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What is This?

The Spread of Security Communities: Communities of Practice, Self-Restraint, and NATO's Post–Cold War Transformation

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This article invokes a combination of analytical and normative arguments that highlight the leading role of practices in explaining the expansion of security communities. The analytical argument is that collective meanings, on which peaceful change is based, cognitively evolve — i.e. they are established in individuals' expectations and dispositions and they are institutionalized in practice — because of *communities of practice*. By that we mean like-minded groups of practitioners who are bound, both informally and contextually, by a shared interest in learning and applying a common practice. The normative argument is that security communities rest in part on the sharing of rational and moral expectations and dispositions of *self-restraint*. This thesis is illustrated by the example of the successful expansion of security-community identities from a core of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) states to Central and Eastern European countries during the 1990s, which was facilitated by a 'cooperative-security' community of practice that, emerging from the Helsinki Process, endowed NATO with the practices necessary for the spread of self-restraint.

KEY WORDS ♦ communities of practice ♦ cooperative security ♦ NATO ♦ security communities ♦ self-restraint

Introduction

Barry Buzan (2004: 222–7) recently suggested a 'vanguard theory of the evolution and decay of social structures', according to which institutions spread from the inside out; from local or sub-system beginnings they may ultimately acquire global forms. This, for example, is how international society evolved from a core of European states. Vanguard explanations build on

theories of institutional expansion, in particular, coercion theories (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Other theories of institutional expansion rely on 'rhetorical action' (Schimmelfennig, 2003, 2005); social influence (Johnston, 2001); and normative diffusion involving imitation (Acharya, 2004), socialization, and persuasion (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Risse, 2000; Checkel, 2005) by international organizations (Gheciu, 2005a, 2005b) or transnational networks (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). While these theories are not mutually exclusive and while the different mechanisms are important at particular stages, they may not be sufficient because they do not make *practices* a central focus or let them carry the major causal and constitutive weight in the explanation.

The theory of cognitive evolution of communities of practice presented in this article, however, argues that the vanguards or 'carriers' of social structures across functional and geographical boundaries are not necessarily states or societal networks, but 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998a) — likeminded groups of practitioners who are informally as well as contextually bound by a shared interest in learning and applying a common practice (Snyder, 1997; Wenger, 1998a; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Explaining the spread of institutions, therefore, requires placing practices in the driver's seat. Practices (Schatzki, Knorr Cetina, and von Savigny, 2001; Neumann, 2002), the background knowledge[1] that constitutes them, and the environment in which they are performed actually make possible political actors' socialization and persuasion and ultimately their rational calculation.

The adoption of a new practice can be not only self-transforming but also constitutive of the ability to change social structure. This is because the diffusion of a practice entails not only the numerical or geographical enlargement of the group of agents who engage in it, but also the new agents' participation in a community of practice where learning takes place and meanings and identities are negotiated and transformed. In and by means of practice, these communities empower linguistic and perceptual expectations, dispositions, and identities that survive preferentially. By facilitating both the innovation and stabilization of practices, communities structure consciousness and intention, constitute agency, and encourage the evolution or spread of social structure. The spread of social structure is also facilitated by the acquisition of new material and organizational capabilities, i.e. 'mobilization' in Bruno Latour's (1999) sense — creating alliances, competing for and mobilizing resources and allegiances, and devising interpretations that align interests with negotiated identities – and by the reification of the background knowledge on which practice is based (Wenger, 1998a).

Identifying an analytical mechanism, such as the vanguard community of practice, however, is insufficient to explain the evolution of normative phenomena like peaceful change. We also need an argument that links the

analytical mechanism to the substance of the social structure we are trying to explain.[2] I thus synthesize this analytical mechanism with a normative theoretical argument by showing that one type of communities of practice, security communities (Deutsch et al., 1957; Adler and Barnett, 1998), spread by the co-evolution of background knowledge and subjectivities of *self-restraint*. The combined effect of communities of practice and the institutionalization of self-restraint accounts both for the *social construction of rationality*, in the sense that cooperative-security practices related to self-restraint help constitute dependable expectations of peaceful change, and for *normative evolution*, in the sense that self-restraint brings about security through cooperation.

To illustrate this thesis, I show that the successful expansion of a security community from a core of Western states to Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) during the 1990s, and the mainly unsuccessful later attempts to change the 'Broader Middle East', were facilitated by a 'cooperative-security' community of practice, which, growing from the Helsinki Process, endowed European institutions, in particular the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), with the practices necessary for the spread of social structure. Because I cannot describe the complex social construction processes involved in the institutionalization of cooperative security and the full life-cycle of the eastward and southward expansion of the Euro-Atlantic security community in a single article, I will illustrate only one link in the chain: NATO's partial transformation into a cooperative-security institution in the 1990s and its subsequent efforts to expand the security community further. This is why my illustration will focus primarily on how practices are adopted by institutions and how they spread, rather than on their effects on particular states (which is the focus of the literature on socialization and persuasion). With this article I mainly introduce my practice-based theoretical framework of the spread of security communities. I provide a partial empirical illustration; more actual empirical work is needed.

Although recent studies have looked at NATO's enlargement in the 1990s from various perspectives — organizational survival (McCalla, 1996), institutional functional adaptation (Wallander, 2000), rhetorical action/cost–benefit analysis (Schimmelfennig, 2003, 2005), and norm suasion (Gheciu, 2005a, 2005b) — they are hard-pressed to explain the spread of security-community social structures. While survival and adaptation played a role in NATO's transformation, the nature of the survival and adaptation strategies were to a great extent dictated by the practices that NATO adopted at the end of the Cold War. Moreover, while one can argue that NATO's potential new members acted instrumentally — initially pursuing NATO membership because of a concern of a future Russian threat (but see Epstein, 2005: 94) — it was their adherence to a security-community

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institution that relied on cooperative-security practices, rather than to a defensive alliance, that changed their identity and, by extension, European security after the Cold War. The interests of candidate states and the logic of European security were transformed continuously and simultaneously in the process of NATO's transformation and enlargement (Ciută, 2002: 52). Also, although socialization and persuasion were important in bringing about liberal democratic reforms in CEEC (Gheciu, 2005a, 2005b), they were first made possible by the 'cooperative-security' way in which the 'templates' were offered and discussed by NATO (Johnston, 2005: 1023).

In addition, the security community spread via the diffusion not only of democratic values but also of self-restraint subjectivities. Liberal democracy and self-restraint norms and practices are intimately related, and in some instances it might not be prudent to treat them as separate normative categories. Self-restraint norms might be necessary (but not sufficient) for liberal democracy, and liberal democratic norms are not necessary for self-restraint (as evidenced by non-liberal security communities). Thus the focus of this article on specifically self-restraint norms and practices seems warranted. Related to issues of peaceful change, self-restraint becomes one of the key factors of democracy that enables the expansion of the security community.

In the next section, I will define the main concepts and further develop the theory of communities of practice, showing that practice improves our understanding of cognitive evolution. I will also advance some hypotheses about the conditions that nurture the successful spread of social structures. Next I will touch briefly on how and why self-restraint lies at the heart of the evolution of solidarity and dependable expectations of peaceful change. Then I will define cooperative security, describe NATO's transformation during the last decade, and analyze the transformation of NATO into an agent of communities of practice. I will conclude with an analysis of how a theory of communities of practice could help extend IR theory in new directions and of how it could be applied to other IR fields.

Communities of Practice and their Cognitive Evolution

Communities of Practice

Practices are knowledge-constituted, meaningful patterns of socially recognized activity embedded in communities, routines and organizations that structure experience (Swidler, 2001: 79; see also Schatzki, 2001a: 2; Knorr Cetina, 2001). They are not outside of or apart from discourses (cf. Neumann, 2002), and unlike habits, they can be learned from others and can be done well or badly, and correctly or incorrectly (Barnes cited in Neumann, 2002: 630f.). Practices, therefore, evolve and can spread together

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with knowledge and discourse. Practices are simultaneously 'objectified' meanings and discourse that congeal in physical matter, and activity, as in a state of permanent becoming; stability within change.

A community of practice 'consists of people who are informally as well as contextually bound by a shared interest in learning and applying a common practice' (Snyder, 1997).[3] More specifically, it is a configuration of a *domain of knowledge* that constitutes like-mindedness, a *community of people* that 'creates the social fabric of learning', and a *shared practice* that embodies 'the knowledge the community develops, shares, and maintains' (Wenger et al., 2002: 28–9).[4] The knowledge domain endows practitioners with a sense of *joint enterprise*, which 'brings the community together through the collective development of a shared practice' and is constantly being renegotiated by its members. People function as a community through relationships of *mutual engagement* that bind 'members together into a social entity'. Shared practices, in turn, are sustained by a *repertoire of communal resources*, such as routines, sensibilities, and discourse (Wenger, 1998a: 72–85, 209; Wenger, 1998b).

