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Trust in World Politics: Converting “Identity” into a Source of Security through Trust-Learning

In the discipline of International Relations (IR), the concept of trust has been an under-theorized concept. A number of works on trust in IR have created an uneasy compromise between the idea of trust and Rational Actor Model. These approaches understand trust as an instrument to further self-interests. Contra to this “rationalist” approach, it has recently been argued that trust is necessary to transcend the security dilemma between individuals and social groups by building a common identity between them (Booth and Wheeler, 2008). This conceptual article aims to show that these approaches do not adequately reflect how trust operates in world politics; that trust provides a new way of understanding the identity-security nexus in IR. It will be argued that as actors learn to trust each other, this trust-learning process has a transformative affect on actors’ definition of self-interests and identities.

The discussion will be pursued in three sections. In the first section, the conventional approaches to the identity-security nexus in the areas of security dilemma and migration will be discussed. Their primordialist and apolitical understanding of identity will be problematized. Following this problematization, the security dilemma framework of Booth and Wheeler will be contrasted to the conventional approaches by highlighting how differently they conceptualize the identity-security nexus through the introduction of trust. However, the problems in the Booth and Wheeler’s framework, especially in relation to the conceptualization of trust in world politics, will also be examined. In the second section, the concept of trust will be explored. This section primarily focuses on the question of what trust means in world politics, how it works and its effects by introducing a new theoretical foundation to study and understand trust in world politics. This theoretical foundation will be built through the combination of Alexander Wendt’s social constructivism (1999) and Bill McSweeney’s sociological approach to formation of collective identities (1999). In the last section, the elaborated understanding of trust in the security dilemma will be operationalized in terms of the immigration security dilemma.

I. Conventional Understanding of the Identity-Security Nexus: Identity as a Source of Insecurity

a. The Identity-Security Nexus in the Areas of Security Dilemma and Migration

The concept of ‘identity’ was (re)introduced in the discipline of IR in general, and Security Studies in particular, by social constructivist approaches (Lapid and Kratochwil, 1996; Wendt, 1999) and used by scholars belonging to different approaches (Campbell, 1998; Adler and Barnett, 1998; Hoogensen and Rottem, 2004). The analytical focus will be on two areas in parallel with the objectives of the
article: identity conceptualizations in the security dilemma literature and in the area of security dimension of migration.

In the security dilemma literature, the concept of identity was first introduced by Barry Posen’s work about security dilemmas at societal level. In Posen’s analysis, the political elites of societies manipulate the historical enmities between ethno-religious groups, which lead to increase fear and insecurity for both. This motivates an ethnic group to pursue its self-security interests. However, this attempt results in more insecurity for the other who, as a response, tries to increase its own security by ethnocentric security policies. The pursuit of self-security of each ethnic group eventually evolves into vicious cycle of security competition (Posen, 1993). A similar perspective is also adopted by Stuart Kauffman (1996) with a more analytical and detailed focus on how the political elite manipulates the already existing fears and enmities. However, the most important work, which links security and identity in the security dilemma literature, belongs to Paul Roe. According to Roe, ethno-religious groups have different “societal identities” which are “securitized” by policy-makers. Attempts to increase security lead to more insecurity, eventually ethnic conflict (Roe, 2005).

The securitization approach used by Roe has appealed to wider scholarship in the area of migration. The securitization approach is an attempt to understand how an issue is presented by ‘securitizing’ actors, mainly decision-makers at the state-level, as an ‘existential threat’ to the societal identities of receiving communities (Waever et al., 1993). According to this approach, ‘securitizing’ political actors argue that social (read: national) identities of the receiving communities are challenged by immigrants, who supposedly have “different” identity (Waever, 1993; Huysmans 2000; Balzacq and Carrera, 2006; Boswell, 2007; Balzacq, 2008). The securitization analysis, as the approach’s prominent figures state, “stabilises” identities of the receiving community and the immigrant community to conduct a security analysis (Buzan and Waever, 1997: 243). Without such stabilisation, there would be no unit which can be studied as the referent of security.

