FIFTY SOCIOLOGICAL SHADES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY
The case of EU Peacekeeping Policy

Anne Bazin and Charles Tenenbaum (eds) L’Union européenne et la paix

Antoine Rayroux. L’Union européenne et le maintien de la paix en Afrique

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Introduction

A man stands alone in the desert, holding a watermelon under his arm. He is wearing a jellaba and looks into the distance with a guarded expression. What is he waiting for? Behind him, a military vehicle bearing the European Union (EU) flag approaches. What has it come for? Will the encounter between the man and the vehicle take place? This theatrical scene, with something of Waiting for Godot about it, is on the cover of Antoine Rayroux’s book L’Union européenne et le maintien de la paix en Afrique [The European Union and Peacekeeping in Africa]. This book is the result of a political science doctoral thesis written while studying at the University of Montreal and the Free University of Brussels. It was published at the same time as the book L’Union européenne et la paix [The European Union and Peace] edited by Anne Bazin and Charles Tenenbaum, which brings together chiefly French researchers. These two books from the French-speaking world look at the emergence, and subsequent institutionalisation, of the EU as an actor in peacekeeping during the 2000s and 2010s, taking sociological approaches to theories of international relations. The actors, their practices, and the institutional contexts in which they operate are taken seriously.

Was the peacekeeping policy implemented by the EU in Africa, the Balkans, and the Middle East shaped by the sum of national practices and usages transferred
from member states, or by practices and usages specific to the EU? Neither. Are the
practices and usages of the EU’s military and diplomatic actors similar to or different
from those generated in other international contexts, such as the United Nations (UN)
or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)? Both. The research conducted
by Rayroux, and by Bazin, Tenenbaum et al., finds two conclusions in common. On
the one hand, the EU’s peacekeeping policy is formulated by a “hybrid collection of
national and multilateral practices”.
1 These hybrid practices result from peacekeeping
methods that are both inherited from the UN and NATO, and specific to EU actors.
On the other hand, the EU’s peacekeeping policy produces a “differentiated dynamic
of Europeanisation”.
2 Rayroux and Bazin, Tenenbaum et al. contribute to the study
of the varying effects of the EU on the implementation of peacekeeping operations, a
continuation of earlier work on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).
3
Analysis of the EU’s peacekeeping policy offers an opportunity to discuss
the contribution and the ambiguities of sociological approaches to the study of
international relations, following on from arguments that underline their heuristic
dimension.
4 This review article contributes to recent discussions about the “practice turn”,
5 by introducing research by French-speaking scholars who employ sociological
approaches that go beyond this “practice turn”. Having discussed the results that focus
on the actors’ practices and the institutional contexts within which these emerge, the
second part of this article analyses the sociological positions relating to the actors’
roles and the logic behind their actions. These sociological approaches differ in their
theoretical and methodological shades. Some of these shades are described in the
third part of this article, which leads to a defence of sociological pluralism, in order
to avoid the race to claim a monopoly of legitimacy by one sociological approach
against, and at the expense of, the rest.

Hybrid Practices and Institutional Interstices

The EU’s peacekeeping policy is the result of hybrid practices and usages that were
formed where different institutional contexts intersect. These ways of conducting

1 Antoine Rayroux. L’Union européenne et le maintien de la paix en Afrique. Montréal: Presses de l’Université
de Montréal, 2017, p. 25.
2 Ibid., p. 25.
sécurité européenne et le tournant pratique en relations internationales. Études internationales 2012, vol. 43,
no 4 ; Delphine Deschaux-Dutard. Convergences et résistances vis-à-vis de la politique de sécurité et de
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vol. 150; Samuel B.H. Faure, Catherine Hoeffler. L ’ “ européanisation sans l’Union européenne”? Penser
4 Sabine Saurugger, Frédéric Mérand. Does European integration theory need sociology? Comparative
European Politics 2010, vol. 8, no 1; Adrian Favell, Virginie Guiraudon eds. Sociology of the European
no 2 ; Médéric Martin-Mazé. Returning Struggles to the Practice Turn: How Were Bourdieu and Boltanski
Lost in (Some) Translations and What to Do about It? International Political Sociology 2017, vol. 6, no 1;
Jonathan Pajouin ed. Forum: Le tournant pratique en Relations internationales. Études internationales 2017,
vol. 48, no 2.
peacekeeping are both external to the EU and specific to it. Indeed, EU actors sometimes share common practices and sometimes differ in the way they operate. This social and institutional dynamic explains how the level of Europeanisation of the practices and usages the EU’s actors varies.

