

“DOVERJAJ, NO PROVERJAJ?”
Tracing the roots of political trust in
contemporary Russia

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Trust is one the key concepts in analyzing the maintenance of social order and diversity in modern societies. Previous studies have reported that trust correlates, for instance, with higher economic growth, better governance, higher levels of education and subjective wellbeing. However, former Soviet countries face particular problems in developing the habits of trust. These observations of trust call for a more comprehensive and in-depth areal research on the concept.</p> <p>The present thesis examines the dynamics of political trust in contemporary Russia, and draws inspiration from W. Mishler and R. Rose's (2001, 2005) studies of political trust. Mishler and Rose (2001) studied the origins of political trust in post-Communist Eastern European countries in the late 1990s. Their main finding was that while socio-demographic factors explain poorly the variance of political trust in post-Soviet sphere, the individual perceptions of political and economic performance of the institutions correlate significantly with it. Thus, they advance that political trust is a rational response to institutional performance in those countries. In this regard, political trust in Eastern European countries seems to adhere to conditions of the Russian proverb "<i>doverjaj, no proverjaj</i>" ("trust but verify").</p> <p>This thesis aims to examine how relevant the aforementioned argument is in the context of contemporary Russia. This examination is done by conducting a kind of replicate analysis of Mishler and Rose's model. Moreover, a critical evaluation of the results of thesis' model is given by applying recent insights from Russian studies. The data for the thesis' model are drawn from the third round of the Life in Transition survey (LiTS III). Analyses were performed using principal component factor analysis and ordinary least squares linear regression models.</p> <p>In general, the results of the thesis's model are consistent with those of Mishler and Rose (2001): the subjective perceptions of political and economic performance of Russian institutions were the most significant domains associated with political trust in modern Russia, whereas socio-demographic factors had only a minuscule effect in shaping it. However, the hypothesis about political trust as a rational response to political and economic performance contradicts with the recent data and research on Russian economy and politics: economy has stagnated or even fallen in Russia during recent years, and, at the same time, Russian domestic policy has become increasingly repressive. These observations suggest that political trust might be a reflection of something else than mere rational response to institutional performance in Russia. On the other hand, the fluctuation of the Russian political trust implies that it presents evaluative attitudes toward institutions, but in the light of the evidence of this thesis, the level of rationality of these evaluative attitudes remains unclear and questionable.</p>			
Keywords political trust, Russian studies, contemporary Russian history, authoritarianism, trust theories, Russian sociology, public opinion studies, area and cultural studies			



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<p>Luottamus on yksi avainkäsitteistä analysoitaessa sitä, miten voidaan ylläpitää samanaikaisesti sosiaalista järjestystä ja sosiaalista monimuotoisuutta nyky-yhteiskunnissa. Aiemmat tutkimukset ovat osoittaneet luottamuksen korreloivan esimerkiksi korkeamman talouskasvun, hyvän hallinnon, korkeamman koulutustason sekä subjektiivisen hyvinvoinnin kanssa. Luottamuksen rakentaminen on kuitenkin haastavaa, etenkin entisissä neuvostomaissa. Nämä havainnot antavat aihetta kokonaisvaltaisemmalle ja syvällisemmälle alueelliselle luottamuksen tutkimukselle.</p> <p>Tämä pro gradu tutkielma tutkii poliittisen luottamuksen dynamiikkaa nyky-Venäjällä, ja tutkielman innoittajina ovat W. Mishlerin ja R. Rosen (2001, 2005) tutkimukset. Mishler ja Rose (2001) tutkivat poliittisen luottamuksen syntymiseen johtavia syitä Itä-Euroopan entisissä kommunistimaissa 1990-luvun lopulla. Heidän mukaansa sosiodemografiset tekijät selittävät heikosti poliittisen luottamuksen vaihtelua jälkisosialistisissa maissa, kun taas ihmisten subjektiiviset näkemykset instituutioiden poliittisesta ja taloudellisesta toiminnasta korreloivat merkittävästi poliittisen luottamuksen kanssa. Tämän perusteella Mishler ja Rose päättelivät poliittisen luottamuksen olevan rationaalinen reaktio instituutioiden harjoittamaa politiikkaa kohtaan Itä-Euroopan entisissä neuvostomaissa. Tässä mielessä poliittinen luottamus näyttää mukailevan kyseisissä maissa venäläistä sanontaa "doverjaj, no proverjaj" ("luota, mutta varmista").</p> <p>Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan, kuinka relevantti edellä mainittu argumentti on nyky-Venäjän kontekstissa. Käytännössä tämä toteutetaan tekemällä eräänlainen toistokoe Mishlerin ja Rosen mallista, sekä analysoimalla toistokokeen tuloksia kriittisesti viimeaikaisien Venäjä-tutkimuksen näkökulmien valossa. Tutkielman analyttisessä mallissa käytetään Life in Transition Surveyn tuoreimman kierroksen (LiTS III) dataa. Analyysimenetelminä käytetään pääkomponenttianalyysiä sekä pienimmän neliösumman menetelmän regressiota.</p> <p>Analyysimallien tulokset ovat yleisesti ottaen linjassa Mishlerin ja Rosen tulosten kanssa: Subjektiiviset näkemykset venäläisten instituutioiden poliittisesta ja taloudellisesta toiminnasta olivat mallin mukaan kaikkein merkittävimmän yhteydessä poliittiseen luottamukseen nyky-Venäjällä, kun taas sosiodemografisten tekijöiden vaikutus oli vähäinen. Hypoteesi poliittisesta luottamuksesta rationaalisena reaktiona poliittiseen ja taloudelliseen kehitykseen on kuitenkin ristiriidassa tuoreen Venäjän taloutta ja poliittista kehitystä koskevan datan ja tutkimuksen kanssa, sillä Venäjän talous on ollut stagnaatiossa tai jopa laskenut viime vuosien aikana, ja samaan aikaan sisäpolitiikassa vallanpitäjien otteet ovat kiristyneet. Tämä puolestaan viittaa siihen, että poliittinen luottamus saattaa heijastella muutakin kuin rationaalista reaktiota instituutioiden toimintaa kohtaan Venäjällä. Poliittisen luottamuksen vaihtelu ajan mittaan Venäjällä puolestaan kielii siitä, että poliittinen luottamus ilmentää ihmisten arvioita instituutioiden harjoittamasta politiikasta, mutta tutkielmassa esitettyjen havaintojen valossa näiden arvioiden täsmällisyys ja rationaalisuus on kuitenkin kyseenalaista.</p>		
Avainsanat poliittinen luottamus, Venäjä-tutkimus, Venäjän lähihistoria, autoritärisyys, venäläinen sosiologia, yleisen mielipiteen tutkimus, alue- ja kulttuurintutkimus		

Transliteration of Russian references

Аа	a	Ии	i	Сс	s	Ъъ	“
Бб	b	Йй	j	Тт	t	Ыы	у
Вв	v	Кк	k	Уу	u	Ьь	‘
Гг	g	Лл	l	Фф	f	Ээ	je
Дд	d	Мм	m	Хх	h	Юю	ju
Ее	e	Нн	n	Цц	c	Яя	ja
Ёё	jo	Оо	o	Чч	ch		
Жж	zh	Пп	p	Шш	sh		
Зз	z	Рр	r	Щщ	shh		

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1 Introduction

“Pervoe pravilo: doverjaj, no proverjaj.” (“The first rule: trust, but verify.”)

Russian proverb from the second episode of the Soviet film *Bol'shaja zhizn'*, 1946 (Dushenko, 2017)

“The contemporary model of the Russian state starts with trust and relies on trust. This is its main distinction from the Western model, which cultivates mistrust and criticism. And this is the source of its power.”

Vladislav Surkov (2019)

Trust is one of the key concepts in analyzing the maintenance of social order and diversity in modern societies. It is also one of the crucial factors keeping modern, complex and differentiated societies together. (Jokinen, 2002, p. 10.) People usually attach positive features to trust. Indeed, since the early 1990s, a wide range of studies have demonstrated that trust correlates, for instance, with such factors as higher growth rates of the national economies, better governance, higher average levels of education and subjective wellbeing (Bjørnskov, 2011; Coleman, 1988; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Uslander, 2002; Zak & Knack, 2001). Trust has also become one of the key concepts in analyzing and understanding contemporary world. B.A. Misztal (1996, pp. 2–3), for instance, has even claimed that it is impossible to discuss modern societies without considering trust.

The importance of trust may be understood by the empirical observation that many of the most developed and wealthiest countries today are also, generally speaking, more trusting countries. In other words, evidence suggests that there is a link between trust and prosperous society. Figure 1 illustrates the trust ratings in selected European countries according to European Social Survey (2012). As one may observe, countries with higher levels of interpersonal and institutional trust are often the same countries that score high in various other international rankings (see e.g. The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2005; The Legatum Prosperity Index, 2018; UNDP, 2019; Veenhoven, 2014). For instance, Scandinavian countries together with such Western European countries as Netherlands and Germany are the most trusting countries, whereas former socialist countries of Eastern Europe and some Southern European countries have considerably lower scores in European trust rankings. Indeed, it has been previously observed that former Soviet countries face particular problems in developing the habits of trust (Rothstein, 2004, p. 13).

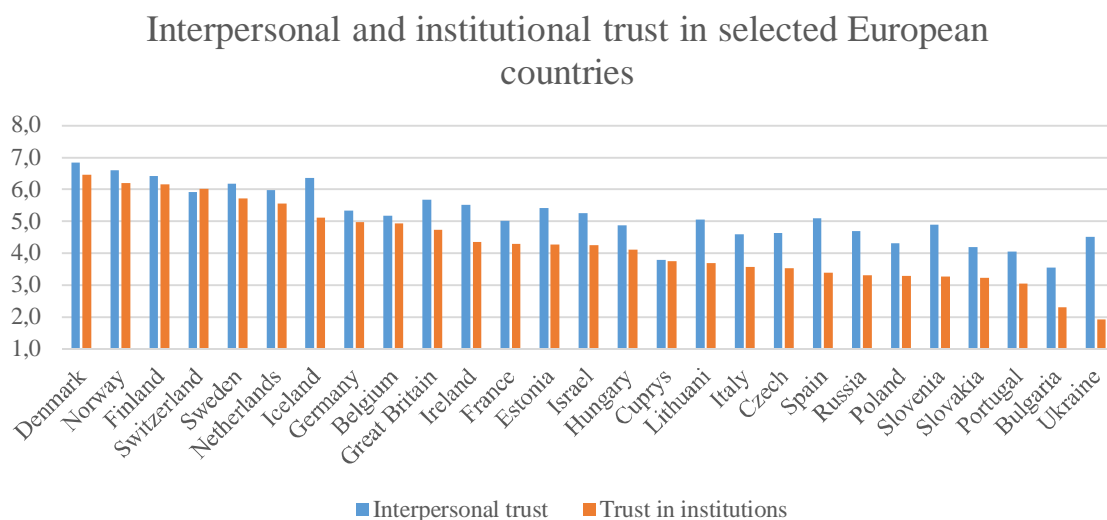


Figure 1: Trust in Europe

The unequal distribution of trust in Europe and internationally calls for a more comprehensive and in-depth areal research on the concept. Why trust is so poorly developed in the post-Soviet countries? What factors affect to the development of political trust? Is there a way to bolster political trust, or is it mainly dependent on national culture?

In this thesis, I will examine the dynamics of political trust in contemporary Russia. Since trust is a subjective feeling which is often measured by standardized questions in large-scale data surveys, I will examine the dynamics of political trust by using recent cross-sectional survey data on Russia. I draw inspiration for my thesis from W. Mishler and R. Rose's (2001, 2005) hypothesis for the origins of political trust in post-Soviet sphere and Russia. Their central argument is that individual perceptions of economic and political performance of different institutions mainly explain the differences in the variance of political trust in Russia, and post-Soviet sphere in general. In their study *What are the origins of political trust? Testing institutional and cultural theories in post-communist societies* (2001), Mishler and Rose tested the impact of different subjective political and economic attitudes and demographic factors on trust in post-Soviet sphere. Their main finding was that individual perceptions of economic and political performance of different institutions is the main explanator of differences in the variance of political trust, whereas social and demographic background factors have little significance in shaping it. In other words, institutions generate trust or distrust depending on their perceived performance in the eyes of the public. Thus, according to them, trust in political

institutions in post-communist Eastern European countries is a rational response to institutional performance. (ibid.) In their subsequent study, Mishler and Rose (2005) examined trust with a similar research question, but only in Russian context. Although the variables used in their later study were a bit different than those of their earlier study, the main argument still held up with single country analysis: individual perceptions of public and economic policies were much more important for political trust than the socio-demographic factors. In this regard, Mishler and Rose appear to suggest that political trust in Russia sphere seems to adhere to conditions of the Russian proverb “*doverjaj, no proverjaj*” (“trust but verify”).¹

It is a widely held view that Russia is a low trust society (see e.g. Beljaeva, 2016; Kozyreva & Smirnov, 2015; Mishler & Rose, 2001, 2005; Shlapentokh, 2006; Uslaner, 2008, pp. 726–727). However, empirical evidence suggests political trust to be somewhat unequally distributed in Russia. Moreover, it has fluctuated notably in post-Soviet Russia (Kozyreva & Smirnov, 2015). But what could constitute this variation and unequal distribution of trust between different institutions? And what factors could account for political trust in Russia? These are the main questions I strive to answer in this thesis.

In this thesis, my aim is to examine how well Mishler and Rose’s (2001, 2005) argument about the performance oriented nature of political trust applies today in contemporary Russia. The analytical model of this thesis builds largely on Mishler and Rose’s earlier study’s (2001) model for studying political trust in post-Soviet sphere. I decided on this approach, because Mishler and Rose are prominent scholars in the field of Russian public opinion studies, and their studies on trust in post-Communist countries are among their best-known works. For example, the afore mentioned article on the origins of political trust in ten Eastern European Post-Communist societies is their most cited article according to Google Scholar. However, this study was conducted almost twenty years ago, and hence I thought it would be interesting to see how valid their central argument is today. Accordingly, albeit the analytical model for studying trust comes from Mishler and Rose (2001), general features of Russian trust are theorized in this thesis more in

¹ According to K. Dushenko (2017), this proverb originates from the second episode of the Soviet film “Big Life” (Bol’shaja zhizn’, 1946), but has been often attributed to Lenin in collections of aphorisms written in English.

detail from linguistic, cultural and sociological perspectives than in their work. Thus, Russian area and cultural studies approach is also applied throughout the thesis.

It is hoped that this thesis could contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship of societal attitudes and political trust in Russia. This understanding is important, because shedding light on these relationships can bring new insights in analyzing political trust in Russian context. Accordingly, better understanding of the relationship between societal factors and political trust can help us comprehend how it evolves in Russia. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, trust is a crucial component keeping modern societies together, and thus its more extensive comprehension is relevant for both the academia and politicians.

