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CRISIS AS PRACTICE: ROUTINIZING RUSSIA – U.S. SECURITY RIVALRIES

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Abstract. This article contributes to the debate on how an international crisis may contribute to ontological security. We argue that ontological security can paradoxically be achieved through escalating practices capable of provoking international crises. By merging 'practices', a fairly distinct theoretical perspective of International Relations, with ontological security, we seek to expand Jennifer Mitzen's premise that "even dangerous routines provide ontological security" and consider practices as a source of attaining ontological security. To partake in the practical turn in ontological security studies, we borrow the concepts of Practice Turn in IR, *habitus* (disposition), and *field* (environment). After substantiating the connection between the two theories, we take the demise of the INF Treaty as an example of a crisis. We argue that the INF Treaty, as a *field*, has become a source of ontological threat to both the U.S. and Russia. Following the end of the Cold War, the U.S. and Russia have constantly changed their *habitus* by developing key missile technologies and deteriorating bilateral relations. Accordingly, the changed *habitus* no longer conformed to the realities of the *field*, making its delegitimization by both sides self-evident.

Keywords: practices, INF, ontological security, Russia, US, security.

INTRODUCTION

Can security be ensured by risky escalation? In a perceptive 2015 article, Matthew Kroenig warned that Russia's revisionist steps were undermining the institutional security architecture in Europe, including the INF Treaty. Kroenig wrote, "Russia's reported test of an intermediate-range ground-launched cruise missile is a blatant violation of the INF Treaty ... [Russian] intermediate-range ground-launched cruise missiles also happen to be perfectly suited to keep Western European NATO allies at bay, while Russia makes moves against its Eastern European neighbours" [Kroenig 2015: 62]. Kroenig's article presciently foreshadowed the intensified 2019 U.S. accusations of Russia's revisionist actions, exemplified, among other things, by the alleged violation of the INF Treaty[1].

These views are shared by a larger body of literature within International Relations that regards the demise of the INF Treaty as yet another revisionist move by Russia

[1] Ford C. The future of U.S. policy towards Russia. 2019 https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116shrg40423/html/CHRG-116shrg40423.htm (accessed 02.09.2023).

[Pifer et al. 2015; Kühn et al. 2017; Kühn 2019; Larsen 2019]. More broadly, the literature points to Russia's revisionist foreign policy towards the West [Borgen 2009; Yost 2015; Sushentsov, Wohlforth 2020]. Meanwhile, the Russian government[2] and experts suggest that the U.S. is also guilty of similar revisionism of prior commitments. As Arbatov explains, "Russia's concerns should be addressed. Moscow claims that U.S. missile defense launchers for Standard-2 interceptors deployed in Romania and Poland could be used to launch offensive Tomahawk sea-based cruise missiles, which are deployed on U.S. surface ships with the same Mk-41 launchers as the Standard anti-missiles" [Arbatov 2020].

In academic discourse, scholars argue that the erosion of the INF Treaty demonstrates the instrumental logic of escalation. George and Smoke's empirical work [George, Smoke 1974] on international crises emphasizes that crises are sequential and can be viewed as a risky escalatory ladder between actors. Various scholars [Huth, Russett 1988; Fearon 1994; Carlson 1995; Kinsella, Russett 2002; Suzuki, Loizides 2011] suggest that parties deliberately risk their physical security to escalate the situation in order to achieve their foreign policy goals. This is often interpreted as an attempt to change the status quo or, less frequently, to develop their military-industrial base.

This article, in contrast, portrays crises as unconsciously routinized endeavors that provide ontological security to the actors involved. The demise of the INF Treaty, which was once a cornerstone of the nonproliferation regime, can serve as an example.

We begin our argument with a provocative question: what if both parties abandoned the INF Treaty because maintaining it became more anxiety-inducing than anxiety-reducing? The notion that even perilous routines can provide ontological security is not novel in the problematization of ontological security. Jennifer Mitzen discussed this concept in her work as early as 2006 [Mitzen 2006]. However, while Mitzen's research is identity-oriented, we adopt a more practical approach to the problematization of ontological security. By integrating practices into the study of ontological security, we aim to show how escalation becomes an unconscious and self-evident pathway towards a predictable and psychologically preferable situation for those involved in a crisis [Wittgenstein 1958; Pouliot 2008: 271].

To understand how crises function as a source of ontological needs for actors, we employ the vocabulary coined by 'sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, a key author for those practicing the "Practice Turn in International Relations." Specifically, we use the term *"field"* to refer to the institutional environment of practices, and the term *habitus* to describe the disposition of actors. In this context, the primary goal of escalatory practices is to establish ontological security, which may not correlate with physical security and merely functions as a marker of stable and certain fora. We argue that the INF Treaty as a *field* became an ontological threat to both the United States and Russia because the development of key missile technologies and the rise of China's military posture changed the parties' *habitus*.

Structurally, our article proceeds in three parts. First, we present the theoretical argument, elaborating on both the basic concepts of practice theory and ontological theory in International Relations. Then we explore the history of the INF Treaty's conclusion. This part serves as a historical foundation to contextualize the problem of the INF Treaty's demise. In the third and final part we demonstrate how,

[2] Vladimir Putin Calls NATO's strategy offensive and aggressive. *Interfax*, 22.12.2017. https://www.interfax.ru/russia/593030 (accessed 02.09.2023).

in the post-Cold War era, the parties revised their *habitus* as they developed their military capabilities in response to changes in the international landscape. As a result of these changes, the parties' dispositions shifted, leading to mutual accusations of non-compliance with the principles of supporting the *field* and diplomatic ping-pong. We conclude that despite the declared goal of maintaining the treaty, this only precipitated its collapse.

ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY AS IDENTITY SECURITY

The scholarly literature on ontological security accentuates the significance of identity as the primary source of security, diverging from a focus on practices. This perspective aligns ontological security with constructivist notions, thereby perpetuating Cartesian dualism. As highlighted by Christopher Browning and Pertti Joenniemi, the process of securitization is deemed the most effective means of generating ontological security [Browning, Joenniemi 2017]. This section aims to delve deeper into this argument.

However, it is important to challenge the association between ontological security and identity, drawing upon the insights of Vincent Pouliot. Pouliot's research, which involved numerous interviews with security practitioners, yielded a fascinating finding: within the realm of everyday diplomatic practice, the conventional ontology of Cartesian dualism, commonly employed by social scientists to distinguish between ideas and matter, lacked coherence. Meanings and symbols, according to Pouliot, do not merely serve as epiphenomena of underlying material forces, as suggested by neo-realism, nor can the role of matter be reduced to a mere facilitator of ideational constructs, as proposed by constructivism [Pouliot 2010b: 294].

Jennifer Mitzen argues that the pursuit of security is a "social practice that involves identity" [Mitzen 2006] emerging between states as an interstitial phenomenon [Mitzen 2006: 354]. Ayse Zarakol's examination of the securitization of the "civilized" European identity in relation to the collective West in Turkey and Japan sheds light on the resulting enduring conceptual ambiguity regarding past crimes. Zarakol suggests that the "reformulation of state identity to represent a group of people who are both capable and apologetic about it" leads to feelings of "shame because they lived in 'semi-civilized' or 'barbaric' states" [Zarakol 2010: 11]. Scholars explore how states uphold their sense of Self in relation to external others through the process of identity securitization, which influences political dynamics and responses to threats [Akchurina, Della Sala 2018; Lupovici 2012]. Examples of this phenomenon include Russia-Europe relations, Israel's unilateral measures following the Second Intifada, and strategies for addressing concerns related to adversary states, ethnic and migrant communities, or domestic political opponents [Gustafsson, Krickel-Choi 2020; Croft, Vaughan-Williams 2017; Homolar, Scholz 2019].

Securitizing identity is investigated by examining the maintenance of non-controversial autobiographical narratives of the Self, which preserve ontological security in various contexts. For instance, Jef Huysmans' work explores how states perceive "internal others" as threats to self-identity, as they challenge the "predictability and continuity" of a state's self-identity [Huysmans 1998a]. Further studies within this logic focus on migrants and their potential securitization [Huysmans 1998b]. Brent Steele's research investigates a state's notion of Self and its ability to construct compelling autobiographical narratives [Steele 2005]. Katarina Kinnvall [Kinnvall 2004] examines how nationalism and religion provide states with powerful narratives and beliefs that offer simple answers to state identity in a rapidly globalizing environment. Filip Ejdus [Ejdus 2018] discusses the disruption of Serbia's self-narrative by

Kosovo's independence declaration. Lastly, Raphael Leduc [Leduc 2021] argues that foreign fighters pose a significant ontological threat to authorities by challenging concepts of loyalty, societal cohesion, and the state as a singular international entity.

PRACTICING ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY

In this section, we endeavor to reconcile the notion of ontological security with research on practices, examining the literature to discern how ontological security is perceived as an objective for mundane interactions through practices. Ontological security, as posited by Giddens [Giddens 1984], refers to an individual's sense of continuity and coherence in their identity and experiences, which allows them to navigate the complexities of everyday life with relative ease. This sense of security is shaped by routine interactions and practices that provide a stable framework for individuals to make sense of themselves and their social environments.

In his seminal work on ontological security, subsequently incorporated as a concept in international relations, Anthony Giddens established the foundation for theorizing practices as a source of ontological security. He posited that people's knowledge of the world is rooted in "practical consciousness, embodied within the continuity of everyday activities." He further claimed that "the maintenance of habits and routines constitutes a crucial bulwark against threatening anxieties" [Giddens 1991: 61]. From Giddens' perspective, it is these disciplining routines that foster a sense of Self in an individual and subsequently constitute the "psychological architecture" that facilitates seamless functioning in the world [Giddens 1991: 39]. Giddens identifies practices, which individuals learn since the moment they are born, as a source of internal order that safeguards against external anxiety. Consequently, he asserts that ontological threats engender "a set of circumstances which – for whatever reason – radically disrupt accustomed routines of daily life" [Giddens 1979: 124]. Similar to Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu's notion of practical knowledge is responsible for the unconscious, albeit possessing profound socializing implications.

Giddens emphasizes the relationship between taken-for-granted, assimilated knowledge, and ontological security [Giddens 1991: 40], with the former shielding the latter through the practice of smooth and predictable behavior. Bourdieu, in turn, illustrates how practical knowledge or the "feel of the game" enables sport players to act "on the spot, that is, under conditions which preclude distance, perspective, detachment, and reflection" [Bourdieu 1992: 82].

Vincent Pouliot integrates Bourdieuan sociology into international political studies, offering a critique of representational bias in IR. It implies that researchers and scholars might overemphasize the role of articulated ideas, theories, and formal knowledge while underestimating the significance of tacit knowledge, know-how, and the practical understanding that individuals and groups acquire through lived experiences, social interactions, and everyday practices. This bias can lead to an incomplete or distorted understanding of social phenomena, as it fails to account for the full range of knowledge and practices that shape individuals' behaviors and the dynamics of social systems.

Pouliot contends that instrumental rationality (as found in realist literature), norm-following [March, Olsen 2008], and communicative action [Risse 2000] are ontologically prioritized by practical knowledge due to its position at the intersection of agent and structure. He asserts, "In contrast to practitioners, who actively engage with and shape the world, social scientists dedicate their careers and lives to contemplating ideas, deliberating on theories, and representing knowledge" [Pouliot 2008: 261].

