ROUND TABLE: SOCIETY AND SOCIOLOGY IN MODERN RUSSIA

Power and society: search for the ways of formation of mutual trust

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Abstract. The article considers the issues associated with the low level of political trust in modern Russia and its consequences for the political regime; it also considers the sources of political trust and the ways of its formation. The article summarizes the most important theoretical and practical aspects using the works of researchers specializing in this field and fundamental texts on the subject. The author emphasizes the special responsibility of the government for the building of mutual trust in politics. He offers some ways to build political trust, focused on public awareness, education, and involvement of society in joint activities.

Key words: trust, political trust, sources and ways to develop political trust.

The phrase "search for the ways of formation of mutual trust" suggests that nowadays there are no ways or they are ineffective. The article poses a problem of the low level of trust of the Russian population in political institutions, authorities and political figures, regularly observed by the sociologists [1]. In other words, we are talking about political trust, because the parties in this case are assumed to be "society" and "power"[1].

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[1] This statement by itself is too broad, because these very general and ambiguous categories hide a wide range of different phenomena that deserve separate consideration. Society can be understood as population in general and as its socially and politically active, involved part – public, civil society – the concept is as popular as empirically elusive, etc. Power is even a deeper concept: it is a process, a state and a subject. However, for the purposes of this article the broad definition of political trust parties seems justified without special discussion.

In this work we will use the following framework: "power" is a set of political institutions, government bodies (political system), political leaders and the bureaucracy as a specific socio-professional group, "society" – broad masses of the Russian population, frequently acting as "electorate" in elections of different level and "respondents" in sociological surveys.

The concept of trust

Trust, in general, is presumption that the object of trust will behave in compliance with the positive expectations and values of the subject of trust, confidence in the correctness and predictability of its actions, confidence, which makes mutual cooperation and commitment possible [2, 3]. Trusting a person, group or organization avoids anxiety and the need to control the partner's behavior partially or completely. In this sense, trust is an effective means to reduce transaction costs in all social, economic and political relations.

Trust, considered in political terms, (so-called political trust) occurs when citizens evaluate the authority and its institutions, politics in general and/or individual political leaders as fulfilling their promises, effective, fair and honest. Political trust, in other words, is citizens' judgment that the political system and politicians are sympathetic to their interests, comply with their values and attitudes and they will do what is right even in the absence of continuous monitoring [4]; it is society's belief that the future reality (due to the performance of the ruling group) will coincide with social expectations, and the resources will be for the common good.

Consequently, the lack of trust in the government means that the society does not consider the authorities' distribution of resources as fair and consistent with the common good, and the elite as honest. Feeling distrust on the part of the society and fearing that in the crisis they will not be able to rely on it, the authorities, in turn, do not trust the society and strive to keep it aside from making really important decisions.

The aspects of trust

Political trust is a multidimensional phenomenon, associated with many other important socio-political constructs. We will mention only the key ones.

Legitimacy (legitimacy, legality, propriety or diffuse support – in terms of D. Easton [5, 6]) – a feeling that the institutions and authorities are formed, the leaders are elected (appointed) and act (take and implement decisions) on the basis of universal moral principles of dominant morality and generally accepted norms of behavior. This aspect of trust is rooted in the culture and history of the society, sustainable over time and varies usually due to profound social trauma or long-term gradual adaptation to changes.

Efficiency (effectiveness, commitment, professionalism, competence, specific support in the concept of D. Easton) is a feeling that the relevant institutions, authorities, political leaders and executors can achieve the stated goals, know and fulfill the population's expectations. This aspect of trust is related to the expected or perceived performance and has a more situational, volatile nature.

Overlaying both of these aspects define a specific level of political trust in the society at the moment, as well as a level of political trust of the individual.

These aspects are connected with "feedback loop": the high level of trust gives the heads an opportunity to take measures to improve economic and political efficiency; the effectiveness strengthens trust. The opposite is true: the policy that does not produce positive results quickly undermines trust in the authorities, which narrows the possibilities of their political action.

Importance of political trust

The modern theories consider political trust as a key element of the network of causal relationships, including political socialization, the institutions' performance, political support, citizens' participation in political life [7, 8]. In these theories, trust is an important measurement of political culture and political trust is perceived as a reflection of a level of trust prevailing in the society. Trust, in other words, is an underlying emotion of the "social contract" between the managers and the managed — promises in exchange for trust and support.

In general, trust becomes a central indicator of the attitude the society has towards politics, a fundamental condition for the political system viability. The relationship between trust in the government and effective governance is circular: while trust in the authorities and its representatives facilitates effective management, the effective governance, in turn, creates and strengthens trust in all its variants.

Trust becomes especially important in the periods of profound socio-economic and political change, modernization shifts and reforms. The credit of trust is the "permission" the government gets due to a high level of trust to take even unpopular measures, based on the expectation that the actions will, ultimately, result in social or financial benefits and improve the state of affairs. If not, then, as a rule, the level of trust becomes low.

