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Master thesis

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Security communities and the pacific effects of international network structures

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Abstract

While the study of war and peace has a long tradition, the network dynamics of the factors influencing peace have only recently come to the attention of scholars. However, understanding the influence of direct and indirect relationships on state behavior has been decisive.

This thesis aims to verify the existence of security communities that behave more peacefully internally than externally. They are defined as groups of states that share strong direct and indirect relations of trade, regime similarity, and IGO memberships, forming communities within the international system.

A quantitative network model was set up to analyze the existence and relevance of security communities. The three network layers trade, regime similarity, and IGO co-memberships, as well as a composite security community network, were computed and analyzed to verify if communities of the respective variables could influence the pacific behavior of states.

The analysis has shown that trade relations and IGO co-memberships alone cannot deter states from engaging in militarized conflicts. A similar regime type and the co-existence of all three connection types, however, significantly reduce the likelihood of conflict between states. It was further demonstrated that the conflict structure within and between communities remained relatively stable, enabling a forecast of areas of war and peace. While reasons for war are difficult to quantify, reasons for peace and the suppression of war seem to be measurable. The data shows that security communities form "islands of peace" where chances of internal conflict are decreased. This can be of use when assessing the stability of regions or seeking measures to stabilize them. It can further be a building block of conflict prediction models.