

Trust and Heterogeneity in Putin's Russia – Testing the “New Middle Class”-Hypothesis

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to our knowledge about the social backgrounds of the new Russian protest movements, which emerged somewhat unexpectedly after the 2011 Duma elections. The hypothesis of an emerging “new middle class” of critical citizens with high democratic standards as a main social force behind the movements receives particular attention. It is argued that political trust reflects fundamental attitudes towards the authorities, hence it is used as a dependent variable. This quantitative study is primarily based on a statistical analysis of a large N dataset from the European Social Survey’s representative sample of Russian citizens, collected in early 2011. It finds that there is good reason to be sceptical about the “new middle class”-hypothesis, as there is only very weak and patchy empirical evidence for its existence. This thesis suggests that Russian society is still overwhelmed with people whose primary desire is high performance. Even though a latent class of people with no relationship between political trust and satisfaction with economy is identified, they are not the members of the anti-Putin opposition, quite the contrary they are a group of people generally inclined to support the incumbent government. These findings have important implications for contemporary Russian politics, both for the authorities and the opposition.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 – Theoretical Overview of Trust	5
1.1 The Concepts and Forms of Trust	5
1.2 Determinants of Trust	8
1.3 Trust in Russia	10
1.4 The importance of heterogeneity	13
Chapter 2 – An Exploratory Analysis of Trust	22
2.1 Conceptualization and Operationalization of Trust	22
2.2 Data	23
2.3 Levels of Trust in a Comparative Perspective	24
2.4 Exploratory Factor Analysis	30
Chapter 3 – Explaining Trust and Heterogeneity in Russia	38
3.1 Analysis of Variance in the Level of Trust	39
3.2 Determinants of Trust in Russia	43
3.2.1 Testing the Hypotheses of Trust’s Determinants	44
3.2.2 Scrutinizing Heterogeneity in Russian Society	49
Conclusions	56
Bibliography	61

Introduction

Recent events in Russian politics may have caused considerable confusion for most casual Russia-watchers. At the State Duma elections in December, 2011 the Kremlin's United Russia (UR) party gained 49.32 *per cent* of the vote – an enviable result by all Western standards, but a considerable decline of support if contrasted with the result four years earlier when the UR won 64.3 *per cent*. Meanwhile, a new opposition was forming, and the largest demonstrations since the dissolution of the USSR were held. Tens of thousands of people marched on the streets of Moscow protesting against the electoral frauds and Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency. Previously marginal and marginalized opposition politicians gave speeches in front of the crowds. The demonstrations were also reported in national public television. Critics of Putin celebrated the awakening of Russia's middle class and applauded the end of political apathy at least among the young and highly educated new generation (Clover 2011). Opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, urged 1 million people to gather on the streets of Moscow and predicted the close fall of Putin's regime (Tsvetkova 2011).

Yet, the scope of the new, anti-regime movements was limited both in terms of space, as there were few significant demonstrations outside Moscow, and the social background of the protesters, as they were largely from the middle class. In early march, the leader of Russia, Putin, was re-elected to the presidency with more than 60 *per cent* of the popular vote and mass protests ended almost as abruptly as they started four months before.

The main goal of my thesis is to contribute to a deeper understanding of recent events in Russian politics. I will *not* address, however, the organizational and collective action problems of protests or opposition movements, but scrutinize the Russian public opinion to see whether recent events signify substantial cleavages in the public's perception of the authorities.

There is an uneasy relationship between state and society in Russia. Russian citizens, in line with international trends (Diamond 2002; Huntington 1991), see no legitimate alternative to a democratic political system (Rose 2009). On the other hand, despite the fact that the Russian political regime fails to meet standards of democracy and is widely regarded to be a non-democratic system, there was considerable popular support both for the regime in general and its leader, Vladimir Putin (Rose, Mishler, and Munro 2011).

The current research is devoted to increase our understanding of this relationship by scrutinizing Russian citizens' attitudes towards the authorities and the regime. More specifically, people's trust in political institutions forms the core of inquiry. Trust is defined as a particular level of subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents, including social institutions will act for the benefit of the agent or will not act against the agent's interest. I believe analysing trust has a number of advantages against alternative dependent variables like support for the regime or leaders' popularity indices. Firstly, political trust reflects more profound relations than mere support (Easton 1965; 1975). While support can be highly volatile, changes in trust reflect more substantial transformations. Secondly, there is more detailed information available on trust than support, as questions on trust in different political institutions are regularly included in surveys, thus, a broader scope of attitudes can be scrutinized. Thirdly, while there is a significant amount of scientific work on political trust this question was not addressed adequately in the Russian case. My thesis hence can contribute to our understandings of trust mechanisms in Russia as well.

The main research question is therefore the following: who trusts which institution and why in contemporary Russia? This is a fairly broad topic, but it allows posing a number of more concrete questions: what tends to determinate why certain people believe that the institutions are trustworthy while others do not? Are there any geographic or generational cleavages among Russians regarding this question? Answering these questions should

contribute to our knowledge both on contemporary Russian politics and on relevant theoretical problems about state-society relations in non-democratic contexts.

Recent events might lead to expectations about significant changes in the attitudes of at least some groups of Russian society. Several commentaries on the protests focused on an interpretation highlighting the emergence of a highly critical “new middle class” in Russia, which has higher standards than the rest of society (Clover 2011; Makarkin 2011). In fact, in an article implicitly reacting to the protests, Putin (2012) himself stated that the development of a middle class, which is not concerned exclusively with its own well-being is an important achievement of his political activity. There are good theoretical reasons underpinning the “new middle class”-hypothesis, which I thoroughly scrutinize in my thesis. The primary source of information for my thesis is public opinion data from the 5th round of the European Social Survey collected in early 2011. Thus, my analysis has a large N, quantitative approach and I am applying a wide range of statistical methods.

I find that contrary to these expectations, there is little empirical evidence for the “new middle class”-hypothesis. Members of this class – highly educated, young city-dwellers – are not significantly more critical of the regime and tend to appreciate economic performance just as highly as the rest of society does. I argue that if there is a class whose trust does not depend on their evaluation of the economy, it is a class of unconditional supporters of the regime.

These findings offer important contributions at least on two grounds. First, it has important implications for Russian politics highlighting the importance of finding a social base for the newly emerged opposition movements, as the “new middle class” might not be supportive in its current form. Second, it provides some interesting and new findings by inspecting the heterogeneity in society, thus emphasising the importance of addressing questions about differences in public opinion on a subnational level.

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 1 provides a theoretical basis for the analysis. It reviews existing literature on trust and its determinants in general as well as provides a deeper understanding of the recent events in Russia and the “new middle class”-hypothesis. I conduct an exploratory analysis in Chapter 2. Firstly, I scrutinize Russian trust levels from a comparative perspective, and then I provide a factor analysis to get a better understanding of Russians general attitudes towards political institutions. Chapter 3 contains the most important part of the analysis, where the main research questions are addressed. I analyse the variance of trust levels and its determinants separately with a special focus on heterogeneity in the sample. In the last part of the thesis, some concluding remarks will be drawn and the main implications of the thesis outlined.

Chapter 1 – Theoretical Overview of Trust

Trust is a crucial concept that plays an important role in such a wide array of disciplines as politics, sociology, economics and psychology, and various aspects of trust has been extensively discussed in the literature. This literature review is thus fundamental for a number of reasons. As trust is a contested concept even within political science conceptualized in crucially different ways, it is essential to have a firm understanding of these theories for being able to specify which conceptualization is most appropriate for the present research. First, the competing definitions and theoretical forms of trust are considered. If there are many conceptualizations of trust, there are even more factors argued to have an impact on it. It is important to have a systematized understanding of these factors to avoid severe violations of parsimony. These theories are considered secondly. Finally, works on trust in Russia and the post-Communist region are encountered to exploit existing knowledge on the subject and to avoid the unintentional replication of previous findings.

1.1 The Concepts and Forms of Trust

Scholars differ so fundamentally in their accounts of trust that it is challenging to highlight any common traits in their understanding of the concept. Most – though not all – theorists agree that trust is “relational” in a sense that the problem of trust arises upon interaction with another “individual, group or institution” (Levi and Stoker 2000, 475). Trust is awakened by the uncertainty of others actions, as there would be no need to trust if we were aware of future events (Uslaner 2002). Accordingly, trust involves certain risks and those who trust “are willing to forgo an immediate accounting of how or even whether the one trusted has responded” (Jones 1998, 466).

Yet it is impossible to go any further without distinguishing between various schools of thoughts. In my understanding, there are basically two branches within political science according to the question what forms of trust exist, or in other words, what this belief of trust

is based on. One account conceptualizes trust as a “strategic” (Fisher, van Heerde, and Tucker 2010, 163), “rational and particularised” decision (Nannestad 2008, 415) or a “risk assessment” (Jones 1998, 467). In this view trust is often formalised like the belief of A that B will do X – an action that is in A’s interest (Cleary and Stokes 2009). Trust is thus viewed as “encapsulated interest” (Hardin 2001, 26) and based on a particular situation with a specified subject and object of trust. This account rightly emphasises that there are important differences in our beliefs of the trustworthiness of other people and while we readily trust our favourite chef to cook our lunch and our broker to deal with our money, we would be hesitant to do so *vice versa*. The other account of trust is called “generalised and norm-driven” (Nannestad 2008, 414), “moral” (Fisher, van Heerde, and Tucker 2010, 165), “moralistic” (Uslaner 2002, 14 ff) or the goodwill account (Jones 1998, 467). It argues that particularised trust has a rather limited explanatory power, as in most situations we simply lack sufficient information to make such decisions, and would waste unreasonably large amounts of resources, had we still try to gain that knowledge. This form of trust is thus mostly independent from our expectations or experiences, and expresses our views on human nature. Trust is “the belief that others share your fundamental moral values and therefore should be treated as you would wish to be treated by them” (Uslaner 2002, 18).

It is appealing, *prima facie* to argue that the different accounts are dependent on the subject of trust, *i.e.* who is trusted. This, however, fails to resolve the conflicts between the two schools. In some extreme situations it might be more or less accepted that there is a rational or norm-driven decision, in a wide array of situations which are of particular importance for social sciences, theories conflict. The first account states that trust is essentially particularised and depends on risk assessment even if it concerns strangers or institutions of which we know little. Similarly, the second account suggests that trust is essentially moralistic even if considerable information is present.

Even if the particularistic account is only partially right, it is already a good reason to consider trust in different institutions separately. This is a frequently stated recommendation for further research. There is considerable evidence that one trust judgement might not fit all (Fisher, van Heerde, and Tucker 2010), and that “trust is seldom unconditional; it is given to specific individuals or institutions over specific domains” (Levi and Stoker 2000, 476). Miller et al (2004) even challenge the Eastonian argument of diffuse support as they argue that trusts in different institutions are so distinct from each other that trust remains specific and is never diffuse. Yet most works on trust do not go beyond the usual distinction between institutional and interpersonal – *i.e.* between political and social (or generalized) (Nannestad 2008) or vertical and horizontal (Offe 2001) – trusts and fail to address the problem of potential differences between various institutions and frequently rely on a single trust in government variable or a general trust-index. It has to be noted that there are arguments for applying only a single trust-index, as covariation between institutional trust variables is high in certain cases (Hooghe 2011). This latter approach however, is more data driven and theoretically less sophisticated than the former. This contradiction between empirics and theory will be addressed below.

