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Security Communities. Theoretical Perspectives

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Abstract

The central idea of the article is that a 'security community' is not just a formal pact, but an invisible structure of trust and shared identity between states. Starting from the vision of pioneer Karl Deutsch, who described it as a 'shared feeling' that eliminates the fear of confrontation, authors Adler and Barnett develop this image, showing how consolidated norms and values transform entire regions into "spaces of peace." The article traces the path and convergence of material factors, procedural mechanisms, and ideological dimensions, thus revealing the continuum that lays the foundation for cooperation up to the constructivist process through which populations adopt solidarity as second nature.

Keywords:
Security Community; Identity; Norms; Cooperation.

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Introduction

The current global context is characterized by an unprecedented level of globalization and interdependence among the multitude of actors on the international relations stage, which makes it almost impossible – regardless of the intensity of exchanges, the degree of hierarchy, or the impact of behavioral variables – to deny the existence of a coherent international system. However, since the dynamics of this international system involve frequent transformations of its structure and permanent adjustments of its fundamental parameters, any explanatory approach must integrate both a knowledge of 'formalized structures and relationships', such as international organizations and the rules of interaction between actors, as well as knowledge of the 'more informal aspects of international relations' such as customs, informal regional commitments and hierarchies, identity dilemmas, or the various interactions between state and non-state/sub-state actors (Dungaciu 2017, 374-375).

For example, British political scientist Barry Buzan states in one of his seminal works, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post Cold War Era* (1991), that 'security is a relational phenomenon' in the sense that 'we cannot understand the national security of any existing state without understanding the international model of security interdependence in which it is embedded'. At the same time, the British political scientist suggests that in order to carry out a comprehensive analysis of security, we need to 'investigate with particular care the way in which the regional level mediates the exchange between states and the international system as a whole'. Without a prior understanding of the regional level, it is unlikely that we will be able to understand the position of state actors in their relations with their neighbors, or the nature of the relations between the great powers and local states (Buzan 2017, 232).

In this context, the concept of a security community provides a valuable analytical framework for understanding the bridge between the state, regional, and international levels, as well as an understanding of the dynamics and emerging transformations in the international system, given that, in order to grasp the logic of a security community, it is necessary to analyze formal structures (international organizations, treaties, regulatory frameworks), but also a careful study of informal elements (customs, informal regional arrangements and hierarchies, identity dilemmas, or various interactions between state and non-state/sub-state actors).

The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of the **conditions and mechanisms that produce the transition from regional interdependence to a sustainable security community, as well as the factors that determine the stability or fragility of this transition**.

The central argument of the article is that the development and viability of security communities result from the dynamic convergence of *material factors* — capacities

and power structures that act as 'cores', *procedural mechanisms* — transactions, institutions, and social learning processes, and *ideological dimensions* — common identities, norms, and practices that legitimize self-control among members. Transformation usually takes place on an evolutionary continuum – from birth to maturity and, occasionally, to disintegration.

From a methodological perspective, this article is a qualitative study, based mainly on document analysis, in particular thematic case studies on related issues, as the main method of documentation and substantiation.

The Security Community: An Overview

Given the purpose of this article, this section aims to answer four main questions: (1) What are security communities?; (2) How do security communities emerge?; (3) How do security communities develop?; and (4) What are the main factors that determine the fragility/disintegration of a security community? In addition, this section seeks to highlight the main features that differentiate security communities from other forms of regional security organizations.

The Security Community: Origin, Evolution, and Conceptual Delimitations

A community is usually defined as 'a collective whose members are bound by a strong sense of participation', representing, at the same time, a structural unit of 'cultural and social organization and transmission'. The main components of a community are: (1) population; (2) territory; and (3) a link between these elements, which provides the community with the infrastructural capacity to act as a whole, as well as the capacity to intervene in the lives of its members. Communities can be identified based on: (1) the existence of universally accepted beliefs and values; (2) the existence of a consistent level of interaction between their members; and (3) the existence of a high degree of reciprocity that expresses 'a certain long-term interest and altruism' (Costopoulos 1995, 16).

The combination of the two terms, community and security, denotes their interdependence, with their most obvious common element being the centrality of shared fundamental values. Thus, if we consider that security aims to protect/preserve fundamental values against any threats, its importance (i.e., security) is obvious: 'the loss of its fundamental values means the end of a certain community (...)'. Thus, the community cannot survive without a sustained effort to ensure its security, just as security 'makes no sense if there is no community of values to protect'. (Costopoulos 1995, 20).

Initially proposed in the early 1950s by Richard W. Van Wagenen, the concept of a security community was only addressed theoretically and empirically after the pioneering study by Czech-born political scientist and sociologist Karl W. Deutsch and his associates, who in 1957 published the work '*Political Community and the*

North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience'. Their seminal work defined the security community as a group of people integrated by a 'sense of community', that is, by a 'belief on the part of individuals in a group that they have reached agreement at least on this point: that common social problems must and can be solved through processes of peaceful change' (Tusicisny 2007, 426).

In the authors' words, by *integration* we mean the achievement, within a territory, of a 'sense of community' and institutions and practices that are sufficiently strong and widespread to ensure, for a 'long' period of time, reliable expectations of 'peaceful change', and by *peaceful change* the authors meant 'the resolution of social problems in a normal way, through institutionalized procedures, without resorting to large-scale physical force' (Costopoulos 1995, 1-2).

