'Nuclear Rivalries: Prospects for Cooperation and Trust-Building'

Networking Symposium Report

Aims and Summary

On 14-15 June the project on 'The Challenges to Trust-Building in Nuclear Worlds', led by Professor Nicholas J. Wheeler, held its second annual networking symposium in the Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University. The project is part of a major, joint research programme - Global Uncertainties: Security for All in a Changing World - supported by Research Councils UK. In line with the overall focus of the project, which aims to address questions of trust-building among states in general, and in the nuclear area in particular, this year's symposium was devoted to the subject of Nuclear Rivalries: Prospects for Cooperation and Trust-Building.

The networking symposia planned by the project over the course of its duration, the first of which took place in September 2010, are primarily envisaged to serve three main purposes. First, they are intended to generate new research capacity by bringing together early career researchers, established academics, and practitioners. Thus the project offers a venue for interaction and exchange of ideas among these distinct groups. This aim is closely connected to the symposia's second main objective, namely research dissemination. In this respect the project aims to provide an opportunity for early career researchers to present results of their ongoing research and to benefit from comments offered in a stimulating environment. There is an added element to this dimension as the symposia are public and open to a wider audience. This year's symposium drew about 50 participants in its four sessions. Finally, the symposia are seen as a tool to explore contributions that could be gained from investigating the potential for an inter-disciplinary approach to the study of trust-building at the international level. Accordingly, one of the goals has been to recruit presenters and participants across a wide spectrum of the arts, humanities, and social sciences.

The symposium on Nuclear Rivalries offered scholarly and policy findings in the following areas: 1) Conceptual - trust among rivals, trusting relationships at the international level; 2) Regional – Indo-Pakistani nuclear relations, the Iranian nuclear stalemate; 3) Great Powers - US-Chinese nuclear relations, US-Soviet arms control, prompt global strike and its impact on potential nuclear disarmament. This report outlines all of these findings in greater detail.

Programme

<u>Tuesday, 14 June 2011</u>

14:00 - 14:15 – Registration

14:15 - 14:30 – Introduction and welcome
- Mike Foley, Head of Department (Aberystwyth)
- Nicholas J. Wheeler (Aberystwyth)

14:30 - 16:00 – Session 1: 'The concept of Trust in International Politics'
- Guido Möllering (Jacobs University Bremen) – 'Trust and deception among rivals'
- Vincent Keating and Jan Ruzicka (Aberystwyth) - 'Confidence and trust: Two concepts in International Relations'

16:00 - 16:30 – Coffee Break

16:30 - 18:00 – Session 2: 'Nuclear Rivalries in South Asia and the Middle East'
- Kate Sullivan (Oxford) - 'Hybridity, esteem, and systems of constitution – The case for an Indo-Pakistan 'trust triangle'
- Naomi Head (Glasgow) – 'Putting trust, empathy and dialogue to the test? Exploring the case of US-Iran relations'

<u>Wednesday, 15 June 2011</u>

9:00 - 10:30 – Session 3: 'Great Powers and Nuclear Rivalries'
- Nicola Horsburgh (Oxford) – 'The sources of mistrust in US-China nuclear relations'
- Laura Considine (Aberystwyth) – 'Trust and strategic nuclear arms control: A study of START I'
- Andrew Futter and Ben Zala (Birmingham) – 'Non-nuclear challenges for nuclear rivalries'

10:30 - 10:45 – Coffee break

10:45 - 12:15 – Session 4: 'Global Nuclear Future Roundtable'
- Andrew Barlow (Foreign and Commonwealth Office)
- Farah Zahra (King's College London)
- Marianne Hanson (University of Queensland)

12:15– 13:00 - Lunch

Conceptual questions

The first session featured two presentations on conceptual issues that arise in the study of trust at the international level. The two presentations built upon themes which had been raised at the first annual symposium in 2010 (the report is available on the project website). In particular, the suggestion of those practitioners present in 2010 who had encouraged scholars to identify the criteria that might help them to recognize the existence of a trusting relationship, and the policy recommendations that might be developed from this.