1.2 Determinants of Trust

Questions on trust in the government were included in the National Election Studies-surveys in the early 1960s, and remained a highly popular subject of empirical studies of political scientists since then (on this and a good overview of survey research on trust Cf. Levi and Stoker 2000, 476ff). The two schools of trust described above provide a useful tool to group determinants of trust. First, I describe what the moralistic account of trust see to have influence on trust and then discuss the common hypotheses within the strategic account. I devote attention to social capital theories, which I see as a borderline case between moralistic and strategic accounts. I finish this part of the chapter with a potential for compromise between these two accounts.

As the moralistic account states that personal experiences have little influence on beliefs in trust, in this view it is largely cultural factors and values that shape trust. Arguably, there are certain values conducive to institutional trust, which are deeply ingrained in society and transmitted within social institutions, such as families and the educational system (Almond and Verba 1963). These are values like optimism, egalitarianism and certain religious beliefs (Uslaner 2002). It is possible to operationalise these values on a macro level – accordingly people with different national culture differ in their trust evaluations – and on a micro level as well, *i.e.* personal socialization and individual values play an important role (Mishler and Rose 2001). These hypotheses are appealing as they offer a parsimonious account of trust, yet they are argued to be effective more in explaining long-term trends and it has limited power in explaining trust within a single country.

The rationality account was more productive in generating hypotheses on the determinants of trust. It is suggested that institutional performance matters, and not surprisingly institutions that perform better are trusted more as well (A. H. Miller and Listhaug 1999). Somewhat similarly ideological proximity and political performance are

argued to have an influence as well. “Citizens want certain political outcomes and are more confident in a government which is delivering the policies they want” (Kotzian 2011, 27). Within these categories there are several sub-fields highlighting various aspects of political and institutional performance. In fact, almost any hypothesis of the voting behaviour literature from policy salience through valence issues till the use of heuristics can be applied to trust as well. A particularly interesting problem is the issue whether trust reflects more attitudes towards the incumbent government (Citrin and Green 1986) or rather general evaluative sentiments towards the political system (Easton 1965; Hetherington 1998). There is considerable empirical evidence that the institutional and political performance accounts can explain a substantial part of the variance of trust, yet some indicators are partly tautological and it is a common mistake to include too many explanatory variables and hence fail by the requirement of parsimony.

The social capital theories lay on the borderline of the moralistic and rational accounts of trust belonging to one or the other depending on what causal mechanism is presented. The general idea is that civic engagement such as participation in voluntary associations contributes to higher interpersonal trust (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993) that in turn might spill over to trust in political institutions as well (Fukuyama 1996). Social capital theories of trust have been occupying a prominent role in the literature, however empirical evidence on the beneficial effects of participation, as well as on the spillover of trust are at best mixed as there are mostly “weak and patchy associations between social and political trust” (Newton 2001, 202).

Social capital theory thus largely fails to combine the strengths of the moralistic and rational accounts of trust. Kotzian (2011), however provides an appealing conceptualisation of trust. In his understanding, trust has two components. On the one hand, it reflects “confidence in the institution’s competence and performance” (28); on the other hand, it refers to trust in

the institution's "honesty and moral integrity" (ibid.). Trust in turn, however, requires both trustworthiness of the institution *and* the willingness of the citizen to trust. While both the confidence component and the institutional trustworthiness belong to the rationality account, making this conditional on the willingness to trust embed the moralistic account to the theory as well. Naturally, even if most scholars are not so ambitious to incorporate both accounts to their conceptualization of trust including independent variables for both types of hypotheses is widespread.

1.3 Trust in Russia

For obvious reasons, research on trust in Russia could not evolve prior to the fall of the Soviet Union, furthermore, it received less attention than the topic's normative and empirical importance would suggest. In the past more than two decades there was only a handful of studies written on trust in Russia the post-Communist states. Professor Richard Rose and his colleges were among the earliest and most prominent researchers of post-communist trust, as they could rely on the unique source of data from the New Russia and New Europe Barometers. Rose wrote his first published paper on trust in the early 1990s and discussed the negative effects of communist legacy, describing the repressive (as opposed representative) role of social institutions during the communist rule (Rose 1994).

Yet, post-Communist countries did not unilaterally fall into a vicious cycle as subsequent analysis revealed that considerable differences in trust developed between post-communist countries. In 2001, Rose and Mishler found that it is the individual level evaluations of the institutional performance that explain most variation in political trust (Mishler and Rose 2001) and this finding appeared to be robust as it was replicated almost ten years later (Rose and Mishler 2010), although in the latter study other factors like objective institutional performance indicators and socialization appeared significant as well, possibly due to the increase in the number of observations. Somewhat similarly, the finding that

interpersonal trust do not have a significant effect on institutional trust (Mishler and Rose 2001) was *not* countered in subsequent research (Mishler and Rose 2005), although the claim that “interpersonal trust appears almost wholly exogenous to the political process... [its] origins lie outside the scope of politics” (Mishler and Rose 2001, 54–55) was refuted later, as in 2005 the authors conclude that institutional trust is a strong predictor of interpersonal trust (Mishler and Rose 2005). In short, while Rose and Mishler provide valuable insight into political and interpersonal trust in the post-Communist region, their empirical findings are mixed. Moreover, the problem of heterogeneity in the sample was not adequately addressed in these studies.

There is also confusion about the dimensionality of trust, as Mishler and Rose use a trust-index as a dependent variable, however, there is some empirical evidence that there are considerable differences between institutional trust factors in Moscow (Stickley et al. 2009) and the post-Communist region (W. L. Miller, Koshechkina, and Grodeland 2004). Yet, both these researches base their arguments on now outdated data from Putin’s first presidency and none of them is based on a representative national sample.

There remains considerable confusion about the relation of interpersonal and institutional trust in Russia as well. In contrast with findings based on the New Russia Barometer, other studies provide contrary evidence, claiming that generalized interpersonal trust do increase institutional trust (see Stickley et al. 2009). Another theory states that even though generalised interpersonal trust has little influence on political attitudes, strong ties *i.e.* personal relationships do play a substantial role in delivering support for democratic institutions through politicised social networks (Gibson 2001). This stands in sharp contrast with the argument that “personal networks undermine formal institutions and thus damage impersonal systems of trust” (Ledeneva 2004, 85–86).

The remaining studies on trust in the Russian or post-Communist context fail to resolve these issues. Bahry et al (2005) provide useful insights but focus on a specific problem of trust relations between and within different ethnicities. Levada (2004) monitors representative national surveys but largely sticks to descriptive statistics and do not address problems of causal relations. Finally, both Radaev (2003) and the two edited volumes of Kornai et al. (Kornai, Rothstein, and Rose-Ackerman 2004; Kornai and Rose-Ackerman 2004) address primarily institutional design rather than public opinion.

Thus, in conclusion, while the merits of these works should not be underestimated as they provide a good starting point for the current research, there are a number of limitations that justify further scientific inquiry on this topic. First, there are data concerns, as most studies are outdated and cannot reflect on such recent changes in Russia like the effects of the global economic crisis or Medvedev's presidency. Moreover, there are surprisingly few studies based on national representative samples, focusing particularly on Russia. Most studies have either a too wide (comparative, post-Communist samples), or a too narrow (sub-national surveys) scope. As a consequence of the latter fact, many studies fail to address certain important, country-specific issues. Geographical cleavages for instance are argued to be of crucial importance for the understanding of recent events in Russian politics (Zubarevich 2012). Similarly, generational differences might be also highly substantial factors (J. W. Hahn and Logvinenko 2008), especially as the share of young, post-soviet generation is increasing in the society, and the role of the old (and aging) generations is decreasing with time. Finally, many studies measure institutional trust by a general trust-index yet, even though researchers were encouraged to go beyond the government and the general institutions and analyse trust in individual institutions (Fisher, van Heerde, and Tucker 2010; Levi and Stoker 2000, 495; W. L. Miller, Koshechkina, and Grodeland 2004). the question of dimensionality of trust received little attention.

1.4 The importance of heterogeneity

To understand recent events in Russia better, there is a need to revisit and shortly discuss the history of Russian politics since the last months of Putin's second term in 2008. Despite his great popularity and a considerable social movement urging him to take a third term in the presidential chair, Putin made it clear that he was not willing to change or go against the constitution prohibiting any person from being president of the Russian Federation for three consecutive terms. The question thus became who would the powerful Putin support as a presidential candidate, guaranteeing him (or her – a highly unlikely possibility in the Russian context) office. For a long time, there were two potential candidates, Sergey Ivanov – an old friend of Putin from the KGB – and Dmitry Medvedev – another old friend, but without any known background in the security services. Ivanov was perceived to be the “hardliner”, while Medvedev the “liberal” and Putin's decision was interpreted as a decision about the way the country would go in the next years. After a considerable period of uncertainty and some serious clashes between informal factions in the Russian political elite, Putin announced Medvedev's candidacy to the presidency in December, 2007 (Kremlin.ru 2007; For an excellent analysis of the “Managed Succession” Cf. Sakwa 2011, 160–183).

The importance of informal relations in Russian politics is well known (Bremmer and Charap 2006; Meyer 2006; Sakwa 2011), but extremely hard to scrutinize as an outsider. Accordingly, the relationship between the new president Medvedev, and Putin occupying the office of Prime Minister remained a frequently discussed issue, despite the clear formal hierarchy between these two positions. There have been two dominant narratives about Medvedev's real role in the decision making process. The first narrative suggested that Medvedev was Putin's “puppet”, whose only role is to “keep the President's chair warm” until Putin's return as a president (Neef and Schepp 2011). These views emphasised Putin's pivotal role in developing and maintaining the *status quo* between informal elite factions, key

political figures' (including Medvedev's) personal loyalty to Putin and Medvedev's lack of a personal power basis. This narrative suggested that Medvedev's role was symbolical and all the important decisions were made by Putin in the background.

As Medvedev's years in the presidency proceeded however, a second narrative gained more influence arguing against the claim of Medvedev's complete subordination of Putin. Somewhat surprisingly, this narrative suggested that Putin and Medvedev's repeated statements about their close cooperation and deliberative decision making process might reflect the reality relatively well. Many scholars highlighted the decreasing role (G. M. Hahn 2008; 2011) and share (Polunin 2011) of the *siloviki* faction and the parallel emergence of more liberal informal elite groups closely associated with Medvedev, which offered the potential of a more independent power base to the president (Sakwa 2011).

There are also signs that Medvedev's subordination to Putin was not as evident to the Russian public opinion as it was to some spectators. By the second half of Medvedev's term surveys revealed that a plurality of Russians believed that Medvedev and Putin ruled the country together and although the second most popular answer indicated Putin's dominance, it did not substantively outnumber those who believed Medvedev was in control. Similarly, a year before the elections, the share of people expecting Putin's return to the presidency and foreseeing Medvedev's second term was within the margin of error¹ (Russia Votes 2012), and Medvedev's popularity index was a few points above Putin's. These facts allowed some careful, but theoretically well-established speculations about the possibility of Medvedev's second term. Yet, the real events contradicted these expectations.

While it seemed reasonable to expect that the events of 2007 would be repeated, prolonging the announcement of the presidential candidate as long as possible, maintaining

¹ To the question, "what do you think Medvedev will be doing after the presidential elections of 2012, 33 per cent of the people argued that he would remain president, while 36 per cent of the people believed in Putin's return to the presidency in an answer to a similar question.

the stability of the regime paradoxically by inducing uncertainty, in late September, 2011 Medvedev announced at a press-meeting that Putin was returning to the presidency in March, 2012 (JRL 2011). This fact dominated the campaign for the Duma elections in December 2011, where the ruling United Russia party received only 49.32 *per cent* of the votes, losing 77 mandates (18 *per cent* of the seats) compared to the previous elections' results. Even more importantly, the opposition managed to organize the first mass demonstrations in Moscow against the incumbent regime since the demise of the Soviet Union. Tens of thousands of people gathered in the streets urging for free and fair elections and for Putin's retirement.

