

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# ‘Practice time!’ *Doxic futures* in security and defence diplomacy after Brexit

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(Received 20 April 2018; revised 2 May 2019; accepted 6 May 2019; first published online 4 July 2019)

## Abstract

Time constitutes social life and time management is central to the everyday conduct of international politics. For some reason, however, the practice turn in International Relations (IR) has produced knowledge about how past practices constitute international politics but not about how the future is also a constitutive feature in and on social life. Introducing a novel perspective on practice and temporality, the article argues that intersubjectively situated representations of the future by practitioners in international politics contribute substantially to our understanding of political processes and the making of international politics. To develop what appears a contradiction in terms – that ‘future-practices’ are driven by tacit know-how and conscious reflection simultaneously – the article develops the concept of doxic futures: representations of the future rooted in practical knowledge and tacit assumptions about the self-evident nature of the social world. The argument is illustrated with a case study of European security and defence diplomacy after the UK voted to leave the EU. Through the envisioning of two concrete doxic futures, a ‘Europe of buying together’ and the UK as a third country in EU defence, diplomats effectively tried to save European security and defence cooperation from the potentially disintegrating effects of Brexit.

**Keywords:** Time; Practice; Future; Security; European Defence; Brexit

## Introduction

Time constitutes social life and time management is central to the everyday conduct of international politics. Therefore, scholars of International Relations (IR) have recently been contributing both to the theorisation<sup>1</sup> and operationalisation<sup>2</sup> of time, and some claim we are seeing a ‘temporal turn’.<sup>3</sup> In another turn – the one centred on practices – time is also central, but the explicit role of practical time, the future especially, has not been productively put to work to solve what has been a theoretical conundrum between stability and change.<sup>4</sup> The former of the two has

<sup>1</sup>Kimberley Hutchings, *Time and World Politics: Thinking the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Andrew R. Hom and Brent J. Steele, ‘Open horizons: the temporal visions of reflexive realism’, *International Studies Review*, 12:2 (2010), pp. 271–300; Ty Solomon, ‘Time and subjectivity in world politics’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 58:4 (2014), pp. 671–81; Andrew R. Hom, ‘Timing is everything: Toward a better understanding of time and international politics’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 62:1 (2018), pp. 69–79.

<sup>2</sup>Iver B. Neumann and Erik F. Øverland, ‘International Relations and policy planning: the method of perspectivist scenario building’, *International Studies Perspectives*, 5:3 (2004), pp. 258–77; Magnus Ekengren, *The Time of European Governance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Christoph O. Meyer, ‘The purpose and pitfalls of constructivist forecasting: Insights from strategic culture research for the European Union’s evolution as a military power’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 55:3 (2011), pp. 669–90.

<sup>3</sup>Andrew R. Hom, ‘Silent order: the temporal turn in critical International Relations’, *Millennium*, 46:3 (2018), pp. 303–30.

<sup>4</sup>Andrew F. Cooper and Jérémie Cornut, ‘The changing practices of frontline diplomacy: New directions for inquiry’, *Review of International Studies*, 45:2 (2018), pp. 300–03.

been prevailing, arguably due to the predominant focus on ordering,<sup>5</sup> habits,<sup>6</sup> and social reproduction.<sup>7</sup> Yet, given the current state of international politics and practitioners' experiences of being situated in a time where there are structural shifts in the making globally, a focus on how the future contributes in the constitution of political processes – and is played out in practice – seems timely. Without subjugating the importance of shared knowledge, past practices, and intersubjectively shared 'ways of doing things', how do explicit representations of the future matter in and on international politics?

Drawing on recent advances in IR practice theory<sup>8</sup> and constructivist accounts of visions,<sup>9</sup> the article argues that intersubjectively situated representations of the future by practitioners in international politics contribute substantially to our understanding of political processes and the making of international politics. To develop what appears to be a contradiction in terms – that 'future-practices' are driven by tacit know-how *and* conscious reflection simultaneously – the article develops the concept of *doxic futures*: representations of the future rooted in practical knowledge and tacit assumptions about the self-evident nature of the social world.

In illustrating the added value of the theorisation of *doxic futures*, the article applies it to the case of Brexit in and on the security and defence field in Europe.<sup>10</sup> The article engages explicit representations of the future and analyses them in relation to the shared understandings that prevailed in the field. Importantly, the approach integrates two logics of action: The logic of practicality from the poststructuralist/constructivist confines of IR post-positivism and a more purely constructivist logic of meaningful possibilities.<sup>11</sup> By way of this move, the article can account for how certain representations of the future were socially meaningful in the European security and defence field following the Brexit vote. The concept of doxa is put to work and enables critical discussion of how intersubjectively shared dispositions that were tacit and unconscious made particular futures possible to represent explicitly. As such, this article also responds to critiques of the lack of conscious reflection and discrediting of agency in IR practice theory.<sup>12</sup>

The empirical argument in the article is that doxic futures in security and defence diplomacy after the Brexit referendum in the UK drew on a doxa of cooperation that pointed towards limited disintegration in European security and defence, and that it actually spurred calls for more cooperation and integration, within the EU as well as between the EU and the UK. Hence, diplomats tried to save security and defence policies from potential Brexit implications through practical innovation within the already existing doxic structures of the European field of security and defence. Therein, continued cooperation was perceived to be self-evident and the only thinkable way forward, despite Brexit.

The article makes two contributions. First, the concept of *doxic futures* enables an approach to practice that theorises non-representational and representational forms of knowledge in one

<sup>5</sup>Rebecca Adler Nissen, 'Towards a practice turn in EU studies: the everyday of European integration', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54:1 (2016), pp. 87–103.

<sup>6</sup>Ted Hopf, 'The logic of habit in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, 16:4 (2010), pp. 539–61.

<sup>7</sup>Vincent Pouliot, *International Pecking Orders: The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>8</sup>Iver B. Neumann, 'Returning practice to the linguistic turn: the case of diplomacy', *Millennium*, 31:3 (2002), pp. 627–51; Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, 'International practices', *International Theory*, 3:1 (2011), pp. 1–36; Christian Bueger and Frank Gadinger, 'The play of international practice', *International Studies Quarterly*, 59:3 (2015), pp. 449–60.

<sup>9</sup>Felix Berenskoetter, 'Reclaiming the vision thing: Constructivists as students of the future', *International Studies Quarterly*, 55:3 (2011), pp. 647–68.

<sup>10</sup>Frédéric Mérand, *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>11</sup>Vincent Pouliot, 'The logic of practicality: a theory of practice of security communities', *International Organization*, 62:2 (2008), pp. 257–88; Berenskoetter, 'Reclaiming the vision thing'.

<sup>12</sup>Sebastian Schindler and Tobias Wille, 'Change in and through practice: Pierre Bourdieu, Vincent Pouliot, and the end of the Cold War', *International Theory*, 7:2 (2015), pp. 330–59; Ted Hopf, 'Change in international practices', *European Journal of International Relations* (2017).

concept. Thus, it contributes to practice theory in the sense that it offers a methodological approach – ‘all the way’ – for how the study of practices can accommodate time and temporality, and especially explicitly stated imaginaries of the future. Second, the article sheds new light on the security and defence implications of Brexit, first arguing that understanding Brexit as an instance of disintegration needed to be approached as a process, not merely as an institutional phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> Through the engagement with Brexit as a process, we find that European security and defence cooperation during and after Brexit was likely to progress more or less as before, or even at greater pace, due to the *doxic futures* that were constitutive in and on security and defence diplomacy.