Professor Guido Moellering, one of the world's leading experts in trust research in the field of management and business administration, addressed the question whether trust is not only possible, but also beneficial among rivals. He argued that contrary to conventional wisdom the answer to the question might be yes. Moellering identified four conditions for such a relationship to arise. First, drawing on Russell Hardin's conceptualization of trust as an encapsulated interest, Moellering stressed that some form of encapsulated interest among rivals is required. This is not too difficult to conceive as rivals might have an obvious interest in maintaining their rivalry as they could stand to benefit from it. The rivalry could, for example, provide them with special status vis-à-vis other states. In addition, rivals also need to accept the social fact of rivalry as normal. Finally, rivals have to be willing to take large leaps of faith (a key concept in Moellering's work) in order not to escalate their rivalry into a full-blown enmity. Based on these assumptions, Moellering claimed that among rivals *'trust means that the rivals maintain the rivalry.'* The interest in maintaining rivalry is underpinned by benefits which both stand to gain from. He identified the following potential benefits: as noted above, rivals can turn their rivalry into a productive social structure which yields social and material resources; rivals can learn from each other by copying successful strategies and techniques; their rivalry furnishes them with a particular identity; finally, rivalry might offer them protection as the other rival has an interest in preserving its opponent. In all this, deception as opposed to cheating should be recognized as part of the game. Moellering noted that trust among rivals is shallow and fragile but we cannot rule out that through routinized, reasoned and reflexive interaction it will develop into more resilient forms of trust.

The second conceptual presentation by Vincent Keating and Jan Ruzicka started with the question how can a trusting relationship be identified among states. The authors argued that the answer to this question must come prior to other questions asked by trust researchers, such as what has caused a trusting relationship, because we need to know whether what is studied is an instance of a trusting relationship to begin with. Current approaches to this research question were argued to be deficient: discursive approaches omit the strategic use of language; other approaches incorrectly equate cooperation with trust. Instead, the authors proposed as the key criterion for identifying a trusting relationship the presence or absence of hedging strategies in a particular relationship. They argued that such an approach does not depend on actors' utterances and allows for the possibility that cooperation can occur without trust. Keating and Ruzicka distinguish trusting relationships from relationships based on confidence. The latter are characterized by them as a calculation that takes into consideration two components, the probability of an event occurring and the benefit or cost of this, which together yield an expected value for any prospective event. Such calculations are typical of all relations among states. However, they argue that only in those situations in which actors give up hedging strategies, is it meaningful to speak of the existence of a trusting

relationship. The absence of hedging strategies vis-à-vis specific others attests to the actor's willingness to set aside residual risk. It is a concrete manifestation of the acceptance of vulnerability which stands at the heart of most definitions of trust. This approach does raise the bar for trusting relationships at the international level fairly high, but there is no good reason to assume that trusting relationships are impossible.

Regional issues

The first empirical panel was devoted to two of the most pressing nuclear relationships in the world today. The first presentation aimed to provide a broader context of the contentious nuclear relationship between India and Pakistan, while the second paper sought to articulate a potentially new approach to the stalemate surrounding the Iranian nuclear programme.

In her presentation on the Indo-Pakistani relationship Kate Sullivan explicitly built upon research conducted as part of the wider project by Nicholas J. Wheeler (see his article "'I Had Gone to Lahore with a Message of Goodwill but Instead We Got Kargil": The Promise and Perils of "Leaps of Trust" in India-Pakistan Relations,' *India Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2010). Sullivan claimed that the particular dyadic relationship between the two countries needs to be understood within a broader regional and international context. She stressed that there are forces and dynamics beyond the dyadic relationship which influence prospects for trust and of trust-building. Seen from this perspective, it is crucial, she argued, to take into consideration how much the political process that culminated in the 1999 Lahore Declaration was motivated by a need to reassure the wider international community about the nuclear motives and intentions of India and Pakistan. It was claimed by the author that the dyadic trusting relationship was significantly influenced by expectations that each side had vis-à-vis external actors. International perceptions and issues of prestige and status played an important role in the two countries' decisions to go overtly nuclear in 1998. However, she argued that following the nuclear detonations, the international community's fears and misgivings had to be addressed. The Lahore Declaration provided for a suitable symbolic mechanism that both India and Pakistan could agree upon. The Declaration therefore served not only the goal of trust-building between the two rivals, but it was also deemed to promote their relations with the international community.

