

FACTORING IN TRUST IN THE ALLIANCE FOR MULTILATERALISM

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WORKING GROUP 1- The pandemic crisis on the global scale and multilateral policies

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to understand the role played by the 'Alliance for Multilateralism' (the Alliance) in furthering the cause of multilateralism, specifically, during the COVID-19 pandemic. My central argument is that there is a decline of contested multilateralism, and the States are now aiming for a type of multilateralism, which can distribute global public goods and tackle global problems in a more efficient way with mutual cooperation. This type of multilateralism, in my opinion, is different from the earlier liberal theorizing of multilateralism. I believe that the Alliance can be successful if the parties are able to trust each other. However, the creation and maintenance of trust is quite difficult. For this reason, the paper will delve into different types of trust that can be used for cooperation and identify which type of trust is the most beneficial for the members of the Alliance. In doing so, the paper will build on the seminal works of Rathbun, Elhardt and Weinhardt to show that there is a causal link between trust and cooperation and that trust of a specific kind can be seen as a risk-absorbing mechanism. Further, the paper argues that the Alliance can be more than an aggregation of States if the founders of the Alliance, i.e. Germany and France, can provide it with an identity and a narrative. Since the Alliance was launched only a few years ago, there has been lack of scholarly research on it. However, my perspective on the Alliance aims to provide some foundation for future research on the changing nature of multilateralism.

Keywords: The Alliance, Trust, Principled Multilateralism, Contested Multilateralism, Relational Trust

INTRODUCTION

In view of the current challenges facing the world, including the COVID-19 pandemic, multilateralism feels like an almost essential form of international diplomacy (Sachs, 2020). However, to state that multilateralism is merely an instrument of international cooperation- no more and no less- would be fallacious. It is true that the underlying values that multilateral instruments uphold and the goals that they pursue, inevitably, help in creating an international community, but may not always result in fostering cooperation (Caporaso, 1992). The post-Cold War understanding of multilateralism being a purely formal category that brings the countries together to achieve a certain unspecified end goal has long been substituted with the understanding that the global governance concept is a power grabbing ploy of the West

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(Schwenninger, 1999). For this reason, the rise of unilateralism (Maynes, 1999) and the advancement of the revisionist powers, most of which were developing countries had drastically hampered the essence of multilateralism (Lieber, 2014). This can be witnessed through the formation of regional institutions such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) that heavily criticized the global governance concept (Stephen, 2014). Unsurprisingly, international relations (IR) scholars noticed this drastic change and understood the need to redefine multilateralism. Morse and Keohane (2014) regarded this as 'contested multilateralism', whereas Ruland (2012) described this as 'diminished multilateralism', with both agreeing that the countries tend to increasingly bypass multilateral institutions when they have particularistic interests and, therefore, severe disobedience of the generalized principles of conduct.

With the rise of far-right governments at the helm of national affairs in most of the countries, multilateralism again finds itself in murky waters (Copelovitch and Pevehouse, 2019). This time, it is not merely a power grabbing exercise that has challenged the global governance system, but it is also about the form of multilateralism and the values underpinning the concept. Thus, the challenge is one concerning the identity of multilateralism and the need for a winning narrative (Narlikar, 2020). The lack of a narrative poses a key question on the value of multilateralism - Has multilateralism turned itself into a simple aggregation of countries that stand for fundamentally different societal and political goals? To answer this question, I will analyze the changes that have taken place in the qualitative multilateral setting. The second chapter of this paper identifies the unstable nature of multilateralism and examines whether it is an effective method for solving global problems. Fundamentally, my analysis will be founded on the understanding that beneficial cooperation is hampered due to the uncertainty about the preferences and constraints of other states.