The certain level of mistrust and suspicion towards the authorities among some citizens is a necessary condition for the viability of the non-totalitarian political regime, therefore it is quite dynamic and should not be considered as a threat to political stability [4; pp. 46-48].

Where does political trust/distrust come from?

According to the modern concepts, *at the macro level* trust is a constellation of national values and current assessment of the effectiveness of the political system and its elements. It is based on the degree of coincidence of interests and values of the subject and object of political trust, evaluated through the prism of public statements, plans and programs of the object and compliance of the object's activities with the previously made statements. *At the micro level* individual trust is formed both in the process of intergenerational socialization and due to the experience of interaction with others [9].

Thus, in Russia mistrust is rooted in the cultural features of the Russians and caused by their negative assessment of the current institutions performance. The frame of the government perception got during socialization forces citizens to perceive any interaction with the government as a problem.

The negative personal experience with a particular politician or official negatively influences the citizen's perception of the authorities and reinforces generalized distrust.

Creation of the preconditions of political trust in Russia

First of all, the authorities, the ruling elite should recognize the fact of distrust on the part of society and realize that it is impossible to overcome political distrust only by means of propaganda ("PR"). Even with the highly authoritarian propaganda machine the high level of trust can emerge only as a consequence of the mobilizing potential of the unifying ideology or value system. As soon as this ideology breaks down, the car loses "fuel".

You can not rely on the spontaneous formation of trust on the basis of self-organization of civil society [10]. The development of civil society in the conditions of radical distrust leads to the formation of counter-elites, unable and unwilling to cooperate with the authorities. The recent events in Ukraine are another example and an unambiguous lesson.

Foundations of political trust

The careful study of theoretical foundations and empirical findings of the political trust concept in relation to the effective management shows that the political leaders, the "authorities" in a broad sense, can create and maintain trust by implementing the following strategies:

• To show genuine concern for the society welfare, while maintaining the unity between words and deeds and demonstrating acceptable behavior, shaping MORAL TRUST.

• To strive to represent effectively the interests of their voters, while keeping the ultimate goal of serving the common good. It creates ECONOMIC TRUST, focused on economic efficiency and its consequences: creation of a favorable (safe, comfortable) social environment, protection of citizens from internal and external threats, provision of an acceptable standard of living.

• To implement political reforms, such as decentralization and implementation of innovations in public administration, etc., with political legitimacy and real fight against corruption being in focus. The prevention of corruption and scandals is a precondition for the maintenance of political trust. Corruption (the feeling of corruption) undermines trust so much that it takes a lot of time to restore it.

Together with political reforms to carry out social reforms that will strengthen the civil society representation. This will strengthen SOCIAL TRUST, aimed at catalyzing effects of social capital.

Technological prerequisites and ways of building trust

Obviously, the problem of distrust and the task of restoring trust are diversified and reciprocal. It is impossible for one party to build trust, for example, by means of enlightenment of the ignorant masses "from above".

Both parties need to take steps towards each other, encouraging forms of cooperation, when the sustainable stereotypes of mutual distrust are gradually overcoming and the experience, structures and the culture of mutual trust are forming.

The society needs to acquire knowledge and understand the character and results of

the government performance, learn to put forward and defend both their demands and initiatives, develop forms of participation. It is the only way for it to feel involved in the public affairs, committed to the common goal and to overcome the alienation. The government has to take pains to build trust using a wide range of tools. Some of them are presented below:

• information is a mandatory, but not the only and, certainly, not the universal, way to build trust in the government and its representatives;

• training is a necessary part of ensuring citizens' participation in the discussion and solution of management tasks and social problems;

• research, obtaining feedback, which gives knowledge, understanding of the society's interests and values;

• transparency of the procedures to exercise power and make decisions;

• creating infrastructure of participation and vertical lifts, support of social projects and initiatives;

• removal of excessive administrative barriers, simplification and automation of routine procedures, elimination, where possible, of a human factor, standardization of business conduct of "front offices" — employees who work directly with the population;

• correct behavior of authorities, absence of double standards, prevention of corruption procedures and regulations;

• delegation of public powers, resources and responsibilities to the society;

• involvement of society in various forms of collective discussion and decision-making, monitoring and evaluation activities of the institutions performance, formation of government bodies.

The most traditional and largely discredited, but practically the only way of political participation is participation in the elections. **Confidence in the just and fair competition in the elections** along with the very fact of the victory of one of the parties is a basis for trust in the winner, even if the voter has not voted for the winner. Doubt in the fact of victory (fraud, manipulation of results) or confidence in its unfair nature (use of illegal methods of struggle, administrative resources) is a source of distrust, deprivation of support and, in some cases, active protest against the formed government.

However, in the modern context, we should actively analyze and use **unconventional forms of political participation**, including on the basis of modern information and communication technologies, accept technological innovation to make the authorities more efficient, transparent and accessible to citizens, ensure real transparency of government procedures and effective channels of political participation, such as electronic government, electronic participation and "crowdsourcing".

The risk here is that the authorities can just maintain the illusion of effective participation of the population. People become disappointed in such pseudo-democratic forms quickly and it takes the government a lot of time to gain trust.

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