

In chapter 2, Adler and Barnett lay out their framework for understanding the nature of a “security community.” First, they define a community as having three characteristics: (1) members of a community have shared identities, values, and meanings; (2) the members of a community have direct (face-to-face) encounters with one another and (3) members of a community develop some sense of responsibility toward one another in the long run. Essentially, a security community, for Adler and Barnett, is a community that exists at the international level, among states, that develops peaceful norms for the regulation of conflicts. Not all international communities will automatically develop into security communities, however.

The question Adler and Barnett seek to answer is as follows: what are the conditions under which a community develops into a security community? The authors propose a three-tiered model to address this question. In tier one, individual state-interests cause them orient themselves to one another in the hopes of coordinating their behavior. Factors driving this stage include changes in technology, demography, economics, and the environment, as well as new interpretations of social reality, and new external threats. In tier 2, social interactions begin to change the environment under which states exist. Power and knowledge are the motors of this stage: power allows strong states to function as “core” states, around which the others coalesce, while the exchange of knowledge allows states to develop certain expectations of each other’s future behavior. Power and knowledge reify themselves within a security community via “process,” which consists of transactions, international institutions and organizations, and social learning.

The third tier is characterized by the development of “trust” among states, what the authors call, “a social phenomenon...dependent on the assessment that another actor will behave in ways that are consistent with normative expectations” (p. 46). The development of trust signals the formation of a “collective identity,” and allows the security community to exist as an operative force in the uncertain, anarchic international arena. The security generates identification among its members as “friends” but also of outsiders as potential enemies.

In chapter 4, Adler attempts to apply this model to the case of Europe, and in particular, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Adler argues that the OSCE is a case of a security community branching out, or, “. . .the institutionalization in the Euro-Atlantic space of a logic of international community. . .” Much of Adler’s article is taken up by a review of the OSCE’s history; I will not rehash but instead review the features of his theoretical analysis.

Adler identifies seven community-building functions of the OSCE. They are: (1) the promotion of consultation and bilateral and multilateral agreements among member states; (2) the setting of liberal standards to judge democratic and human rights performance; (3) the prevention of violent conflict; (4) the development of peaceful dispute settlement; (5) building mutual trust through arms control, military transparency agreements; (6) supporting newly independent states and promoting democratic/ market reforms; and (7) and assisting in the post-conflict reestablishment of institutions.

These specific functions exist within six more general functions of the OSCE model, according to Adler, which are: (1) Cooperative security—i.e., security as “demilitarization”; (2) socialization, teaching of norms (spreading knowledge); (3) development of international modes of legitimacy/accountability ; (4) development of a structured, if crude, international governance system; (5) development of a collective perception of transnational identity; (6) building a community in general. Within this last characteristic, Adler identifies six specific mechanisms undertaken by the OSCE: (1) the political, rather than legal, nature of OSCE injunctions; (2) the informality of the negotiation process, which prevented the development of large-scale bureaucratic structures; (3) the implementation to a consensus, rather than majoritarian, rule; (4) the employment of follow-up conferences to promote social learning; (5) the employment and development of shared practices (rather than atomistic balance-of-power techniques) and (6) the promotion of seminar diplomacy. Adler is particularly interested in this sixth aspect, calling seminar diplomacy, “a vehicle to socially construct shared values and mutual responsiveness in a given region and the transnational identity of a region.”

Adler sees much of the OSCE’s significance in its ability to travel, especially to former Soviet states. As a result, it has helped to transform Eastern European institutions (via the vehicles listed above) in order to extend the European security community identity.