Whilst identifying the types of multilateralism, it is necessary to show the current issues plaguing the idea of multilateralism and whether any steps have been taken to solve them. Only recently, however, the Western powers in the EU realized the need for coming together. For this reason, the German and French Foreign Ministers formed the Alliance for Multilateralism (the Alliance) (Kaul, 2020). In the words of Bagger (2019), "*If "Never again" was the first fundamental lesson drawn from the collapse of civilization during the Nazi years that was meant to address the challenge of Germany's history, "Never alone" was clearly the second most important and deeply ingrained perspective*". Hence, it is necessary to recognize the role played by the Alliance, if any, in furthering the cause of multilateralism. Simply put, the idea for the Alliance was that the major challenges of this generation, by their nature and global

scope, cannot be addressed by countries separately but must be tackled jointly. Simultaneously, it also realizes that rules-based multilateral cooperation is also a key guarantee for sovereign equality of states as epitomized in the United Nations General Assembly. The third chapter of this paper aims to examine the role the Alliance can play in solving the global public goods problem. With the COVID-19 pandemic still looming large and the need for a coordinated effort by all the countries to tackle this problem, this paper suggests that the Alliance is the right way forward.

Lastly, it is necessary to realize that the Alliance is susceptible to the flaws of power politics. For this reason, it is imperative to provide solutions for the smooth functioning of the Alliance. Recently, it has been understood that trust plays an important role during uncertain situations (Michel, 2012). Trust allows multilateral cooperation in situations where parties might be pessimistic (Rathbun, 2012). As the primary factor, trust enables the actors to bridge the gap between preferences for mutually beneficial cooperation, even though there is uncertainty and risk present (Elhardt, 2015). The fourth chapter of this paper aims to conceptualize the nature of trust and identifies which variety of trust would be most beneficial for the members of the Alliance. This chapter will build on the limited literature of trust in IR, to show how specific forms of trust can be used in institution building and whether there is a causal nexus between trust and cooperation.

I. CHANGING CONTOURS OF MULTILATERALISM- CONCEPTUALIZING MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

1. Principled Multilateralism

International cooperation and national sovereignty are at the forefront of multilateral thought, with the idea that one does not exclude the other. Ruggie (1992) states that the Institution of Multilateralism (IM) follows three essential principles: (1) indivisibility, (2) generalized organizing principles, and (3) diffused reciprocity. Primarily, the idea of indivisibility relates to security arrangements where the states must stand together and are incapable of being divided. These collective security arrangements are based on the idea that ‘an attack on one is an attack on all’ (Martin, 1992). However, the norm of indivisibility is not conducive to the idea of solution to collaborative problems. Incidentally, through security arrangements, indivisibility tends to create public goods, which in turn offer States an incentive to free ride (Martin, 1992, 772). Insofar as generalized norms are concerned, Ruggie’s (1992) definition stresses that “*these are principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of*

actions, without regard to the particularistic interests of the parties, or the strategic exigencies that may exist in any specific occurrence". Take for instance, a most-favoured nation clause in trade agreements which bars discriminatory treatment towards a State and, therefore, implies that all States be treated equally. These behavioural standards that are created are intended to be followed by 'all' the States, showcasing that the behavioural standards are clearly disassociated from unprincipled realpolitik and political pragmatism. This is essential as realpolitik philosophers would always aim for predictability, regularity, and stability through the notions of order and security by a simple bifurcation of species into "them" and "us". Thus, in a Hobbesian space, realpolitik would be the method to manage uncertainty and disorder (Sandole, 1986). Lastly, diffused reciprocity is based on the idea that the States must rely on long term benefits through collective interaction rather than specific, quid-pro-quo exchanges. However, due to the lack of direct retaliation in International law for defections, it is unlikely to maintain cooperation (Martin 1992, 771). Since members would rely on generalized norms of obligation to promote cooperation, it is necessary to punish cheating. If cheating is not punished, States will have an incentive to defect for short term gains rather than cooperate for the supposedly long-term benefits. That said, the idea is that all the three properties must go hand in hand to make an IM successful.

Rüland (2018) describes Ruggie's approach as 'Principled Multilateralism' as the three properties are supposed to be the organizing principles of international life. However, the liberal theorizing of multilateralism by Ruggie does not concede that power dynamics play a role in maintaining institutions. For this reason, the fall of principled multilateralism was inevitable.

