Trust-Building in International Relations*

Nicholas J. Wheeler

Abstract

The challenge of building trust between states that have a history of conflict and acrimony has attracted the attention of scholars in the field of International Relations for several decades. While several models have been offered, constant changes in the international environment reveal their gaps. In this paper, the author explores the challenges that states face in the process of building trusting relationships, given the complexity nuclearization proffers. It presents a critique of the existing models and some preliminary ideas for understanding the process of trust building using a concept he terms as "interpersonal communicative dynamics".

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This paper offers a toolkit and vocabulary for thinking about the challenge of trust-building in conflict situations. While the ideas and approaches elucidated here can be applied to both interstate and intrastate conflicts, the focus is on interstate relations (particularly in the context of nuclearization). The purpose of this paper is five-fold. First, to distinguish trusting relationships from trust; second, to identify four key drivers of mistrust (or barriers to trust) in interstate relations; third, to elaborate the weaknesses of two models of trust-building in International Relations and to discuss the importance of interpersonal communicative dynamics in the building of trusting relationships, drawing on empirical cases such as the ending of the Cold War and ASEAN. Finally, the focus is on the challenge of sustaining and embedding trusting relationships.

Definitions of trust and trusting relationships

The conventional wisdom among trust researchers is to define trust as a psychological state[1] in which positive expectations are held regarding the motives and intentions of another actor. Yet whilst an actor might hold the belief that another can be trusted, one may argue that what matters for the existence of a trusting relationship is that one or both parties predicate their actions on this assumption. A distinction must be made between trust and trusting relationships.[2] The most important action, and the one that defines the emergence of a trusting relationship, is a decision by one or both parties to make themselves vulnerable – or at least not seek to eliminate existing vulnerabilities – as a way of communicating their trustworthiness. In other words, we make ourselves vulnerable because we want to communicate our trustworthiness. This is what may be termed as the *decision to trust*, a concept borrowed from Robert Solomon and Fernando Flores[3].

The centrality of an acceptance of vulnerability to the development of a trusting relationship is recognized by trust researchers across the social sciences and humanities. This is because, as James Notter argued, "if you risk and you are not exploited, this builds your confidence in the trustworthiness of the other. Second, by exposing yourself to exploitation, you are likely to make yourself more trusting in the eyes of the other"[4].

This leads to the following definition of a trusting relationship as "one into which actors enter in order to realize benefits which would otherwise not be available to them. They do so in the knowledge that this increases their vulnerability to other actors whose behavior they do not control, with potentially negative consequences for themselves. In doing so, they make a

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[1] This can be defined as a cognitive attitude which includes reason and emotion.

[2] Aaron M. Hoffman, *Building Trust: Overcoming Suspicion in International Conflict* (Albany: SUNY, 2006).

[3] Robert C. Solomon and Fernando Flores, *Building Trust: in Business, Politics, Relationships, and Life* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[4] James Notter, "Trust and Conflict Transformation," The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, Occasional Paper Number 5 (April 1995). Available at http://www.imtd.org/pdfs/OP5.pdf.

judgment about how to relate to the other party in which there is a strong expectation that they will not face the negative consequences of the *decision to trust.*"[5]

Building trusting relationships in both interstate and intrastate conflicts requires overcoming some key drivers of mistrust (or barriers to trust).

The drivers of mistrust[6]

There are four drivers of mistrust that can be applied to both intrastate and interstate conflicts. These are (1) the security dilemma; (2) the challenge of peaceful/defensive self-images; (3) ambiguous symbolism; and (4) "ideological fundamentalism".

