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Introduction

What if we adopted a different perspective on international security – one that stresses the practical logics of day-to-day diplomacy? More specifically, what if we conceived of interstate peace less as an abstract category than as a particular way to engage with the world of diplomacy? On the ground of international politics, how do daily interactions between representatives whose states are at peace differ from those of rival states? What makes a given international practice more or less commonsensical in certain contexts but not in others? How are pervasive power relations and domination patterns expressed, in and through practice, on the international stage? In brief, what can we learn by adding to our theories and social scientific interpretations the practical perspectives of those agents involved in the quotidian unfolding of international security?

In this book I argue that, in practice, interstate peace rests on self-evident diplomacy. When security practitioners engage in the non-violent resolution of disputes as if it were the axiomatic way to go, they come to debate *with* diplomacy but not *about* its opportunity. Diplomacy becomes commonsensical – the practice from which all further interactions take place. Building on Pierre Bourdieu's sociology, I show that this peaceful commonsense is made possible by the contingent alignment between the practitioners' dispositions (the stock of background knowledge accumulated from experience) and their positions in the field of international security (defined by evolving rules of the game and stocks of valued resources). When diplomats on both sides of an interstate relationship behave in tune with how the structure and terms of the relationship are understood to work, then the non-violent settlement of disputes may become self-evident, paving the way to peace in and through practice. Where a mismatch between positions and dispositions exists, however,

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chances are that the development of a peaceful order will be undermined by more or less intense symbolic power struggles over the very terms of interaction.

This book demonstrates that the politics of NATO–Russia diplomacy appertain to the second of these scenarios. I argue that in the post-Cold War era, the non-violent settlement of disputes has become a normal yet not self-evident practice between the two former enemies, largely due to a growing disconnection between the dispositions that players embody and their positions in the contemporary game of international security. The dominant player, NATO, possesses large stocks of resources that are highly valued in the contemporary field of international security; as a result Alliance officials think *from* their superior position to Russia and act accordingly. In Moscow, however, pervasive Great Power dispositions lead security practitioners to construe their country's position as much higher in the international security hierarchy than other players in the field, especially NATO, are inclined to recognize. As a result of this mismatch, which after Bourdieu I call hysteresis, the contemporary Russian–Atlantic relationship is primarily characterized by fierce symbolic power struggles that thwart security community development.

Although real, pacification between NATO and Russia remains limited. On the one hand, compared to the Cold War era and the continually looming specter of mutually assured destruction, contemporary Russian–Atlantic relations have significantly pacified. The possibility of a military confrontation has receded considerably and the many heated disputes that have plagued the relationship over the last twenty years have consistently been solved peacefully. On the other hand, NATO–Russia diplomacy has been and remains rather uneasy: bones of contention abound, startling differences in international outlook keep surfacing, and legacies of mistrust endure. Overall, Moscow and the Alliance have come to solve their many disputes through power struggles that, as intense as they may be, do not hinge anymore on the possibility of using military force against one another. Despite persisting tensions and struggles, NATO–Russia power politics seem to have uneasily migrated from the realm of war, however cold, to that of normalized diplomacy.

Security community development and the NATO–Russia puzzle¹

One of the oldest and most fruitful theoretical lenses through which to study international peace is the concept of security community. As Karl Deutsch *et al.* conceptualized fifty years ago, a security community is an interstate group of peoples among whom there is a “real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way.”² With the constructivist turn in International Relations (IR) theory, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett revisited the concept to argue, in opposition to the view that the international system is invariably based on rivalry and self-help because of anarchy, that states can establish a variety of intersubjective forms of order, one of which is a security community. By their definition, a security community is “a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change,” where peaceful change means “neither the expectation of nor the preparation for organized violence as a means to settle interstate disputes.”³ Contrary to a widespread view, then, security communities are *not* characterized by the absence of disputes, but rather by the fact that disputes are systematically solved peacefully.⁴

According to the standard constructivist account, the main mechanism of security community development is collective identity formation – “a cognitive process in which the Self–Other distinction becomes blurred and at the limit transcended altogether.”⁵ As the redefinition of Self and Other creates a common in-group identity, this sense of community or “we-ness” leads to the shared belief “that common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of ‘peaceful change.’”⁶ Mutual identification plays a constitutive role by redefining states’ interests and instilling a pacific disposition. We-ness, the cement of a security community, becomes part of states’ self-understandings and practices, thus producing dependable expectations of peaceful change. Deutsch *et al.* theorized that we-ness

¹ This section draws on Pouliot (2007).

² Deutsch *et al.* (1957, 5). ³ Adler and Barnett (1998, 30 and 34).

⁴ See Pouliot (2006). ⁵ Wendt (1999, 229). ⁶ Deutsch *et al.* (1957, 5).

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fosters dependable expectations of peaceful change among countries because transnational interactions instill a sense of community that leads statesmen to solve their disputes “without resort to large-scale physical force.”⁷ Likewise, for Adler and Barnett mutual identification is a “necessary condition of dependable expectations of peaceful change.”⁸ As such, for students of security communities, collective identification is the key source of common interests in fostering international cooperation and eventually pacification.

