3 Trust building in nuclear disarmament

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The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968) (NPT) is based, among other things, on a set of differentiated trusting relationships between its signatories. We put forward the case for this novel understanding of the treaty prior to the 2010 NPT Review Conference (Ruzicka and Wheeler 2010). By developing theoretically the concepts of trust and trusting relationships in international politics, our perspective stresses the importance of particular, historically formed trusting relationships in the forging and maintenance of the NPT. In short, such trusting relationships make the treaty possible. Their robustness or, alternatively, fragility has significant effects on the way in which the treaty allows states to achieve the declared goals of cooperation in the sphere of nuclear non-proliferation.

This chapter builds on our re-conceptualization of the NPT and connects it specifically to the notion of global zero. Global zero, understood here as the movement toward the total elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide, relates to the trusting relationships underpinning the NPT in two important ways. First, it is obvious that the end goal of global zero has a direct bearing on the quality of trusting relationships between the recognized nuclear weapons states (NWS) and the countries that have agreed to decline the possession of nuclear weapons. This relationship concerns, respectively, the obligation of the non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS) not to acquire or develop nuclear weapons and the commitment of the NWS to get rid of their existing nuclear arsenals. Unsurprisingly, these commitments have received a good deal of attention, although not through the concept of a trusting relationship. The twin obligations go to the core of what is typically interpreted as one of the central bargains in the NPT – in return for giving up the legitimate ownership of nuclear weapons, the NNWS were promised that the NWS would work towards nuclear disarmament. The perceived failure to live up to the disarmament commitment has been a constant source of irritation to the NNWS. Feelings of betrayed trust have been expressed repeatedly (Wilton Park Report 2014).

Second, the objectives of global zero influence trusting relationships among the NWS. This set of relationships is not as apparent as that

between the NWS and the NNWS, but it is no less central to the achieve-
ment of nuclear disarmament. If the goal is to be reached, the NWS will
have to transform their mutual relations, many of which rely on the logic
of deterrence rather than trust. This, of course, concerns both the NPT
signatories temporarily recognized as legitimate nuclear powers as well as
the nuclear-armed states that have chosen to remain outside the treaty.
The necessity of going beyond the NPT, or perhaps bringing the non-
signatories into the fold, highlights the need to establish and expand trust-
ing relationships between the signatories and those states not party to the
treaty, which is something that we stressed in our previous work. Without
robust trusting relationships among states possessing nuclear weapons, the
prospects of global zero are dim at best and most probably doomed to
failure. In other words, trust building is crucial to the objective of a world
free of nuclear weapons.

We examine two important questions in this chapter. First, we must
explore what, if any, is the link between the existence of trusting relation-
ships underpinning the NPT and the possibility of global nuclear disarma-
ment. Are the trusting relationships that sustain the NPT sufficient to
enable the process of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons? Second,
we raise the question as to what kind of policy initiatives and, importantly,
outcomes would be required to strengthen and extend the admittedly
fragile set of trusting relationships underpinning the NPT. Specifically,
answers to this question must identify with which actors, under what con-
ditions, and how this goal could be reached. Is one way ahead, for
instance, to attempt to set up conferences about regional zones free from
nuclear weapons?

Our chapter is structured in the following way. In the opening section
we outline an understanding of the NPT, applying insights generated by
the study of trust in international relations and related disciplines. We
then draw further on this research to address the two specific questions:
the link between trusting relationships and nuclear disarmament; and
policy initiatives oriented toward the strengthening of trusting relation-
ships. We use recent and current empirical illustrations to flesh out our
theoretical and conceptual points. The two questions are dealt with sepa-
rately. They are, however, connected by the overarching concern to better
understand the possibilities and limits of trust building when it comes to
nuclear weapons.