The protests meant a paradigm shift in contemporary Russian politics in many ways. Public demonstrations are textbook examples of collective action dilemmas (Olson 1982), as the potential benefit (regime change) is a public good which is non-excludable. In other words, all members of the society benefit (practically) equally from the achievements of a successful protest movement, irrespective of the fact whether they participated in the movement or not. This obviously encourages free-riding; individuals will naturally tend to stay home and hope that the rest of society sharing their interest will achieve the objectives of the movement. If too many people seek to free-ride, however, the whole movement might fail to gather enough strength and visible support to surpass the threshold necessary for the government to react to the movement's demands.

Accordingly, there was a striking difference between the number of Russians foreseeing mass demonstrations in the near future and the number of people willing to participate in these demonstrations in a survey conducted in the turbulent years of the early '90s (Rose, Mishler, and Munro 2006, 85). Overcoming collective action problems was not the only important achievement of the protest movements. Opposition leaders could benefit from publicity given by the mass protests and its broadcasts. Even though Putin won the presidential elections with a majority of the votes in the first round, the elections were given a

new flavour by Mikhail Prokhorov, a controversial oligarch receiving almost 8 per cent of the votes and being thus the third most popular candidate.

It is thus understandable why the events caused considerable excitement both in Russia and abroad, yet it remained unclear what caused this tipping point in Russian politics. How come crowds of the largely alienated, apolitical Russian society appeared on the streets? One of the most widely stated arguments built on the composition of the protesters. Surveys, conducted on the protests showed that many young people went to the streets. Roughly one quarter of the sample was below the age of 25 and two-thirds of all protesters were below 40. These people were also highly educated, more than 80 *per cent* of the respondents finished at least 3 years of higher education (Levada Centr 2012b). Moreover, the protest movements concentrated in the biggest cities of Russia, and were particularly successful in Moscow.

A prevailing interpretation of the emergence of the protest movements thus focused on the development of a “new middle class”. As Makarkin (2011) suggested, during the years of economic prosperity of Putin’s first two terms in the presidency a new social class developed. This is a class of relatively young, highly educated people living in big cities. These people share at least two highly important traits. First, they judge the incumbent regime by higher standards than the rest of society. This is to a great extent an influence of their personal experiences with liberal, democratic regimes of the West, as members of this class could now afford travelling abroad. Second, these people have the potential to get organised. They live *en masse* in big cities and they are very active on the internet, which became a highly influential feature of Russian politics lately (Schmidt 2012).

The combination of these two traits, so the theory goes, developed a protest potential, yet it still had to “erupt”. The failure of Medvedev’s modernization program and the end of a more liberal period in Russian politics, which were both symbolically admitted by Putin’s announcement of return to the presidency and consequently by Medvedev’s lack of running

for a second term contributed to significant disturbance. The Duma elections, which were claimed fraudulent by many opposition forces provided the focal point for the “new middle class” to organise and appear on the streets transforming from a latent to a real political factor in Russia.

While obviously this is an interpretation supported primarily by adversaries of the incumbent Russian regime, it should not be immediately dismissed as wishful thinking as there is considerable support for this interpretation in political theory. Samuel Huntington (1991) suggests that legitimacy crises have been a serious concern for most contemporary authoritarianisms and contributed to the “third wave of democratization”. He argues that “a world democratic ethos came into being” and “authoritarian rulers were thus impelled to justify their own regimes by democratic rhetoric” (Huntington 1991, 47). Authoritarian regimes however, cannot renew themselves by elections as there is no change within the ruling elite, accordingly people cannot distinguish between the incumbents and the political system, which means a major burden for autocratic leaders, forced to carry all the failures of their whole reign.

Evidentially, authoritarian rulers are well aware of this problem and do their best to avoid severe delegitimation. Growing attention in the literature has been devoted lately to regimes not abandoning democratic practices altogether, but clearly failing by democratic standards (Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002; 2010; Schedler 2006). There is good reason to believe that elections in non-democratic contexts are more than a facade (Gerrits 2010). Elections are argued to have a role in co-opting elites and the opposition, helping authorities “identify their bases of support” as well as informing elites the power incumbents have (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 405–406). Still, one of the most important goals of elections remains providing some legitimacy to the regime. “Electoral authoritarian regimes establish the primacy of democratic legitimation ... [and] institute the principle of popular

consent” (Schedler 2006, 13). Yet it remains unclear, how successful undemocratic regimes can be claiming democratic legitimacy by only mimicking democratic practices. In Russia, for instance, the share of people who believe that recent elections fail by democratic standards and are not free and fair has grown considerably from 35 *per cent* in 2008 to 60 per cent in 2012 (Volkov 2012).

Having said this, obviously, democratic institutions are not the only source of legitimacy in any regime. Scharpf (1999) highlights the importance of distinguishing between input- and output-oriented legitimation. The former focuses on democratic procedures as free and fair elections, and even playing field for all political actors *etc.* However, there is another important source of legitimacy. Output-oriented legitimation aims at building legitimacy based on the performance of the regime, and on the outputs it provides for the members of society. Evidently, economic prosperity, stability and development can contribute to positive sentiments towards the incumbent regime to a certain extent.

Yet Huntington (1991) raises attention to the fact that many contemporary autocracies face a “performance dilemma” *i.e.* legitimizing the regime with increasing economic performance might be a double edged sword as the increased economic performance might paradoxically delegitimize the regime. “The legitimacy of an authoritarian regime was also undermined if it did deliver on its promises. By achieving its purpose, it lost its purpose. ... It promoted uncertainty and conflict within the regime about what new purposes it should pursue” (Huntington 1991, 55). The argument of Huntington’s performance dilemma was pushed further by Gel’man (2010) suggesting that economic development could contribute to the emergence of social groups that cannot be satisfied by the old purposes of the regime, which increases the legitimacy concerns of the regime.

These arguments can be easily applied to Russia as Putin’s support relied heavily on economic development (Rose, Mishler, and Munro 2006; 2011). It might be argued that for

the emerging “new middle class” the stagnation (*zastoi*) that Putin’s return to presidency suggested was not worrisome for the lack of further economic development in the first place, but due to the threat of the stagnation of political and social liberalization. This argument ties in with Inglehart’s (2001) theory of the development of post-materialistic values with economic growth. Moreover, there is a general tendency for members of the middle class to support opposition forces more than other classes do in countries as different as Mexico (Magaloni 2006) and Vietnam (Malesky and Schuler 2008). It might be argued thus, that the Russian case parallels international trends.

Zubarevich (2012) formulates a highly similar argument in a recent paper reflecting on the emergence of the protest movement and discussing the potentials for change. The author suggests that for a better understanding of Russian politics and state-society relations, it is necessary to distinguish between four faces of Russia based on substantial socio-economic cleavages. Inhabitants of cities over 500,000 residents formulate “Russia 1”. They are highly educated, have a relatively high income, occupied mostly as qualified workers, many of them have a chance to travel abroad, and they formulate the largest part of Russian internet-users *etc.* They live in a more highly developed economic environment and have the best chance to cope with economic crises. “Russia 1” is the environment in which the “new middle class” could emerge (Zubarevich 2012, 55–59). This face of Russia stands in sharp contrast with “Russia 2”, formed by citizens of smaller towns between 20,000 and 500,000 inhabitants. Many of these towns were developed during the Soviet period around a single gigantic industrial complex, and became extremely vulnerable if the only major place of employment in town lost competitiveness or faced great problems, as happened in many (if not most) cases during the recent economic crisis. A significant share of the people are employed (directly or indirectly) by the state and a major social crisis had been avoided in 2008-9 only by offering large governmental bailouts to these factories to escape bankruptcy (Zubarevich 2012, 59–

61). Accordingly, the middle class is largely absent in “Russia 2” and its citizens has fundamentally different interests than the citizens of “Russia 1”. “Russia 3” is formed by the citizens of small towns or villages, mostly employed in agriculture, while “Russia 4” consists of the ethnic minorities in the Caucasus and the inhabitants of the peripheral territories in South-Siberia. Both of these latter clusters are argued to have minimal political and protesting potential (Zubarevich 2012, 61–63).

I believe Zubarevich introduces a crucial notion to Russian politics: the claim that there are significant political cleavages within Russian society. Political cleavages have a well-established place in political theory. Lipset famously “stressed the need for the institutionalization of cleavages, that is the creation of stable political parties” for maintaining stable democratic systems (Lipset 2001, 3). Kornhauser (2008) emphasised his belief that pluralist liberal democracies require meaningful cleavages in the society, while their lack leads to mass societies where political leaders face less constraints, which in turn might lead to populist regimes.

Kornhauser’s theory can be applied to the Russian case well (Ahl 1999; Fleron Jr. and Ahl 1998). The Soviet rule had a strong negative effect on the development of stable social cleavages. “The weak and peculiar stratification of Russian social structure therefore established very different ‘conditioning perimeters’ around political life than those evident in many other - particularly nonsocialist – cases” (Fish 1995, 99). Particularly, it made it “difficult to develop a democratic class struggle [in Russia]” (Lipset 2001, 8).

It could be argued that Putin managed to develop a very broad social basis during the 2000s partly due to the absence of meaningful, institutionalized social cleavages within Russian society. If this statement is at least partly true, however, it stresses the high significance of the interpretation of recent events discussed above. If the protests in fact revealed the emergence of political cleavages in Russia, it could have important consequences

for the future of Russian politics. It could allow the potential of exploitation of cleavages for non-incumbent political forces and maintaining the broad social support for the incumbent regime might become more difficult.

Despite these facts, there have been no thorough scientific investigations addressing the questions raised by recent events in politics. The main goal of my paper is to fill this gap in the literature. My research question is whether there is an emergence of a „new middle class” or any other distinct social group that a) differs from others in levels of trust towards authorities, b) has different factors shaping its trust towards authorities. I intend to test the hypotheses using the works of Huntington, Gel’man and Zubarevich – all discussed above – about the legitimacy problems of the authorities, particularly among distinct social groups. I believe using trust as a dependent variable is appropriate as it allows for testing both parts of my research question. Trust is argued to reflect beliefs in the legitimacy of political institutions, hence the analysis of the variance in its level should reveal if there are particular legitimacy concerns among a social group. Furthermore, other attitudinal factors are used as independent variables, to scrutinize whether different factors have different effects on trust within different social groups.

Chapter 2 – An Exploratory Analysis of Trust

Before I proceed to testing the hypotheses discussed above, there is a need for an exploratory analysis of trust. This chapter has three main parts. First, I provide the conceptualisation of trust I rely on henceforth, and the dataset used in the analysis. Secondly, the chapter puts the Russian levels of political and interpersonal trust in a comparative, post-Communist context to avoid potentially misleading conclusions based on inspecting only Russia's trust indicators. I argue that although in absolute terms there is in fact rather low trust in Russia, compared to other post-Communist countries however, these levels are not particularly low. Thirdly, I address the question whether Russians differentiate between different political institutions while forming their trust evaluations. I use factor analysis to reveal that there is a single latent variable that can account for most of the variation of institutional variables.

2.1 Conceptualization and Operationalization of Trust

An appealing definition of trust is that it is „a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both before he can monitor such action ... and in a context in which it affects his own action” (Gambetta 1988, 217). Yet this is overwhelmingly rationalistic definition of trust as it refers to particular actions and leaves little room for the moralistic account. Moreover it remains questionable how well particularistic trust can be measured with the usual survey-questions on trust as the ‘X’ of the trust relationship (*n.b.* “A trusts B with X”) remains unspecified. Hence I see it necessary to modify slightly Gambetta's definition and I define trust as a particular level of subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents, including social institutions will act for the benefit of the agent or will not act against the agent's interest.