In other words, the concept of a security community refers to 'a group of actors who genuinely believe that the members of the community will not fight each other physically, but will resolve their disputes in another way', a particular feature of which is that, unlike other institutions involved in preventing military confrontations, 'it is based on the premise that its members do not accept in any way the idea of using violence against each other' (Miroiu and Ungureanu 2008, 243-244).

For Deutsch and his collaborators, security communities could be divided into two categories: (1) amalgamated security communities, which are constituted by 'the formal merger of two or more independent units into a single larger unit, with a certain type of governance after amalgamation' and (2) pluralistic security communities, in which 'member states retain the legal independence of their separate governments, but have become integrated to the point where they enjoy reliable expectations of peaceful change'. Although Deutsch *et al.* divide security communities into two distinct categories, it is clear that in both cases, the members of the security community do not suspect each other of aggressive intentions and regard the use of force between them as unthinkable; moreover, they also effectively give up preparing to fight each other (Aşan 2008, 5).

The core of Karl W. Deutsch's security community approach is shaped around a transactionalist perspective of international integration, which emphasized the importance of communication processes and flows of interaction/transactions between various agents as the main driving forces of sustainable peace in certain regional contexts. Thus, Karl W. Deutsch started from the assumption that 'only communication allows a group to think together, see together, and act together' (Julio Bulling 2016, 86), suggesting that communication binds social groups in general and political communities in particular.

At the same time, in Karl W. Deutsch's formulation, security communities emerge as a result of interaction flows/transactions between various agents. According to his transactional approach, flows such as trade, migration, tourism, cultural and

educational changes, and the proliferation of communication facilities serve to underpin a 'social fabric among both elites and the masses, instilling in them a sense of community, which becomes a matter of mutual sympathy and loyalty; a sense of "we-feeling", mutual trust and consideration; partial identification in terms of self-image and interests; mutually successful predictions of behavior; ... in short, a matter of a perpetual dynamic process of mutual attention, communication, perception of needs and responsiveness in the decision-making process' (Adler 2005, 208).

Karl W. Deutsch viewed transactions as a primary source of new identifications, but his excessive emphasis on quantitative measures made his theoretical model 'inattentive to international organizations and social groups or classes, decision-makers, business elites, and the mix of interests and self-image that motivate their behaviors'. Furthermore, Karl W. Deutsch's theoretical model has often been criticized for not paying sufficient attention to the complex and causal ways in which 'the power and practices of states, international organizations, transactions, and social learning processes can generate new forms of mutual identification and security relations' (Adler and Barnett 1998, 9).

At the same time, Karl W. Deutsch did not limit his analysis to inter-state relations, explicitly adopting an 'individual-societal and bottom-up approach', as evidenced by his definition of the security community as 'a group of integrated people'. Furthermore, Deutsch never limited the study of international relations to the interaction between states, but instead, as we have shown above, adopted an approach focused on transactions between individuals, groups, and societies. He also accepted the realist view that 'international relations are organized as a system of states based on the distribution of material power and capabilities', but at the same time emphasized 'their social relations based on common understandings, principle-based belief systems, and narratives', which gave the concept of a security community 'a middle ground theoretical position' in the study of international relations (Koschut 2014, 522).

However, despite its potential theoretical and practical importance, the concept of security community developed by Karl W. Deutsch and his collaborators did not generate any solid research agenda in the following decades. Potential explanations could be that:

> **(1)** it was not the right time for such an approach, given that during the Cold War, especially in its early stages, 'any discussion of a community of states seemed hopelessly romantic and extremely discordant in the context of the harsh conditions of the time and the prospects of nuclear war'. At the same time, the theoretical premises of the concept were quickly overshadowed by other integrationist approaches, such as regional neo-functionalism, as the process of European integration gradually emerged. Moreover, the idea of a pluralistic security community made up of sovereign states was viewed with skepticism due to the shortcomings of the UN, which was considered 'the

only organization capable of forming such a community at the global level'.
(2) the field of international relations was strongly dominated by realist paradigms that considered the emergence and development of such security communities to be unrealistic from both a theoretical and practical point of view, in which sense they 'removed this concept from the general theoretical debates that studied the absence of war and stable peace'.
(3) the 'Deutschian framework' suffered from various theoretical, conceptual, and methodological problems inherent in the concept itself, which undoubtedly 'deterred future applications' (Ulusoy 2003, 3-4).

Despite previous efforts to modify and update the concept of security community, it was only after the well-known study by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, entitled '*Security Communities*', published in 1998, that it began to be truly reconsidered. Essentially, the main contributions of their study in terms of reconceptualizing, modifying and updating Karl W. Deutsch's analytical framework include, but are not limited to: (1) redefining the concept of security community from a qualitative and social constructivist perspective, to the detriment of Deutsch's purely transactionalist orientation; (2) emphasizing pluralistic security communities and their redefinition; (3) identifying the conditions under which they could emerge; (4) developing a three-phase evolutionary model of security communities, as well as a three-level analytical framework; (5) emphasis on the role of transnational forces; and (6) consideration of their possible development in different regional contexts, providing a rich agenda for further research.

