

Chapter 25

Responsibilities of Alliance: Czech, Hungarian, and Polish Contributions During and After NATO's Kosovo Intervention

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Introduction¹

By joining NATO, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland assumed new international responsibilities. As U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright explained in December 1997:

These nations are accepting a fundamental change in their national identities. For decades they looked to the free world for reassurance and support in their struggles for freedom and independence. Now, for the very first time, they are accepting responsibility for the freedom and security of others. We will be counting on them to stand by us in our future hours of need, and when other nations look for our reassurance and support.²

At the event formally admitting the three countries to the alliance, held on March 12, 1999, the new members' foreign ministers also remarked upon the duties that came with entering NATO. Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic emphasized that "we are prepared to fulfill our part of the responsibilities and the commitments of member states, and to meet all the obligations and duties which stem from this membership." Hungary's János Martonyi stressed that "Hungarians know that membership in NATO is a combination of advantages to enjoy and obligations to meet." The Polish foreign minister, Bronisław Geremek, assured that "Poland in the Alliance will be a good and credible ally for good and bad weather."³

The three new members confronted the realities of NATO membership immediately. Just 12 days after they joined, on March 24, 1999,

NATO launched Operation Allied Force, an air campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), which by then comprised only Serbia and Montenegro. NATO aimed to compel Serbia's leader, Slobodan Milošević, to reach a political agreement with the Kosovo Albanians that would arrest an escalating conflict in Kosovo and prevent further humanitarian abuses there.

Examining how the three new NATO members contributed to the Alliance's Kosovo intervention, launched when the ink on their instruments of accession was barely dry, offers a way to reflect upon the responsibilities of NATO membership. All three new NATO members met their alliance obligations during Operation Allied Force and all of them contributed meaningfully to the Kosovo Force (KFOR) peace-keeping mission that followed.

Section I provides background to Operation Allied Force and gives an overview of the intervention and its results. Section II details the contributions made by Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic during the air campaign. Section III describes the contributions of the new allies to the aftermath of Operation Allied Force, both to KFOR and to the broader effort to integrate the Balkans into the Euro-Atlantic community. The concluding section, Section IV, makes three major points: (1) NATO membership comes with real responsibilities; (2) since NATO is an alliance of democracies, there will be political debates within members about what is required of them during military interventions; and (3) due to the complex nature of such interventions, allies can contribute to them, and thereby fulfill the responsibilities of alliance, in many ways.

I: Background to Operation Allied Force and Overview of the Intervention

By the late twentieth century, the Serbian province of Kosovo had a population of almost two million people, of whom 90 percent were ethnic Albanians.⁴ In 1989, Serbia's leader, Slobodan Milošević, ended the political autonomy that Kosovo had long possessed.⁵ By diminishing the status of the predominantly Muslim Kosovo Albanians, Milošević portrayed himself as the avenger of a historic defeat suffered by a Serb-led army in Kosovo in 1389 at the hands of the Ottomans.⁶ In late

1989, a group of Kosovo Albanians established the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), a movement that pursued Kosovo's independence through a strategy of non-violence.⁷

In this era, Yugoslavia as a whole was entering a period of dramatic upheaval. In 1991, the republics of Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia all declared their independence, then Bosnia followed in 1992. While Macedonia was able to exit Yugoslavia peacefully and Slovenia's independence led to a very brief struggle, Croatia's move precipitated a war that cost 10,000 lives.⁸ The greatest bloodshed, however, occurred in Bosnia. Lasting from 1992 until 1995, the conflict there killed 200,000 people. Muslim, Serb, and Croat military units were all guilty of abuses, but Serb forces were responsible for the overwhelming majority of atrocities.⁹ In late August 1995, NATO began serious air strikes—Operation Deliberate Force—and, together with ground offensives by Croat and Bosnian Muslim forces, they pushed the Bosnian Serbs onto the back-foot militarily.¹⁰ That convinced Slobodan Milošević, the patron of the Bosnian Serbs, that it was time to accept serious diplomatic negotiations. American diplomat Richard Holbrooke orchestrated the resulting peace talks, which culminated in the signing of the Dayton Accords in late 1995.

