



**Nicholas J. Wheeler.** *Trusting Enemies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. xxi + 349 pp. \$39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-969647-5.

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**Published on** H-War (May, 2020)

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Nicholas J. Wheeler sets out to develop a new theory of interpersonal trust that applies to the international level. He expounds on his prior work within the field of signaling in international relations to determine if the recipients of signals interpret these signals as initially intended by the senders. He endorses the thesis that “the most important ‘mechanism’ explaining the emergence of trust between two state leaders is a process of interpersonal bonding that is made possible through face-to-face interaction” (p. 1).

The author provides a comprehensive and contemporary theoretical analysis of IR signaling and walks readers through existing theories that explain the formation of trust while positing that they do not provide a plausible argument for the required conditions that are conducive to breaking out of the security dilemma. He purports that two enemy state leaders must undergo a process of bonding through face-to-face interactions to then transmogrify their identities from rational egoists who calculate risk toward bonded partners. This process results in a subjective certainty about the sincerity of each other’s signals aimed at ending their security dilemma.

This book uses a process-tracing methodology, shown below, that begins with face-to-face interactions that then create a chain reaction as the independent variable. Therefore these interactions ulti-

mately have a causal relationship with the dependent variable of accurately interpreting an enemy’s signaling. By using the “working backward” heuristic, this change in signaling interpretation occurs due to a bonded trust, indicated by an absence of risk calculation by the prior enemies. The suspension of risk calculation occurs after identity transformation away from enemies, for example, the metamorphosis mentioned above. Preceding this chain reaction is the face-to-face interaction that begins the process by providing the leaders with the ability to acquire a humanizing index of their opponent’s intent and integrity (face-to-face --> bonding --> identity transformation --> suspension [also known as bonded trust] --> accurate signaling interpretation).

Wheeler then adeptly transitions readers to the environments that precede and succeed in this process. Even before the above process begins, the leaders ideally exercise security dilemma sensibility and empathy by understanding that others could misinterpret their actions, which could create increased insecurity for their opponent. He then proposes that the leading theories that relate to trust and signaling depend on calculative trust, but bonding trust is the soil that allows enemies to begin the cultivation of collaboration.

The author uses three case studies to corroborate the importance of personal relationships. He

commences with the book's inspiration for the face-to-face meetings between US president Ronald Reagan and Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, which is the prototypical scenario that led to breaking down the entrenched mistrust of the Cold War. Their bonded trust was a prerequisite for them to accurately interpret the other's signals of peaceful intent by removing their enemy images. This trust then had a trickle-down effect that changed history forever. Wheeler rejects the assumption that personal relationships cannot be obtained at the international level, and these interpersonal relationships at this level do not affect the behavior of states. The author then provides counter analysis where there were no face-to-face interactions between US president Barack Obama and the supreme leader of Iran Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Since these interactions did not occur, the theoretical chain reaction did not commence. He then illustrates how the face-to-face interactions of Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif led to a bonded trust relationship. This bonded trust ultimately dissolved due to Pakistani military hostilities and the lack of the Pakistani prime minister's capacity. He stresses that although bonded trust can occur, they are not guaranteed into perpetuity since behavior is a complex culmination of a multitude of factors. He also notes that successors of these relationships may not ascribe to the same bonded trust.

There are some noted limitations within the book. The book falls short with its explanatory power since it is groundbreaking in the theoretical realm but only teases the empirical realm without statistical power. Wheeler solely focuses on the psychology of these interactions and does not provide a comparison with the bureaucratic or social models. He dismisses the rational actor model without providing evidence that the leaders genuinely suspend their rational egoist tendencies. He also acknowledges the use of two main assumptions: state leaders have peaceful intent, and signalers genuinely represent the collective of their

nation-state. Furthermore, this study is limited to two state leaders, and the dynamics of trust are drastically more complicated by the addition of other players. Moreover, with the advent of newer technology, further study is warranted on the validity of this theory within different substrates that lack face-to-face physical interactions, such as those found in cyberspace. Ultimately this field of study could become even more critical in this information age where relationships and communication are evolving with the technology.

Overall this book is an excellent source of up-to-date signaling theory within IR. Wheeler's theory merits further research with potential applications in determining causal mechanisms that generate trust between enemy states. This research is vital since the development of bonded trust between state leaders would herald the improved possibility that conflicts can begin to de-escalate. Analysts could also potentially improve their prediction of signals between state leaders. Finally, Wheeler's theory sets the stage for trust research to determine when face-to-face interactions lead to bonded trust and if this trust can withstand temptation or betrayal. This field of study comes at an opportune time as the unipolar world transitions into a more multipolar milieu with international threats that require multinational collaboration.

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**Citation:** Kenneth Bode. Review of Wheeler, Nicholas J. *Trusting Enemies*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. May, 2020.

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