Within the constructivist reconceptualization, the community is characterized by 'identities, values, and meanings shared by its members', thus becoming an 'imagined region' or a 'cognitive region' whose boundaries 'may or may not be congruent with traditional geographical boundaries' (Aşan 2008, 22). Viewed from this perspective, the community becomes a kind of 'regional system of meanings', made up of people whose common identities and interests are built on common understandings and normative principles other than national sovereignty, and who: (1) actively communicate and interact across state borders; (2) show a high degree of involvement in the political life of a region and commitment to pursuing common regional goals; and (3) urge, as citizens of states and the community, 'to act as agents of regional good, based on regional systems of governance'. At the same time, within this 'regional system of meanings', people 'institutionalize commonalities that cut across the region, including shared perceptions of external threats, and promote practices of mutual non-threat' (Adler 2005, 181).

Essentially, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett concluded that there are three defining characteristics of a community, namely that: (1) members have common identities, values, and meanings; (2) members have close relationships, constant and multilateral interactions, and (3) members show reciprocity that expresses a certain degree of long-term interest and maybe even altruism (Jädersand 2021, 15).

With regard to the emphasis on pluralistic security communities and their redefinition, we note that Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett continued the Deutschian view that 'the world is not ready for political amalgamation through the merger of national governments or the creation of powerful international administrative agencies. At best, we can hope that pluralistic security communities can develop between nations' (Koschut 2014, 522). However, unlike Karl W. Deutsch, Adler and Barnett reconceptualized the idea of pluralistic security communities from a social constructivist perspective, emphasizing the role of shared values and identity, in which context they defined a pluralistic security community as 'a transnational region consisting of sovereign states whose populations have credible expectations of peaceful change' (Adler and Barnett 1998, 30). The constructivist perspective of the two researchers is revealed by the fact that ensuring credible expectations of peaceful change among the population of a security community 'requires stable norms and a collective identity capable of transforming the behavior of states from self-help to trust-building' (Koschut 2014, 525).

The emphasis on common/collective identity is not accidental, given that, as Emanuel Adler suggested in a 2005 study entitled '*Communitarian International Relations. The epistemic foundations of International Relations*', 'cooperative behavior between individuals is mediated by the perception of belonging to a common category' (i.e., common/collective identity), and within the community 'we help others, seemingly selflessly, because we perceive their needs and goals as those of our social category and, therefore, as our own'. In other words, the role of common/collective identity is revealed by the fact that when individuals define their state as belonging to a particular community, they internalize a certain normative framework, in the sense that 'certain behaviors (...) become appropriate, while others (...) become inappropriate or illegitimate'. Thus, in a discussion about democratic communities, Emanuel Adler concludes that 'the state follows democratic norms not only because its people believe in democracy, but because the category of 'democratic state' now defines, in part, their identity'. Furthermore, the understanding of 'peaceful change' invoked by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett in their definition of pluralistic security communities can also be understood by the fact that 'the identity factor allows peoples from different states to get to know each other', which reduces the uncertainty generated by the anarchic nature of the international system and increases mutual responsiveness (Adler 2005, 189).

At the same time, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett have expanded the analytical framework of pluralist security communities, distinguishing between two ideal types of such communities, namely: (1) loosely coupled pluralist security communities, which, in their words, 'meet the minimum defining properties and nothing more: a transnational region made up of sovereign states whose populations have reliable expectations of peaceful change', in which community members 'do not expect bellicose activities from other members and, therefore, consistently practice self-control' and (2) tightly coupled pluralistic security communities which, unlike the

former, have a much higher degree of integration, in that: (a) they have laid the foundations for a 'mutual aid society', within which members end up building various collective systems; (b) they possess a 'system of governance that lies somewhere between a sovereign state and a centralized regional government', equipped with 'joint supranational, transnational, and national institutions and some form of collective security system' (Adler 2005, 30).

So far, we have discussed the contributions made by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett in terms of: (1) redefining the concept of security community from a qualitative and social constructivist perspective, as opposed to Deutsch's purely transactional approach, and (2) emphasizing pluralistic security communities and their redefinition. The rest of the contributions will be addressed in the following sections.

The emergence of security communities

In this section, we aim to identify the main variables that facilitate the emergence of security communities, both from the initial perspective proposed by Karl W. Deutsch and through the lens of the constructivist reconceptualization developed by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, as well as from the subsequent contributions of other authors established in the field of international relations.

As we have shown previously, both Karl W. Deutsch and Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett were skeptical of any form of supranational structure, i.e., of the amalgamated forms of the security community, in which context the discussion of the emergence of security communities will be limited to the emergence of pluralistic security communities.

Karl W. Deutsch did not find a 'perfect recipe' for the emergence and development of security communities, but he did discover that, under certain fairly specific conditions, 'it is possible to achieve a state of integration that makes war almost impossible in the foreseeable future' (Costopoulos 1995, 2).

Karl W. Deutsch was convinced that security communities can have 'humble and selfish' beginnings, all that was needed in the initial phase being a 'complementarity of needs and resources' (Adler 2005, 209), coupled with 'sustained interaction (trade, migration, tourism, cultural and educational exchanges) between relevant agents'. Such cross-border movements, Karl W. Deutsch suggested, generate 'reciprocity, new forms of trust, the discovery of new interests and even collective identities, in short, a set of conditions and relationships that, over time, instill a sense of community in the participating agents' (Aşan 2008, 10).