These two approaches (the societal security dilemma and the securitization of migration) share a particular understanding of identity as a “thing”, as put by McSweeney (1999: 73). The security dilemma and securitization approaches heavily rely on the idea that the societal identity has essential characteristics and when formed, it “freezes”. As a result, different and conflictive identities with their essentialist features are treated as the sources of insecurity. What is missing in these approaches is the role of political interests in construction and reconstruction of social identities; to put it differently, the fluidity of collective identities because of the political contestation over them. This results in treating identity ‘exogenous to political processes’ without discovering the role of politics on the (re)construction of particular social identities and on the marginalization of others (Bilgin, 2010: 83-84). The implication of this ahistorical and apolitical understanding is that identities
are generally understood in the primordialist and essentialist sense, which leads to the conceptualization of identity as a source of insecurity for social groups which have ‘different’ identities (ibid). However, the identity can be studied also as a source of security, if it is understood from the political perspective. The security dilemma framework of Booth and Wheeler offers a new way of approaching identity (and enables a political analysis) as a source of security by attempting to explore the role of trust in identity construction processes.

b. The New Security Dilemma Framework

The security dilemma is conventionally understood as a situation in which when an actor tries to improve security for itself, it creates more insecurity all around. Challenging this understanding, for Booth and Wheeler, these approaches confuse “the security dilemma” with “the security paradox”, which refers to “a situation in which two or more actors, seeking only to improve their own security, provoke through their words or actions an increase in mutual tension, resulting in less security all around” (2008: 9, italics original). According to their new thinking, the heart of the security dilemma is *lemma*, a Greek word for proposition, as “dilemma” is a situation in which an actor is forced to make a decision between “two equally balanced alternatives” (2008: 6). The security dilemma is a strategic predicament of an actor about how to interpret others’ intentions and capabilities and how to respond to them (2008: 3-4). Booth and Wheeler conceptualize three types of ideational settings from which choices of actors can be derived: the logics of insecurity.

One choice of political actors can be underlined by fatalism. Fatalism foresees that when an actor faces insecurity in relation to another under the condition of uncertainty, it should prepare itself for the worst by adopting policies whose objective is to increase security ostensibly just for the actor itself. Fear has a key role in the formation of fatalist logic (2008: 62). Another choice is derived from the mitigator logic. The mitigator logic argues that insecurity can be ameliorated if actors choose to cooperate in order to break the vicious cycle of security competition and war. This depends on the ability of actors, mainly at the state-level, to develop shared norms and values. They ameliorate insecurity because the common norms reduce the degree of uncertainty by providing some level of predictability about others’ intentions (2008: 15-16). The third choice of political actors is shaped by the transcender logic. According to this logic, security dilemmas can be transcended if a new type of relationship between social groups is constructed through trust-building. Trust can be a choice for actors who are ready to take risks to build security for themselves and others (2008: 16-17).

Booth and Wheeler’s security dilemma conceptualization provides important advantages for the students of Security Studies. The societal security dilemma approaches reduce the security dilemma as the action-reaction dynamics. In contrast, Booth and Wheeler’s security dilemma
approach enables analyses which examine political actors’ ideas about security and how their ideas affect their choices of policies. As it brings the “choice” as the centre of the security dilemma, it provides a new framework to analyse the actor responsibility in the escalation of crises into the conflicts. Unlike the securitization approach, it enables an analysis to discover the plurality of the politics of security by focusing on alternative ideas and policies of security in a political structure.

This innovative thinking has implications for studying the identity-security nexus. In the politics of security, different political actors have different ideas about how to make the social group more secure in relation to another. The choices of some aim to pursue security through ethnocentric (fatalist) security policies regardless others’ security needs. However, there can be other choices, available to political actors, which seek security for the social group with others. If political actors choose to act in this way (the transcender logic), a common identity between two groups who feel insecurity towards each other can be constructed.