The NPT as a set of trusting relationships

Since we first explored the puzzle of trusting relationships in the NPT
more than five years ago, the research on trust in the field of international
relations has grown significantly (for a detailed exposition, see Ruzicka
and Keating 2015). As a result, we now have a better and more nuanced
grasp of the two central concepts used in our original article: trust and

trusting relationships. There is clearly no uniformity in their understanding. In fact, as will become clear, the two of us disagree on some important conceptual issues. However, this variation in conceptual understandings within the field has been largely beneficial and produced both theoretical innovation as well as new empirical insights (Rathbun 2012; Brugger *et al.* 2013; Michel 2013; Wheeler 2013; Keating and Ruzicka 2014). These advances in the study of trust allow us to revisit and further refine our conceptualization of the NPT as a set of trusting relationships.

Our principal argument that trust and trusting relationships are a key element in the establishment and maintenance of the NPT remains in place. The treaty would not have been possible in the absence of trust among its signatories. It creates obvious vulnerabilities for both the states which gave up the potential possession of nuclear weapons (in contrast with the NWS, they find themselves in a clearly inferior position with regard to their material power capabilities) as well as the NWS, which must face the possibility that the civil nuclear programs and assistance that are legitimated under the NPT might lead some NNWS to clandestinely develop their nuclear weaponry under the guise of their treaty membership (Wohlstetter 1976–1977). Trust, along with various cost–benefit calculations, has enabled the signatories to overcome the risks and uncertainties inherent in this situation. The persistence of trusting relationships, at least at some minimal level (where this minimal level depends on different perceptions of individual actors participating in the non-proliferation regime), thus continues to be crucial to the future of the treaty.

There are three differentiated categories of trusting relationships underpinning the NPT. The first category entails the relationships between the five recognized NWS and the NNWS. The second set refers to the relationships among the recognized NWS. Finally, and perhaps somewhat controversially, we argue that there are trusting relationships between the signatories of the NPT and those states that have not signed up to the treaty (India, Israel, and Pakistan) or that have left it (North Korea). This section briefly examines each of the trusting relationships. To clarify our concepts, the understanding of a trusting relationship used in this chapter is as follows: a relationship where actors enter into a mutual interaction knowing that, as a consequence, they increase their vulnerability to another actor whose behavior they do not control, with potentially negative consequences for themselves.

Central to the treaty are several obligations that affect the widest set of trusting relationships which underpin it – namely, between the NWS and the NNWS. The NPT stipulates the obligation of the NWS not to assist in the spread of nuclear weapons (Article I) and of the NNWS not to acquire nuclear weapons (Article II). These obligations are supported by a guarantee to all states that allows them to develop nuclear programs for energy purposes (Article IV), subject to conformity with Articles I and II. The other key part of the bargain is the promise by the NWS in Article VI to

> … pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to
> the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear
> disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament
> under strict and effective international control.
>
> (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons 1968)

These obligations imply that the NNWS assumed a potentially serious vulnerability. By forsaking the possibility of obtaining their own nuclear weapons, they exposed themselves to the actions of the NWS, as a result of which they could face negative consequences – for instance, in the form of nuclear blackmail. Given the conceptualization we use here, the basic bargain of the NPT thus represents a trusting relationship. There would have been little incentive for those who signed the treaty to do so, had they thought that they could not trust the other parties. Some states might have been pressured by the superpowers into accepting the treaty through a mix of sticks and carrots (e.g., a system of verification, security guarantees, and the determination to keep Germany and Japan denuclearized) that would generate a favorable set of payoffs. Other states might have signed the NPT because of their own normative commitments (believing, for instance, that the possession and proliferation of nuclear weapons was a moral taboo). It seems improbable, however, that the states which signed the treaty fell strictly into just one of these categories.

For the vast majority of states, the decision to join the treaty reflected a mix of interests and values. In accepting the treaty, they demonstrated trust, no matter how weak. In fact, the reluctance of a number of states – both NWS (e.g., France and China) and NNWS (e.g., India, Brazil, West Germany, Japan, and Spain) – to sign and/or ratify the treaty, even after it came into effect in 1970, shows that these states were, to varying degrees, unwilling to accept the basic bargain at its core. In other words, the states which lagged behind did not have trust in the treaty and its signatories. Hence they initially, and in some cases for protracted periods of time, refused to enter into a trusting relationship with other states party to the treaty.