The article proceeds as follows. First, European security and defence policy is conceptualised as a field. This move takes the article beyond mere institutionalism, thinking instead about European security and defence as a way of practising defence, notwithstanding the importance of institutions, or spaces, to do those things. This is also in line with the broader Bourdieusian sociology. Second, the article theorises the concept of *doxic futures* to account for the factor of time and the forthcoming in and on practices. Third, based on the theorisation, the article presents an analytical strategy for the study of *doxic futures* and the specific case of security and defence diplomacy during and after Brexit. The analysis is structured in accordance with the methodological considerations: It establishes doxa, presents futures, and analyses them in relation to the doxa. Finally, the article concludes on how introducing time and the future to the practice turn through the concept of *doxic futures* can strengthen our engagements with disintegration, crisis and – ultimately – stability and change in international politics.

### Theorising the uncertain future after Brexit

The first step in the theorisation of *doxic futures* in relation to Brexit concerns how to conceptualise the European security and defence architecture properly. The West has long been considered a security community, but the logic of what generates the community remains subject to contestation.<sup>14</sup> Importantly, our understanding of European security and defence in relation to Brexit should go beyond the idea that what holds Europe together can be fully explained as a we-ness that is based on ideational unity, despite relentless variations of trying to establish it.<sup>15</sup> The history of UK-EU relations serves to tell that there is much more to the story.<sup>16</sup> Recently, emerging literature on Europe and the EU as a security community has drawn attention to how the European security community in and through *practice* becomes and expands,<sup>17</sup> how such expansion can be an effective foreign policy tool for the union,<sup>18</sup> and how studying the EU as a community of

<sup>13</sup>Ben Rosamond, ‘Brexit and the problem of European disintegration’, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 12:4 (2016), pp. 864–71.

<sup>14</sup>Karl Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957); Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Ole Wæver, ‘Insecurity, security, and asecuritization in the West European non-war community’, in Adler and Barnett (eds), *Security Communities*, pp. 69–118.

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, Ian Manners, ‘Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40:2 (2002), pp. 235–58; Christoph O. Meyer, *The Quest for a European Strategic Culture: Changing Norms on Security and Defence in the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Helene Sjursen, *Questioning EU Enlargement: Europe in Search of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>16</sup>Stephen George, *An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); David M. McCourt, *Britain and World Power since 1945* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2014).

<sup>17</sup>Emilian Kavalski, *Extending the European Security Community: Constructing Peace in the Balkans* (London: Taurus Academic Studies, 2007); Nina Græger, ‘European security as practice: EU-NATO communities of practice in the making?’, *European Security*, 25:4 (2016), pp. 478–501.

<sup>18</sup>Niklas Bremberg, ‘The European Union as a security community-building institution: Venues, networks and co-operative security practices’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 53:2 (2015), pp. 674–92; see also Emanuel Adler and Patricia Greve, ‘When security community meets balance of power: Overlapping regional mechanisms of security governance’, *Review of International Studies*, 35:1 (2009), p. 72.

practice can give more precise descriptions of how the EU's security infrastructure functions from within.<sup>19</sup> Yet, these approaches are devoted to community a priori, and thus, they overlook the central power struggles that structure security and defence cooperation.<sup>20</sup> Surely, European security and defence diplomacy run on certain established practices, and going further into how representations of possible futures reinforce, challenge, and embody those practices moves practice theory beyond simply stating that 'practitioners do what they do because that is how it is done'.

Change and continuity in and through practices of envisioning the future based on taken-for-granted truths – that is, *doxic futures* – are not initially based on a particular modus operandi embedded in community but should be appreciated in the struggles that construct the particular social field in which they are played out. Trine V. Berling's study of doxic battles in NATO in the 1990s does exactly that.<sup>21</sup> Her 'Bourdieu-based "action framework" suggests understanding the European security field as a power struggle between agents seeking to reshape the definition of security.'<sup>22</sup> However, whether there is contestation over doxa or not at work in a field is a tension without theoretical or empirical certainty. Stefano Guzzini reminded us of this a long time ago: 'A field stands both for a patterned set of practices which suggests competent action in conformity with rules and roles, and for the playing (or battle) field in which agents ... try to advance their position.'<sup>23</sup> This article treats European security and defence as a field and theorises *doxic futures* not in terms of positioning through battles, but as a process that is both socially situated and visionary.

### **The dispositional problem in practice theory**

If doxa in practice can be both stabilising and challenged, the tension in IR practice theory between inarticulate background knowledge – which has been its main contribution to IR theory – and creative agency needs to be theorised further. The role of time in practices, the forthcoming in particular, what Theodore R. Schatzki on the back of Heidegger calls 'the time of activity',<sup>24</sup> should help advance our understanding of agency in international politics *within* structure<sup>25</sup> (doxa) and *beyond* improvisation (agency).<sup>26</sup> The case of security and defence diplomacy in Brexit is an obvious example of how political processes embody space for agency in which practices play out in and through imagining, and thus constituting, the future. As a RAND report pointed out,

The future direction of policy, strategy and global affairs is inherently uncertain. The outcomes of Brexit will be shaped not only by decisionmakers in the UK, Europe and elsewhere, but also by external and as yet unforeseen events, with the potential for unpredictable interdependencies between developments in different policy areas.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Federica Bicchì, 'The EU as a community of practice: Foreign policy communications in the COREU network', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 18:8 (2011), pp. 1115–32; Federica Bicchì and Niklas Bremberg, 'European diplomatic practices: Contemporary challenges and innovative approaches', *European Security*, 25:4 (2016), pp. 391–406; Frédéric Mérand and Antoine Rayroux, 'The practice of burden sharing in European crisis management operations', *European Security*, 25:4 (2016), pp. 442–60.

<sup>20</sup>Christian Bueger and Frank Gadinger, *International Practice Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

<sup>21</sup>Trine V. Berling, *The International Political Sociology of Security* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>22</sup>Bueger and Gadinger, *International Practice Theory*, p. 41.

<sup>23</sup>Stefano Guzzini, 'A reconstruction of constructivism in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, 6:2 (2000), p. 165.

<sup>24</sup>Theodore R. Schatzki, 'Peripheral vision: On organizations as they happen', *Organization Studies*, 27:12 (2006), pp. 1863–73.

<sup>25</sup>William H. Sewell Jr, 'A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation', *American Journal of Sociology*, 98:1 (1992), pp. 1–29.

<sup>26</sup>Jérémie Cornut, 'Diplomacy, agency, and the logic of improvisation and virtuosity in practice', *European Journal of International Relations*, 24:3 (2017), pp. 712–36.

<sup>27</sup>James Black et al., 'Defence and security after Brexit', RAND, available at: {[https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1786z1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1786z1.html)} accessed 14 June 2017.