1.1 Main concepts

The main concept discussed and examined in this thesis is *trust*, or, more accurately, its sub-category political trust. Moreover, since many classic trust theories set interpersonal trust as a precondition to political trust, it is also included into the analytical model of this thesis. Next, I will preliminary define these two concepts. More comprehensive discussion of the concepts may be found in the chapters 3 and 4.

Political trust measures perceived trust in political institutions. It is an evaluative position toward government based on how well government is operating according to people's normative expectations (Hetherington, 1998, p. 791, 2018, p. 9). Retelling L. Gudkov (2012, p. 20), political trust is a social interaction focused on a high probability (changes) that the actions of partners (which can be also political institutions) will proceed in accordance with the expectations given to them. Since trust can be measured by asking directly from people themselves, trust in different political, economic and social institutions is often used as an indicator of political trust. Political and institutional trust are often used as synonyms (see e.g. Hetherington, 1998; Kozyreva & Smirnov, 2015; Mishler & Rose, 2001), but to avoid confusion, I will utilize the concept of political trust throughout the thesis.

Interpersonal trust measures trust in "other people". Today, it is often operationalized by standardized questions in large-scale data surveys. A typical question measuring generalized trust in these surveys is formulated as: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people".

However, recent studies have questioned the validity of this classic trust question as measure of generalized trust, and question about trust in “people one meets for the first time” has been suggested to be used instead to measure the generalized trust in others (Almakaeva et al., 2018, p. 932; Sturgis & Smith, 2010). Therefore, interpersonal trust is measured by trust in “people one meets for the first” in this thesis. This concept is discussed more in detail in the methodology chapter of the thesis.

1.2 The significance of the study

As mentioned, I aim to test the validity of Mishler and Rose’s (2001, 2005) hypothesis on the origins political trust in Russia. This will be done by using more recent data and contextualizing political trust. This is the first significance of the thesis. Another significance of the thesis is that I will discuss problematics of studying trust particularly in *Russian* context by combining cultural and area studies approach to their quantitative approach.

In summary, one could say that the significance of my study is to test the fitness of existing hypothesis on formation of political trust, and to bring new insights and ideas into studying it particularly *in Russia* through extensive contextualization of the research problems. This will be done by conducting a kind of replicate of Mishler and Rose’s (2001) statistical analysis, and by contextualizing the results of this model in contemporary Russian society.

Research questions

The main research question is how well Mishler and Rose’s (2001, 2005) hypothesis on performance oriented nature of political trust holds up today in the context of contemporary Russia. In this thesis, subjective political trust is measured by trust in political institutions, and interpersonal trust by trust in “people you meet the first time”. The question is how well different factors, such as demographic background, and perceptions of economic and public policy predict one’s political and interpersonal trust in Russia. To answer this question, an analytical model of measuring trust is created on the basis of Mishler and Rose’s (2001) model. Apart from the main research question, two specifying sub questions are also asked:

1. Do survey questions about trust measure the same thing in Russia than in (Western) democracies?

2. Is it relevant to study political trust in such authoritarian countries as Russia by utilizing theories that are developed to study it mainly in established democracies, or at least in somewhat different kind of societies than Russia? Or is the composition of Russian political trust so unique that we need completely new kind of theories to study it?

The first sub-question deals with the plausible cultural differences in the understandings of trust. This question is discussed more in detail in the conceptualization chapter. The second sub-question relates to the first. A narrative which especially the official Russia likes to utilize emphasizes that Russian values and conception of the world differs remarkably from the Western (Grigori Yudin, 2018). Following this logic, one could argue that Russians might also use different criteria for evaluating the performance of their country's institutions than the westerners. Moreover, there are doubts that the authoritarian polling environment may affect the way that people report their feelings in survey answers (Kuran, 1997; Rogov, 2017). Thus, I will consider the possible limitations of the cross-sectional data on Russia used in thesis in the limitations chapter.

1.3 Structure of thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters: introduction, background, conceptualization of trust, methodology, analysis and findings, limitations, and conclusions. The background chapter deals with Mishler and Rose's (2001) main arguments and theoretical concepts, and introduces their approach to studying political trust in post-Soviet countries. The concept of trust is further problematized in the conceptualization chapter. Accordingly, since there are relevant historical differences between studying trust in democratic and authoritarian countries, I will discuss why theories and models that stem from the Western (or non-Russian) ideas of trust are utilized in this thesis instead of more localized theories of trust. Hence, the conceptualization chapter includes also a brief history of Russian sociological surveys. The Life in Transition Survey III, which serves as thesis' data, and the analysis method, ordinary least squares regression, are presented in the methodology chapter. The analysis and findings chapter present the overall results of the statistical models used in this thesis. Both the conceptual and methodological limitations of my model for studying trust in Russia are examined in the limitations chapter. Finally, in the conclusion chapter, I will discuss how well research questions were answered and introduce some thoughts on future research on subject.

2 Background

Trust is a major subject of interest within many different fields of science, and one of the most basic and widely spread social categories (Rubtsova & Vasilieva, 2016, p. 61). It has been the subject of many classic sociological studies dealing with the preconditions of societal cohesion (Jokinen, 2002, p. 10). Importance and relevance of studying trust may be illustrated by a simple database search: Google Scholar finds 922.000 and 382.000 results for “political trust Russia?” and “institutional trust Russia?”. Accordingly, similar search on Russian digital library KiberLeninka finds 41.645 and 15.768 results for ”политическое доверие Россия” and “институциональное доверие Россия”. Thus, since Mishler and Rose’s (2001) analytical model is utilized in this thesis, I will next discuss their approaches to trust. Their main arguments and theoretical concepts are introduced in this chapter to provide better understanding of where the analytical model of the thesis’ stems from, and to clarify how trust is explored in this study.

2.1 Competing trust theories

Mishler and Rose (2001) identify two theoretical traditions as competing explanations for the origins of trust: cultural and institutional theories. Cultural theories hypothesize that the roots for political trust originate outside the political sphere in long-standing and deeply seeded beliefs about other people, and these beliefs are rooted in cultural norms and communicated through early-life socialization processes. Thus, political trust is as an extension of interpersonal trust, learned early in life and later projected onto political institutions. Hence, cultural theories hypothesize trust to be path dependent, which indicates that the development of political trust will take decades or even generations. (ibid, p. 33.)

Institutional theories, in contrast, argue trust in political institutions to be politically exogenous. In other words, institutional trust is an expected consequence of institutional performance. To put it bluntly, institutions that perform well generate trust, and poorly performing institutions generate distrust and skepticism. Thus, institutional theories assume that political trust can be bolstered, for instance, by providing economic growth and refraining from repressive and corrupt practices. (ibid., p. 32–33.) Mishler and Rose (2001) suggest that competing theories of trust may be further divided into micro and macro-level variants (Table 1).

Table 1: Competing theories on the origins of political trust

	Cultural and/or Exogenous Theories	Institutional and/or Endogenous Theories
Macro theories	National culture	Government performance
Micro theories	Individual socialization	Individual evaluations of performance

Competing theories of the origins of trust and their explanatory emphases, adopted from Mishler and Rose (2001, p. 34).

As I am focusing solely on Russia instead of taking into account a wider group of countries, I will concentrate on testing the micro-level variants of cultural and institutional theories (the lowest row in Table 1), which emphasize the importance of individual socialization and individual evaluations of performance as main predictors in the variance of political trust. Micro theories assume that political trust varies both within and between societies as a result of political socialization experiences interrelated with differences in educational background, gender, or other social structural influences and/or because people have different political values and interests and thus they evaluate political and economic performance differently. For example, two individuals living in the same society and in the same kind of economic conditions may evaluate the economy differently, because one puts greater emphasis on current household difficulties, whereas the other does not stress current difficulties in expectation of future economic prosperity. (Mishler & Rose, 2001, p. 49.) Mishler and Rose (2001, 2005, pp. 1–2) argue that although there are important differences among both cultural and institutional theories, the commonalities with the regard to the emphasis given to necessary conditions for the generation of trust justifies their common treatment.

Next, I will give a short overview of some of the classic social studies and theories dealing with trust. By no means this overview aims to be a comprehensive representation of all theoretical approaches to trust, but rather representative examples of some the significant and influential studies with different explanatory emphases on trust.

R. Putnam is arguably one of the most well-known scholars dealing with such concepts as “trust” and “social capital”. He is often cited alongside with J.S. Coleman and P. Bourdieu as founding father and developer of the term “social capital” (Breuskin, 2012, p. 2; Kankainen, 2019a). Since trust is an important component of social capital, Putnam’s

work is highly relevant in the area of trust studies. In his book *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (1993), Putnam studies the causes of differences in economic and societal development between Northern and Southern Italy. He argues that Northern Italy's dense of civil society is the main explanation of its greater civic involvement and economic prosperity, while the agrarian South Italy is less prosperous in the terms of economy and democracy because of its lesser social capital (and thus, lower levels of trust). In Putnam's reasoning, trust is a component of social capital, which helps make political institutions function because it spreads first into cooperation with people in local civic associations and then eventually creates a nationwide network of institutions necessary for the presentable government. (Mishler & Rose, 2001, p. 34; Putnam, 1993.) His work draws inspiration from Tocquevillian² approach, in which society's capability to produce social capital (and hence also trust) among its citizens is par excellence determined by its long-term experience of social organization, which have roots in historical and cultural experiences that can be traced back over very long periods.

G. Almond and S. Verba's (1963) book *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, in turn, is a study of the political culture of democracy, and the social structures and processes sustaining it. Although it does not utilize concepts social capital or trust as explicitly as Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*, it is classic work in the field of political science and an often cited study among studies dealing with trust (see e.g. Breuskin, 2012; Kozyreva & Smirnov, 2015; Mishler & Rose, 2001, 2005). Almond and Verba's (1963) central argument is highly relevant for trust studies, because they claim that interpersonal trust is an essential precondition for the formation of associations, which, in turn, are necessary for guaranteeing the effective political participation in any democratic system. Thus, following their reasoning, one could define trust as an important building block in creating a civic culture. In this sense, Almond and Verba attach great importance to interpersonal trust in creating subsequent political trust.

² Alexis de Tocqueville was a French diplomat, political scientist and historian who lived in the 19th century. One of his most famous works is *Democracy in America* (1991), where he argued that the strength of American democracy builds on its citizens' propensity to form civil associations which educate people on cooperation, shape their public awareness and foster solidarity among their members. Eventually, this will give rise to a civil society. (Breuskin, 2012, p. 2; Kankainen, 2019b.)

R. Inglehart is a political scientist and arguably best known for his position as a director of the World Values Survey (henceforth WVS). In his book *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies* (1997), Inglehart argues that economic development and cultural and political changes go together in coherent and somewhat predictable patterns. According to him, some socioeconomic developments are more likely than others, and some societal changes are foreseeable. For instance, once society commences industrialization, a multitude related changes – such as erosion of traditional gender roles – are likely to appear as well. With respect to trust, Inglehart (*ibid.*, pp. 188–190) embraces the Tocqueville-Putnam hypothesis on the importance voluntary associations with regard to successful functioning of democratic institutions. Analyzing the data of WVS, he suggests that membership in voluntary associations is strongly linked with stable democracy: societies with higher rates of association membership are for more likely to be stable democracies than those of low rates of membership. Therefore, following Mishler and Rose’s typology, Inglehart may be classified as cultural theorist.

As mentioned, J.S. Coleman is often accounted as one of the first utilizers of the concept “social capital”. Thus, the modern understanding of social capital – and trust as its component – stems very much from his work (Breuskin, 2012, p. 2). However, unlike Putnam, Coleman emphasizes the significance of performance instead of culture in shaping trust. In his book *Foundations of Social Theory* (1994), Coleman defines trust as a relation where at minimum two parties, trustor and trustee, engage in commerce that usually contains risks, because all parties aim to satisfy their interests. According to him, people engage in trusting relations because this allows an action on the part of the trustee that would have been otherwise impossible, and if trustee proves to be trustworthy, trustor is better off than in the case of choosing not to trust. (Coleman, 1994, pp. 96–98) To quote Coleman (p. 99): “A further analysis [...] of cases involving decisions to place trust shows that the elements confronting the potential trustor are nothing more or less than the considerations *a rational actor* applies in deciding whether to place a bet” (emphasis added). For Coleman (p. 98), the rationale for political trust is that by trusting political institutions people can free more time for themselves, and thus turn their attention to other life matters. Naturally, this presupposes that political trust is well placed. If the evaluations on the trustworthiness of political institutions and actors is not well placed, the political, social and military affairs in which they are interested may turn out less well

than if they had paid attention to them. (ibid., p. 98.) In short, Coleman's sees trust as a result of calculative decision-making process. In this sense, Coleman's trust perception is close to rational economic man thinking, which is also characteristic to some neoclassical economic theories.

M. Hetherington may also be named as one of the advocates of institutional trust theories. In his article *The Political Relevance of Political Trust* (1998), Hetherington studies the effects of political trust in the American political system by examining two cross-sectional datasets of the National Election Study from 1988 and 1996. His study's results suggest that trust not only reflects evaluative orientations with political leaders, but distrust by itself is also likely to be a powerful cause of the dissatisfaction. In other words, political distrust affects both specific and diffuse political support and is also being affected by them (ibid., p. 799). On the grounds of his analyses, Hetherington concludes that the (American) political leaders can increase trust by conducting generally accepted policy solutions.

P. Dasgupta (1988), in turn, considers trust as a commodity based on reputation, which has to be acquired through behavior over time in well-understood circumstances. He utilizes a game theory approach to underline the idea of importance of trust in repeated social interactions (or in the game theory language, "repeated games"), and concludes that people invest resources for building a reputation for honesty, because the short-term gains of dishonest behavior are lesser than the long-term gains of acting honestly. Thus, following Dasgupta's logic, one may find rational grounds for acting trustworthily even in those situations where its short-term payoff is negative. In this sense, his approach to trust is somewhat similar to Coleman's rational actor assumption.

According to Mishler and Rose (2001, 2005), institutional or endogenous theories offer superior explanations for the origins of political trust. In summary, Mishler and Rose (2001, p. 33) suggest that cultural theories hypothesize trust to be path dependent, which indicates that the development of political trust will take decades or even generations, whereas institutional theories hypothesize that political institutions can generate trust, for instance, by providing economic growth and refraining from repressive and corrupt practices. On the basis of their analyses, Mishler and Rose (2001, 2005) claim that institutional theories – and especially its micro-level variants – are superior in explaining

the origins of political trust in post-Soviet sphere and in Russia. Thus, they conclude that political trust can be nurtured by conducting sound public and economic policy.

Mishler and Rose's (2001, 2005) studies on political trust in post-communist societies and Russia are somewhat seminal: sociology and public opinion studies were generally speaking underdeveloped during the Soviet era in Russia (Levada, 2004, p. 158). This may have affected the fact that the research of Russian political trust in the 1990s and 2000s was primarily descriptive in nature. Even today, many studies of political trust in Russia contain only descriptive statistics instead of quantitative analysis of the phenomenon. In this sense, Mishler and Rose's (2001, 2005) quantitative studies have been significant exceptions in studying Russian trust.