2. The fall of principled multilateralism

The post-Cold War version of multilateralism aimed at reducing the problems of uncertainty and creating a channel of communication that was better than conventional forms of diplomacy (Hwee, 2018). Basically, the idea was to democratize institutions, giving them the power to decide normative standards of right and wrong. Subsequently, the power provided to the institutions resulted in colossal change in enforcement where international organizations produced results, which, at times, were distant from the ethos of national laws (Hwee, 2018, p. 51). Since the thought was to create civil society participation through democratization, the Western powers emphasized that they were better suited to transplant their ways in these international organization. Meanwhile, for non-Western countries the urgency was to balance out the power asymmetry inherent in the sphere. Inevitably, the increased democratization

resulted in furthering the divide between the West and non-Western powers, to the extent of alienation of the latter. The ignorance of the power distribution issue by the West would have far reaching consequences on the idea of global governance. To say that it was only the liberal theorizing of multilateralism that was inept in adapting to the needs of the non-Western powers would be incorrect. Constructivists, too, relegated the concept of power grabbing, as there was a surge of studies on how shared identity enhances cooperation, without understanding the consideration of power and interests of State actors (Rüland, 2018, p. 4).

A narrative is extremely important for multilateralism to be successful (Narlikar, 2020). The liberal narrative, as mentioned by Ruggie (1992), often tends to forego the deficits of international order, i.e. power asymmetries. For this reason, to merely state that “together we are strong” would be nothing more than rhetoric as strength in multilateralism requires trade-offs. Eventually, non-Western powers realized that the power asymmetries were extremely difficult to cure and institutionalization of international order did not actively help in navigating through this issue. Rüland (2018, p. 7) described the non-Western powers as ‘revisionists’ who wanted to create an institutional order that was more amenable to their aspirations, thereby, turning themselves from “*rule takers*” to “*rule challengers*” and eventually “*rule makers*”. With the rise of India and China, there was a belief that the non-Western powers can have their voices heard in the international arena. Formation of the BRICS, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) along with the proliferation of new institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) allowed for a healthy competition between the Global South and the North, resulting in the end of principled multilateralism and the beginning of an era of competitive multilateralism (Morse and Keohane, 2014). The challenges of a changing world order also allowed an increase in Bilateral Trade and Investment Treaties, which indicated the end of global governance.

Apart from the rise of revisionist powers, there was a call for unilateralism in the U.S. The invasion of Iraq and the de-facto hegemonic status that the U.S. had achieved post-Cold War ensured that the U.S. was at the top of the hierarchal structure in the battle for power in international politics (Kellner, 2006). There was a growing concern amongst the EU Member-States that multilateralism had to move forward from the earlier concept of coordinated diplomatic interaction of three or more states. For this reason, the EU, in the year 2003, coined the term ‘effective multilateralism’. Essentially, this was a more exigent interpretation of the term multilateralism, which retains the liberal theorizing of multilateralism but puts an emphasis on the rules and reciprocity principles that apply to all Member-States. This version

is not merely a diplomatic approach but also a necessary commitment to principles and substantive goals (Toje, 2005). However, as Maull (2020) pointed out, this form does not specify *ex ante* which rules must be followed in international affairs. Although, this time around, the change in national governments, especially President Barack Obama's victory in the U.S., facilitated the growth of multilateralism. Simultaneously, the revisionist powers also gained a strong foothold in their region, specifically China, through its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Ploberger, 2017). For this reason, Khoong (2008) rightly noted that for a healthy multilateral life, members in the institutions must engage in "institutional balancing".