In most surveys the operationalisation of trust is left for the respondent *i.e.* trust in institutions is being asked directly, without an objective operationalisation of what trust means. This approach has an advantage that respondents are not biased by the researchers' conceptions, but also makes the analysis more problematic. Yet, I believe my conceptualisation of trust has firm theoretical grounds, and given that I have found contradicting empirical evidence, I assume that the definition of trust stated above is appropriate.

2.2 Data

Most of the empirical analysis of this thesis is based on data from the 5th round of the European Social Survey (ESS). ESS is one of the largest comparative European social surveys, currently covering more than thirty nations (including the Russian Federation), putting a great emphasis on methodological rigor and collecting highly reliable data. The fieldwork of the Russian survey of the 5th round was conducted between December 24, 2010 and May 14, 2011. The data—consisting of 2595 cases—is based on a national representative sample.

There are a number of reasons why this dataset is the best available option for my research. First, it covers a wide range of political and social questions, including institutional and interpersonal trust. Second, it is the most recent publicly available nationally representative public opinion data from the Russian Federation. The data were collected within less than twelve months of the events that are of special interest for me, and there is good reason to believe that no paradigm changes could occur in such a short period, hence our data is likely to reflect the characteristics of contemporary Russian society. Third, the reliability and the lack of political bias should be appreciated, as some of the Russian polling agencies have been criticised for not being impartial. Fourth, given its cross-country nature, ESS data allow addressing comparative questions.

Having said this, it has to be admitted that my data have certain limitations as well. It would increase the reliability of my findings, if I could base them on a survey conducted in the past few months, during or after the recent political events. Such data is unfortunately publicly unavailable today, yet as I demonstrate below, trust attitudes showed remarkable stability during the past few years. Moreover social and political cleavages do not emerge overnight. Hence, I believe the ESS data are appropriate for testing my hypotheses on contemporary Russian state-society relations. Another limitation of this dataset is the lack of Russia specific variables. Particularly, trust attitudes towards the presidency and evaluations of the main political figures (such as Putin and Medvedev) are troubling. There is no good theoretical reason for excluding these factors from my models, it reflects a necessary compromise between the freshness of the data and the country specificity – the most recent data available to me containing all theoretically relevant variables was collected in 2007 at a time of Putin’s second presidency. In sum, I believe the ESS data are the best available option for the current research.

2.3 Levels of Trust in a Comparative Perspective

Low political and interpersonal trust in contemporary Russia is frequently mentioned as a symptom of deeply rooted tensions and problems within the society. Shlapentokh’s article – “Trust in public institutions in Russia: The lowest in the world” – argues that „the deep mistrust of social institutions in Russia reflects the fundamental fact that the society is deeply fragmented and people feel alienated from political power and the institutions that serve it”(Shlapentokh 2006, 168). Moreover, the author assumes that evaluations of institutional trust can be taken as an “expert view on the country’s future” and comes to an alarming conclusion that the almost complete lack of trust in social and political institutions might substantially jeopardize the stability of the country, as in case of a crisis the authorities will not be able to rely on these institutions. Shlapentokh concludes with the pessimistic

suggestion that contemporary Russia can be seen as a “testing ground ... [to understand] what ... the minimal level of public trust necessary for social institutions to function without massive tribulations [is]” (172). In a similar vein, Sil and Chen (2004) base their argument about the severe legitimacy-problems of the incumbent Russian authorities fundamentally on the low institutional trust ratings. Accordingly, Gel'man (2010) believes that the absence of trust indicates that support for the current regime is at best specific and hence less stable and robust. In sum, it is widely argued that the exceptionally low levels of trust should raise concerns about important political and social issues in Russian society.

It is reasonable, hence, to scrutinize the problem of levels of trust in Russia from a comparative perspective as a preliminary analysis. In this part of the study, I exploit the comparative nature of the European Social Survey to compare the levels of trust between all post-Communist countries participating in the collection of public opinion data. Nine countries from this region participated in the survey: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Slovakia and Ukraine. This is not a complete, nor a representative sample of the post-Communist region. Yet, they should contribute to a better understanding of general trends among these countries, sharing the burden of communist past.

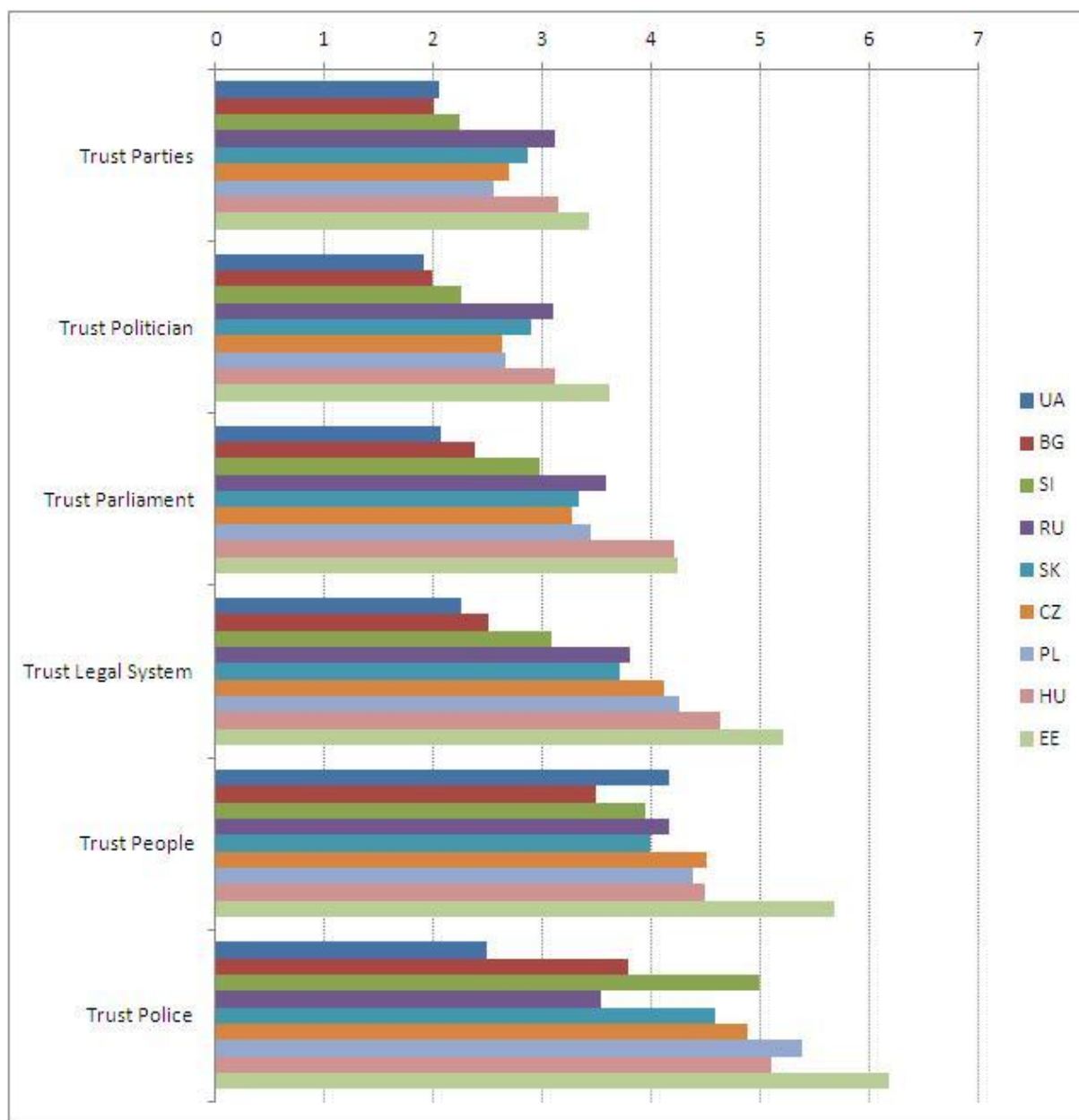


Figure 1 - Levels of trust in nine post-Communist countries

The mean values of trust in five institutions (parties, politicians, Parliament, legal system and police) and in people are depicted in Figure 1. The first and most important finding is that trust is rather low concerning all institutions in all countries. Despite the fact that trust was measured on an eleven-point-scale from zero to ten, most indicators are well-below the middle point (5) and only five out of fifty-four values are above it.

There can be three groups distinguished between based on the means values and variances of trust levels. First, trust in parties and politicians is in fact very low. 73.5 and 73.6

per cent of all respondents gave a value below five for the trust in parties and trust in politicians questions respectively. There are relatively small differences between the countries in our sample. Bulgaria has the lowest mean value for the trust in parties variable – 2.00 – but Estonia with the highest average – 3.43 – is not substantially better. There is a bit more variance in trust in politicians, yet the difference between the highest and lowest means (Ukraine: 1.91 and Estonia: 3.6) is not substantial. The second group, consisting of trust in Parliament and trust in the legal system shows a mixed picture. For some countries like Ukraine and Bulgaria, there is no real difference between the values of the first and second groups. For others, particularly for Hungary, Poland and Slovenia the latter institutions are trusted significantly more. Accordingly, there is a larger difference between the lowest and highest values. Mean trust in Parliament ranges between 2.05 (Ukraine) and 4.23 (Estonia), while trust in the legal system is between 2.24 (Ukraine) and 5.21 (Estonia). Institutions of the third group – police and people – are trusted substantially more than other institutions in all countries (with the notable exception of Russians’ and Ukrainians’ trust in police). However, only a small share of people trusts clearly these institutions, 33.31 *per cent* rated trust in the police above five and 29.88 *per cent* stated that they trust other people.

Russia is by no means a lonely outlier among these countries. Russia is in fact slightly above the mean of our sample concerning trust in parties, politicians and Parliament. This is a surprising result if we consider that the flaws of the undemocratic Russian regime, particularly the small role these institutions play in political decision making are argued to be the main reason for low trust in important democratic institutions. Yet, apparently a democratic political system and higher role of parties and Parliament do not mean a remedy for this problem, as is demonstrated by the example of Bulgaria and Slovenia. Russia does significantly worse than most post-Communist countries only in the case of trust in police. This arguably reflects important problems within the Russian police that is widely perceived

to be a corrupt and inefficient institution. This single fact however, is hardly a sufficient reason for having serious concerns about the stability and legitimacy of the incumbent Russian regime. Moreover, there is a general trend of low trust among the countries in our sample, and other comparative empirical studies demonstrate that this is a widespread phenomenon apparent in many Western democracies as well (Norris 1999).

A logical question might be whether these findings reflect only recent trends in Russian politics or can be seen as signs of more stable characteristics. Levada Centr, the most reliable and widely respected Russian polling agency, publishes trend-lines for trust in most social and political institutions for the past 18 years. Findings are based on surveys conducted two or three times a year, relying on nationally representative samples of Russian citizens above the age of 18, (N between 1600 and 2100). Trust in institutions is measured by a 200-point-index. The index is constructed by adding the percentage of people stating “complete trust” in a particular institution to one half of the percentage of people having “not complete trust”, subtracting the percentage of people “distrusting” and adding to this value 100 (Levada Centr 2012a, 90).

