

February 2022: Russia And Europe's Challenging Time The Practice Approach*

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Putin's Russia's contentious position, that culminated in the incursion into Ukraine in 2022, creates a puzzling situation within international affairs and European politics. Informed by Bourdieu's sociology and Neumann and Pouliot's study of practice theory and approach, this empirical investigation explores whether and how the 'lack of fit between practices and the field' where they are performed has important consequences that hamper security. It deals with practices originated by Moscow, at intervals interacting with the European Union. By introducing 'confrontational' and 'contentious' positions as originating from 'background knowledge', this enquiry adds an extra layer of analysis to the practice logic with regard to the theory. By testing the working of the practice perspective concerning this investigation's aim, this enquiry demonstrates the virtue of the practice approach in terms of policy.

Keywords: *Europe, European Union, Russia, Ukraine, Practice Approach, Hysteresis, Security*

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditions and ways of conducting politics generate actions, such as Moscow's inclination to inflate its region, that might ultimately affect international affairs and European politics. The tendency to expand is explained in international politics by examining the 'systemic pressures' and 'geopolitical conditions' (Barkanov, 2015; Laruelle, 2015; Kelly, 2016). Wohlforth, for example, debates how the flat geography of Eurasia offers a sort of game of 'conquer or be conquered' in the region (Wohlforth 2001,

* The author is indebted to the two anonymous referees for their insightful observations and comments concerning my earlier draft, and grateful to the APJEUS Editor for considering my research.

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217). Structural and systemic dynamics neglect the social dispositions of the agents that affect their practices. This implies that the nature (behaviour) that characterises Moscow's political interactions with other states (the European Union (EU) and its members) is overlooked or misrepresented. The social dispositions and attitudes of an actor might lead to struggles and security preoccupation. Neumann and Pouliot (2011) suggest that neither realist nor constructivist interpretations explain cases such as how Russia's readiness to act and expand weakens the EU's confidence regarding security. These scholars propose drawing concepts from Bourdieu's sociology (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 105-7), since the nature of the human activity has no representation in analytical terms. To solve this representational lack of social action, practice theory allows the 'background knowledge' of the actors to feature at the forefront of the analysis (Pouliot, 2008, 259). Supported by notions of Bourdieu's sociology (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), and Pouliot's (2008) and Neumann and Pouliot's (2011) observations on practice theory, this empirical enquiry investigates whether and how the 'lack of fit between practices and the field' where they are performed has important consequences that hamper security. Essentially, practices that appear poorly-suited to the current circumstances because they adapt to conditions that no longer exist, analytically give shape to the state of hysteresis (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 109). This enquiry applies the practice approach to conduct by Moscow, at times interacting with the EU, bearing in mind Putin's Russia's 2022 intrusion into Ukraine. The triad of 'habitus', 'field, and 'common sense' lead the analysis of the 'doings' by Moscow. By introducing 'confrontational' and 'contentious' positions as a share of the 'background knowledge', this investigation proposes a supplementary layer of analysis to the practice approach in relation to theory. In responding to this investigation's central question, the enquiry reveals the virtue of the practice approach in terms of policy.

The enquiry is organised as follows. The next section, section two, focuses on the scholarly studies of 'Russian dynamics', which suggests a reading of Moscow's behaviour as an imprint of, or as influenced by, a hysteresis status. This section serves as a departure point for how to view Putin's Russia, given the controversial and combative positions that the leader holds, such as the spring 2022 irruption into Ukraine. Section three introduces the methodology, that includes a few notions from Bourdieu's sociology, the concept of hysteresis and the practice approach. This is followed by section four, which presents the collected analytical data. Two sub-sections are included. The first stresses how Putin and the Russian leadership (the Bourdieunean 'habitus') have built up and exposed a confrontational and contentious position that challenges the EU. Central to the

analysis is an awareness that the 'field' (the Bourdieunean international arena and social space) changed after 1989, and that, despite the 1989 turning point, Russian conduct is seen to be reproducing practices that can be considered dear to the past. The second sub-section focuses on the diplomacy (the Bourdieunean practical sense) of Putin ('habit') and the associated leaders. The data are provided by political scientists and historians and show how, in seeking its international identity, Russia is defying the European order, and attempting to remodel its power of attraction both in the neighbouring region and beyond. The Bourdieunean idea of excavating the actors' inner place highlights how Putin's Russia is also ready to accept severe (economic) hardship and international (political) censure in exchange for successfully remaking its greatness. Section five presents the findings of the investigation concerning the 'methodology', the 'lack of fit', and the 'contributions in terms of policy, theory, and EU studies'. Section six concludes the investigation.