Starting from here and along with: (1) increased communication; (2) a consistent number of transactions; (3) learning and socialization processes, which lead to the creation of a common normative framework and common models of behavior; (4)

a 'core of power' that attracts weaker states and guides them; (5) the emergence of 'community-building institutions'; and (6) the existence of elites who use material and symbolic resources to enhance a certain set of identity traits necessary for the existence of a collective identity, a framework conducive to the emergence and development of security communities would be formed (Adler 2005, 209).

Based on these conditions, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, in their study entitled '*Security Communities*', have made numerous additions/clarifications regarding the emergence of security communities. Thus, concerning the first two conditions, Adler and Barnett believe that, within the framework of communicative action, 'participants negotiate definitions, values, and mutual understandings as they join the discourse around a task', and in addition to this, 'they bring not only formal knowledge, but also practical experience and interests'. At the same time, through transactions of all kinds, 'joint learning processes in which "doing things together" becomes an important component of "knowing together" are encouraged` (Adler and Barnett 1998, 417).

Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett define the learning process as an 'active process of redefining or reinterpreting reality based on new causal and normative knowledge', which plays an active role in the emergence and development of security communities, contributing to: (1) the spread of norms, which facilitates the expansion of the area in which mutual trust and collective identities can emerge; (2) the redefinition of regional security in ways that have promoted 'trust-building and the social construction of collective identities'; and (3) the formation of collective identity through the creation of common norms, symbols, and customs, including by discovering previously non-existent or unrecognized cultural similarities between different states, or by socially constructing or redefining the regions themselves (Adler and Barnett 1998, 422-423).

Regarding the 'core of power', Karl W. Deutsch observed that 'security communities usually develop around "power cores" consisting of larger, more powerful, politically, administratively, and economically advanced political units' that functioned as 'poles of economic or political attraction', assuming leadership roles (Aşan 2008, 9). Although he noted the importance of 'power cores' in the development of security communities, Karl W. Deutsch offered no further guidance on them. In their landmark study, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett went beyond the Deutschian framework, distinguishing between two distinct but probably necessary ways in which 'power cores' facilitate the emergence of a security community, namely: (1) using the phrase 'carrots and sticks', the two authors refer to 'power cores' as decision-making centers or informal leaders who have the ability to allocate resources and use selective incentives to offer rewards/impose sanctions in order to shape the behavior of community members, and (2) 'power cores' have 'the ability to project a sense of purpose', their power being 'not someone to be feared, but rather someone to be emulated' (Adler and Barnett 1998, 424). Additionally, Pinar Aşan believes

that 'power cores' play an important role in the emergence and development of security communities because they: (1) have a high potential to resist the demands and requirements imposed on them during the process of building the security community; (2) confer increased material and moral authority on the norms and practices they disseminate on the international stage, in the sense that they 'can induce their political adoption and institutionalization'; and (3) have a 'magnetic effect' on other weaker actors who aspire to benefit from their inclusion in the emerging order (Aşan 2008, 9).

The causal relationship between international institutions and the emergence of security communities is based, according to Emanuel Adler, on 'agency', that is, on 'the catalytic function of institutions to promote, induce, and socially construct the community through community-building practices' (Adler and Barnett 1998, 120). Thus, with regard to the formula of 'community-building institutions', in one of the case studies published in the book Security Communities, Emanuel Adler states that they: (1) help determine the common understandings that will be selected culturally and politically to become the practices and interests of governments; (2) create evaluative, normative, and sometimes causal frameworks around which a security community is built; (3) disseminate and institutionalize common values, norms, and understandings; and (4) play an important role in intra- and inter-state processes that shape the political choices that make the development of security communities possible (Adler and Barnett 1998, 150-151).

In other words, the Deutschian model offers three essential conditions for the emergence of a pluralistic security community. The first condition necessary for the emergence of a pluralistic security community is the compatibility of major values (Costopoulos 1995, 23). The second necessary condition is mutual receptivity, i.e., the ability of the community's constituent units to 'respond to each other's needs, messages, and actions quickly, appropriately, and without resorting to violence'. In this sense, mutual responsiveness implies: (1) the ability of member units to understand the problems of other members of the community; (2) the ability of member units to find answers to these problems through a negotiation process that satisfies the needs and desires of all community members; and (3) the joint implementation of these solutions and a feedback process on the new demands generated by these solutions (Costopoulos 1995, 39-40). The third condition for the emergence of a pluralistic security community is mutual predictability of behavior, a condition that Karl W. Deutsch considers to be less important, rather a normal consequence of the two conditions mentioned above, given that 'the member states of a pluralistic security community must take joint decisions only on a more limited range of subjects and each retains a much wider range of issues for autonomous decision-making within its own borders'. Nevertheless, the importance of mutual predictability of behavior lies in the fact that it 'allows the formation of reliable expectations about the future behavior of other members of the system," expectations that are very important for "the latency of the social system as such" (Costopoulos 1995, 54; 58).