The old Yugoslavia had fragmented, but the Kosovo Albanians remained stuck within Serbia, which itself was now only in a federation with the much smaller republic of Montenegro. Madeleine Albright later summarized the situation of the Kosovo Albanians in the second half of the 1990s, writing that:

Kosovo's Albanians looked around and saw that the Bosnians, Croats, Slovenes, and Macedonians had all left Yugoslavia to form independent states. The Albanians shared the same ambition but the Dayton Accords did nothing for them.¹¹

With the Democratic League of Kosovo's efforts to achieve independence having made little headway, an alternative faction, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), embarked upon a violent guerilla campaign. The conflict between the KLA and Serb forces intensified dramatically in late February 1998 when Serb forces attacked KLA strongholds and killed 85 people, including civilians, in one week.¹²

During the following months, the United States worked alongside international partners to encourage a political dialogue between the Serbian government and the Kosovo Albanians. On the ground, however, the violence got worse. In July 1998, the KLA embarked upon a major offensive and Serb forces responded by targeting both KLA fighters and civilians.¹³ By October 1998, approximately 300,000 Kosovo Albanians were either internally displaced persons or refugees.¹⁴

In mid-January 1999, Serbian forces massacred forty-five civilians in Račak, which precipitated an intensification of diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. In February 1999, the United States—along with France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and the United Kingdom—convened a conference in Rambouillet, France, between the warring parties. Both the Serbs and Kosovo Albanians disliked elements of the political framework they were asked to consider and the negotiations dragged on for weeks. Ultimately, the Kosovo Albanians signed a political agreement on March 18, 1999. Following that, the Clinton Administration sent Richard Holbrooke to Belgrade in one last attempt to get Milošević to sign the agreement, but he refused to do so.¹⁵

On March 24, 1999, NATO resorted to armed force to compel Serbia to accept a settlement. Informed by events earlier in the 1990s, especially the West's extreme tardiness in halting the carnage in Bosnia and the failure to do anything to stop the Rwandan genocide, NATO leaders decided it was better to act sooner rather than later. As Secretary of State Albright said three weeks after the Račak massacre, "we learned in Bosnia that we can pay early, or we can pay much more later" and "the only reward for tolerating atrocities is more of the same."¹⁶

During the 78 days of Operation Allied Force, NATO aircraft flew over 38,000 sorties, of which 10,484 were strike sorties.¹⁷ Alliance aircraft hit tactical targets, such as Serb forces in Kosovo, as well as strategic targets across the Yugoslav federation. Despite NATO's aim of preventing further outrages, the humanitarian situation on the ground actually got worse during the initial part of the campaign because Serb units intensified their expulsions of Kosovo Albanians.¹⁸ At the end of the conflict, over 800,000 Kosovo Albanians were refugees, while an additional several hundred thousand were internally displaced.¹⁹ NATO's demands for ending the air campaign included the withdrawal of all Serb forces from Kosovo, the deployment of a NATO-led peace-

keeping force, and the ability for all refugees to return home.²⁰ The shorthand version of these aims was to get “Serbs out, NATO in, refugees back.”²¹

Following NATO’s late April 1999 summit in Washington D.C., several developments produced Milošević’s capitulation. First, the Alliance escalated its air campaign.²² Second, American and NATO military commanders began preparatory assessments of a ground invasion of Kosovo, signaling to Belgrade that NATO might be willing to escalate beyond airstrikes.²³ Third, President Yeltsin of Russia, which had a close relationship with Serbia, committed his country to working for a diplomatic end to the war.²⁴

Yeltsin’s eagerness to participate in the diplomacy of war termination set the stage for a series of meetings between Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Russian presidential envoy for Kosovo, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott (representing NATO), and Martti Ahtisaari, the president of Finland, who represented the European Union (EU). That diplomatic troika met several times and, after strenuous efforts, developed a commonly-agreed list of terms that Milošević would have to accept to end the airstrikes.²⁵ Those terms included all of the major objectives that NATO had established. On June 2, 1999 Viktor Chernomyrdin and Martti Ahtisaari conveyed the terms to Milošević, who formally accepted them the following day. After NATO and Yugoslavia finalized the technical arrangements for a settlement, NATO ended Operation Allied Force on June 10, 1999.²⁶ The U.N. Security Council passed resolution 1244, which authorized the deployment of a peace-keeping force to Kosovo and put civil administration in the hands of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) began its deployment on June 12, 1999.²⁷