Many of the transnational communities and networks discussed by the IR literature — 'epistemic communities' (Haas, 1992; Adler, 1992), 'transnational advocacy networks' (Keck and Sikkink, 1998), 'security communities' (Deutsch et al., 1957), and 'critical communities' (Rochon, 1998) — may be seen as subsets of communities of practice. Other communities described in the social sciences and humanities may also be taken as variations on communities of practice: 'communities of discourse' (Wuthnow, 1989) and 'communities of print' (Tarrow, 1994) in sociology, 'interpretive communities' in literary studies (Fish, 1980) and legal studies (Johnstone, 1991). While all these communities can be conceptually subsumed under communities of practice, a differentiation remains valuable if — as is the case in most of the research programs spurred by these different concepts — the focus is not specifically on the practices that undergird these communities. Yet, just as this article tries to advance the security community research program by focusing on one security community *specifically as a community of practice*, research on other communities and networks could take this turn and advance a larger (maybe even comparative) research program on communities of practice.[5]

'Community of practice' can incorporate so many concepts because it encompasses not only the conscious and discursive dimensions and the actual doing of social change, but also the social space where *structure* and *agency* overlap and where knowledge, power, and community intersect. Communities of practice are intersubjective social structures that constitute the normative and epistemic ground for action, but they also are agents, made up of real people, who — working via network channels, across national or organizational lines, and in the halls of government — affect political, economic, and social events. As such, communities of practice help mediate

between structure and social action, especially when background knowledge becomes reified in practice.

Although communities of practice are everywhere, they transcend our obvious classifications of social phenomena. They may be grasped only analytically and relationally, as social spaces that are organized around practices and in which meaningful social relations take place on the basis of 'weak ties'; where practitioners 'are known only in one very limited respect and . . . may *never* be encountered face to face' (Urry, 2004: 116; Granovetter, 1973). Still, communities of practice are grounded in places and represented in the material world (Sassen, 2000). They differ from the oft-used concept of 'network' (Castells, 1996), mainly because they involve not only the functional interpersonal, inter-group, and inter-organizational transmission of information as networks do, but also processes of social communication and identity formation through which practitioners bargain about and fix meanings, learn practices, and exercise political control.

Because the boundaries of communities of practice are determined by people's knowledge and identity and by the discourse associated with a specific practice, communities of practice, unlike networks, are not necessarily 'congruent with the reified structures of institutional affiliations, divisions and boundaries' (Wenger, 1998a: 118–9). As boundaries form in and around practice, communities of practice link up with their social environments and with other communities of practice to form community-of-practice constellations (Wenger, 1998a: 129); e.g. diplomats and security analysts or brokers and financial consultants. Communities of practice are not international actors in any formal sense, but they coexist and overlap with them. In fact, government officials and their respective networks (Slaughter, 2004), as well as non-state representatives, pursue what communities of practice first bring to collective consciousness and attention. Moreover, state interests develop primarily because a community of practice has first attempted to influence the conceptual framework used to think about interests (Rochon, 1998: 23). Nor are peace, happiness, and harmony necessary properties of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998a: 77). Communities of practice are not necessarily about good or bad practices, but rather about what people happen to practice, for better or worse.

If we think about our world as composed of communities of practice we see, for example, transnational communities of diplomats sharing a diplomatic culture, common values, and interests that are intrinsic to their practice. We also see merchants from different, even rival, countries who share an interest, knowledge, discourse, and identity in learning and applying their business practices. Like international financial traders (Knorr Cetina and Bruegger, 2002), they may never meet each other; but their intersubjective knowledge and discourse distinguish them from the rest of the world.

Because people do what they do partly because of the 'communities of practice' they form and sustain, when these communities expand across functional and geographical boundaries their background knowledge structures an ever-larger share of people's identities and intentional acts. Hence communities of practice are learning communities, where 'learning' means participation in and engagement with the meanings, identities, and language of communities of practice and their members (Wenger, 1998a: 55). As a source of social structure, learning is 'what changes our ability to engage in practice, the understanding of why we engage in it, and the resources we have at our disposal to do so' (Wenger, 1998a: 95–6). For individuals, learning means not only the redefinition of meanings but also the transformation of their identities (Wenger, 1998a: 215). Moreover, individuals acquire their knowledge when they learn to participate in the knowledge of others. From a collective perspective, however, learning means the evolution of background knowledge or the substitution of one set of conceptual categories that people use to give meaning to reality with another such set. From this perspective, learning requires not only the internalization of new knowledge by individuals but also the institutionalization of dispositions and expectations in and by means of practice.

Communities of practice contribute to the learning of new identities via the negotiation and reification of meanings. Being able to negotiate and reify meanings successfully is one of the highest forms of power. According to Wenger, neither 'identification nor negotiability is inherently collective or individual. Yet their interplay in specific settings is what defines the meaning of the collective and the individual as an experience of identity' (Wenger, 1998a: 212).

Membership in communities of practice also constitutes identity 'through the forms of competence it entails' (Wenger, 1998a: 152), where competence refers to practice performance. Engagement, imagination, and alignment processes also play important roles. Engagement is what allows individuals to conform to the norms of the community and to negotiate their participation in it. Imagination allows its members to link their experience with that of others. Alignment, in turn, allows them to combine their material and ideational resources for the sake of what they jointly practice (Wenger, 1998a: 173–4). Apart from other types of identification practitioners may have with, for example, their family or nation, their engagement in a common practice makes them share an identity and feel they are a 'we'.

Because communities of practice compete with other communities for the successful institutionalization of their practices, their ability to reify knowledge, and to legitimize and thus reproduce and disseminate their practice requires mobilization of organizational and material resources. Communities of practice expand when their agents successfully compete for epistemic and

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material authority and manage to get non-members to adopt their practice, learn the community's knowledge and discourse, and thus adopt its identity. When they join communities of practice, new agents not only learn and adopt new identities, they also become able to influence and change the community. Hence practice is part of the mechanism of the cognitive evolution of social reality and not only of its reproduction (Giddens, 1984).

Cognitive Evolution

'Cognitive evolution' refers to an evolutionary[6] collective-learning process that explains how communities of practice establish themselves, how their background knowledge diffuses and becomes institutionalized, how their members' expectations and dispositions become preferentially selected, and how social structure spreads.[7] Cognitive-evolution theory helps reveal why certain ideas become practices and why and how practices evolve. By stressing the notion that, mediated by practice, the evolution of background knowledge at the macro level constitutes changes in expectations and dispositions at the micro level, this concept differs from those of individual learning, understood simply as changes in the beliefs held by individuals (Levy, 1994).

Background knowledge — understood here as building on what John Searle called the 'Background'[8] and Pierre Bourdieu called 'habitus'[9] — can be grasped only as embedded in practice. It is Janus-faced because, in addition to being intersubjective knowledge embedded in practices, it also includes the subjective representations of intersubjectivity[10] — mainly expectations, dispositions, and pre-intentional capacities — that make intentional states possible. Background knowledge is the context within which rational action takes place — not only of the individuals who contributed to the institutionalization of a practice, but also of individuals who later, by means of learning, join a community of practice. Background knowledge, however, does 'not create uniformity of a group or community, but organizes their differences around pervasive understandings of reality' (Adler and Bernstein, 2005: 296). It enables practitioners to share similar beliefs related to their practice, to entertain similar reasons, and to act with common sense. The capacity for rational thought and behavior is above all a background capacity; rationality is 'located' not only in people's heads, but also in an evolving backdrop of knowledge (Searle, 1998).

According to the theory of cognitive evolution the selection and institutionalization at the macro level of novel background knowledge explains the survival of expectations and dispositions in individuals' minds. These subjectivities then become the reasons for the actions of individuals who keep the practices and background knowledge institutionalized. Thus, because communities of practice are not only the collective knowledge that sustains practice over time,

but also agents who practice what they know, the active spread of practices by the organizations within which communities of practice become embedded promotes the evolution of background knowledge and the development and dynamic stabilization of new subjectivities.