In *L’Union européenne et la paix*, Simon Tordjman reveals a hybridisation of the practices and professional trajectories of EU actors that contributes to the propagation of democratic standards beyond Europe’s borders. The creation of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) in 2012, and of the European Institute of Peace (EIP) in 2014, are symptomatic of this hybridisation dynamic. Tordjman draws a correlation between this phenomenon, the hybridisation of practices, and the place where these emerge, “at the margins of the EU’s institutional space” (p. 103), and at “the intersection of the spaces of diplomacy, human rights, development, and conflict resolution” (p. 105). Sara Dezalay, for her part, notes an interconnection between different fields, identifying a “continuum between the humanitarian field and development, and between development and security” (p. 20).

In *L’Union européenne et le maintien de la paix en Afrique*, Rayroux also demonstrates that there is a correlation between the type of practice and the institutional context in which practices emerge. In order to do this, he develops an approach that is situated at the intersection between the “practice turn” in international relations theories and the sociology of public policies (p. 23, p. 56). He analyses the practices of French and Irish military actors through the case of the implementation of the EUFOR Tchad/RCA (European Union Force in Chad/ Central African Republic) peacekeeping operation in 2007 (p. 20). Rayroux retains the definition of the concept of a practice developed by Emmanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, which refers to “modes of action accomplished by members of a social group (or of a field) – modes of action that are organised socially, have a meaning and produce meaning for the group, and are reproduced over time” (p. 61). As for the EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation, it brought together 26 states, of which three were outside the EU: Albania, Croatia, and Russia. A total of 3,600 soldiers were deployed in Africa, of whom 2,000 were French and 450 Irish – the two largest contingents involved (p. 19). The practices that generated the EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation were situated, socially and institutionally, within an “arena” or a “context of social interaction” described as a “social field” (p. 56). Rayroux completes this definition by quoting Frédéric Mérand and Vincent Pouliot, according to whom “A field is characterised by an interplay, and a power struggle between its members to define this interplay and secure a dominant position within the field” (p. 58). The social field of the EUFOR Tchad/RCA was structured across three distinct institutional arenas situated on three scales of public action (chapter 5). The politico-strategic arena refers to the institutional organs of the CSDP in Brussels. The operational arena refers to the EUFOR Tchad/RCA general staff, in Mont-Valérien on the outskirts of the capital.

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6 In Bazin and Tenenbaum, Clara Egger’s chapter (pp. 179–202) contradicts this transversal result by revealing an EU-specific model, based on the case of the implementation of the EU’s “global approach” in Somalia. See also: Clara Egger. L’approche globale à l’européenne. L’impact des rivalités intersectorielles sur la gestion de crise européenne en Somalie. *Politique européenne* 2016, vol. 51, no 1.


of Paris. Besides these two arenas, there was the arena of the theatre of military operations in Chad.

Through this operationalisation of the concept of the social field, Rayroux develops an interesting theory to explain the “differentiated dynamic of Europeanisation” (p. 25). He adopts Neil Fligstein’s definition of Europeanisation, which refers to “the creation of new interdependences and new social networks at the European level, around specific interplays” (p. 23). The degree of Europeanisation of the practices of the French and Irish actors depended on the institutional arena within which they were created. The further the CSDP actors moved from the centre of policy decision-making in Brussels, the more their national differences were reduced and the more likely it was that practices common to the French and Irish actors would emerge (p. 134). Rayroux asserts that “there is probably hardly any more fertile breeding ground for this socialisation than a multinational military camp in the middle of the desert” (p. 153). Thus, he simultaneously demonstrates the strengthened Europeanisation of the practices of the military actors in Chad, and their limited Europeanisation in Mont-Valérien and Brussels. Apart from the fact that it is surprising that no discussion of the work derived from international political sociology (IPS) is developed, these results invite three observations.