In this case, the challenge is how to make sense of the indeterminate process that would take a country out of the European Union. Federica Bicchì and Niklas Bremberg argue that attention to time, processes, and daily occurrences is central to those that focus on practices and that ‘time, space and social groups are crucial, as a focus on practices require looking into what social groups are doing and their understanding of it, at a specific time and in a specific place’.<sup>28</sup> However, the devotion to studying practices with a relational ontology based on a world of our making does not suffice for a time-sensitive and future-oriented practice approach to the security and defence field after the Brexit referendum.<sup>29</sup> We need a theory for engaging with how the role of time, the future especially, factors into the performances of the practices under study. That is, how is the situated and tacit, *and* the manifold representations of the future playing out in practices?

Of course, practice theory constitutes a heterogeneous body of works and thought in the social sciences, with several variants also in IR, but some of its main proponents and early successes in the field drew on the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>30</sup> In Bourdieu’s work, the concept of doxa refers to a ‘tacit understanding operating as if it were an objective “truth”’.<sup>31</sup> It constitutes what takes ontological embodiment in agents in social fields. The concept has already been brought into IR to illustrate how political fields change when the doxa becomes subject to contestation,<sup>32</sup> how it more generally creates stability and consolidation of the status quo,<sup>33</sup> and implicitly in a famous critique of the internal inconsistencies within neorealist thought.<sup>34</sup> As Bourdieu put it, ‘schemes of thought and perception can produce the objectivity that they do produce only by producing misrecognition of the limits of the cognition that they make possible, thereby founding immediate adherence, in the doxic mode, to the world of tradition experienced as a “natural world” and taken for granted’.<sup>35</sup> As such, social life works on the basis of ‘truths’ that are not objective but arbitrary and socially situated. It is the ‘confusion of what is in fact a social and arbitrary order, but which is perceived and understood as a natural and inevitable order’ that enables a doxa in the first place.<sup>36</sup> Richard Ashley illustrated this in the IR discipline a long time ago with reference to how the anarchy assumption in realism paradoxically created a community under anarchy in how the realism-idealism binary as the doxa of the field were based on how the realist orthodoxy stood in opposition to heterodox idealist utopias.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Bicchì and Bremberg, ‘European diplomatic practices’, p. 394.

<sup>29</sup>Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

<sup>30</sup>See Pouliot, ‘The logic of practicality’; Adler and Pouliot, ‘International practices’; Rebecca Adler-Nissen (ed.), *Bourdieu in International Relations: Rethinking Key Concepts in IR* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>31</sup>Rebecca Adler-Nissen, ‘Opting out of an ever closer union: the integration doxa and the management of sovereignty’, *West European Politics*, 34:5 (2011), pp. 1092–13 (p. 1099). Doxa is only one in the family of interrelated concepts that make up Bourdieu’s sociology. For instance, without field and habitus there would be no doxa, as there is no field and habitus without doxa. However, the concept of *doxic futures* is developed to stand alone, so to speak, but its epistemological basis necessarily lies in Bourdieu’s wider social theory. As such, ‘doxa is the cornerstone of any field to the extent that it determines the stability of the objective social structures through the way these are reproduced and reproduce themselves in the agents’ perceptions and practices; in other words, in their *habitus*’. Cécile Deer, ‘Doxa’, in Michael Grenfell (ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 119–30, emphasis in original.

<sup>32</sup>Berling, *The International Political Sociology of Security*; Martin Senn and Christoph Elhardt, ‘Bourdieu and the bomb: Power, language and the doxic battle over the value of nuclear weapons’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:2 (2014), pp. 316–40.

<sup>33</sup>Guzzini, ‘A reconstruction of constructivism in International Relations’; Adler-Nissen, ‘Opting out of an ever closer union’; Anna Leander, ‘The promises, problems, and potentials of a Bourdieu-inspired staging of International Relations’, *International Political Sociology*, 5:3 (2011), pp. 294–313.

<sup>34</sup>Richard K. Ashley, ‘The poverty of neorealism’, *International Organization*, 38:2 (1984), pp. 225–86; Richard K. Ashley, ‘The geopolitics of geopolitical space: Toward a critical social theory of international politics’, *Alternatives*, 12:4 (1987), pp. 403–34.

<sup>35</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (New York: New York University Press, 1977), p. 164.

<sup>36</sup>Steven Loyal, *Bourdieu’s Theory of the State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 28.

<sup>37</sup>Ashley, ‘The geopolitics of geopolitical space’; Stefano Guzzini, *Power, Realism and Constructivism* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 103–04.

Theorised in the concept of *doxic futures*, Bourdieu's concept becomes integral to representations of the future. Surely, the future is present also in Bourdieu's work through how

the body is snatched by the forthcoming of the world, what we aim at in ordinary action is not a contingent future: the good player is the one who as in Pascal's example, 'places' the ball better or who places himself not where the ball is but where it is about to land. In either case, the forthcoming in relation to which he positions himself is not a possible which may happen or not happen but something which is already there in the configuration of the game and in the present positions and postures of teammates and opponents.<sup>38</sup>

In the example from the football field, the practice of placing oneself where the ball is most likely to land is based on doxic knowledge, but an important element from the game is missing, and I shall explain it using the same metaphor. When the player makes the run, she sticks her arm out to signal her anticipation to her teammates, explicitly indicating that the ball may be played into the open space because that is where she intends to run. This brings the theoretical point: Practice needs to be appreciated both through situated dispositions (pasts) and representations of the future.

Ted Hopf deals with the same problem when he tries to develop a practice theory of the international that can account for change beyond the habitual.<sup>39</sup> In his account, change happens in two ways: either habitually – that is, in practice – or through reflection. Again, we encounter a dichotomy between tacit and representational knowledge: As people go on in the world through everyday doings and sayings, they are unlikely to be emancipated from their traditions, experiences, and habits. Instead, any conscious reflection is produced *with* the dispositions, also unknown and tacit ones, that any agent embodies at a given moment. Thus, scholars of practice could theorise change as it emerges in a dialectical relationship between structural reproduction and agentic innovation through mobilising the concept of *doxic futures*. Our main concern is not what goes on in the brain but, rather, how representations of future scenarios within social fields cannot escape the rules that stabilise those fields in the first place, despite those futures being explicitly stated.

The problem in dealing with the uncertainty of the future in IR practice theory is that the prevalent focus in this literature has been on where people speak from, their dispositions. This is also the case in the Bourdieu-inspired approaches that dominated much of the early work in the practice turn.<sup>40</sup> Bourdieu's concept of habitus, the 'system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions', comes with a devotion to looking back temporally when giving meaning to practice.<sup>41</sup> Knowledge is located in practice, and practice is a result of past experiences that operate as structuring structures for how social agents perform in the fields in which they operate. Time is something that has been, that creates a particular moment where there is space for agency based on what was and became internalised. As Vincent Pouliot notes, 'The dispositions comprised in the habitus, constituted by subjective and intersubjective past experiences, in part constitutes future practices.'<sup>42</sup> Whatever thoughts agents have regarding the future are temporally

<sup>38</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Mediation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 208.