The obligations forming the basic bargain of the NPT have often been described as unequal and derided for creating two classes of states (Vital 1968; Bloomfield 1975). The NWS received a much better deal than the NNWS. Whereas the latter are to fulfill their commitments immediately and not pursue nuclear weapons, the former make a rather vague future promise. This is quite true. It is also the case, however, that in signing the NPT, the NWS have entered into a trusting relationship. By agreeing to the right of all signatories of the treaty to pursue civilian nuclear programs involving international assistance, albeit subject to safeguards administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the NWS have accepted (along with the NNWS) the potential vulnerability inherent in the possibility of a state mastering the fuel cycle and thereby becoming a "virtual" NWS. Thus all states that are party to the NPT, irrespective of their nuclear

status, enter into a trusting relationship with each other. The difference, admittedly an important one, is in the degree of vulnerability to which the two groups of states are exposed as a result of exhibiting trust.

The second category of trusting relationships underpinning the NPT is that covering relationships among the recognized NWS. To make this a credible claim, we must identify specific vulnerabilities accepted by the NWS vis-à-vis each other. Such vulnerabilities come in a weaker form than in the first category. Nevertheless, they can be spelled out and concern both material capabilities and reputational costs. By agreeing to the treaty, the NWS have accepted a key part of the original bargain of the NPT – that is, nuclear disarmament. Progress toward this would put them into a new position when it comes to their material capabilities, potentially making them more vulnerable with regard to each other. The extent of this vulnerability depends on how far each of the NWS can trust the others to live up to this commitment. On the other hand, a lack of progress on nuclear disarmament carries with it obvious reputational costs and hence a different form of vulnerability. For example, if one or more of the NWS fails to disarm, then this will put them under increased pressure from the other recognized nuclear powers who are living up to the bargain. Although reputational hazards may be dismissed as cheap talk, they must be countered. Paradoxically, the best way of doing so has been for the NWS to toe a more or less unified line. To maintain it, however, they need to have basic trusting relationships among themselves.

Nuclear disarmament presupposes the ability of the recognized NWS to strengthen the trusting relationship among themselves beyond the level which made the treaty possible. Moving toward nuclear disarmament – and arriving at zero itself – requires that the NWS trust each other suffi-ciently not only to begin the process, but, crucially, to follow-up in such a way as to deepen the trusting relationship so that it becomes possible to take significant steps toward zero. The prospects in this area have been mixed at best. On the one hand, the two recognized nuclear powers that initially declined to join the NPT (China and France) finally did so in 1992. On the other hand, finding agreement on far-reaching nuclear dis-armament between the five recognized nuclear powers (let alone the nine that currently possess nuclear weapons) will involve a complex process of negotiations much more difficult than the original treaty, which was ham-mered out largely by the USA and the Soviet Union.

Three factors stand in the way of achieving deep cuts in and, ultimately, complete dismantling of, the arsenals of the NWS. The first is the convic-tion that the NWS need to maintain their nuclear weapons for their own protection or that of their allies. Second, this conviction is coupled with peaceful/defensive self-images and the belief of each state that, while it can be trusted with nuclear weapons, other states cannot (Booth and Wheeler 2008: 51–58). The Chinese announcement following the coun-try's first nuclear weapon test in 1964 captured this sentiment well:

> The mastering of the nuclear weapon by China is a great encouragement to the revolutionary peoples of the world in their struggles and a great contribution to the cause of defending world peace. On the question of nuclear weapons, China will neither commit the error of adventurism nor the error of capitulationism. The Chinese people can be trusted.
>
> (Quoted in Burns 1965: 861)

Finally, there are now nuclear powers that stand outside the NPT and thus are not even a part of the limited trusting relationship established by the treaty.