First, the terms “practice” and “field” are used in different ways by different writers. For Tordjman (pp. 93, 94, 97) but also for Bazin and Tenenbaum (pp. 12, 13, 41, 47, 57, 58), Dezalay (pp. 28, 32), Antje Herrberg (pp. 137, 141, 143), and Franck Petiteville (pp. 116, 119, 130), these terms are employed to describe, in a metaphorical way, observed empirical reality; practices correspond to actions taken by EU actors to implement a peacekeeping policy. As for fields, these correspond to specific professional groups: the “political field”, the “development field”, the “peacekeeping field”, and so on. This being so, how are we to conceptualise the hybridisation of actions taken by the actors of peacekeeping policy observed “in practice”, as well as the differentiation of the institutional gaps within which they implement it? Do these writers share with Rayroux the established definitions of the concepts of practice and field? If not, how do they regard the concepts of the “European bureaucracy field” and “weak field” derived from IPS to understand the “differentiated institutionalisation” (p. 98) of the contexts within which EU peacekeeping actors operate, as well as their “growing porousness” (p. 104)?

Moreover, are there not analogies to be drawn between the political reality re-established at the intersection between different contexts of social interaction and the concept of the “intermediation field” specific to the phenomenon of the circulation of elites? Indeed, Dezalay notes “the emergence and professionalisation of a space of intermediate professional practices” and the development of a “market in non-


governmental expertise in the field of peacekeeping in Brussels” (p. 28; see also pp. 20, 25, 31, 36). According to Herrberg, mediation is characterised as a “field of specialists and consultants” (p. 141), which bring together several professional groups. What are these writers’ conceptual propositions for revealing the degree of autonomy (and therefore of dependence) of one field (the EU) with respect to another (such as member states, the UN, and NATO)?

Second, Rayroux uses the concept of the social field to summarise the singular contexts of social interaction within which the practices of the EU actors emerge. Rayroux does not confine himself to reconstructing these practices on the basis of the actors’ interpretation of them. He objectifies their meaning by establishing, to use Pouliot’s terminology, a “local causality”. This local causality, which, methodologically speaking, is situated at the level of action, connects a given context (the theatre of military operations in Chad) to the degree of transnational socialisation of the actors involved (strong Europeanisation of practices). According to Pouliot, this local causality should be complemented by the identification of a “general causality”. A general causality is not confined to a specific context, but interprets a number of cases by recognising a causal mechanism, such as the “hysteresis of habitus” (social arrangements) or the “social field” (social positions) in Pierre Bourdieu’s sense of the term. Rayroux’s monographic work does not favour such a theoretical development, thought it does not reject it (p. 222). Indeed, is it possible and desirable to reveal the conditions that explain the dynamic of differentiated Europeanisation, beyond the case of the EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation (general causality)? If it is, what are the determinants of the process of political change that Europeanisation embodies? If it is not, does he believe that this goal is incompatible with his interpretative approach, which should then confine itself to working on contextualisation (local causality)? These investigations of the relationship between causality and the interpretative approach are linked to the degree of parsimony of his analysis which is the subject of the next observation.