However, Mishler and Rose do not treat contextual or cultural factors in much detail, but rather assume trust to be a somewhat universal concept and to have similar connotations in different cultures. Thus, their approach to political trust is rather similar to those approaches of the generalizing grand theories discussed in this chapter. Nevertheless, albeit these kind of theories have their own important role in analyzing and comprehending multifaceted concepts and phenomena, it is also important to consider how different societal contexts affect to phenomena. Hence, I will discuss some relevant historical, contextual and cultural questions related to studying political trust especially in a Russian setting in the following chapter.

3 Conceptualizing & situating trust

In this part, I will discuss the concept of *trust* more in detail. Trust is a major of interest within many different fields of science. As mentioned, the generality and importance of the concept has supplied a massive amount on literature on the subject. Thus, in order to have a coherent and reasonable research setting for the thesis, I will next discuss the concepts of political and interpersonal trust more in detail. The theoretical foundations of Mishler and Rose's and the thesis analytical model for studying political trust were discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter, in contrast, offers reflection of the plausible cultural dependency of trust – that is, whether Russian understanding of trust differs from the Western, and why, in the final analysis, Mishler and Rose's analytical prototype is used as a model for the analytical model of thesis'.

3.1 Cultural understandings of trust

As mentioned, Mishler and Rose (2001, 2005) suggest that institutional and economic performance explains and predicts the best the volume of political trust in Russia. In their article *What are the origins of political trust* (2001), they utilized trust in “people who one meets” to measure interpersonal trust in all of the countries included in the analysis. Political trust, in turn, was measured by mean score of individual trust in six institutions. (ibid., pp. 42–44, 58.) However, in their study, they did not treat the possibility of different cultural or linguistic understandings of trust in much detail. Nevertheless, since I am concentrating solely on Russia in my thesis, it is relevant to consider whether the Russian understanding of trust differs essentially from the Western understanding of it. It is noteworthy that Mishler and Rose's analytical model stems largely from theories that are not developed to analyze particularly post-Soviet or Russian trust. This, in turn, raises a following concern: could trust reflect different phenomena and have different connotations in Russia than in the West?

The existing body of research on trust suggests that it is a highly complex and contested concept, which also raises concerns about the possible culture dependency of trust. B. Fine (2001), for instance, claims trust and other dimensions of social capital to be to a large extent context dependent concepts. Thus, international survey questions on trust likewise measure somewhat different phenomena in different countries. T. and M. Yamagishi (1994) also argue that the trust data from different societies may be distorted

by other types of societal perceptions or individual dispositions. T.W. Guinnane (2005, p. 78), in turn, has criticized the loose use of trust in social sciences and economics, and claimed that such a use has made trust a nearly useless concept.

Apart from possible culture and context dependencies of trust, some scholars have also established that not only positive, but also negative connotations can be attached to it. For example, K. Ilmonen and K. Jokinen (2002, p. 21) note that trusting relationships can be either moral or amoral by their nature. They may produce solidarity, social cohesion and economic growth, but also foster exploitation, intolerance and formation of antagonistic groups within society. Organized crime and especially mafia is a good example of “misuse” of trust, because, in its own way, mafia represents a network of abundant social capital and trusting relationships. S. Berman (1997) has also stressed how the extensive system of voluntary organizations in Germany after the First World War markedly eased the Nazi takeover of power, which likewise can be seen as an example of evil-intentioned use of social capital and trusting relationships.

Moreover, when political trust is considered, it is also important to remember that in a democratic society political trust cannot be permanently all-resistant and unlimited. Instead, occurrence of certain distrust in those in power is also one of the key features of democratic society. (Kozyreva & Smirnov, 2015, p. 82.) P.M. Kozyreva and A.I. Smirnov (2015, p. 87) suggest that both the “deficit” and “surplus” of political trust hinders democracy. Significant deficit of political trust limits the possibilities of authorities to implement policies and reduces the activity of citizens, impedes the development of integrational processes of society, and slows down the initiation and realization of constructive plans. Excessive trust in governmental authorities, in turn, gives them unlimited power of agency, which easily leads to despotism and eventually to the consolidation of authoritarian rule. Thus, Kozyreva and Smirnov argue that in order to promote the development of democratic processes, the level political trust should not reach either extremities. (ibid.)

Nonetheless, although afore mentioned observations of the “misuse” or negative connotations of trust are highly important, many of them represent rather questions of *particularized in-group trust* than those of *generalized* or *political trust*. As mentioned, this thesis deals before all with the latter forms of trust. Thus, important and relevant as

these notions on negative connotations are, I claim that they form insufficient grounds for rejecting the idea general importance and desirability of trust.

However, this does not conclude the debate on universality–context-dependency of trust. For instance, P. Watier and I. Marková (2004, p. 30) claim that one can find a double distinction of trust when it is examined as a part of social differentiation process. First distinction is between trust as a generalized belief and trust as a contextual confidence, and the second distinction is between trust in other people and trust in abstract mechanisms and institutions. G. Simmel (1992), for instance, distinguishes between the contextual confidence, which rests on experience or on synthetic knowledge of the other person, and between a more universal trust that is closer to a faith in a religious sense.

Above described differences in meanings of trust appear also in different human languages. The French language, for example, differentiates between “to confide” (*se confier*) and “to trust” (*faire/avoir confiance*). The first refers to an act of confidence in a situation or in relation to certain characteristics of a person, while the latter, “to trust”, refers to a non-context dependent confidence, which is beyond possible verification and available knowledge; it is an act of faith in the strongest sense. The English language, in turn, utilizes “trust” with reference to persons, whereas “confidence” refers to more often to impersonal, professed and institutional relations of certainty with respect to expertness. (Watier & Marková, 2004, p. 31.) On the other hand, according to Oxford Living Dictionaries (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/trust>), trust is “firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or *something*” (emphasis added), so unlike Watier and Marková (*ibid.*) claim, this modern dictionary definition presents that the object of trust does not necessarily have to be a *person*.

Since I am dealing with Russia in this thesis, it is meaningful to consider the definitions of Russian word for trust, *doveriye*. Table 2 provides summary of definitions of “*doveriye*” and its uses. Dictionary definition of Russian trust described in Table 2 suggest that one can presume trust to indicate evaluations of normative beliefs in different actors, and that these actors can be either individuals or larger groups of people, such as organizations or institutions. Thus, by linguistic definition, Russian trust seems to by and large represent the same kind of evaluative attitude or emotion towards someone or something, as described in the introduction chapter of the thesis.

Table 2: Definitions of trust (doveriye) in selected Russian monolingual dictionaries

Reference	Definition	Example of use
Kuznecov (1998)	“Relationship to someone, based on assurance of his honesty, his bona fides.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “To express trust (in government, cabinet etc.)” – “To approve the work of government, cabinet etc.”
Dal' (2017)	”A feeling or conviction that some person, circumstance or hope can be trusted, believed; faith in the reliability of someone or something.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “To authorize somebody to do something.” – “To rely on someone, to believe him, not to doubt his honesty.” – ”To believe, to entrust someone.”
Ozhegov (2014)	”Confidence in someone’s conscientiousness, sincerity, in rightness of something.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ”To gain or lose trust.”
Ushakov (2008)	“Assurance of someone’s honesty, decency; faith in someone’s sincerity and decency.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ”To abuse, to lose trust.” – “Blind trust.” – “To worm one's way into somebody’s confidence.”

Accordingly, a corpus linguistic analysis by Rubtsova and Vasilieva (2016) indicates that the word trust is most commonly mentioned with “political institution”, “social interaction” and ”economic institution” in the Russian mass media, which also in a certain way supports the usability of trust as proxy for measuring political performance in Russia.

In spite of the linguistic similarities between the English and Russian definitions of trust, some scholars have argued that *the sociological understanding* of Russian trust differs substantially from the Western. For instance, famous Russian sociologist Y. Levada (2004, pp. 158–159) points out that trust comparisons between the Western countries and Russia cannot ever be exact, because in diverse social traditions people attach different meanings to the term “trust”, and expect specific things when they say that they trust or distrust someone. Levada goes on by claiming that if Russian citizen, for example, is

asked whether he or she trusts the president, he does not conceive the institution of the presidency as having any definite social duty, function or workplace. Instead, for Russian citizen the institution of the presidency means above all the particular person (e.g. Mr. Medvedev, Mr. Putin), that is, trust in the presidency is rather person than performance oriented. Thus, while in the Western countries citizens expect from the president a proper performance of official duties, in Russia people expect “miracles of salvation and heroic feats”, as Levada writes. According to Levada, this same logic applies also to some extent to other institutions, such as prime minister or governors. (ibid., p. 159.)

V. Shlapentokh (2006, p. 167) has made similar notions considering the expressions of trust in the presidency in Russia. He suggests that evaluations of any country’s leader tend to have a “Teflon” quality, which means that to some extent leader of the country is immune to harsh criticisms for his or her failures in domestic and foreign policy. Accordingly, the evaluations of the leader’s performance tend to be significantly higher than the estimates of his or her activity in any individual sphere of society. The leader is first of all seen as a representative of the general unity and stability of the country, and thus his or her existence alone is considered a blessing to society. According to Shlapentokh, this is especially the case in Russian society, which is fraught with various “destructive tendencies”. Thus, the idea of disappearance of Putin is frightening for the majority of Russians, and therefore they also avoid blaming him personally for the various shortcomings in the country, preferring to blame other institutions instead. Shlapentokh suggests that this tendency was illustrated clearly by Russians’ perceptions on the responsibility for the tragedies at the Moscow Theater in 2002 and Beslan in 2004. (ibid., p. 167.)

L. Gudkov (2012, pp. 11–12) has also stressed the distinctive features of Russian trust. According to him, one specific characteristic of trust in Russia is that low trust in others is compensated with high trust in symbolically important institutions. Especially president, army and Russian Orthodox Church have important symbolic meaning in Russian society. Thus, following Gudkov’s logic, one could argue that expressing distrust in these institutions in Russia has deeper meaning than mere declaration of dissatisfaction of their actions. In other words, expressing distrust in these institutions would also mean rejection of the important core values of Russian society. Hence, social threshold for

expressing distrust in these three institutions may be higher than with other societal institutions in Russia.

Gudkov (2012, pp. 12–13) goes on by arguing that traces of “totalitarian syndrome” can be seen in the current expressions of political trust in Russia. C. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski (1956, p. 21) originally defined totalitarian syndrome as a “totalitarian dictatorship consisting of an ideology, a single party typically led by one man, a terroristic police, a communications monopoly, a weapons monopoly, and a centrally directed economy”. Gudkov claims that in the Soviet era the legitimacy of communist rule was based on confidence of masses in “the better future”, which meant quite modest but yet guaranteed improvements in everyday life of the Soviet citizens. However, the economic and social crisis of the 1990s Russia ruined this illusion for the better future, and thus the post-Soviet Russian regimes have to rely its legitimacy on reassurance of lack of alternative politics. This policy, in turn, is mainly supported by power structures and propaganda. Gudkov contends the composition of aforementioned totalitarian trust to be very stable, and thus distribution of opinions in Russia does not depend on interests of different groups of society, but reflects deeper layer of mass ideas, which react poorly on actual changes. (Gudkov, 2012, pp. 12–13.)

The existing data on Russian trust do not directly contradict Levada’s, Shlapentkoh’s and Gudkov’s claims. Table 3 shows an overview of the distribution of trust in different institutions and other people in Russia. As the table illustrates, the armed forces and president are clearly the most trusted institutions. Over 70% of Russians express rather trusting than neutral or distrusting relations with these two institutions. Government, police and religious institutions are also more likely trusted than distrusted. In general, however, Russia can be described as low-trust society where distrust and skepticism are widespread: nine of the fourteen institutions presented in Table 3 are trusted by less than one third of Russians. It is noteworthy in Table 3 that trust in religious institutions is lower and trust in police higher than in many other surveys and opinion polls (see e.g. Gudkov, 2012; Kozyreva & Smirnov, 2015; Levada-tsentr, 2018a; VTsIOM, 2018a). In general, however, the data of multiple different surveys and polls asking about trust in Russia paint a similar picture of the phenomenon as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Dynamics of institutional and interpersonal trust in Russia

	Trusting (%)	Neutral (%)	Distrusting (%)	Mean
Armed forces	73	15	12	3,99
Presidency	72	13	14	3,88
Government	43	26	32	3,08
Police	41	25	34	3,02
Religious institutions	38	28	34	3,01
Regional government	31	29	40	2,82
Local government	28	26	46	2,69
Courts	28	31	41	2,78
Parliament	26	32	42	2,74
Banks and the financial system	25	27	47	2,67
Other people	21	26	53	2,45
Political parties	20	31	49	2,54
Trade unions	20	35	45	2,61
Foreign investors	13	30	57	2,32
Non-governmental organizations	12	33	55	2,34
Institutional trust (average)	26	45	29	2,93

Source: Life in Transition III survey, EBRD 2016.

Questions: “To what extent do you trust the following institutions” and “To what extent do you trust people you meet the first time”. The total number of weighted responses for each institution varies from 1257 to 1468. Means are based on a 5-point scale, on which trusting = 4–5 on trust; neutral = 3 on trust; and distrusting 1–2 on trust.

3.2 Why to study Russian trust using grand theories?

As the previous chapter illustrates, Mishler and Rose build their model of analyzing political trust mainly on general ideas and grand theories that have been developed to analyze trust primarily in the Western, or at least in non-Russian context. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, some scholars suggest that the Russian cultural understanding of trust differs somewhat from Western. Thus, one could also question the use of these grand theory based and “non-Russian” models for studying political trust in Russia. All the classic trust theorists mentioned in the previous chapter of the thesis have developed their analytical model to analyze contexts that differ substantially from contemporary Russian context. Putnam (1993), for instance, studies trust in Italy, Almond and Verba (1963) in Britain, the United States, Germany, Italy and Mexico, and Hetherington (1998) deals with political trust in America. Coleman’s and Dasgupta’s contributions, in turn, are rather theoretical than empirical. Out these advocates of cultural and institutional theories, Inglehart is the only one who examines also Russia as a part of his cross-country analyses. This raises a logical question: why to use those analytical models and ideas of studying

political trust that have not been developed to study it particularly in Russia? Since I am utilizing survey data to study Russian political trust, it is relevant to briefly consider the general historical differences of studying public opinion in Russia and in the more democratic countries to answer this question.

The U.S. has been a leading country in the development of modern survey methods (Simpura & Melkas, 2013, p. 35). Modern opinion polls and surveys have been an important part of social sciences at least since the 1930s, when G. Gallup, A. Crossley and E. Roper successfully predicted the re-election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936 by using random sampling method. These correct predictions were also an important milestone in beginning of era of modern technologies for studying public opinion, and they also shaped the ulterior political culture of the U.S. (Doktorov, 2004, p. 19.)