<sup>39</sup>Hopf, 'Change in international practices'.

<sup>40</sup>Guzzini, 'A reconstruction of constructivism in International Relations'; Pouliot, 'The logic of practicality'; Adler-Nissen (ed.), *Bourdieu in International Relations*; Berling, *The International Political Sociology of Security*; Leander, 'The promises, problems, and potentials of a Bourdieu-inspired staging of International Relations'; Frédéric Mérand, 'Pierre Bourdieu and the birth of European defense', *Security Studies*, 19:2 (2010), pp. 342–74; Kirsti Stuvøy, 'Symbolic power and (in)security: the marginalization of women's security in northwest Russia', *International Political Sociology*, 4:4 (2010), pp. 401–18; Didier Bigo, 'Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations: Power of practices, practices of power', *International Political Sociology*, 5:3 (2011), pp. 225–58.

<sup>41</sup>Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, pp. 82–3.

<sup>42</sup>Vincent Pouliot, *International Security in Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 193.

located in a conception of time that operates at the level of past experience: 'Practices carry the past into the present; and the present into the future.'<sup>43</sup> They accumulate over time, creating a ratchet effect that structures the future.<sup>44</sup> To be blunt, Bourdieusian practice theory in IR embodies a dispositional bias.

The emphasis on inarticulate know-how acquired in the past as *the* source for explaining political practice is problematic because the role that ideas about the future has in structuring practice is central to any understanding of social agency and indeed practice. When the United Kingdom sought to leave the EU, the European security and defence field would change in one way or another, and accordingly, the future architecture of an institution like the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was a central part of the debate before and after the British referendum. By way of introducing *doxic futures* to the practice theory agenda, the current theorisation welcomes the representational element of informed ideas about the expected consequences of competent performances and representations, performances, and representations that are, indeed, based on tacit know-how. Indeed, Brexit was, before the referendum, already envisioned to produce a 'new Europe' based on how it played out as exemplified by terms such as 'hard Brexit', 'soft Brexit', 'Smexit', 'Fifty shades of Brexit', 'Full English Brexit', 'Brexit over easy', 'Continental Brexit', 'Dirty Brexit', and so forth.<sup>45</sup>

### **Doxic futures**

What is needed, I argue, to move beyond the dispositional bias in practice theory is conceptualising human agency and practice as a 'temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented towards the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and towards the present (as a capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)'.<sup>46</sup> In Mead's conceptualisation of time, we would here understand practices as 'specific forms of events that do not happen in time, but themselves first constitute a present with past and future horizons'.<sup>47</sup> These sociological insights have been absent in IR, at least representationally speaking. Felix Berenskoetter labels the neglect of the future in IR theory a 'sloppy habit permeating much of IR, namely the tendency to conflate the impossibility of knowing what others currently think, or social contingency, and the impossibility of knowing the future as such, or temporal contingency'.<sup>48</sup> As such, IR realists, for instance, have interpreted the future as absent from post-positivist approaches based on how 'they pay close attention to the prevailing discourse(s) in society because discourse reflects and shapes beliefs and interests, and establishes accepted norms of behaviour'.<sup>49</sup> However, there is much to gain by challenging realists and the idea that the future is known due to given structural conditions by incorporating the future into interpretivist analyses as well.

The concept of *doxic futures* is here defined as representations of the future rooted in practical knowledge and tacit assumptions about the self-evident nature of the social world. They are situated in social theatres, and they enable practices by guiding actors towards the future. As such,

<sup>43</sup> Adler and Pouliot, 'International practices', p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Vincent Pouliot and Jean-Philippe Thérien, 'The politics of inclusion: Changing patterns in the governance of international security', *Review of International Studies*, 41:2 (2015), pp. 211–37.

<sup>45</sup> Tim Oliver, 'Now! That's What I Call Brexit: Delving into the Brexicon' (2016), available at: {<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2016/12/22/now-thats-what-i-call-brexit-delving-into-the-brexicon-of-brexit/>} accessed 14 February 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, 'What is agency?', *American Journal of Sociology*, 103:4 (1998), p. 963. In their conception of temporality, Emirbayer and Mische allow a level of agent rationality that is not possible in *doxic futures* due to the embeddedness of habits when alternative possibilities are imagined.

<sup>47</sup> Werner Bergmann, 'The problem of time in sociology', *Time & Society*, 1:1 (1992), p. 125.

<sup>48</sup> Berenskoetter, 'Reclaiming the vision thing', p. 650.

<sup>49</sup> Stephen M. Walt, 'International Relations: One world, many theories', *Foreign Policy*, 110 (1998), pp. 40–1.

*doxic futures* link the past and the future into the embodied state of the present and guide practices towards – and inevitably into – the future. They account for how agents’ ‘feel for the game’ creates expectations about tomorrow. Turning to *doxic futures* thus implies turning to the future as it is rationalised by practitioners in international politics.

Berenskoetter argues that a focus on visions as meaningful possibilities differs from the logic of practicality because of its ‘focus on the power of inspiration and the drive toward realization’,<sup>50</sup> The logic of practicality as formulated by Pouliot is oriented towards inarticulate and habitual ways of being in the world: pre-reflexive knowledge that makes agents do what they do, or in lay language, having a ‘knack’ for what is considered socially competent.<sup>51</sup> *Doxic futures* account for how visions of the future are expressed and serve rationalising functions for social agency and practice but with an analytical sensitivity to where people speak ‘from’ in a wider intersubjective setting. Wedded to the concept of doxa, this leads our attention also to symbolic structures and violence in the form of how ‘the doxa is so central to the production of social hierarchies, politics, and power precisely because it is common sense – and hence unquestioned/mis-recognized’.<sup>52</sup> As such, there is more power in *doxic futures* than the power of inspiration as it enables questions about where that inspiration comes from in the first place. Therefore, *doxic futures* breaks down the distinction between representational and non-representational knowledge that has defined the logic of practicality and allegedly distances it from the study of visions due to its emphasis on the tacit knowledge that structures international politics ‘from below’.<sup>53</sup> With *doxic futures*, knowledge remains intimately tied to practice, that is, competent performances and doxic ‘truths’, but explicit representations of the future rooted in background knowledge of produced effects as a result of the agents’ experience of change or disruption are approached with greater sensitivity towards their representational element. To be sure, struggles in social fields are structured by both logics of practicality and the visionary logic of meaningful possibilities, and the analytical distinction between the two is unfortunate when trying to understand the relationship between practices and the flow of time in the making of international politics. If anything, they both lend ontological security, which arguably also was a central element in the reasoning in the immediate debate about the future of European security and defence in relation to Brexit.<sup>54</sup> Thus, there is nothing but analytical distinctions between how practitioners dealing with the security and defence aspect of Brexit gave meaning to their life worlds based on embodied social structures and their views on how the world would look tomorrow. They were intrinsically linked.