II. RUSSIAN DYNAMICS

Scholars' positions and theories related to their support concerning Russia and its leaders are primarily expected to encourage thoughts on how to examine, and from which perspective, Putin's provocative and bellicose conduct. Scholarly investigations' claims regarding aspects of Putin's political philosophy and politics tend to contribute to the analytical framing of how the provocations and incentives led to the present situation. Yet the 'Soviet legacies' and 'systemic characters' are central for those historians who believe that an 'unfinished revolution' continues to motivate the Russian leaders' behaviour (McFaul, 2001).¹⁾ This unfinished revolution implies that anti-democratic forces from the Soviet-era have regrouped in the aftermath of communism's fall. Involved in this perspective is the security apparatus, its attendants and the structure that moulded Putin's model of 'statist oligarchic capitalism'. Belton (2020) and Dawisha (2014) hold the opinion that the statist oligarchic capitalism endorsed by Putin, generates the type of destabilisation that aims to weaken the Western legal and financial institutions. These scholars contend that the Soviet system has replicated itself, regardless of the end of the ideological confrontation and presumed change in the government's organisation. In fact, Rid (2020) observes that this would explain why Moscow's practices recall the doings of the Soviet era. These actions, repeating the past, aim to damage other countries' actors' policies, those by the EU and its member states, which

1) The inverted commas are mine to draw emphasis on words and concepts.

are portrayed to the Russian audience as threatening Moscow. Jones explains how these practices are inclined to discredit and weaken others' intelligence, as a means to broaden Soviet influence (Jones 2019, 2). Discrediting actions involve misinformation and cyber meddling as part of an uninterrupted system that the Soviet started and Russian security agents endorsed. How Soviet actions threaten the legitimate policy that other countries adopt is a theme that Robinson (2019) scrutinises. This same perspective induced Hall and Ambrosio (2017) to point out how practices are used to interfere in and contrast with 'consensual' (as opposed to 'imposed') governance systems, helping Moscow to weaken the stability of those political structures. Hall and Ambrosio link their disquisition on practices to the continuing open contention between communism and capitalism which, then, falls into the conflict between autocracies and democracies. Employing similar discourses, Sherr (2013) bases his argument on a different viewpoint: the angle of soft power themes producing destabilisation (Sakwa, 2020, 3-4).

These issues are linked with the debate raised by Gerasimov (2013), the Chief of the Russian General Staff (Thomas, 2019; Foxall, 2021; Sakwa, 2020, 4). The argument holds that 'contactless actions' versus a target substitute for 'wars' as a means of achieving a desired outcome. Actions can affect other actors to the extent that they promote divisions within their governance system. To the Kremlin it is clear that regime change can be attained via the application of a myriad of acts from propaganda to organising disinformation campaigns, financing and sustaining opponents to political systems and training protest groups. These combined techniques generate vulnerabilities when intended to contrast with societies that are not based on autocratic systems. Abrams (2016) argues that the methods for helping to defeat contenders at national political elections are part of the efficient procedures that are gaining substantial results. This process represents an 'alleged legitimate system' based on the use of civil instruments. The certainty that the 'non-military means exceeds the power of weapons and their effectiveness' has become a credo within the Russian intellectual circus (Sakwa, 2020, 3-4).

The discovery of new strategies and confidence concerning their efficacy opens up new options: Fridman (2018) recognises Gerasimov's strategy identification as the blueprint for the Kremlin's attempts to destabilise Western societies. Fridman explains how, following Russian actions in Crimea and Donbass (2014), the term of 'hybrid warfare' has become the norm for describing Russian politics. The mixed method of propaganda and information warfare, plus the use of special forces, have consistently developed the Russian agenda.

Giles pushes his argument a little further in explaining Russia's attempt

to 'subvert' the West by framing this struggle as lying within Russian political culture (Giles, 2019, 25; Sakwa, 2020, 2). A 'finite amount of security' exists in the world, the argument goes, and actors play with security to the extent of satisfying their interests. Within this context, Giles shows little space for diplomacy, explaining this attitude as Moscow's felt ingrained need to extend its territory. If the Kremlin truly opts for the 'insecurity of others' as an approach to making Russia feel more secure, the question of demonstrating how this relation works, however, remains unanswered.

The idea that Moscow is attempting to subvert the West because of the provocations induced by what is usually viewed as a widespread sense of 'russophobia' is dismissed as untrue, as Mettan's (2017) analysis concedes. Tsygankov (2009) frames russophobia as resulting from a form of paranoia focused not only on Moscow's leaders, but also on the Russian people in general. The russophobia approach encourages 'hostile sentiments' and is built on the belief that Russians are genetically prone to co-opt, infiltrate and gain favour (Koenig, 2017; Sakwa, 2020, 2). Hence, manifestations ranging from fear to disregard are accounted for within this approach (Smith, 2019). On the other hand, it is possible as Horvath (2013) discusses, that the influence that the EU exerted on the Eastern states, slowly and gradually, built up the Kremlin's resentment.