Prominent Russian sociologist B. Doktorov (2004) has examined the differences between the development of Russian (or Soviet) and the U.S. public opinion studies. According to him, the development of survey methods in the U.S. since the 1930s was a direct result of country's political and economic system, because the capitalistic and democratic societal system of the U.S. was dependent on gaining information about the interests and intentions of consumers and voters. However, this was not the case with Russia during the Soviet era, because democratic elections did not exist, and market economy was replaced with command economy. Thus, there was not demand such a demand for public opinion research, as in the political system of the U.S. (ibid., p. 19.)

However, this not to say that surveys were totally non-existent in the Soviet Union. The first professional organization for studying public opinion in the Soviet Union, "Institute of public opinion of 'Komsomol'skaja pravda'", or "IOM 'KP'" (*Institut obshhestvennogo mnenija "KP"*), was founded in 1960, and famous Russian sociologist B. Grushin was appointed to head the organization. (Doktorov 2004, p. 11.) Nevertheless, since the state was to replace all markets as the means of distributing resources, the government control of information was a distinctive feature of communist rule. For instance, economy had to be monitored carefully in order to determine what should be produced. Accordingly, since the Soviet regime was based on force rather than popular will, it had to keep an eye on society and observe vigilantly for signs of opposition and resistance. (Herrera, 2006, p. 54.) In this sense, surveys and state statistics served

primarily as “the eyes” of the establishment rather than as source of information for the public.

There were several reasons for the Soviet establishment to prohibit opinion surveys. First, they could have exposed the deficits of the Soviet society or public discontent with the system. Secondly, they might have also caused disadvantageous comparisons with the West, which would have been importunate for the ruling power. Accordingly, social sciences were generally underdeveloped in the Soviet Union, because the Soviet rulers strived to control all the information. Ruling power also distorted the development of civic society with the Kremlin led propaganda, and repressed science community for decades. The most symbolic example of this act against the science community was Lenin’s order to deport two hundred or more intellectuals – doctors, economists, philosophers, and others – abroad on what became known as “the Philosophers’ Ship”. (Gessen, 2017, pp. 18–19.) Thus, both the domestic (Soviet) and foreign scholars willing to examine the country had to base their conclusions on scattered knowledge and “phrase them in a language inadequate for the task”, as M. Gessen (2017, p. 18) has put it.

In short, the degree of freedom of conducting opinion surveys in Russia was largely dependent on the leaders of the Communist party during the Soviet era. As mentioned, Lenin started the supervision and repression of the Russian science community, and situation did not become any easier for social scientists after Stalin took the power and started his Great Terror. IOM KP, in turn, was founded in the course of the years of Hrushhiov’s Thaw, while its activities became increasingly regulated – and was eventually shut down – during Brezhnev’s rule. (Doktorov 2004, pp. 12–13.) The first polling institute of modern Russia, VTsIOM (Russian Public Opinion Research Center), was founded during the era of Gorbachiov’s perestroika and glasnost only in 1987 (VTsIOM, 2018b), when it became increasingly possible to criticize and publicly discuss the defects of the Soviet society. As a first sociological institution in Russia, VTsIOM was a pioneer for many sociological surveys and it build a reputation as an independent research organization in the course of the 1990s (VTsIOM, 2019b). However, a few years after Vladimir Putin came into power, the Kremlin tightened its grip over various societal institutions, and VTsIOM was no exception here: in 2003, the Ministry of Property of the Russian Federation decided to change the status of the center, making it a 100% state owned institution. As a result, the then director of VTsIOM, Y. Levada and his collective

left the center to create their own analytical organization, which later became known as the Levada-Center (Levada-tsentr, 2018b). Later in 2016, the Kremlin further hampered the functioning of the Center by giving it a status of “foreign-agent” (Levada-tsentr, 2016).

This brief historical overview of the evolution of Russian public opinion research indicates that the development of sociological surveys in the 20th century Russia differs substantially from the Western. In the ideal world, statistics (including opinion surveys) are publicly produced commons, which are then utilized to make the everyday decision-making processes easier (Simpura & Melkas, 2013, p. 15). Nevertheless, both the Soviet and post-Soviet Russian experience illustrates that this has not been the case in Russia. On the contrary, the degree of freedom for conducting opinion surveys has been, and, to some extent, continues to be dependent on the attitudes of the Russian rulers. Accordingly, this has undermined the development of public opinion research in Russia, which, in turn, could partly explain why there has been little quantitative analysis of Russian political trust.

Thus, although the analytical model of this thesis is adopted from Mishler and Rose – who built their model largely on theories developed to analyze different type of societies than Russia – it offers a good starting point for a study. Moreover, in spite of the roughness of Mishler and Rose’s (2001) analytical model, it includes many relevant measures, and, on the other hand, ignores some factors that are probably relevant in examining political trust in many democratic countries, but not in Russia (such as membership in voluntary organizations or labor unions, see methodology chapter of the thesis for discussion of this topic). However, since the purpose of the current thesis is also to situate trust studies to Russia, it is necessary to acknowledge the impact of cultural, linguistic and sociological contexts in analyzing the results.

4 Methodology

In this chapter, I will introduce the data for the analysis and the analysis method of thesis. Since my analytical model comes from Mishler and Rose's (2001) work, I will utilize ordinary least squares (henceforth OLS) regression analysis as they did to test their hypothesis on origins of trust in Russia. In this thesis, the aim is to examine how independent variables (socialization and social background, and political and economic performance perceptions) predict dependent variables (political and interpersonal trust), and compare the outcomes of Mishler and Rose's (ibid.) model and thesis' model. Next, I will introduce the data and then the method.

4.1 In search of the most fit data for my analysis – Life in Transition Survey

The data that Mishler and Rose used in their analysis were drawn from the fifth New Democracies Barometer (henceforth NDB) and the seventh New Russia Barometer (henceforth NRB). Interviews for both NDB and NRB were conducted in 1998 (for further details of these surveys go to <http://www.cspp.strath.ac.uk/index.html>). NRB survey measured trust in institutions by asking the respondents the following question: "There are many different institutions in this country, for example, the government, courts, police, civil servants. Please show me on this 7-point scale, where 1 represents great distrust and 7 represents great trust, how much is your personal trust in each of the following institutions." The list of institutions included political parties, courts, police, civil servants, government, the military, parliament, churches, trade unions, television and radio, the press, private enterprise and the president of the country. Interpersonal trust, in turn, was measured by asking people "How much do you trust most people you meet?" with the same response set. (Mishler & Rose 2001, p. 40.)

According to Mishler and Rose (2001, pp. 40–41) a significant theoretical advantage of this kind of question formulation is that trust in institutions is asked without reference to the performance of institutions or their occupants. Some surveys use question formulation, which asks respondents to measure "confidence" in establishment democratic institutions by asking in particular about "the people running government" and whether institutions are "doing what is right". However, Mishler and Rose claim that this kind of questions bias responses in ways that favor performance-oriented theories of trust. They also cited the use of the same metric in measuring interpersonal and

institutional trust as an advantage of their data, because the use of different metric might cause confusion and affect the survey responds. (ibid., p. 41.)

Since my analytical model comes from Mishler and Rose (2001), I had to examine which kind data would fit my purposes the best. At first, I considered using data of Social Distinctions in Modern Russia (henceforth SDMR), which has been carried out in Russia in 1991, 1998, 2006 and 2015. This survey is conducted by the Russian Academy of Sciences institution (State Humanities University) in concert with the University of Helsinki and the University of Tampere. SDMR is a large-N survey covering a wide range of areas of Russian society, such as class composition, income divisions, family and social mobility, values, interests and stereotypes. Nevertheless, it does not cover questions on political and economic performance, or on perceived corruption similar to Mishler and Rose's (ibid.) model. Thus, I did not consider the data of SDMR very suitable for my model.

Another survey which I considered to be useful for my "replicate analysis" was the European Social Survey's (henceforth ESS) data on Russia. ESS asks many questions on trust similar to NRB's trust measures. It is a longitudinal large-N survey, which has been conducted in Russia in 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2016. However, as with SDMR, ESS does not cover questions on perceived corruption, and questions on political and economic performance that could be possibly used in my analysis were also quite different from Mishler and Rose's (2001, p. 58) model. Furthermore, from the usability perspective, survey questions on institutional trust in ESS cover some quite irrelevant institutions to my analysis. It asks, for instance, respondents to report their trust in the European Parliament and in the United Nations, but not about trust in the armed forces, president and churches – which are usually cited as the most trusted institutions in Russia according to various different opinion surveys. The absence of these relevant institutions would naturally affect the overall analysis and its conclusions. Thus, despite of the comprehensive sample size and advantages of longitudinal data analysis, ESS was not the most suitable resource for my analysis.

Finally, I came across with the Life in Transition survey (henceforth LiTS) carried out by European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (henceforth EBRD). LiTS has been conducted three times, in 2006, 2010 and 2016. As the name of the survey indicates, LiTS deals with transition countries, that is, with former command economies adopting market

economy practices, including Russia. It is a combined household and attitudinal survey which collects information on the socio-economic status of the respondents and asks subjective, perception-based questions on economic, political and social topics. The latest round of the survey (LiTS III) covered 51,000 households in 29 transition countries as well as Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Greece and two Western European comparator countries (Germany and Italy). The third round included many similar features to the first two rounds, but it has larger coverage of interviews, with 1,500 households interviewed in each country instead of the 1,000 households of the previous rounds.

The LiTS III interviews were conducted with a female and a male respondent in all households composed of at least two adult members of a different gender. The survey was conducted face-to-face by means of Computer-assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). (EBRD, 2016, pp. 7–8, 67.) The LiTS III was designed by means of multi-stage random probability stratified clustered sampling, and the sample was stratified by geographical region and level of urbanity. 75 primary sampling units were selected in each country in the first stage of sampling. In order to build a panel element into the survey, interviewers were requested to revisit the localities that were sampled during the second round of the survey in 2010. (EBRD, 2016, p. 68.)

I use the data of the third round of the LiTS (III) for my analysis, because it has relatively comprehensive sampling (N for Russia is 1,507) and its questions are quite similar to ones Mishler and Rose (2001) utilized in their model. The LiTS III was conducted between the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016. The country data on Russia includes nine modules, of which the first two collect information on the characteristics of the household, the dwelling they live in and their consumption habits. The remaining modules gather information on asset ownership, working profile, entrepreneurial activities, attitudes and perceptions of corruption of the primary respondent. Especially the latter data on attitudes and individual perceptions on economic and politics is highly relevant to my model. Hence, I decided to use the LiTS III data in my analysis.

Another advantage of the LiTS III is that it is open access data. The complete survey data, including all three waves, is openly available on request for research purposes (<https://www.ebrd.com/publications/life-in-transition-iii>). The LiTS III was designed by the EBRD's Office of the Chief Economist, Transparency International and the World Bank's Poverty and Equity Global Practice. The survey was funded by the EBRD

Sharefolder Special Fund, Transparency International and World Bank's Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality. From an ethical viewpoint, the findings of the LiTS III will not identify individuals or families, and all the information obtained from the survey will be used only in the aggregated form. Thus, neither users of the LiTS III data – including me – nor the people who read the analysis of this thesis, can identify a single participant of the survey.

4.2 Analytical model

In this section, I will introduce the statistical method of the analysis. The analysis method depends on the nature of the data and the research question. I chose to use OLS regression as statistical method for my analysis. I decided on this method, because my intention is to imitate the analysis of the origins of political trust by Mishler and Rose (2001), and hence it is reasonable to use the same statistical method as they did, that is, OLS. Since the dependent variables (institutional and interpersonal trust) are and some of the independent variables are ordinal, one could argue that different kind of regression models should have been utilized instead of linear models. However, besides the fact that political trust is technically speaking categorized as ordinal variable in my data, it is not completely groundless to assume it to behave like continuous variable. Moreover, although my model is a little bit rough around the edges, it nevertheless describes the phenomenon of political trust without systematic error. In addition to this, the advantage of linear models is that they have more straightforward interpretation (Almakaeva et al., 2018).

In Mishler and Rose's (2001) study of the dynamics of trust in post-Soviet countries, altogether eight regression analyses were run in order to define which factors have the most effect on political and interpersonal trust. Their model has three separate domains: socialization domain, and political and economic performance domains. The socialization domain is operationalized by using five variables concerning social and demographic aspects that might affect individual's perceptions on trust: age, education, gender, town size and church attendance. Political performance domain, in turn, contains aggregate index of political corruption and individual perceptions of personal freedom, government fairness, political corruption and government responsiveness to citizen influence. Lastly, economic performance domain includes individual evaluations of both current and prospective evaluations of macro-economy and household economy, perceptions on the

importance of fighting inflation versus fighting unemployment, and subjective experiences of unemployment and respondent's income quartile. (ibid., pp. 49–51.)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, many classic studies emphasize the importance of civil society in making of political trust. Therefore, one could argue that measures civil society activity should be added to socialization domain. However, there are compelling counterarguments to oppose this view. For instance, Kozyreva and Smirnov (2015, pp. 95–96) have noted that the Russian civil society is weakly developed, and many Russians do not consider the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote their rights or interests efficiently. Much in the same way, the labor unions do not have the same significance in promoting worker's rights and interests as in Western democracies, because the Russian labor unions are weak and dependent on federal and regional authorities, and they also have weak ties with other organizations of the Russian civil society. (ibid.) Thus, it is reasonable to exclude these civil society measures from the thesis' model too.

As described earlier, the measures used in this thesis are derived from the LiTS III. Unfortunately, since I use cross-sectional data of one single country in my statistical model, aggregate data of the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index cannot be utilized, like Mishler and Rose did in their cross-country model. However, I do not cite this to be very serious limitation considering the entire analysis, given the fact their model includes only one aggregate variable (the data on aggregate corruption of afore mentioned Corruption Perceptions Index). In addition to this, experience of unemployment could not be included in my analysis due too many missing values (965 missing cases or 64% of responds to a question "Are you actively looking for a job at this moment", which was the closest question to measure experience of unemployment in the LiTS III dataset).