Furthermore, *doxic futures* provide the means to be open to continuity *in* change and how everyday practices might well privilege reproduction rather than change.<sup>55</sup> Related to the European security and defence field after Brexit, this means that change would not necessarily be as disruptive as some dystopian observers would have claimed. There are degrees of change, and the way that doxic knowledge structured visions about the future for European defence points our attention towards the way that representations of the future may not have been disruptive in and of themselves but innovations within the orthodox confines of the field. Rather, change beyond this theorisation of a single field would occur in the lacunae between fields. However, the unfolding tension between change and continuity is embedded also in *doxic futures* when practices are understood in ‘the flow of time’.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup>Berenskoetter, ‘Reclaiming the vision thing’, p. 663.

<sup>51</sup>Pouliot, ‘The logic of practicality’.

<sup>52</sup>Leander, ‘The promises, problems, and potentials of a Bourdieu-inspired staging of International Relations’, p. 304.

<sup>53</sup>Pouliot, ‘The logic of practicality’.

<sup>54</sup>Thanks to Felix Berenskoetter for drawing my attention to this.

<sup>55</sup>Hopf, ‘The logic of habit in International Relations’.

<sup>56</sup>Emirbayer and Mische, ‘What is agency?’.



## Methodological paths from doxa to futures, and back

No common methodical technique can be easily applied to the study of practices, even though interviews, participant observation, and discourse analysis have been common methods applied.<sup>57</sup> In both IR and social science more broadly, one might argue that the practice ontology comes as a ‘theory-method package’ where the research activity moves from zooming in to zooming out.<sup>58</sup> Yet, the methods – and analytical strategies especially – applied by those working with practice theory have not always been clear and transparent.<sup>59</sup> The specific mobilisation of the concept of doxa in this article as something tacit and taken for granted in agents’ representations of possible futures means that ‘it must be interpreted from contexts and practices as well as through agents’ dispositions and subjective meanings’.<sup>60</sup> The doxic element in practices of representing the future is unknown to the agents themselves, and as such, one cannot ask practitioners in international politics about their own silences. What is in the doxa, then, is what is excluded as a possibility because it would question the fundamental meaning of the interaction in the field.<sup>61</sup> Analytically, a theorisation of doxa is a scholarly endeavour whose internal validity is contingent on reflexivity.<sup>62</sup> *Doxic futures* do not constitute an empirical reality as such, but they form part of a model that seeks to understand social life in a Weberian sense.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, a Bourdieu-inspired study of *doxic futures* approaches the concept as a thinking tool, one that ‘needs to be developed further and adjusted to the needs of situated research contexts’.<sup>64</sup> The conceptual development in the article, however, needs to be accommodated by an explicit research strategy that makes visible how the practice analysis of *doxic futures* is ‘put to work’.<sup>65</sup> To conceptualise and analyse *doxic futures* that structured security practices after the Brexit vote in the UK, I conducted 13 in-depth interviews with diplomats and civil servants with stakes in the European security and defence field.<sup>66</sup> In these interviews, I asked questions that enabled the informants to talk about their everyday way of working in general and in relation to Brexit, as well as to reflect on the potential impact that Brexit would have for European security and defence cooperation. The limitation of this is, of course, that the interviewees merely talked about their social interaction, and represented the future only in an artificial situation. As such, the data in the study are proxies to actual diplomatic interaction.<sup>67</sup> To treat this problem with care, the interview guide was meticulously constructed to enable the interviewees to talk about European security and defence after Brexit with regards to their social interaction and not

<sup>57</sup>Jérémie Cornut, ‘The practice turn in International Relations theory’, in Robert A. Denemark and Renée Marlin-Bennett (eds), *The International Studies Encyclopedia* (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing, 2010).

<sup>58</sup>Vincent Pouliot, ‘“Subjectivism”: Toward a constructivist methodology’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 51:2 (2007), pp. 359–84; Davide Nicolini, *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>59</sup>Bueger and Gadinger, *International Practice Theory*.

<sup>60</sup>Pouliot, ‘The logic of practicality’, p. 284.

<sup>61</sup>Rebecca Adler-Nissen, *Opting Out of the European Union: Diplomacy, Sovereignty and European Integration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 208.

<sup>62</sup>Deer, ‘Doxa’.

<sup>63</sup>Morten Skumsrud Andersen and Iver B. Neumann, ‘Practices as models: a methodology with an illustration concerning Wampum diplomacy’, *Millennium*, 40:3 (2012), pp. 457–81.

<sup>64</sup>Anna Leander, ‘Thinking tools: Analyzing symbolic power and violence’, in Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (eds), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 11–27; Bueger and Gadinger, *International Practice Theory*, p. 43.

<sup>65</sup>Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 73.

<sup>66</sup>Due to the sensitive topic, all informants have been granted anonymity. Seven of the informants were ambassadors to the EU’s Political and Security Committee (PSC), one was a deputy ambassador to the same committee, one was an EEA diplomat preparing meetings in the PSC, one was a member of the House of Lords, one was a head of a CSDP section at a national representation in Brussels, one worked on security issues in the European Commission, and one was a security official at a national representation in Brussels.

<sup>67</sup>Vincent Pouliot, ‘Practice tracing’, in Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel (eds), *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 237–59.

only what they themselves thought about it. Also, the theorisation of *doxic futures* itself is an attempt to situate practices of representing the future socially. From the interviews, I inferred the field-specific doxa and analysed how explicit representations of the future of European defence after Brexit embody the doxic mode of adherence to the world ‘as it is’. Thus, the analytical strategy is three-tiered: establish doxa, engage representations of the future, and discuss those futures on the basis of doxa. Where the different *doxic futures* meet, we can meaningfully speak to the organising principles of the field, in this case, the European field of security and defence, and eventually also the politics of Brexit.

### A European doxa of interstate cooperation in and on Brexit

Brexit was, in and of itself, less than popular among security practitioners in Europe: ‘It is obvious that everyone in the European Union does not like it, but they [The UK] took their own decision.’<sup>68</sup> In his in-depth study of the EU’s Political and Security Committee (PSC) and its associated ambassadors, Jolyon Howorth found heartfelt compassion for, and desire on behalf of, European defence cooperation and integration.<sup>69</sup> Asking a civil servant working on security issues in the European Commission about her feelings on the morning of the Brexit referendum vote, the reply came immediately: ‘I was completely devastated. I was very angry. It could have been avoided, and it was too easy for them to win that.’<sup>70</sup> How did these sorts of dispositions play into and structure practices of representing the future within the European security and defence field?

When practitioners in international politics represent the future, those representations are ‘world-making’ and embedded in doxic truths about what is considered ‘natural’ in and on the world. After all, ‘not only is language the conduit of meaning, which turns practices into the location and engine of social action, but it is itself an enactment or doing in the form of “discursive practices”’.<sup>71</sup> For these reasons, the first step in the analysis of post-Brexit representations of the future of European security and defence needs to establish the doxic basis of the field from which such representations emerged. Together with the concept of habitus, doxa is the most central stabilising feature and source of dominance and social disciplining in Bourdieu’s social theory.<sup>72</sup> The social dimension of the dispositional and situated elements of *doxic futures* is fundamentally premised on the assumption that the social itself is made up of relations.<sup>73</sup> Basing the analysis in the social field of EU security and defence diplomacy, then, entails an attempt to ‘grasp the processes through which such relations are appropriated and used to stabilize and reify some other relations as making up an entity or thing’.<sup>74</sup>

In the European security and defence field, cooperation was structuring how diplomats envisioned European security post-Brexit. On the back of internal EU developments such as the establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), diplomats foresaw a role for the UK in EU security also after leaving. The perceived need for cooperation on security and defence was neither surprising nor something new. The EU had called for it already in its 2003 security strategy, and European security generally has been based on a cooperative spirit

<sup>68</sup>Interview 1 with PSC ambassador, Brussels, 21 September 2018.