Security dilemma

A central challenge facing actors in conflict situations is how to cope with the security dilemma created by the inescapable condition of international anarchy – understood as a political system where there is no central global authority to regulate the agents within the system. Security dilemma may be defined as the inescapable uncertainty that confronts governments about the intentions of those with the capability to do them harm.[7] According to Robert Jervis, security dilemma arises when states take actions to make themselves secure, but end up making other people insecure.[8] The security dilemma gives rise to what has been called the 'dilemma of interpretation' and the 'dilemma of response'. With regard to the former, those responsible for security policy have to decide whether another actor's actions—especially its military behavior—signal that it is acting defensively only (to enhance its security in an uncertain world) or whether it has offensive purposes (seeking to change the status quo to its advantage). Decision-makers then need to determine how to respond. If the dilemma of response is based on misplaced suspicion regarding the motives and intentions of other actors, and decision-makers react in a militarily confrontational manner, then they risk creating a significant level of mutual hostility when none was originally intended by either party. If the response is based on misplaced trust, there is a risk they will be exposed to coercion by those with hostile intentions.

Moreover, even if governments are confident about the current intentions of others, what guarantee can they have that another state or actor will not develop aggressive intentions in the future? This "future uncertainty" argument was first discussed by John Herz[9] in the literature on security dilemma theorizing. He questioned how could governments "trust in the continuance of good intentions in the case of collective entities with leaders and policies forever changing?" His answer, that leaders had to maximize their power against potential enemies, and be prepared for the worst, was echoed by contemporary offensive realists.

[5] Jan Ruzicka and Nicholas J. Wheeler, 'The Puzzle of Trusting Relationships in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,' *International Affairs*, Vol. 86(1), (2010): 69-85.

[6] A distinction can be made between mistrust and distrust. In distrust, an actor actively believes that *the other* cannot be trusted. A decision has already been taken that *the other* is insincere. In mistrust, an actor is suspicious of *the other*, but he/she does not know whether *the other* can be trusted. However, the operationalization of the difference is difficult.

[7] Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* (United Kingdom: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 5.

[8] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 66.

[9] John H. Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," in *World Politics* 2(2): 157-180.

Peaceful/defensive self-images

A key factor in leading governments to pessimistically resolve the dilemma of interpretation is the problem of peaceful/defensive self-images. Herbert Butterfield, a British historian, was the first to capture how these psychological dynamics can work to exacerbate conflict. Diplomats, he wrote, "may vividly feel the terrible fear that [they] have of the other party, but [they] cannot enter into the [others'] counter-fear, or even understand why [they] should be particularly nervous…[and it is] never possible for you to realize or remember properly that since [the other] cannot see the inside of your mind, [they] can never have the same assurance of your intentions that you have".[10] In other words, while we may think that other people see us as peaceful and defensive, they might think differently and instead see us as having aggressive intent. Butterfield was very doubtful that state leaders were capable of entering into the counter-fear of their enemies. He was of the view that historians, at a later stage, might be able to understand these patterns. However, empathy of this kind is a crucial precondition (though not a guarantee) for the building of trust.

Developing and elaborating Butterfield's work, Robert Jervis in the 1970s had described these dynamics as the "spiral model". Jervis explained this as a situation where two states (mis)perceive each other as having aggressive intent when each is only acting defensively; the result is a spiral of mutual hostility that could have been avoided through a better understanding of these dynamics (of the spiral). One key factor that inhibits actors from understanding that they might be in a spiral situation is their powerfully ingrained peaceful/defensive self-images. As Jervis wrote, what drives the spiral is the inability of policy-makers to "recognize that one's own actions could be seen as menacing and the concomitant belief that the other's hostility can only be explained by its aggressiveness".[11]

Butterfield's and Jervis's elucidation of the psychological dynamics that can fuel mistrust and/or distrust between states raises the question whether a better understanding of the spiral model on the part of policy-makers might lead to less pessimistic resolutions of the dilemma of interpretation in the nuclear sphere. The difficulty in answering this question is that it depends upon the response to a deeper question which is: on what epistemological and methodological grounds should policy-makers and analysts privilege a spiral explanation over one that posits aggressive intent—either now or in the future—on the part of governments? The problem is that there is no Olympian viewpoint from which observers or policy-makers can make a definitive claim that a particular case fits the spiral model or *security dilemma dynamics*. Despite Butterfield's claim that only historians, in retrospect, would be able to make reliable assessments as to whether a situation was explainable in spiral terms, the fact is that history offers no final resting point for resolving these issues. For example, historians continue to disagree about the motives and intentions that led to war in 1914 and 1939. This is because the *security dilemma*—the existential condition of uncertainty regarding the intentions of others—can never be escaped in world politics.