Their most crucial contribution for the purposes of this discussion is that the new security dilemma framework introduces trust to the security-identity nexus. They define trust as a situation that “actors mutually attempt to promote each other’s interests and values, including in circumstances that cannot be observed” (Booth and Wheeler, 2008: 230). In order to transcend security dilemmas, trust should be embedded into the societal relations. In embedded type, trust is so internalized in social relationships that it is not possible to talk about separate identities: two ‘I’s become one ‘we’ (2008: 233). Therefore, a conceptual link between the idea of trust and identity is made.

As important and innovative as their work may be, Booth and Wheeler’s trust conceptualization within the security dilemma framework also has problems. First, although they include the interest in their trust definition, they do not adequately analyse the interest dimension of trust-building in world politics. The questions such as what ‘interest’ means in trust relationships, what it differs from the one in the relations characterized by mistrust remain unanswered. Among them the vital question is: what kinds of effects that the trust relationship produces for the interests of an actor? The current analysis aims to build a stronger theoretical foundation for the role of interests in trust-building processes.

Second, related to the first problem, Booth and Wheeler extensively focus on “normative” dimension of trust. They define the properties of trust as leap in the dark, empathy, vulnerability, integrity (2008: 234-245). For them, when actors trust each other, they leap in the dark by relying on the integrity of others and expect them not to harm their interests. This understanding is highly shaped Martin Hollis’ trust conceptualization (1998), which is not satisfactory for studying trust-building processes under the conditions of insecurity in world politics. Why should an actor just leap in the dark and make itself vulnerable or try to empathize with others to whom it feels anxiety, fear
and even enmity? In this discussion, it will be argued that trust does not just appear out of normative considerations. Rather, actors learn to trust each other through interaction taken by small steps and self-interest is a key motivation in trust-building.

The third problem is that Booth and Wheeler do not sufficiently elaborate how a trust relationship between two actors leads to the construction of a common identity between them. In fact, Booth and Wheeler’s study challenges the dominant perspective about identity in IR, which attempts to ‘freeze’ it for analytical purposes. Their framework enables an analysis of the role of trust in identity politics, albeit remains under-theorized. To explore this important relationship, the interest dimension of trust should be analysed further. This study aims to accomplish this by using a combination of the Wendtian social constructivism (1999) and the sociological approach to identity developed by McSweeney (1999). The parameters of the immigration security dilemma will be built upon this combination.

II. Trust in World Politics: From “Trust is in my interest” to “Trust is my interest”

a. The Idea of Trust

The concept of trust has been studied by scholars from different disciplines of social sciences. In spite of their differences in understanding the concept, all approaches point at the idea that trust is a risky venture (Luhmann, 1988: 97).

In spite of its risky character, trust has generally been considered as a valuable asset in social relations mainly because, as Luhmann put it, trust makes the common life possible (1979: 1). Without trust, individuals would solely act upon rationalist cost-benefit analysis. This results in the limitation of choices for individuals to actions which serve only self-interests regardless of others’ needs or at the expense of others’ interests. In a social system constituted and inhabited by self-centric units assumed by the Rational Actor Model, a collective life can become almost impossible. As a result, “a [social] system may lose its size; it may even shrink below a critical threshold necessary for its own reproduction at a certain level of development” (Luhmann, 1988: 104). For Luhmann, trust is necessary not only for building a common life, but also for enriching it. Hollis concurs, “we cannot flourish without trust” (Hollis, 1998: 4).

As useful and necessary as it may be for the creation of the conditions of a collective life, individuals can be discouraged to embark upon such a venture because by developing a relationship based on trust, the parties of trust become more vulnerable. The exploitation of trust can harm the trusting party’s interests. Then, is not trust ‘irrational’? Why would an individual make him/herself more vulnerable by leaving his/her interests into the custody of others? To answer these questions, the interest dimension of trust should be discussed.
According to the approach prioritizing the role of interest promotion as a motive for trust-building, which is commonly highlighted in the trust literature, trust characterizes a social relationship which serves the interests of both trusting and trustee parties (Misztal, 1996; Kohn, 2008). The interest-based definition of trust claims that two parties whose interests might be different can develop trust towards each other if each party adopts the other’s interests as its own (Hardin, 2002; Dees, 2004). Similarly, for Kohn, “trust is an expectation, or disposition to expect, that another party will act in one’s interests” (2008: 9). The result of a successful trust relationship is rewarding. By building trust, as Misztal nicely put it, “human beings, as emotional, rational and instrumentally oriented agents, seeking to ensure that their social relations and arrangements meet their emotional, cognitive and instrumental needs” (1996: 22).