Pouliot enriches this theoretical landscape by examining inarticulate, non-verbalized, and non-representational knowledge, which "renders what is to be done as 'self-evident' or commonsensical" [Pouliot 2008: 259]. In opposition to positivist or reflectivist approaches in international relations, practice theories contest Cartesian dualism [Pouliot 2010b] by incorporating social meanings into agents' activities. As a result, the intrinsic transformation of social meanings of actions, fashioned by agents, modifies the environment, consequently augmenting or attenuating ontological security.

Despite a multitude of interpretations regarding the meaning of practices, ranging from the most expansive (*what we do*) theoretical models [Kustermans 2016] to more intricate approaches [Little 2011; Voeten 2011; Neumann 2002; Hansen 2006], our analysis draws upon the framework proposed by Vincent Pouliot, who conceptualizes practices as socially meaningful patterns of activities [Pouliot 2010a; Adler, Pouliot 2011; Pouliot, Cornut 2015]. It is crucial to differentiate practices from action and behavior, as practices emerge from socially organized contexts [Adler, Pouliot 2011: 5]. Consequently, the most pertinent domain of study in the context of practice theory in international relations (PTIR) encompasses historically established, symbolically meaningful diplomatic practices, such as pre-modern practices of the Iroquois tribes [Andersen, Neumann 2012], diplomatic practices within the EU [Mérand 2010; Bicchi 2014; Zwolski 2014], the UN [Bueger, Gadinger 2015; Pouliot 2020; Adler-Nissen, Pouliot 2014], and NATO [Adler-Nissen, Pouliot 2014; Adler 2008].

It is important to shed light on the basic concepts surrounding practices, namely Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *field* and *habitus*. *Field* is the "social space" of practices. It encompasses power relations [Bourdieu 1992: 72–77], struggle and the matter of struggle [Pouliot 2008: 275], and the rules of the game shared by the players [Buerger, Gadinger 2015: 457]. Although the rules of the *field* are shared among the players, they struggle to preserve or transform its structure [Addison 2009: 332]. In IR, researchers analyze social *field*s of international law [Kauppi, Madsen 2014], European Union international bureaucracies [Cohen 2013; Georgakakis, Rowell 2013], or international governance [Kauppi, Madsen 2014]. The second category, *habitus*, is responsible for the source (integrating past experience, perceptions and roles) of patterned practices. Vincent Pouliot and Iver Neumann refer to *habitus* as "grammar" that allows for action in a certain way, i.e., the formation of patterned practices, in conjunction with the *field* [Neumann, Pouliot 2011: 110]. Both *habitus* and *field* are structural concepts when analyzing the game of practices between actors (and applying the constructivist agent-structure dilemma [Ringmar 2014; Wendt 1987]), with *field* being the institutionally organized topography of such interaction, and *habitus* being the language determined by this topography. The *field* structures the *habitus*, yet *habitus* contributes to the constitution of the *field* and may render it irrelevant when changed dramatically. For instance, why should North Korea continue to engage in the *field* of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Treaty when its disposition, stemming from the acquired nuclear missiles, has changed dramatically? Researchers analyze the *habitus* of decision-makers in security communities [Bjola, Kornprobst 2007; Mérand 2010], on the eve of and during military operations [Gutkowski 2012], in diplomacy [Neumann, Pouliot 2011], or how *habitus* determines a state's position on particular historical issues [Levine 2017].

INF TREATY AS THE OBJECTIVE OF ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY

We hypothesize that an ontological threat arises when a shifted *habitus* no longer corresponds to the *field* in which parties are actively engaged. Consequently, the process

of systemic delegitimization of the *field* paves the way for formulating a new social *field* that aligns seamlessly with the shifted *habitus*. As we argue, this was precisely the case with the delegitimization of the INF Treaty conducted by both parties. Prior to this escalation, however, the INF Treaty functioned as a new social *field* for parties seeking alignment with the emerging détente-oriented *habitus*, reflecting a shift towards "new thinking" and reduced tensions. How did this become possible?

The 1980s marked the pinnacle of military-political confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. The parties' *habitus*, entrenched in both the Reagan administration, dominated by Cold War hawks, and Andropov's Politburo, favored escalation as the sole viable option, in line with their ontological security. Paradoxically, they felt ontologically secure despite the physical risks of escalating to the brink of nuclear conflict. In February 1977, the USSR deployed 300 SS-20 Saber missiles, each carrying three multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs). Positioned just minutes away from targets in Western Europe, these missiles threatened a decapitating strike against NATO Headquarters and the entire European infrastructure of the Alliance. In response, the NATO Council adopted a double-track decision in December 1979 to negotiate an agreement with the USSR while simultaneously preparing for the deployment of the U.S. Pershing-II missile defense system in Western Europe. In March 1983, President Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program, prompting the Soviet Union to deploy SS-12 and SS-23 operational-tactical systems in Czechoslovakia and East Germany and to move nuclear submarines closer to the U.S. Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Amid escalating tensions, both nations conducted major military exercises, with the U.S. Pacific Fleet practicing simulated attacks on Soviet nuclear submarines and Moscow coordinating large-scale exercises with the Warsaw Pact countries, including a general mobilization rehearsal.