Since I utilize the analytic model of Mishler and Rose's (2001) study, I conducted a principal components analysis similar to their study to make out a better understanding of what kind of variables could be used to build summed scales on institutional trust (see Table 4). This analysis produced three components with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, which is often cited as a limit value for the main components to be included in further analysis (Jokivuori & Hietala, 2007, p. 98). However, the first component dominates with the eigenvalue of 7.2, and, also accounts more than 33% of the total variance in the 14

Table 4: Dimensions of political trust in Russia

Variable	Rotated Component Matrix ^a		
	Component		
	1	2	3
Regional government	,839	,281	,178
Parliament	,838	,313	,161
Government	,815	,144	,314
Local government	,804	,340	,127
Political parties	,779	,344	
Courts	,681	,421	,105
Foreign investors	,216	,838	
NGO's	,313	,790	
Banks and the financial system	,234	,679	,318
Trade unions	,378	,604	,131
Religious institutions	,369	,405	,273
Armed forces	,129		,892
Presidency	,572		,620
Police	,144	,551	,584
Eigenvalue	7,209	1,373	1,186
Percentage of variance	33,065	23,107	13,602

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

measures of institutional trust. Apart from this, the institutions with factor loadings greater than 0.5 in the first component are democratic institutions – no matter how undemocratic they might be in reality. Thus, it is also reasonable to assume that when survey respondents evaluate the *political performance* of different institutions, they evaluate the performance of *public institutions* rather than the performance of private sector, civil society or institutions practicing monopoly on violence. For example, it would be illogical to assume that Russians would consider military responsible for economic policy and economic growth or fighting the corruption in the country; this task is rather given to democratic institutions with higher factor loadings of the first component. Moreover, a recent study by E. Sirotkina and M. Zavadskaya (forthcoming in 2019) suggests that Russians do differentiate political institutions from each other when evaluating their functionality and performance.

Although political trust is the main interest of the thesis, many classic trust theories hypothesize interpersonal trust as a precondition for political trust. Thus, interpersonal

trust is also included in the thesis model as a dependent variable, and it is measured by the LiTS III question “to what extent do you trust people you meet for the first time”. Phrasing of a question differs somewhat from the one Mishler and Rose utilized (“trust in people who you meet”). The LiTS III also includes the classic trust question “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people”, but the validity of this as measure of generalized trust has been questioned recently. For instance, Sturgis and Smith (2010) discovered in their study that in the UK over 40% of people answering the question whether “other people” can be trusted or not actually had family, friends and colleagues – in other words, *known people* – in mind when thinking of “other people”. Accordingly, various scholars have detected significant variation of the trust radius across countries (Delhey et al., 2014; Torpe & Lolle, 2011; van Hoorn, 2014). Thus, it has been suggested that this radius of trust in the classic question indicates particularized trust instead of generalized trust (Almakaeva et al., 2018, p. 932). Moreover, the classic trust question has been criticized also for its two-dimensionality, since the first part of the question captures trust, but the second one addresses caution instead of distrust. However, trust and caution are not opposites and mutually exclusive, and they can exist simultaneously. Considering the encountered criticism of the classic trust question, I will use a measure of generalized trust that is free from the trust radius and trust-caution issues. Trust in “people one meets for the first time” question offers such measure, because it presupposes trust in people regardless of the specifics of their otherness. (ibid., p. 932.)

Furthermore, since the mass media is considered as an important source of public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1986, pp. 157–166; Rogov, 2017), I added one variable in my model to measure the impact of media consumption on political trust. There are reasons to assume that media consumption could have impact on political trust, because majority of Russians uses TV as the main source of information. (Levada-tsentr, 2017). At the same time, the Russian media scene has also undergone significant changes in Putin’s era, and the Kremlin has strived to restore state’s control over the media contents (Strovsky, 2015). Thus, the Kremlin has the means to mold the public attitudes in its favor, and hence one could assume the news consumption to correlate with higher levels of political trust. In my model, media consumption is measured with a question on how often respondent uses news broadcasts on radio or TV to learn what is going on in Russia or in the world.

Table 5 provides a more detailed comparison of Mishler and Rose’s (2001) and the thesis model’s variables. In sum, variables used in Mishler & Rose’s analysis but not in my model are: aggregate corruption, perceived government fairness, prospective macro and household economy and experience of unemployment.

Table 5: Comparison of the measures of Mishler & Rose’s and the thesis’ model

Variable	Mishler and Rose’s model	Thesis’ model
<i>Trust in political institutions</i>	Individual trust in parties, parliament, president and/or prime minister, courts, police, military.	Individual trust in parliament, regional government, local government, political parties, government, courts, presidency.
<i>Trust in people</i>	Trust in people “who you meet.”	Trust in “people you meet the first time”.
<i>Education</i>	Level of education on 4-point scale.	Level of education on 2-point scale.
<i>Age</i>	Age in years.	Age in years
<i>Gender</i>	Female or male.	Female or male.
<i>Town size</i>	Town size on 4-point scale.	Urbanity / rurality status.
<i>Church attendance</i>	Frequency of church attendance.	Not available, religious group used as a proxy.
<i>Perceived corruption</i>	Corruption increased or decreased since Communism.	Overall corruption decreased in 4 years or not.
<i>Perceived freedoms</i>	Freedom of speech, religion, association and political interest have increased since Communism.	Mean score of individual perceptions of existing freedoms and rights in Russia.
<i>Perceived influence</i>	Government’s responsiveness to citizen influence worsened or improved since Communism.	Children who are born now will have a better life than my generation.
<i>Current macro-economy</i>	Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with macro-economic system in 5 years.	Overall satisfaction with the present state of the economy.
<i>Current household economy</i>	Information missing. ³	Overall satisfaction with the present personal financial situation as a whole.
<i>Retrospective household economy</i>	Household finances better or worse under communism.	Household lives better than 4 years ago.
<i>Income quartile</i>	Subjective placing on income quartile.	Subjective placing on income percentile ladder.
<i>News consumption</i>	–	How often respondent uses news broadcasts as a source of information.

³Unfortunately, information on this variable was missing in Mishler and Rose’s (2001) appendix, so the original measure remains unknown to me. However, question about personal financial situation in the LiTS III seemed like a good proxy to measure individual satisfaction on current household economy.

However, one extra variable was added to my model to measure how news consumption affects political trust. The existing measures of my model are the closest proxies to Mishler and Rose's model variables I could find in the LiTS III.

5 Analysis and findings

This chapter provides the results of my analysis. To recap, my intention is to test whether Mishler and Rose's (2001) hypothesis on the origins of political trust applies to contemporary Russia. In their study, Mishler and Rose ran several OLS regressions to test what kind of factors correlate with political and interpersonal trust. On the basis of their model, they claim that institutional trust theories are many times better in explaining the variance of trust in post-Soviet sphere. This led them to conclude that there is a distinction between interpersonal and political trust in post-Soviet societies, and because of this, political trust is substantially determined by institutional performance. (ibid., pp. 50, 55–58.)

Table 6 summarizes the main findings of my model. All analyses were carried out using SPSS software's (version 25) linear regression function. In general, my model confirms the hypothesis of Mishler and Rose: perceptions of political and economic situation in the country explain better the differences in trust than the socio-demographic factors. Religion and educational level are the only factors that associate with political and interpersonal trust, when all the other variables are controlled: the Orthodox Christians have more trusting relations with political institutions than other religious groups, and Russians with higher education trust slightly less other people than their countrymen with high school or lower education. The strong correlation between the Orthodoxy and political trust is not surprising, given its position as a dominant religion and its close ties with the Russian political life (Lamoreaux & Flake, 2018). However, together the six socialization variables explain only 1.2% of the variance in political trust and 0.6% in interpersonal trust, respectively.

The political performance domain, in contrast, accounts 28.5% of the total variance in political trust and 7.1% in interpersonal trust. The strongest predictor of this domain for both political and interpersonal trust is the extent of perceived freedoms in Russia. Those Russians who believe that certain democratic rights and freedoms exist in their country

also express more trust in institutions and other people, than their more cynical compatriots. Moreover, agreement with statement that “children who are born now will have a better life than my generation” increases moderately but statistically significantly trust in political institutions. Much in the same way, the perception of decreased corruption in Russia bolsters trust in others.

Table 6: OLS estimates on sources of political and interpersonal trust in Russia

Variable	Political trust			Interpersonal trust		
	B	S.E.	Beta	B	S.E.	Beta
<i>Socialization and social structure</i>						
Educational level	.004	.048	.002	-.133	.067	-.057**
Age	.000	.001	.003	.001	.002	.016
Gender	.049	.046	.025	.126	.064	.054
Urbanity status	.041	.056	.018	.029	.077	.010
Religion	.262	.069	.092***	-.076	.095	-.022
News consumption	.009	.020	.011	-.011	.027	-.011
Adjusted R ² bloc (total)	1.2%			0.6%		
<i>Political performance perceptions</i>						
Perceived corruption	.033	.027	.035	.084	.037	.075**
Perceived freedoms	.443	.031	.373***	.143	.043	.102**
Perceived influence	.070	.022	.082**	.054	.030	.053
Adjusted R ² bloc (total)	28.5%			7.1%		
<i>Economic performance perceptions</i>						
Current macro-economic	.238	.029	.238***	.217	.040	.185***
Current household economy	.065	.027	.074**	.134	.038	.128***
Retrospective household economy	.015	.027	.016	-.079	.037	-.073**
Income percentile	-.035	.012	-.076**	-.067	.016	-.123***
Adjusted R ² bloc (total)	19.3%			9.2%		
Total adjusted R ²	34.7%			11.5%		
N	1241			1224		

Note: The Bs and Betas reported in the table are those for the fully specified model; the R², however, is reported separately for each bloc of variables as well as cumulatively for the model as a whole.

*** $p < .001$

** $p < .05$

Finally, the economic performance domain explains 19.3% of the variance in political trust and 11.5% in trust in other people. The observation of Mishler and Rose (2001, p. 52) about the importance of macro-economy for trust holds up in my model as well – macro-economic conditions have strong and significant effects on trust. Current macro-economic evaluation (“On the whole, I am satisfied with the present state of the economy”) is the strongest explanatory variable for interpersonal trust and the second strongest for political trust.

Satisfaction with one’s household’s economic situation and level of income have also significant effects in shaping trust, especially in the case of interpersonal trust. Satisfaction with own financial situation increases trust in other people, and, accordingly, those who feel that they belong to a lower income group tend to be more skeptical towards others. These two variables have similar but weaker effects on political trust too. Moreover, Russians who disagree that their household lives better than four years ago report lower trust in other people.

By and large, my updated and explicitly “Russian” model supports the main findings of Mishler and Rose (2001). There are some minor differences, for instance, according to their model, age and town size of the socialization domain were the most significant factors in shaping trust in institutions instead of religion. However, it is important to bear in mind that the variables used in my model and in theirs differ from each other, sometimes even quite substantially. Hence, the way in which variables interact with each other within regression equation naturally differs too. Moreover, my model deals only with Russia, whereas Mishler and Rose’s cross-country model includes nine other post-Soviet countries as well. Nonetheless, both analyses maintain that perceptions of political and economic conditions have stronger influence on both political and interpersonal trust in Russia, than the socio-demographic background.

6 Limitations of my model

Studying political trust is challenging for many reasons. Since trust is to some extent culture and context dependent concept, it is difficult to give generally acceptable definition to it. Moreover, it is hard to prove causality between different factors and perceptions of trust on the basis of my model: how can we, for instance, know whether those Russians satisfied with the macro-economy are more trusting or trusting Russians more satisfied with the economy? In other words, does economic optimism bolster political trust or political trust economic optimism?

In this chapter, I will consider the conceptual and methodological limitations of my model. Conceptual limitations consist of the different cultural understandings of some independent variables of my model. Much in the same way as trust reflects a set of values, perceptions on political and economic performance may reflect cultural differences. For instance, Russians might stress different aspects of democracy and market economy in their evaluations than westerners. Since my model utilizes only subjective political and economic performance evaluations, it is reasonable to examine how well these evaluations go together with the more objective data on similar issues on the given time period, that is in 2015–2016 Russia. The methodological limitations, in contrast, deal with limitations concerning the data, i.e. the LiTS III, especially the plausible effects that authoritarian survey environment may have on the survey answers. These limitations are reviewed in following.

6.1 Conceptual limitations

I discussed the possibility of distinctiveness of Russian trust in the third chapter of this thesis. However, since my model utilizes subjective evaluations and perceptions to measure the successfulness of public and economic policy, one could also ask whether the democratic and economic preferences of Russians differ significantly from the preferences of the citizens of democratic countries. For example, my model points out that those Russians who are more prone to believe that free and fair elections, law and order, freedom of speech, peace and stability, a state independent press, a strong political opposition, fair courts system and equal rights for women exist in Russia also report higher levels of political and interpersonal trust. But how Russians actually perceive and

stress these democratic values and freedoms? Do Russians consider these values as important as westerners in the first place?

A considerable amount of both academic and popular literature have been published on rising authoritarianism and conservatism in Putin's Russia. Very often this literature suggests that the first decade of the 2000's was a decade of "softer" authoritarianism, which took more repressive and total form after the pro-democratic protests in 2011–2012. Especially the annexation of Crimea and the subsequent confrontation with the West is seen often as an important demarcation point. (Gel'man, 2015; Kniivilä, 2014; Rogov, 2014, 2016.) Apart from growing repression, the Russian state leadership has increasingly emphasized traditional and conservative values as core of the Russian national unity, particularly after Putin's return to the presidency in 2012 (Østbø, 2017; Robinson, 2017). Moreover, state ideology in Putin's Russia has been influenced by ideas of fundamental differences between Russian and Western values. Here, the Russian establishment has been inspired by so called Eurasian mode of thinking, which underscores Russia's role in the creation of Eurasian civilization (Bassin et al., 2015). Scholars have described the change in Russian political atmosphere after 2012 with such terms as "ideological", "cultural" and "conservative turn" (Engström, 2014; Laine & Saarelainen, 2017; Robinson, 2017).

In addition to "cultural turn" and growing repression in the 2010's Russia, the Kremlin has emphasized differences between Russian and Western models of democracy. For instance, former deputy chief of the Russian Presidential Administration and Russian Federation's deputy prime minister V. Surkov has claimed that Russian democratic system is not democracy in a Western sense, but a system of "sovereign democracy". Surkov (2006) defines sovereign democracy as "a society's political life where the political powers, their authorities and decisions are decided and controlled by a diverse Russian nation for the purpose of reaching material welfare, freedom and fairness by all citizens, social groups and nationalities, by the people that formed it". Critics have purported that in practice sovereign democracy means that the Kremlin can define whether democratic exigencies are realized or not in Russia. Moreover, critics claim that sovereign democracy makes the Russian government by definition immune for the critique of foreign governments and human rights organizations. (Lipman, 2006; van Herpen, 2015, p. 80.)

Aforementioned “turns” and the concept of sovereign democracy in Russian politics begs the question about the possible change in the views of ordinary Russians. It has been previously observed that Russians actually had high expectations for market economy and democracy in the beginning of the 1990s, when the Soviet Union collapsed (Shirayev & Zubok, 2000, pp. 41–43; Yudin, 2017). However, these expectations were not met: Russia’s economy suffered from two hyperinflations in the course of the 1990s, and a low birthrate combined with a low life expectancy led to a severe population decline and demographic crisis (Kainu et al., 2017; Stiglitz, 2002, pp. 133–165). Could it be so that majority of Russians have abandoned the Western democratic ideals after disillusionment with the Russian democracy of the 1990s, and embraced “Russian values” or “sovereign democracy” instead, as some Kremlin-minded thinkers have claimed in recent years?

