, the CJTFs allow "separable but not separate" military components to be assembled ad hoc. It is now assumed that CJTFs will become NATO's normal way of running non-Article 5 operations, which states in the Partnership for Peace, an associated group of non-NATO members that allows nonmembers to strengthen their ties to NATO members, can also join.[71] The CJTF program rests on the premise that in order to perform crisis-prevention, peacekeeping, and humanitarian-aid operations, which are likely to be in areas adjacent to NATO states but could also be farther away, NATO members need forces that are more flexibly assembled and used than those that arrayed against the Warsaw Pact.[72] As one NATO official put it, "The units comprising the task force itself will be selected in light of the specific political and military features of the task at hand. This tailored quality—the 'fit' between missions and force—is one of the great advantages of such an approach."[73]

Organizationally, the CJTF program has built upon the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps, which served as the basis for the IFOR operation in Bosnia. The Rapid Reaction Corps can in principle organize quickly and then deploy up to four ground divisions in a crisis. In 1994 NATO added air and naval forces to this flexible-deployment capability, creating the CJTF program. As currently conceptualized, each of the three subordinate commands within Allied Command Europe—Allied Forces Northwest Europe, Allied Forces Central Europe, and Allied Forces Southern Europe—as well as Allied

70. Olson and Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances," p. 272.
71. See "A New Kind of Alliance?" *Economist*, June 1, 1996, p. 19.
72. Charles Barry, "NATO's Combined Joint Task Forces in Theory and Practice," *Survival*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring 1996), p. 89.
73. Anthony Cragg, "The Combined Joint Task Force Concept: A Key Component of the Alliance's Adaptation," *NATO Review*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (July 1996), p. 9.

Command Atlantic will organize a permanent headquarters for the use of combined joint task forces. Permanent headquarters for the CJTFs have been established because the Gulf War as well as the IFOR and SFOR operations have shown how painstaking the process of setting up multinational and multiservice military forces can be.[74]

The CJTF program may help to surmount the overconsumption and underprovision problems associated with peace operations in several ways, each of which is suggested by the collective action arguments presented earlier. Consider first overconsumption—which, in the context of the argument presented here, refers to the tendency for IGOs to assume more, or more demanding, peace-operation assignments than they can handle. One so-called design principle for managing this problem stipulates that clearly defined physical boundaries be established to identify rightful users of goods that are rival but nonexcludable. In the language of the natural resources literature, from which this argument originates, "Individuals or households who have rights to withdraw resource units from . . . [such a good] . . . must be clearly defined, as must the boundaries of the . . . [good] . . . itself." The rationale for this stipulation is that without such demarcation, responsible coordination of consumption patterns in a situation of high demand is impossible, because managers of the good will not be able to project likely depletion rates.[75] In instituting the CJTF program, NATO may have derived an organizational solution consistent with this principle. By operating out of headquarters established at particular regional or subregional locations within the North Atlantic area, CJTFs are effectively charged with implementing peace operations in specific geographic areas. CJTF headquarters commanders thus may have, or may develop over time, incentives to recommend or undertake only those operations that they believe can be carried out effectively with available resources.

In addition, organizing peace operations on a regional or subregional basis may promote a more coherent view of particular problems than one would find within larger groups of actors with more varied sets of outlooks and interests. At times, the most effective institutions are those that include like-minded actors, especially if those with divergent views would otherwise be able to block collective action within the smaller group. As NATO enlarges in the next century, its growing diversity could make blocking coalitions among

74. James A. Thomson, "A New Partnership, New NATO Military Structures," in Gompert and Larrabee, *America and Europe*, p. 86.
75. Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, pp. 88–92. The sentence in quotes appears on pp. 90–91.

its members a strong constraint on effective collective action unless its members operate more through informal subgroups. As one official recently put it, "Sometimes I wonder whether the Alliance would find a consensus to take military action against an enemy who was blocking the Strait of Hormuz or the Suez Canal to choke off our vital oil supplies. . . . As NATO grows, it will become even more difficult to reach agreement on the gravity of any threat. That's why you are likely to see more coalitions of the willing, as in the [Persian] Gulf War, rather than the one-for-all, all-for-one attitude we maintained against the Warsaw Pact."[76]