Some growth in institutional trust variables in fact can be found in recent years in Russia. Most notably, trust in the president rocketed from a dramatically low level of 40 points during the last years of Yeltsin’s presidency to an impressive level above 150 points already in the very first months of Putin’s rule. While there have been some fluctuations within a range of 20 points since 2000, the presidency remained by far the most highly trusted institution in Russia. Trust in the State Duma was also boosted by Putin’s emergence, yet it did not prove to be as robust as trust in the president, which fluctuated around 100 points for most of the 2000s. The level of trust increased substantially however in 2008 again reaching 120 points, most probably reflecting shifts in the regime caused by the emergence of the ruling tandem. Trust in the government shows remarkably similar trends as trust in

Parliament, though its level is constantly 15-20 points above the former's. Finally, trust in institutions like parties and the police lack any clear trends or major shifts. Both indices showed considerable fluctuations, the parties between 70 and 100 points, while the police between 80 and 110 points, and while trust in both institutions is higher today than it was at its minimum, still, trends in these data do not allow for particular optimism about growing trends in these variables.

In sum, there have been a major change in institutional trust in Russia, but it occurred more than twelve years ago and considered a single institution, the presidency, which was not addressed in my comparative analysis. Most institutions, moreover, had only gradual shifts or fluctuations without clear trends. This, on the one hand underpins the argument that the current regime failed to develop broad social support for its political and social institutions (Gel'man 2010). On the other hand, however, it means that there is good reason to believe that the findings inferred from the comparative analysis of the ESS data can be accepted as reflecting more stable relationships.

Admittedly this analysis has several limitations. I have looked at descriptive statistics of aggregate level data of a non-representative sample, hence no casual inferences can be drawn from these findings. Furthermore, I do not challenge Mishler and Rose's (2001) argument that the communist legacy can explain little of the variance in contemporary trust levels. Yet, I believe these results can be seen as a strong reason to treat verdicts based on the exceptionally low trust levels in Russia with scepticism, unless one is ready to argue that many other countries, including full democracies integrated into the European Union, are facing severe legitimacy and instability problems as well. While Shlapentokh claims that "the Russians are behind not only the most advanced countries in the world, but even countries known for their flimsy, unstable political systems, such as Colombia or Nigeria" (2006, 155), he failed to notice that other formerly Communist countries like Ukraine, Bulgaria and Slovenia among

which the latter two are today members of the European Union, cope with even lower trust indicators.

2.4 Exploratory Factor Analysis

There is another important theoretical question that should be addressed before proceeding to the discussion of causal relations; this is the problem of particularity and generality in trust. As was demonstrated in the literature review above (Section 1.1), it is a prominent concern for many theorists, whether trust should be understood as a general concept or an attitude towards a particular institution. It is frequently formed as a criticism of the existing literature on political trust that scholars fail to distinguish between different institutions and thus risk the potential of neglecting important information. Yet, in this part of my thesis I argue that as far as Russia is concerned, these criticisms have no empirical grounds. Based on my findings of an exploratory factor analysis, I state that there are good reasons to believe that trust attitudes reflect general evaluations of the political regime and not sentiments towards particular institutions.

Factor analysis is the most straightforward way to address the problem of generality or particularity. This method can be used to test the “assumption that some underlying factors, which are smaller in number than the number of observed variables, are responsible for the covariation among the observed variables” (Kim and Mueller 1978, 12). It can be used thus, to test the hypothesis that the underlying, unobserved, latent variable of general trust attitudes towards the regime can to a large extent explain people’s trust in different institutions. If there is a single factor that accounts for much of the covariance, it is a strong support for the generalized understanding of trust. In contrast, if there are more than one factors needed, it should be perceived as evidence against the generalized view and support for the particularized view of trust. This latter case would indicate that people distinguish between

Table 1. Factor Analyses of Trust Variables

Variables	Factor loadings			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	
Trust Politicians	0,933	0,865	0,427	0,891
Trust Parties	0,905	0,786		0,671
Trust Parliament	0,864	0,780	0,549	
Trust Legal System	0,784	0,934	0,735	- 0,519
Trust Police	0,779	0,903	0,711	- 0,327
Trust People*	0,249	-	-	-
Variance explained by factor**	0,620	0,732		

* Variable included only in Model 1

** Values not available for Model 3

particular institutions and there is a potential for different factors influencing trust in different institutions.

It is thus a crucial decision how many factors we take into account, yet this is a decision where straightforward, law-like statistical rules are absent and only rules of thumb exist. Two of these methods of selecting the number of factors are applied here, both are based on eigenvalues. The first method (also known as the Kaiser-Guttman rule) suggests that all factors with a higher eigenvalue than 1 should be taken into account (Kaiser 1960). The second method suggests the examination of the “scree plot of the eigenvalues plotted against the factor numbers ... [where] the number of factors appropriate for a particular analysis is the number of factors before the plotted line turns sharply right” (Brown 2001, 18).

First, all six of our trust variables are included in the factor analysis (see Table 1. Model 1.). The first factor’s eigenvalue is 4.02, while for the second factor it is 0.92. This might be seen as a borderline case of taking into account the second factor as well, however, the examination of the scree plot (not shown) reinforces the suggestion that the second factor cannot contribute substantially to the analysis of covariance. Five of our six variables have reasonably high factor loadings, ranging from 0.933 (trust politicians) to 0.779 (trust police). The interpersonal trust variable however, has a rather low loading, especially compared to the

other variables in the model². This can be seen as support for the generalized theory of trust, as apparently there is a single factor that accounts for much of the variance of the trust indicators. At the same time it is worth noting that interpersonal trust, the factor that is argued to be the best measurement of generalized trust (Uslaner 2002), has the lowest loading.

In fact, if we exclude the trust in people variable from the factor analysis, we witness a significant improvement of the one-factor model (see Table 1. Model 2). Firstly, it is an even more clear-cut decision not to include a second factor, as its eigenvalue decreases to 0.48. Secondly, the variance explained by the factor increases by more than 10 per cent, to 0.732. All the factor loadings are high, and above 0.75. This suggests that Russian citizens' trust attitudes towards particular political institutions is to a large extent explained by a latent unobserved concept that might be called trust in the political regime.

It is difficult to explain why Russians do not distinguish between evidentially different (though related) political institutions such as politicians and the police. I tested the robustness of these findings by repeating the factor analysis in various sub-samples. I selected subsamples based on five variables: age, education, size of domicile, partisanship and interest in politics. Comparing the subsamples revealed that none of these factors have any substantial effect on peoples' understanding of trust, neither in terms of the number of underlying structures explaining covariation, nor in terms of the factor loadings. Irrespective of whether I included the trust in people variable to the model or not, none of the second factors' eigenvalues exceeded 1.0. Similarly, trust in people remained a factor that had only marginal loadings in all the 10 subsamples.

While this is strong evidence that no single variable can explain the lack of political sophistication in Russian society, it does not necessarily mean that there are no respondents in

² It is interesting to note however, that if after all we do test the model with two factors specified, trust in people do not load on the second factor neither, but remains similarly low. Using promax rotation – *i.e.* allowing for the correlation between the two factors – leads to the loading of trust in the legal system in the second factor.

the sample who do distinguish between institutions. Subsampling on variables has the limitation that only observed sources of heterogeneity can be tested to have an effect. There might be however, unobserved latent factors having an influence. A factor mixture model is applied to shed some light on the problem whether there is a latent class in our sample whose covariation in institutional trust cannot be described effectively with a single factor.³ “Factor mixture models are a combination of latent class and common factor models and can be used to explore unobserved population heterogeneity” (Lubke and Muthén 2005, 21). Here, a slightly modified version of the factor mixture model is applied, using an exploratory factor analytical approach to test whether there is a group of respondents for whom the two sets of institutions load on different factors.

I categorised institutions according to their level of personalisation. Accordingly, parties and politicians form one set of institutions as they hardly can be abstracted from active politicians and parties. The other set is formed by police and the legal system. These institutions are less personalised and have important abstract meanings. Admittedly, Parliament is a borderline case, since there is a considerable danger that Parliament is closely associated with the active MPs and the government. Still, Parliament itself plays a crucial role in democratic theory, moreover the goal of our analysis is to test the hypothesis that for most people institutional trust reflects general attitudes towards the regime I believe it is more appropriate to put Parliament to the second category.

Latent classes were specified according to the correlations between the two factors of the factor analysis. For the first class, correlation was set to 1, which in effect means that there are no differences between the two factors. This is equivalent to the statement that there is only one relevant factor. For the second class, however correlation was minimised. The factor mixture model provides probabilities for each person in the sample for getting into one or the

³ I am particularly grateful to my supervisor, Levente Littvay for providing me help with building this model.

Table 2 - Logistic regression on being in factor class 2

	Odds	P-values
High interest in politics	1,689	0,011 *
Close to party	0,743	0,021 *
Private sector	0,753	0,035 *
Yeltsin's Gen.	1,130	0,606
Gorbachev's Gen.	0,646	0,119
Brezhnev's Gen.	0,610	0,028 *
Khrushchev's Gen.	0,729	0,219
Stalin's Gen.	0,771	0,355
Domicile 2	0,990	0,945
Domicile 3	1,329	0,080
Education 2	1,089	0,707
Education 3	0,948	0,808
Residual deviance: 1669.6 on 1955 df		

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1

other sample. Based on these probabilities two latent classes can be specified. 2127 cases, 82 *per cent* of the sample went to category 1 with perfect correlation between the two factors, 394 people, however went to category 2. The factor analysis of trust variables within this class, confirmed that for these people there is a clear separation between two types of institutions (Table 1. Model 3.). The factors load confirming my theoretical categorisation of institutions, with Parliament, legal system and police dominating the first factor, and politicians and parties the second. The negative loadings of the legal system and police in the second factor highlight the significant separation between the two factors.

A logical question at this point would be to ask, what factors determine whether a respondent is in category 1 or 2. A logistic regression was conducted with class 2 membership as the success category. Findings are summarised in Table 2. Three factors had statistically significant effects out of the six variables included in the model. The strong positive effect of high interest in politics is not surprising, as interest is widely perceived to be an important determinant of political sophistication. Feeling close to a party reduces the odds of making distinctions between institutions. In other words, not feeling close to any party increases the

chance of evaluating parties and politicians on the one hand, and other institutions on the other hand, differently by 34 *per cent*. Interestingly, working in the private sector also significantly reduces the odds. A potential explanation might be that these people have fewer connections to the state and hence tend to view it as a monolith structure, yet this theory needs further investigation for valid inferences to be made. The three other categorical variables⁴, age (with the exception of the negative effect of being in the generation socialised under Brezhnev compared to the youngest generation), domicile size and education, had no significant effects. In sum, personal political attitudes have a more substantial effect on the structure of trust evaluations than the “usual suspects” of social factors.

Finally, it is worth noting, that a majority of society failing to distinguish between institutions in their trust evaluations is, again, not an exclusively Russian phenomenon.