Answering this question is challenging, because the available data and research on the subject offers somewhat conflicting results. On the one hand, there are representative surveys and studies pointing out that out of all transition countries, Russians have the most negative attitudes towards the free market and democracy. A study of Denisova et al. (2010), for instance, maintain that about one-half of Russian population is disappointed with transition from communism to capitalism. At the same time, a large majority of Russians favors high state regulation, and state provision of goods and services. The data of the LiTS III paints a somewhat similar picture of Russian disappointment with democracy and market economy. According to the LiTS III data, 36% and 46% of Russians think that an authoritarian system or planned economy, respectively, could be preferable under some circumstances to democracy and market economy. These two figures are the highest in the whole transition region. In addition to this, 83% of Russians opted for “Country A” when they were asked the subsequent hypothetical question:

“Imagine you could choose between living in two countries, Country A and Country B. Country A has few political liberties but strong economic growth. Country B has full political liberties but weak economic growth. Which country would you rather live in?” (EBRD, 2016, p. 120.)

Nevertheless, another response figures of the LiTS III data suggest that despite of aforementioned recent authoritarian tendencies, an overwhelming majority of Russians considers Western type democratic rights and freedoms important for their homeland. Table 7 provides figures of Russian perceptions on the importance of certain democratic

institutions and freedoms for their country. The data suggests that in spite of the Kremlin promoted Russian model of democracy, Russians seem to still embrace (Western) democratic values. Therefore, one could also claim that it is reasonable to use them as an independent variable in a model examining Russian trust, as has been done in this thesis. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that even though the large majority of Russians cite democratic institutions and freedoms important, the most important factors are peace and stability, and law and order, while a bit over a third of the respondents do not perceive independent press and strong political opposition very important for Russia.

Table 7: Perceived importance of democratic institutions & freedoms in Russia

	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Mean
Peace and stability	92	5	3	4,3
Law and order	92	5	3	4,3
Fair courts system	92	6	3	4,3
Free and fair elections	88	9	3	4,2
Freedom of speech	87	9	4	4,1
Equal rights for women	85	11	4	4,1
Independent press	76	17	7	3,9
Strong political opposition	72	20	9	3,9

Source: LiTS III, EBRD 2016.

Question: “To what extent do you agree that the following are important for Russia? The total number of weighted responses varies from 1437 to 1482. Means are based on a 5-point scale, on which agree = 4–5; neutral = 3; and disagree = 1–2.

Moreover, the mere descriptive LiTS III data on the importance democratic rights and freedoms does not end the debate on possible different cultural understandings of democracy: according to multi-continental representative surveys, perceptions of democratic governance and preferability of democracy have weak connections with the actual stage of democracy in different countries. Rose et al. (2011, pp. 22–26), for instance, discovered that despite of the fact that most part of the mankind does not live in democratic countries, there is a near universal support for democracy. However, the fact whether a regime actually is democratic or not has no influence on how its population evaluates its performance: some governments of undemocratic countries are highly supported by their population, while some governments of the most democratic countries have poor performance evaluations. (ibid., pp. 24–26.)

A quick glance at the cross-country data also suggests that there is no connection between perceived democratic governance and the actual governance politics. Figure 2 presents an overview of weighted mean scores for each country for the WVS question: “How

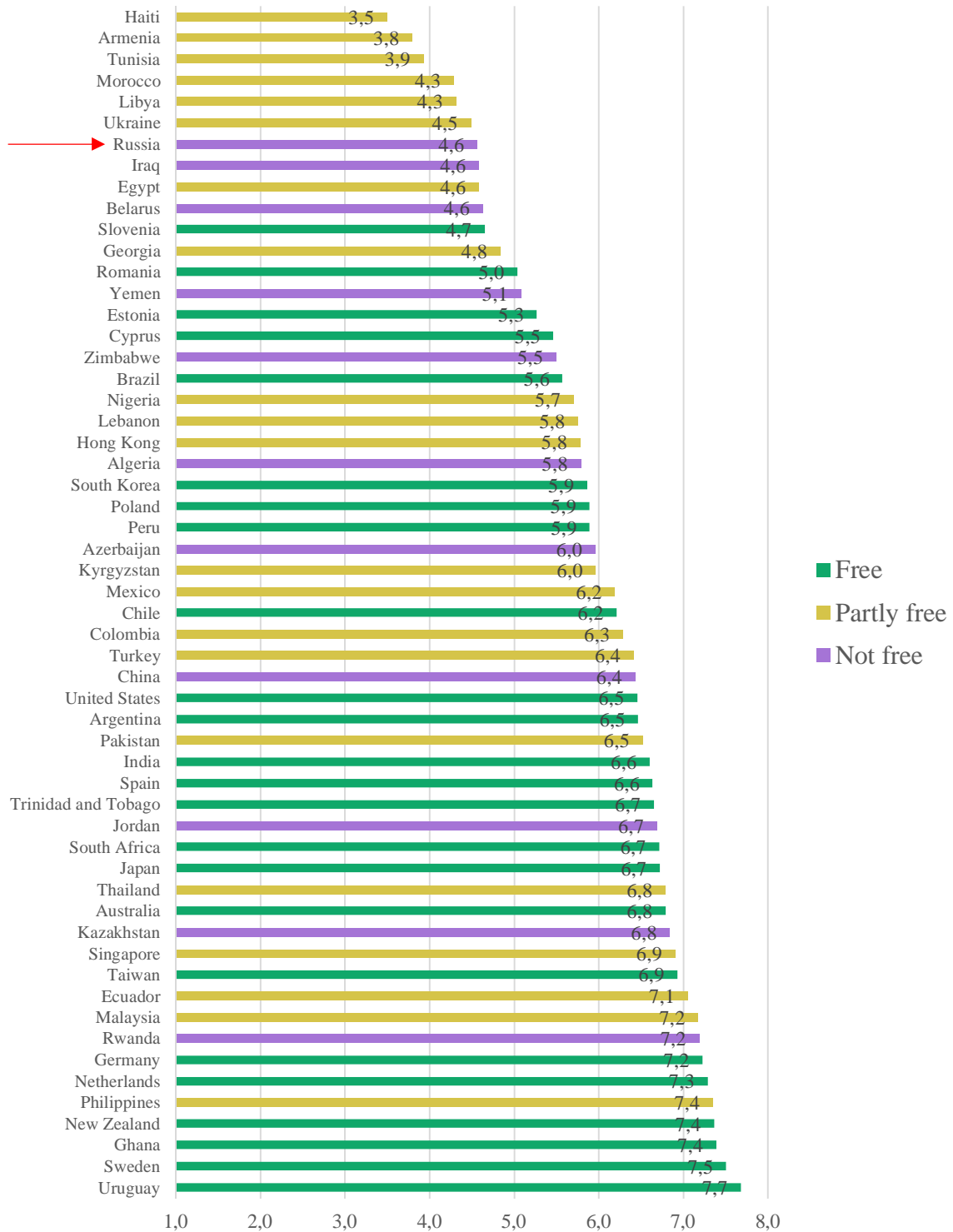


Figure 2: Perceived level of democracy in different regimes

Source: World Values Survey, 2010–2014, wave 6 (Inglehart et al., 2014). Political status: Freedom house rating as reported for year of survey (www.freedomhouse.org). Idea for the figure is adopted from Rose et al. (2011, p. 25).

Question: “How democratically is this country being governed today?” Means are based on a 10-point scale, on which “not at all democratic” = 1 and “completely democratic” = 10.

democratically is your country being governed today?”, and, respectively, each country’s categorization according to Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World index*. As the figure illustrates, evaluations of the current level of democratic varies substantially between

different societies, but it does not depend on the “actual level of democracy”. Populations of some undemocratic and authoritarian countries nonetheless perceive that their countries are governed quite democratically, whereas populations of some established democracies give somewhat negative evaluations of their country’s democratic governance. For instance, citizens of arguably undemocratic Rwanda, Kazakhstan, Jordan and China express positive evaluations of their regime’s level of democratic governance, while allegedly more democratic Estonians, Romanians and Slovenians are more skeptical of their regime’s democratic governance.

As far as Russia is concerned, Russians seem to give quite “realistic” evaluations of their regime’s way of governance according to this dataset: Freedom House labels Russia as undemocratic country, and Russians are also one of the most skeptical nations in their attitudes towards democratic governance of their homeland with the mean score of 4.6 on a 10-point-scale. However, the picture changes slightly when people are asked what definitions they give to democracy. As H. Kirsch and C. Welzel (2018) pointed out in their study, not only widespread support for democracy but also the endorsement of both liberal and authoritarian notions of democracy coexist in many countries. This is especially true in non-Western cultures (see also: Shin, 2015). This observation seems to hold up also with Russia.

Figure 3 provides comparison of mean support for authoritarian notions of democracy. As closer inspection of the figure shows, Russia is positioned rather in the same group with other undemocratic countries than in the group of established democracies. The mean score for the support of authoritarian notions of democracy in Russia is 5.2, which is also higher than the world average (4.9).⁴

In summary, one cannot exclude the possibility of different understandings of Russian and Western democracy on the basis of the existing data: on average, Russians seem to be more supportive to authoritarian ideas of democracy than westerners. Thus, theoretically speaking, the possibility that the correlation between democratic rights and

⁴ In their study, Kirsch and Welzel (2018) defined authoritarian notions of democracy as three meanings of democracy which attribute unchecked powers to (1) “religious authorities”, (2) “the army” and (3) the statement that people’s obedience to their rulers is essential for democracy.

Support for authoritarian notions of democracy

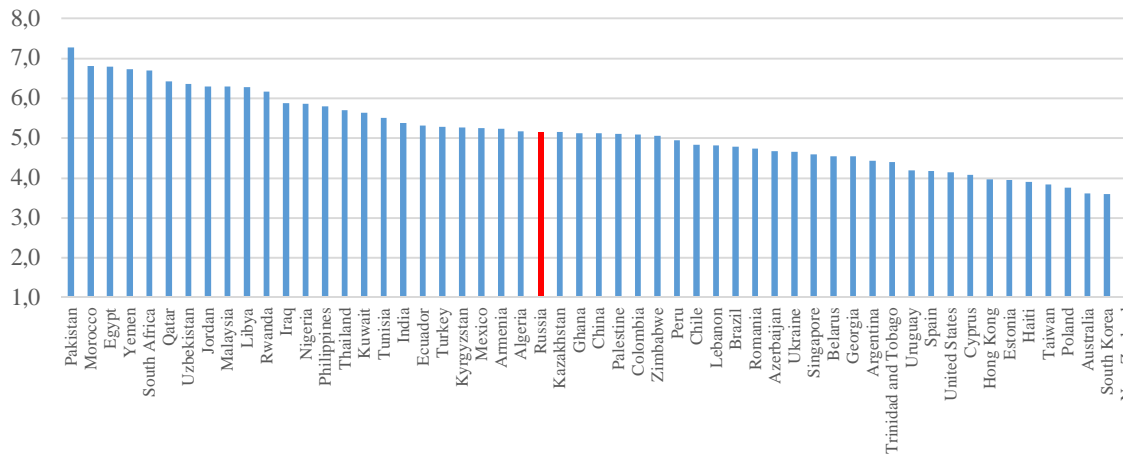


Figure 3: Support for authoritarian notions of democracy

Source: Inglehart et al. (2014)

Note: Russia emphasized with red font color.

Question: “Many things are desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. Please tell me for each of the following things how essential you think it is as a characteristic of democracy: 1) ‘Religious authorities ultimately interpret laws’, 2) ‘The army takes over when government is incompetent’ and 3) ‘People obey their rulers’”. Means are based on a 10-point scale, on which “not essential to democracy” = 1 and “essential to democracy” = 10.

freedoms and political and interpersonal trust found in my model would erode if authoritarian were asked (and included in the model) cannot be completely ruled out. Unfortunately, the LiTS III does not include such measures.

Another concern is about the reliability of the subjective economic evaluations. Both Mishler and Rose and the thesis’ model suggest that satisfaction with the macro-economic system increases political trust. On the strength of this result, Mishler and Rose (2001, pp. 56–58) concluded that political trust can be generated in the post-Soviet sphere by conducting acceptable economic policies. Thus, following Coleman’s (1994, p. 99) logic, they conceive political trust as *a rational response* to conducted public and economic policies (emphasis added). Henceforth, this view is referred to as the *rational response approach* in this thesis.

However, the objective data on Russian macro-economy from the time period when LiTS III was conducted contradicts the rational response approach. Figure 4 presents IMF’s (2018) data on the development of selected macro-economic indicators in Russia in 2000–

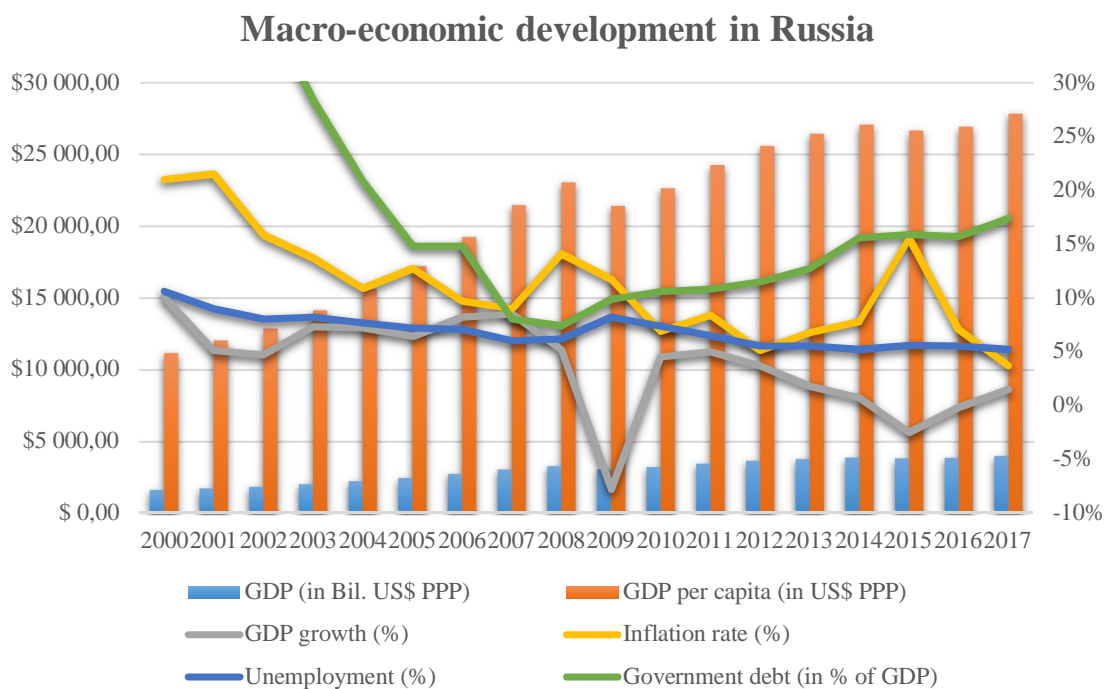


Figure 4: Selected macro-economic indicators in Russia in 2000–2017

2017. As the chart indicates, many economic indicators have either stagnated or fallen in recent years in Russia. For example, GDP growth sunk steadily from 2011 to 2015, the inflation rate nearly doubled in 2014–2015 and GDP per capita in 2015–2016 was lesser than in 2014.