II: Contributions of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to Operation Allied Force

None of the new NATO members contributed combat aircraft to Operation Allied Force. That was hardly surprising because all were flying Soviet-made fighter and ground-attack aircraft—MiG-21s, MiG-23s, MiG-29s, and SU-22s—and the vast majority of those air-

craft had not been modernized and were not interoperable with other NATO air forces.²⁸

Milada Anna Vachudová, an expert on post-communist Europe, emphasizes that Poland's government was among the most politically supportive of the intervention within NATO.²⁹ Poland's prime minister at the time was Jerzy Buzek, who had been in office since 1997 and led a coalition government of his own bloc, Solidarity Electoral Action, and the Freedom Union party. Opinion polls reported that a majority of Poland's public approved of the air campaign.³⁰ Despite such support, NATO did not have a need to request the use of Polish airspace.³¹ Jeffrey Simon, an American expert on Central European militaries, notes that Poland provided NATO with one of its transport aircraft to help with logistical demands.³² Additionally, Poland sent 140 soldiers to the NATO-led Albania Force (AFOR), which provided humanitarian assistance to Kosovar refugees.³³

Hungary was a cautious supporter of Allied Force. Public opinion polls showed similar levels of popular support for the campaign as existed in Poland, with 53 percent of Hungarian respondents indicating their approval of NATO's action in April 1999.³⁴ Hungary was the only NATO member at the time that bordered Serbia. András Simonyi, Hungary's first ambassador to NATO, recalls in this volume how the country's government was keenly aware that its involvement in the operation might cause Milošević to retaliate against ethnic Hungarians in Serbia.

On the opening day of NATO's air campaign, Hungary's parliament voted to make the country's airspace and airfields available to its fellow allies.³⁵ That same day, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán—who had entered office in 1998 and led the Fidesz party—assured the public that “NATO has so far not requested, nor will it in the future, armed participation from Hungary and, for that matter, our country could not fulfill such an expectation in view of its special situation.”³⁶ In April 1999, Hungary sent 35 public health specialists to assist refugees in Albania.³⁷

Although Hungary did not directly participate in air strikes, the Alliance's use of the country's airfields contributed to combat operations. By the time of the Kosovo intervention, Hungary's Tászár airbase, located in the south of the country and just 40 miles from the border with Serbia, had become a major logistical hub for American troops

that were part of the peacekeeping forces in Bosnia.³⁸ In support of that same operation, the United States had deployed unarmed Predator drones to Taszár, from where they flew reconnaissance missions over Bosnia.³⁹ During Operation Allied Force, the United States used the Predators based in Hungary to conduct sorties over Serbia. The Predators provided intelligence that enabled strikes by manned aircraft against military targets.⁴⁰ NATO also deployed KC-135 tanker aircraft to Hungary and they provided refueling to combat aircraft.⁴¹

In May 1999, as NATO escalated its air campaign, Hungary's government assented to the basing of 24 U.S. Marine Corps F/A-18 Hornet aircraft—a multi-role aircraft with strike capabilities—at Taszár.⁴² That precipitated some opposition among Hungary's public, with opinion polls finding that around two-thirds of the population opposed NATO's launching of strikes directly from Hungary's soil.⁴³ László Kovács, the parliamentary leader of the Hungarian Socialist Party, proposed prohibiting NATO strike sorties launched from Hungary, but the parliament failed to pass that measure.⁴⁴ By May 25, the American "Hornets" had arrived and Foreign Minister Martonyi defended the decision to accept them, remarking: "This is exactly the kind of NATO we wanted to join 10 years ago, one that stands for a certain set of values. Now, NATO is fighting to defend those values."⁴⁵

The F/A-18s began flying combat missions several days later. As Benjamin Lambeth emphasizes in his study of the war, basing those aircraft in southern Hungary exacerbated the challenges faced by what remained of Yugoslavia's air defense units. Those units now confronted NATO aircraft attacking from yet another launching point, in addition to those that had already seen considerable use, such as airbases in Italy.⁴⁶ As one F/A-18 pilot deployed to Hungary commented at the time, "we'll make Milošević feel like he's in a box, with NATO staring at him from every side."⁴⁷ Of course, the strike missions flown from Taszár began just days before Milošević capitulated, but at the time the aircraft were moved there it was as yet unclear just so long Milošević would hold on. NATO's decision to fly bombing missions from Hungary was one element of the steadily intensifying military and diplomatic pressure that Milošević faced in late May 1999.