This takes us to the third set of trusting relationships underpinning the NPT. The question of the relationships between the signatories and those states that remain outside the treaty is of key importance to any analysis using trust as an analytical category when examining the treaty. The vulnerabilities in this category are indirect; after all, the signatories and non-signatories have not entered into a direct relationship concerning nuclear weapons. They relate chiefly to the hypothetical scenario of the treaty collapsing. At stake is, primarily, the question of the impact the non-universality of the NPT has had on the strength of the trusting relationships between the members of the treaty. As long as at least one state stays outside the treaty, the trusting relationships that are embodied in the NPT will be diminished and may even be fatally undermined. This would make both the signatories and the non-signatories more vulnerable because they would no longer be able to count on the positive payoffs generated by the treaty. The non-signatories therefore have to act in a way that would at least hint toward the desirability of the maintenance of the norms embodied in the NPT. Hence the proclamations by India that it will not join the discriminatory NPT, but is ready to work toward nuclear disarmament, or Israel's claims that it is ready to join the nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East under the right conditions. Still, the unwillingness of the states remaining outside the treaty to join shows their mistrust toward it. This is so for two main reasons.

First, the non-signatories manifest their lack of trust in the bargains and relationships that underpin the treaty. They signal either that they do not trust other states to live up to their obligations and/or that the bargains incorporated in the treaty are not in their interest, even if they could trust the other signatories. Finding out which (or both) of the two concerns has motivated states to not sign the treaty will reveal whether, and if so how, they could be persuaded to join. The former of the two concerns, that relating to the lack of trust, might paradoxically be easier to address than a calculation that the bargains in the treaty are incompatible with a state's interests and values. Although the lack of trust could potentially be overcome in a trust building process, no amount of trust building could address the conviction that the bargain incorporated in the treaty threatens the state's security and is inherently unjust and discriminatory.

The second reason why the lack of universality undermines the trusting relationships in the NPT has to do with the concerns of the signatories. If states remain outside the treaty, the payoffs from the NPT for the signatories will change and influence their cost–benefit calculations about their participation in it. Moreover, the lack of universality will reinforce the perception of some signatories that they need to maintain a hedge against future uncertainties, potentially leading to a spiral of distrust.

This is the classical problem of free-riding. The non-signatories enjoy the benefits of nuclear non-proliferation brought about at least in part by the treaty. However, by preserving their right to develop nuclear weapons – or actually developing them – they do not bear the costs of underwriting the treaty by restraining their own actions. The lack of universality is not a new issue. We noted earlier that two of the recognized nuclear powers refused to join the treaty in the beginning. It took more than twenty years for France and China to sign up to the NPT. Over the course of its history, nevertheless, the treaty has had a very good record of attracting states, as attested by the extremely low number of non-signatories today. States have expressed their trust in the treaty, limited though it may be, by entering into the trusting relationships it establishes. The trust embodied in these relationships may, however, be nurtured as well as undermined. Whereas the 1990s saw, for the most part, a process of successful nuclear trust building, the first decade of the new century was predominantly marked by the erosion of the trusting relationships in the NPT (Walker 2007).

It should be readily apparent that the respective trusting relationships are uneven in their quality and some are more robust than others. Historically, for example, trusting relationships among the individual NWS have differed greatly. It is helpful to contrast the relationship between the USA and the UK with that between the USA and the Soviet Union/Russia. In addition to the variations among the specific bilateral relationships, the individual trusting relationships have also evolved across time, and not in a linear fashion. We have not been able to observe a continuous development toward ever-stronger trusting relationships. Once again, the ebb and flow in the relationship between the USA and the Soviet Union/Russia can serve as a useful illustration.

Just as the respective sets of trusting relationships differ in their quality, so does their importance to the future of the treaty. The three sets of trusting relationships we identify are not equally significant. It is apparent that the trusting relationships between the NWS and the NNWS are more important than the trusting relationships between the NPT signatories and the states which have chosen not to join the treaty. This can be demonstrated in a simple way. The treaty has survived for close to half a century despite the fact that it does not apply universally, although this has occasionally put it under a good deal of strain. This fact should give sufficient pause to the alarmists, who have repeatedly cried that the treaty's end is near (for an outstanding analysis of their discourse, see Horovitz 2015).