Yet this account of security community development faces serious limitations in the case of post-Cold War Russian–Atlantic security relations. On the one hand, the post-Cold War track record of peaceful settlement of disputes between NATO and Russia seems to provide evidence of a security community: even profoundly vexing conflicts, such as the Kosovo crisis, Ukraine’s Orange Revolution or the Georgia War, did not lead to a military standoff between the two former enemies. That fierce disputes such as these could be consistently solved “by means short of war,” as Deutsch *et al.* would have it, is testimony to peaceful change – the essence of security community. In addition, contemporary Russian–Atlantic relations score at low to medium levels on all five indicators of security community devised by Adler and Barnett.⁹ In effect, NATO and Russia have: (1) established numerous multilateral channels; (2) significantly decreased border defense; (3) partly adapted military planning away from mutual confrontation; (4) similarly defined several security threats; and (5) generally held, although with some inconsistencies, a discourse of community.¹⁰ Although it has made a comeback in the wake of the American project of ballistic missile defense, nuclear deterrence has also receded from the security landscape.¹¹ Overall, then, it is quite plausible that a trend toward a rudimentary Russian–Atlantic security community has developed over the first post-Cold War generation.

⁷ Deutsch *et al.* (1957, 5). ⁸ Adler and Barnett (1998, 39).

⁹ Adler and Barnett (1998, 55–6).

¹⁰ Pouliot (2007) expands on each of these indicators.

¹¹ In 1994, Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin pledged to re-target all their nuclear forces away from each other’s territories. As two Russian experts confirm, “deliberate conventional or nuclear war between Russia and the European Union or the NATO states is unthinkable”; Arbatov and Dvorkin (2006, 32). On more recent developments in nuclear relations, see Pouliot (n.d.).

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Paradoxically, however, this process is not accompanied with what Deutsch and Adler and Barnett theorize as the key mechanism of security community development: we-ness or collective identification. In effect, survey data indicate that mutual representations between Russia and the NATO member states are quite lukewarm twenty years after the end of the Cold War.¹² Qualitative studies also indicate that the two entities still construe each other as political “Others.” Ted Hopf contends that the West constitutes the main “External Other” in Russian foreign policymaking, whereas Iver Neumann observes that Russia has historically been and remains to this day Europe’s “Eastern Other.”¹³ This NATO–Russia puzzle suggests that the constructivist hypothesis by which security community development rests on collective identification is in need of theoretical refinement. Peoples and state representatives do not have to think of themselves as the same to develop dependable expectations of peaceful change. In fact, the notion that stable interstate peace has to rest on some form of prior consensus about a collective identity seems mistaken, as the transatlantic rift over Iraq recalled.¹⁴ Communities, whatever their nature, continually experience disputes, including about their own identities. The symbolic power politics of peace are irreducibly part of security community processes. Interstate peace does not imply perpetual agreement about collective identity; instead, it emerges out of shared practices in the management of disagreements.

In taking a “practice turn” in the study of security communities, in this book I make the wager that *it is not only who we are that drives what we do; it is also what we do that determines who we are*. By starting with the concrete ways in which state representatives handle disputes in and through practice, I reverse the traditional causal arrow of social action – from ideas to practice – and emphasize how practices also shape the world and its meaning. With Adler, I start from the premise that security communities are first and foremost “communities of practice.”¹⁵ This leads me to focus less on how people *represent* one another than on what practitioners actually *do* when they interact on the diplomatic floor. To use Bourdieu’s formula, I want

¹² See, e.g., PIPA (2002); Zimmerman (2002); White, Light and McAllister (2005); Allison (2006); Colton (2008); and the EU’s yearly Eurobarometer.

¹³ Hopf (2002); Neumann (1999).

¹⁴ Pouliot (2006). ¹⁵ Wenger (1998); Adler (2005).

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to look into interstate pacification as a *modus operandi* instead of an *opus operatum*. In order to do this, I develop a theoretical and methodological framework to conceptualize and empirically reconstruct the logic of practicality in NATO–Russia diplomacy.

Plan of the book

This book intends to demonstrate that in order to understand interstate pacification, our theories need to be attentive to the logic of practicality on the ground of diplomacy. In the first part of the book, I develop a theoretical and methodological framework specifically geared toward the restoration of the practical logics of peace. In the second part, I delve into the politics of NATO–Russia diplomacy and account for the limited development of a security community with the growing symbolic power struggles over the rules of the international security game.

Chapter 2 develops a theory of practice of security communities. I begin by showing that most theories of social action focus on what people think *about* instead of what they think *from*. I then explain how taking a practice turn redresses this representational bias. Building on Bourdieu's sociology, I theorize the logic of practicality and argue that any and all practices are informed by a substrate of inarticulate know-how. Finally, I apply this insight to the issue of international peace and contend that security communities exist in and through practice when security practitioners resort to diplomacy – the non-violent settlement of disputes – as a self-evident, everyday practice to solve disagreements. Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of doxa and hysteresis, I devise a theoretical apparatus to explain the power dynamics that render such a peaceful commonsense possible or, alternatively, undermine it.