Within these features attesting the Kremlin's search for power, the quest for status is an important topic. The work by English (2000) emphasises the long-term presence of an 'intellectual revolution' in Soviet thinking. Among the many aspects of Russian foreign policy identity, a clear enunciation of that 'revolution' is the distancing from the alignment with Europe and the West as a clear approach to enhancing great power Russia's national interests. Sakwa (2020, 7-8) contributes to the overall discussion by explaining how Russian ambition focuses on challenging the practices that lie at the core of the historic West. Putin came to power in 2000 and returned to the Kremlin in 2012, between which dates, at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, he criticised the Atlantic power system (Putin, 2007). This open 'neo-revisionism', opposing the idea of the 'liberal international order', articulates the foundation of Putin's 'realist strategy'.

What do we gain from political scientists and historians' perceptions concerning Russian policy that would contribute towards building an approach regarding how to scrutinise Putin's challenging and confrontational behaviour? The characters and features that more openly emerge from this insight display resentment against the West, the EU and the countries of that region. The need to upset systems other than the autocratic ones (politically, socially and economically) describes targets and techniques

that operate to destabilise states, and reproduces antagonistic roles; it mirrors illegal methods aiming at regime change. It denotes procedures that revive previous political appeals, concentrating on how to create disinformation campaigns; it brings to the surface the out-of-date idea of a peculiar intellectual revolution that focuses on formulae aimed at exceeding the power of weapons within societies. These attitudes, intentions, functions, methods and targets seem to connect with the past, recalling old trajectories that inform the present and future action. These mind-sets and manners appear to be phenomena whereby the actors tend to retain their former positions, although they occupy a social space that differs from the social space in which these positions were initially or previously manifested. These phenomena are acknowledged as the lack of fit of the actors' practices, and are recognised as the impacts of hysteresis (cfr Neumann and Pouliot, 2011). Acknowledging these matters is important to this analysis. As Neumann and Pouliot (2011) advise, realist or constructivist interpretations would obscure aspects of hysteresis concerning the policy that Putin's Russia implements. Looking at systemic pressures, realist or constructivist readings would reveal part of the story only, since they overlook the social dispositions of the actors. Concepts from Bourdieu's sociology are, instead, expected to explain how to shed light on the lack of fit of an actor's practices. Bourdieu can assist by describing how 'dissonances' between an agent's disposition to act and the field where the practices are applied (i.e. lack of fit) create dynamics with enduring influences (106-7).

III. THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This investigation adopts a few concepts from Bourdieu's sociology as well as the idea that practical sense and common sense form the basis and essence of diplomacy (Nicolson, 1963; Pouliot, 2008, 258). The practical nature of action due to human activity analytically resides in a 'non representational layer'. Social theorists have demonstrated that this nonrepresentational knowledge (pre-intentional and pre-reflexive) is activated in and through practice. Against the representational bias of social action, practice theory brings the 'background knowledge' to the foreground of the analysis. All of our intentional states (our particular beliefs, hopes and fears) only function in the way they do (that is, they determine their conditions of satisfaction) against a background of know-how. This background (of know-how) enables us to cope with the world (Pouliot, 2008, 259, 267; Searle, 1998, 108). Individuals perform practices that are informed by past experiences. As Bourdieu suggests, the conceptual analytical elements of the logic of practicality, that help to investigate how the

present practices connect to preceding actions, are provided by the triad of 'habitus', 'field', and 'practical sense' (diplomacy) (see Pouliot, 2008, 266, 268-9). Practices are meaningful when seen in and through context and use.²⁾

Bourdieu's sociology describes how a 'lack of fit' takes shape in world politics. The lack of fit is explained as a dissonance between a repertoire of practices, accumulated through history, and the field where such a repertoire is employed (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 105). Every historical action brings together two states: 'objectified history' (rational: accumulated over time in books, theories and customs) and 'embodied history' (emotional: represented by feelings and tendencies) (136-7). 'Habitus' includes both and represents a system of 'dispositions that integrates previous experiences'. It functions as a generation of action, and perception, that makes possible the 'accomplishment of infinitely differentiated tasks'. Field is represented by a 'social configuration comprised of unequal positions', determined by specific rules of the game (109-110). If we take the post-Cold War era as an example of the 'field', the rules of the international security game have evolved from an external mode of pursuing security, based on balancing, into an internal mode characterised by democratic peace and human rights (cfr. Gheciu 2005; Pouliot, 2010). Practical sense is intended as a dimension of representational and non-representational social action (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 109) and, in this investigation, serves as the basis for diplomacy.

As Pouliot (2008, 276 note 116), acknowledging Bourdieu (1992), explains, in analytical terms, hysteresis designates a persisting habitus within a changed agent's conditions, status or social environment and space. 'Where a gap opens between habitus and the field, hysteresis emerges' (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 111). Bourdieu's long definition is also clear, observing hysteresis as 'cases in which dispositions function out of phase, and practices are objectively ill-adapted to the present conditions because they are objectively adjusted to conditions that no longer obtain' (Bourdieu, 1990, 62). Therefore, hysteresis presents cases where practices are 'untimely both historically and socially, [and] arise from a dysfunctional practical sense that is maladapted to a concrete situation'. Hysteresis represents a scenario where 'dispositions lose touch with positions' (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 111, 113).