Consider next the tendency to underprovide the capabilities that are needed to carry out peace operations. Here, several different kinds of private, selective incentives could encourage NATO members to support these operations more strongly. For example, each of the permanent CJTF headquarters will provide new command positions for military officers that could be seen as prestigious or as a route to further promotions. Such positions give those who hold them opportunities to influence military strategy, the disposition of forces, and procurement. These in turn have significant implications for such other selective benefits as arms-production contracts and employment in politically important industries.[77] For these reasons, military organizations might be more inclined to support procurement, training, and force-employment policies within their own governments that are conducive to effective peace operations than if such incentives did not exist.

The CJTF program is still an experiment, but the available evidence suggests that it may well develop in ways consistent with the informal hypotheses laid out above. Returning to the overconsumption problem that accompanies rival but nonexcludable goods, a well-functioning CJTF program should logically induce precisely the opposite kind of behavior within NATO. To avoid creating redundant structures while remaining flexible, CJTF headquarters will consist of small "nucleus" staffs composed of officers borrowed from command billets within the existing Main Subordinate NATO Commands. These officers will be responsible both to the parent NATO command and the CJTF headquarters. CJTF headquarters staffs will be charged with executing guidance from NATO's Supreme Allied Headquarters Europe in different peace-operations contingencies. It is likely that over time these headquarters will acquire some

76. Drodziak, "Instability to the South Worries U.S. Forces in Europe," p. A02.
77. James R. Golden, *NATO Burden-Sharing: Risks and Opportunities*, CSIS, Washington Papers, No. 96 (Washington, D.C.: Praeger, 1983), p. 40.

autonomy, as regions and subregions grow more politically and strategically distinct within Europe.[78] Such a development is especially likely if Europeans gradually assume more responsibility for some of their own security needs through an enhanced European security and defense identity. This aspiration was once deemed fanciful even by many Europeans, but it now appears to be an increasingly serious policy objective.[79] The combination of greater regional autonomy within NATO and constrained military resources—according to one analyst, independent national defense establishments throughout Europe are under great strain[80]—suggests that regionally based CJTF headquarters will have multiple incentives to husband resources carefully. Already, they are using an implied threat of future exclusion from NATO operations to induce desired behavior: non-NATO states that work on CJTF operations must be able to operate according to common NATO procedures.[81] Together, these trends imply that CJTFs are likely to be used fairly efficiently and, as a result, that NATO has strong incentives *not* to stretch itself too thin in carrying out its new tasks. The IFOR operation in Bosnia, which in many ways was a prototypical CJTF, bears this out. It may not have been perfectly sized or configured, given the objective, but neither was it grossly undersized or bloated.[82]

Returning to the underprovision problem that accompanies both (purely) public goods and goods that are nonexcludable but rival, the CJTF program could create selective incentives for governments, military organizations, and individuals to participate in the new missions. If peace operations are a big part of NATO's contemporary rationale, command roles in carrying them out will become sources of national and service prestige as well as tickets to career advancement. So, for instance, in return for agreeing to the U.S.-sponsored CJTFs plan, French officials insisted that specific NATO posts held by Europeans be identified as possible nodes around which joint task forces could be organized.[83] A desire to create a meaningful European defense identity within NATO is another such incentive. As a practical matter, the Western European Union under present conditions can shape such a result mainly by carrying

78. Heurlin, *Military Command Structures in the Baltic Sea Area*, pp. 6, 10. For another argument that post–Cold War Europe is likely to develop into several distinct geopolitical regions, see James Kurth, "The Shape of Things to Come," *National Interest*, Summer 1991.
79. Charles Barry, "Creating a European Security and Defense Identity," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, No. 15 (Spring 1997), p. 62.
80. Ibid., p. 66.
81. Charles Barry, "NATO's Combined Joint Task Forces in Theory and Practice," *Survival*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring 1996), p. 88.
82. Burbach, "Ready for Action?" p. 10.
83. Rick Atkinson, "NATO Gives Members Response Flexibility," *Washington Post*, June 4, 1996, p. A14.