However, while the varied significance of different sets of trusting relation-   1
ships may explain the persistence of the NPT, all these trusting relation-   2
ships will have to become more robust if the goal of global zero is to be   3
attained.   4

How trusting relationships can be made stronger depends on how one   5
conceives of trust. It does make a difference, for instance, whether we   6
define trust, drawing on the work of Annette Baier, as "acceptance of vul-   7
nerability to harm that others could inflict, but which we judge that they   8
will not in fact inflict" (Baier 1995: 152) or if, instead, we follow Nikolas   9
Luhmann and think of trust as the ideational structure that allows actors   10
to cognitively reduce or eliminate the overall amount of risk and uncer-   11
tainty they face when making decisions (Luhmann 1979: 15; see also   12
Keating and Ruzicka 2014). Our opening discussion of how the NPT is   13
constituted by trusting relationships between the NWS and the NNWS,   14
and among the NWS themselves, was predicated on a particular definition   15
of trust that sees the conscious acceptance of vulnerability as the *sine qua*   16
non of a trusting relationship. This could be called the "vulnerability   17
approach" and it is preferred by one of us (N.J.W.). This approach entails   18
a clear recognition of the potential dangers of trusting. To trust, and thus   19
to enter into a trusting relationship, means to open oneself to the possib-   20
ility of betrayal by the actor in whom one places the trust. According to   21
this line of thought, the trusting actor makes a judgment that such a   22
betrayal is unlikely, which opens up the possibility of achieving mutually   23
advantageous outcomes that could otherwise not be attained by either of   24
the two parties. This is the benefit of trusting. The judgment that trust will   25
not be betrayed can be based either on a rational calculation or a moral   26
belief about the trustworthiness of the trustee (the actor being trusted).   27
The rational calculation rests on the idea, in the words of its most famous   28
proponent, Russell Hardin, that "I trust you because I think it is in your   29
interest to take my interests in the relevant matter seriously" (Hardin 2002:   30
1). A trusting relationship is therefore an outcome of a particular struc-   31
ture of payoffs. Once the distribution of payoffs from trusting behavior   32
changes for the trustee, there will be an incentive on the part of the latter   33
to abandon the trusting relationship. To rationalists, this explains why   34
trusting relationships in international politics are so rare. A prudent states-   35
man will always be aware of the future possibility that a trusting relation-   36
ship could break down and hence will be extremely cautious about   37
investing in it or avoid it altogether.   38

The judgment to accept vulnerability can also be, however, based on a   39
moral belief. Central to this line of thinking is the notion that actors will   40
honor their promises and do what is right. The fact that a trustor (the   41
actor trusting) places trust in another creates a sense of moral obligation   42
on the part of the trustee. As Martin Hollis puts it, "you are *at fault* if you   43
do not *oblige*" (Hollis 1998: 10–11). In the study of international politics,   44
this has been best captured by Aaron Hoffman, who notes that the notion   45

of moral obligation is necessary to differentiate trust from other forms of risk-taking, which also involve vulnerability (Hoffman 2002). Seen from the perspective of moral obligation, a trusting relationship is valued for more than just the payoff structure it might yield. Such trusting relationships will continue to exist even when the initial payoffs no longer do so. This is so because trust is "an ongoing process that is as much influenced by knowledgeable actors as it exerts an influence on them" (Möllering 2006: 79).

But is the willing acceptance of vulnerability the most suitable indicator of a trusting relationship? Since the publication of our original paper, one of us (J.R., together with Vincent Keating) has argued that it makes little sense to equate the acceptance of vulnerability with a trusting relationship. The judgment to accept vulnerability on the part of the trustor, irrespective of whether this is on the basis of a rational calculation about the encapsulated interest of the trustee or a moral belief in their trustworthiness, is merely an expression of confidence in the other actor. It should therefore be considered not a manifestation of trust, but of confidence. Keating and Ruzicka claim that the key distinction between the two ideas is that "confidence does not reduce the perception of risk, trust does" (Keating and Ruzicka 2014: 756). A good indicator of a trusting relationship is therefore the extent to which actors are willing to shed hedging strategies otherwise available to them, because they do not perceive certain possibilities as risky. Giving up on the potential possession of nuclear weapons might be one such example of declining to hedge.