The macro mechanism that explains the selection and institutionalization of background knowledge, which determines the practices that become prevalent and diffused, is not *environmental fitness*, as in natural evolution, but *meaning investment*. By that I mean the endowment of meanings of identity and interests with authority and naturalness of the kind that may only come with practice. Communities of practice expand because recurrent practice contributes to the institutionalization of a practice; the latter, in turn, determines the survival of background knowledge on which the practice is based and thus also affects individuals' expectations and their dispositions to act. Several factors facilitate this mechanism and thus create propensities for the expansion of communities of practice.

(1) 'Symbolic power' (Bourdieu, 1977) — which I prefer to call 'cognitive authority' (Antoniades, 2003: 29) — is the ability to endow material objects with lasting socially legitimate meanings. When attached to a practice, it renders competing practices less appealing and makes it improbable that the practice will become deconstructed or forgotten. Cognitive authority of a practice also connotes its ability to reorganize social life, break new social ground, and offer previously unavailable modes of consciousness and discourse (Wuthnow, 1989: 3).
(2) Practices that become acceptable to dominant domestic coalitions and government networks are more likely to be institutionalized and to enlarge the social structures' constitutive reach. It may not be the 'best-fitted' practices or the most efficient institutions that appeal to policy-makers, but rather those that help produce a balance or temporary consensus between competing trends within and between governments and societies and that can serve as a rallying point for forming stable coalitions.
(3) Communities of practice may cross a cognitive threshold and expand preferentially (Gladwell, 2002). The 'tipping point' is related not only to the number of practitioners, but also to socially constructed definitions of novelty and the success of the practice; these depend not only on context and interpretation but also on people's theories about what is conducive to success. Moreover, if each individual's expectations depend on what other individuals expect, and if each of these individuals' expectations depends on their collective background knowledge, then a change affecting even a small number of key individuals may become self-reinforcing and lead to changes of background knowledge and practices, and thus to structural change.

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(4) To become institutionalized and naturalized, background knowledge must become entrenched in organizational rationalities and routines. As organizational bureaucrats join in the practice, they mobilize on behalf of the community of practice the organization's resources and technologies, reputation, and international legitimacy, and, eventually, the practice's background knowledge. Moreover, they attempt to change the environment in ways that enhance the legitimacy and naturalness of practices.

(5) Cognitive evolution may benefit from the timing and rate at which practitioners adopt new meanings and mobilize resources on their behalf.

The micro mechanism that sustains cognitive evolution involves practice-driven changes in expectations and dispositions, and thus, in practical reason. Because identities are conferred on practitioners by the workings of communities of practice, practitioners' participation in evolving forms of mutual engagement, their struggle 'to define what the enterprise is about, reconciling conflicting interpretations of [it], . . . inventing new terms and redefining and abandoning old ones, creating and breaking routines' (Wenger, 1998a: 96) changes perceptual and linguistic interpretations. It produces a particular set of experiences with a narrative and a sense of familiarity and generates motivational dispositions that structure experience (Searle, 1995: 33–6). Because, however, agents reflexively interpret and judge background knowledge and may become emotionally attached to particular objects and subjects, reflexivity, judgment, and emotion contribute to the evolution of background knowledge and practices and thus to the evolution of their communities.

The fact that cognitive evolution is sustained by the expansion of communities of practice is one reason why communities of practice attempt to socialize and persuade non-members. Instrumental strategic choices, socialization, and persuasion, therefore, take place against the backdrop of expectations and dispositions, constituted within a community of practice, which structures the negotiation of meanings and identities.

Self-Restraint Communities

In a security community members share rational and moral expectations and dispositions of self-restraint, in particular the abstention from the use of force (cf. Bjola and Kornprobst, 2007). Self-restraint makes violence unnecessary, because within security communities people deal with conflict through compromise and through legal and diplomatic means. Self-restraint, however, is not to be found *exclusively* in cost–benefit analyses, socialization and persuasion-based normative diffusion, or in the moral directives of a particular ideological doctrine, such as Kantian liberalism, but also in particular in security-community

practices. The expansion of a security community can be traced to its role in transforming non-members' identities: At the heart of this transformation lie the normative effects that accompany the evolution of practice-based self-restraint understandings. This is particularly evident when the practitioners are military leaders who are involved in their states' decisions to use force.[11]

I owe my thesis partly to Norbert Elias (1982), who referred to self-restraint as the key 'genetic' material of civilizing processes. By self-restraint, Elias meant a subjective disposition that develops together with the 'civilizing process' and which he traced back to the strong state institutions developed to control the use of physical violence and to the interdependencies that result from broader social relationships. According to Elias, one needs to understand the collective consciousness related to the types and mechanisms of violence a society deems legitimate or illegitimate.

In my view, however, self-restraint develops not only within intrastate political communities and networks, but also within transnational communities of practice. Elias' psychological approach to self-restraint includes the taming of emotions and affects and the 'extension of mental space beyond the moment into the past and future' (1982: 236). Although emotions must be moderated for self-restraint to become institutionalized, and emotions play a role in the formation of 'we-feeling' — e.g. 'the gratification of seeing (successful) efforts of self-discipline and moral behaviour reflected in our own actions' (Williams, 2001: 540) — collective dependable expectations of self-restraint are achieved mainly by processes associated with cognitive evolution. Self-restraint is not (only) a political choice for the moment, nor is it just a habit — even though it might start out like that — it is a disposition. Its actual empirical expression, in other words, the practices that are associated with it, differ across time and space.

I also owe my thesis to Michael Williams (2001: 538–9), who argues that 'the relationship between recognition and identity in liberalism' rests on 'the commitment to a specific form of subjectivity — of self-identity and mutual recognition — which binds liberal individuals within a disciplinary structure of community, and which underpins and is given expression in liberal-democratic norms and institutions'. There is also a subtle but influential kind of power involved in 'the way that liberal community excludes and *incorporates* those who stand outside it' (Williams, 2001: 542). As in the case of NATO, this places the burden and responsibility to live up to the security community's normative standards, which are portrayed as 'universal', on those outside the community (Williams, 2001: 543).[12]

Williams' argument is a powerful explanation of the development of liberal security communities. The spread of social structure occurs through an identity/power mechanism that depends not only on liberal recognition, but also on disciplined subjectivity. It is difficult, however, to disentangle where

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the effects of liberal consciousness end and those of liberal practices start: Processes of recognition themselves are, as Williams notes, not only determined by abstract principles, but are 'overtly political practices, practices entailing and enabling the exercise of considerable power' (Williams, 2001: 526). Emphasizing the practical basis of security communities leaves open the possibility of the development of (incipient) non-liberal security communities, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Acharya, 2001). As communities of practice, which are constituted around liberal practices, spread to non-liberal communities, the latter may be able to develop self-restraint subjectivities, such as cooperative security, that will help them evolve into *non-liberal* security communities. Relying overly on Kantian principles as an explanation of the evolution of a liberal social structure, and especially the argument that although all states are recognized, not all are accorded respect (Williams, 2001: 543) is problematic: The community that non-members first join, and where they learn to acquire self-restraint, is a community of practice, which can incorporate and provide respect to all those willing to engage in particular practices. Liberal recognition thus requires liberal practices first.

I agree, however, with Williams' argument (2001: 339) that 'liberal constitutionalism is in this regard underlain by an "epistemic community", in a sense deeper than that usually conveyed by the term, and this epistemic commitment is linked to a structure of disciplined subjectivity in the constitution of liberal institutions'. This 'deeper epistemic community' is in fact a community of practice. The epistemic commitment, in turn, is linked to the community of practice's background knowledge, which need not necessarily be liberal. Although linked to a structure of 'disciplined subjectivity', the origins and evolution of this structure on which the security community is based depend not only on the self-recognition that comes with the adoption of Kantian values, but also and primarily on the engagement of non-members of the security community by a community of practice, whose processes change identities and may lead to Kantian 'recognition'.

Individual rational and moral choice is compatible with my argument; I emphasize, however, that rational and moral reasoning is situated, embedded, embodied, and constituted in communities of practice. Rational and moral self-restraint is thus related to community sites, where rational moral agents 'can see in others something of themselves' (Erskine, 2000: 586).

NATO's Cooperative Security Transformation

Cooperative Security

Cooperative security refers to a 'model of interstate relations in which disputes are expected to occur, but they are expected to do so within the limits of agreed upon norms and established procedures' (Nolan, 1994: 5). It is,

thus, the 'natural' security practice of security communities. More specifically, cooperative security is a collection of security practices, adopted mainly by multilateral institutions of security communities, on the premise that threats to the community's security are best handled by confidence-building and dialogue, cooperative quality-of-life measures, and the promotion of regional identities, and, in particular, by the inclusion of neighboring states into the community as members or partners. By offering security and economic partnerships, the community's multilateral institutions entice and teach partners to adopt the community's core standards and practices, thereby promoting strategic stability and peaceful change.