In a certain way, the rational response approach resembles the idea of human as a naïve scientist. According to S.T. Fiske and S.E. Taylor (1991, pp. 11–12), the naïve scientist approach hypothesizes that given enough time, humans gather all the relevant data and arrive at the most logical conclusion when measuring and analyzing the world around them.

The key problem with this explanation is that it makes somewhat generalizing assumptions about the cognitive inclinations and limitations of the human mind. It has been previously observed that people take shortcuts in interpreting causal relationships and in estimating magnitudes, frequencies and probabilities. In the same way, people employ several mental shortcuts and judgmental heuristics in evaluating and inferring different phenomena. One of these heuristics is about availability: people are prone to estimate frequencies and probabilities by the ease with which instances or associations

come to mind. An individual might, for instance, estimate the proportion of philatelists in the society by recalling the philatelists among one's own acquaintances. The significance of the heuristic lies in the link it creates between repetition and perceived validity – the exposure to a particular view eases its retrieval from memory and thus increases its perceived validity. (Kahneman, 2011, pp. 7–9; Kuran, 1997, pp. 158–159; 166.) S.T. Fiske and S.E. Taylor (1991, p. 13) utilize the concept of “cognitive miser” to depict the idea that because people are limited in their capacity to process information, they employ shortcuts whenever they can.

Previous research has established that the concept of heuristics stems from two basic principles of human judgment. The first principle of human judgement is often referred as the “least effort principle”, which presumes that individuals do not often have complete information when they make social judgements and evaluations. The least effort principle rests on the assumption that individuals prefer to spend as little cognitive effort as possible when processing information in a judgement situation. However, the least effort principle is not the only mover in decision-making and evaluative situations, but people are also prone to make decisions and judgements that are reasonably accurate. This latter judgement principle, in turn, is often referred as the “sufficiency principle”, which assumes that a desire to make accurate or “good” decisions motivates people to expend the amount of effort necessary to reach a sufficient amount of confidence in the quality of their decision. (Chen & Chaiken, 1999, pp. 74–75; Rudolph, 2017, p. 198.)

Taken together, the least effort and sufficiency principles form the heuristic-systematic model of information processing (Chaiken, 1980). According to this model, there are two different modes of information processing – systematic and heuristic processing – which differ mainly in terms of how effortfully people process information in the decision-making or judgment situation. Systematic processing is more analytical and takes more effort, whereas heuristic processing is less effortful mode of thinking, and requires much less cognitive effort. T. Rudolph (2017, p. 198) maintains that since individuals generally prefer less effortful forms of information processing, it is widely assumed that people will also prefer to engage in heuristic processing rather than in systematic processing, whenever it is possible for them.

Accordingly, P.M. Sniderman et al. (1991, pp. 18–19) argue that several lines of evidence suggest that the average citizen knows little about politics and political abstractions.

Consequently, this political knowledge gap is compensated by taking advantage of judgmental heuristics. Sniderman et al (ibid.) define heuristics as “judgmental shortcuts, efficient ways to organize and simplify political choices, efficient in the double sense of requiring relatively little information to execute, yet yielding dependable answers even to complex problems of choice”. Russian scholars A.V. Beljanin and V.P. Zinchenko (2010, p. 45) have made similar notions concerning political trust in Russia by arguing that “political trust is often groundless, spontaneous and even irrational”.

In sum, afore mentioned notions on the cognitive limitations and people’s propensity for heuristic reasoning take issue with rational response approach. The possible impact of spontaneous or heuristic evaluations concerning the political and economic factors of my model cannot be completely ruled out. Accordingly, they may offer a possible alternative explanation for my model’s results.

6.2 Methodological limitations

Mishler and Rose (2001, 2005) hypothesize political trust to be performance oriented by nature in Russia (and in post-Soviet sphere in general). In short, well-performing institutions generate trust, and poorly performing institutions generate skepticism and distrust. While my “replicate measurement” does not contradict with their model, their conclusions make somewhat generalizing assumptions on human rationality, as already mentioned before. Another problem with their conclusion is that it does not consider how the surrounding society can affect opinion formation. Human is a “social animal”, and thus derives both emotional and physical comfort from the other members of the community and from the surrounding society: people feel themselves isolated and vulnerable without approval of their communities, and people gain access to otherwise inaccessible goods and services through participation in the social system (Kuran 1997, pp. 26–27). The early psychological experiments – such as the Asch (1963) experiment and the Milgram (1974) experiment on obedience to authority figures – have demonstrated the considerable power of group pressure on individual choice and fear of social criticism.

Fear of group criticism and social consequences for expressing generally unacceptable views are especially relevant concerns in present-day Russia, because regime has become increasingly repressive after Putin took office in the beginning of the 21th century, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Especially the annexation of the Crimean

peninsula in the spring 2014 marked an important turning point in the post-Soviet Russian history, because it provoked a major crisis in Russia-West relations, and quick repressive reaction in Russian domestic policy (Rogov, 2014).

Moreover, there are doubts that survey respondents might falsify their preferences. This concern is especially relevant in authoritarian countries, where freedom of speech and political rights are more limited than in democracies (Kuran, 1997; Rogov, 2017). T. Kuran (1997) employs the concept of *preference falsification* to describe the situation where people's expressed public preferences differ from their private preferences. According to Kuran, preference falsification aims at manipulating the perceptions of others about one's motivations or dispositions. It is a broader concept than mere "self-censorship", because unlike self-censorship, which silences one's potentially blameworthy thoughts, preference falsification goes beyond that by expressing deliberately projected contrived opinion. It also causes unease and discomfort to the falsifier. Preference falsification is a response to real or imagined social pressures attached to a particular preference. (ibid., pp. 4–5.)

Kuran (1997) argues that preference falsification contributed to the longevity of the Soviet Union, because Soviet citizens falsified their private preferences partly to gain material benefits, and partly for fear of punishment for expressing one's private preferences. This falsification of public preferences lead to reinforcement of the perception that society is at least publicly behind the establishment, which, in turn, raised the political threshold of protesting. Kuran also suggests that such political surprises as revolutions will occur more likely in the future in politically repressing countries than in established democracies, because doubts about the regime are expressed relatively freely in countries with strong democratic traditions. Countries with weak democratic traditions, in contrast, harshly limit our ability to track popular causes for complaint against the political regime. (ibid., pp. 345.)

Afore mentioned Kuran's (ibid.) observations raise the question about the possible preference falsification in my data. Could the recent ascent of Russian authoritarianism have led to a situation, where survey respondents increasingly engage in preference falsification, and thus distorted the data used in my model? In other words, does my data reflect the general and sincere attitudes of Russian citizens? Preference falsification causes a nibbling doubt that the survey data gets inflated in such authoritarian countries

as Russia, because respondents are not honest to pollsters. Even a small change of punishment, or perceived social or political repression may be sufficient to persuade survey respondents from expressing their true feelings about the establishment or politics in general in authoritarian regimes. (Frye et al., 2017, pp. 1–2; Rogov, 2017.) Accordingly, some scholars have argued that Russian pollsters and survey organizations are often seen as servants of the authoritarian regime, and thus survey respondents often give socially desirable responses in surveys (Belkovskij, 2016, pp. 28–29).

Answering the question about the possible preference falsification is not completely straightforward, and it is beyond the scope of the thesis to examine in detail whether or not this phenomenon exists in the data used in my analysis. Nonetheless, some considerations could be expressed here. First, there are persuasive arguments pointing out that self-censorship is relatively limited in Russian surveys. As T. Frye et al. (2017, p. 5) stress, security service and intelligence agency’s monitoring in today’s Russia is not as penetrating as it was in the Soviet era, and it is uncommon to observe cases where charges are brought against ordinary citizens for merely expressing oppositional views. The harsh repression for expressing public criticism of the establishment concerns mainly opposition elites and politicians, but usually not politically inactive average Russians. (ibid.) Frye et al. (2017) also tested the occurrence of preference falsification in V. Putin’s approval ratings in 2015 using list experiments⁵, and found no systematic bias in president’s favor.

Furthermore, if the data used in my model would be significantly biased in favor of the Kremlin’s political ideology, one could expect to observe systematic tendency towards approval of the Kremlin’s politics in the survey responds. Yet, Russians seem to give quite critical evaluations of Russian domestic politics. Table 8 shows the breakdown of evaluative the political and economic performance variables used in my model. It can be seen from the data in Table 8 that an overwhelming majority of the respondents are very skeptical and critical of the overall economic situation. Likewise, most of the Russians do not believe that the overall corruption has decreased. The issue of perceived freedoms polarizes public opinion the most in my data: fourth of the respondents perceive that

⁵ A list experiment is a questionnaire design technique used to mitigate respondent social desirability bias when eliciting information about sensitive topics (World Bank, 2019).

fundamental political rights exist in contemporary Russia, while almost as many disagrees with this statement, and half of the respondents take neutral position to this statement. The only statement with which majority of the respondents are more optimistic than pessimistic about is that future generations will have a better life than their generation.

Table 8: Public evaluations of political & economic situation in Russia

	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Current macro-economy (macro-economy has improved)	12	16	72
Perceived corruption (corruption has decreased)	13	21	66
Retrospective household (household lives better than before)	15	23	62
Current household economy (satisfaction with the household economy)	19	23	57
Perceived freedoms (basic political rights and freedoms exist in Russia)	26	50	25
Perceived influence (future generations will have a better life)	41	29	30

Source: LiTS III, EBRD 2016

Note: N varies from 1396 to 1480. See the appendix for the complete versions of question wordings.

On the other hand, survey data on freedom of speech in Russia suggests that there is a sizeable minority of Russians who feel that they cannot always speak freely about their opinions on the Kremlin's policymaking. In 2012–2017, on average 42% of Russians felt they face either some or serious limitations to their freedom of speech, and 18% thought that the majority of Russians lie when they speak about their relations and attitudes to establishment and president Putin (Levada-tsentr, 2018c, pp. 43–44). Thus, the change of preference falsification cannot be ruled out decisively.

Another methodological limitation in my model is about causality. Since I am utilizing cross-sectional data in my model, it is not possible to truly point out causal relationship between political trust and socio-demographic factors and subjective perceptions of political and economic performance. Establishing some causality between dependent variable (political trust) and independent variables (socialization, political performance and economic performance domains) would require the use of longitudinal data.

The final methodological limitation relates to the data collection method. The information drawn from the LiTS III is based on participant's subjective self-reports. The LiTS III does not employ registered data or governmental documents in order to get the most

accurate information about e.g. participant's household, age or personal income. On the other hand, while this limitation can affect the validity and reliability of some variables (e.g. educational level, age or income), most of the variables deal with such subjective measures as attitudes and values, and thus they could not even be drawn from the governmental registers or comparable documents. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that informality is widespread in Russian society (see e.g. Ledeneva, 2006). Rosstat (Russia's Federal Service for State Statistics), for instance, estimated that in 2018 approximately 20% of the Russian workforce was employed informally (RBK, 2019). Extensive informal sector, in turn, naturally questions the reliability and validity of register-based data, since large amount of information is hidden in informal sector and networks. Thus, although registered data or governmental documents could in theory offer more reliable data, there are also notable practical limitations related to this kind of data in the case of Russia.

7 Conclusions

As discussed in the introduction chapter of the thesis, the aim of this thesis was to examine whether or not Mishler and Rose's (2001, 2005) argument about the performance oriented nature of political trust applies in contemporary Russia. I have considered how socio-demographic background, and subjective perceptions of political and economic situation affect political trust and interpersonal trust. This was done by utilizing analytical model of Mishler and Rose (2001), and by situating the concept of trust in the context of modern Russia. In this final chapter, I will discuss the results of that inquiry by answering the research questions introduced in the beginning of the thesis. Finally, I will present some thoughts on further research work on the subject.

7.1 Answering the research questions

The main research question of the thesis was whether Mishler and Rose's (2001) hypothesis about political trust as a response to institutional performance holds up in today's Russia. This hypothesis was tested by adopting the analytical model of Mishler and Rose, and by using more recent survey data. A model consisting of altogether eight regression analyses was applied in order to gain better understanding of which subjective social background factors and political and economic performance perceptions have the strongest correlations with political trust in Russia.

Regression analyses revealed that the factors associated significantly with higher political trust were: religious group, perceived democratic freedoms, macro-economic situation, household economy and income percentile. Political performance perceptions domain was clearly the strongest predictor of political trust in the thesis' model with the total adjusted correlation coefficient of 28.5%. Economic perceptions domain explained 19.3% and socio-demographic domain 1.2% of the total variance of political trust in Russia, when all the domains and independent variables were controlled. Interpersonal trust was used as a reference category to examine the explanatory power of institutional and cultural theories. Economic performance perceptions domain was the strongest predictor of interpersonal with the total adjusted correlation coefficient of 9.2%, and political performance and socio-demographic factors, respectively, explained 7.1% and 0.6% of the total variance of interpersonal trust. Figure 5 provides the main results of the thesis' model.

Sources of political and interpersonal trust in Russia

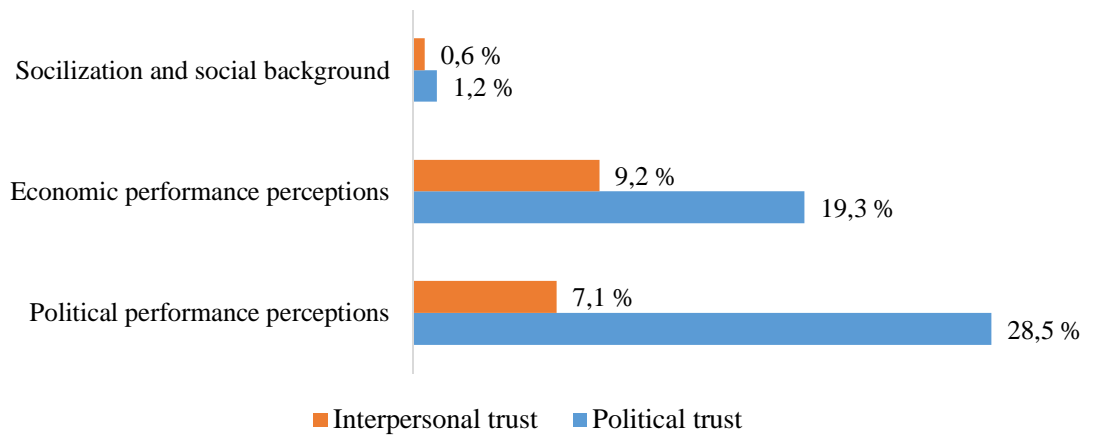


Figure 5: Relationship between the thesis' model domains and trust

Overall, this study strengthens the idea that political and economic performance perceptions have far more significant importance on political trust than the socialization and social background factors. However, Mishler and Rose's rational response approach to political trust sits uneasily alongside the observation that many political rights decreased and economic situation worsened in Russia during the surveying period of the LiTS III. As discussed in the previous chapter of the thesis, the correlations between more positive evaluations of political and economic performance and higher levels of political trust in Russia may also reflect impressions and heuristics related to political trust, instead of rational evaluative responses to political performance of the analyzed institutions. In short, political trust seems to represent responses to political and economic performance, but the *accuracy* and *rationality* of these individual evaluations is questionable in the light of more objective data and recent research on Russian society. This, in turn, gives cautious support to the notion that the average citizen does not know much about politics (see e.g. Sniderman et al. 1991, pp. 18–19).