The actual effects of accepting vulnerability and of giving up a hedging strategy might be similar in appearance – in our case, once again, agreeing not to acquire nuclear weapons could be seen as both signaling the willingness to make oneself vulnerable or the lack of need to hedge – but the risk perception of actors will be different and so will the likely processes leading them to the given outcome. The perception of risk will be very real in the case of vulnerability, but it will be overridden by judgment. This process might allow for dramatic frame-breaking moves and initiatives that could be carried out by individual decision-makers (Wheeler 2013). In the hedging approach, rapid moves and "leaps of faith" are unlikely because, if actors perceive vulnerability, they will hedge against its possible effects. The emphasis is therefore on longer historical processes that allow actors to trust as a matter of habit, which comes through stable and repetitive interactions with other actors (Keating and Ruzicka 2014).

Given the differences between the "willing acceptance of vulnerability" and "no-hedging" approaches to defining a trusting relationship, is it still possible to argue that the NPT is based on a set of trusting relationships? Both perspectives offer strong points. In an international agreement, trust is inevitably weak in the beginning, but it may grow stronger through a range of practices. These include an increased exchange of reliable information, greater acceptance of interdependence, and confidence in

others living up to mutual agreements (Zand 1972: 231). In reverse, the
initial expression of trust will further weaken and potentially disappear if
there is no exchange of reliable information and an unwillingness to
accept interdependence, and if mutual agreements are not lived up to. If
it can be empirically shown that states do form trusting relationships – that
is, relationships where they assume some vulnerability or decline certain
hedging strategies – then we should also be able to show how maintaining
such relationships could influence their interactions further, particularly
with a view toward nuclear disarmament.

Trust building and global zero: two questions

In this section, we examine two questions: what is the link between trust-
ing relationships in the NPT and global nuclear disarmament; and what
kind of policy initiatives might sufficiently strengthen these trusting rela-
tionships to allow for nuclear disarmament? The awareness that the NPT
was related to the question of trust was not lost on those who drafted it.
The preamble unambiguously expresses the desirability of the "strength-
ening of trust between States" (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear
Weapons 1968). The content of the relevant paragraph makes it clear that
building trust was envisaged as the means toward a more peaceful world in
general and nuclear disarmament in particular. However, the paragraph
also implies that, at the time of its creation, the trusting relationships were
not robust enough to allow for nuclear disarmament.

The fundamental problem that has strained trusting relationships in
the NPT remains. As long as the five recognized NWS (as well as the four
states outside the treaty) believe that nuclear weapons – even at massively
reduced levels – remain indispensable for their security, the invitation will
always be there for others to seek their own nuclear security blanket,
potentially wrecking the treaty in the process (Schell 2007). The disillu-
sionment of the NNWS with the NWS has been thwarting the action that
would prevent the emergence of new "virtual" nuclear powers. The
problem is how to preserve the sovereign right of states to enjoy the peace-
ful benefits of nuclear energy without practicing a new discrimination in
fuel cycle capabilities (Perkovich and Acton 2008: 76–78). Just as the NWS
argue that the bomb is vital to their security in an uncertain world, so
many states view indigenous fuel cycle capabilities as an insurance against
potential adversaries breaking out of the restraints of the NPT, the fear of
those nuclear-armed powers outside the treaty, and a generalized collapse
of the non-proliferation norm.

Movement toward a new and far-reaching bargain might seem to
require that one of the parties takes a leap of trust by accepting substan-
tially greater vulnerability. This is one of the possibilities, but it is unlikely
that governments will act in this manner. There is another possibility,
which builds on the fact that the signatories of the NPT have already

accepted a significant degree of vulnerability or have given up specific
hedging strategies when they entered into the treaty in the first place. This
alternative rests on one or both parties taking a series of steps that would
strengthen the trusting relationship between the NWS and the NNWS.
Our reinterpretation of the NPT opens up new ways of thinking about
nuclear disarmament. If states realize that they have already entered into
trusting relationships with other signatories, the actions required to revi-
talize the grand bargain do not appear as risky as skeptics might suggest.