Partnerships (Attinà, 2001) are meant to persuade partners that learning the practices of a community of the like-minded and coming to share an identity with its members will make them part of that community and enable them to enjoy the security, economic, and cultural benefits it offers. A primary objective of partnerships, such as the EU's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)[13] and New Neighborhood Policy (ENP),[14] is (cognitive) region-building, like NATO's recent attempts to construct 'regions' in the Baltics. According to Wendy Larner and William Walters (2002: 415, 418), regions are liberal governance mechanisms that work 'at a distance . . . by implicating their [regional] members in projects (perhaps "missions") of reform, rationalization, and national improvement', and by constructing 'states and their publics as choice makers'. Power is also evident in the magnetic attraction that 'core' states (Deutsch et al., 1957) exert on other members of a community and in the pull that a community exerts on its neighbors.

The practice of cooperative security, with its recognition of the indivisibility, comprehensiveness, and inclusiveness of security, was born of the Helsinki process. In addition to the Final Act (1975), the CSCE embodied the norms and rules of cooperative security in the Stockholm (1986–90) and Vienna Document regimes on Confidence and Security-Building Measures (1990–99), the Paris Charter for a New Europe (1990), the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security (1994), and the Charter for European Security (1999) (Leatherman, 2003).

The practice of cooperative security spread through the different European institutions and increasingly became part of their own activities. The Council of Europe, for example, set itself the goal of turning all of Europe into a 'vast area of democratic security' (Tarschys, 1995: 1). In a similar way, the EU developed a variety of initiatives, including the EMP and ENP, which build on the practice of cooperative security. This strategy of creating a 'ring of friends' (Commission of the European Communities, 2003: 4) around the enlarged EU relies on CSCE cooperative-security practices, especially partnerships and region-building.

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NATO adapted cooperative security to suit its military and political characteristics and new emerging roles, such as its eastward enlargement. In the NATO context, cooperative security acquired the form of: (1) *political dialogue*, 'which aims at confidence-building through information sharing/exchange exercises'; (2) *practical cooperation*, which targets 'the military and defense-related fields, as well as security related to political and economic issues' and promotes 'transparency in national defense planning and military budgeting as well as democratic control of the armed forces'; and (3) *closer ties with other international organizations and regional institutions*, such as the EU, UN, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), with the aim of developing a network of interlocking cooperative-security institutions (Johansson, n.d.: 14–15).

NATO's Partial Transformation in the 1990s

Without shedding its defense alliance identity, NATO steadily moved into cooperative security in the 1990s. It 'is almost as if NATO, after having defeated attempts in 1990–91 to create an all-European collective security organization under CSCE auspices, is gradually transforming itself into an entity comparable to such a body — a mutual supervisory agency for the Euro-Atlantic region' (Yost, 1998: 161). In this process, NATO could build on its own cooperative-security, community-building initiatives and practices from the Cold War (cf. Gheciu, 2005b: ch. 2). The tradition that goes back to its 1949 Charter, and especially to the détente-promoting 1967 Harmel report (NATO, 1967), was conducive to the cooperative practices NATO later adopted. For example, the 1991 North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was 'designed as an explicit outgrowth of NATO practices' (Wallander, 2000: 720). Post-1991 NATO practices, as will be seen, however, represent a quantum leap from NATO's Cold War practices. Moreover, although NATO members had a shared 'we-feeling' before its transformation and were long considered to constitute a security community, NATO became an institution that is fully consistent with security-community *practices* only when those practices became part of the institution's raison d'être.

The first step in NATO's transformation, driven by the end of the Cold War, consisted in the cautious adoption of new intellectual premises about European security, an acknowledgement that the CSCE's cooperative-security practices reflected these premises, and an attempt to place NATO, rather than the CSCE, at the forefront of new European security efforts. The next stage came with the realization that if European security now meant erasing hostile borders between West and East, the enlargement of NATO was a 'virtual necessity' (Moore, 2002: 7), and that as long as Russia did not construe enlargement as anti-Russian, but as a pan-European security measure, NATO could remain at the

center of European security. NATO enlargement would also ensure lasting American influence in post-Cold War Europe, reassure Europeans who insisted on continued inclusiveness in the architecture of European security, and be welcomed by the CEEC, which were eager to join NATO rather than the CSCE. In fact, the CEEC elites' strong preference for NATO enlargement and their lobbying effort in Western Europe and the United States helped move Western decision-makers in the enlargement direction (Schimmelfennig, 2003). Because, however, 'neither ministers nor ambassadors were able to reach agreement on the controversial issues', NATO's bureaucrats (de Wijk, 1997: 45) and experts also played a key role in the transformation; experts joined the cooperative-security community of practice in the early 1990s and facilitated its diffusion by providing it with intellectual legitimacy.

The decisive impetus for change was given at the London summit (July 1990), which explicitly set the goal of NATO's transformation (NATO, 1990), and at the Rome summit (November 1991), which adopted a strategic concept that based NATO security policy on dialogue, cooperation, and the maintenance of a collective defense capability (NATO, 1991: §4). More significantly, the Rome Declaration created the NACC, which was the first attempt at institutionalizing the partnership between the East and the West in security-related areas such as defense planning or civilian–military relations (NATO, 1991: §12). Comprising the foreign ministers and representatives from NATO countries (16 at the time), CEEC, and all the Soviet successor states, including the Baltics (a total of 38 countries), the NACC became NATO's attempt to take over the community-building initiative from the OSCE, while adopting OSCE-like cooperative-security practices.

The Partnership for Peace (PfP), which according to British expert Nick Williams represents 'the most extensive and intensive program of military co-operation yet conceived in Europe' (quoted in Yost, 1998: 98), was officially launched at the Brussels summit in January 1994 with the 'conviction that stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area can be achieved only through co-operation and common action' (NATO, 1994: §2). At first, the PfP was not easily accepted by NATO military personnel. 'NATO militaries, the US military, in particular, had initial doubts about moving their activities away from planning and exercising for the traditional mission of collective defense and maintaining the firewall between members and non-members. Through the experience, however, NATO members' militaries became enthusiastic supporters of Partnership for Peace' (Wallander, 2000: 720). On the basis of interviews, Wallander notes that 'officials agree that the strength of Partnership for Peace is its practical, concrete program for security cooperation, which focuses on military missions, planning, and exercises: "The whole point of PfP was to teach how NATO does these things"' (Col. Steve Randolph, quoted in Wallander, 2000: 728). Through PfP, in sum, partners 'are shaped to adopt NATO practices' (Wallander, 2000: 730).

The PfP includes a vast program of practical activities, such as facilitating transparency in national defense planning and budgeting processes, ensuring democratic control of defense forces, maintaining the capability and readiness to contribute to operations under the authority of the UN and/or the responsibility of the CSCE, developing cooperative military relations with NATO, for the purpose of joint planning, training, and exercises, and developing forces that are better able to operate with those of the Alliance (NATO, 1994: §3). With these purposes in mind, each partner country established a liaison office at NATO headquarters, and a Partnership Coordination Cell to coordinate peacekeeping operations was created at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). Isabelle François of NATO's Defense Planning and Operations Division has underlined the usefulness of practical cooperation: 'Through education, training and exercises, NATO exported its way of doing business to countries interested in developing closer ties to the alliance — even to those that did not necessarily hope for eventual membership' (François, 2000: 1).

Building on that success, NATO subsequently decided to promote other partnership initiatives. In 1994, the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) was launched with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia (Algeria joined in 2000). The Dialogue involves regular political discussions at least twice a year and more specific activities, for example in the sciences. As a bargaining chip to facilitate the double enlargement, the Alliance also negotiated an institutionalized partnership with Moscow (cf. Asmus, 2002: 175–211). The Founding Act, signed in May 1997 between Russia and NATO, instituted the NATO–Russia Permanent Joint Council, aimed at 'increasing levels of trust, unity of purpose and habits of consultation and cooperation' (NATO, 1997a: 5). In addition, Russia established a mission to NATO, headed by a representative with ambassadorial rank. At the Rome summit in May 2002, the NATO–Russia Council was created to replace the Permanent Joint Council (NATO, 2002b) and since then meetings have been conducted with Russia as an equal partner of NATO allies. With Ukraine, NATO established a NATO–Ukraine Commission, which was beefed up in 2002 with the adoption of the NATO–Ukraine Action Plan. Following the 'Orange Revolution', NATO in 2005 launched an 'Intensified Dialogue' with Ukraine on membership aspirations and key reforms. Over the years, senior Ukrainian officers have been participating regularly in courses at the NATO Defense College in Rome and the NATO School in Germany.