Of the three new NATO members, the Czech Republic experienced the most contentious political debate regarding Operation Allied Force.

Opinion polls found that only 35 percent of the Czech public approved of the campaign.⁴⁸ The year after the intervention, as part of a detailed study on Czech attitudes towards NATO, analysts Ivan Gabal, Lenka Helsusova, and Thomas Szayna asked Czech respondents whether “at the time we joined NATO, did you consider that by doing so we also took on such responsibilities as participation in Operation Allied Force?” Among the respondents, 34 percent reported that “I never considered something like that at all,” while 30 percent stated that “I did not expect something as intensive.”⁴⁹ In the same study, the authors also emphasized that “a lack of consensus at the highest levels of the Czech representative bodies persisted throughout the entire Operation.”⁵⁰

On March 16, 1999, representing the Czech Republic for the country’s first time at NATO’s North Atlantic Council, Prime Minister Miloš Zeman of the Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) stated that “the development in the Former Yugoslavia is particularly tragic” and added that “the international community must take a strong stand against aggression, violations of human rights and suppression of basic freedoms.”⁵¹ Notwithstanding those words, Prime Minister Zeman was unenthusiastic about the air campaign.⁵² On the day the alliance’s operations began, he remarked that “it is our obligation to proceed toward this nation [Yugoslavia] in such a way so as to comply with our commitments arising from NATO membership and not to assume the position of troglodytes who believe that bombs will solve everything.” During the same statement, Zeman reminded the Czech public of the strong historical relations between the Czech people and Serbia, notably including Yugoslavia’s opposition to the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.⁵³ Within the Social Democratic Party government, Foreign Minister Jan Kavan offered public support for the air campaign, but there was considerable opposition within the government and the wider party.⁵⁴

The second largest political party in the Czech parliament at the time was the center-right Civic Democratic Party (ODS). Its leader, Václav Klaus, also opposed NATO’s air strikes.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, some of his party’s leading members, as well as some of the party’s local bodies, offered support for the military campaign.⁵⁶ In the Czech parliament, two other opposition parties—the Freedom Union and the Christian Democratic Union-Czech People’s Party—also supported NATO’s campaign.⁵⁷

The most prominent supporter of NATO's intervention, within the Czech Republic, was President Václav Havel. In a statement issued on March 25, 1999, he recounted Milošević's mistreatment of the Kosovo Albanians and emphasized that Serbia had refused to sign the political agreement produced by the Rambouillet negotiations.⁵⁸ Just days after the end of the NATO summit in late April 1999, President Havel addressed Canada's parliament and offered a vigorous defense of NATO's intervention, arguing that the alliance was "fighting in the name of human interest for the fate of other human beings."⁵⁹

Despite its political divisions over the issue, the Czech Republic still made limited contributions to the air campaign. The government approved NATO's use of the country's airspace and airfields on April 6, 1999, a step that was also approved by the Czech parliament.⁶⁰ Additionally, the Czech Republic deployed a field hospital and a transport aircraft to NATO's humanitarian assistance effort in Albania.⁶¹

Towards the close of May 1999, Foreign Minister Jan Kavan joined forces with his Greek counterpart, George Papandreou, to offer a diplomatic proposal aimed at ending the intervention. In Greece, only around 2 percent of the public approved of the air campaign.⁶² The "Czech-Greek Peace Initiative" was unveiled on May 23, 1999 and, among its provisions, it called for a 48-hour bombing pause and provided that most, but not all, Serbian forces would have to leave Kosovo.⁶³

Foreign Minister Kavan emphasized that the peace plan was not meant to undermine other diplomatic efforts.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, for the United States government, as well as for many others in NATO, the initiative was problematic because a bombing pause threatened to weaken the military and diplomatic pressure confronting Milošević. Furthermore, the very fact that two NATO members were putting forward their own diplomatic initiative threatened to signal serious cracks in the alliance's political unity, at a moment when NATO had a strategic interest in showing Milošević that he could not hope to outlast the alliance. As it happened, the Czech-Greek peace initiative did not do serious damage to the campaign of coercive diplomacy because, as a result of the discussions between Chernomyrdin, Ahtisaari, and Talbott, Serbia was presented with a combined NATO-Russia-EU position just 10 days after the Czech and Greek foreign ministers had proffered their own plan.