The way in which hysteresis can build up is explained more thoroughly. 'Positions' based on 'possession' alter more rapidly than the dispositions of actors, that are deep-seated in their habitus. As actors change from one

2) To deepen more on the origin of habitus, field, and practical sense, see Pouliot (2008, 273-8).

social conformation to the following, they frequently bring with them dispositions that are foreign to a given field. Habitus or positions can change, although former experiences are particularly durable. Time and contact with other experiences (tacit learning) and involvement with the world can modify them. Weakening powers characteristically insist on performing as 'if they were still dominant players in the game' (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 113). How the social dynamics expressed by the triad of habitus, field, and practical sense (diplomacy) will contribute to our analysis will be the emphasis of this investigation. These notions will drive our focus on practices originated by Moscow, at intervals interacting with the EU to the final task of exploring whether and how the 'lack of fit between practices and the field' where they are performed have important consequences that weaken security. The practices originated by Moscow logically regard Putin's Russia's contentious, provocative, challenging and divisive position.

IV. THE INVESTIGATIVE DATA

How do the investigative data differ from the 'Russian dynamics' of section two? The 'Russian dynamics' served to detect the hysteresis effects, our starting point, that induced the search for a methodology able to handle hysteresis and the lack of fit, whereas the investigative data in the following two subsections guide our focus to hysteresis stances, assembled, first, under the theme of the changed international affairs arena, environment and social space, and, later, under that of diplomacy.

1. The changed field Confrontation, contentious positions and dissonant perceptions

Feeding the argument about confrontation being primarily the result of mutually-incompatible descriptions of the self and the other, one might recall that, during the post-Cold War era, the rules of the international security game changed. From an approach to pursuing security based on balancing, the system evolved towards a mode characterised by democratic peace and humanitarian rights. This transformation displaced Russia. The Soviet Union has been seeking recognition of its power status for many years, with regard to which it strongly believed that 'the symbolic value of the nuclear weapons...mattered' (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 131). As Ringmar (2002) expresses, this is what you had to do if you wished to be recognised in that capacity. Russian observance of secrecy, which was the norm during the Cold War, tends to continue in its aftermath; this is an unusual position

that creates unease among its international partners. While Europe embedded itself into liberalism, Russia clung to governing practices inherited from the past, a circumstance that proved Russia's peculiarity to the Europeans. The arena where Russia had practical experience in relation to military capital has significantly changed.

Seeking to deal with the field's transformation, former president Gorbachev (1989) foresaw the possibility of a new political order accompanying the dissolution of the Soviet Union. 'Geopolitically multipolar and ideationally plural', the new diplomatic setting was predicted to lay the basis for a more cooperative system of relations, with Russia positioned as a co-founder (Sakwa, 2018, 1659, 1661). This vision assumed that the end of the Cold War marked not only the common success that Russia shared, but also a victory to which Russia contributed (Putin 2007). Gorbachev's speech concerning the 'Common European home' implied that the European group welcomed Russia. The Soviet sought to enter a period of cooperative governance (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 131; Matlock, 2004; Cohen, 2009; Sakwa, 2018, 1661), and expected flexibility, diversity and experimentation to become the key words of the incoming common discourse (Nitoiu and Pasatoiu 2020, 501; Baranovsky 2000). Ringmar goes beyond these claims, and, building on Russian belief in the 'shared victory', argues that Russia sought recognition as an 'equal' with the United States (Ringmar 2002, 127). 'Dissonant perceptions' regarding the altered setting were constant.

More tangible differences between the Kremlin and Brussels' opinions took shape with the provision of the Helsinki Final Act (1975). The EU and member states charted this procedure within the frame of an 'appropriate endeavour' (Smith, 2016). In combination with the Council of Europe and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the EU considered itself the 'legitimate voice of Europe' (Sakwa, 2018, 1661). The Europeans also promoted, this time, the policy of 'liberal order', to demonstrate that a new historical era was consolidating (Fukuyama, 1992). The 'field change', this time seen as a process, entered a period of rapid acceleration. With the Act's 'third basket', the Kremlin saw values that it had not professed becoming 'transnationally sponsored'. The promotion of universal norms within its own territorial political space defined a project that Moscow was unable to accept.

Samokhvalov (2018) maintains that, during the early post-Cold War years, Moscow sought to share a neighbourhood policy with Europe in the Black Sea area. Also, Wetiz (2012) describes Kremlin's disappointment as this time being due to the EU's refusal to participate in a Russia-led regional security complex (Samokhvalov, 2018, 35). A pluralistic approach might have been possible due to the several agreements over economic

cooperation that the EU offered and were positively acknowledged by Russia (Nitoiu and Pasatoiu, 2020, 501). However, Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, was extremely clear, stating that the Kremlin perceived a political and security threat attached to the EU (Lavrov, 2016). Former Soviet satellite states beyond the EU's borders and in Russia's own germane area started to slide away from Soviet influence feeling the attraction of the EU. These states commenced to harbour political systems that were unaligned with Moscow's tradition. The Kremlin discovered that its political 'status' (and social space) was exponentially rapidly changing, and built up disagreement with the EU, after which dissonance between *habitus* and the field emerged.