At the Sintra meeting in May 1997, the Alliance replaced the NACC with the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), a consultative body of 46 members and partners that increases the role the latter play in joint decision-making and planning, makes the PfP more active, and expands the scope of consultations to include sensitive issues such as arms control

(NATO, 1997b: §§6, 7, and 11). The EAPC has also allowed 'interested partners to come together and discuss subregional security problems in South Caucasus, the Baltic Sea, Central and Eastern Europe, Southeastern Europe and Central Asia' (Johansson, n.d.: 22). In Sintra it was also decided to enhance the PfP through a series of practical initiatives, such as the Planning and Review Process and the Operational Capabilities Concept. Reflecting on the PfP and EAPC, then-Secretary General Javier Solana declared that 'over the last few years, we have been putting in place various elements of a comprehensive approach to cooperative security in Europe and the Euro-Atlantic region' (1997: 3–4).

At the 1999 Washington summit, NATO admitted three new members (the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland), launched a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to help partners become full members — similar to the PfP's role five years earlier (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 256) — and adopted a new Strategic Concept that gave formal approval to NATO's transformation as a 'genuine partnership with and among all democratic Euro-Atlantic countries' (NATO, 1999: §33). Thus, in an astounding move, the Alliance began considering partnership, along with crisis management, to be one of its 'fundamental security tasks' (NATO, 1999: §3). NATO's new Strategic Concept showed that the balance between the ever-present *inside* (building, maintenance and spreading of the Western community and of specific domestic institutions) and *outside* (geostrategic) logic of security in NATO strategic thinking and practices, had tilted squarely to the inside logic in the 1990s (Gheciu, 2005b). This 'inside' logic with an explicit 'outward' orientation was stressed by Nicholas Burns, a former US Ambassador to NATO: 'The whole orientation of NATO has moved toward partnerships; our partners are becoming as valuable as our members' (personal communication, 20 September 2004).

NATO's transformation is also evident in its involvement in region-building. In 1999, NATO launched the South-East Europe Initiative to promote long-term regional security and stability in the region and created a South-East European Brigade (SEEBRIG), composed of Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Romania, and Turkey (Apparthurai, 2001: 3). NATO has also become involved in the 'invention' of a region in the Caucasus; the EAPC Ad Hoc Working Group on Prospects for Regional Cooperation in the Caucasus aims at promoting transparency and confidence-building. The Baltics is another region whose 'invention' was promoted by a 1996 Rand report on Baltic security (Asmus and Nurick, 1996).

Immediately after 9/11, and for the first time in its history, NATO invoked Article 5 on common defense and began replacing the previous 'geographical' understanding of security with a 'functional' one (Robertson, 2003: 2) — for example, by moving some operations to Central Asia. In

October 2001, also in reaction to 9/11, NATO launched Operation Active Endeavor, which sent NATO ships to patrol the Eastern Mediterranean to detect and deter terrorist activity. At its 2002 Prague summit, NATO issued invitations to seven new members, agreed on a new concept for defense against terrorism, and decided to create a NATO Response Force. But it also expressed a renewed enthusiasm for partnerships. A new practical mechanism, Individual Partnership Action Plans (IPAP), was introduced to bring together the various cooperative practices through which each partner interacts with NATO (cf. Weaver, 2004: 2). In addition, a Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism was established (NATO, 2002c: §9). The Plan welcomed the participation of MD countries in workshops, seminars, and other activities on a case-by-case basis (NATO, 2002c: §15). The Prague summit also decided to 'upgrade substantially the political and practical dimensions of the Mediterranean Dialogue' (NATO, 2002a: §10).

The Istanbul summit in June 2004 was especially important for NATO partnerships with the Mediterranean and the so-called 'Broader Middle East'. The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) was extended to interested countries of the broader Middle East region, especially the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.[15] The initiative focuses on practical cooperation in defense and security (NATO, 2004: §37). In Istanbul, NATO also decided to 'elevate the MD to a genuine partnership' (NATO, 2004: 4). This is to be accomplished through 'greater emphasis on practical cooperation' following the model of PfP tools (NATO, 2004: §8). In addition to allowing participation, on a case-by-case basis, in appropriate PfP exercises, the Alliance also suggested the establishment of a liaison between MD countries and NATO. The ICI and an enhanced MD supplement NATO's activities in Afghanistan and Iraq and have become part of NATO's post-9/11 strategy to use partnership and region-building practices to stabilize and, if possible, help democratize the Broader Middle East. Yet, when NATO confronted the critical implications of 9/11, practices had already changed the Alliance. Not only did NATO redirect its military action against global terrorism, it also 'redeployed' cooperative-security practices to transform the Middle East politically.

NATO as Community of Practice Institution

Since, as Ciută (2002: 42) argues, 'the distinctive character of a security community refers to a particular set of practices, to a particular manner of *understanding security* and the environment in which these practices are performed', we cannot understand the expansion of a security community without the practices that allow self-restraint to diffuse more widely. NATO's enlargement policy may have originally been aimed at strengthening the

Alliance's membership with former adversaries, promoting democracy and human rights in CEEC, and ensuring its own post-Cold War institutional survival. But it was NATO's partial adoption of cooperative-security knowledge and practices, and a sense of community and joint enterprise — sustained by a repertoire of ideational and material communal resources — which enabled NATO to transform itself and its mission. This change, in turn, made it possible to broaden the pool of community members for whom self-restraint is subjectively and intersubjectively constitutive of peaceful change.

It would be difficult to claim that material factors and/or a cost–benefit analysis alone determined NATO to replace balance-of-power practices with security-community practices. First, such a move would go against the grain of the international system's anarchical nature, which did not disappear with the end of the Cold War. Second, without a change in security background understandings, the adoption of cooperative-security practices would have made no sense for NATO, even after the end of the Cold War. What did make sense then in the process of rethinking North Atlantic (and, in fact, global) security, was socializing and persuading partner states to adopt democracy and human rights (Gheciu, 2005b). Socialization and persuasion of the CEEC, and ultimately rational calculation by them, were made possible, however, by the cooperative-security practices NATO adopted, the knowledge on which they were based, and the environment in which the practices were performed.

When bipolarity effectively ended, CEEC turned to the CSCE — which was held in high esteem because of its role in ending the Cold War — and the EU. It did not take long for the CEEC to realize, however, that the CSCE was weak (mainly vs Russia) and that the EU was slow (Asmus, 2002: 11; Jacoby, 2004: 118ff.). At the time, specific decisions about how to transform NATO had not yet been taken. NATO leaders and practitioners knew, however, that NATO needed to change to survive, that there were strong CEEC and domestic US interests in favor of enlargement, and that CSCE cooperative-security practices, which had helped bring down the Soviet empire, were available. Moreover, cooperative security was not entirely new to NATO's bureaucracy. And because liberal values had been part of NATO's identity since its inception (Williams and Neumann, 2000), cooperative security's 'pedagogic' approach of inducting partners into a community of shared values made sense. NATO, therefore, absorbed CSCE cooperative-security ideas, but, because of its military nature and experience, also transformed them. It thus created a set of hybrid practices (Howorth, 2004: 212; Croft, 2000) that enabled NATO, rather than the CSCE, to become an almost pan-European collective security arrangement.

NATO leaders, however, had limited experience with cooperative security as an alternative to balance-of-power politics between alliances; détente and

the Helsinki process can be seen as the beginning of a long process of acquiring experience. After the end of the Cold War, the 'program' necessary for understanding security in a Euro-Atlantic environment that now lacked a balance of power had yet to be 'installed'. Moreover, unlike its European allies, the US was never keen on cooperative-security practices. Post-Cold War NATO had the option of attempting enlargement toward the East using classic diplomatic means and stopping there.