III: The New Allies' Contributions to the Aftermath of Operation Allied Force

On June 10, 1999, the day Allied Force ended, European Union foreign ministers, together with counterparts from the Balkans region, and other nations such as the United States and Russia, announced that they would establish the "Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe." Joining the ministers were representatives from a host of international organizations. All participants pledged to work on a collective strategy for achieving "lasting peace, prosperity and stability for South Eastern Europe."⁶⁵ The design of the Stability Pact was led by Germany, which held the EU Presidency for the first half of 1999, alongside the United States. For its part, the Clinton Administration helped to conceptualize the project, but deemed it appropriate for the European Union to take ownership of the initiative.

The Stability Pact was formally launched in late July 1999 in the capital of Bosnia, Sarajevo, at a meeting attended by leaders from almost 40 countries.⁶⁶ Launching the pact in Sarajevo, which had been besieged for the duration of the Bosnian war, underscored the goal of helping the region move beyond the horrors of its recent past. As Daniel Hamilton, one of the authors in this volume and a U.S. State Department official who worked on both the design and implementation of the initiative, said in congressional testimony:

The guiding principle behind the Stability Pact is a bargain between integration and reform: the international community will work to stabilize, transform and integrate the countries of this region into the European and transatlantic mainstream; they, in turn, will work individually and together to create the political, economic and security conditions by which this can be possible.⁶⁷

Hungary played a significant role in the Stability Pact. From the moment it joined NATO, Hungary had pledged that, because of its geographic location, it would try to help the nations of South Eastern Europe to follow in its own footsteps and to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic community.⁶⁸ Among its efforts as part of the Stability Pact, Hungary led an initiative known as the "Szeged Process." That project aimed to strengthen the independent press in Serbia and it also tried to improve governance in that country by connecting members

of the Serbian opposition, specifically those in municipal government, with municipal leaders from other states in the region.⁶⁹ Additionally, in April 2000, Hungary and the United States convened a conference in Budapest regarding efforts to further economic reform in South Eastern Europe and enhance the region's integration into the global economy.⁷⁰

In addition to Hungary's active and enthusiastic role in the Stability Pact, it contributed to the KFOR peacekeeping operation in Kosovo, along with both the Czech Republic and Poland. All three countries already had experience of peacekeeping in the Balkans, having contributed to the mission—known initially as the Implementation Force (IFOR), then subsequently the Stabilization Force (SFOR)—that deployed to Bosnia in the aftermath of the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords.⁷¹ Poland began deploying troops to KFOR on June 23, 1999.⁷² Its initial contribution was to send a 800-personnel unit, comprising Polish soldiers alongside troops from Ukraine and Lithuania.⁷³ Hungary's initial troop contribution to KFOR was 324 soldiers, who began deploying to Kosovo on July 15, 1999.⁷⁴ Also in July 1999, the Czech Republic sent 124 troops to KFOR, a contingent that grew to 175 personnel by the end of that year.⁷⁵

The potential risks associated with participating in KFOR became apparent quickly. In December 1999, a Polish Captain was killed while handling a M-60 grenade rifle that had been confiscated during patrols near the Macedonian border.⁷⁶ In early April 2000, after U.S. military police and Polish troops seized weapons from a Serb house, they were surrounded by 150 Serbs who refused to let the American and Polish personnel leave. After eight hours the standoff was defused, having resulted in injuries to 11 American personnel and one Polish soldier.⁷⁷

KFOR remains deployed in Kosovo at the time of this writing. The overall size of the peacekeeping operation has been on a downward trend since 1999, with fluctuations based on conditions on the ground. Beginning in 2006, a United Nations-led diplomatic effort aimed to resolve Kosovo's political status, but by the end of 2007 that process had failed to produce an agreement that the Kosovo Albanians, Serbia, the EU, Russia, and the United States could all agree upon.⁷⁸ In February 2008, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia and more than 100 states now recognize Kosovo as a sovereign state.⁷⁹ NATO decided that KFOR would continue to operate in Kosovo, in line with UNSCR

1244.⁸⁰ Since 2008, KFOR has been reduced from about 16,000 soldiers to roughly 3,600 troops at the time of writing.