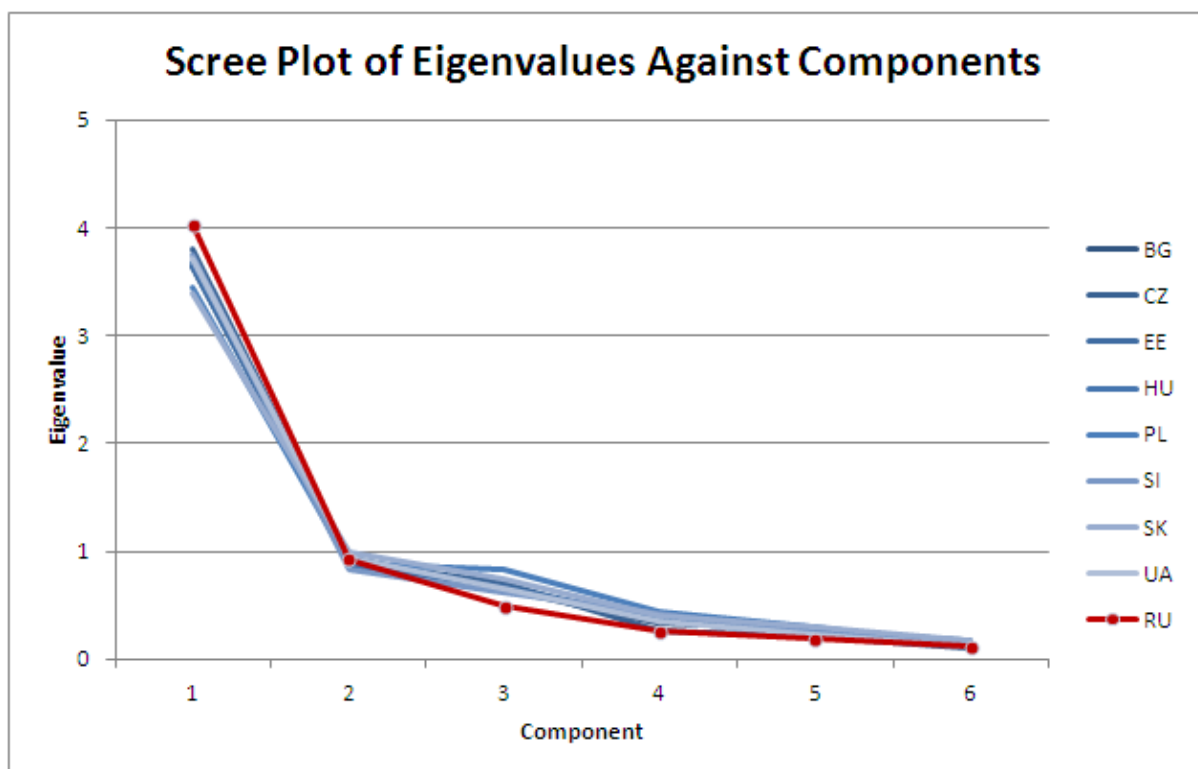


Figure 2 - Scree Plot of Eigenvalues Against Component for 9 post-Communist Countries

⁴ These variables are also used to test various theories about trust and heterogeneity in Chapter 3. A detailed discussion on the operationalisation and categorization of these variables concerning those models is thus, provided below (Cf. Sections 3.1 and 3.2.1).

Repeating the factor analyses for the nine post-Communist countries reveals similar trends in all the countries in our sample. Even if trust in people is included in the model, eigenvalues of the second factor never exceed 1.0 and the second factor is always the “tipping point” of the plotted lines’ break (see Figure 2). This suggests that not only Russians, but most post-Communist citizens (at least those in our sample) fail to evaluate the trustworthiness of particular political institutions separately and most people are likely to rely on some latent understanding of their general trust in the political regime. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to address this question on a larger sample, yet it is an interesting problem and good topic for further research to scrutinize whether a similar methodological approach would lead to different results in old Western democracies, where peoples’ political sophistication is higher and understanding of the working mechanism of democratic institutions is better.

This chapter provided a preliminary, exploratory analysis of trust, addressing two questions, the significance of absolute levels of trust and the covariation between our six trust variables. The comparative nature of the ESS data was utilized to scrutinize these problems with a general post-Communist outlook. I found two important traits. Trust levels in Russia are not substantially lower than in other post-Communist countries. In fact, Russia has not even the worst values in our sample and democratic countries like Bulgaria and Slovenia do worse than Russia. This is an important conclusion as many interpretations of Russian trust levels emphasise the exceptionally low levels of trust. I argue that it might be misleading to base far-reaching inferences on the absolute levels of trust, as a mean trust of 3 on an 11-point-scale can indicate crucially different polities. I believe it is more appropriate to focus on relative levels and differences within the sample if one is focusing on Russia itself.

Secondly, the analysis above highlighted that despite all theoretical reasons to believe that there should be differences between attitudes towards various institutions (see Section 1.1), most Russians fail to distinguish between political institutions and apply a general

(though latent) trust in the political regime factor to evaluate institutional trustworthiness. This is significant because it means the society's attitudes towards politics are general. People tend more to have a general evaluation of authorities than to judge each institution separately. Moreover, this is a firm justification of the appropriateness of constructing a single trust-index from the first factor loadings of the institutional trust variables that can increase the reliability of the inferences about the general trust towards the regime. The index ranges from -1.43 to 8.24, thus it essentially remained an eleven-point-scale, but it shifted somewhat towards negative values.

Chapter 3 – Explaining Trust and Heterogeneity in Russia

I came to two important conclusions in Chapter 2. First, Russian levels of trust are not particularly low from a comparative perspective. Analysing relative levels of trust and differences between social groups should contribute better to our understanding of Russian politics than speculations about the effects of lowness of trust in absolute terms. Secondly, the finding that the overwhelming majority of Russian society fails to distinguish between the five political institutions in our sample and that the first factor loading accounts for much of the covariance in these variables suggests that it is appropriate to use a single trust-index in our analysis as reflecting general trust in the current political regime.

In this chapter, I turn to addressing the research questions outlined at the end of the first chapter. Firstly, I scrutinize whether there are substantial differences between social groups in their levels of trust. I find that even though there are statistically significant variations and the Russian society showed considerable diversity in terms of trust levels, there is little support for the emergence of the “new middle class” among the highly educated, young city-dwellers. I also suggest that there are no clear trends in the variation of trust and although there are substantial differences in the society, they are produced by highly different groups that are small in size.

The second part of this chapter provides a more complete model about the determinants of trust in Russia. Its goal is twofold. (1) It tests many different hypotheses on the determinants of trust in a specific non-democratic context. (2) It continues the analysis of social and political cleavages in the society. I find some evidence for significant differences between various groups of the society; however, there is relatively little support that it corresponds with the theory about the emergence of the “new middle class”.

3.1 Analysis of Variance in the Level of Trust

The most straightforward way to address the question, whether there are apparent cleavages in a society considering levels of trust is to look at descriptive statistics. I scrutinize mean values of trust for the sample, divided by three factors; generation, education and domicile size. There are good reasons to suspect that these three social variables if anything should have an impact. Russia had a turbulent history in the 20th Century and witnessed several major political and social changes. Accordingly, it might be hypothesised that there can be significant differences considering the political attitudes of different generations of society. There are two different approaches to divide the society by age. Live cycle models suggest that it is the absolute age that influences political behaviour, while generational theories suggest that adolescent's socialization have a long-term effect. I believe the latter is a more nuanced approach and accordingly, I divide Russian society into six categories, based on the historical periods (marked by the name of the main leader) they were socialised in. Doing so I build on and develop Levada's (2005) division of generations. I assume that people's political socialization starts at the age of 15 (Rose and Carnaghan 1995).

The role of domicile size was discussed in detail above as it is a crucial concept in Zubarevich's (2012) theory (see Section 1.4). Unfortunately, objective indicators were not recorded in the ESS survey, subjective evaluations of the domicile size, however were asked. While using this is an obvious compromise, as the original theory refers to objective values, it can be argued that it has its own advantages, since even if someone lives in a relatively small city, but understands his lifestyle to be closer to a metropolitan routine, this should be reflected in the data. There are three categories within domicile size: big cities (and its suburbs), small towns and villages. Education's potential in shaping political views is almost a commonplace. I distinguish between people who had 9 years of education or less, those with some secondary education and those with tertiary education.

As a short reminder, the most detailed hypotheses suggesting the rise of the “new middle class” signalled by recent political events in Russia, claim that young, highly educated people living in big cities form the bulk of the new social class, who became more sceptical about the undemocratic political regime. Accordingly, I expect younger, more educated people living in bigger cities to trust political institutions less. An objection might be to this operationalization of the hypothesis that trust in institutions with such a crucial democratic role as Parliament should be higher among people with firm democratic standards and rejection of authoritarian values. It was demonstrated above, however, that most variation in institutional trust variables can be described with a latent variable of trust in the current political regime. I believe this is a firm basis to argue that even democratically minded people should fail to support the largely marginalised Parliament in its current form in an undemocratic political setting.

Inspection of the mean values of trust in Parliament⁵ stratified by the three variables provides limited support for this hypothesis (see Table 3). While there are some differences

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of trust in Parliament for social groups

Generations						
	Putin's (1)	Yeltsin's (2)	Gorbachev's (3)	Brezhnev's (4)	Khrushchev's (5)	Stalin's (6)
Age	18-25*	25-34	35-40	41-60	61-71	72-
Mean Trust	3,76	3,47	3,20	3,38	3,83	4,12
% of Sample	15,80	15,64	10,68	32,92	14,03	10,93
Education				Domicile size		
	Max. 9 years (1)	Secondary (2)	Tertiary (3)	Big cities (1)	Small Towns (2)	Villages (3)
Mean Trust	4,13	3,48	3,50	3,62	3,39	3,78
% of Sample	12,95	33,61	53,44	43,31	34,35	22,34

* People below the age of 18 are not considered as they did not participate in the ESS surveys.

⁵ I use trust in Parliament here, because I believe it is more meaningful to look at descriptive statistics of an observed variable. Inspecting other institutional trust variables or the trust index does not alter the picture drawn here.

between mean values they are hardly ever substantial and do not fall in line with the theory's predictions. Apparently, there is no linear relationship between trust and age. The three generations with least trust in Parliament are those who socialised between the late '60s and the '90s. This wide range of people between the age of 25 and 60 share the lowest levels of trust. Older people tend to have higher trust levels, which is supported by the theory, yet interestingly the youngest generation, those below the age of 25, have relatively high trust levels as well.

More educated people trust Parliament less, yet the breaking point is not between those with university degrees and the ones with no higher education, but between the small share of people with only the most basic education and all other more educated participants. Finally, domicile size has no substantial effects on mean trust levels.

This approach to qualitative assessment of descriptive statistics has two main disadvantages. First of all, it lacks any statistical hypothesis testing, thus we cannot make any inferences whether the mean differences are the effects of mere chance or not. Secondly, it is rather difficult to reveal potential interactions between the three factors. For these reasons, I apply analysis of variance (ANOVA). ANOVA is a hypothesis-testing method to reveal whether certain categorical variables can provide a meaningful separation of the data. In our case it can be used to shed some light on the problem whether the mean values presented above are statistically different or not. I include all possible two and three way interactions in my model as well.

The results of the model are summarised in Table 4. I use the trust-index based on the first factor loadings of the five political institutional trust variables. The overall F-statistic is highly significant, thus we can be certain that there are significant differences between the mean values. The generation and education variables are highly significant, but domicile size fails by conventional levels of significance, although only marginally ($p=0.053$). Considering

Table 4. Type II ANOVA test on the institutional trust index

	Sum Sq	Df	F value	Pr(>F)
Education	48,6	2	4,895	0,008 **
Domicile size	29,3	2	2,949	0,053 .
Generation	115,8	5	4,666	0,000 ***
Education x Domicile size	50,1	4	2,526	0,039 *
Domicile size x Generation	21,6	10	0,435	0,930
Education x Generation	121,1	10	2,440	0,007 **
Education x Domicile size x Generation	138,8	20	1,398	0,112
F-statistic		53	2.337	0,000 ***

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1

the interactions, the education-domicile size and education-generation interactions have significant F-statistics, that is the combinations of these two variables contribute to significant mean differences beyond the differences explained by the variables.

ANOVA is essentially applicable for hypothesis testing, but not for parameter estimation. Hence, to have a better understanding of which mean differences are significant I apply Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test. The post-hoc test reinforces my previous findings based on the descriptive data. In terms of generational differences, the null hypothesis of no statistical difference was rejected in the case of comparing Yeltsin's and Gorbachev's generations with Khrushchev's, Stalin's and Putin's generations. In all six cases the former two had statistically lower estimated trust levels. Similarly, there is statistically significant difference between the lowest and the middle, as well as the lowest and the highest education categories. Tukey's HSD found no significant differences in terms of domicile size. The few significant mean differences between two-way interactions do not change the picture drawn by these findings in any substantive ways.