At this moment, to aim for a single global body for a global governance seems utopian. The EU realized that multilateralism is just one of the channels of diplomacy. Therefore, it made sure that through its 2016 Global Strategy, it realized the importance of economic diplomacy. Following this, the EU entered into Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with South Korea, Japan, Australia and initiated further negotiations for Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreements with India, Vietnam, and Thailand. For Fukuyama (2006) the world is "*multi-multilateral*" which is "*far too diverse and complex to be overseen properly by a single global body*" and better served by "*a diversity of institutions and institutional forms to provide governance across a range of security, economic, environmental and other issues.*"

3. Multilateralism 2.0- Can contestation help?

Morse and Keohane (2014) were of the opinion that if the States are not satisfied with the rules, practices or missions of the existing multilateral institutions, they tend to create alternative institutions to pursue practices and policies different from the existing institution. According to them, this concept can be described as Contested Multilateralism (CM) or Multilateralism 2.0 where there is regime shifting and competitive regime creation. Regime shifting occurs when some actors move the regulation of an issue from an original institution to a competing institution that better reflects their interest. On the other hand, regime creation takes place when the actors are so dissatisfied with the regulations of the existing institution that they create a new institution alongside the existing one to promote regulations better reflecting their interests. The creation of the new regime is a consequence of the power struggle and the rise of revisionist powers. In a similar vein, Rüländ (2018, pp. 9-11) describes that CM, or what he calls Diminished Multilateralism, can be characterized by (1) the international actors bypassing multilateral institutions; (2) there being lack of incentives for the State governments due to the rising cost of balancing power disequilibria; (3) the loss of functional specificity - multilateral meetings becoming loose platforms for policy coordination without formation of

any binding agreements; (4) it being a device for balancing of 'soft power' and 'hedging'; (5) the rampant institutional building causing further redundancy of international institutions; and (6) an increase in forum shopping.

Búrca (2016) has critiqued the idea of CM by stating that it is a pseudonym for power politics in the international sphere. This is the latent ambiguity of the institutions expressed through 'soft balancing' or 'hedging' - States using institutions to balance power disequilibria elsewhere (Rüland, 2018). Meanwhile, He (2018) argues that CM has also taken place in the Asia-Pacific region after the Global Financial Crises of 2008. The rise of multilateralism in Asia-Pacific has been documented by scholars with the rise of ASEAN, however, high levels of uncertainty and the need for economic interdependence have transformed the Asia-Pacific institutional sphere. Interestingly, He (2018) terms this new phenomenon as 'Contested Multilateralism 2.0' (CM 2.0) which is a by-product of the institutional balancing among the countries. He's (2018) analysis is based on institutional balancing theory to suggest that high economic interdependence would encourage States to employ institutions to realize relative gains such as power and influence. In actuality, He (2018) is unable to differentiate distinctly between CM and CM 2.0, except for the diminished role of non-State actors in CM 2.0.

As mentioned previously, the reason for disagreement between the coalition of actors with other actors in an institutionalized setting is that there is no convergence of expectations. Hence, one could argue that CM lessens the individual and collective gains that could have been achieved through institutionalized cooperation. However, Faude and Parizek (2020) argue that, "*because (CM) generates such costs, the exercise of CM can be informative and credible signal that helps revitalize deadlocked processes of institutional and adjustment bargaining.*" Interestingly, by not utilizing measures such as bilateralism, the parties are still keen on institutionalized cooperation, albeit different from the existing institution. For this reason, it is argued that CM does help in moving from 'cooperation under anarchy' to a system of 'cooperation in a thickly institutionalized system'. If strategic inconsistency is the reason for CM, inter-institutional accommodation can be achieved by providing concessions by the existing members to the revisionist. Primarily, cooperation gains can be achieved through these inter-institutional integrative bargaining approaches and, thus, reaching inter-institutional complementarity. On the other hand, Faude and Parizek (2020), through their empirical analysis point out that the worst-case scenario would be a conflicting set of provisions with a deadlock in inter-institutional negotiations resulting in losses of cooperation gains for both the parties.