The approach focusing on the interest dimension of trust is challenged by another approach which prioritizes ‘normative’ side of trust-building processes (Hollis, 1998). This approach argues that if a trust relationship is built to further participants’ self-interests, the relationship becomes fragile because it can be broken when the relationship does not serve self-interests of the parties. In contrast, according to Hollis, trust has a normative dimension whose source lies in ‘social norms and moral qualities’. These norms and moral qualities construct a “bond” between individuals. Trust therefore becomes an expectation that others will honour this bond and “do what is right” (1998: 10-13).

Hollis’ criticism to the approaches which highlight the interest dimension of trust is important for the purposes of this article. This is mainly because many IR scholars have so far treated trust in the way that Hollis criticizes: trust just as an instrument to serve self-interests (see below). However, Hollis and IR scholars he plausibly criticizes do not sufficiently conceive the transformative effect of trust relationship on the definition of self-interests and identities of the trust parties.

The interest dimension of trust deserves attention, especially when the concept is studied in relation to the politics where diverse interests compete to affect “who gets what, when and how” (Lasswell, 1935). In the conditions where a lack of trust characterizes the political relations, individuals pursue their self-interests as opposed to others’ interests. This potentially conflictive competition can pave a way for a political structure in which each “self” should take care of him/herself. On the contrary, when political relations are based on trust, the individual adopts others’ interests as “the self”’s own interests with the expectation that others will act similarly. This does not mean the disappearance of self-interest, rather generation of the following idea: “I pursue my self-interest better if I pursue the other’s interests because I trust that the other will pursue my interest too”.

If no party betrays trust of the other, the trust relationship eventually itself becomes the shared interest of the both sides; something that both value. In other words, they do not trust each
other because the trust relationship serves furthering their self-interests, but because the trust relationship itself becomes their self-interest. Their self-interests are re-defined through trust-building, or through adopting each other’s interests. If the trust relation is successful, they do not think that “trust is in my interest”, but that “trust is my interest”. This idea has implications for studying and understanding security-identity nexus in world politics. In the following section, these implications will be discussed.

b. The Identity-Security Nexus with Trust

It was previously argued that in a social system without trust, individuals act in accordance with their self-interests regardless of others’. S/he thinks that when others’ self-interests necessitate, they will exploit the trust s/he puts on them by jeopardizing his/her interests. This problem is effectively described by the Prisoner’s Dilemma (PD). In the PD game, the self (-interest) is prioritized over the other (-interest). In this well-known game, motivated by the self-interest, both prisoners choose to confess and therefore, can only achieve their third-degree preference (both are sentenced). One of the basic assumptions of the game is that as there is no assuring mechanism between the prisoners to enforce the agreement on not to confess, each party’s self-interest shapes their preferences. Fack of trust (accompanied by a lack of an enforcing mechanism) between the prisoners results in one of the least preferred outcomes.

Some scholars in IR have attempted to solve the problem exemplified by the PD by bringing trust into the game. However, this type of conceptualization leads to Hollis’ point: when the cooperation does not serve parties’ self-interests, will trust just disappear? According to the rationalist approach to trust, the answer is yes. Similar to Hollis, Booth and Wheeler (2008: 155) criticize the rationalist approach by arguing that this approach overlooks “the human factor” that is personal attachments and feelings between the parties.