<sup>69</sup>Jolyon Howorth, ‘The political and security committee: a case study in “supranational intergovernmentalism”’, *Les Cahiers Européens*, 01:2010 (2010), pp. 1–24.

<sup>70</sup>Interview in European Commission, 29 November 2016.

<sup>71</sup>Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); Adler and Pouliot, ‘International practices’.

<sup>72</sup>Hopf, ‘The logic of habit in International Relations’.

<sup>73</sup>Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon, ‘Relations before states: Substance, process and the study of world politics’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 5:3 (1999), pp. 291–332.

<sup>74</sup>Ole Jacob Sending, Vincent Pouliot, and Iver B. Neumann, *Diplomacy and the Making of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

for decades. Language of cooperation and inclusiveness might, however, serve to conceal power struggles that went on in the security and defence field with regards to Brexit. A general acceptance of France, Germany, and the even the UK as the main engines in defence developments among diplomats was, for example, from a practice perspective, part of a naturalisation of relative power and influence in this area. As an insider of the EU, the UK had been part of the apparently *inclusive* and *cooperative* social field of security and defence diplomacy, but simultaneously concrete developments were lagging behind the doxa of doing more together, partly because of the UK's – and certainly others' – unwillingness to allow the EU to move towards ever closer union in the particular area. Evidence from the interviews conducted for this study points to how an incremental sense of the reach and eventual success of EU and European defence cooperation went hand-in-hand with a fundamentally *intergovernmental* process.

Concerning that most of the interviewees in the study represented states in an intergovernmental body (the PSC), it was perhaps 'natural' that they had an intergovernmental approach to the field. However, within intergovernmental structures, there is practical space for navigating, which is exactly what the field concept seeks to grasp. One ambassador to the PSC, for instance, was illustrating the possibilities for interstate cooperation beyond Brexit while also being explicit on the ambiguities of time in what was an ongoing process:

That is a bit early to tell. We ... know that the UK has done a lot bilaterally in the security sector in many areas. The best case after they leave might be even more cooperation and better cooperation than when they are in because then they will really have to link up with the EU actors. We have to come back to that question.<sup>75</sup>

The quote illustrates the doxic mode of thinking about interstate cooperation as a self-evident response to Brexit that prevailed in the European security and defence field. There existed no discourse with which to address a dystopian future in which the UK and the rest of Europe approached security and defence in 'splendid isolation', despite a clear frustration with the UK project of disintegrating from the EU from the outset. A similar representation came from a member of the House of Lords only months after the Brexit referendum: 'I think the structure of European cooperation in terms of defence and security, apart from a European Army, should continue as much as possible – between sovereign states.'<sup>76</sup>

The following illustration and analysis of concrete representations of the future as *doxic futures* in the European security and defence field were deeply situated in the taken-for-granted necessity for cooperation and incremental development of institutions and capabilities in the European security and defence field. Brexit was considered only as a potential disruptor to the modus operandi of the field. *Doxic futures* of EU and European defence were based on an approach to Brexit and the future EU-UK relationship with the same pragmatic spirit as in the diplomatic everyday more generally: Solutions needed to be found, and that went for both the EU internally and the potential role for the UK and its role as a third country. It is on this basis that *doxic futures* in the context of European security post-Brexit were attempts – within the security and defence field – at 'saving' Europe from the disintegration that Brexit represented.

Arguably, a problem when applying Bourdieusian theory in empirical studies is that the theory is static and that 'the reality is that most strategic policies contain spaces of opacity and ambiguity that fit uneasily with the notion of *doxa*'.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the claim seems to be that because strategic agents think, they cannot be limited by doxa. The theorisation in this article is sympathetic to the critique of static theory, however, the distinction does not hold against *doxic futures*. As for European security and defence diplomacy in relation to Brexit, the next section presents

<sup>75</sup>Interview with PSC ambassador, Brussels, 21 November 2017.

<sup>76</sup>Interview with member of the House of Lords, London, 1 December 2016.

<sup>77</sup>Frédéric Mérand and Amelie Forget, 'Strategy', in Adler-Nissen (ed.), *Bourdieu in International Relations*, pp. 93–113.

concrete *doxic futures* and argues that they did not embody doxic reconfiguration or even doxic battles,<sup>78</sup> but some form of constructive ambiguity in a tacit defence of the everyday mode of working together during and beyond the Brexit process.

### The spectre of Brexit in the European security and defence field

The main argument that will be continued in the following – based on the preceding discussion of doxa in the European security and defence field – is that diplomats tried to save European security and defence cooperation from the disintegrating effects of Brexit. In making this case, two non-competing and concrete *doxic futures* are presented and discussed: one concerning ‘a Europe that is buying together’ and one concerning the UK’s future role as a third country in EU security and defence. The former primarily pertains to internal EU cooperation at 27, whereas the second is based on representations of the future EU-UK relationship. In these *doxic futures*, Brexit was a spectre, as the diplomatic perception of disintegration proved to be an unwanted future spurring resistance and practical adaptation.<sup>79</sup> Interestingly, the notion of shared threats and necessity for cooperation – usually represented as a rationale for cooperation – was not as central as one might expect from reading the documents that justify and premise European cooperation, such as the EU’s Global Strategy released only days after the Brexit referendum in the UK.<sup>80</sup> Certainly, the response reflex for the diplomats in this study was to mention the security context as a premise, but the novelty – call it supplementary finding – in the following concerns the predominant focus on the economics of defence and the need to keep the UK close to the EU and Europe despite Brexit.

#### ‘A Europe buying together’

Observers have noted how the bureaucratisation of Europe has depoliticised some issues that previously were considered deeply political and wedded to state democracy.<sup>81</sup> Thinking in such terms, the argument can be extended to how the economic dimensions of security and defence had been lifted up and beyond the scope of the nation state, despite the defence sector remaining one of the most protected industries by nation states. In relation to the money side of things in EU security and defence, the cooperative doxa in the field meant that ‘non-EU states can also participate in EDA activities if they wish to do so. A regular EU-UK dialogue would allow for finding common ground on operations, industrial and capability cooperation, which would be of mutual interest.’<sup>82</sup> These sorts of representations of the future figured predominantly in diplomacy. As one diplomat in the PSC expressed when asked about the Brexit effect on the CSDP, ‘We can have a lot of fine words, but words have to be followed by deeds, and then we will have to see. In the end of the day, let’s be honest about it, it is also a question about financing and money, and about willingness to pay for more.’<sup>83</sup> The taken for granted need for economic cooperation on security and defence was here coupled with a realisation that the defence economies were

<sup>78</sup>See Berling, *The International Political Sociology of Security*.