Even though gains are possible in CM, it is still necessary to strive for a Multilateralism 1.0, especially to tackle global problems which affect the world. The rise of far-right governments throughout the world, including the U.S., has showcased a need to safeguard multilateralism. China has been taking strides, at least regionally, to further strengthen its base in the South-east and Asia-Pacific regions. However, in this bi-multi polar system, now being essentially dominated by the U.S. and China, it seems that there is a possibility for middle powers, such as Australia, India, Germany, Japan to rise to the fore and become independent forces by creating new multilateral institutions. For this reason, He (2018) rightly notes that we might be able to see the liberal theorizing of multilateralism championed by the EU member states and the rising need to have regional institutions, i.e. Multilateralism 2.0 in the Asian region. If managed effectively, both principled as well as contested multilateralism would be able to co-exist in a globalized world. In the words of Pempel (2010), “*Institutional Darwinism will determine the rise and fall of multilateral institutions*”.

II. THE RISE OF THE ALLIANCE

The whole world is currently reeling under a global pandemic that has caused a recession in most countries. As of this moment, there are 54 million detected COVID-19 cases worldwide, which has resulted in roughly 1.32 million people dying due to COVID-19 related symptoms. Further, a U.S.-Sino trade dispute has intensified causing negative spillovers affecting other major economies in the process. As mentioned previously, the rise of populist leaders across the globe has further intensified the call for unilateralism. However, the EU, ASEAN, China, and India are still supporters of multilateralism. It seems increasingly likely that President Donald Trump may not be elected for a second term as the President of the U.S.A. If that is the case, the post-President Trump strategy for the U.S. would be to facilitate a trilateral relationship between EU-Asia (ASEAN, China, Japan, and India)-U.S. It would not be unreasonable to assume that China is not keen on multilateralism, especially, with the growing disagreement of the EU with President Trump’s strategy. However, if China does aggressively expand in the Asian region, as witnessed in the recent India-China standoff, the U.S. can join political and economic forces with other Asian countries to counter-balance China. Indeed, these are assumptions, which can only be tested once we see stable national governments aiming to face upcoming global challenges.

Meanwhile, EU countries have realized that BREXIT and the rise of CM requires a renewed call for a global multilateralism with a narrative. Hinchman and Hinchman (1997) define narrative as a discourse “*with a clear sequential order that connect[s] events in a*

meaningful way...thus offer[ing] insights about the world and/ or people's experiences of it". Basically, one could characterize it as a chronological storytelling structure, which typically ends in evaluation. Oftentimes, a lack of narrative could be detrimental to the creation of an institution. The challenge then is to formulate a simple narrative; one concerning the identity of multilateralism (Narlikar, 2020). The narratives could include, *inter alia*, the following: (1) dealing with some upcoming challenges, e.g. COVID-19 virus, climate change, Disarmament and Arms control; (2) Ends to be achieved, e.g. Global solidarity, prevention of diseases; (3) Interests and values to be accommodated; and (4) Benefit to the International order. Of course, these seem rather simplistic, but are possible if multilateralism captures regulatory ideas about world politics with the hope of global solidarity.

If multilateralism follows a rhetoric such as 'multilateralism is good because cooperation is inherently good' rather than formulating a narrative, disagreements will inevitably arise as cooperation has a long-term cost on several countries (Narlikar, 2020). Additionally, countries often carry out a rational choice analysis of entering a multilateral arrangement and if they believe that the benefit of not entering one is much higher, countries, inevitably will not enter that agreement (Posner, 2003).

Without a doubt changes are taking place and the international system is trying to evolve constantly. This evolution necessitates that the multilateral tools need to be reformed for multilateralism to stay relevant. Global governance can be achieved when countries are able to find the 'right' and 'appropriate' answers to the current global problems. Therefore, multilateralism must be axiomatic to the foreign policies of the states. Considering this, the German and French Foreign Ministers have recently launched the Alliance, which is an "*informal network of countries united in their conviction that a rules-based multilateral order is the only reliable guarantee for international stability and peace and that common challenges can only be solved through cooperation.*". The Alliance, rightly, does not see itself becoming an institution; it merely aims to act in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the general principles of international law. Besides unifying a group of like-minded countries around the idea of multilateralism, the Alliance also aims to lay down concrete initiatives for tackling global challenges together. By making multilateralism more accessible to all stakeholders involved under the '# Multilateralism Matters', Germany and France deserve some credit for the symbolism that is shown through the Alliance. Meanwhile, there has been some criticism by the IR scholars (Maull, 2020; Narlikar 2020), who state that the Alliance focuses itself on secondary issues in international politics which are relatively easier to reach because the interests of the parties are aligned. Furthermore, it has been argued that the Alliance