out regional peace operations through NATO's CJTFs. NATO governments that want a more autonomous security role for Europe therefore have reason to contribute resources to such operations. As for the United States, a successful CJTF program is a way to avoid involvement in every European crisis, whether or not the United States has tangible stakes in it. We might thus expect U.S. officials to look favorably on European requests to borrow or lease such American assets as strategic lift, intelligence, or command-and-control facilities for use in task forces led by Europeans. In return, Europeans would assume the direct risks and costs of carrying out certain peace operations.

For all these reasons, one analyst concludes that "if carried to its logical conclusion, NATO countries would plan, equip, and designate forces to join in CJTF missions."[84] They have a variety of private as well as public incentives to do so. All else being equal, moreover, effective involvement in regional crises is more likely if the capability to do so is readily available.

The emergence of tacit regional spheres of influence since the end of the Cold War is a second development that could help NATO ameliorate its contemporary collective action problem. The demise of a dominant, polarizing global conflict has made distinctive regions more significant culturally and strategically in world politics. Especially if the major states within regions are democracies, or are at least in the process of democratizing, "over time the rest of the world might find more acceptable a world order in which the great powers through benign spheres of influence assumed larger responsibilities in some parts of the world but not in others."[85] Such a development would effectively create privileged groups at the regional level—groups in which one actor has the incentive and ability to take on much of the burden of providing security or economic goods to others.[86] And because threats are likeliest to be perceived by the actors closest to them, security systems are likeliest to function with the greatest commonality of interest at the regional level.[87] This combination of capability and incentive makes it likely that the United States and a European (perhaps Franco-German) security actor, as well as Russia or China, might become the dominant providers of security in their regions—

84. Stanley R. Sloan, *Combined Joint Task Forces and New Missions for NATO*, Library of Congress report no. 95–1176 F (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, December 7, 1995), p. CRS-4.
85. Charles William Maynes, "A Workable Clinton Doctrine," *Foreign Policy*, No. 93 (Winter 1993–94), p. 11; see also Aaron Friedberg, "The Future of American Power," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 109, No. 1 (Spring 1994), p. 11.
86. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, pp. 48–50.
87. George W. Downs and Keisuke Iida, "Assessing the Theoretical Case against Collective Security," in Downs, *Collective Security beyond the Cold War*, p. 25.

though not in others—in the next century. Such a solution—one based on "benign Realpolitik"[88]—might raise some difficult normative questions, especially if the dominant security provider tried to insist on exclusive rights within its zone. Nevertheless, this kind of arrangement might mitigate some of the underprovision problems associated with pure and impure public goods. If so, the increasing regionalization of international security since the end of the Cold War makes it likely that a considerably decentralized NATO could effectively conduct peace operations.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

NATO has come a long way since 1990 in redefining itself both as the core of an enlarged security community in Europe and as a versatile conflict-management tool. This is no small achievement for an organization that seemed to many on the verge of redundancy just a few years ago. Regime theory explains why NATO leaders and working officials have labored hard to define new purposes for the alliance. What this theory cannot tell us is how successful such changes are likely to be in practice. This article has used a collective action framework to explore one piece of the puzzle: whether NATO is likely to be able to perform peace operations effectively and reliably. Collective action theory offers a window on these issues by highlighting the strategic and political incentives that are likely to attend the production or attempted production of different security goods. Based on the incentives I have examined, it is doubtful whether NATO governments will provide enough of the right kinds of forces to carry out peace operations effectively or whether they will assume the costs and risks of intervening at decisive moments in situations that are likely to be dangerous. These difficulties, moreover, are likely to grow as NATO expands, because a larger group is likely to be less militarily cohesive and politically decisive than a smaller one.