The situation transformed significantly when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the USSR. He argued that "Security cannot be built forever on (deterrence).... to say nothing of the absurdity and immorality of a situation when the world becomes a nuclear hostage, and these doctrines encourage the arms race that could sooner or later get out of control" [Frederking 2000: 131]. Brian Frederking demonstrates how the shift in the Soviet government's political course, which was not met with unequivocal approval within the Politburo, ultimately altered the Soviet *habitus* towards a pro-détente one [Frederking 2000: 136–137]. This change necessitated synchronization with the social space of interaction between the USSR and the USA. At the 27th Communist Party Congress, the Soviets proposed an international collective security system encompassing non-aggression, disarmament, self-determination, and equal economic security. This concept mirrored Western Europe's "nonoffensive defense." Soviet proposals on disarmament and regional development appealed to Western Europe as an alternative to deterrence.

Historian Vladislav Zubok argues that Reagan, viewing Gorbachev as an opportunity for détente, transformed from a Cold War "knight" into a staunch disarmament advocate. This change in *habitus* required a corresponding shift in the institutional *field* to ensure ontological security for both parties [Zubok 2007: 498]. By September 1987, the U.S. and the USSR had agreed to address intermediate-range and cruise missile issues based on the "global zero" formula, which called for the complete destruction of these weapons rather than their withdrawal from Europe. Signed in December 1987, the INF Treaty institutionalized a *field* of controlled military rivalry between the USSR and the U.S. Under its terms, the parties committed to destroying all land-based

missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 km within three years, including missiles in both the European and Asian parts of the USSR. This treaty marked the first instance of an agreement to completely eliminate an entire class of existing nuclear weapons.

THE INF TREATY INCREMENTALLY BECOMES AN ONTOLOGICAL THREAT

This section examines the shifting dispositions of Russia and the U.S. following the end of the Cold War. Firstly, we will explore how the U.S. pursued missile defense deployment in Europe, as well as the development of target missile programs and UAVs, which altered Russia's *habitus* concerning the INF Treaty. Secondly, with respect to the U.S. perception of the *field*, we will concentrate on two pivotal issues: the American *habitus* transformation in relation to Russia's 9M729 missiles and the evolution of China's missile program.

Anti-ballistic missile treaty and missile defense in Europe

By the end of 2001, the U.S. underwent a significant shift in its approach to ABM systems. While previously it had been considered an element of bipolar confrontation, at that point the U.S. began to perceive ABM as a self-defense tool against terrorists and "rogue states" after transitioning from the concept of "mutually assured destruction" to "cooperation" with Russia. Consequently, the 1972 ABM Treaty was losing relevance for the United States.[3]

Despite Russia's warnings of a possible INF Treaty withdrawal in response to the U.S. departure from the ABM Treaty, Moscow's reaction was composed. Vladimir Putin labeled the U.S. decision as wrong yet predictable, adding that Russia possessed the means to counter enemy missile defense systems. As a result, ongoing consultations and dialogue on strategic arms reduction, along with U.S. assurances that the decision did not threaten Russia's national interests, helped avoid a crisis.[4]

The issue of ABM systems resurfaced when the U.S. decided to deploy missile defense systems in Europe. The initial project involved installing silo-based interceptor missiles in Poland and constructing a radar in the Czech Republic. Russia expressed concern about these plans and threatened to withdraw from the INF Treaty. U.S. Defense Department officials countered that the system was not meant to threaten Russia and could not intercept Russian ICBMs, which outnumbered the planned interceptors.[5]

In 2009, the Obama administration replaced this program with the Phased Adaptive Approach.[6] The first phase, completed by 2012, involved constructing a radar in Turkey, a command center in Germany, and deploying American missile cruisers armed with the Aegis missile defense system and SM-3 interceptor missiles to the Mediterranean Sea. The second stage (by 2016) saw the Aegis Ashore interceptor missile complex deployed at the Deveselu base in Romania.[7] A similar complex is scheduled to become

[3] President Bush's Remarks. *Arms Control Association*, 2001. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002-01/us-withdrawal-abm-treaty-president-bush's-remarks-us-diplomatic-notes#bush (accessed 02.09.2023).

[4] Bush pulls out of ABM treaty; Putin calls move a mistake. *The New York Times*, 13.12.2001. https://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/13/international/bush-pulls-out-of-abm-treaty-putin-calls-move-a-mistake.html (accessed 02.09.2023).

[5] Boese W. U.S., Europe anti-missile plans upset Russia, *Arms Control Association*, 2007. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2007-03/us-europe-anti-missile-plans-upset-russia (accessed 02.09.2023).

[6] The European phased adaptive approach at a glance. *Arms Control Association*, 03.2022. https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Phasedadaptiveapproach (accessed 02.09.2023).

[7] Trebin P. Europe under the Aegis. *Russian International Affairs Council*, 2016. https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/evropa-pod-egidoy/ (accessed 02.09.2023).

operational in late 2023 in Poland at the Redzikowo base.[8] An SM-3 Block IIA missile successfully intercepted an ICBM over the Pacific Ocean during a November 2020 test.[9]

Russian leaders had repeatedly insisted that missile defense in Europe posed a threat to its ICBMs [Zolotarev 2008], which could be intercepted in the boost phase, and that such targets would be within the range of Russian theater-range missiles (up to 500 km). However, while Redzikowo is within reach, Deveselu, located far from Russian borders, can only be targeted by missiles prohibited under the INF Treaty.