In addition to the additions and clarifications made to the Deutschian model, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett laid the foundations for an integrative model structured on three levels on how security communities emerge, combining material and ideological, structural and procedural, as well as empirical and normative explanations. Thus, according to the two authors, the emergence of security communities is conditioned by the completion of the following three levels/stages:

- *Level 1* is represented by precipitating conditions, which, in the authors' words, include but are not limited to 'technological developments, an external threat that causes states to form alliances, the desire to reduce mutual fear through security coordination, new interpretations of social reality, transformations of economic, demographic, and migration patterns, and changes in the natural environment'. Such conditions can mobilize states to coordinate policies to their advantage, and even if, at this level, there is no 'expectation that these initial meetings and acts of cooperation will generate mutual trust or identification', they create a favorable climate for the further development of relations, paving the way for more frequent and friendly interactions between states (Adler and Barnett 1998, 38).

- *Level 2* is represented by the fact that, as a result of the actors' fairly long exposure to various precipitating conditions, 'states and their peoples became involved in a series of social interactions that began to transform the environment in which they are embedded'. According to the authors, this level consists of two distinct categories: structure and process. The first is represented by the structural categories of power and knowledge. According to the two authors, power is a central element in the development of a security community, given that, by virtue of power, a central state has the ability 'to determine and, occasionally, to compel other states to maintain a collective position'. In other words, power is considered a 'magnet' around which not only a material dimension, based on the balance of power, crystallizes, but also an ideological one, built on the symbolic coherence of the hegemon's vision and its power to sanction deviations from agreed norms. On the other hand, the authors consider that, beyond the material dimension, knowledge, in the form of a framework of shared meanings and norms, is equally indispensable for the emergence of a security community, given that it 'represents the categories of practical action and legitimate activity' (Adler and Barnett 1998, 40). The second is the category of procedural elements which, in the authors' opinion, involves: transactions, international organizations and institutions, and social learning (Adler and Barnett 1998, 41-45).

- Finally, *level 3* marks the attainment of the stage where the precipitating conditions, coupled with the constant interactions between the structural and procedural categories, have generated sufficient social capital for states to act predominantly based on mutual trust and collective identity. Trust appears here as the willingness to act 'despite uncertainty', and collective

> identity is formed when people 'not only identify (positively) with the fate of other people but also identify themselves and those other people as a group in relation to other groups'. At this level, both symbolism (myths, rituals, common flags) and internally adopted norms reinforce the 'boundaries' of the community and make the escalation of violence between members less and less likely (Adler and Barnett 1998, 45-48).

The issue of the emergence of security communities has also been addressed by other authors. In his work entitled '*Communitarian International Relations. The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations*', Emanuel Adler identifies six contextual variables that promote the emergence and development of security communities. These are: **(1)** the expected utility of peace, which exceeds that of war, a variable that lays the foundations for a climate in which dialogue and regular exchanges are no longer mere transactions but become instruments for building mutual trust, and multilateral norms and procedures become legitimate through the active participation of countries in their development and implementation; **(2)** the prevalence of liberal democratic regimes; **(3)** the existence of 'power centers' committed to resolving any disputes peacefully; **(4)** the existence and implementation of an articulated set of international principles and norms designed to guide the behavior of states toward the peaceful resolution of disputes and discourage the use of force; **(5)** the existence of a mutual, tacit or sustained agreement on the institutional/principled legitimacy underlying the joint organization of the security community, the legitimacy of the community in the eyes of its members explaining, more than anything else, the existence of a system of regional governance based on collective identity; and **(6)** the existence of 'peacemakers' with significant agency, i.e., actors who can mobilize resources, inspire courage and strategic vision, and are considered catalysts that generate conditions conducive to the creation of a common purpose, collective identities, and mutual trust (Adler 2005, 215-218).

Another perspective comes from Indian author Amitav Acharya, who, in his 2001 work '*Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*', identifies three key elements in the creation of security communities: institutions, norms, and identity.

Concerning institutions, Amitav Acharya believes that multilateral institutions contribute to the formation of security communities on two complementary levels: in the neoliberal-institutional paradigm, they mitigate anarchy by providing information, reducing transaction costs, supporting dispute mediation, and, through sanctioning mechanisms, discouraging cheating, which encourages states to cooperate rationally and pursue their interests through cost-benefit calculations. From a constructivist perspective, institutions not only regulate the behavior of states, but also shape their identities and interests through processes of socialization and normalization: they transmit and reinforce norms of conduct, promote a common regional culture (e.g., democracy and respect for human rights), host functional

projects that strengthen the sense of a common destiny, and facilitate social learning that redefines states' perceptions and expectations. Furthermore, both 'rational-legal' formalities and informal 'customs, practices, and ideas' of dialogue and consultation, essential for countries sensitive to sovereignty, contribute to cementing the cohesion and legitimacy of a security community (Acharya 2001, 22-24).

Norms, according to Amitav Acharya, serve as essential normative and constitutive structures for security communities: they prescribe and prohibit behaviors, reduce uncertainty, and legitimize cooperation by establishing common standards of rights and obligations, providing a framework for peaceful dispute resolution and the prevention of subversive actions. From a constructivist perspective, norms have an independent constitutive effect, 'teaching' states to adopt/accept new interests and identities, redefining national preferences, and generating collective interests that shift attention from selfish sovereignty to community solidarity. By adopting similar behavioral claims, members of a community create parallel models of peaceful conduct across borders, coordinate their values in order to avoid war, and consolidate a 'social habit' of non-violence, thus cementing the sense of 'us' and mutual loyalty necessary to sustain reliable expectations of peaceful change within a security community (Acharya 2001, 24-25).