Third, Rayroux argues in favour of a “pragmatic” methodology, according to which “each methodological problem analysed should correspond to a specific approach, adapted to it” (p. 63). This inductive methodological position is prudent with regard to the parsimony of the analysis, which must not be “improper” (p. 63), indeed renouncing a “wide-ranging theoretical ambition” (p. 51). However, Rayroux does not spell out what, by contrast, could be an “appropriate”, “medium-ranging” ascent into generalities. As for the work edited by Bazin and Tenenbaum, the research design converges with the pragmatic methodology espoused by Rayroux, even though a search for the terms “method” or “methodology” would be a vain one. Therefore, the level of theoretical generalisation, which is allowed and advocated by these inductive approaches, remains vague. The abiding impression is that this inductive methodology is idiosyncratic, and that it rejects any form of parsimony, however limited. Do the authors of these two works accept the assessment according to which idiosyncrasy is not the result of a methodological limit, but rather a theoretical goal?

In such cases, the narratives they construct from their field surveys would benefit from a more explicit expression of their unexpected results. Or do they envisage that a form of idiosyncrasy (“local causality”) would be complemented by a parsimonious explanatory model (“general causality”)? The use of causal mechanisms would then make it possible to explain the variation of practices reconstructed at the intersection of several institutional contexts, or to “trace” the formation of a practice over time, to highlight a political change. Another way of questioning these authors on their methodological position would be to hear their view on whether it would be of any interest, heuristically, to propose a typology – a term that is absent from both works. Do they accept, or reject, the methodological approach that consists of establishing ideals/types of hybrid practices, as well as interstitial institutional spaces? This exercise would make it possible to compare and classify several case studies.

Varieties of Actors and Logics of Action

What is the theoretical position of Rayroux, and Bazin, Tenenbaum, et al. as regards the EU’s actors and the types of logic that drive their actions? What governs the EU’s peacekeeping policy, and how? These authors observe a heterogeneity among governmental and non-governmental actors that are situated simultaneously at the levels of national, European, and global public action. However, their way of restoring these actors’ diversity is complementary to the use of different levels of analysis.

Bazin, Tenenbaum, et al. remain on a macro level of analysis. Clara Egger reveals the relations between the Commission (DG ECHO, DG EuropeAid), the European Council, the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the European External Action Service (EEAS), and the European Union Special Representative (EUSR), the last of these also cited by Herrberg and Charlotte Hille. The relations between the EU, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Somali government, and NGOs are also described by Egger. Dezalay emphasises the links that connect, in either a conflictive or collaborative way, the Commission (DG RELEX, DG DEVCO, DG ECHO), European Council, and NGOs. Du Plessix, Hille, and Petiteville concentrate on the associations between the EU and other international actors (the UN and OSCE, p. 205), or national actors (member states, the US, and Russia, p. 207). This methodological approach conceptualises the EU as a actor or collection of actors, rather than, as Rayroux has it, an institutional context within which actors operate. The point of this approach is to describe the political and institutional relationships between the multiple actors that are involved in the EU’s peacekeeping policy. On the other hand, this methodological tool does not help in-depth analysis of a type of actor, or the taking into consideration of individual actors. The few individual actors cited, such as successive high prerepresentatives (Javier Solana, Catherine Ashton, Federica Mogherini, p. 142), are mentioned because of their role, not in their capacity as agents with singular characteristics and variable actions.

16 V. POUJOT, Practice tracing, op. cit.
The micro level of analysis adopted by Rayroux supplements the contributions in the work edited by Bazin and Tenenbaum. Although Rayroux analyses the statements and capacities of French and Irish actors at a macro (national) level, the micro level of analysis is adopted to study the case of the EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation through a professional group: the military actors (chapters 5 and 6). Rayroux’s analysis is based on the production of first-hand data: 46 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 military actors. This methodological approach has two advantages. On the one hand, it produces data and an in-depth analysis of the performative role of a professional group in the process of the Europeanisation of the EU’s peacekeeping policy. The political and institutional situation in Europe is embodied not “from above” by functions or procedures, but “from below”, by agents and their professional usages. We learn, for example, that the agents of the committee that deals with the civilian aspects of crisis management (CIVCOM) regularly visit the bar and the sauna together in order to “strengthen their bonds” (p. 137).