Another point of contention for the Russian leadership is the use of multi-purpose Mk-41 launchers at these sites, capable of launching not only SM-3 interceptor missiles but also medium-range Tomahawk sea-based missiles.[10] While sea-based missiles were not regulated by the INF Treaty, Russia regarded the placement of Mk-41s at missile defense sites as a "grave violation" of the treaty.[11] U.S. representatives argued that the type of launchers deployed in Romania and planned for Poland differed from the naval version, had never been tested with Tomahawk missiles, and thus could not violate the INF Treaty.[12]

Problems of target missiles and UAVs

Since 1999, Russia raised concerns about the U.S. using target missiles for developing intermediate-range missile technology, arguing they test weapons delivery vehicles.[13] The U.S. contends these missiles are designed solely for research and development purposes and thus do not violate the Treaty.[14] Russia also maintained that U.S. drones violated the INF Treaty, calling them de jure cruise missiles.[15] U.S. officials argue that drones are not missiles, but platforms for delivering weapons, more akin to aircraft than missiles.[16]

[8] Judson J. Poland's Aegis Ashore delayed to 2022 with new way forward coming soon. *Defence News*, 2020. https://www.defensenews.com/smr/federal-budget/2020/02/18/polands-aegis-ashore-delayed-to-2022-with-new-way-forward-coming-soon/ (accessed 02.09.2023).

[9] Larter D.B. US Navy destroyer shoots down an ICBM in milestone test. *Defence News*, 2020. https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2020/11/17/us-navy-destroyer-shoots-down-an-icbm-in-milestone-test/ (accessed 02.09.2023).

[10] The situation after the U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate-range and Shorter-range Missile Treaty (INF Treaty). *Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 28.04.2021. https://www.mid.ru/voenno-strategiceskie-problemy/-/asset_publisher/hpkjeev1aY0p/content/id/1138496 (accessed 02.09.2023).

[11] Deputy Minister Grushko called the deployment of Mk-41 units in Europe a gross violation of the INF Treaty. TASS, 12.07.2019. https://tass.ru/politika/6658887 (accessed 02.09.2023).

[12] Woolf A.F. Russian Compliance with the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty: Background and Issues for Congress. Congressional Research Service, 2019. https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R43832.pdf (accessed 02.09.2023).

[13] The situation after the U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missile Treaty (INF Treaty). *Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 28.04.2021. https://www.mid.ru/voenno-strategiceskie-problemy/-/asset_publisher/hpkjeev1aY0p/content/id/1138496 (accessed 02.09.2023).

[14] Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the elimination of their intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles (INF Treaty). *U.S. Department of State*. https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm; Woolf A.F. (2019) Russian Compliance with the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty: background and issues for Congress. *Congressional Research Service*. https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R43832.pdf (accessed 02.09.2023).

[15] The situation after the U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate-range and Shorter-range Missile Treaty (INF Treaty). *Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 28.04.2021. https://www.mid.ru/voenno-strategiceskie-problemy/-/asset_publisher/hpkjeev1aY0p/content/id/1138496 (accessed 02.09.2023).

[16] Woolf A.F. Russian Compliance with the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty: Background and Issues for Congress. *Congressional Research Service*, 2019. https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R43832.pdf (accessed 02.09.2023).

The Russian missile

The 9M729 cruise missile was a primary focus of U.S. criticism. At a Senate Hearing, it was described as part of a renewed arsenal of "new Russian ground-, sea-, and air-based nuclear or dual-capable delivery systems that [...] are coming online in support of a Russian nuclear doctrine [...] that emphasizes [...] both coercive and military uses of nuclear weaponry".[17] On January 23, 2019, during a briefing organized in response to U.S. concerns, Mikhail Matveevsky, head of the Missile Forces and Artillery of the Russian Armed Forces, highlighted that the missile is an upgraded version of the 9M728 missile, with a range of 490 km, higher accuracy, and a more powerful warhead. The missile had never been tested at a greater range.[18]

For the first time, the cruise missile was shown to participants, and information about its design and specifications was presented.[19] The U.S. declined to attend the briefing. According to American diplomat Andrea Thompson, a static exhibit would not allow for determining the missile's characteristics. This could only be achieved through testing, "under conditions that the Russian military has no control over".[20] U.S. representatives responded to Russian claims about the missile's flight range, asserting that these statements were false and that the 9M729 could have been developed based on the Kalibr sea-launched cruise missile, with a range of up to 2,500 km.[21]

In November 2018, U.S. Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats reiterated that the 9M729 "strongly resembled" other similar missiles but was tested from fixed launchers at a range of more than 500 km. It was then tested from mobile launchers at a range of less than 500 km, with claims that this was the maximum range.[22] The Russian leadership denied the accusations adding that they did test missiles with ranges of more than 500 km, but these were of other classes.

Chinese missiles

While in 2000 the Pentagon deemed China's armed forces "archaic", by 2013, the U.S. National Air and Space Intelligence recognized that "China has the most active and diverse ballistic missile development program in the world" [Ghoshal 2016: 364]. In 2020, the U.S. military acknowledged China's significant advancement in combat capabilities, even surpassing the U.S. in several areas, including the navy, air defense systems, and land-based missiles.[23]

[17] Ford C. The future of U.S. policy towards Russia, 2019. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116shrg40423/html/CHRG-116shrg40423.htm (accessed 02.09.2023).

[18] Gavrilov Y. Missile declassified. *Russian Newspaper*, 2019. https://rg.ru/2019/01/23/minoborony-pokazalo-raketu-9m729-kotoraia-tak-ne-ustraivaet-ssha.html (accessed 02.09.2023).

[19] The Defense Ministry held a briefing for foreign military attachés with a presentation of the 9M729 Iskander-M missile. *Russian Ministry of Defense*, 23.01.2019. https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12213705%40egNews (accessed 02.09.2023).

[20] Russia shows off new cruise missile. *The New York Times*, 23.01.2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/23/world/europe/russia-inf-cruise-missile.html (accessed 02.09.2023).

[21] SSC-8 (9M729). *CSIS Missile Defense Project*, 31.03.2022. https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/ssc-8-novator-9m729/ (accessed 02.09.2023).