Trusting relationships would be strengthened by all NPT states living
up to the promises they have made, by a willingness on the part of all sig-
natories to uphold and enforce the norms on which the treaty stands, and
by a recognition that trusting relationships are already in place. Historical
legacies, feelings of betrayal on all sides, and questioning of others'
motives and integrity create formidable obstacles to strengthening the
trusting relationships. They do not, however, rule out such a possibility.
The fact that the states that have signed up to the treaty argue over each
other's trustworthiness suggests that there is more space for trust than is
generally recognized. The steps that are necessary to build trusting rela-
tionships both open up and depend on the possibility of new payoffs as
well as mutual bonds.

This brings us to our second question – namely, the necessary policy
ideas and steps. Prior to the 2010 NPT Review Conference, two initiatives
were seen as very promising in reinvigorating the non-proliferation
regime: the New START Treaty between the USA and Russia and the pro-
gress toward the nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East. Although
the New START Treaty was eventually ratified by both countries and the
2010 Review Conference reaffirmed the commitment to the nuclear
weapons free zone in the Middle East, which subsequently led to the desig-
nation of Finland as a host government and the appointment of Jaakko
Laajava as facilitator, neither seems to have significantly improved the
quality of trusting relationships within, let alone beyond, the NPT. A larger
confrontation between the USA and Russia came on the coat-tails of what
was a very contentious ratification process of the New START Treaty in the
US Senate. The Middle East initiative, despite planned international con-
ferences, was overtaken by the turmoil within various relevant countries
and the ensuing regional instability.

All this begs the question of whether high-profile policy initiatives are
the most suitable way of building trust. We disagree on the answer. N.J.W.
now embraces the view that, if trusting relationships can be built between
individual leaders, particularly through face-to-face encounters, then this
opens up a new space for leaders to take "leaps of trust" that are aimed at
breaking down the walls of distrust between adversaries (Wheeler 2013).
Moreover, he has become skeptical about the possibility of trusting rela-
tionships existing among collectivities, considering that only individuals
are capable of trusting behavior. He therefore thinks that personal

encounters at the highest levels of diplomacy are the key to trust building. J.R., on the other hand, is open to the possibility that trusting relationships may exist between collectivities (Keating and Ruzicka 2014). If such a likelihood were to be ruled out, the concept of trust in international politics would be severely circumscribed and there would be nothing to maintain trusting relationships once the original leaders departed from the scene. As to the process of trust building, he subscribes to the perspective that long-term habitual interaction, which allows parties to reflect on the state of their relationship, is essential. This view does not offer spectacular political moves, the "leaps of trust," but rather puts emphasis on communication and regularized encounters.

Neither perspective offers quick solutions to the issue of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We do not argue that all issues and concerns can be solved if only states trust each other sufficiently. That would be incredibly naïve. It would presuppose a dubious harmony of interests as well as identical normative commitments on the part of all states. Recognizing the presence of trust is nevertheless important because it shifts attention from the structural constraints of international anarchy to the active policy choices of actors. Trust is a way in which two or more parties relate to each other. Not even the anarchical structure makes states automatically relate to each other in a distrustful and suspicious manner. David Yost has argued that distrust will persist among the possessors of nuclear weapons to the detriment of the treaty (Yost 2007: 573). Yost does mention Martin Wight's contention that "in the long run the idea of a common moral obligation is probably a more fruitful social doctrine than the idea of a common material interest" (Wright, cited in Yost 2007: 574). Nevertheless, he dismisses the role of promises. In contrast, we have argued that the promises made in the NPT ought not to be disregarded lightly. Actors in international politics have the opportunity to decide whether they will accept a degree of vulnerability/shed available hedging strategies and live up to the promises necessary to realize the benefits of trusting relationships. It needs to be stressed that other courses of action are, naturally, not free of vulnerability and that there is no risk-free nuclear future. This makes the achievement of global zero a moral and strategic imperative. The belief that the presence of nuclear weapons will never lead to their intentional or accidental use is even more idealistic than the possibility of forging robust trusting relationships leading to global zero.

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