“The human factor” or the normative side of trust is an important dimension of trust-building processes. Personal attachments and compassion between actors can alleviate the process by encouraging actors to understand ideas and feelings of others. However, they are not sufficient enough to generate trust-building in world politics where actors are to trust those who do not know personally at best, or those with whom they share a history of enmity, fear, and insecurity at worst. Can inter-personal emotions adequate to enable trust at societal level, say, between ethnic groups who vividly feel fear towards each other? For example, was it possible to build trust between Croats and Serbs in 1992 in former Yugoslavia? If yes, why could not trust emerge between them? In order to generate trust in relation to the identity-security nexus in world politics, the interest dimension of trust needs to be re-visited, albeit different than it is treated in the IR literature on trust.
A major separation was previously made between “trust is in my interest” and “trust is my interest”. The former dominates the trust conceptualizations in IR literature. Actors motivated by their self-interests choose to ‘trust’ another because they believe that their cooperation serves to further their self-interests. Their broad objective is to address the problem manifested in the PD game: what types of changes trust can make in the PD game and in world politics (Deutch, 1958; Wallace and Rothaus, 1969; Brennan, 1997). Kydd defines trust as “a belief that the other side prefers mutual cooperation to exploiting one’s own cooperation, while mistrust is a belief that the other side prefers exploiting one’s cooperation to returning it” (Kydd, 2005: 6). In Kydd’s conceptualization, trust is a “rational” choice made by “rational” actors. In this way, trust becomes a property of the Rational Actor Model.

The common pitfall in this approach is that the transformative role of trust relationship on actors’ interests and identities is never explored. However, a trust relationship can change actors’ identities and interests. The Wendtian social constructivism can explain why. According to Wendt, “identity” and “interest” are two main properties of actors. Properties of actors constitute behaviours of them. Behaviours shape an actor’s interaction with others. Their interaction constructs what Wendt calls “structures”, which in turn constitute an actor’s properties. In other words, there is a mutually constitutive relationship between actor’s properties and its behaviours. The Wendtian approach provides a fresh perspective to understand the role of trust in world politics.

According to Wendt, the idea of “self-interest” changes in different structures (Wendt, 1999: 18). The conception of self-interest in a structure underlined by the idea of ‘trust is in my interest’ is different from the one in a structure of ‘trust is my interest’. In the former, actors are motivated by the ‘self-interest’ defined by the Rational Actor Model. Trust has an instrumental value to further their interests. An actor makes itself vulnerable by opening its self-interests to the exploitation of others and at the same time it prevents itself from exploiting others’ trust. For the dominant approach in IR literature, this is the end of story. However, for the current discussion, it is the beginning. If the Wendtian approach is adopted, their trust relationship produces implications for their interests. Insofar as the trust relationship is successful (no party betrays trust of an other), they begin to construct a new structure different than the one of ‘trust is in my interest’ through interacting. Learning is hereby the key.

In their interaction, actors learn to trust each other. By not harming others’ interests with the expectation that others will not harm its interests, the actor learns that the promotion of self-interests is not necessarily a conflictive process that is pursued as opposed to others’. As the actor adopts and protects others’ interests as its own, it learns that others return its trust by protecting its interests. In fact, the actor learns that the other is trustworthy. If the trust relationship continues, actors learn more about each other’s interests, ideas, needs, and fears and realize that they can
pursue their self-interests better when they do not seek to harm each other’s interests. Their interaction based on trust constructs a new structure: the structure underlined by the idea of ‘trust is my interest’. Following Wendt, in this structure, the definition of self-interest is different from the one assumed by the Rational Actor Model. Through trust, the self-interest is re-constructed in a more conciliatory way.

An implication of a new trust structure and a new “self-interest” is on the identity conceptualizations discussed above. As a reminder, the two approaches to identity discussed previously “stabilise” the social identity. In contrast, McSweeney’s approach to identity highlights the political contestation over collective identities. McSweeney argues that identity is not “a thing” but “a process of negotiation among people and interest groups” (1999: 73). Different units in a political structure claim and endeavour to construct alternative identities for the collectivity. These alternative identities reflect political groups’ interests. As a result, societal identity is subject to constant contestation, and therefore, it is unsolidified and non-reified and in addition, it is political. McSweeney’s understanding of identity explores the interest dimension in identity construction processes. Hence, unlike the approaches discussed above, the collective identity is not conceptualized by appealing to essentialist ideas (ethnicity, religion, institutional affiliation such as common citizenship and so on), but by analysing the interests of political actors who have alternative ideas about how the collective identity should be. If trust is about how to pursue interests, it will have implications for the character of the collective identity.