The hypothesis that young, highly educated people living in big cities have lower trust levels was directly addressed by re-categorising our factors into dichotomous variables, where 1 indicates people below the age of 40 (Gorbachev's generation or younger), living in big

cities and who completed higher education. The overall F-statistic of the ANOVA model (not shown) was not significant, thus I fail to reject the null hypothesis that the mean values of these categories are equal. Neither were any single variables or interactions. The argument that these people have distinct trust levels seems to fail.

In sum, there is mixed evidence considering the hypothesis that meaningful social cleavages are apparent in terms of trust levels. On the one hand, there are statistically significant differences between various social groups. Citizens with no secondary education, below the age of 25 or above 60 trust the political system more than the rest of society. On the other hand, cleavages between the social groups indicated by theory are largely absent. The divisions might shape Russian society in a different way than recent events suggested. The model above concentrated on the particular issue of differences in trust between social groups. It could not and did not want to offer a complete picture of determinants of trust in Russia. This is the task of the next part of the chapter.

3.2 Determinants of Trust in Russia

In the previous section of this chapter, I established that there is only mixed evidence supporting the hypothesis that there are important differences in terms of trust levels between social groups in Russia. Belonging to any social group, however has little direct effects on trust beliefs. It is more appropriate to assume that belonging to a social group might have an effect on individual political preferences and attitudes – beliefs in trust *inter alia*. We know relatively little about trust while we do not know what other attitudes tend to influence it. The objective of this section is to address this problem. It can be divided into three parts. First, I test the hypotheses proposed by theoretical works on trust in the non-democratic setting of contemporary Russia. I argue that performance evaluations have the largest effect. Second, I revisit the issue of heterogeneity and evaluate interaction effects in the model to see if any influential factors have any special effects within any social groups. I find some evidence for

social cleavages, as people in small towns tend to appreciate economic welfare more than people living in big cities, moreover voting (understood as a form of political activism) has a less positive effect on trust among more educated people. Thirdly, I apply factor mixture model again to shed some light on a latent class where satisfaction with the economy has little role in determining trust. I demonstrate that interpersonal trust, education and partisanship have important effects on whether a person falls in this latent class or not.

3.2.1 Testing the Hypotheses of Trust's Determinants

I discussed three categories of theories on trust's determinants in the first chapter (Section 1.2); rationality and moralistic accounts and social capital theories. The rationality account states that trust is based on the evaluation of trustworthiness and satisfaction with the performance of the institution and it is relatively easy to measure these feelings. Since it is argued that most people do not distinguish between institutions upon trust evaluations it is reasonable to rely on general satisfaction variables as satisfaction with democracy and satisfaction with economy. It is an open question whether satisfaction with life should be considered as reflecting personal sentiments about the moral attitudes of somebody, or rather it belongs to the other performance indicators. I believe that the high role an average Russian attributes to the state in contributing to his/her personal welfare is well-known (Levada 2007), hence I incline to put it to the former group. Moreover, the moralistic account is more appropriately measured by generalised trust in other people which also reinforces this decision. Clearly, it is hypothesised that the higher satisfaction is, the higher trust will be. Satisfaction with the government is not included in the model, as it would be tautological to explain trust in the political regime with such a general factor. Furthermore, there is a danger that it would take much of the variance in our model from other, potentially significant factors.

Ideology, partisanship and interest in politics form another group within the rationalistic account of trust. It is hypothesised that ideological proximity, support for the incumbent political power contributes to trust. The role of political interest is ambiguous. On the one hand, it seems reasonable to assume that the more one is familiar with something, the more s/he is ready to trust it. Accordingly, interest in politics can increase trust in institutions due to more familiarity with the system. On the other hand, knowing more about the flaws of politics can also increase scepticism. Social capital theory suggests that involvement in social life increases trust in political institutions. Accordingly, a dummy variable for voting at the last Duma elections and for engaging in work for social organizations are included to test their effect on trust. The moralistic account is measured here by the interpersonal trust variable. I also include two interaction terms between factors of rationalistic and the moralistic accounts of trust to test whether people both generally trusting and having better evaluations of the regime's performance trust institutions more than these two factors alone could explain.

Finally, socio-economic variables, age, education, domicile size, and dummy variables for being occupied in the private sector and using internet on a daily basis are added to the model. The role of age, education and domicile size were discussed in detail above, according to theories on political cleavages in Russia. It is worth noting that education, similarly to political interest, also has a vague role. On the one hand, it is an important factor within rational scepticism theory, suggesting that more educated people realise the flaws of the system more easily (Listhaug and Wiberg 1995). On the other hand, it contributes to more knowledge about the importance of institutions in political systems. Working in the private sector reduces the vulnerability of people to the State's will and usually means less interaction with bureaucrats and various state officials in general. This increases support for democracy in general (Rose, Mishler, and Munro 2006), which could have a positive spillover effect on trust. In the current Russian regime, nevertheless, it is more likely to have a negative effect,

Table 5 - OLS-regression on the Russian institutional trust-index

Variables	Estimates	P-values
Satisfaction with economy	0,157	0,012 *
Satisfaction with democracy	0,275	0,000 ***
Satisfaction with life	0,066	0,017 *
Left-right scale	0,031	0,287
United Russia	0,661	0,000 ***
Political Interest	0,143	0,428
Voted	0,313	0,019 *
Social work	0,347	0,167
Trust in people	0,018	0,683
Trust in people x Satisfaction with economy	0,000	0,974
Trust in people x Satisfaction with democracy	0,016	0,115
Income	- 0,011	0,619
Age	0,015	0,000 ***
Domicile 2	- 0,218	0,094 .
Domicile 3	0,128	0,395
Education 2	0,084	0,700
Education 3	0,187	0,381
Private Sector	0,064	0,582
Internet (daily)	0,230	0,103
Adjusted R-squared:	0,421	

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1

especially if we consider the substantial political alienation, which is arguably facilitated by working in the private sector. The internet has a growing role in providing a completely free interface for discussions about politics as well as in organising opposition forces in Russia (Schmidt 2012), hence it is assumed that regular internet users trust the regime less.

I apply an ordinary least-square (OLS) regression model to address the problem of determinants of trust. I use the trust-index, constructed by the first factor loadings of the five institutional trust variables as a dependent variable. Variables with at least 10 categories are assumed to be continuous; other factors are included as categorical. The findings are

summarised in Table 5. The adjusted R-square (0.421) demonstrates that the model fit is decent, reliable inferences can be based on this model.

The three performance variables have the most straightforward, highly significant effects. Satisfaction with democracy has the largest, positive effect on the dependent variable. The more people are satisfied with the way democracy works in Russia, the more they trust political institutions. Similarly, higher satisfaction with the economy also has a substantial positive effect on trust. Satisfaction with life has a smaller, yet still significant effect. The strong positive effect of sympathies towards Putin's United Russia party also underpins the rationality account of trust.

There is less, yet considerable support for the social capital theory of trust. Those who voted at the last elections are somewhat more trusting, yet the direction of the causal link is not entirely clear here. Doing social work is among the primary mechanisms of increasing political trust in the social capital theory and even if it is not significant at conventional levels in this model, it is likely to suffer from multicollinearity, as in the more parsimonious model (discussed below), it has a highly significant positive effect.

There is no support for the moralistic account of trust in this model, neither for general readiness to trust to have a substantial impact on performance indicators' effect-size, nor the interpersonal trust variable, nor do its interactions with satisfaction variables have any significant relationships. It has to be admitted that interpersonal trust is not the only dependent variable proposed by moralistic accounts of trust. Other potential explanatory variables like optimism and egalitarianism had to be left out from my model due to the lack of comparable data. Yet, this finding supports theories arguing that interpersonal trust has little direct effect on institutional trust.

Socio-economic variables perform rather poorly in our model. Only age has a highly significant effect, however substantially it is very small, suggesting 0.15 points increase in

Table 6 - A parsimonious model of trust in Russia

Variables	Estimates	P-values
Satisfaction with economy	0,202	0,000 ***
Satisfaction with democracy	0,344	0,000 ***
United Russia	0,736	0,000 ***
Voted	0,463	0,000 ***
Social work	0,542	0,007 **
Adjusted R-squared	0,368	

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1

trust for every 10 years of increase in age. Domicile size, education, income, internet usage, and being occupied in the private sector have no significant effects on trust at conventional levels. In sum, after testing three different theoretical accounts of trust's determinants and a few additional socio-economic factors, I find strong support for the rationalistic theory suggesting that people consider the performance and trustworthiness of institutions upon trust evaluations, weak support for social capital theory, arguing that engagement in social and political life contributes to political trust, and no support for the generalistic account, claiming that it is people's general tendency to trust or not which has most influence.

This model however, fails by the standards of parsimony, as it consists of fifteen variables. A more parsimonious model is essential for effectively scrutinizing heterogeneity, as introducing all interactions to the model above, would require to handle sixty interaction terms. Hence, I built a more parsimonious model, including only five variables, without losing much from the model's explanatory power (adjusted R-squared=0.368, see Table 6). Accordingly, if there are five important factors that influence political trust in Russia, they are: satisfaction with economy, satisfaction with democracy, sympathies towards United Russia party, voting, and doing social work. These are the factors I look at in the next section, when I scrutinize whether there is heterogeneity within the Russian society concerning the effects of these variables. Moreover, knowing that these five factors have a substantial role on

trust evaluations is important for proper interpretations of my findings for contemporary Russia.

3.2.2 Scrutinizing Heterogeneity in Russian Society

After inspecting how different theories perform in explaining trust in Russia and coming up with a parsimonious model of trust, now I address the question if there are differences within the society concerning the effects of my explanatory variables. Firstly, I further develop the parsimonious model by including all two-way interactions with the three most important socio-economic variables (age, education, domicile size). Secondly, I apply a factor mixture model to detect a latent group of particular importance, those for whom satisfaction with the economy have little effect on trust.

Table 7 summarises the model developed to test whether there are significant interactions between the five explanatory and the three socio-economic variables. In my analysis I focus on the fifteen interaction terms primarily, as I believe that individual effects are measured more reliably in the two previous models. If the interaction effect would be statistically and substantially significant, it would mean that there are in fact important differences between different parts of Russian society, concerning the effects explanatory variables have on trust. The theory that younger, more educated people, living in big cities are getting more sceptical towards the authorities would be supported best by negative interaction effects for education and positive interaction effects for domicile size and age (which coded that smaller values denote bigger cities and younger age, respectively).