has not been able to provide a convincing narrative about State interest in protecting multilateralism (Narlikar, 2020). It is true that there is a requirement to build a strong narrative, but the Alliance is a step towards creating that identity. This does not necessarily imply that universal multilateralism without the power struggle would be achieved. Nevertheless, the mere symbolism of taking partners from Africa and Asia that share the first-order values into the fore of the Alliance shows that there is a reignition of the brand, i.e. multilateralism.

On the face of it, the Alliance seems to be an example of Principled Multilateralism; however, there is a lack of shared understanding of principles at all. In actuality, the Alliance revolves around concrete initiatives and aims to have pragmatic agreements on specific issues. As of now, the Alliance has had certain declarations in key action areas such as global public goods, climate change, and international law. Most importantly, the Alliance has through its ministerial meetings made sure that the countries focus on the universal provision of treatment of the COVID-19 virus and, further, making sure that immunization against this virus be regarded as a public good. A fight against a global pandemic of this magnitude requires some sort of international cooperation and global solidarity. Thus, States must move beyond unilateral, bilateral, or even mini-multilateral actions to universal multilateralism (Kaul 2020). Even if there is a declaration by the States that the eventual vaccine be regarded as a global public good (GPG), cooperation, without consideration of power, is necessary for the GPGs to be able to reach the grassroots. Fortunately, with more developing States moving up the development ladder, most of them have taken an active role in negotiating their position in the international arena (Lopes and Kararach, 2019). Following this, global powerhouses are now realizing that there must be a tolerance of diversity and the aim must be to reach a fair and mutually beneficial outcome for all parties. Kaul (2020) rightly notes, *“Multipolarity has been an important additional driver in shifting the nature of the relationships among states towards de facto universal multilateralism. It has added a substantive dimension to the systemic or technical interdependencies generated by the GPGs: strengthened expectations that states will interact in a spirit of equality and fairness.”*

As seen above, the Alliance seems to be an important step towards universal multilateralism. However, to maintain the Alliance, there must be trust within the parties. If the Alliance does not see itself becoming an institution, there is a higher freedom or discretion allowed and, therefore, a lower degree of risk absorption. For this reason, parties must make sure that there is a higher degree of trust to achieve cooperation.

III. TRUST (WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?) - ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING

To achieve outcomes that are mutually beneficial, trust is often essential. Whilst scholars differ on the varieties of trust, it is generally believed that trust incorporates an intention to accept vulnerability by the trustor under the conditions of risk with expectations that the trustor will not be harmed (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer, 1998).² Therefore, incorporation of elements of positive expectations and beliefs are essential to the formation of any type of trust. Academic scholars, whilst agreeing on the elements of trust, have differed in identifying notions of trust in international relations (Rathbun, 2012). Some have argued (*See* Kydd, 2005; Edwards, 2018) that rational trust or, as Uslaner (2002) terms it, ‘strategic trust’, which is the belief that potential partners have a self-interest in cooperation, is the prominent notion of trust. Meanwhile, other scholars have outrightly rejected the said notion and have argued that social identities play an important role in building trust (Hoffman, 2006). These social constructivists believe that actors will honour their obligations and do ‘what is right’ rather than causing any harm, even when causing harm would be in the actor’s self-interest (Booth and Wheeler, 2008). This ‘honouring of obligations’ can take place only when there are perceived commonalities amongst the identities, which, in turn, make the other trustworthy. Narlikar’s (2020) criticism of the Alliance is that it does not have this identity. To build this identity in the Alliance, Germany must first, themselves, make clear what the Alliance stands for, the goals and boundaries of the Alliance and the norms it is trying to uphold. Amending the idea of social constructivism, Weinhardt (2015) incorporated the psychological dimension to trust, paving the way for ‘relational trust’. Simply put, her idea of trust implies an inter-subjective nature of trust, dependant on the relationships that actors have with others, which is constituted not only through cognitive, but also affective, identity-based interaction. She realized the need to have relevant psychological indicators such as benevolence and integrity coupled with an understanding of social relationships in the identification of trust. Her idea assimilates the understanding of Wendt’s creation of social identity through repeated actions and Deutsch’s understanding of cooperation within a security community, based on a “we feeling”, mutual trust and cooperation.