Social groups can perceive insecurity in relation to each other. Political actors are expected to choose policies, among many, to address this insecurity, which put them in a security dilemma. From the McSweeneyian perspective, if some groups of migrants or other societal groups are considered as “threats” to the self-collective identity, this is mainly because of the dominant political actors. These political actors (state and non-state level) define the interests of the collectivity as opposed to and at the expense of other social groups’ interests. They claim that the self-interests of the collectivity can be pursued better without developing trust with others. Their conception of interests constitute a collective identity, which (re)construct other social groups as “threats” and as untrustworthy. The properties of the collectivity constitute behaviours of the social group and shape its interactions with others. The interactions construct a structure characterized by fear, enmity, and mistrust, which in turn constitute the properties.

In contrast, if political actors conceive that the interests of the collectivity can be pursued better if they are able to build a trust relationship with others, a different structure can be constructed. These political actors adopt other social groups’ interests as their own because they think that they can promote their self-interests in a more efficient way; that their choices are not restricted to the ones which dichotomize others. They think that ‘trust is in my interest’. This is
similar to what Kydd calls cooperation. However, what he does not consider is the mutually constitute relationship between behaviours and actors’ properties.

If the trust relationship is successful, social groups learn to trust each other. They learn that the other social group’s interests can co-exist with the self’s interests and that others are trustworthy. This trust-learning process through interaction constructs a new political structure, which in turn transforms the properties of the social group. The self-interest of the social group is re-constructed in the way that it includes others interests. In this new political structure, social groups think that ‘trust is my interest’. Through trust-learning, the security interests of the social groups become more and more conflated. Social groups learn that they are not “essentially” different from others; but their differences, which put their self-interests in opposition, are politically constructed. This learning process results in the realization of the idea that a common “we” feeling can be formed between social groups. As a result, the security dilemma is transcended.

How would a trust-learning relationship work in practice? The primary condition of trust-learning is that political actors (politicians, decision-makers, publicly respected figures or civil society actors) should act as ‘identity entrepreneurs’ (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). In trust-learning process, they claim that the insecurity problem of the unit (self-interest of the society or the state depending on the level of analysis) can be dealt with through building a common identity with others. For example, in the case of Croat-Serb relations in the former Yugoslavia, political actors such as ‘Civic Alliance of Serbia’ argued for ‘Yugoslav Commonwealth’ in which a certain level of Yugoslav common identity would hold different ethnic groups together (Thomas, 1999: 109-117). Other identity entrepreneurs would be civil society actors in Serbia and Croatia which they tried to promote trust between ethnic groups (Devic, 1997: 190-197). Even during the civil war, especially women organisations in Serbia were active in this area (Hughes et.al., 1995; Bieber, 2003).

However, trust-building activities of state and non-state actors at micro-structure level failed in former Yugoslavia where the political macro-structure was highly dominated by ethno-nationalist groups. Their logic of fatalism marginalized the alternative approach of trust-building by feeding into insecurity and fear of societies under the condition of uncertainty. The Yugoslav case leads to the point that, as put by Booth and Wheeler (2008: 245), trust is “elusive” in world politics, but this does not rule out the possibility of trust-learning as a way to achieve security through common identity building. In the last section, the issue will be re-thought in relation to one of the main security issues in world politics: immigration.

III. Towards the Immigration Security Dilemma

In this last section, an example of this new security dilemma framework will be illustrated regarding one of the contemporary issues in the politics of security: immigration. Before this discussion, a
caveat is in order. Migration is a multifaceted phenomenon. Different migrant groups can become different types of insecurity for the receiving societies. For example, in some societies, an immigrant community of particular ethnic group can be a reason of insecurity; in others, asylum-seekers from a neighbouring country can be considered a destabilising factor. Irregular migration has various dimensions, which generates insecurity for societies and states whose border regulations are violated. In consideration of this complexity, the following discussion only presents a sketch of the immigration security dilemma by drawing its broad analytical boundaries. Students of security studies can adjust the framework in relation to specific receiving societies and immigrant groups.