Chapter 3 lays out a subjective methodology that is specifically tailored to the recovery of the logic of practicality in world politics. My main contention is that social scientific inquiries need to develop not only objectified (or experience-distant) but also subjective (experience-near) knowledge in order to produce incisive narratives about international life. I start with a short discussion of the epistemological and ontological requirements of the constructivist style of reasoning. I then infer the need for a methodology that is inductive, interpretive and historical. A subjective methodology follows a three-step

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logic from the recovery of subjective meanings to their objectification, thanks to contextualization and historicization. I inventory a number of methods that can be put to work toward that end, paying special attention to the challenges of studying practices and their non-representational dimension. After a brief discussion of standards of validity, I explain the methodological underpinnings of my case study and offer a detailed picture of how the research proceeded.

Turning to the case study, Chapter 4 reconstructs the logic of practicality at the NATO–Russia Council (NRC). Building on sixty-nine interviews conducted in 2006 with officials in Moscow, Brussels, Washington, Berlin, London and Ottawa, I look at diplomatic dealings from the point of view of their practitioners. In order to operationalize my theory of practice of security communities, I abductively devise a set of three empirical indicators of the embodiment of diplomacy: the disappearance of the possibility of using force, the normalization of disputes and daily cooperation on the ground. The evidence that I present is mixed: while diplomacy was the normal practice in NATO–Russia relations in 2006, it stopped short of self-evidence. I also discover that at the NRC table there are two masters but no apprentice. As a result, fierce symbolic power struggles characterize Russian–Atlantic politics at the practical level.

Chapters 5 and 6 seek to trace back in time the sources of symbolic upheaval or hysteresis in NATO–Russia diplomacy in the post-Cold War era. My main focus is on NATO–Russia dealings over the double enlargement (geographical and functional) – certainly the main bone of contention over the last fifteen years. My analytical narrative hinges on the evolving match or mismatch between players' dispositions and their respective positions in the game of international security. I first show that in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, NATO promoted the internal mode of pursuing security while Russia seemed happy to play the junior partner. Yet NATO's 1994 decision to enlarge both in functions and membership abruptly put an end to this pattern of domination, largely because, for the Russians, the Alliance's practices undermined the new rules of the international security game. The resurgence of the Great Power habitus in Moscow created intense hysteresis effects that were compounded in the wake of the Kosovo crisis. Despite a temporary hiatus in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001, which led to another short-lived honeymoon in Russian–Atlantic relations, the Great Power habitus further

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consolidated in Moscow as NATO's double enlargement continued into the new millennium. I conclude that the Georgia War of summer 2008 vividly illustrated the sharp decline in the Alliance's authority over Russia. Overall, the politics of NATO–Russia diplomacy consist of shifting phases of alignment and misalignment between dispositions and positions – an evolution that explains the limited security community development in the post-Cold War era.

Finally, the seventh and concluding chapter takes stock of the contributions that this study seeks to make to IR scholarship, as well as to the analysis of the post-Cold War Russian–Atlantic relationship. First, I return to my theory of practice of security communities and highlight how it expands and rejuvenates the study of international security and interstate peace more specifically. Second, I infer from my theoretical framework two key policy recommendations that might contribute to easing contemporary symbolic power struggles between NATO and Russia. Finally, I briefly analyze how practice theory shares common ground with existing IR theories, while also opening new avenues for dialogue and cross-fertilization. Ultimately a better grasp of the logic of practicality in international politics promises innovative solutions to pressing problems, both practical and theoretical.

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PART I

*Restoring the practical logic
of peace*

2 *The logic of practicality: a theory of practice of security communities*

Most theories of social action focus on what agents think *about* at the expense of what they think *from*. In IR, rational choice theorists primarily emphasize representations and reflexive knowledge in explaining political action. In the rationalist equation (desire + belief = action), ideas factor in an individual calculation informed by intentionality. Agents deliberately reflect on the most efficient means to achieve their ends. For their part, several constructivists theorize that norms and collective identities reflexively inform action. Intersubjective representations of reality, morality or individuality determine socially embedded cognition and action. In a related fashion, Habermasian constructivists concentrate on collective deliberation and truth-seeking as a form of communicative action. Overall, the three logics of social action that have the most currency in contemporary IR theory – the logics of consequences, appropriateness and arguing¹ – suffer from a similar bias toward representational knowledge. Conscious representations are emphasized to the detriment of background knowledge – the inarticulate know-how from which reflexive and intentional deliberation becomes possible.

In and of itself, this focus on representational knowledge is not necessarily a problem: the logics of consequences, appropriateness and arguing cover a wide array of social action, as recent studies about socialization in Europe have demonstrated.² The problem rests with the many practices that neither rational choice nor rule-based and communicative action theories can explain properly. Take the case of diplomacy, perhaps the most fundamental practice in international politics. For most IR theorists, diplomacy is primarily about strategic action, instrumental rationality and cost-benefit calculations. Yet this scholarly understanding is at odds with that of practitioners,

¹ March and Olsen (1998); Risse (2000). ² See Checkel (2005).