<sup>79</sup>An obvious parallel and inspiration for this wording is, of course, Marx and Engels’ *The Communist Manifesto* in which they analysed the elites’ fear of and reaction to the coming of communism.

<sup>80</sup>EU, ‘Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy’, available at: {<http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy-european-union>} accessed 14 June 2017.

<sup>81</sup>Vivien Schmidt, *Democracy in Europe: The EU and National Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Chris J. Bickerton, ‘Towards a social theory of EU foreign and security policy’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49:1 (2011), pp. 171–90.

<sup>82</sup>Claudia Major and Alicia von Voss, ‘European Defence in View of Brexit’ (2017), p. 4, available at: {[https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2017C10\\_mjr\\_vos.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2017C10_mjr_vos.pdf)} accessed 14 June 2017.

<sup>83</sup>Interview in Brussels, 29 November 2016.

predominantly national, but that incremental steps could be made towards a future where smarter spending across Europe could emerge. This also unfolded in a context in which most European states – the NATO members – had committed to significant increases in their military spending.

Extending the argument that European security and defence diplomacy were based on a *doxa* where both the state and its sovereignty was *doxa*, while doing more together was simultaneously perceived to be self-evident as well, the following reply from one PSC ambassador when asked what EU security and defence cooperation should look like in ten years is indicative:

I hope it will look like we will work together much more. And that those projects are a success. It means that we will have more defence for less money. And that we not only have projects that we are able to buy – in the end easier and cheaper specific capabilities – but also that we have made some steps in the innovation and research part, which is more the EDF part. Because that would mean continuing to ensure that you are working together on innovation for the defence industry. And then you work together and actually make the prototypes and you can eventually buy together. In that sense, you can fill the capability shortcomings that we have already identified. ... In the end, we will be able to also expedite missions so that we can really intervene, not only militarily, but also civilian, quick interventions.<sup>84</sup>

Without compromising the anonymity of the diplomat quoted above, the PSC ambassador represented a country with a strong NATO focus and a more cautious approach to EU defence cooperation. As such, it spurs the argument about how the *doxa* of interstate cooperation structured the futures that diplomats represented regarding EU and European security and defence. Within this space, between national priorities from home and the supranational agenda of the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) specifically, the European security and defence field was based on an inclusive and pragmatic way of working – including buying – towards common solutions, albeit on a sovereign basis.

We support investing more in European security under the European heading. ... Basically, doing what we are best at: the coherence of our societies, the internal market, growth, investment in defence, opening the market for defence.<sup>85</sup>

This quote is a testament to the changing state practices in and through bureaucratisation of certain political issues in ‘post-sovereign’ Europe.<sup>86</sup> Notably, the major developments in the EU security and defence area following the Brexit referendum in 2016 happened in the economics of defence through how the newly established European Defence Fund would provide funds for joint development of defence equipment and technology in the defence sector, even geared towards ‘disruptive technologies’.<sup>87</sup> Only from such joint investments, could Europe eventually close its ‘capability gap’.<sup>88</sup> The way that European defence was represented above in relation to the economic argument for cooperation despite Brexit was based on how scholars and EU officials alike embodied a particular vision of what the modern state was and should be in an interconnected world. This was arguably based on a neoliberal *doxa* that made self-evident the necessity to deepen economic interdependence within the European security and defence field.<sup>89</sup> In a sense, *doxic futures* about the European defence economy had no space for what the British referendum result

<sup>84</sup>Interview 1 with PSC ambassador, 20 November 2017.

<sup>85</sup>Interview 2 with PSC ambassador, 21 September 2018.

<sup>86</sup>Adler-Nissen, ‘Opting out of an ever closer union’.

<sup>87</sup>European Commission, ‘European Defence Fund’, available at: {[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/european-defence-fund-2019-mar-19\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/european-defence-fund-2019-mar-19_en)} accessed 4 April 2019.

<sup>88</sup>Interview 1 with PSC ambassador, 20 November 2017.

<sup>89</sup>Rohit Chopra, ‘Neoliberalism as *doxa*: Bourdieu’s theory of the state and the contemporary Indian discourse on globalization and liberalization’, *Cultural Studies*, 17:3/4 (2003), pp. 419–44.

ultimately asked for. Accordingly, it was ‘natural’ that experts argued that ‘the ultimate solution’ for European defence was ‘shared defence procurement and development between like-minded European countries’.<sup>90</sup> The *doxic futures* in a ‘Europe buying together’ would see a transformation of both the EU internally and in the union’s relationship with the UK that countered any potential negative impact to the interstate way of incrementally moving forward on the economics of defence.

### **The UK as a third country in EU defence**

On the doxic basis of interstate cooperation, Brexit was considered a disruption to an incremental process of ‘thickening’ defence cooperation in Europe. This did not exclusively refer to Europe-as-EU with a clear border delineating inside and outside; the borders of inside and outside were more fluid than that, and Brexit would in that respect mean some future EU-UK relationship.<sup>91</sup> The everyday practice of ‘bordering’ as opposed to ‘border’ helped to push against any claims that Brexit itself could constitute a major setback for EU-UK security and defence cooperation. For one, diplomats talked of some form of a forum within the CSDP for the UK in a post-Brexit era, for instance, through regular consultations in a ‘PSC+1’ configuration. This might be linked to what one diplomat referred to as the ‘uninspiring’ PSC configurations with third states such as Norway and Turkey with all superpower third states in absentia.<sup>92</sup> The UK would be in a different position here, one closer to the one enjoyed by Canada and the United States today in terms of leverage and political weight in the field.

In the same interview, notably conducted early in the Brexit process, the diplomat willingly speculated about the future relationship:

I think it will be ‘à la carte’. I don’t think necessarily they want to be part of all areas – well ideally of course they would like to – but they are also realistic. I think they know that they are leaving, they cannot be part of all of it.<sup>93</sup>

The initial acceptance of the UK’s desire for an ‘à la carte’ defence relationship with the EU indicated that the UK in the future, despite having left the EU, would potentially be part of an ‘ever more differentiated’ Europe. This was partly a naturalisation of the UK’s strength in the area of security and defence coupled with the already differentiated way of handling security in the everyday (and the ‘exceptional everyday’ for that sake). It made it ‘natural’ to maintain close UK/EU ties post-Brexit. As one ambassador stated:

We know of course that the UK wants to have something very special and unique. I think this is the issue that has not really been thought through thoroughly. In any case, the UK is a strong security actor. We want to have the UK closely linked to our work, to make it possible, and we would not like to see big hurdles for that. ... There are already models on how to include third states or in the CSDP missions. The ground has been prepared already. If this is enough for the UK, is of course, for them to answer. From our side, we would very much like to see the UK closely aligned.<sup>94</sup>

Such representations were a testament to how the future of the EU defence and its EU/UK dimension would be based on similar dynamics of practical cooperation that often goes under the radar

<sup>90</sup>Sophia Besch, ‘Security of Supply in EU Defence: Friends in Need?’ (2016), available at: {[https://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/insight\\_sb\\_17.8.16.pdf](https://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/insight_sb_17.8.16.pdf)} accessed 14 June 2017.

