

Building Trust In An Uncertain World: From Individuals to Institutions, States to Societies

Thursday, 22 June 2023 13:15 (1h 30m)

Description of the panel

In accordance with the Secretary-General's 12 key proposals, this panel aims to explore how "building trust" can help "promote peace and prevent conflicts" in various contexts. First, dealing with the crisis of the liberal world order, US-Russia, Israeli-Palestinian, Inter-Korea relations and UN, this panel investigates how trust can be built and be an important factor in managing these crises. In order to do this, the papers in this panel will conceptually and theoretically disentangle trust from legitimacy, confidence, and hope, so that we can scrutinise various phenomena which hinder us from overcoming challenges in international relations, such as uncertainty or hypocrisy. In addition, as this panel includes five papers ranging from trust in the liberal world order and international organisation to individuals and communication devices, it can provide a productive discussion on how studying micro-level phenomena can help us understand macro-level issues. Finally, scholars represented on this panel come from a range of career-stages and institutions inside and outside the UK, utilising different methodologies and case studies as well as differing conceptualisation of "trust" yet a shared interest in better understanding "trust" in international relations.

Abstract

State Leaders' Different Responses Toward Uncertainty: Fear, Trust and Hope

Jiyoung Chang (PhD Student, Department of Political Science, University of Birmingham)

: Rationalist IR theorists assume that under anarchy there is always a permanent state of fear and uncertainty. And many other scholars open up spaces for trust as a precondition for peace/cooperation rather than the unavoidable tragedy. However, the former president of South Korea and Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Kim Dae-jung, said "we try all our best to keep peace on the Korean peninsula. It does not matter if the other side is good or evil. It is not because we trust them, but because we hope peace." As we can see in this short phrase, trust and hope should be distinguished in terms of a precondition for cooperation/peace. In this sense, first, this paper conceptually disentangles hope from trust and argues that a state leader's hope for peace should not be dismissed as a lack of vigilance or as "cheap talk"; rather, it can transform a conflict by initiating conciliatory gestures between adversary states, leading to increased cooperation. Second, borrowing concepts and theories from psychology studies, this paper investigates the conditions under which state leaders can experience hope. Based on these theoretical reviews, this paper finally explores the role of hope in the initiation and types of conciliatory gestures between two adversary states.

Trust and Negotiations: Evidence from the United Nations

Nicola Chelotti (Lecturer, Institute for Diplomacy and International Governance, Loughborough University (London campus))

: What exactly does trust make possible in diplomatic negotiations, and what kind of trust is doing the work – trust between states, or trust between individual diplomats? The paper analyses the enabling power and the boundaries of trust in UN diplomatic negotiations. More specifically, we test the independent and interaction effects of interstate- and interpersonal-trust upon a number of negotiation activities, including information sharing and flexibility in the negotiating positions, using a vignette experiment we conduct with national diplomats based in their permanent missions to the United Nations in New York. This is part of a multi-year project aimed to study how trust develops and functions in the committees of the United Nations.

Hypocrisy and Trust in the Liberal World Order

Vincent Keating (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Management, University of Southern Denmark)

: The liberal world order is being increasingly challenged by illiberal powers who use claims of hypocrisy against Western states as a means to harm both the states themselves and the underlying values. At the same time, the nature of this harm is unclear in the existing literature, with some scholars suggesting that hypocrisy is fundamentally erosive of legitimacy, and others suggesting that it is erosive of trust. Through a comparative theoretical analysis of legitimacy and trust via this problem of hypocrisy, this paper demonstrates why trust is the more important factor, and what this means to the continued sustenance of the liberal world order in the face of these persistent challenges.

Users' trust in the Moscow-Washington hotline

Eszter Simon (Senior Lecturer, Department of Politics and International Relations, Nottingham Trent University)

Agnes Simon (Educational Developer, Centre for Scholarship and Teaching, Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia)

: The Moscow-Washington hotline has been a crisis communication device that has linked US presidents and Soviet (now Russian) leaders. Simon and Simon (2020) has argued that the hotline is a trust-based device. In this paper, we argue that the hotline can only fulfil its trust function in crisis communication if actors believe that they can trust the device itself. After elaborating on our theoretical angle about the difference between trust and confidence, we discuss (1) what efforts were made to make the hotline a trustworthy institution, (2) what lapses in its reliability happened over the years and (3) what additional efforts were made to improve it. We define trustworthiness in terms of the hotline's (a) technical reliability, i.e., ability to transmit between leaders, including the security of encryption and the transferring of messages quickly to decision-makers, (b) speed and accuracy of the translation of message texts, (c) exclusive use by Soviet and American leaders, (d) message ownership, including drafting, by Soviet and American leaders, and the (e) maintenance of secrecy of hotline messages.

Below the State Leader: Boundary Spanners and The Development of Trust Between Conflict Parties

David Wilcox (PhD Student, Department of Political Science, University of Birmingham)

: Within current International Relations (IR) trust literature, the focus for examining interpersonal trust has been on state leader relationships or how interpersonal trust at the state leader-level can develop into inter-societal or institutional trust. Yet below-state leader level actors like ministers, diplomats, negotiators and even well-connected individuals are more than capable of developing relationships of interpersonal trust which they can use to influence the relationships between states, organisations and state leaders. I argue that these below state leader level actors can be recognised and examined by conceptualising them as boundary-spanners. Boundary-spanners are actors who operate along the boundary between a bounded unit and its external environment. I argue this allows for considering interpersonal trust between actors other than the state leaders and how this can impact other relations between states and/or organisations. I apply this concept to a single case study of Dr. Yair Hirschfeld's activities in 1988-1993 which were crucial for the establishment of Oslo Channel between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation and without who the Channel would not have developed.

Track Classification: Emotions in Politics and International Relations Working Group