[22] Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats on Russia's INF Treaty Violation. *Office of the Director of National Intelligence*, 30.11.2018. https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/speeches-interviews/item/1923-director-of-national-intelligence-daniel-coats-on-russia-s-inf-treaty-violation (accessed 02.09.2023).

[23] Military and security developments involving the People's Republic of China. 2020. Washington: Office of the Secretary of Defense. https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF (accessed 02.09.2023).

During the first half of the 2010s, the U.S. expert community debated the relevance of the INF Treaty in light of China's growing medium-range missile capabilities, which threatened U.S. allies and their power projection in Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific region [Kearn 2012]. In April 2017, Admiral Harry Harris, commander of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Pacific, said at a congressional hearing that the INF Treaty restrictions provided "a huge advantage" to China.[24] China's accession to the treaty would lead to the elimination of 95% of its missiles [The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IIS) 2020: 35], while the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty would help counterbalance China's increased military posture, as land-based systems are more cost-effective than warships and can be rapidly expanded if needed.[25] Upon leaving the INF Treaty, the U.S. planned to consult with its allies to initiate the deployment of new land-based missiles to Asian countries, as soon as they would be developed and adopted, to counter China.[26]

Practicing *Field*'s Meltdown

In the previous section, we overviewed the key historical moments that contributed to the shifting *habitus* of the U.S. and Russia. Both nations became keenly aware about the changing balance in military technologies, which gradually led to the perception of the Cold War-era INF Treaty as conserving a reality that no longer exists. Next, in the first section of this part, we will demonstrate how exactly the parties expressed the idea that the INF is no longer in keeping with the current realities. Although these comments might have been merely rhetorical, they helped frame the shared understanding of the INF's irrelevance. In the subsequent section, we will trace the history of diplomatic practices of both sides, which paradoxically espoused peaceful aspirations, and yet, unreflectively, brought the eventual end of the Treaty closer.

The field is obsolete

Since the late 1990s, it became increasingly clear that the dispositions of Russia and the United States were shifting, leading to the emergence of mutual disputes and complaints over the INF Treaty [Batyuk 2019: 18]. The first signal of this shift came in 2000 when Vladimir Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov cautioned that Russia might withdraw from the INF Treaty if the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty.[27] However, in 2000, Russia's discontent was partially alleviated by a joint U.S.—Russian statement of September 6, 2000, in which the presidents of the two countries agreed that "Russia and the United States reaffirm their commitment to the ABM Treaty as the cornerstone of strategic stability. Russia and the United States intend to implement the provisions...of the INF Treaty" (Saving the INF Treaty, 2018).

Nevertheless, the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, which allowed the U.S. to deploy intermediate-range anti-missiles, rendered Russia's commitment to the *field* of the INF Treaty short-lived. On October 9, 2003, Russian Defense Minister

[24] Treaty restrictions giving China huge missile advantage over US, admiral warns. *Fox News*, 28.04.2017. https://www.foxnews.com/politics/treaty-restrictions-giving-china-huge-missile-advantage-over-us-admiral-warns (accessed 02.09.2023).

[25] Sayers E. The intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Future of the Indo-Pacific military balance. *Arms Control Association*, 2018. https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/asia-inf/ (accessed 02.09.2023).

[26] Reif K., Bugos S. U.S. aims to add INF-range missiles. *Arms Control Association*, 2020. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-10/news/us-aims-add-inf-range-missiles (accessed 02.09.2023).

[27] Mizin V. Saving the INF Treaty. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2018. https://carnegie.ru/commentary/75708 (accessed 07.07.2021).

Sergey Ivanov, in a conversation with his American counterpart Donald Rumsfeld, raised the issue of the possibility of Russia's withdrawal from the INF Treaty for the first time. Rumsfeld cautiously replied that the U.S. would not oppose such a scenario [Buzhinsky, 2014]. On April 24, 2006, Sergey Ivanov called the INF Treaty a "relic of the Cold War" that did not correspond to contemporary realities because "dozens of countries", including India, Pakistan, Korea, China, Iran, and Israel, "already have such missiles" (How the INF Was Criticized, 2019).

Russia's discontent with the *field* was further reaffirmed by the country's political leadership. On February 10, 2007, in his Munich speech, Vladimir Putin said that "today, a number of countries already have such missiles [...] And only the United States of America and Russia have obligations not to create such weapons systems. It is clear that under these conditions we are forced to think about ensuring our own security" (Munich Conference on Security Policy, 2007).

On February 15, 2007, the Chief of the Russian General Staff Yury Baluevsky warned that Russia might withdraw from the INF in response to the U.S. plans to deploy a third missile defense positioning area in Eastern Europe, which, according to Russian military commanders, posed a threat to Russian strategic forces. This statement resonated widely in both Russia and the U.S., prompting U.S. officials to assure that the missile defense system was not directed against Russia. In particular, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates suggested that "Moscow might be concerned about the growing threat connected with medium-range missiles to the south and east of its borders", referring to Iran's missile stockpile.[28]

The field dissolves

Since then, both parties had actively pursued a consistent delegitimization of a *field* recognized as inconsistent with their *habitus*. On August 15, 2011, the Wall Street Journal published an article by John Bolton, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security under George W. Bush, in which he sharply criticized the INF Treaty due to changing strategic realities.[29] He asserted that Chinese power had risen, and medium-range missiles were being developed in "rogue countries," such as Iran and North Korea, which threatened the security of U.S. allies. Consequently, Bolton argued, the treaty must either be extended to all countries possessing intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles (which is unlikely) or be abandoned as a relic of a bygone era.[30] The INF's counterintuitive nature regarding Russian interests was partially acknowledged by Vladimir Putin as well when, on June 19, 2013, he called the USSR leadership's decision to abandon intermediate-range missiles "at least controversial"[31], but noted that Russia intended to "act according to the realities of today" and comply with the treaty.