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[10] Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (London: Collins, 1951), 21.
[11] Robert Jervis, op.cit., 75.

Ambiguous symbolism

The above psychological dynamics are compounded by the problem of *ambiguous symbolism*[12]. The term refers to the difficulty (many would say the impossibility) of safely distinguishing between "offensive" and "defensive" weapons. Even if states profess that their weaponry is only to be used in self-defense after an attack, others will worry that such capabilities might be used for offensive purposes.

For example, such arguments were invoked in the context of India-Pakistan relations to foreground the risks of instability during crises. Did the crises during the period 1999–2002 reflect the difficulty of distinguishing precautionary "defensive" moves from preparations for attack? Did Indian and Pakistani decision-makers face nuclear dilemmas of interpretation and response?

The problem of ambiguous symbolism arises in relation to deployed weapons, but it also arises in relation to the dual-use character of civil nuclear technology. For example, civilian nuclear power-plants, which generate electricity, also possess the technology to build a weapon. The boundary between "peaceful" and "military" uses of nuclear technology throws up a particularly vexing dilemma for policy-makers because the boundary itself is blurred, yet once crossed it gives the transgressor immense weapons potential. All states, for example, that have mastered the technologies of uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing possess the capacity to produce the fissile materials that are needed for developing a nuclear weapon. A 2004 UN report estimated that at least 40 governments are in a position to move quickly to nuclear weapons status should a political decision be taken.[13]

Ideological fundamentalism

Ideological convictions have often been decisive in how policy-makers have resolved uncertainties about the motives and intentions of others. Ideological fundamentalism is a mindset which assigns enemy status because of what the other is – its political identity – rather than how it actually behaves. Ideological fundamentalism gives rise to what Ole Holsti called "an inherent bad faith model"[14] of one's adversary. In a landmark study, Holsti showed how John Foster Dulles, U.S. President Eisenhower's Secretary of State, adopted an 'inherent bad faith model' of Soviet behavior in the 1950s. Holsti's verdict was that for Dulles the Soviet Union must behave in the negative way it did solely as a result of the ideological nature of the state. The implication of bad faith thinking for trust-building is that governments operating with this outlook will always treat cooperative moves as either a trick to lull them into a false sense of security, or as a sign of weakness.

Recently, there have been claims that such a mindset has afflicted India-Pakistan relations as also the relationship between Iran and the US.

Highlighting this source of inter-state mistrust does not, however, mean that ideological fundamentalism is always a bad thing, since governments might find themselves facing an

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[12] Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler, op.cit., 154.

[13] United Nations, *A more secure world: Our shared responsibility: Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change*, 2004, available at http://www.un.org/secureworld/report2.pdf

[14] Ole Holsti, "Foreign Policy Formation Viewed Cognitively," in *Structure of Decision: The Cognitive Maps of Political Elites*, ed. Robert Axelrod (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976).

implacable foe, or foes, motivated by an ideological creed that commits them to aggressive actions. The problem is that because of the security dilemma, there can be no final certainty as to whether others are behaving in a hostile way because they are fearful or because they have aggressive intent.

Building trust between adversaries

In order to examine how far existing approaches to trust-building in International Relations provide the resources for overcoming mistrust between states and other actors, the focus will be on two key models. The first is Charles Osgood's conception of Graduated Reciprocation in Tension Reduction (GRIT) and the second is Andrew Kydd's model of costly signaling.