Enlargement to the East, however, also provided NATO with the opportunity and means to become a leading institutional agent of the cooperative-security community of practice — and this was the road taken in the end. Via PfP and other partnerships it began not only to change itself, but also to diffuse expectations and dispositions of self-restraint to partners. These subjectivities emerged from joint military forums where thousands of partner officers learned about civil–military relations, the separation of powers, accountability of the armed forces, and the practice of inter-institutional and international cooperation and passed this on upon their return (cf. Gheciu, 2005b: 149; but see Jacoby, 2004: 135). Diffusing *general* dispositions of self-restraint through the spread of *specific* institutions involves politics and contestation: NATO tried to build a consensus around its model of civilian control through imparting knowledge and through empowering certain domestic actors (Epstein, 2005: 85ff.). According to Jonathan Eyal (1997: 702), 'untold numbers of young officers from the countries of Central Europe have been trained at Western military facilities, literally thousands of officers obtained training in either the English or (more rarely) the French language. A network of bilateral visits was also developed', making partners feel like insiders. NATO also conducted formal and informal consultations targeting CEEC, launched public opinion campaigns to guarantee their support for NATO membership, and 'engaged in socializing younger Czechs and Romanians, in civilian as well as military circles' (Gheciu, 2005a: 990, 988, 994). Subjectivities also emerged from participation in peace-keeping missions (like IFOR and KFOR, cf. Gheciu, 2005b: 138, 149) directed against individuals and groups that did not show self-restraint. Through such practical security cooperation, according to Deputy Secretary General Balazino (1998: 8), NATO built 'a common security culture in the Euro-Atlantic region'.[16]

While NATO enlarged its membership for both instrumental and normative reasons, every new crisis thrust its practitioners deeper into cooperative-security practices, until, in 1999, partnerships became a main component of its new Strategic Concept. From then on, NATO aligned its practices with its role as the institutional arm of a security community. Take, for example, NATO's PfP: its main goal has been to encourage partners not only to acquire the necessary know-how for bringing their forces up to NATO levels,

but also, through hands-on experience, to learn how democracies control the use of violence. PfP, therefore, 'is an attempt to separate and reconcile the two different visions and practices of an *alliance against enemies*, and a *partnership for peace*' (Ciută, 2002: 47). Because the latter ended up spreading the security community eastward, a change in background knowledge, rather than merely in 'rhetorical action' (Schimmelfennig, 2003), best explains NATO enlargement to the East.[17]

From the perspective of cognitive evolution, the interesting question is not whether, for example, Polish or Czech officials were deeply persuaded to adopt Western values (Gheciu, 2005a), but how the background knowledge of European security and NATO's practices evolved, thus making PfP practices possible and learnable. NATO, for example, may now conceive of Ukraine as part of the West. The instrumental motivations, beliefs, and passions that NATO and Ukraine bring to diplomatic encounters probably could not be more different. But the common participation in joint activities and their interaction via partnerships, seminars, and joint military exercises align NATO's community of military and political practitioners with Ukrainian counterparts around goals they develop jointly.[18]

One of the reasons why we should not dismiss the cognitive evolutionary importance of PfP is that partnerships, designed to negotiate meanings and discourse, require the exercise of power. How power, identification, and practice are related becomes clear when we compare NATO's attempt to transform CEEC and Middle East countries. NATO (and the EU), while largely successful in engaging CEEC in their cooperative-security practices, are failing in the Middle East because a majority of Muslims have no or little ground for identification and negotiating meanings with Westerners; thus no learning can take place. NATO's community-building power is weak when it comes to Arab countries, so the Western cooperative-security community of practice cannot expand to the South as easily as it did to the East.

NATO, of course, is not the only institution to use cooperative-security practices in Europe and the Muslim world; the EU, the OSCE, and other institutions also do. NATO practices, therefore, are part of a broader constellation (Wenger, 1998b) of regional military, economic, political, and cultural cooperative-security practices. Within constellations, however, practices may be hierarchically related to one another. NATO occupies a pre-eminent place because of the relative homogeneity of the political and military personnel who participate in NATO partnerships and because their practice is directly related to the use of force, which means that self-restraint subjectivities can be institutionalized more easily. When trying to engage Arab countries, however, NATO's privileged position in the cooperative-security community of practice is a liability. Because NATO is not only a 'partnership for peace', but also a Western military alliance, it elicits Arab countries'

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suspicion. Thus, one of the above-mentioned key macro conditions facilitating the expansion of communities of practice is severely challenged in NATO interactions with Arab states: legitimate cognitive authority (see discussion below).

The PfP's most important cognitive-evolutionary contribution was enabling the diffusion of self-restraint expectations and dispositions to CEEC. While liberal theory predicts that the mere diffusion of democratic values to CEEC would ensure the expansion of the security community eastward, I argue that the CEEC's adoption of self-restraint expectations and dispositions through NATO's cooperative-security practices — alongside other international and domestic factors — were key for the expansion of the community and important for making democracy sustainable in CEEC.[19] Specifically the generation of 'we-feeling' among military elites, whose 'business' is using violence against other states, was a major factor in the diffusion of self-restraint, the inoculation of democracy against unlawful use of military force, and thus the expansion of the security community eastward. It is no coincidence, for instance, that many of Gheciu's (2005a: 985–1003) examples about the movement of the Czech Republic and Romania toward liberal democracy were related to creating transparency and accountability in their defense ministries, police, and gendarmerie. Not only did NATO help CEEC democratize in that sense, it also helped to 'denationalize' defense strategies: In the case of Poland it helped delegitimize arguments about defense 'self-sufficiency' and avert 'destructive [i.e. un-restrained] military cultures' (Epstein, 2005: 64f.).[20] Moreover, CEEC military elites acquired first-hand experience with restoring democracy and the rule of law, strengthening civil society, and defending human rights via participation in NATO's Implementation and Stabilization Forces (IFOR) in Bosnia and in its Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR) (cf. Gheciu, 2005b: 138, 149). In the Middle East, however, because of the continued use of the region's colonial past in contemporary domestic political discourse and practice, which highlights the gap between 'the West' and 'the Muslim world' and makes it politically consequential, the multilateral partnerships cannot do much to institutionalize self-restraint and catalyze domestic reforms.

Documenting the flow of subjective understandings within communities of practice is not an easy task. However, cognitive evolution has an advantage over individualist methodological approaches based on persuasion and socialization. Rather than looking inside people's minds, cognitive evolution theory looks at practices and deduces subjectivities. Take for example the reasoning behind the hypothesis that, as long as people practice cooperative security, self-restraint subjectivity is likely to spread: When it comes to sharing a practice in a community-based context over time, members must share an interest in learning the practice, the configuration of background knowledge

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that constitutes their practice, and the activities that produce like-mindedness. In such circumstances, a practice cannot be effectively sustained through rhetorical action alone (Schimmelfennig, 2003). An equally or more important reason, however, is that when it comes to sharing a *cooperative*-security practice, the configuration of knowledge that comes to be shared is linked to self-restraint, the type of practical and moral reasoning that constitutes a security community. Finally, cognitive evolutionary theory allows us to systematically study constitution and causation in a dynamic and non-linear fashion. While NATO initially adopted the practice of 'security partnerships' because of a conceptual evolution of European security away from balance of power, actually *practicing* these partnerships in turn helped institutionalize a new European security order based in part on cooperative security. The apparent circularity of this argument disappears because, once we conceptualize communities of practice as dynamic and evolutionary, changes in background knowledge at time t may help constitute those practices that help institutionalize background knowledge at time t_1, etc. Cognitive evolution, therefore, while not irreversible, may become reinforcing.

In the theoretical section, I offered five hypotheses about turning community of practice expansion potential into reality. I return to them now:

Cognitive authority facilitated the expansion of the community of practice to CEEC and thus enabled the security community to spread. Even though in some CEEC, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Romania, important domestic actors did not readily sign on to cooperative-security practices, but had to be persuaded by NATO that post-Cold War European security was no longer about power balancing,[21] a critical mass of the elite accepted the legitimacy of NATO as the key institution of the Western community (even if they initially employed different notions of democracy), and as an 'authoritative, trustworthy source of expertise in the area of security' (Gheciu, 2005b: 13).[22] In contrast, Arab states that have been invited to partner with NATO and other Western institutions are suspicious of cooperative-security practices and, fearing neo-colonialism, tend to question their legitimacy (Alani, 2005). NATO countries are trying to manage this problem by strengthening the community's cognitive authority, mainly by adapting the practices to local conditions (Acharya, 2004), following the notion advanced by NATO and other Western institutions that cooperative-security processes should be based on 'joint ownership', where priorities are defined by common consent (cf. Gheciu, 2005b: 85).

Cognitive authority was also invested in cooperative practices because they offered previously unavailable modes of consciousness and discourse. Cooperative security began to break new ground in the 1980s in Europe and South-East Asia. By the time of the signing of the Helsinki Process-related Paris Charter for a New Europe, which consecrated democracy, the rule of

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law, and human rights as the 'constitutional' base of a new Europe, coopera-
tive security was considered to have facilitated the peaceful end of the Cold
War (Thomas, 2001). Finally, the effects of the new practices were strong
because they were applied to readily recognizable tasks. Thus, because they
resonated with existing practices, they appeared commonsensical.
Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs), for example, were originally por-
trayed as a variant of arms control. By suggesting both innovation *and* famil-
iarity, cooperative-security practices more easily found adept performers.