Be it the rational, constructivist or psychological approach to trust, it is imperative to understand trust, as this concept not only helps in de-escalating anarchial situations in the international arena but also assists in building a long-term partnership. As Ruizicka and Keating (2015) mention in their seminal work, the rationalists theorize trust as a type of a

² Several trust scholars have tried to define and conceptualize trust. However, for this paper, I am relying on the definition given by Rousseau, et. al (1998).

rational choice calculation. The constructivists would understand trust as a social phenomenon. Whereas some other scholars consider trust in its psychological dimensions.

As mentioned previously, the COVID-19 pandemic has made sure that the global community refurbishes the idea of universal multilateralism; hence, the Alliance. Therefore, the argument of a rational institutionalist would be that the pandemic brings in uncertainty regarding the preferences of the States, and, therefore, something like an Alliance is necessary to pierce the veil of uncertainty. However, the Alliance would be infructuous if credible information regarding the preferences of the States is not available and the cost of defection to curb opportunism is not high. According to a rationalist, States would build an institution to overcome the problem of trust. Thus, trust and institutions could be regarded as mutually exclusive substitutes. This argument is countered by Elhardt's (2015) empirical analysis, wherein he believes that the rationalist argument is fallacious as an institution can be counted as a complementary mechanism to absorb the risks of cooperation. The same argument can be laid down for the Alliance, even though it does not see itself becoming an institution. Elhardt (2015) realizes that there are inherent risks of cooperation, but the existence of trust is itself an antidote for most institutions to work effectively. This analysis furthers Rathbun's (2012) concept of generalized trust, which shows that there will always be opportunism in a qualitative multilateral scenario such as the Alliance. Having said that, the only way States can make sure that the cooperation is successful is if there is a deeper form of trust (generalized trust), which is different from the rationalized institutional approach. Rathbun's (2012) concept of generalized trust is a moralistic form of trust and it is dispositional, making it a quality of the trustor, grounded in cooperative social orientations. He found that, as a form of "social capital", generalized trust promotes cooperation even in highly uncertain situations inhospitable to collaboration by rationalism. As mentioned, generalized trust considers disposition qualities of the individual decision makers, however, it also important to analyze Weinhardt's (2015) relational trust which differs from Rathbun's (2012) concept.

1. Relational Trust in the Alliance

Wendt's (1999) constructivism was based on recognition of socially constructed identities forming states interests. Therefore, a mutual identity created between States brings out the 'we feeling', in that sense the States are similar in their fundamental understanding. This creates a positive perception bias which, inevitably, allows for miscounting the signals of uncooperative intentions. However, Wendt's analysis, as Rathbun (2012) points out, requires a feeling of trust before the formation of identity. This can only be achieved through a