GRIT

Writing nine months before the superpowers came to the brink of nuclear war over the Soviet deployment of nuclear weapons to Cuba, the social psychologist Charles Osgood had proposed that the United States could break the Cold War cycle of suspicion and fear by making a series of limited conciliatory moves. He argued that this might trigger reciprocation by the Soviet Union, leading to what Osgood called a "spiral of trust"[15]. He encapsulated the essence of a unilateral graduated approach to trust-building in his proposal that it should "satisfy reasonable requirements of national security" and only involve taking "limited risks". If reciprocity was forthcoming, Osgood argued that the initiating state should follow up with bolder initiatives. If there was no positive response, he argued that the state pursuing GRIT should carry on making limited moves in the hope of triggering reciprocation.

There is clearly room for debate and political disagreement as to what counts as satisfying "reasonable requirements of national security". Nevertheless, the potential merit of GRIT is that it allows governments in relationships of varying degrees of rivalry to signal their peaceful/defensive intentions without exposing themselves to a high level of risk if it turns out that the state which one is seeking to build trust with has aggressive intentions.

However, GRIT suffers from four key limitations. The first is the difficulty of justifying unilateral initiatives given particular forms of domestic opposition. If positive reciprocity was not forthcoming after a GRIT move, Osgood argued that it was important to keep making small moves in the hope that these would elicit the desired response. But the problem with applying this prescription is that it overlooks the political damage that could be done to a leader who makes a series of concessions which are seen to have been pocketed by the other side.

Secondly, it can be difficult to determine which moves will be sufficient in terms of their trust-building potential to appear credible to the other state, and there is the related difficulty of ensuring that signals which the sender believes communicate trustworthiness will be perceived this way by the receiver. Cultural, historical, and psychological biases might serve to distort trust signals from that intended by the sender.

The third limitation of GRIT is that decision-makers in the state with whom an actor is trying to build trust may discount the trusting signal as either a trick or a sign of weakness because their

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[15] Charles E. Osgood, *An Alternative To War Or Surrender* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1962).

ideological fundamentalist mind-sets lead them to apply a "bad faith model" to the other side's actions. The concern here is that the government which believes it has made a trusting move will become disillusioned by such a negative response and shift to a more confrontational strategy in the belief that the other side cannot be trusted. We can see the consequences of such disillusionment in President Obama's shift to a more confrontational policy towards Iran's nuclear program after what he viewed as a series of conciliatory overtures.

The final weakness in Osgood's theory is that he does not provide a convincing account of how decision-makers in relationships of mistrust can overcome the dynamics of distrust in the absence of credible evidence that a conciliatory move would be reciprocated.

Costly signaling

A graduated, incremental approach to building trust like GRIT suffers from the general problem that small steps might be insufficient to communicate trustworthiness to suspicious adversaries. This leads Andrew Kydd to argue that if actors are to decisively signal their trustworthiness, they have to send what he calls a "costly signal". He defined this as "signals designed to persuade the other side that one is trustworthy by virtue of the fact that they are so costly that one would hesitate to send them if one were untrustworthy"[16]. It is no good sending a signal, he argued, that could be dismissed as "cheap talk", and so will fail to reassure the other side about one's intentions. Consequently, a state wanting to be seen as trustworthy should be prepared to take some risks. But it is a weakness of Kydd's theory, just like Osgood's theory, that he gives little guidance as to what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable risks.

The failure of Kydd to specify what his theory requires in terms of risk-taking is compounded by three further limitations. The first is that he assumes that decision-makers always interpret a costly signal correctly. However, as with GRIT, what the sending state perceives as a costly signal might not be interpreted in the same way by the receiving state. The second limitation is that Kydd assumes that costly signals clearly differentiate trustworthy from untrustworthy types and that the latter would never send a costly signal. But this ignores the possibility that a state with aggressive intent might be able to mimic costly signals as a way of lulling an adversary into a false sense of security. The third criticism that can be leveled at Kydd's model is an even stronger version of the one leveled at Osgood's GRIT, namely, he does not supply us with an account of how decision-makers who are sincerely committed to building trust reach the point where they make a decision to trust a potential adversary.