Balance or Temporary Consensus: NATO's adoption of cooperative security
in the early 1990s, especially the institutionalization of the PfP, enabled the
social construction of a common ground among NATO countries and
between the latter and non-members. Those who saw the glass as half full,
including CEEC partners, believed that the PfP was just a temporary meas-
ure before most CEEC would be admitted to NATO. Russia, in turn, was
temporarily relieved by what it perceived as a half measure (Asmus, 2002).
Those who saw the glass as half empty were not necessarily bothered by PfP,
which looked like a pointless talk-shop. As hypothesized, then, PfP helped
produce a balance or temporary consensus between competing trends within
governments and societies and between them. It became a rallying point
until the question came up again regarding which CEEC would be the first
to join NATO (Asmus, 2002).

The Tipping Point for cooperative-security practices came around NATO's
1991 Rome Summit. Throughout the 1990s, partnerships, regional coopera-
tive-security arrangements, and attempts to induce the creation of regional
identities enjoyed legitimacy and spread from Europe to other parts of the
world, including South-East Asia and the Middle East. In 1995, for example,
with an eye to exporting stability to the Middle East, the EU established the
EMP, and later the ENP, while the OSCE, the WEU, and the Concert of
Europe were all involved in 'teaching' CEEC's societies to practice democracy,
the rule of law, and human rights. In Asia, ASEAN developed its own version
of cooperative security and facilitated the creation of an Asian Regional Forum
(Acharya, 2004). In the Middle East, Arabs and Israelis experimented with
multilateral cooperative measures (Peters, 1996) during the first half of the
1990s. Because cooperative security became encoded in the language of a wide-
spread functional and geographic collectivity and was therefore 'communic-
able', it facilitated the expansion of background knowledge and the spread of
self-restraint norms inside the Middle East. Middle Eastern partners (for ex-
ample, in the ICI), however, although they may share some language with
NATO, lack the active networking with the NATO bureaucracy, its representa-
tives, and military personnel, which can lead to learning and identity changes.

Organizational Rationalities and Routines: By adding new cooperative-
security institutions like the PfP to its repertoire, NATO's bureaucracy

became familiar with cooperative-security rationales and 'technologies' (e.g. region-building), thus effectively joining the cooperative-security community of practice. American academics like Ashton Carter and John Steinbruner (1992) — who later worked for the Defense Department — were instrumental in conceiving and diffusing the concept of cooperative security (Asmus, 2002: 28). Think tank staffers, such as the 'RAND boys', especially Ronald Asmus and Stephen Larrabee, provided the notion of eastward expansion with conceptual credibility (Yost, 1998: 236). In a widely noted article, Asmus, Richard Kugler, and Larrabee (1993: 31) argued on behalf of a strategy of 'double enlargement' (Asmus, 2002: 277), which involved not only the geographical extension of the Alliance eastward, but also the addition of functions beyond common defense. Later this conception was turned into policy. In addition to conceptual knowledge on cooperative security, the way NATO's bureaucracy gave practical meaning to concepts became part of the background knowledge. Persuasion and socialization which took place, for example, at PfP training centers, at the SEE-BRIG, and at EAPC meetings, thus occurred against the background of meanings and practices developed by NATO's bureaucracy. NATO's enlargement mission, again, was partly led by the bureaucracy (de Wijk, 1997: 45). Through seminars and partnership activities, it helped partners become acquainted with the Alliance's (cumbersome) bureaucratic rules and practices and made them part of the partner's military network. NATO expected that representatives from partner countries would return to their countries and help spread the know-how and practices further (but see Jacoby, 2004: 135).

Timing: The timing of NATO enlargement helped the cooperative-security community of practice expand eastward. In the early 1990s, NATO had won the Cold War, the US was the sole superpower, Russia was weak, and US allies had just successfully coordinated political and military action against Saddam Hussein. There was psychological euphoria at the end of the Cold War. European countries were beginning to deepen and broaden their integration. At this unique juncture, material power, historical developments, the evolution of institutions and practices, norms, and epistemic understandings were positively aligned, permitting the enlargement of the community of practice and the spread of social structure. By contrast, the timing of NATO's post-9/11 thrust toward the Middle East was not conducive to the spread of cooperative security: The US and Europe have been at loggerheads because of the 2003 Iraq war, Russia has veered away from democratization, and the Middle East remains unsettled by the Iraq war, by renewed violence between Palestinians and Israelis, terrorist suicide bombings, nuclear proliferation, and, more generally, by a widening cultural gulf between Western and Muslim expectations.

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Conclusion

The evolution of cooperative-security practices and, in particular, their adoption by NATO at the end of the Cold War constituted one of the reasons why self-restraint subjectivities were institutionalized in CEEC (not despite, but in fact because of early instrumental political action related to enlargement). Building on premises consistent with social-construction processes, a theory of communities of practice and cognitive evolution broadens constructivist IR theory. It also deepens constructivist IR theory by suggesting an explanation of selective institutionalization, based on the reciprocal evolution of background knowledge and individual subjectivities, and of normative evolution, based on the institutionalization of self-restraint.

Applied to cooperative security, security communities and the institutionalization of self-restraint, my explanation thus aspires to synthesize analytical and normative approaches, suggesting the possibility of new theories of international change, for example, about the replacement of security dilemmas and deterrence-based security practices with security community practices. From the perspective of such a preliminary synthesis, security communities are not primarily peaceful alliances or communities of liberal values, but mainly communities of cooperative-security practices that help diffuse peaceful change via self-restraint subjectivities. From an analytical perspective, shared norms and values are indispensable for creating and maintaining a collective identity, but the practices are indispensable for reproducing these values and promoting their expansion. From a normative perspective, both liberal democracy and self-restraint norms and practices enable the existence and expansion of security communities. As a social structure, which communities of practice and their institutional agents, such as NATO, help keep both stable and in dynamic expansion, security communities become an alternative mechanism to balance-of-power and deterrence practices.

The analysis of NATO's transformation during the last decade actually provided us with a glimpse at the transition from balance of power and deterrence to cooperative-security mechanisms in Europe. NATO's dilemma, as indicated here, was and remains how to be both a defense alliance and a partnership for peace. While NATO members constituted a security community before the end of the Cold War, it was only with the adoption of cooperative-security practices that NATO became a 'vanguard' institution and agent of security-community expansion. In turn, joining NATO's cooperative partnerships and other region-making practices gave CEEC hands-on experience with security community practices, which in turn allowed them to institutionalize self-restraint subjectivities and to adopt practical, instrumental, and moral reasons congruent with the background knowledge of the security community.

One might ask the question whether these processes and NATO's transition towards cooperative-security mechanisms is expected to be permanent or transient.[23] While no practice is ever permanent, NATO's adoption of cooperative-security practices seems to rest on relatively solid grounds. Although NATO's priorities have now shifted, both functionally toward combating terrorism and territorially beyond Europe, partnerships and other cooperative-security practices became a regular feature of NATO's 'arsenal'.

The community of practice framework may help extend IR theory in new directions and can be applied to other IR fields. First, it is an excellent way to cope with the agent–structure dilemma, because cognitive evolution may allow us to study social processes as they move from structure to agency, and again to structure, etc., each step amounting to a link in social-construction and institutionalization processes. Second, because communities of practice are simultaneously agents — who act on the basis of learning and identity change — and structure — background knowledge on which learning and identity-generating practices are based — a communities of practice framework provides a method for empirical study of the simultaneous evolution of agency and structure, without the need to bracket one or the other (Wendt, 1987).

My theory may also help explain how and when dissemination of identity changes becomes cultural change, in Wendt's (1999) sense. Wendt's otherwise excellent study did not adequately explain the gap between identity change and cultural change and how changes in culture take place when culture conditions its own reproduction rather than its transformation. A cognitive-evolutionary approach based on the concept of communities of practice provides a systematic yet also historical way to trace the diffusion of practices in time and place, making it possible to determine, with some degree of accuracy, when practice-driven identity changes in regional or sub-systemic terms become global or systemic (Buzan, 2004; Buzan and Waever, 2004). In addition, focusing on communities of practice helps transcend social-psychological understandings of learning, adopting instead a two-tier approach in which the evolution of meanings at the macro level contributes to and is carried by changes in human expectations and dispositions (for a critique of different theories of learning relevant in IR see Adler, 2005: 19ff.).