NATO's basic problem in this regard is twofold. First, peace operations constitute either (pure) public goods, a set of private goods, or are nonexcludable yet rival in consumption. For any but small humanitarian operations, the specialized nature of the tasks is likely to make force thinning and force infungibility major problems. And when the good in question is nonexcludable yet rival, NATO governments face the worst sort of incentives from the standpoint of providing a good: they have reason to underprovide the capabilities

88. Maynes, "A Workable Clinton Doctrine," p. 11.

needed to produce it, as well as incentives to allow actors to overconsume the level of the good they do produce. This problem inheres in the nature of the goods in question. Second, the end of the Cold War has created a strategic situation in which the expected utility of most joint security action within NATO is often low. Thus peace operations as a "good" may not be highly valued in practice, whatever NATO members say. If this is the case, only highly valued private, selective incentives are likely to induce the kind of policies and policy coordination needed to make multilateral peace operations work effectively. For these reasons, it is relatively unlikely that NATO has a viable post–Cold War peace-operations mission unless the incentives facing its members are significantly redefined.

Yet this diagnosis of the problem implies a partial solution. If NATO governments want to have a viable post–Cold War peace-operations mission, they must find ways to highlight the potential selective incentives that are available. To varying degrees, all of these involve decentralizing the alliance and assigning responsibility for specific elements of its peace-operations mission to particular actors. Bureaucratic, national, and perhaps even some supranational incentives might then come into play in ways that make a successful peace-operations mission more attractive. The result of course will not be anything like the sense of common purpose that animated NATO during the Cold War—common purpose that in any case cannot be revived without the recrudescence of a major shared threat. Short of that, a disparity in individual incentives and preferences would be good for NATO, insofar as it leads to a greater diversity of private security goods, some of which can presumably be used for NATO purposes as well.

This reasoning suggests a specific policy recommendation. As much as possible, CJTF headquarters commanders should be given responsibility for planning operations that are carried out under the auspices of their headquarters and then should be held accountable for the results. Not only does this make sense from the perspective of the argument laid out in this article, but there is precedent for it within the alliance. The officers who lead NATO's two major commands are at present responsible for developing defense plans for their respective areas, for determining force requirements, and for carrying out exercises and deployments under their command and control.[89] There is no reason that such decision-making authority could not come to rest at least one level further down for peace operations, especially given that final responsi-

89. *NATO Handbook,* p. 168.

bility—as is the case for action that originates within the major commands—will continue to rest with NATO's Military Committee and, ultimately, with the North Atlantic Council. Such decentralization would provide the task-force command slots that these officers fill with more prestige, creating a set of incentives to perform well the tasks that constitute these roles. They would also make it more likely that governments would develop capabilities for use at that level. As emphasized earlier, the essence of the underprovision problem is that governments now have relatively little incentive to develop enough of the highly infungible military capabilities needed for peace operations. If task-force headquarters commanders and their staffs were seen to be a big part of the operational heart of contemporary NATO's military life, they would be likely to lobby their own governments for the tools they need to do their jobs well. To the extent that the relevant capabilities thereby became more readily available, action would be more likely. And if regional and subregional task-force commanders came to have more authority and responsibility, they would likely behave responsibly in choosing and executing tasks, thus easing the overconsumption problem.

This kind of decentralization in NATO military operations makes sense from a larger strategic perspective as well. For decades, the United States was lukewarm at best about the desirability of a more autonomous European security capability. Since 1993 there seems to have been a change of heart in Washington. Largely as a way to spread security burdens more evenly, the Clinton administration seems genuinely to want a more equal European security pillar, as do many Europeans. The policy changes recommended in this article have the potential to move NATO considerably closer to that objective.

The stakes for NATO in constructing a viable peace-operations mission are large. At a time when many citizens in the developed world hardly think about security at all in traditional military terms, maintaining and using armed forces of any size and expense requires public justification and some demonstrable impact on policy outcomes with which people can identify. Peace operations could meet at least some of that need. After all, NATO leaders themselves have insisted that stability throughout Europe is in their countries' best interests and that a successful peace-operations mission is a major reason for the organization's existence. At some point, their publics may take them at their word and hold them accountable for real results. To give the organization a "fighting" chance to succeed in achieving this objective, some way has to be found to make individual and organizational incentives more closely coincide. NATO is likely to fail unless it can solve this problem.