The key question that Kydd's theory opens up—though lacks the theoretical resources to adequately answer—concerns the processes, domestic and international, that lead policy-makers to seek to signal their trustworthiness in ways that break down previously held negative images of an adversary.

Building trusting relationships through interpersonal communicative dynamics

The first step in developing a trusting relationship is for decision-makers on one, or preferably both sides, to appreciate that their adversary might be acting out of fear and not malevolence. Moreover, it is crucial that each actor recognizes the role that their own behavior has played in provoking that fear. Building on the pioneering work of John Herz, Herbert Butterfield, and

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[16] Andrew Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Robert Jervis, Ken Booth and I have called such empathetic responsiveness on the part of leaders to the security concerns of others as "security dilemma sensibility". In our 2008 book *The Security Dilemma*, we defined this as an "actor's intention and capacity to perceive the motives behind, and to show responsiveness towards, the potential complexity of the military intentions of others. In particular, it refers to the ability to understand the role that fear might play in their attitudes and behavior, including, crucially, the role that one's own actions may play in provoking that fear".

Yet even if leaders are aware that others might be acting out of fear and insecurity, it does not automatically follow such a reframing of a conflict that actors will initiate trusting moves. Decision-makers might consider that a *spiral* interpretation of a conflict is a persuasive one, but still feel compelled to act on the basis of mistrust because of the perceived costs of adopting policies that turn out to be based on misplaced trust. Individual-level empathy can be translated into policies aimed at building trust. But for this to happen, decision-makers have to make a conscious *decision to trust* and, such a decision entails an acceptance of vulnerability (or at a minimum doing nothing to reduce existing vulnerabilities). Vulnerability is inescapable because there is always the risk that one's assessment of the other side's motives and intentions as peaceful/defensive is wrong. There is no escape from uncertainty because trust and uncertainty are mutually implicated; after all, if we had certainty, we would not need trust.

Even if decision-makers make a conscious decision to trust (and it is only a decision to trust if actors could have done otherwise), the question is what kinds of polices will signal their trustworthiness to others? Crucially, what risks are policy-makers prepared to take to transform an adversary's threat perceptions? Despite recognizing the potential for states to make unilateral conciliatory moves that might unwind spiral situations, Robert Jervis warned that governments with peaceful/defensive intentions should minimize the risks they take in order to build trust. He emphasized the importance of hedging strategies when he wrote that governments should "design policies that will provide safety"[17] if their trust in others proves mistaken, and that as a result 'even if both sides believe that the other desires only protection, they may find that there is no policy and level of arms that is mutually satisfactory'.

The trouble in following Jervis's advice for a state that wants to signal its trustworthiness is that the kind of policies that maintain 'safety' are often insufficient to communicate this to others who are mistrustful or even distrustful. This is because governments, as Evan Braden Montgomery has argued, "are often confronted with a difficult trade-off: the same actions necessary to reassure their adversaries will also endanger their own security if those adversaries are in reality aggressive"[18]. How these trade-offs play out in particular cases is a matter for empirical research, but they emphasize the importance that decision-makers will attach to having a safety net when they seek to build trust. The problem is that what one actor perceives as a safety net which facilitates the building of trust might be viewed by others as too flimsy to take risks with the security of the collective.

A key question concerns the role that certain forms of "interpersonal communicative dynamics" (encompassing written, verbal, and face-to-face interactions) play in both promoting security dilemma sensibility and encouraging decision-makers to take a decision to trust by taking on

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[17] Robert Jervis,op.cit.
[18] Evan Braden Montgomery, "Breaking out of the Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance, and the Problem of Uncertainty," *International Security* 31(2) (2006): 153-54.

some risks. One is not arguing that all interpersonal communicative dynamics promote a trusting relationship. A textbook case where interpersonal communicative dynamics promoted mistrust, with nearly disastrous consequences given that it emboldened Nikita Khrushchev's nuclear brinkmanship a year later over Cuba, was his disastrous meeting with President Kennedy at their summit in 1961. The key question, then, becomes understanding which forms of interpersonal communication build trust by enabling leaders and officials to enter into a "space of trust",[19] and secondly, what are the conditions – material and ideational – under which such forms of interpersonal communicative dynamics become operative in conflict situations. Such a communicative approach is missing from existing trust research in International Relations.