<sup>91</sup>This dynamic was also visible in the public debate and reflected in the political declaration on the future relationship that the UK and the EU negotiated as part of the Article 50 process.

<sup>92</sup>Interview in EEAS, Brussels, 29 November 2016.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Interview 2 with PSC ambassador, Brussels, 20 November 2017.

of public attention. Furthermore, it illustrates that the security and defence field was not statically bound to the institutions governing it, but that the perceived necessity for cooperation brought about representations of the future that functioned as practical ‘bordering’ towards the project of ‘saving’ the field by countering any potential Brexit impact on its extant functioning. This would all eventually be the result of the careful balancing that security practitioners engage in every day to ‘move’ on security and defence, both together and as individual nation states. As explained by one diplomat,

Over time, once we enter into negotiations over the official relationship, I think there will be a manoeuvre space to find solutions which will be beneficial for both sides. But again, it will be close relations, but, you know, once you are out you are out. You cannot expect to have the same relations or rights as the member states. That’s reality.<sup>95</sup>

On the one hand, diplomats balanced the need for EU coherence *and* cooperation with like-minded third states as Europe saw the UK engage in disintegration. Beyond the formal composition of the EU and its external border, *doxic futures* for EU-UK cooperation were based on visions for incremental development of closer cooperation. One ambassador frankly stated,

We need the UK. From our perspective, we have been very open and clear that we want the PESCO to include possibilities for third states to join on specific projects. In defence, we are very much cooperating with the UK, so if we want to have good projects, sometimes, for example Norway would be an obvious one which we would really want to join as well.<sup>96</sup>

Several diplomats stressed how some rights, of course, needed to be taken away from the UK as a necessity due to the exiting. In the context of increasing EU defence cooperation, the search for credibility certainly drove this form of bordering. Yet, the most notable developments in EU defence cooperation, PESCO and the European Defence Fund (EDF), were developed to be inclusive enough for the UK to be involved on a differentiated basis if they, at any point, wanted to. Another diplomat stressed the temporal dimension in his vision for EU-UK cooperation in PESCO (and other parts of the CSDP):

What I am trying to say is that most likely they will stay inside once we will reach overall agreements on Brexit. But initially, that will be definitely maybe modest for the UK. Not so satisfactory comparing to what they were thinking to have. But over time, as the whole story goes on, God knows ..., maybe we will reach the point where we will have a feasible solution that will mitigate their ambition to have closer relations with the EU when it comes to security and defence.<sup>97</sup>

*Doxic futures* on EU-UK relations in security and defence can hardly be represented as exclusively concerning disintegration. Rather, representations of the future analysed here pointed to how the process towards Brexit would eventually, over time, develop into an exercise in more differentiated cooperation. As such, a cautionary *modus operandi* of diplomatic practices, the *doxa* of interstate cooperation in the European security and defence field, and the pragmatic relationship with bordering in this area tells an untold story of Brexit as disintegration. In the European security and defence field, the analysis of *doxic futures* argues that, based on established and deeply situated ‘truths’ about European cooperation, Brexit was made into a process towards a desired future as emerging from disintegration. This pertains both to *doxic futures* of the EU buying

<sup>95</sup>Interview with Head of CSDP Section, 21 September 2018.

<sup>96</sup>Interview with PSC ambassador, Brussels, 20 September 2017.

<sup>97</sup>Interview with Head of CSDP section, Brussels, 21 September 2018.


together and the EU-UK relationship. These findings shed new light on the Brexit process through the argument that diplomats tried to save the ‘stuff’ of their own field – security and defence cooperation – from the possible impact of disintegration. Importantly, political processes of making the future by representing alternatives should not merely be considered rational calculations of desired outcomes but rather as deeply embedded in the operating ‘truths’ in social fields. As a critique of the fields of study, introducing representations of the future to the practice turn fulfils an objective both of ‘practice turners’ and ‘temporal turners’ alike, that is, questioning, destabilising, and unmasking hegemonic foundations.<sup>98</sup>

## Conclusion

This article has introduced the concept of *doxic futures* to the practice turn in IR. The concept was defined as representations of the future rooted in practical knowledge and tacit assumptions about the self-evident nature of the social world. By inquiring into representations of the future, practice approaches can shed new light on how the flow of time is essential in the everyday making of international politics. Time matters both in how past practices are embedded in social fields and in and through practices of representing the future within those fields. *Doxic futures* capture this dynamic. Theoretically, the implication is that the so-called logic of practicality must be re-theorised to account also for representational knowledge, yet with the tacit truths structuring representations intact and analytically wedded to each other. As such, that practices are enabled both by conscious reflection *and* tacit knowledge simultaneously is not a contradiction in terms; it is an analytically meaningful way of studying the flow of time in and on international practices.

The article contributes to the understanding of the Brexit process and how the diplomatic security and defence field responded to the British decision to leave the EU. By putting the concept of *doxic futures* to work in an interview-based study, I have illustrated that practitioners represented two particular *doxic futures* that were bounded within the social field from which they emerged. They concerned a Europe of ‘buying together’ and the future EU-UK security and defence relationship. Importantly, these *doxic futures* were attempts at saving European security and defence *from* Brexit. The developments in European and EU security and defence have been characterised by incrementality, and the *doxic futures* pointed to a Europe that would – present and future – be structured by a doxa of cooperation and international deliberation on how to get there.

Regarding the tension between change and continuity and how to identify it when it is happening, the framework of *doxic futures* enables a broader discussion on how discourses of crisis and resilience in IR relates to power. Notwithstanding the degree of seriousness of Brexit, the extent to which it, in practice, would produce detrimental consequences in and on European security and defence seemed to be overplayed in the epistemic conversation about the future of European security and defence. There is a politics of methodology, from theory to method, that determine these arguments. By turning to doxic representations of the future when approaching the European security and defence aspect of Brexit, IR scholars could succeed in ‘rupturing not simply existing truths but habitual and institutionalised uses of methods that reproduce dominant political practices’.<sup>99</sup> For IR practice theories with a strong basis in Bourdieu’s critical sociology, this should be a goal in and of itself. A novel approach to temporality in and through practice might prove promising in that regard, and the analysis of *doxic* security and defence *futures* in the Brexit process serves as a first illustration. Ironically, only the future will prove or disprove the real salience of the theorisation in the specific case study undertaken here.

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<sup>98</sup>Hom, ‘Timing is everything’, p. 306.

<sup>99</sup>Claudia Aradau et al., *Critical Security Methods: New Frameworks for Analysis* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p. 11.



**Acknowledgements.** I am very grateful for the kind and helpful feedback that I have received on earlier versions of this article from Rebecca Adler-Nissen, Felix Berenskoetter, Christian Bueger, Jakob Dreyer, Joelle Dumouchel, Kristin Annabel Eggeling, Katharina Glaab, Frédéric Mérand, Noel Parker, Vincent Pouliot, Ben Rosamond, Kirsti Stuvøy, Larissa Versloot, Sindre Gade Viksand, and Dylan Loh. I am also grateful for comments from fellow panellists at several conferences, the editorial team at *RIS*, and the anonymous reviewers.

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