rationalist trust by calculating the risk and benefit of entering a collective identity formation in the first place. In the words of Rathbun (2012), “*While the core variable of constructivism is generally thought to be identity, trust is logically prior to the formation of a common identity. An individual cannot feel part of a community composed of others if she believes they might mean her harm. She must believe that her needs will be respected.*”. The trust that Rathbun points out is based on the beliefs of honesty and integrity of potential partners. In a similar vein, Hoffman’s (2006) understanding is that this ‘moralistic trust’ is when others have a belief that their personalities and traits are similar and do not vary by situation. But this does not negate the need to have a rational cognitive calculation of trusting behaviour. So, trust would be better understood as a mixture of cognitive rational calculation and emotional identity-based attachment. This is exactly what Weinhardt (2015) points out through her idea of relational trust, which is based on the social psychological notions of ‘affective based trust’, ‘identification based trust’ or ‘benevolence based trust’ all of which are dependent on the social relations between the actors. For her, “*It [Relational Trust] goes beyond social psychology by adhering to a social ontological perspective on trust according to which these notions of trust cannot ultimately be reduced to the characteristics of trust.*” This is where her idea differs from Rathbun’s concept of generalized trust, which links trust to the disposition of individual rule-makers. Therefore, trust and its sense of a secure relationship can be made possible by not only the construction of identities but also practices and emotions. For this reason, her idea differs from social constructivism; primarily based on emotions that she believes play an important role. However, Weinhardt (2015) categorically mentions, “*While human psychology seems intuitively to be the closest to the concept of trust, constructivism arguably offers a bridge between states as actors in international politics and the individuals that interact in international settings.*”

Thus, her proxy to identify whether relational trust is present is the evidence of the relevant actors’ viewing the other sides as benevolent, altruistic, or cooperative in official statements or interviews, which show benevolence-based trust. On the other hand, evidence regarding the other side’s negotiating behaviour as fair indicates the presence of identification-based trust. Indeed, this begs the question whether the same is applicable to a multilateral setting, such as the Alliance. The Alliance is unique in its sense since it does not see itself becoming an institution. For this reason, if we assume that the focal point is Germany and France’s identity of what multilateralism stands for, which the other countries affirm to, we see each country affirming/ negating the stance of multilateralism taken by the aforesaid countries. Therefore, each country must have that benevolence-based and identification-based trust to be

able to enter the Alliance in the first place. This does not necessarily mean that the State entering the Alliance must blindly accept the views of the majority in the Alliance; all it implies is that the other side's cooperativeness in the identity of the Alliance must be there. Although the potential threat of opportunism and abandonment is omnipresent in a multilateral setting, trust, specifically Weinhardt's (2015) relational trust, would help increase diffuse reciprocity and allow parties to live by their commitments. For future research, one can identify the way a State would act by understanding the emotions felt by a group within the state. As Wetering (2018) notes while analyzing Weinhardt's work, "*Within international politics, individuals often become part of a larger identity. Their personal feelings are submerged under the state identity as it does not always reflect these emotions. Yet, the feelings of trustworthiness remain more at the disposition of the individual policy-maker than with other social identities.*"

Noticeably, Rathbun's (2012) concept of generalized trust and Wienhardt's (2015) concept of relational trust outrightly reject the notion of rational trust. To some extent that is correct, as according to Rathbun, those who lack generalized trust fall back on strategic (rational) trust. For this reason, in Rathbun's analysis, less trusting individuals rely more on stringent enforcement and monitoring mechanisms to curb opportunism; by doing this, they miss out on potentially beneficial relationship with others they do not know. The same applies to Weinhardt's understanding of relational trust although her analysis does take some inspiration from rational trust.

FINAL REMARKS

Research on interests, power and cooperation in a multilateral setting has long been an important part of the research agenda in IR. Drawing on the works of Keohane, Ruland and Ruggies, this paper has shown that the Alliance could be seen as a positive change in the fight for saving universal multilateralism. While the Alliance is at a nascent stage, it has made sure that certain declarations are put forward which help in solving global problems. Especially, during the precarious situation that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused, the Alliance seems to have found a right time to pitch its message, i.e. Multilateralism indeed matters. Although the Alliance must create its own identity and a strong narrative for the States to be attracted to its message, the paper shows that the symbolism itself carries weightage. The paper has also provided an overview of how trust could play an important role in beneficial cooperation in a multilateral setting. Lastly, the time is ripe to make sure that theory of trust is studied in the context of multilateralism.

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