In his *Memoirs*, Mikhail Gorbachev reflected that the personal relationship he had developed with President Reagan had been fundamental to the ending of the Cold War. Gorbachev called it "the human factor"[20]. Echoing this theme, the former US diplomat Jack Matlock, who attended the summits between Reagan and Gorbachev in Geneva, Reykjavik, Washington and Moscow argued in his book that 'face-to-face meetings between the Soviet and American leaders and their policy makers were essential to move the U.S.–Soviet dialogue in a constructive direction. Under these conditions, the overwhelming suspicion characteristic of the Cold War was gradually replaced by trust'[21]. The level of mutual trust that Reagan and Gorbachev established was so remarkable that they came very close to agreeing to the elimination of all US-Soviet nuclear weapons at their summit in Reykjavik in October 1986.

This focus on "interpersonal communicative dynamics" has considerable potential as a way of building trust. I have argued that this communicative approach sheds important light on how a trusting relationship developed between Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in late 1998 and early 1999. The high-water mark of the trusting relationship that emerged between the two leaders was their decision to meet in Lahore in February 1999 and sign the 'Lahore Declaration' and a 'Memorandum of Understanding'. These agreements would not have been possible without the trusting relationship that had developed between the two leaders prior to the summit, and which was strengthened by their meeting at Lahore, thereby making possible new levels of cooperation over Kashmir and the nuclear issue, which held out the promise of transforming relations between the two nuclear foes. Nevertheless, the subsequent collapse of the Lahore peace process in the Kargil war (which threatened to escalate to the nuclear level) showed, the 'human factor' depends crucially on the capacity of leaders who are seeking to build trust being able to shield these initiatives from domestic spoilers. In the case of the Lahore peace process, the trust-building process between India and Pakistan collapsed because the civilian leadership was insufficiently in control of Pakistan's national security policy and the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif failed to appreciate that what the Pakistani military was planning at Kargil was incompatible with the diplomatic process that he had begun at Lahore. Even if trust-building initiatives can be protected from domestic opponents, there is the further challenge of ensuring that they are carried on by future leaders. This is the problem of future uncertainty and leads offensive realism to argue that states must choose to maximize their power at the expense of potential rivals because as

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[19] I owe this idea to Meenakshi Gopinath.
[20] Mikhail S. Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).
[21] Jack F., Jr. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (Westport, CT: Random House, 2004).

Mearsheimer puts it, "a state's intentions can be benign one day and hostile the next".[22] Sustaining trust-building initiatives under successive leaders and governments is the challenge of embedding trust.

Embedding trust

In an earlier work, Booth and I distinguished between trust that develops between particular leaders, and which can be traced to the interpersonal chemistry between them, and trust which has extended beyond the elite level to encompass the interaction between societies – a condition of what we called "embedded trust".

A key theoretical approach in thinking about the possibilities for achieving embedded trust is the theory and practice of security communities. The concept of a security community was developed by Karl Deutsch and his co-researchers in the mid-1950s. Their normative project was the eradication of war and the promotion of peaceful change, and the litmus test of a security community is that the participants do not target each other militarily.[23]

Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett in their pioneering work on security communities identified a pivotal role for trust by arguing that a security community was "the deepest expression of trust possible in the international arena"[24]. Despite recognizing the centrality of trust to building security communities, Adler and Barnett – like Deutsch before them – did not directly address how states can overcome their fear and distrust of others in order to start this process of trust-building. Yet if security community theory is to provide a model for building trust in regions where distrust is high, it needs supplementing with a conceptual framework that explains how trust might be built between adversaries.

