

# Considering the Possibility of Abolishing War

Written by Robert Bewick

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

## Considering the Possibility of Abolishing War

<https://www.e-ir.info/2010/06/08/the-possibility-of-abolishing-war/>

ROBERT BEWICK, JUN 8 2010

### **Considering its Eurocentric origins, can the Security Communities theory be successfully applied to regions other than Europe? Discuss.**

The groundbreaking theory of Security Communities proffered by Karl Deutsch and his associates in 1957 which sought to "...[contribute] to the study of possible ways in which men some day might abolish war",[1] was largely shunned during the decades immediately succeeding its publishing. The timing of Deutsch's piece was unfortunate in that, given the historical failings of previous 'idealistic' notions of peace, such as Woodrow Wilson's *Fourteen Points* (which merely served as a prelude to the Second World War), and the ever growing East-West divide in the aftermath of that conflict, statesmen were not interested in theories which aimed to "...eliminate war as a social institution",[2] as they had come to accept war as an almost unavoidable consequence of human interaction.

Furthermore, as the Cold War continued into the 1970's and through the 1980's, the dominance of the realist paradigm in scholarly debate served to accentuate this belief amongst statesmen, as realism's grip on academia tightened with the introduction of neorealism via Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* and Barry Buzan's security focused *People, States and Fear*. The lasting effect of the realist monopoly on international politics was felt well into the 1990's, as Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett noted, the very existence of security communities, "...has been made conceptually invisible because of the dominance of realist theories of international security."[3] However, the end of the Cold War had dealt a strong blow to the legitimacy of Realism and, in time, Deutsch's theory was explored once more, as an antidote to the very hypothesis which had stunted its initial development in the late 1950's.

Though the analysis of Deutsch and his collaborators focused explicitly on the North Atlantic area, the framework provided is not restrictive in the sense that it may be transposed onto other regions, provided certain necessary criteria are fulfilled. This paper will argue that despite the eurocentric nature of the study in question, attempted application of the Security Communities theory to areas other than Europe may prove fruitful, as the necessary conditions identified by Deutsch *et al* are not explicitly European or confined only to polities of Europe and the North Atlantic area, though they may find their greatest expression in this region.

This analysis will deal exclusively with pluralistic security communities, wherein governments retain their sovereignty and do not formally merge. This is due to pluralistic communities being, "...somewhat easier to attain and easier to preserve than their amalgamated counterparts,"[4] and their consequent frequency in the current international system. As Tuscisny notes, "Since regional integration has not led to a formal unification of sovereign states, as early postwar federalists often hoped, contemporary researchers deal almost exclusively with pluralistic and not amalgamated security communities... [which] have proved themselves to be astonishingly vigorous."[5]

Deutsch's analysis of security communities unearths conditions which are deemed the minimum necessary conditions for application of this theory. The task here shall be to identify these fundamental and interlinked conditions and explore them in an attempt to create an abstract model of a pluralistic security community. Once this has been completed, we might begin to apply the model to other regions and comment on the suitability of this theory for documenting and fostering integration elsewhere. These integral conditions for establishing a pluralistic security community are; the existence and, "...compatibility of major values relevant to political decision-making," "The

# Considering the Possibility of Abolishing War

Written by Robert Bewick

capacity of the participating political units or governments to respond to each other's needs, messages, and actions quickly, adequately and without resort to violence" and a mutual predictability of behaviour.[6]

Deutsch claims that in every case his team analysed, "...[a] compatibility of the main values held by the politically relevant strata of all participating units,"[7] could be identified. In light of this distinction, we can be certain that security communities are unlikely to exist between units of radically different internal political composition. For example, a security community between a communist and a capitalist unit during the Cold War era, such as Cuba and the United States, would have been unthinkable. Similarly, in Europe, the rigid East-West distinction of the Cold War nullified the notion of a security community forming which might include nations from both sides of the divide. Conversely however, this divide did create a security community on either side of the curtain, with Western Europe and the United States on one side, and Eastern Europe and the USSR on the opposite.