On July 28, 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama sent a letter to Vladimir Putin accusing Russia of testing a cruise missile with a range of more than 500 kilometers. These accusations were later reiterated by the United States in the

[28] *Kommersant Newspaper*, 17.02.2007, p. 1.

[29] Bolton J. A Cold War Missile Treaty That's Doing Us Harm. *The Wall Street Journal*, 2011. https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111903918104576500273389091098 (accessed 21.07.2021).

[30] Ibidem.

[31] Vladimir Putin considers the decision of the USSR leadership to abandon medium-range missiles controversial. *TASS*, 19.06.2013. https://tass.ru/politika/620195 (accessed 02.09.2023).

State Department's annual reports of July 31, 2014[32], June 5, 2015[33], and April 11, 2016.[34] The reports did not specify which missile was in question, whether it was capable of carrying nuclear weapons, or whether Russia planned to deploy it [Kühn, Peczeli 2017].

Meanwhile, Russia continued to criticize the U.S. missile defense policy in Europe. On October 9, 2015, Mikhail Ulyanov, head of the Russian delegation to the first committee of the 70th session of the U.N. General Assembly, stated that U.S. plans to deploy the Mk-41 vertical launchers at the missile defense facility in Romania were "incompatible with the obligations under the INF Treaty".[35] On May 27, 2016, Yevgeny Ilyin, deputy head of the main directorate for international military cooperation at the Defense Ministry, accused the United States of testing intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles under the guise of missile defense capabilities.[36] On October 19, 2017, speaking at the Valdai Forum, Vladimir Putin said that Russia was prepared to retaliate if the United States decided to withdraw from the INF Treaty.[37]

On November 29, 2017, Christopher Ford publicly identified the Russian missile that the U.S. believed to be in violation of the treaty: the 9M729.[38]

On December 9, 2017, in response to Thomas Shannon's interview, Sergey Ryabkov confirmed the existence of the 9M729 missile but claimed there was no direct evidence of a violation of the INF Treaty. Ryabkov also accused the United States of deploying launchers in Romania capable of launching not only interceptor missiles but also Tomahawk attack missiles, although their deployment on land contradicts the INF, as well as the intention to develop land-based cruise missiles of a prohibited range. Ryabkov warned that the U.S. appeared to be looking for an excuse for the already taken decision to leave the INF, adding that Russia was prepared for a symmetrical response.[39] This narrative was endorsed by Vladimir Putin, who said that the U.S. had "in fact...already withdrawn" from the INF Treaty

[32] Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments. Compliance report. *US Department of State*, 31.07.2014. https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/230108.pdf (accessed 02.09.2023).

[33] Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments. Compliance report. *US Department of State*, 05.06.2015. https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/2015/243224.htm (accessed 02.09.2023).

[34] Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments. Compliance report. *US Department of State*, 11.04.2016. https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/2016/255651.htm (accessed 02.09.2023).

[35] Statement by M. I. Ulyanov, Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation to the First Committee of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly, Director of the Department for Non-Proliferation and Arms Control of the Russian Foreign Ministry. *Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 12.10.2015. https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/1844514 (accessed 02.09.2023).

[36] Moscow suspects U.S. of using banned missiles in missile defense tests. *RBK*, 27.05.2016. https://www.rbc.ru/politics/27/05/2016/574832459a7947086b83addf (accessed 02.09.2023).

[37] Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club. *President of Russia*, 19.10.2017. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55882 (accessed 02.09.2023).

[38] INF Diplomacy Highlights Timeline. *U.S. Mission Russia*, 16.11.2018. https://ru.usembassy.gov/inf-diplomacy-highlights-timeline/ (accessed 02.09.2023).

[39] Commentary by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov on the US anti-Russian attacks on the INF Treaty. *Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 09.12.2017. https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2983745 (accessed 02.09.2023).

by deploying facilities in Romania where "anti-missiles can be easily replaced by medium-range missiles".[40]

On October 20, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump announced the U.S. intention to withdraw from the treaty due to Russia's prolonged non-compliance and concerns that the U.S. could be at odds with China's development of intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles.[41] On August 2, 2019, the U.S. withdrew from the treaty. In the respective statement by U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, he cited "prolonged and repeated violations" by Russia as the sole reason. Russia's suspension of participation in the CFE Treaty (2015) and the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (2016) were also mentioned as reasons for the U.S. withdrawal from the INF [Kühn, Peczeli 2017].[42] On August 5, 2019, Putin issued a statement in which he held the U.S. responsible for the situation.

DISCUSSION: TOWARDS A BALANCE OF INTERPRETATION VIA PRACTICES

This article highlights the dilemma of disjunction between *habitus* and the social *field*, a subject central to the works of Vincent Pouliot and Iver Neumann, who examined this intersection almost a decade ago. Drawing on practice theory, these scholars primarily explore the elements that preface diplomatic or international crises. They argue that crises arise from the complex, problematic results of the combination of the institutional settings where actors interact and the practices they employ, shaped variably by space and time. Neumann exemplifies this disruption through situations where Russian diplomats, following extensive interaction in non-European international arenas, uphold dispositions viewed as barbaric, uncivilized, or at the least, regressive [Neumann, Pouliot 2011]. A parallel argument, though in reverse, is put forth by Pouliot, who maintains that post-Cold War European and Russian diplomats endeavored to construct a new institutional reality using their old *habitus* [Pouliot 2010]. Building off of Bourdieu's concepts, Neumann and Pouliot describe this phenomenon as "hysteresis", whereas Ted Hopf characterizes the same logic as a "productive crisis" [Hopf 2018].