The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland have each made sustained contributions to KFOR. Table 1 shows, year by year, the troops contributed by each country, as well as the approximate total size of KFOR. The table also shows what proportion of KFOR's overall force was represented by the collective contributions of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. Ever since 2003, the combined deployments of these three allies have exceeded 5 percent of KFOR's total force and for many years they have been significantly above that proportion.

IV: Reflections on the Responsibilities of NATO Membership

Considering the contributions of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland to Operation Allied Force and its aftermath, I reach three major conclusions.

First, membership of NATO comes with real responsibilities. In his memoir, former Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Wesley Clark recounted a phone conversation that he had with the Hungarian Chief of Defense, General Ferenc Vegh, early in the Kosovo campaign. Clark wrote the following about the conversation:

I tried to imagine how he must feel; he and his wife had come for dinner just two weeks ago when we were celebrating Hungary's admission to the Alliance. Welcome to NATO; you're now at war!⁸¹

On May 28, 1999, just 80 days after Hungary had joined NATO, American F-18s were taking off from Hungarian soil and bombing targets in a neighboring country. The United States and the other most powerful members of the Alliance are not the only ones who take on responsibilities to their fellow Allies through NATO.

Second, because NATO is an alliance of democracies, there is the potential for serious domestic political arguments within member states about what is required of them during military campaigns.

During the Kosovo intervention, there were significant debates in both the Czech Republic and Hungary. In the case of the Czech Republic, there were divisions about whether the Alliance should have

Table 1. Czech, Hungarian and Polish Contributions to KFOR

Year	Poland's Troops in KFOR	Hungary's Troops in KFOR	Czech Republic's Troops in KFOR	Total of Poland, Hungary, and Czech Republic Combined	Approx. Overall Troop Strength of KFOR	Poland, Hungary, and Czech Republic Troops Relative to KFOR (%)
2000	763	325	160	1248	50,000	2.50
2001	532	325	175	1032	50,000	2.06
2002	574	325	400	1299	39,000	3.33
2003	574	325	409	1308	26,000	5.03
2004	574	294	408	1276	20,000	6.38
2005	574	294	410	1278	17,500	7.30
2006	312	484	500	1296	17,000	7.62
2007	312	268	445-501	1025-1081	17,000	6.36
2008	312	484	500	1296	16,000	8.10
2009	271	317	400	988	15,000	6.59
2010	226	243	393	862	10,200	8.45
2011	152	242	103	497	5,000	9.94
2012	295	245	7	547	5,000	10.94
2013	160	194	7	361	5,000	7.22
2014	228	201	7	436	4,700	9.28
2015	254	336	9	599	4,700	12.74
2016	240	357	11	608	4,700	12.94
2017	253	366	12	631	4,352	14.50
2018	240	373	9	622	3,642	17.08

Sources: KFOR Website, <https://jfcnaples.nato.int/kfor>, IISS Military Balance, Years 2000-2018, *Reuters*, September 2, 2009, NATO to Cut Troops in Kosovo Despite Unrest.

been intervening against Serbia at all. In the case of Hungary, the most significant political debate concerned whether the country should allow alliance aircraft to launch bombing missions from Hungarian soil. The debates that occurred in these two new members did not make them exceptional; there were political debates and controversies within many members of the alliance regarding Kosovo. As noted above, polls found that only around 35 percent of the Czech Republic's population approved of NATO's air campaign. That was not that different from public opinion in a number of other allied states: only 42 percent of Belgium's population approved; 41 percent approved in Portugal; 39 percent approved in Spain; and only 2 percent of Greece's population supported the air campaign.⁸²

Additionally, across NATO, there were various views about how the air war should be waged. For example, some allies had concerns about hitting certain targets within Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, in the United States, within both the administration and Congress, there were real concerns about whether to contemplate a ground invasion of Kosovo as a way to bring about Milošević's surrender. Even the call for a bombing pause that was central to the Czech-Greek peace initiative, although it had the potential to undercut the diplomatic pressure that was building on Milošević, mirrored an idea that a number of other allies had advocated previously.⁸³ Debates about how exactly to meet the responsibilities of alliance are something that comes with NATO's character as a club of democracies.