On the other hand, this analysis reveals the role of two individual agents: the French general Jean-Philippe Ganascia and the Irish general Patrick Nash. The former is in charge of the EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation in Chad, while the latter commands it from his headquarters, located in Mont-Valérien. Although it is regrettable that more data on their career paths is not available, analysing the role of generals Ganascia and Nash contributes to taking the reader out of a certain form of abstraction, by returning the EU’s peacekeeping policy in action. The agents’ role is more fleshed-out, as are their interpersonal relations: “The two generals had multiple bonds: the officers on the ground communicated daily by telephone or online with their counterparts [teams at the force’s headquarters] in Mont-Valérien, Ganascia met with Nash weekly at the start of the operation, and informed him of his deliberations in writing” (p. 149). The power of professional relations as a condition that explains the implementation of a policy is reiterated in the remarks of a French officer seconded to Brussels: “When you know people, so that a relationship of trust is established, that gets rid of many difficulties” (p. 192). Other passages contribute to giving substance to the mechanism of socialisation which in a fair number of constructivist studies remains abstract. An Irish lieutenant-colonel explains that “the most important member of the team was the Nespresso machine” (p. 151).

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17 This research usefully complements other recent work on the diplomats’ professional group: Iver B. Neumann. At Home with the Diplomats: Inside a European Foreign Ministry. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012; Christian Lequesne. Ethnographie du Quai d’Orsay. Les pratiques des diplomates français. Paris: Presses du CNRS, 2017; Vincent Pouliot. L’ordre hiérarchique international. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2017. Although we can only imagine that the short format of the book edited by Bazin and Tenenbaum makes it difficult to integrate quotations, the fact remains that there is a gap between the announcement in the introduction of analyses that “rely on in-depth sociological investigations” (p. 12), and the little primary data disclosed. As for Rayroux, the justification for the absence of participant observation – despite a real difficulty and which is not underestimated – seems a little rapid (p. 68) seen from other works which used this method: Severine Autesserre. Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

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19 There are no developments on the professional trajectory of actors in the work edited by Bazin and Tenenbaum, with the exception of a section of Tordjman’s chapter (p. 104 et suiv.).
The author explains this metaphor: “Nash obliged everyone to prepare oral presentations and discuss recommendations over a coffee rather than by email [...] after three or four months, they started to socialise, go out for a drink, eat together, and so on” (p. 152).

While the choice of level of analysis of Bazin, Tenenbaum, et al. and of Rayroux complement each other, they resemble each other in the little space that is devoted in their analyses to political actors and, what is more, to politics itself. This result seems to correspond to the argument put forward by Vivien Schmidt, which says that the EU has at its disposal public policies devoid of politics (“policies without politics”). Would the contributors to the two works confirm this analysis? Is the EU’s peacekeeping policy technocratic, or is this perception the result of a blind spot in the analyses? What is the structure of the relations between the French and Irish military actors and administrative and political actors? Is it hierarchical or heterarchical by a specific type of actor (the military or the Commission, for example) or by a coalition of actors that is located at the intersection of different professional groups? Could the concept of “programmatic actors” developed in the sociology of public policy that allows an association to be made between administrative, military, and sometimes even political actors prove to be useful?

Having discussed the way in which actors are analysed by Rayroux, and Bazin, Tenenbaum, et al., we shall now describe their logic of action. In the work edited by Bazin and Tenenbaum, contributors come together, interpreting the way in which actors behave using a logic of appropriateness. They emphasise both the actors’ strategies and the institutional constraints that can generate as many constraints as opportunities in their implementation of the EU’s peacekeeping policy. Likewise, the authors do not just identify the resources the actors have at their disposal, but also identify the way in which they use them. Dezalay explains that the term “crisis” has been used in a “vague” way by the Commission in order to avoid conflicts over jurisdiction with the Council, and thus “to open up a sphere of action for the Commission between urgent humanitarian aid and long-term development aid” (p. 25). Tordjman interprets the EU’s promotion of democracy as “this situation of uncertainty and the absence of a common vision that makes it possible to mobilise and make resurgent, from below, the democratic agenda” (p. 108). The same applies to Egger, who points out that the EU’s global approach was defined in a “fairly vague” way in the context of the late 2000s in Somalia (p. 182). Where do these