The “immigration security dilemma” was first conceptualized by Mikhail Alekseev (2006). According to Alekseev, immigration security dilemmas emerge largely because of “a shadow of uncertainty about the intentions of immigrants” which is amplified by four factors: anarchy, indistinguishability between offence and defence, groupness of immigrants, and socioeconomic relations (2006: 21). Receiving populations with socio-economic problems may be threatened by immigrant populations with high in-group solidarity, whose intentions are uncertain under the condition of anarchy. These factors, for him, construct immigration-phobia which creates an immigration security dilemma. Although Alekseev’s empirical analysis provides substantial input for the immigration security dilemma theory, his security dilemma is an example of the security paradox. The immigration security dilemma below analyses choices available to actors underlined by different logics of insecurity. This framework brings the concept of trust into the security-identity nexus in the area of migration.

Immigrant groups can become a source of insecurity for the receiving societies for a myriad of reasons. In order to understand these reasons, analysts can adopt “the national identity approach” in migration studies. The national identity approach claims that “the unique history of each country, its conception of citizenship and nationality, as well as debates over national identity and social conflicts within it, shapes immigration policies” (Meyers, 2000: 1251). The national identity approach focuses on “traditions” appeared historically within a country in the course of political, social and economic interactions (Herbert, 1990: 3).

The national identity approach not only helps analysts explore why particular immigrant groups are considered as “threats” by unfolding historical/sociological/political characteristics of the receiving society, but also confirms the McSweeneyian perspective adopted in this discussion. The political contestation about national identity interacts with ideas and policies about how to solve the insecurity in relation to particular immigrant groups. The political actors are in an immigration security dilemma in relation to these groups and how they want to address the insecurity problem constitute a particular national identity. They face with two choices.
The first types of choices are underlined by the logic of fatalism. These choices aim to increase security of the receiving society without sufficient consideration of how these security policies negatively affect the immigrant groups’ security interests. Political actors who adopt the ethnocentric security policies have a certain conception of threatened “we” versus threatening “they”. The self-interests of the receiving society are pursued at the expense of immigrant groups’ interests, as “they” are not trustworthy. Political actors assume the worst about the immigrant groups and produce policies to minimize the risk through exclusion and alienation.

While some fatalism-driven policies aim to stop immigration completely, for example the “zero immigration policy” of France (Hollifield, 1999), others attempt to deter more immigrants coming. The deterrence policies can be the restriction of welfare benefits for immigrant groups such as those policies in the UK (Schuster and Solomos, 1999). They can also cover restrictive visa regulations, which, for example in the case of some European states, make asylum-seeking and family unification only probably ways of immigration (Boswell, 2003). Another dimension of these policies are about irregular migration. As some immigrants attempt to use asylum-seeking to migrate and settle, fatalist policies target for restrictions in the asylum systems, which negatively affect asylum-seekers (Guild, 2003).

Fatalism-driven policies can be varied. Their common objective is to make the receiving society more secure by excluding and marginalizing some immigrant groups in relation to whom insecurity is perceived. The point here is not the political actors with the fatalist logic want to cause harm immigrants intentionally. However, their way of seeking self-security produces negative implications for the target groups. As the legal migration channels are restricted, some immigrants attempt to use the service of human smuggling networks (Brugeman, 2002). The restriction of welfare benefits and exclusion of some groups from the economic interaction in the society (such as the voucher system in the UK for asylum-seekers) push immigrants more to the fringes of the wider community. Therefore, fatalism-driven policies feed into the very insecurity they purport to aim: an attempt to generate self-security result in more insecurity for all, a security paradox. As a result, the “threatened self” and the “threatening other” dichotomy is (re)constructed.