Third, what the new NATO members' contributions to the Kosovo intervention demonstrate is that there are many ways Allies can meet their responsibilities during military campaigns. After all, interventions are complex and multi-faceted undertakings, whose success does not depend merely upon contributions that enhance the "tip of the spear." In the case of Operation Allied Force, Hungary's airfields were an important piece of infrastructure in NATO's air campaign. Additionally, all three members contributed personnel to humanitarian assistance efforts for Kosovar refugees. Finally, and especially significantly, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland each made sustained troop contributions to the KFOR peacekeeping mission.

To illustrate the benefits to the United States of the Czech Republic's, Hungary's, and Poland's involvement in KFOR, we can consid-

er the year 2008, when the three Central European Allies collectively had 1,300 troops in KFOR, representing around 8 percent of the total force. That was close to the United States' commitment of troops to KFOR that year, which numbered 1,640.⁸⁴ That year was also one in which U.S. forces were carrying significant burdens around the world; there were 160,000 American troops in Iraq at the opening of that year, following the surge of 2007, and the United States had close to 25,000 troops in Afghanistan.⁸⁵ By sending 1,300 troops to KFOR, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were helping to secure and sustain the victory NATO attained in June 1999 and lessening the troop commitment that the United States had to make there. That same year, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland collectively had 2,600 of their troops deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq as well.⁸⁶

A recurring complaint heard during discussions about NATO in the United States is that America's European Allies often do not contribute a fair share to the Alliance and they "free-ride" on the efforts of the United States. Such criticisms of America's European allies are grounded in the fact that a minority of NATO's European members have met the alliance's pledge to spend 2 percent of their GDP on defense. Additionally, during military campaigns, the United States has contributed the majority of capabilities. During Operation Allied Force, for example, American aircraft flew 60 percent of the total sorties, 90 percent of the intelligence and reconnaissance sorties, and released 80 percent of the precision-guided bombs used.⁸⁷

Even so, American criticisms about the scale of NATO Allies' contributions can sometimes be too harsh. As the experiences of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland during and after the Kosovo intervention showed, all allies take on responsibilities as a result of NATO membership. The three new members contributed to Operation Allied Force and, in an even more pronounced way, they helped to bear the burdens associated with the KFOR peacekeeping operation that followed afterwards and that continues until this day.

Notes

1. I am grateful for the helpful comments I received on earlier drafts of this chapter from my colleagues at SAIS and from other contributors to this volume.

2. Madeleine Albright, "Statement during the North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting, NATO HQ, Brussels, Belgium," December 16, 1997, <https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1997/s971216aa.htm>.

3. All of the quotes are from U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesman, "Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright And Foreign Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland Remarks on Accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri," March 12, 1999, <https://1997-2001.state.gov/statements/1999/990312.html>.

4. Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, 1st Harper Perennial ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), p. 445.

5. Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*, vol. 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 298.

6. Daniel Paul Serwer, *From War to Peace in the Balkans, the Middle East and Ukraine, Palgrave Critical Studies in Post-Conflict Recovery* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 72.

7. Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p. 8.

8. Power, *op cit.*, p. 247.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 251, 310.

10. Regarding the combined impact of the air strikes and the ground offensives, see Robert A. Pape, "The True Worth of Air Power," *Foreign Affairs*, March 1, 2004.

11. Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary: A Memoir* (New York: Miramax Books, 2003), p. 380.

12. Daalder and O'Hanlon, *op cit.*, p. 27.

13. Albright, *Madam Secretary*, *op. cit.*, pp. 386–87.

14. Daalder and O'Hanlon, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

15. For a good overview of the problems both sides had with the Rambouillet framework, see Albright, *Madam Secretary*, *op. cit.*, pp. 397–407.

16. Madeleine Albright, "Remarks and Q&A Session at the U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C.," February 4, 1999, <https://1997-2001.state.gov/statements/1999/990204.html>.

17. “Kosovo Air Campaign (Archived), Operation Allied Force,” NATO, April 7, 2016, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49602.htm.

18. Serwer, op. cit., p. 75; Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2001), p. 234.

19. James Dobbins et al., *America’s Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2003), p. 113, https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1753.html.

20. Daalder and O’Hanlon, op. cit., p. 113; Talbott, op. cit., p. 309.

21. Albright, *Madam Secretary*, op. cit., p. 410.

22. Clark, op. cit., pp. 274–76.

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