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20 It is unexpected that the words of General Ganascia and General Nash are quoted in the body of the text without anonymity, but that the names of the actors interviewed do not appear in annexes.
24 Il y a une tendance – qui n’est pas propre à ces deux ouvrages – de concentrer son attention sur les acteurs qui font une politique, et plus rarement sur ceux qui la freinent (Egger, p. 197).
authors stand as regards the literature that deals with “constructive ambiguity” in theories of international relations and in European studies. Moreover, although this strategy that consists of playing on the ambiguity of a term or a situation can prove “constructive” for some actors, it can also be “destructive” for others. Indeed, du Plessix notes that the consequence of the lack of clarity in the EU’s strategy is “a progressive reduction in the EU’s influence” (p. 165). Hill reaches the same conclusion on the basis of another case study: “the EU’s position with regard to Nagorno-Karabakh remains ambivalent … An ambiguous political position that weakens the EU’s credibility in the region” (p. 214). Why does this strategy of ambiguity produce effects that are sometimes “constructive” and at other times “destructive”?

As for Rayroux, his main contribution to restoring the logic of action of military actors in the EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation is to link the concept of practice with that of “usages” as developed by Sophie Jacquot and Cornelia Woll. The idea of usages is defined as a set of “the practices and political interactions that adapt and are redefined considering Europe as a collection of opportunities of different kinds – institutional, ideological, political, and organisational” (p. 59). For example, French and Irish military actors “make usage of Europe” through “… the internationalisation of career paths, the putting into practice of training programmes put together in Europe, or the establishment of new social and cultural skills” (p. 25). In this way, Rayroux does not confine the CSDP military agent to one logic of action, but combines two different logics: “… usages place the emphasis on the actor’s motivations and intentions, whereas practices place more emphasis on the structuring effect of context on an action and on the influence of habitus on the decisions a actor makes” (p. 62). Through this original conceptual structuring, Rayroux provides a convincing answer to the problem Pouliot encounters in linking the “logic of what is practicable” with reflexive logics, be these of consequence, of balance, or discursive.

However, two questions remain unresolved. On the one hand, Rayroux does not explain whether these two “explanans” are on the same level, or whether one of them precedes or shapes the other. What determines the proportion of reflected knowledge (usages) and the proportion of tacit knowledge (practices) in relation to actors and contexts? On the other hand, it would have been interesting if the author had engaged in a discussion with the historic and sociological neo-institutionalist approaches as well as with the work derived from IPS to clarify the part played by the conceptual device employed. On this last point, the contribution of Buchet de Neuilly is illuminating; in his chapter he makes an association between the concepts of “usages” and “institution”, with the aim of enriching the former with the latter (p. 74). The

The author demonstrates that the usage of the military instrument (“battlegroups”) in a theatre of operations is not its only usage for reinforcing the institution embodied by the CSDP (p. 75). The author demonstrates that “battlegroups” are not used by EU actors – in particular, France and the United Kingdom, which worked on setting them up – to intervene militarily. On the other hand, they are used for other purposes, such as to justify requests to acquire equipment, to transform national armies (in the case of Sweden), or to reinforce the neighbourhood policy (p. 77).

Sociological Approaches: From ‘Matrices’ to ‘Shades’

The research conducted by Rayroux, and Bazin, Tenenbaum et al. reaches three conclusions. First, the EU’s peacekeeping policy is confined neither to a combination of national preferences nor to a mechanical transfer of a policy model formulated outside the EU. The EU’s peacekeeping policy is produced by hybrid practices and usages. This first conclusion questions the degree of autonomy (and hence dependence) of a group of actors or a field with regard to another. Second, these hybrid practices and usages are not formed in a single social arena. They emerge within interstitial institutional spaces situated at the intersection of the EU, its member states, other international organisations, and non-governmental arenas. This second conclusion questions the process of social and institutional differentiation at work, of which the reconfiguration of European defence governance is the symptom. Finally, Europeanisation of the EU’s peacekeeping policy is neither absent nor total. The effect the EU has on the implementation of peacekeeping operations varies according to the actors and the contexts within which they act. This third conclusion confirms the correlation between the the arena of social interaction and the politico-institutional dynamic that leads to the work of contextualisation of European public action being taken seriously.