Within the line of Russian and European divergence and differing discourses, Charap and Colton (2016) recognise the reproduction of 'the zero-sum logic of Cold-War politics'. Prodi believed that Europe and the EU offered Russia a chance to democratise its policy and political system (Prodi, 2004). On its part, Moscow saw the termination of the Soviet Union, and states that were once within the Union now adhering to political prospects that lay beyond Kremlin's sway. What 'diplomacy could make of the dissonances and contradictions' became a problem. Disagreement among scientists' perceptions led to Baranovsky (2000) arguing that if, during the post-Soviet area, Moscow stood within a vacuum of power, the reason lay in its inability to fill the post-Soviet space (Nitoiu and Pasatoiu, 2020, 501). Sakwa describes Moscow as 'sensing' the undermining of 'Great Power Russia' (Sakwa, 2018, 1660). Contrary to Prodi's understanding of the on-going changes in the field, the Kremlin sensed that the EU was a driver, fabricating Russia's uncomfortable status.

Former foreign minister of the Soviet Union Gromyko called the new order a smaller Europe ingrained into the larger Atlantic community (Gromyko, 2015). The Kremlin observed with dubious sentiments as a peaceful, liberal and democratic Europe fitted into the Atlantic Alliance's strong politics. The post-Cold War international order proved corrosive (Sakwa, 2018, 1659). Nitoiu blames the EU for having failed to put in place appropriate arrangements to engage with Moscow and include Russian territorial interests within the new system (Nitoiu and Pasatoiu, 2020, 501). Historians are alert to the problem that dissonant perceptions are the result of past history (Neumann, 1996; Neumann and Pouliot, 2011; Ringmar, 2002). History sees beyond this evidence and launches its warnings. Unless the dilemmas concerning political identity, territorial unity, security cooperation and economic modernisation within the post-Soviet space have been resolved, these issues are bound to arise, and conflicts will ensue (Sakwa, 2018, 1661).

As Neumann and Pouliot (2011, 111) inform, where a gap opens be-

tween habitus and the field, hysteresis emerges: controversial positions and dissonant perceptions become observable. Moscow feels that its great power status deteriorated and that regaining it is a matter of 'doing it'. The nonrepresentational, pre-intentional and pre-reflexive knowledge is activated through practice and make apparent practices that are maladapted to a concrete situation (113). The EU's dynamic expansion and different governance system are felt to be countering Moscow together with its governance's configuration and power. A changed social environment and space are contrasted by Russia's habitus. Inconsistencies help to erect a wall between what appears to be managed as reciprocally exclusive alternatives. States' options (liberalism and authoritarianism, capitalism and communism) collide due to an inability to accept the diversity of the other. The outcome of a similar configuration is the expression of mutually-incompatible visions of the self and the other. In particular, the result of this state of affairs conveys the extent to which '*confrontational*' and '*contentious*' positions originated from the 'background knowledge', and are central to it in the case of Putin's Russia which is under observation.

2. The 'practical sense' informing diplomacy

In Bourdieunean conversation, the 'practical sense' is regarded as a dimension of representational and no-representational social action. Clearly, every action has a link with a repertoire of practices accumulated through history, responding to rational behaviour, with another set of practices acting as emotional reactions. Practices are meaningful when observed within and through context and use. Seeking to interpret the doings that converge in Putin's Russia's diplomacy, the build-up of Moscow's hatred toward Europe unravels. Whether these doings explain Putin's contentious, combative position (such as the desire to conquer Ukraine) will be our focus now. Gretskey et al. (2014) recount how 'Moscow increased mistrust concerning the EU's growing role in the region', which exposed a determination that was new to the Kremlin.³⁾ For some time, Moscow persisted as an outlier to Europe's ordering, not entirely inside and nor completely outside it, while attempting to define its international identity and national interests. While gambling its claims for regional spheres of influence, Russia embraced a belligerent attitude. The tension was evident between what Moscow saw as the EU-centric efforts to arrange the continent (the Baltic states, 1991) and Russia's mounting hostility due to its failure to secure a place from which to exert power and a veto (Marten 2017). Franke (2015) argues that Georgia (2008), and Crimea and Eastern

3) The inverted commas are mine.

Ukraine (2014) were the response to the EU's management of the European space. Also Russia's scant power of attraction made possible its collapse. Franke describes Moscow's reluctant tolerance of the 'western liberal' influence as a sentiment transformed into complete opposition (Haukkala, 2021, 390-1).