Last but not least, identity is seen by Amitav Acharya as the third essential pillar in the development of security communities, as it is considered the psychosocial glue of communities, transforming state actors driven by material interests and self-help thinking into conscious members of a cohesive group marked by a sense of 'we-feeling' that generates mutual receptivity, trust, and consideration, thus reducing the security dilemma. The development of identity also involves the development of a collective sense not only of 'who we are', but also of 'how we differ from others', as well as 'ensuring external recognition of the distinctive character of the community'. Amitav Acharya identifies three indicators of collective identity: (1) multilateralism, i.e., the desire of community members to solve more and more problems through regional cooperation rather than unilateralism; (2) the development of cooperation in the field of security (collective defense, collaboration against internal threats, collective security, etc.); and (3) the clarity of the community's borders and membership criteria, i.e., how 'regional' boundaries are defined and the rules that determine who belongs to this community and who remains outside it (Acharya 2001, 26-29).

Another perspective belongs to Professor Laurie Nathan, who, in her paper '*Security Communities and the problem of domestic instability*', argues that 'internal instability in the form of large-scale violence prevents the emergence or existence of a security community in several ways'. She offers three reasons why internal stability is important enough to be considered a necessary condition for the emergence and development of a security community: (1) large-scale domestic violence undermines the credibility of the idea of a security community, because citizens caught up in internal conflicts cannot benefit from reliable expectations of peaceful change; (2)

internal instability generates tension and mistrust between states, preventing them from achieving the high level of mutual trust and collective identity necessary for the creation and maintenance of a security community; and (3) internal violence erodes the coherence and predictability of behavior, destroys the sense of community, and makes it impossible to build the mutual trust necessary to rule out the use of force and guarantee non-violence (Nathan 2004).

Another perspective belongs to Andrej Tusicisny, who in his work '*Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously*' identified several variables that should facilitate peaceful change and the emergence of security communities: (1) interpersonal trust, or the sense of 'we-feeling' that strengthens internal cohesion and reliable expectations of peaceful change; (2) tolerance towards 'out-groups', or acceptance of ethnic, religious, and political minorities, which should help reduce internal tensions and the risk of civil conflict; (3) democratic commitment, i.e. the belief that any disputes can be resolved through institutional means and not through violence; (4) economic liberalism, which contributes to a 'universal expansion' of trust within a community because 'in a market economy, most people must engage in non-violent interactions with each other'; and (5) civic engagement, i.e., involvement in voluntary associations and activities that create interpersonal trust and overlapping and interdependent social networks, which can 'reduce the propensity for conflict' (Tusicisny 2007, 431-432).

In summary, this section emphasized that the emergence and consolidation of security communities cannot be explained by a single factor, but rather by the complex interaction of several key variables. The section started from the approach of the founding father, Karl W. Deutsch, then presented some of the contributions of Adler and Barnett, who enriched this framework with structural, procedural, normative, and institutional dimensions, showing how prescribed and constitutive norms, supported by multilateral institutions, generate new interests and patterns of peaceful behavior. Subsequently, several additional points of view were presented, from democratic peace theory and the role of free markets to the importance of visionary leadership and social learning, aspects that expanded the inventory of variables that facilitate peaceful change and the emergence and development of security communities. Together, these elements reveal a dynamic interweaving of material, ideological, and institutional factors, whose convergence transforms the stakes of security from pure state survival into a sustainable social construct capable of responding to both internal challenges and cross-border threats.

The security community as a process

In this section, we aim to highlight the contributions made by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett to the development of a three-phase research program on security communities, as well as their emphasis on the role of transnational forces.

Thus, while in the previous section we identified the main variables that contribute to the emergence of a security community, in this section we will analyze the security

community not only as a static result, but as an evolutionary process.
The merits of the three-phase security communities research program belong, as previously stated, to Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett who, starting from the idea that 'security communities are socially constructed', concluded that they 'have a history and, therefore, present an evolutionary model that follows the direction of the "arrow of time"' (Adler and Barnett 1998, 49).

Essentially, security communities do not arise and disappear suddenly, but follow a continuum, as follows:
• *Phase I – nascent phase* is characterized by the fact that states do not explicitly seek to lay the foundations for a security community *per se*, but instead engage in various diplomatic, bilateral, and multilateral exchanges to coordinate their relations in order to achieve certain goals. In other words, this phase is characterized by 'organizational emulation and a common ignorance of the existence of the security community', with regional actors acting without any plan, but merely testing the 'nature of the ongoing exchanges'. Not surprisingly, for this phase, institutions play a crucial role in interpreting, deepening, and expanding ongoing exchanges (Vucetic 2001, 113).

In Adler and Barnett's model, institutions, or 'third parties' as they call them, play an essential role in building security communities because they 'contain norms and provide mechanisms that make states accountable to each other; institutionalize immediate reciprocity (if not diffusion); identify common interests (or even identities) among a selected population; and produce agendas and convene meetings and seminars, reflecting an attempt to create a binding set of interests and a collective future' (Adler and Barnett 1998, 52).