To reach these conclusions, Rayroux, and Bazin, Tenenbaum, et al. employ sociological approaches that differ because of theoretical and methodological differences of degree rather than substance. Starting from the founding texts by Jacques Vernant, Raymond Aron, and Marcel Merle to formulate a sociology of international relations, the development of several “sociological matrices” has come to light in theories of international relations. Rayroux’s work embodies one of the sociological matrices whose aim is to contribute to the “dominant” theories of international relations and European studies. In order to do this, Rayroux develops a “complementary” practice approach, associating the concept of practice with that of usages. This is also the path taken by Sèverine Autesserre and Kathleen McNamara, who structure the concept of practice with ideas of regulations and

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symbols. For Autesserre, McNamara, and Rayroux, practices illuminate only a part of world politics. The “practice turn” introduced by Emmanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot and upheld by, among others, Rebecca Adler-Nissen, Christian Lequesne, and Iver Neumann, also aims to compete with the main theories of international relations. However, this approach of the “comprehensive” practice distances itself from that of Autesserre, McNamara, and Rayroux, by establishing “the precedence of the practice in all social actions”.

As for the book edited by Bazin et Tenenbaum, it is in line with the “sociology of international relations” (p. 12). In France, this sociological matrix refers to the work of Bertrand Badie, Guillaume Devin, and the Groupe de recherche sur l’action multilatérale [multilateral action research group] (GRAM). This sociology of international relations is characterised by the production of “dense” descriptions of the international political situation – the result of in-depth field surveys. The conceptual tools are chosen according to the data gathered. In *L’Union européenne et la paix*, they correspond to multiple sociological traditions, including the socio-historical approach (Egger, pp. 179-202) and sociological choice (Buchet de Neuilly, pp. 63-86). Finally, the IPS sociological matrix, associated with the eponymous periodical and collection of books, takes seriously the notions of domination and confliction. The aim of writers who employ this approach is not so much to contribute to the dominant discussions in international relations theory, or generate “thick” descriptions of international reality, as to produce critical knowledge of the social structures that determine world politics. It has been noted that this sociological matrix is absent from the approaches and references employed by Rayroux, as well as by Bazin, Tenenbaum et al.

These sociological matrices are not so much a juxtaposition in watertight theoretical and methodological silos, as an amalgamated network of fifty sociological shades. Through the case of the EU’s peacekeeping policy, it has been demonstrated that the differences between these sociological approaches – which take the form of multiple conceptual preferences, different levels of analysis, and a variety of ways of using data – are less a matter of substance than a matter of degree. Not only do these fifty sociological shades not appear irreconcilable, but...
their structuring favours, through their theoretical and methodological variations, an understanding of the implementation of the EU’s peacekeeping policy. This pluralist position is in opposition to the vague hope of imposing one legitimate sociological approach to studying international relations. In the extension of Philippe Bourbeau’s commentary, scepticism is expressed as to the apologia for an “epistemological and ontological purity” which embodies a retreat into a theoretical “chapel”, and which carries the risk that the means (the formation of a community of knowledge) takes precedence over the end (to produce a body of knowledge?). A constant effort should be made to ensure that the dialogue between these fifty sociological shades is continued. With this in mind, the recent publication of an IPS manual, of a book on Raymond Aron, of a special issue of the Journal of International Theory devoted to Marcel Mauss, and the organisation of a forthcoming international conference on Norbert Elias are reasons to celebrate.

Bibliography


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