Naomi Head tackled in her presentation the policy stalemate surrounding the Iranian nuclear programme. Proclaiming as unsuccessful the attempts to reach some conclusion that would be satisfactory to the international community by the means of sanctions and coercion, the author argued for a fundamental policy change. Such a change should, in her view, place greater emphasis on empathy and dialogical approaches to conflict resolution. These approaches are better suited to solving a confrontational situation which, she argued, is produced when strong 'emotional beliefs' (a concept developed by Jonathan Mercer which he explains as beliefs that go beyond evidence), such as the one that Head argues has motivated the United States (and the wider international community) in its perceptions of the Iranian nuclear programme. She claimed that emotional beliefs change as a result of combining new evidence with empathy. This is, however, fairly difficult to achieve as already entrenched emotional beliefs lead actors to either discount new evidence or interpret it in the light of those beliefs. Her key claim is that actors ought to engage in perspective taking which she sees as a form of empathy. Deploying this type of empathy as a tool of statecraft could help in understanding why Iran has been behaving deceptively, and why it perhaps aims to develop a level of nuclear capability that would give it a de facto nuclear hedge. Head claimed that the decision by the IAEA to report the issue of the Iranian nuclear programme to the United Nations Security Council in 2006 closed down opportunities for dialogue. She concluded

that a way forward might therefore lie in cognitive perspective taking and in looking for mutual security concerns.

Great power relations

In the third session, three papers addressed nuclear relations among great powers from the perspective of cooperation and trust-building. These papers featured a historical example of successful cooperation in the nuclear sphere as well as analyses of the current US-Chinese nuclear relations and of the potential impact that the development of the US prompt global strike capability might have on great power nuclear relations and the prospects for general nuclear disarmament.

Nicola Horsburgh began by stressing that the US-China nuclear relationship is a hard case for building trust because historically a great deal of mistrust has existed between the two countries. Moreover, at present a considerable disparity in overall nuclear capabilities exists. Nevertheless, she expressed her general belief that dialogue can help in trust-building and attempted to list several developments between China and the United States pointing in this direction. In a manner reminiscent of the conceptual presentation by Guido Moellering, Horsburgh emphasised that the relationship entails positive and negative elements. Both countries share an interest in global stability despite their ideological differences. She identified several specific barriers to building trust on both sides: the United States worries about China's regional assertiveness, conventional weapons modernization, and the general lack of transparency of its nuclear programme. China views with suspicion the US support for Taiwan, the continuing investment and commitment to national missile defence and is disquieted by the persistence of the 'China threat' theory in the United States. In addition, both sides display a remarkable lack of understanding of their respective bureaucratic structures and linguistic/cultural barriers should not be underestimated. They have, however, been engaged in mutual dialogue at both official and semi-official levels. Such initiatives hold significant potential for trust-building and should be developed further. Noticeably absent from the dialogue have been discussions of strategic stability, and she argued future talks should focus on this area.

Laura Considine's presentation posed the question whether trust played any role in making possible the signing of the START I treaty. She put theoretical emphasis on active trust (developed in the work of Anthony Giddens) consisting of reflections on the position of the other (perspective taking) and communicative engagement. While Considine is in the early stages of her doctoral research, she claimed that initial evidence suggests negotiators engaged in the practice of active trust, and that this was significant in US decisions on START I.

The concluding presentation by Andrew Futter and Ben Zala pointed out a disparity between President Barrack Obama's stated vision of nuclear disarmament and the continuous development of US ballistic missile defence and prompt global strike capabilities. The latter is billed as a means of reducing reliance on nuclear weapons. However, they posed the question, is prompt global strike conducive to building trust between the United States and its key strategic rivals Russia and China? Futter and Zala answered this question by arguing that prompt global strike is incompatible with such a trust-building process. In addition, they considered that US national missile defence posed a further threat to strategic stability, and hence a factor increasing the mistrust in Beijing and Moscow regarding future US motives and intentions. The US investment in global strike technologies and in national missile defence was leading to an increased Russian reliance on nuclear weapons for its security, thereby undercutting

the key stated goal of the Obama administration to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in national security policy. Russia's nervousness about future US intentions is shared in Beijing which worries that its much smaller arsenal vis-à-vis the United States could in the longer term be vulnerable to US global strike capabilities, especially if coupled with robust missile defences. In so far as trust-building requires some 'leaps of faith' (as Moellering argues), other great powers are unlikely to be willing to take them when faced with US conventional superiority. Futter and Zala argued that there are also important domestic constituencies supporting both programmes, which introduces an increased level of complexity into any potential negotiations that would seek to curb them and thus adds to the difficulty of trust-building among the major nuclear powers. The authors concluded that 'attempting to silence domestic critics by *increasing* conventional capabilities effectively works to *undermine* the nuclear reductions agenda.'