Dragneva and Wolczuk (2013) acknowledge Russia's attempts to create a bipolar setting in Europe. This challenge started with the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC, 2014) which was soon transformed into the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).⁴ The EAEU was the desired manifestation of Moscow's leading command on the other part of the continent. The EAEU was seen as a golden bridge to achieving political aims (Wolczuk et al., 2022). The new regional league, however, climaxed with the catastrophic outcome of trying to co-opt Ukraine to join in 2014. The Kremlin made it clear that the EU had to accept the view that Eastern Europe was Moscow's principal area of interest (Trenin, 2009), and also that Moscow would employ every measure at its disposal to apply this policy. Menon and Rumer (2015) and also Wilson (2014) go so far as to admit Russia's willingness to bear huge costs (in terms of both economic adversity and international condemnation) if countered regarding its Eastern Europe leadership and primacy. Hukkala (among others, Kappeler, 2001; Wohlforth, 2001; Neumann, 2008; Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 106) defines the Russian focus on demonstrating the fact that it was 'alive as a great power' as almost an issue of survival. 'No matter how hard it pushes its version of order on the East, Moscow is always willing to push back a little harder' (Hukkala, 2021, 391). Hukkala believes that Russia is prepared to bear any possible cost for doing so. Korosteleva and Paikin (2020) concede that Moscow has demonstrated an 'ability' to generate 'disruptive power' (7).

Russia does not restrain itself from acting as a destructor or order in Europe. It has shown a strong disposition to back military means both in its close neighbourhood and elsewhere, outside its borders (Syria). However, Haukkala (2021) argues that Moscow is not competent to re-order Europe (391), and displayed little power of attraction. In addition, its economy is weak, being mostly reliant only on the sale of hydrocarbons. By contrast, Korosteleva and Paikin (2020) trust that Russia retains the ability to impact the shape of the order. Firstly, Moscow has shown that the EAEU alone is inadequate to ensure a sustained great power rank, and has expanded its strategic partnership with China. Secondly, Moscow has dem-

4) The EAEU includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. The organization's key objectives are increasing cooperation, the promotion of stable development and economic competitiveness.

onstrated its sway through portions of Eurasia, from Europe to the Middle East, and to Central Asia and beyond (Korosteleva and Paikin, 2020, 7).

Yet, the more recent conflict between Russia and the West (the EU) was far from inevitable. Forsberg et al. (2016) and Stent (2014) suggest that the efforts to foster this relationship were marked by fundamental and mostly incompatible strains. An essentially bipolar setting in Europe is Putin's aim (Haukkala, 2021, 391). The EU (and beyond) has hoped that Moscow would play a dignified humanitarian role in complying with repetitive requests for a truce in Ukraine in 2022. The Kremlin's (Putin's) habitus, however, showed no disposition to change. Russia is impatient concerning inclusion and not subordination (Talbott, 2002; Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 134), and uses violence to win it. Violence evokes the image of hysteresis. The Kremlin has repeatedly objected that, if forces were continuously supplying Kiev, Moscow's answer was to be considered in the range of using powers that would have changed the configuration of the international order (*Financial Times* 29th August 2022). The menaces include the downgrading of the European economic prospects (and beyond), aiming to plunge it into a deep crisis. Neumann and Pouliot (2011) would say that these messages resound as monologs and take on a 'symbolic dimension' regarding the foreseeable prospects ahead (134). Moscow is unwilling to admit that the economic crisis (and whatever other disastrous events) is a fact that burdens the whole of Russia (*Financial Times* 29th August 2022). The impact of hysteresis is detectable in the aggressive position that interpreted the European reaction to the invasion of Ukraine as the EU's building up of a belligerent might.

It seems unthinkable that the ultimate effect of this war would result in a new identity for Russia, free of the inherited legacy of empire. By contrast, Putin's Russia's diplomacy or practical sense shows readiness to accept any possible cost for advancing its version of order. Putin's Russia expresses its wants, not by using shared diplomacy, social relations and mutual arrangements, but through demonstrating and showing off its capability to expand its destructive power. This skill of the Kremlin is hardly comparable to the other skill professed by multilateralism projecting cooperation. Again, acting as a spoiler of the order in Europe might demonstrate the Kremlin's ability to impact the shape of that order. However, if Russia truly wants to be recognised as a great power, it should seek to build that image in a more positive, constructive way. Its magnetism and attraction would hardly consolidate through expressing hatred toward Europe. Magnetism and attraction would be advantaged with Russia practicing social dynamics to carve out a space for itself in full respect of its non-belligerent interests. The sort of identity that Putin's Russia fabricated (particularly the desired conquest of Ukraine) provides room for

manoeuvre for old narratives. A narrative dear to the Russia empowered by Putin embraces Ukraine as a social space belonging to the late 9th century 'Greater Russia'.⁵ This implies that the history of Ukraine as a nation and independent state, together with its national identity, would be erased following the Russia of today's aim. Products of hysteresis are clearly visible.

Is it important whether the resentment toward the West, the EU and the countries in that area, that we observed in the Russian dynamics, is similar to or differs from the hatred, unveiled, here, by Moscow's practices? Whether the investigation of the analytical data leads to similar or different results does not matter. However, if similar results are obtained, it means that the enquiry's outcomes and the scores of the Russian dynamics reinforce each other. It also suggests the practice approach's perspicacity to focus on the hysteresis effects.