The second choice political actors have is to build trust towards the immigrant groups and seek security of the receiving society through addressing the security needs of the relevant immigrant group. Political actors with the transcender logic adopt the immigrant groups’ interests as their own, with the expectation that the group will not harm the receiving society’s interests. They adopt the idea that “trust is in my interest”. For example, the transcender-driven policies create new legal channels of migration to cut down irregular migration. Considering the irregular migration in the EU, the EU Commission suggested a formulation of regularization mechanisms to irregular immigrants who came to the EU countries to seek protection or humanitarian reasons (Commission,
Instead of building detention centres where asylum-seekers are kept, “cities of sanctuary” can be created. In these cities, asylum-seekers and refugees are given chance to contribute to the receiving society. Political actors formulate mechanisms through which immigrants are informed about the receiving society. The mentors who are ordinary members of the receiving society interact with an immigrant. This interaction is voluntary and based on trust. The Time Together Program in the UK is an example of this mechanism.

Consequences of the aforementioned actors’ efforts of trust-learning are yet to be seen. If the trust relationship is successful, their interaction leads to the transformation of the receiving society’s properties, or its interests and identity. Political actors at the state and EU levels are enabled to conceive that the security interests of the society do not necessarily require exclusion or marginalization of immigrant groups. They believe that the security of the receiving society does not have to result in insecurity of the immigrant groups. Political actors can think that “trust is my interest”. The immigration security dilemma can be eventually transcended.

Conclusion

The concept of trust was first introduced to the security dilemma theorizing by Booth and Wheeler (2008). This article took the Booth and Wheeler’s work as a starting point and aims to elaborate their conceptual discussion about how trust contributes to the construction of common identities by presenting a stronger theoretical foundation. While accepting the interest as the focal point of trust in world politics, it was argued that trust can be a way to generate security by constructing a common identity when actors feel insecurity towards others under the condition of uncertainty, or put it simply, when they are in a security dilemma. This argument was built upon the assumption that trust relationship has a transformative effect on actors’ interests and identities. This transformative role was explained through a new theoretical foundation. Strengthened by this theoretical foundation, a new security dilemma was illustrated in relation to migration as a contemporary matter of security.

Two main conclusions about trust can be derived from the discussion: trust as analytical concept and trust as a political idea. Trust as the analytical concept has been under-theorized in IR. The current dominant accounts are rather limited in understanding the role of trust. An alternative approach of Booth and Wheeler represents a new understanding, although it needs theoretical elaboration regarding the implication of trust-building on the identity-security nexus. This study has shown that this theoretical foundation can be constructed by a combination of the Wendtian social constructivism and the McSweeneyian sociological approach to identity. Trust as a political idea highlights that trust becomes possible only if political actors realize the potential of the idea to generate self-security with other social groups, not as opposed to others. As trust-building is related
to how the collective identity can be constructed, there is a political contestation about it as well. As briefly highlighted above in the immigration security dilemma, fatalist and transcender choices co-exist in political structures. Which one prevails is a matter of politics.

References


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This definition is not exclusive, although it is generally accepted by the students of IR. One approach, which was proposed by Robert Jervis (1976), claims that intentions of actors (whether they are offensive or defensive in intent) are important in security dilemmas. Based on this distinction, he proposed the spiral model (actors with defensive intentions) and the deterrence model (at least one actor has offensive intentions) (Jervis, 1976: 58-113). Following Jervis, for example, Roe formulates three types of societal security dilemmas. In two of them (tight and regular), actors have defensive intentions; in one of them (loose), actors have aggressive intentions (2005: 73). The conceptualization of the security dilemma based on differing intentions, however, is not without a challenge. First, Mitzen (2006) argues that actors sometimes define themselves in terms of the security dilemma they are in so whether they have offensive or defensive intentions does not essentially matter because the security dilemma is about their “ontological security”. Second, Tang (2010) problematizes the intention-based approach by arguing that a “security dilemma” between actors with offensive intentions is not a security dilemma at all. Following Butterfield (1951: 19-21), he argues that in security dilemmas, actors must have defensive intentions.
ii City of Sanctuary Website, <http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/resources/criteria>