

New Perspectives on Trust in International Relations

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Trust is a crucial component of social relations and creates unique affordances in interaction as it can allow actors to overcome situations of uncertainty and vulnerability. It is thus not surprising that, in the past two decades, scholars have successfully illuminated trust's analytical value in the field of International Relations (IR), to better understand instances of positive change or constructive continuity. The salience of trust – or lack thereof – is increasingly acknowledged by practitioners as well, as a “deep and growing global mistrust” arguably is one of the four main threats endangering our common future (Guterres, opening UN General Assembly, 22 September 2020).

Yet, an increased interest in trust does not mean it is an easy concept to work with. Indeed, trust is both theoretically and empirically challenging to grasp in the international. Theoretically, trust is a slippery concept to pin down, and debates about its nature are divided along rational, psychological and social/constructivist lines (Ruzicka & Keating 2015). Moreover, IR scholars face the challenge of how trust – which, ultimately, is experienced by individuals – can function at the international level. Empirically, it remains challenging to find commonly accepted indicators of trust. Scholars cannot rely on experiments or surveys often used to study trust in other disciplines, because of the type of actors and issues under scrutiny. Current debates thus seem entrenched in disagreement about trusts' nature, at what level it (can) operate and how to study it, empirically. We believe that much of trust's analytical potential in International Relations, however, still waits to be discovered and that fresh approaches seeking to move beyond established theoretical divides point out promising new directions of enquiry.

To revive scholarly discussions, this workshop brings together new perspectives on trust in IR. We look forward to receive proposals that (1) expand, deepen and clarify conceptual vocabulary around trust; that (2) employ new methodologies or suggest innovative strategies for empirical investigation; and that (3) provide novel theorisations about the function of trust in IR on or across various levels of analysis. Paper proposals may include the following topics and questions:

- How does trust function in the everyday of International Relations? What do practitioners (e.g. diplomats, soldiers, bureaucrats, peace mediators) *do* and what is *being done* to gain or break trust? How does trust concretely affect the unfolding of international life?
- How can trust be theorised as a dynamic *process* instead of something that depends on *characteristics* of the actors involved? How is trust *maintained* over time?
- How can trust be conceptually disentangled from related concepts such as common identity, loyalty, friendship or habit?
- How can trust be *destructive*? Can we, theoretically, understand the relevance of trust in cases of harm or conflict?
- How is trust *gendered*? To what extent does a gendered lens change perspectives on which affordances trust creates and how it speaks to uncertainty and vulnerability?
- How does trust, conceptually and practically, relate to distrust, mistrust or misplaced trust?