Deutsch further claims the representation of these ideals via political and social organisations as integral to the process, noting, "Values were most effective politically when they were not held merely in abstract terms, but when they were incorporated in political institutions and in habits of political behaviour which permitted these values to be acted on in such a way as to strengthen people's attachment to them." [8] From this we may ascertain the value of the separate political entities mirroring one another in their domestic make-up – the existence of similar social and political norms contributing to the development of what Deutsch termed a 'we-feeling' amongst the separate units.

However, as Adler and Barnett note, "...while all political communities will contain norms to regulate their security and foster order, there is no reason to assume (as Deutsch did) that they will generate the assurance of nonviolent dispute settlement... the conflict mechanisms that emerge might very well be an expressive component of the individual's identity." [9] Consequently, if violent settlement of disputes is the norm of all units in any proposed security community, they may not be deemed a security community, even though their internal make-up may be identical. As Adler and Barnett continue, "...what distinguishes a security community from other kinds of communities is that its members entertain dependable expectations of peaceful change." [10]

So, the paramount necessary value at the heart of those previously offered is the view that, at a minimum, both units share the expectation of peaceful change, defined by Deutsch as, "...the resolution of social problems, normally by institutionalized procedures, without resort to large-scale physical force." [11] With this, we may begin to determine the types of polity most likely to be interested in creating a security community and those which are most conducive to their successful maintenance. If we are to look at some of the individual security communities which reside within the North Atlantic area defined by Deutsch, for example, we may identify their first common characteristic as their commitment to liberal democratic ideals and adoption of democratic means of government.

Of course, since the time of Deutsch's writing, the European continent – a major constituent of his study – has become integrated to a point only likely to have ever been contemplated by the most idealistic of post-war scholars. An individual and group commitment to democracy lies at the heart of this integration, and indeed, the supranational institutions that serve to integrate the separate sovereign entities to such a degree. For example, the membership criteria of the European Union (EU) firmly states that candidate polities must contain stable institutions capable of guaranteeing democracy. [12] In this sense, though the EU motto, 'united in diversity', holds true with regard to the numerous languages, races and cultures contained within its boundaries, in terms of political organisation, it is anything but diverse, with each sovereign unit agreeing to adhere to the same liberal democratic principles and practices upon its accession.

Thus, given that the EU, the largest example in history of a pluralistic security community, is a democracy, and that the examples on the American continent offered by Deutsch of the USA and Canada and the USA and Mexico [13] are also, the importance of democracy to the integration process becomes increasingly apparent. However, this is not to claim that democracies do not wage war against other polities and may be deemed as implicitly peaceful entities, as the U.S. led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq attest; the point is merely that democracies do not go to war with *other* democracies, as it is undemocratic.

With this fact in mind, given Deutsch's definition of a security community as a political community, "...in which there is

## Considering the Possibility of Abolishing War

Written by Robert Bewick

real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way,"[14] and the assertion of Adler and Barnett that, "...individuals can organize and define themselves based on markers that are not necessarily tied to space, suggesting something of an 'imagined region', or a 'cognitive region',"[15] we might even claim that the established democracies[16] of the world are representative of a security community. It is not such a great stretch when you consider that Australia and New Zealand, two long-established democracies a world away from the North Atlantic area, are already often considered members of the Western security community.

If we are to agree with this proposition that democracy is at the heart of the integration process and that democracies will only enter into a security community with other democracies due to the very nature of their political organisations prohibiting war between them and thus, making them perfect candidates for a security community, we may determine why an application of the security communities theory to regions other than the North Atlantic area might become difficult. Firstly, if a pluralistic security community is, by definition, a community consisting of *at least* two separate political units, and we follow the original notion that these individual entities are likely to share a border or, at the very least, inhabit the same region; identifying democratic neighbours in areas other than the North Atlantic or European Union which might create a security community is complicated.