• *Phase II – ascendant* is characterized by an intensification of interactions and a notable increase in relational density, with the multiple flows of the incipient phase becoming increasingly extensive and deepened. At the same time, new international institutions and organizations emerge, reflecting not only increased coordination and cooperation but also a visible reduction in mutual uncertainties and fears. At the same time, the expansion of networks and the intensification of relations and interactions between societies, states, and organizations 'institutionalize cognitive structures and strengthen mutual trust and responsiveness' (Adler and Barnett 1998, 53).

• *Phase III – maturity* marks the moment when reliable expectations of peaceful change become so well established among regional actors that the security community 'begins to exist'. In this phase, regional actors share not only common interests but also a common identity, assuming credible expectations of peaceful resolution of any disagreements, signaling the crossing of a critical threshold—the rhetoric of war loses all instrumental meaning.
Here, Adler and Barnett provide additional insights into the distinction and evidence of the emergence of two types of pluralistic security communities: weak and tightly coupled.

Thus, regarding the weakly coupled (minimalist) pluralistic security communities, their members 'positively identify with each other and proclaim a similar "way of life"; there are multiple and diverse mechanisms and patterns of interaction that strengthen and reproduce the security community; there is an informal system of governance based on shared meanings and a collective identity; and, although there are conflicting interests, disagreements, and asymmetric negotiations, states are expected to exercise self-control'. Evidence of the emergence of a loosely coupled pluralistic security community includes: (1) multilateralism; (2) the existence of unfortified borders; (3) changes in military planning with regard to community members; (4) provision of a common definition of what constitutes a threat; and (5) the existence of a visible concordance between the discourse and normative actions of the state and the standards of the community.

In tightly coupled pluralistic security communities, mutual cooperation becomes a routine, everyday practice, and the sense of national identity is expressed through joint efforts. At the same time, the unilateral right to use force is transferred from individual states to the collective of sovereign states and becomes legitimate only 'against external threats or against members of the community who deviate from the fundamental norms of the community'. Conventional power balances, nuclear deterrence, and the possibility of retaliation remain functional instruments, but they are mobilized exclusively in defense of the common space against 'foreigners'. In the event of external aggression, the security community can pool its resources to respond as a collective security system or even as an integrated military defense bloc. Evidence/indicators of the emergence of a closely coupled pluralistic security community include: (1) the transition from mutual arms control to cooperative security internally and collective security externally; (2) a high level of military integration; (3) coordination of policies against 'internal' threats; (4) free movement of people; (5) internationalization of legislative authority; and (6) the existence of a 'multi-perspective' policy that allows for the creation of rules and decision-making mechanisms between the national, transnational, and supranational levels (Adler and Barnett 1998, 55-57).

• *The disintegration of the security community* is succinctly presented by Adler and Barnett as a variable that occurs when the forces that previously constituted the security community begin to erode under the impact of exogenous shocks or internal dysfunctions. At the heart of the two authors' perspective on the disintegration of the security community lies the 'loss of mutual trust', which paves the way for the revision of common norms, the restriction of transactions, and the fragmentation of the institutional framework (Adler and Barnett 1998, 58).

The issue of the disintegration of a security community has also attracted the interest of other authors. For example, Karl W. Deutsch identified six possible

causes for the failure of a political system, namely: (1) loss of power; (2) loss of communication channels; (3) loss of leadership or coordination capacity; (4) loss of memory depth; (5) loss of partial internal reorganization capacity; and (6) loss of comprehensive or fundamental internal structure reorganization capacity. According to the author, all six causes have in common the fact that they 'call into question the mutual predictability of behavior'. At the same time, Deutsch considers that the challenge of mutual predictability arises in two different ways, namely: (1) through doubts that arise about the system as such and (2) through doubts that arise about the will and ability of a member. In the first case, doubts about the system 'create a sense of distrust in the fixity of the system, as well as in its ability to fulfill its role as a forum for relations between members', in which context mutual predictability of behavior becomes an impossible condition once the environment that led to its emergence has changed. In the second case, as a result of changes in the actions of a member unit, disintegration results from the fact that 'the member unit of the security community is considered unreliable by the other members' (Costopoulos 1995, 65-66).

Another perspective on the disintegration of a security community belongs to Indian author Amitav Acharya, who offers two points of view in this regard: a neorealist point of view and a constructivist one. From a neorealist theory perspective, Amitav Acharya believes that the decline of security communities is explained by major changes taking place on the international relations scene which, in the author's words, 'can generate new threats to the security of states, causing new external alignments among some members, which can prove disruptive and divisive (...)' for the integrity of the security community. In contrast, according to the constructivist approach, Amitav Acharya places the sources of decline not only in exogenous factors, but especially in the internal dynamics of the socialization processes that constitute the security community, highlighting the fact that excessive expansion through the 'introduction of previously "unsocialized" actors' can test the material, psychological, and normative capacities of the community, as well as the socialization processes within the community and between it and the outside world (Acharya 2001, 36-37).

Distinguishing security communities from other regional security systems

In this section, we will highlight the main features that differentiate security communities from other forms of regional security organization, *alliances, collective security, security regimes, and security complexes*, in order to emphasize the unique contribution of each model to the logic and practice of state cooperation. We will compare the basic vocabulary, operating mechanisms, and horizons of application, thus providing a clear framework for further analysis. For clarity, we will present the differences succinctly in the form of a table.