V. ASSESSMENT OF THE INVESTIGATION'S FINDINGS

Presenting the findings, we specifically focus on how the methodology helped to slant the analysis toward recognising the hysteresis effect. This is followed by the analytical results concerning the lack of fit seized through the 'changed field, and also grasped via the 'practical sense' informing diplomacy. The practice approach's contribution, and the contributions of this enquiry to the approach and to the area of EU studies ensue. Subject to evaluation logically are the practices originated by Moscow, at intervals interacting with the EU, with particular attention to Putin's Russia controversial positions, bearing in mind the recent incursion into Ukraine. Our final aim is to respond to the central question of this investigation.

1. The methodology

Three points assess why this analytical methodology is valid and how it led to include hysteresis into the analysis. First, the political scientists and historians' perceptions of Russian policy revealed useful hints about how to frame the enquiry into Russian conduct. The features that emerged showed resentment against the EU, its countries and the West more gen-

5) Late 9th century 'Greater Russia' indicates 'Kievan Rus'. Kievan Rus was the first East Slavic State (in Eastern and Northern Europe) founded in 882 and dissolved in 1240. It included people from several origins, encompassing East Slavic, Norse, and Finnic. Owing to its strategic location, in 882 Kiev became the capital of the Kievan Rus. "Kievan Rus, historical state, Europe", Britannica. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kyivan-Rus>.

erally. Obsessed targets, perverse functions, illegal methods, and dysfunctional drives portrayed the comportment of the Kremlin and Putin's policies. These findings suggested that the dispositions of the actors have evoked the old trajectories informing the present and future action, and led to the recognition of these postures as the impacts of hysteresis.

Second, looking for a methodological approach that would shed light on actors and state-actors' conduct resulting from hysteresis conditions, we learnt that aspects of hysteresis would remain obscure if explored from realist or constructivist perspectives (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011). We found that structural and systemic dynamics disregard the social dispositions of the actors that influence their practices. This meant that the nature and behaviour that describe Moscow's political interactions with other state-actors, the European Union and its members, were neglected or distorted. We understood that the nature of the human activity has no representation in analytical terms. This limitation was particularly grave since we aimed at distinguishing the dynamics of the hysteresis condition, and how this condition might lead to struggles and security preoccupation.

Third, to solve the conundrum of the representational lack of the nature of human activity, we found that practice theory and approach allow the background knowledge of the actors to feature at the forefront of the analysis. The background knowledge of the actors is important because all of the intentional positions function in the way they do against a background of know-how. We acknowledged Bourdieu's sociology (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), and Pouliot's (2008), and Neumann and Pouliot's (2011) observations on practice methodology as helpful to explain the following: practices that appear poorly-suited to the current circumstances, because they adapt to conditions that no longer exist, analytically give shape to the state of hysteresis (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011, 109). Central to the analysis was the understanding of the 'field' in Bourdieunean terms, i.e. the international arena and social space. The field changed after 1989, and, despite the 1989 turning point, Putin's Russia's conduct reproduced practices that can be considered dear to the past. We realised that the practice perspective was suitable to answer this enquiry, particularly whether and how the 'lack of fit between practices and the field' where they are performed has important consequences that hamper security. Many of these occurrences, resulting from practices that are maladapted to the present situation, have been addressed, and their assessment is presented below.

2. The lack of fit

The lack of fit seized through the 'changed field' explained the hyste-

resis puzzle. In investigative terms, we described hysteresis as a persisting habitus within a changed agent's conditions, status or social environment and space. The analysis of 'habitus', observed via a focus on the 'changed field', caused several observations of the impact of hysteresis to emerge. Hysteresis was the trust that regaining Russia's great power status (which weakened) was simply a matter of reclaiming it. It was the incapacity to abandon the presumption of seeking to be recognised as an equal with the United States, and the belief that the value of the nuclear weapons corresponded to a greater power rank. It was the miscalculation (and stubbornness) in continuing to observe secrecy, in contrast with open dialogue, as if the Iron Wall still characterised the field. The effect of hysteresis was the inability to mediate the new political order and create political advantages from it for Russia. Similarly, it was opposing efforts to shape a role for itself while holding dear the innovations of the period: multilateralism and the belief that the wellbeing of one state corresponds to the wellbeing of the others. Putin's need to exalt diversities (dig a gap) with the EU (and the West) by adopting postures intended to construct Russian power, based on the incompatible vision of the other, was the core manifestation of the hysteresis impact. The reading of this behaviour ('habitus') showed that 'confrontation' emerged as an inevitable pragmatic conduct, preferred by Russia and Putin's relational practices with the other states.