In a forthcoming work with Vincent Keating[25], we show by comparing the cases of the West-European security community and ASEAN how the growth of a new inter-societal collective identity in the European context was crucial to assuring those "dependable expectations of peaceful change", to use Karl Deutsch's language, which are the *sine qua non* of a security community. In such a context, even if new leaders came to power intent upon restarting hostile power competition, a security community that has been 'embedded' in the societies of its members would pose a powerful obstacle to such revisionism.

The ASEAN case, by contrast, shows that whilst a measure of trust has been achieved between diplomats and leaders over the last four decades, this has not reached the point where it has countered the tendency of military planners in the region to plan for future military contingencies with other members of ASEAN. Whatever confidence each member of ASEAN has in the current motives and intentions of the others does not prevent it from hedging against the uncertainty that today's ally might become tomorrow's enemy. Put differently, ASEAN has developed a level of trust that goes beyond the "weak" form associated with rational egoism,

[22] J.J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

[23] Karl Wolfgang Deutsch, et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area; International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

[24] Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1998).

[25] Vincent Keating and Nicholas J Wheeler "Logic and Practices of Security: Lessons from Western Experience", in *The Security Challenge: From Alliance Systems to Cooperative Security,* edited by, Vojtech Mastny and Zhu Liqun, Rowman and Littlefield (forthcoming).

but it has not acquired the 'thick' character that is necessary for a Deutschian security community.

The comparison between the cases of Western Europe and ASEAN leads to the conclusion that it is only when both elites and societies develop trusting relationships across borders that war becomes 'unthinkable' among them. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, an important future exploration can be how far this finding can be applied to the cooperation and trust that developed in the nuclear field between Argentina and Brazil in the 1980s, and which seems to have been a key motor for the development of what Andrew Hurrell has called a 'loosely knit security community'[26].

Democratization, Hurrell argues, was an important motor in leading both countries to redefine their interests in ways that promoted this integration, and that this changing conception of interests sprung from a redefinition of identity. The need to nurture their fledgling democracies and promote joint economic development became the shared values of Argentine and Brazilian policymakers. Nevertheless, a good case can be made that democratic transition is not a sufficient explanation by itself for the levels of cooperation and nuclear transparency achieved between the two South American powers. Instead, we need to combine explanations of the democratic transition with recognition of the positive interpersonal dynamics that developed between Alfonsin and Sarney. Certainly, in the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, it would be unwise to assume that any set of democratic leaders in both countries would necessarily have taken the series of trust-building steps that Alfonsin and Sarney took during the 1980s.

Conclusion

There are no risk-free futures available to us. When decision-makers weigh the risks of making moves that might build trust but which, might also prove costly and dangerous, they need to remember that misplaced suspicion brings its own risks and costs. To give way to the impulse to mistrust risks (if hostility is fear based) trapping states in spiraling hostility that could have been avoided.

The litmus test of the beginnings of a trusting relationship is a decision by one or both parties in a conflict to make themselves vulnerable to the other. I have argued that this depends crucially upon key decision-makers on both sides coming to a realization that their adversary's hostile actions might stem from fear and insecurity and not aggressive intent.

The existing literature identifies two key models of trust development—GRIT and costly signaling—but neither of these provides a convincing explanation of how actors come to make a decision to trust. I have argued that a fuller explanation of how trusting relationships develop would focus on the conditions under which interpersonal communicative dynamics lead decision-makers to enter into a "space of trust". I am not arguing that communication is a panacea because clearly some forms of communication can increase mistrust. But the key question is to understand the conditions under which some forms of interpersonal

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[26] Andrew Hurrell, "An Emerging Security Community in South America?" in *Securities Communities*, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1998), 228-264.

communication which are empathetic can lead actors to take a decision to trust by making themselves vulnerable. Having done this, the challenge is to shield such moves from domestic spoilers, and ensure that such relationships can be continued and deepened under future leaders.

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