TABLE 1. The difference between a security community and other forms of regional security organizations

FORM OF ORGANIZATION	BASIC VOCABULARY	OPERATING MECHANISMS	SCOPE OF APPLICATION
Security communities	Fundamental, unequivocal, and long-lasting convergence in avoiding war; collective identity, the sense of 'us'; accepted norm of non-use of force among members; reasonable certainty that all share the same commitment	Multi-dimensional integrative process (formal and informal institutions, diplomatic practices, evolving norms and customs); peaceful resolution and self-control mechanisms; sustainable practices that 'prevent' war through socialization, functional interdependence, and mutual trust building	Avoiding armed conflicts between members; maintaining internal peace and stability; prevention through common practices, without necessarily targeting an external threat; peace between community members assumed as the norm
Alliances	Collective defense imperative; mutual military commitments; identification and deterrence of a pre-recognized and commonly perceived external threat	Formal (or informal) agreements whereby states commit to providing military support to an ally under attack; common front against an external enemy; joint command or military consultation mechanisms; 'security role' (Lynn Miller)[1].	Collective against an external enemy; common defense to deter aggression; does not guarantee non-conflict between members when there are no external threats
Collective security	The feeling of 'us'; the threat of collective punishment for any aggression committed by a member of the group; the supremacy of physical force as a means of enforcing sanctions	Multilateral legal mechanism (e.g., UN) that punishes the aggressor through sanctions or collective intervention; priority given to the credibility of the punishment mechanism; minimal cooperation required to maintain the credibility of sanctions; does not imply trade interdependence or deep functional integration	Discouraging and punishing any aggression between members; maintaining peace through collective force; does not profoundly transform internal relations, but relies on punishment/ sanctions
Security regimes	A set of principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures designed to reduce the security dilemma; balance of power or mutual deterrence; interests that are 'neither completely compatible nor completely competitive'	Inhibition of force use through balance of power and reasonable expectations of behavior (monitoring, deterrence); occasional cooperation in dispute management; does not imply deep functional ties or identity; can function in contradictory contexts as long as force remains a last resort	Managing disputes and avoiding war within a framework of deterrence and balance; maintaining a state of 'no war' but not completely eliminating uncertainty and not establishing lasting peace through common identity
Security complexes	Significant interdependence between states (rivalry or common interests); regional nodes in the global security network; interrelated securitization/ de-securitization processes	Analysis and coordination at the regional subsystem level, depending on the dynamics of friendship-enmity, does not automatically imply integrated cooperation, but rather notes interdependence (e.g., rivalries, mutual fears, or functional solidarity); it focuses on security issues in mini-systems, without imposing common rules on the non-use of force	Mapping and managing security in a regional space defined by multiple interdependencies (conflictual or functional); it does not necessarily focus on avoiding war, but rather on managing security relations

Source: Table compiled by the author using information taken from: (Acharya 2001, 17-21; Sava 2005, 150; (Buzan, Waever and Wilde 2010, 28; 281)

[1] By 'security role', Lynn Miller refers to an integral part of a defense community that denotes 'the organization's potential to present a common military front against an external actor or actors'. In contrast, the 'peace role', which is essential to a security community, refers to 'the potential of a regional organization, through its peacekeeping mechanism and diplomatic techniques, to control the resolution of conflicts between its members by force'. See Amitav Acharya, op. cit., p. 19.

Summarizing the table above, with regard to the essential difference between the security community and other forms of regional security organization, we emphasize that the former is distinguished by an essential 'cognitive transition' (Acharya 2001, 20) that shifts from the logic of fear and balance of power to an accepted norm of non-use of force within the group, supported by identity and lasting trust, while the other models maintain, to one degree or another, the possibility and legitimacy of force as a security tool.

Conclusion

In view of the above, we consider that this article has achieved its intended purpose of providing a comprehensive and critical overview of the conditions and mechanisms that bring about the transition from regional interdependence to a sustainable security community, as well as the factors that determine the stability or fragility of this transition.

First, we focused on fundamental definitions, from Karl W. Deutsch's transactionalist perspective to constructivist reinterpretations that emphasize the role of transnational identities and norms. We thus outlined a clear delimitation of the notion of security community, highlighting its essential characteristics: convergence of interests, non-use of force, and mutual certainty of reliable expectations of peaceful change, in contrast to other forms of regional cooperation.

Next, through a detailed analysis, we revealed the main variables that facilitate the emergence of security communities, both from the initial perspective proposed by Karl W. Deutsch and through the lens of the constructivist reconceptualization developed by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, as well as from the subsequent contributions of other authors renowned in the field of international relations.

At the same time, we examined in depth the procedural dynamics of community life: from the early phase of pragmatic orientation, through the rise of dense relationships and institutions, to the moment of maturity, when reliable expectations of peaceful change become the norm, making war between members unthinkable, providing both a conceptual map of the stages and empirical indicators for each phase. We also showed how these evolutionary processes, dependent on trajectory, can paradoxically lead to decline when loss of trust or internal and external transformations test the resilience of the community.

Finally, through a comparative analysis, we distinguished security communities from other forms of regional security organization, clarifying the points of conceptual tangency and separation.
Methodologically, the approach was supported by a systematic analysis of the literature and other relevant documents, ensuring the coherence and transparency of the reasoning.

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