The first sub-question, in turn, was about the commensurability of survey questions about political trust in Russia and in democratic countries. Although it is hard – if not impossible – to give a conclusive answer to this question, I problematized this question in the conceptualization chapter by considering some linguistic, cultural and sociological

understandings of Russian trust. This brief review of the subject suggests that it is reasonable to assume that survey questions about political trust measure more or less the same thing in Russia as in established democracies. As mentioned in the conceptualization chapter, the linguistic definitions of the Russian word for trust (*doveriye*) do not support the hypothesis on highly distinctive understandings of political trust.

Moreover, political trust seems to reflect evaluative position toward the authorities even if one examines the question from the sociological perspective. Albeit Russians trust mainly abstract, personalized and undemocratic institutions – such as military forces, president and Russian Orthodox Church – it seems to be shooting rather wide off the mark to claim the composition of political trust to be very stable and unreactive in Russia, as some sociologists maintain (see e.g. Gudkov 2012). For example, the longitudinal polling data indicates that political trust has fluctuated significantly over the past few decades, and even those polling agencies with close ties with the Kremlin have reported on this. Figure 6 presents VTsIOM’s (2019a) data on V. Putin’s trust ratings in 2007–2018.

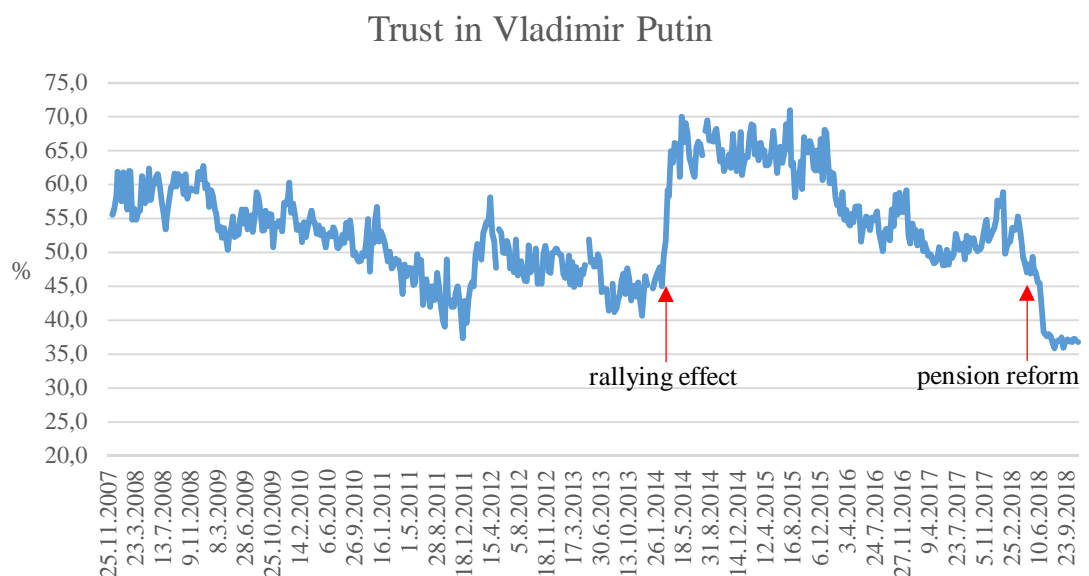


Figure 6: Fluctuation in V. Putin’s trust ratings in 2007–2018

Such ratings are especially illustrative, since there are grounds to doubt that they are especially susceptible to social desirability bias or preference falsification (see e.g. Frye et al., 2017; Rogov, 2017). As one can see from the figure, even trust in Putin has

fluctuated significantly in accordance with the political events in Russia. For instance, the annexation of the Crimean peninsula caused a vigorous rally-around-the-flag effect in 2014, but Putin's trust ratings started to decline again after 2015. In 2018, trust in Putin declined dramatically from almost 60% to 35% after Prime Minister D. Medvedev introduced the extremely unpopular pension reform, which Putin also supported (RBK, 2018).

Thus, although political trust in Russia seems to have some features of stable and solid "totalitarian trust" described by Gudkov (2012), it seems that the dynamics of political trust may change rapidly if certain political thresholds are crossed. Therefore, the fluctuation of the Russian political trust indicates that it presents evaluative political attitudes toward institutions, but the level of rationality of these evaluations is unclear and questionable. Thus, the "do verjaj, no proverjaj" (trust but verify) –hypothesis, which was introduced in the beginning of the thesis, cannot be confirmed. Nevertheless, the results from the statistical models and other observations discussed in the thesis suggest that political trust is a viable concept to be used in analyzing public support for political institutions and societal attitudes in general in Russia.

The second sub-question was about the usability of general grand theories of trust in analyzing political trust in Russia. In the USSR, the development of sociological surveys lagged behind the West for the reasons discussed briefly in the conceptualization chapter. The authoritarian polling environment skewed public opinion statistics in the ruling power's favor and engaged Soviet citizens in preference falsification (Kuran, 1997). Consequently, many seminal studies on trust were developed in democratic countries, where societal barriers for social sciences and conducting sociological surveys were lower. However, many classic theories on trust start from the premise that the analyzed society is democratic (e.g. Hetherington, 1998; Putnam, 1993). If such theories are applied without situating them to different cultural settings, the meaningfulness of the results of these kind of studies might become questionable. To give an example, it would be bizarre to test Putnam's (1993) hypothesis about the relationship between social capital and civil society as it is in the Russian context, because the organizations of civil society have very different meaning and significance in Italy, where Putnam conducted his own

research. In other words, it is important to acknowledge the contextual differences when such grand theories are applied to different societal contexts.

In a certain way, the strength of Mishler and Rose's (2001) analytical model lies in its simplicity and generality, because their model does not make very strong assumptions about the possible correlates of political trust. Yet, one of the challenges in interpreting the results is the possibility of different understandings of democracy and economic priorities between Russians and citizens of the established democratic market economies. In recent years, the official Russia has been increasingly stressing the idea that Russian values differ fundamentally from Western, and thus the political and economic ideals of the democratic countries are alien to Russian "character" or "mentality" (Grigori Yudin, 2018). This line of thinking is advocated especially by some influential persons close to the Kremlin and by some classic Russian novelists, such as F. Dostoevskij (Williams, 1970). V. Surkov (2019), for instance, writes:

*"There is a deep nation (in Russia). [...] The deep nation is always as cagey as can be, **unreachable for sociological surveys**, agitation, threats or any other form of direct influence. [...] The multilayered political institutions which Russia has adopted from the West are sometimes seen as partly ritualistic and established for the sake of looking 'like everyone else', so that **the peculiarities of our political culture** wouldn't draw too much attention from our neighbors, irritate or frighten them. They are like a Sunday suit, put on when visiting others, while at home we dress as we do at home. [...] In essence, **society only trusts the head of state**. Whether this has something to do with the pride of an unconquered people, or the desire to directly access the truth, or anything else, is hard to say, but it is a fact, and it is not a new fact. [...] **The contemporary model of the Russian state starts with trust and relies on trust**. This is its main distinction from the Western model, which cultivates mistrust and criticism. And this is the source of its power."*
(emphases added)

Nevertheless, although Russia's societal system differs from the systems of the established Western democracies, it has many features that are typical of countries at a similar level of economic development. As A. Shleifer and D. Treisman (2004, pp. 21–22) present, Russia's socio-economic profile is close to an average "normal country" in a global scale. Typical characteristics of such "normal country" include, inter alia, corrupted government, politicized judiciaries, unfree press, high income inequality, concentrated corporate ownership, and turbulent macro-economic performance. Shleifer and Treisman (ibid.) present that generally speaking the only features that differ Russia

from the rest of its peer countries are Russia's nuclear arms, and its pivotal role in international affairs.

To a certain extent, Shleifer and Treisman's (ibid.) "normal country" logic seems to apply also to political trust. As mentioned in the very beginning of the thesis, political trust is much lower in Eastern and Southern Europe than in Northern Europe, and at the same, Northern European countries dominate many other welfare and development rankings too. Furthermore, extremely high figures of political trust in country's leader or government are not atypical for authoritarian countries. Like K. Rogov (2017, p. 4) reminds, the rulers of such countries as Azerbaijan, China and Vietnam enjoy similar or even higher approval ratings than Putin.

Moreover, the closer investigation into public opinion data on Russian values and attitudes does not give firm grounds for "Surkovian" approach; as illustrated in the previous chapter, a vast majority of Russians considers democratic institutions and freedoms important for their country. According to these data, we can infer that although political trust may have some distinctive features in Russia, generally speaking trust seems to be a feeling that all human beings share, and Russians make no exception here. This observation gives cautious support for the use of general grand theories of trust; one simply needs to acknowledge the plausible limitations of the used data, as always when doing research.

7.2 Thoughts about future research

It is obvious that this thesis has merely scratched the surface of the phenomenon of political trust in Russia. There are still many unanswered questions about the mechanisms of Russian political trust. The most important limitation lies in the fact that the analytical model of the thesis utilized cross-sectional data, and hence it is not possible to truly prove the causality between dependent variable (political trust) and independent variables (socio-demographic background, and political and economic performance perceptions). Thus, one natural progression to this work is to analyze the phenomenon using longitudinal data.

The present thesis also set out to examine the possible distinctiveness of Russian political trust, which was done by contextualizing and situating the concept. The insights gained from this contextualization may be of assistance to contribute the debate on whether trust

is mainly universal or cultural/context dependent concept (see e.g. Levada, 2004; Watier & Marková, 2004). As mentioned earlier, linguistic definitions of the Russian word for trust and the data on fluctuation of political trust in Russia do not support the idea of fundamental differences in understandings of trust between Russia and democratic societies. Taken together, these observations suggest that one can assume the survey questions on political trust in Russia to measure tolerably well the subject matter without systematic biases.

Moreover, analyses done with other data from different societies would be important to gain a better understanding of how universal the factors affecting political trust are. Accordingly, since the possible differences in societal values between democratic and authoritarian countries have been discussed in this thesis, the question raises if the authoritarian attitudes could explain political trust in such non-democratic countries as Russia. The thesis' model presents that the perceived democratic rights and freedoms correlate with higher levels of political trust, but tells nothing about the correlation between authoritarian attitudes and political trust. At least the ESS and WVS include items dealing with authoritarian attitudes, so there are already existing data on the subject. At the same time, this research on the relationship between authoritarian attitudes and political trust would not have to be limited only to Russia. For instance, other former Soviet countries could establish an interesting comparative research setting for studying the phenomenon.

Studying heuristics related to Russian political trust could form another interesting line for future research. As presented in the limitations chapter of the thesis, human's cognitive limitations are somewhat well-documented, and thus it would be interesting to examine what kind heuristics are related to political trust in Russia, and how these heuristics develop.

Albeit the present thesis has not gave an exhaustive answer to the question of the origins Russian political trust, it is hoped that it has brought some new ideas and insights in analyzing the problem of political trust in the Russian context. Since all kind of regimes are to some extent dependent on political support, political trust will be a crucial factor in keeping both democratic and authoritarian societies together in the future too. Therefore, more comprehensive understanding of political trust will be needed, and this understanding may be gained only by doing further research on the subject.

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Appendices

Coding of the LiTS III variables used

Variable	Variable in the LiTS III	Question wording	Scale
Trust in political institutions	4.04 a–g (mean score of trust in seven institutions)	<i>“To what extent do you trust the following institutions?”</i> parliament / regional government / local government / political parties / government / courts / the Presidency	1 Complete distrust – 5 Complete trust
Trust in people	4.05 c	<i>“To what extent do you trust people you meet for the first time?”</i>	1 Complete distrust – 5 Complete trust
Education level	1.09	<i>“What is the highest education level that you (primary respondent) have completed?”</i>	0 = Non-tertiary education or lower (60.5%) – 1 = Tertiary education or higher (39.5%)
Age	1.05	Age in years according to the last birthday.	min 18, max 93, mean 46
Gender	1.03	<i>“Is primary respondent male or female?”</i>	0 = male (45.2%) 1 = female (54.8%)
Urbanity status	Contact sheet	–	0 = Rural (24.9%) – 1 = Urban (75.1%)
Religion	9.22	<i>“What is your religion?”</i>	0 = Other (14.2%) – 1 = Orthodox Christian (84.3%)
News consumption	9.04 b	<i>“People use different sources to learn what is going on in their country and the world. For each of the following sources, please indicate how you use it:”</i> news broadcasts on radio or TV	1 Never – 7 Daily.
Perceived corruption	4.01 i	<i>“There is less corruption than around 4 years ago.”</i>	1 Strongly disagree – 5 Strongly agree.

Perceived freedoms	4.15 a–h (mean score of individual perceptions of existing freedoms and rights in Russia)	<p><i>“To what extent do you agree that the following exist in Russia?”</i></p> <p>free and fair elections / law and order / freedom of speech / peace and stability / a press that is independent from government / a strong political opposition / a courts system that treats all citizens equally / equal rights for women as citizens’</p>	1 Strongly disagree – 5 Strongly agree.
Perceived influence	4.01 f	<i>“Children who are born now will have a better life than my generation.”</i>	1 Strongly disagree – 5 Strongly agree.
Current macro-economic evaluation	4.01 g	<i>“On the whole, I am satisfied with the present state of the economy.”</i>	1 Strongly disagree – 5 Strongly agree.
Current household economy	4.01 k	<i>“All things considered, I am satisfied with my financial situation as a whole.”</i>	1 Strongly disagree – 5 Strongly agree.
Retrospective household economy	4.01 d	<i>“My household lives better than around 4 years ago.”</i>	1 Strongly disagree – 5 Strongly agree.
Income percentile	3.15	<p><i>“Please imagine a ten-step ladder where on the bottom, the first step, stand the poorest 10% people in our country, and the highest step, the tenth, stand the richest 10% in our country. On which step of the ten is your household today?”</i></p>	1 – 10