The lack of fit grasped via the 'practical sense' informing diplomacy was also assessed. In addition to how 'habitus' played out within the altered social space of the field of operation, the focus was on how the Bourdieuan 'practical sense' (diplomacy) emerged as an output of hysteresis. The impact of hysteresis was to reject 'diplomacy (social relations) as a power inspired to an inter-states discourse', and, by contrast, face any cost to demonstrate the skilfulness to project a disturbing influence and control onto others. It was, also, the refusal to accept the repetitive requests of a truce from Ukraine, the EU and the international community, in the aftermath of February 2022. Likewise, a hysteresis output was the aversion to transform the belligerent might into a new Russian identity, free of the legacy of empire; and a hysteresis product was negating Ukraine's national identity and the independence of its nation state. A further hysteresis mark was abusing and misusing history, and, in the end, an additional hysteresis imprint was the truth that social dynamics were obliterated as a tool capable of building up diplomacy. Finally, a hysteresis outcome was Putin's use of violence to modify the setting of the international practices, something that would have inescapable damaging consequences concerning security.

3. The contributions in terms of policy, theory, and EU studies

Speaking about the contribution of this approach 'in terms of policy' means verifying whether the practice approach has been able to find an answer to the investigation's central question as we defined it in the introduction. The implicit query regarded whether and how the lack of fit between practices and the field where they are performed has important consequences that hamper security. Within the overall investigation, we remarked how the contestation of positions that we discussed between Putin's Russia and the EU demonstrated that 'confrontation' emerged as an inevitable pragmatic conduct chosen by Russia and Putin's interactive practices. We observed how the propensity to make use of devastating power, with unimaginable consequences, was the principal element emanating from Putin's Russia. This attitude corresponded to the tendency to embrace violence in order to modify the scenario of the international system. This prospect expressed hostility, clash, conflict and war. Thus, by assessing that the cost of debilitating security is with no doubt the end result that the persisting habitus within a changed agent's conditions, status or social environment and space carries on, we responded to the investigation's question, and demonstrated the contribution of the practice approach in terms of policy.

Focusing on this investigation's impact on the practice approach 'in terms of theory' implies explaining whether additional analytical parameters have been experimented, and found useful to this enquiry. The elements of sociology inspired by Bourdieu (and *al.*) that we used within the approach fixed 'habitus', 'field', and 'practical sense' as fundamentals to structure the analysis. They were expression of the background knowledge that is informed by past experiences, and enables actors to cope with the world. In fact, these parameters led our attention to the practices stemmed by the actors. What was new, or added with the analysis, was the finding that 'confrontational' and 'contentious' postures were elements that described attitudinal behaviour that we distinguished several times within this investigation. This led to infer that together with 'habitus', 'field', and 'practical sense', also 'confrontational' and 'contentious' positions assisted as a supplementary layer of analysis, all of them originated by the background knowledge, thus explaining the contribution in terms of theory provided by these added features.

Concerning the field of EU studies, by testing the practice approach applied to Putin's Russia's disposition to conduct affairs that have a relation (though distant) to the EU, and a relation to the incursion into Ukraine, this enquiry brings fresh air to the perspectives on foreign policy within the European Union's research area.

VI. CONCLUSION

Believing that Russia and Europe are living through a challenging time, with Putin's Russia forcefully invading Ukraine in February 2022, this empirical investigation questioned whether and how the lack of fit between practices and the field where they are performed has important consequences that hamper security. To observe the developments originated by Moscow, and at times interacting with the EU, the investigation primarily focused on scholars' study of Russian dynamics that contributed to how the perceived behaviour of Moscow might be influenced by hysteresis situations. Hysteresis conditions express the inner status of the actors. The investigation contended that the social dispositions of the agents are fundamental to action because they affect their practices. Arguing that the social dispositions of the actors are concealed to analytical perception, the enquiry borrowed notions from Bourdieu's sociology concerning the nature of human activity as well as Neumann and Pouliot's analysis on practice theory and methodology. The practice approach's skill to include within the actors' conduct ('habitus') both historical and also emotional dispositions allowed a focus on the non-representational social action that the realist and constructivist perspectives would ignore. The investigation explained how 'habitus', 'field' and 'practical sense' are connected to the social dynamics of the actors' background knowledge. Shedding light on the 'background knowledge', the approach indicated how hysteresis results from a persevering habitus within an altered actor's status, conditions, environment, or social space. The investigation showed the lack of fit status exemplified by the actions of Moscow and Putin's Russia that presented a 'dissonance between a repertoire of practices, accumulated through history, and the field where such repertoire was employed'. Attitudes to project disruptive power, to employ violence as a practice to rework the international sphere, and the choice of confrontation as a taken behaviour emerged due to this focus. Hence, the investigation's aim to explore whether and how the 'lack of fit between practices and the field' where they are performed has important consequences that hamper security was answered by showing how the lack of fit signalled uncertainty, destabilisation and insecurity.

Finally, we hope that this enquiry may encourage others interested in the EU to investigate the practice logic further. They might apply this methodology to assess whether Ukraine is informed by a desire to become a member of the EU, or simply uses this shield as protection to deal with the complexities of the war with Russia. By evaluating this matter, researchers might confirm or disprove the findings discussed herein regarding this approach's capability to bring into focus the 'non representational layers'.

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