While current scholarship offers insights into what causes such crises, the ramifications of these disruptions warrant further examination. Moreover, how can we conceptualize the process of harmonizing—or "marrying back"—actors' *habitus* with the institutional sphere? This article intends to take an initial step in analyzing this critical nexus.

Firstly, while the disintegration of the INF treaty serves as a stark illustration, such "productive crises", we hypothesize, are a natural byproduct of the continuously evolving *habitus* of international actors and the perpetually lagging institutional milieu in which they operate. In essence, these crises can be attributed to the routine activities of agents in international relations aiming to reestablish a "balance of interpretation" of each other's dispositions by virtue of an evolving institutional sphere. This enduring necessity to restore such a balance of interpretation makes it a structural feature of international engagement through practices.

[40] Vladimir Putin's big press conference. *President of Russia*, 14.12.2017. http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56378/videos (accessed 02.09.2023).

[41] Trump says US will pull out of intermediate range nuke pact. *Associate Press*, 21.10.2018. https://apnews.com/article/north-america-donald-trump-ap-top-news-politics-russia-99ab3fb09bbe41a497db0162a3c213be (accessed 02.09.2023).

[42] U.S. completes INF treaty withdrawal. *Arms Control Association*, 09.2019. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-09/news/us-completes-inf-treaty-withdrawal (accessed 02.09.2023).

Secondly, international crises, though ubiquitous and countless, often remain invisible to observers due to the continuous routinization of these phenomena by actors via practices. An ontological threat, perceived as an intuitive yet frequently unarticulated demand for change, triggers alterations in our practices to correspond with external realities. Within the context of this article, the INF treaty epitomizes a vivid crisis affecting the bedrock of strategic stability. However, according to the theoretical paradigm used within this article, its disintegration is a natural progression resulting from the habitual adaptations of actors to align their environment with their *habitus*. Such adjustments are universally present in other domains too, such as economic and political reforms, as well as diplomatic negotiations.

Conclusion

For many years, Vladimir Putin has framed Russia's behavior in relations with the United States using a sequential logic. In explaining Russia's withdrawal from the INF Treaty, the Russian President confirmed this perspective: "Our American partners have announced that they are suspending their participation in the treaty, and we are suspending it, too. They announced that they are engaged in experimental design works, and we will do the same".[43] This paper posits that escalation may not only stem from instrumental actions but also from unconscious practices that respond to ontological threats, rather than merely physical ones.

To theorize this hypothesis, we combined two relatively distinct theoretical perspectives: research on ontological security and practice theory. We employed concepts from Pierre Bourdieu's sociology as applied in international political studies: *field* as the social environment of practices, and *habitus* as the agent's disposition. Thus, ontological threat arises when the agent's disposition changes over time, rendering the *field* of interaction irrelevant. Consequently, the very environment in which agents interact becomes a source of ontological threat.

We conclude that this may be part of what transpired with the INF Treaty. It itself became an ontological threat to the participants, having altered their *habitus* in 20 years, manifested both in the perception of changing missile technology and of the geopolitical environment of the post-bipolar world order. The delegitimization of the INF Treaty is paradoxical in nature: rhetorically condemned and criticized by the actors negotiating its preservation, it becomes self-evident and inevitable. It is more dangerous to be bound by its conditions than to interact without it.

As we reflect on the developments that have unfolded, it becomes evident that the withdrawal from the INF Treaty and the subsequent escalation of tensions hold implications far beyond the immediate confines of international relations. While the actions and rhetoric of political leaders often dominate the headlines, our investigation unveils a deeper layer of dynamics that have contributed to the evolving landscape of nuclear issues and security in Europe. Following the end of the INF Treaty, Europe has returned to an explosive military situation reminiscent of the peak of bipolar standoff between 1976 and 1987. However, due to a number of political (NATO expansion) and technological (more advanced weaponry) factors, a new missile crisis may assume a much more acute form. Moreover, with the termination of the ABM and CFE Treaties, there are no longer any real instruments to deter armed escalation in Europe [Richter 2019]. This article seeks to discern the sinister banality that has resulted in this

[43] Teslova E. Russia suspends INF Treaty. *Anadolu Agency*, 03.02.2019. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/russia-suspends-inf-treaty/1381716 (accessed 02.09.2023).

situation: by tacitly practicing shifting dispositions one step at a time, Russia and the U.S. had in the end rendered the INF Treaty an impossible reality by 2019.

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КРИЗИС КАК ПРАКТИКА: ФЕНОМЕН РУТИНИЗАЦИИ ЭСКАЛАЦИИ ОТНОШЕНИЙ РОССИИ И США

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Аннотация. Авторы открывают дискуссию о проблеме влияния перспективы реального международного кризиса на онтологическую безопасность вовлеченных игроков. Выдвигается гипотеза, что парадокс онтологической безопасности состоит в способности достичь ощущения большей безопасности через эскалацию и вероятность международного кризиса. В статье совмещены два подхода, получившие достаточное освещение в литературе о международных отношениях, теории практик и теории онтологической безопасности. Объединяя их, авторы пробуют развить исходное допущение Дженнифер Митцен о том, что "даже опасные практики могут обеспечить онтологическую безопасность". Привнося интеллектуальный багаж практического поворота в исследования онтологической безопасности, авторы рассматривают кризис Договора о ликвидации ракет средней и меньшей дальности, выдвигая аргумент о том, что этот кризис способствовал достижению игроками искомой онтологической безопасности, даже несмотря на возрастающие риски физической небезопасности. Реконструируя хронологию событий, авторы показывают, как рутинизация дипломатических практик и острой риторики привела стороны к обоюдному пониманию нерелевантности Договора.

Ключевые слова: практики, онтологическая безопасность, ДРСМД, Россия, США.

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