For example, India, an established democracy, is surrounded by polities preferring to practice one party rule (Tibet, China) and monarchy (Nepal) or those whose transition to democracy is still very much uncertain (Pakistan, Bangladesh) – leaving India with no established democratic neighbours with which to create a security community. Furthermore, geographically speaking, the closest democracy to India is Thailand, a polity with which it shares few common, regional problems; thus, integration between the two units is not deemed attractive. On the African continent too, established democracies are the exception rather than the norm. Though democratic enclaves exist in the North West (Senegal, Benin and Ghana) and South (Botswana), these established democracies are mere archipelagos in a continent characterised by uncertain democracies, collapsed, and autocratic states.

This serves to illustrate the difficulty of applying Deutsch's theory to regions other than that which his initial analysis focused. However, it is through examination of the South American political community that a supplementary condition to those deemed necessary by Deutsch for the integration of polities is revealed. For the most part, the individual units which comprise the South American continent are now democracies, yet many of them have been ruled by military dictatorship in the recent memory and have experienced protracted civil war. As such, their democratic status is far less rigid or embedded than that of their North American and European counterparts. As Tuscisny notes, "Security communities are formed around the expectation that 'social problems' can and must be resolved 'without resort to large-scale physical force.' If large-scale violence is still seen as a possible means of regime change, national liberation, or oppression of political opponents, such a region simply does not meet the criteria of a security community, regardless of the likelihood of interstate war."[17]

Laurie Nathan claims the existence of domestic stability in any given political unit to be of equal importance to the integrative process as the conditions offered by Deutsch *et al.* Overlooked by Deutsch and his colleagues, the notion of violent internal upheaval influencing the means by which nations can expect 'peaceful change' is highlighted fervently by Nathan. In claiming domestic stability as a necessary condition of a security community he asserts, "The inhabitants of unstable countries are not remotely secure... substantial violence threatens the security if not the survival of the state. It would strain credulity to claim that people and states in these circumstances are part of a 'security community'."[18]

Nathan continues, "...large-scale domestic violence prevents the attainment of security communities because it renders people and states insecure, generates uncertainty, tension and mistrust among states, and creates the risk of cross-border violence."[19] Nathan's proposition that dependable expectations of peaceful change should apply not only *between* political units but also *within* them further fosters the notion that a particular type of polity, i.e. democracy, is conducive to the creation and maintenance of a security community. As he explains, with particular reference to the claims that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) might well constitute a security community,

# Considering the Possibility of Abolishing War

Written by Robert Bewick

“The key mechanism [of the SADC]... is the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, a common security regime established in 1996... [Despite indicating] SADC’s desire to become a security community... the Protocol envisages a range of domestic situations that would render people and states highly insecure... [providing] that the Organ’s peacemaking mandate covers civil wars, insurgencies, military coups and ‘large-scale violence between sections of the population or between a state and sections of the population, including genocide, ethnic cleansing and gross violation of human rights’.”[20]

Nathan is not alone in his assertion that domestic stability is a necessary condition of a security community. Indeed, Raimo Väyrynen adopts a similar disposition, further adopting the term ‘comprehensive security community’ to describe those units which display the conditions proffered by Deutsch *and* are able to maintain domestic stability.[21] This distinction affords greater scope for the study of security communities via the application of Deutschian theory to the transitional and uncertain democracies previously highlighted whilst illustrating the fact that Deutsch took this as a *given* condition of a security community. Any political unit in governmental transition is likely to experience violence or at the very least upheaval. Väyrynen’s terminology allows us to differentiate between those we may predict will be successful and those more susceptible to disintegration. As Nathan notes, “Whatever the nature of inter-state relations among a group of countries, a citizenry engulfed by internal violence cannot plausibly be said to inhabit a security community.”[22]

A possible explanation for the omission of the condition of domestic stability by Deutsch and his team is that, if we are to agree with the argument presented in this paper; that successful security communities are composed primarily of democracies, the analysis of the North Atlantic area did not need to make explicit the role of domestic stability, given that it is a fundamental principle of democratic political organisation due to the many accessible, non-violent channels of opposition available to citizens of a democratic polity. Whether knowingly or not, Deutsch and his collaborators were implicitly speaking of democracies when they formulated their theory of security communities.