My approach can also be read as an effort to synthesize rationalist and constructivist approaches by showing not only how the social construction of rationality takes place by means of practice, but also how practice may help bridge the agential and structural elements of the constructed nature of rationality. NATO's partnerships invest material security with meaning by strategically adopting structures of meaningful action, but depend for their success on NATO's agency, and on the intentional actions of NATO officials. NATO, in fact, has used and continues to use cooperative-security practices to accomplish instrumental ends. According to my approach, therefore,

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strategic social construction (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998) is integral to cognitive evolution and communities of practice. Building on constructivism, my approach offers a pragmatist reading of rationality that takes strategic construction into account. Finally, an approach based on communities of practice may enrich studies of socialization and persuasion, for the processes through which practices help actors learn partly explains how and why socialization and persuasion processes occur in the first place.

As for this study's empirical implications, as indicated in the introduction, I have focused on only one moment of cognitive evolution and the institutionalization of cooperative-security practices. A more elaborate and longer study could provide insights into the entire sequence, from the Helsinki process in the 1970s, to the still feeble attempts to extend the cooperative-security community of practice to the Middle East. Such research would require studying how the combined effect of institutional evolution, the attributes of interstate cooperation, the variation in normative structures, and institutions' capacity to become the vanguard of the expansion of social structure affects 'agent–structure constitution across time and space' (Johnston, 2005: 1029). Cognitive evolution supports this type of longitudinal analysis, because it dynamically studies how changes in structures at time t_0 constitute the reasons for states' actions at t_1, which in turn help reproduce and further spread social structure.

Moreover, the evolution of cooperative-security practices and security communities can be studied in other regions. ASEAN members, for example, now openly self-determine themselves as a security community (ASEAN, 2005). Recognizing the spread of cooperative-security practices broadly defined to non-Western regions does not presuppose an uncontested, non-variable, one-on-one transportation: Just as the inter-regional diffusion of norms involves processes of 'localization' and variation (Acharya, 2004), practices can be expected to be modified when transported. When and how this occurs are interesting questions for empirical research. Other questions might include, first, whether the diffusion of practice depends on socially constructed normative factors — for instance, a totally 'foreign' practice may be less likely to get accepted — and second, whether practice helps create or undermine norms. Obviously, my approach could also be carried to regions less integrated than South-East Asia, such as North America (NAFTA) and South America (OAS), in order to analyze whether current practices and institutions there promote or discourage the development of integration. I would also argue that my approach could be applied to conflict-ridden regions, such as the Middle East, and help explain how practice can promote a change in collective identities, without which Middle East peace is probably a chimera. Developing the Middle East case more systematically and contrasting it to the European case would be an obvious way of taking my

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line of research further — towards researching more closely the conditions that make the spreading of self-restraint more or less likely — and would show my argument's generalization potential.

A community of practice and cognitive-evolution approach may also be useful for studying practices other than cooperative security. In addition to a theoretical and historical study of the cognitive-evolutionary processes involved in the development of other security practices, such as balance-of-power practices or human-security practices, we could scrutinize the evolution of national, international, and transnational practices in a wide array of non-security fields, such as international finance. Recently evolved practices related to human rights and the environment, and cyber-practices, may also provide opportunities for studying the evolution of practices and the expansion of social structures.

Finally, the normative side of my theory may help open up a research agenda on the possible implications of the spread of self-restraint from region to region and of it becoming, in Elias' (1982) and Williams' (2001) sense, the global engine of civility and self-discipline that underlies dependable expectations of peaceful change. Thus the cognitive evolution of communities of practice may break new ground by creating openings for the emergence of new and better human practices, global governance institutions, and transformed human beings.

Notes

1. Background knowledge needs to be distinguished from the knowledge people carry in their heads (Searle, 1995; Bourdieu, 1977).
2. Such an argument can help bring substance (back) into constructivism.
3. The concept of communities of practice, pioneered by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), plays an important role in the recent development of the field of 'knowledge management' in business administration, which promoted the rise of a cottage industry of knowledge-management theories and studies. See, for example: Wenger, 1998a; Wenger et al., 2002; Lesser et al., 2000. To date, the community of practice concept has been applied mainly in domestic and transnational corporate environments. The World Bank also created 200 communities of practice (Denning, 1998).

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4. In contrast to Wenger, who understands communities of practice as engaging mainly in knowledge exchange, I view communities of practice as engaging in knowledge diffusion and validation as well.

5. One might also think of communities of practice as encompassing various kinds of (trans-)national communities: Arguably, the latter could also be disaggregated into a number of communities of practice. The level of analysis basically hinges on the substance of the practice in question.

6. Darwin explained natural evolution as a result of blind variation (chance) and selective retention (necessity). The first process refers to the random mutations in the organism's interactive traits. In the second process, only those organisms that develop interactive traits that make them fit to survive the competitive nature of their environment pass these advantages to their offspring, thereby out-producing related species and eventually leading to their demise. The key idea of evolutionary genetics is that, through natural selection, the differential extinction and proliferation of 'bodies' cause the differential perpetuation of gene structures (Dawkins, 1976). The fact, however, that biological evolution and cognitive evolution may belong to the same 'family' of explanations does not mean that they are necessarily isomorphic.

7. I use the term 'cognitive evolution' because it is the evolution of mental representations in individual minds, such as expectations and dispositions, which, depending on and contributing to background knowledge, is the key to the evolution of practices.

8. Searle (1995: 129) defined the 'Background' as 'the set of nonintentional or preintentional capacities that enable intentional states to function'.

9. Bourdieu (1990: 53) defined *habitus* as 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions' that constitute people's thoughts and practices.

10. I thank Vincent Pouliot for this insight.

11. The significance of the military in these processes is due to, first, the intimate relationship between the military and Westphalian notions of state sovereignty; second, civilian control of the military embodies a notion of self-restraint and democratic reform (cf. Epstein, 2005); third, whereas other organizations would focus on the non-military side of democratization, civilian control was one of the key concerns and demands of NATO in the enlargement process (cf. Jacoby, 2004: 122ff.; Gheciu, 2005b: 70).

12. On the other hand, the responsibility to live up to the security community's standards also works on the inside of the community: The norms and practices of the community reinforce the process of enlargement — a 'closed-door' policy of NATO would not have been in accordance with its own norms after the end of the Cold War (cf. Gheciu, 2005: 17) — and are reinforced by the process in turn. Plus, they can be used to 'rhetorically entrap' members who are critical of expansion (Schimmelfennig, 2003).

13. Launched in 1995, the EMP or Barcelona Process is a broad multilateral cooperative framework of political, economic, and cultural relations involving 26 European, Middle Eastern and North African countries and the Palestinian Authority, aimed at achieving stability and security in the Mediterranean.

14. This is the EU's 2003 multilateral cooperative initiative to promote political stability and prosperity in its 'Near Abroad' (Commission of the European Communities, 2003).
15. Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.
16. The illustrations presented here are preliminary in that the development of subjectivities has been only marginally traced. But the preliminary evidence lends enough credence to the theory to call for further empirical research in its vein.
17. Schimmelfennig's argument that actors that had an interest in NATO (and EU) enlargement used liberal rule-based arguments strategically to 'entrap' actors who were opposed to enlargement is compelling. His argument and mine are not mutually exclusive: 'entrappers' strategically used norms to enter what they thought to be the NATO alliance, but later became normatively 'entrapped' by NATO as a partnership for peace.
18. Ukrainian forces contributed to NATO missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996 and in Kosovo since 1999. Since March 2005, Ukraine has also contributed officers to the NATO Training Mission in Iraq. A NATO–Ukraine Joint Working Group on Defense Reform was established in 1998. Since 2002, annual high-level informal consultations on defense reform and policy are held with Ukrainian and NATO defense ministers and experts.
19. My main aim in this article is not to show why democracy takes hold or how individual countries changed. Yet, my argument has implications for the democratization literature that tends to prioritize the importance of norms and formal institutions and neglect the role practices play (together with norms and institutions) for the sustainability of democracy.
20. Epstein (2005) is careful to note that the influence of NATO may vary from case to case (not least according to access to the domestic reform process) and proposes a theory of institutional influence.
21. I thank an anonymous reviewer for alerting me to this point.
22. Alexandra Gheciu (2005b) shows effectively the domestic dynamics in Romania and the Czech Republic and their impact on NATO's ability to 'teach' certain norms. Similar to the here employed concept of cognitive authority, she recognizes that power understood as competence depends on recognition (2005b: 16).
23. I thank an anonymous reviewer for alerting me to this question.

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