In the final conclusion then, Deutsch’s theory of security communities highlights, without explicitly naming them, the necessity of Western political norms, inherent to democratic government, in the creation of pluralistic security communities. Despite the theory being Eurocentric in its formulation, it may be successfully applied to any other region where these values are prevalent and flourish. However, given that these social and political norms are being described here as ‘Western’ illustrates the fact that these are, for the most part, only endemic in that particular region. However, given that Deutsch’s theory is not geographically restrictive but rather qualified politically, it may be in the future, theoretically at least, applied anywhere in the world where established democracies exist.

## Bibliography

Adler, Emmanuel and Barnett, Michael ed. *Security Communities* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998)

Deutsch, Karl W. *et al. Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1968)

‘Europa: Gateway to the European Union’ available at [http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession\\_criteria\\_copenhagen\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm) – accessed 02/03/10

Nathan, Laurie ‘Security Communities and the Problem of Domestic instability’, *Development Studies Institute*, Vol. 1, No. 55, Nov 2004, available from LSE ‘Crisis States Research Centre’ at <http://www.crisisstates.com/Publications/phase1papers.htm> pp. 1-19

Tusicsny, Andrej ‘Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously’, *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2007), pp. 425-449

## Considering the Possibility of Abolishing War

Written by Robert Bewick

Väyrynen, Raimo (2000) 'Stable Peace through Security Communities? Steps Towards Theory-Building,' *Joan B. Kroc Institute Occasional Articles Vol. 18, No. 3*, pp. 157-193

Williams, Paul D. ed. *Security Studies: An Introduction* (Routledge, Oxon, 2008)

[1] Deutsch, Karl W. *et al. Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1968) p. 3

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Adler, Emmanuel and Barnett, Michael 'A Framework for the Study of Security Communities' in Adler, Emmanuel and Barnett, Michael ed. *Security Communities* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998) p. 37

[4] Deutsch, Karl W. *et al. Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* p. 29

[5] Tuscisny, Andrej 'Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously', *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2007), p. 426

[6] Deutsch, Karl W. *et al. Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* p. 66

[7] *Ibid.* p. 46

[8] *Ibid.* p. 47

[9] Adler, Emmanuel and Barnett, Michael in Adler, Emmanuel and Barnett, Michael ed. *Security Communities* pp. 33-34

[10] *Ibid.* p. 34

[11] Deutsch, Karl W. *et al. Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* p. 5

[12] 'The Copenhagen Criteria' at 'Europa: Gateway to the European Union'  
[http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession\\_criteria\\_copenhagen\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm)

[13] Both of which are still withstanding

[14] Deutsch, Karl W. *et al. Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* p. 5

[15] Adler, Emmanuel and Barnett, Michael in Adler, Emmanuel and Barnett, Michael ed. *Security Communities* p. 33

## Considering the Possibility of Abolishing War

Written by Robert Bewick

[16] I use 'established' here to distinguish between long-standing/established democracies and those which are transitional and/or uncertain

[17] Tuscicisny, Andrej 'Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously', p. 428

[18] Nathan, Laurie 'Security Communities and the Problem of Domestic instability', *Development Studies Institute*, Vol. 1, No. 55, Nov 2004, available from LSE 'Crisis States Research Centre' at <http://www.crisisstates.com/Publications/phase1papers.htm> p. 3

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid. p. 4

[21] Väyrynen, Raimo (2000) 'Stable Peace through Security Communities? Steps Towards Theory-Building,' *Joan B. Kroc Institute Occasional Articles Vol. 18*, No. 3, p. 163

[22] Nathan, Laurie 'Security Communities and the Problem of Domestic instability', p. 5

—

*Written by: Robert Bewick  
Written at: University of Kent  
Lecturer: Dr. Anne Hammerstad  
Date written: 3/3/2010*