My model provides some support for this theory. On the one hand, there are only two interactions out of the fifteen combinations which show significant effect, on the other hand, the direction of these effects supports the theory discussed above. People living in smaller towns tend to appreciate the economy's performance more than people in bigger cities do. This stands in line with the argument that smaller towns' inhabitants' higher economic

Table 7 - Replicating the "parsimonious model of trust" introducing all two-way interactions of the socio-economic and the other explanatory variables

Variables	Estimates	P-values
Satisfaction with economy	0,236	0,071 .
Satisfaction with democracy	0,360	0,001 **
United Russia	0,035	0,946
Voted	1,497	0,002 **
Social work	- 0,277	0,814
Age	0,016	0,015 *
Domicile 2	- 0,489	0,032 *
Domicile 3	0,030	0,915
Education 2	0,522	0,161
Education 3	0,736	0,041 *
Satisfaction with economy x Age	- 0,001	0,346
Satisfaction with democracy x Age	0,001	0,304
United Russia x Age	0,008	0,167
Social work x Age	0,009	0,460
Voted x Age	0,008	0,193
Satisfaction with economy x Domicile 2	0,128	0,021 *
Satisfaction with economy x Domicile 3	0,007	0,924
Satisfaction with democracy x Domicile 2	- 0,062	0,220
Satisfaction with democracy x Domicile 3	0,030	0,623
Social work x Domicile 2	0,114	0,819
Social work x Domicile 3	- 0,160	0,741
Voted x Domicile 2	0,122	0,561
Voted x Domicile 3	- 0,169	0,524
United Russia x Domicile 2	0,055	0,804
United Russia x Domicile 3	- 0,356	0,157
Satisfaction with economy x Education 2	0,026	0,769
Satisfaction with economy x Education 3	- 0,026	0,768
Satisfaction with democracy x Education 2	- 0,101	0,194
Satisfaction with democracy x Education 3	- 0,064	0,393
Social work x Education 2	0,774	0,397
Social work x Education 3	0,190	0,829
Voted x Education 2	- 0,884	0,014 *
Voted x Education 3	- 0,883	0,011 *
United Russia x Education 2	0,529	0,161
United Russia x Education 3	0,405	0,268
Adjusted R-squared	0,391	

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1

vulnerability and dependence on the state has an effect on their attitudes towards the government. Similarly, voting in the last elections has substantially lower effects on trust for more highly educated people. This might also be evidence for the fact that more educated people vote even if they trust the institutions less.

This model was based on observed factors in the society, which should be understood somewhat like an input-oriented approach to analyse heterogeneity. The factors that are argued to have an influence on the problem which social class a respondent belongs to, are known and used to construct theoretically founded interaction terms. A different method is to approach the problem from the “output”, with prespecifying in a factor mixture model which factors are expected to divide the sample into two latent classes and then scrutinizing which variables determine which class a person belongs to. This is the goal of the last part of my analysis.

The mixture model is specified to distinguish between two latent classes in Russian society, those who trust institutions more, the more they satisfied with the economy and those for who these two factors are practically independent. Substantial economic development during the 2000s is widely argued to be the single most important source of Putin’s support (Rose, Mishler, and Munro 2011; White and McAllister 2003). Most Russians highly appreciated the economic stability brought by Putin, which stood in sharp contrast with the turbulent years of Yeltsin’s presidency. However, it is hypothesised that there is a “new middle class” developing in Russia, which has more nuanced preferences and cannot be satisfied only with economic stability or growth. If this is correct, the latent class should have two important properties. First it should trust the institutions less than the rest of society. Second, they should be younger, more educated and living in bigger cities than the rest of the population.

Table 8 - Logistic Regression on belonging to latent class with independent satisfaction with economy and trust-index variables

	Odds	P-values
Satisfaction with economy	1,068	0,223
Satisfaction with democracy	2,014	0,000 ***
United Russia	1,502	0,111
Political Interest	1,027	0,939
Distinguish between Institutions	0,531	0,020 *
Voted	1,149	0,545
Close to party	0,396	0,001 ***
Trust People	1,345	0,000 ***
Social Work	1,500	0,351
Internet	1,113	0,656
Private Sector	1,043	0,821
Income	0,975	0,504
Generation 2	1,085	0,830
Generation 3	0,640	0,292
Generation 4	1,251	0,543
Generation 5	1,349	0,481
Generation 6	1,915	0,163
Domicile 2	0,693	0,090 .
Domicile 3	0,884	0,613
Education 2	2,219	0,028 *
Education 3	1,867	0,080 .
Residual deviance: 851.62 on 1408 df		

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1

Evidence from the model clearly rejects the first of these two criteria. The 500 respondents, sorted to the latent class with no significant relationship between satisfaction with economy and the trust-index, have remarkably high trust on average, 5.15 points which is especially striking if we compare it with the mean trust value of the other latent class, which is only 0.94. The mean difference between the trust values of two latent classes is highly significant ($p < 0.001$). This is a clear sign that those whose trust is largely independent

from their evaluation of the economy's performance are not more sceptical towards the regime, on the contrary they are substantially more trusting than the rest of the sample.

A logistic regression model (summarised in Table 8) is developed to reveal which factors explain which latent class a respondent belongs to. There is moderate support for the theory specified above. People living in bigger cities and with higher education have a bigger chance to get in the latent class of our interest, yet the relationship is statistically significant at conventional levels only for the second group within the education factor (*i.e.* for people with secondary education). The p-values of two other factors, Domicile 2 (small towns) and Education 3 (people with tertiary education), are also close to 0.05. Age, however, has no significant effect. There are other important factors which increase the odds of having no relationship between trust and satisfaction with economy. They are satisfaction with democracy and interpersonal trust. Each unit increase in being satisfied with democracy makes being in this latent class twice as likely and one unit increase in trusting other people also increases the odds by 34 per cent. Interestingly, satisfaction with economy has no effect, which means that for some people trust and satisfaction with the economy are independent, irrespective of their level of satisfaction with the economy. In other words, the level of satisfaction with the economy has no statistically significant relationship with the latent class dummy variable. People have equal chance to be in the latent class regarding their evaluation of the state's economic performance. This is not a direct consequence of the selection of the latent classes, as it is entirely possible and even supported by the hypothesis that more wealthy people who are satisfied with economy are those who demand more than economic development to trust the political institutions. Yet evidence from my model shows that both income and satisfaction with economy are insignificant.

There are two other significant variables, however, distinguishing between institutions and close to party. The former denotes the latent class analysed in the previous chapter

(section 2.4), those who distinguish between different types of institutions in their trust evaluations. It has a strong negative effect; people who have more sophisticated attitudes towards political institutions are twice as likely not to be in this latent class. Similarly, people who feel close to any political party are almost three times less likely to have no relationship between satisfaction with the economy and institutional trust.

These findings draw a rather surprising picture. Upon searching for a “new middle class” I have detected a latent class that is crucially different. They are apolitical and have only general attitudes towards institutions, yet they are highly satisfied with the way democracy operates today in Russia and also have high interpersonal trust. At the same time, they have very similar socio-economic patterns than the theory proposes for “the new middle class”. However, while we expected these people to be sceptical with the current political regime, I find that, on the contrary, they are extremely sympathetic towards it. Satisfaction with economy has no effect on trust for them, not because they have higher standards and look beyond the achievements of Putin’s regime, but because they trust the system anyway.

In conclusion, my goal in this chapter was to reveal whether there are significant differences between various social groups of the Russian society concerning the extent and way they trust the political institutions. The chapter had two main parts. First, I scrutinized variations within the level of trust between various social groups. I found that significant differences do exist, yet they are not between the groups specified by the hypothesis. Highly educated are not different from people with only secondary education, but both these groups are distinct from people with very low education. Young generations are not uniformly more critical towards the authorities, but the youngest generation, socialised under the Putin era, is almost as well-disposed towards the regime as the oldest generations. Finally, despite all economic rationality and substantial heterogeneity in Russia, domicile size had no significant effect on the levels of trust.

The second part of the chapter went further and inspected heterogeneity in the effects of the determinants of trust. First, I tested the effects of three groups of determinants, based on the theoretical categorisation of the variables and found strong evidence for the rationality account of trust, weak evidence for the social capital theory of trust and no support for the generalised view. Investigating the heterogeneity within the effects of these factors with interaction terms, again, had mixed results. There are some notable differences between various groups of society. People living in small towns appreciate economic performance more. More educated people vote even if they trust the regime less. Still, there is no systematic evidence for the emergence of a “new middle class” with prevailing critical attitudes.

Finally, as observed classes did not yield significant results, I turned to a latent class approach, detecting a group of people whose trust evaluations are independent of their satisfaction with the economy with a mixture model. The goal of this model was to inspect a class whose support is not based on their evaluations of economic performance. While higher education and bigger domicile size significantly increased the chances of being the member of this latter group, contrary to my expectations, this latent class is not more sceptical than the rest of the society, but largely supportive. In short, their evaluations of trustworthiness is not independent of satisfaction with the economy, because they have higher standards, but because they are generally inclined to trust. The implications of these findings for Russian politics and the political science literature are discussed in the conclusions.

Conclusions

The topic of this thesis was triggered by recent events in Russian politics. Thousands of Russians protesting in the streets against the incumbent regime caused considerable excitement in Russia and abroad, in academic, political and civic spheres alike. It raised important questions about state-society relations in the contemporary non-democratic context. I endeavoured to address the question if demonstrations signalled substantial cleavages in Russian society, or its subgroups' attitudes towards the incumbent regime. I devoted particular attention to a cardinal interpretation of the events, focusing on the growing role of an emerging "new middle class" in Russian politics. Opposition leaders, the liberal media and some scholars agree that the political activation of previously alienated masses is probably a sign of the consolidation of a new social group, formed by young, highly educated people living in big cities. They are allegedly familiar and idealise the West, tend to have higher democratic standards and, accordingly, are more critical towards the non-democratic incumbent regime. Clearly, the emergence of such a class can in fact be a game changer in any non-democratic setting, thus the significance of these proposals is evident.

My thesis however, suggested that it is reasonable to be more sceptical about these propositions. I stated that considerable homogeneity is still characteristic for Russian society, especially considering the variables having an influence on people's evaluations of the regime's trustworthiness. Russians largely base their trust in the regime depending on their evaluation of the regime's performance.

This thesis was carefully tested on multiple grounds using a wide range of methodological tools. Evidence largely supported my thesis. First, preliminary analysis showed that only a relatively small group of people – highly interested in politics, though non-partisan – distinguish between various political institutions upon their trust evaluations. The rest of society tends to trust or distrust the political regime in general. Secondly, even

though there have been considerable differences in the levels of trust between various social groups, the “new middle class” did not stand out as the flagship of critical sentiments. Low trust is widespread in Russian society and there are groups, which are only marginally more trusting, people with only low levels of education and interestingly both the youngest and the two oldest generations. Thirdly, performance indicators were the most effective group of predictors of trust. There was only weak support for social capital theory and no evidence for the generalised view of trust. The performance of the regime thus, largely determines its evaluation. Investigation of the interactions of the explanatory variables with socio-economic factors could not substantially alter this picture. Social groups differ little in terms of trust’s determinants. Finally, a distinct social group with no relationship between trust and economic performance was identified. Yet again, contrary to expectation these people are the unconditional supporters of the regime and not its critics.

It therefore remains to consider what these findings imply for contemporary Russian politics. Based on the four main findings outlined above, I raise attention to four aspects of the prospects of Russian opposition movements. The lack of meaningful distinction between various political institutions indicates that at present, there are no alternative sources of power in Russia. Most Russians see authorities as a single entity and thus opposition forces might need to occupy this position, or – more plausibly– shift public opinion to recognise that there are different fields of contestation. This might allow the opposition movements to contest the incumbent even without the objective of overthrowing them in the near future, yet this might need considerable efforts and changes in the Russian political landscape compared to its contemporary situation.

Performance indicators have crucial effects on political attitudes in Russia. The Putin regime was highly successful in maintaining significant support for the regime, which is mostly attributed to the economic prosperity and political stability of the 2000s. It is possible,

but beyond the scope of my research, that as the standards of living grow, the level of legitimating force performance has increases as well. This might complicate maintaining the performance-based support for the regime with time. The flaws and challenges of Russian economy are well known as well. Yet, all these concerns do not indicate that there has been a shift from the primarily performance-oriented demand in Russian society. This means that the goal of authorities remains unchanged; maintaining the regime performance can contribute to substantial trust from Russian society.

The lack of clear cut evidence of a “new middle class” is particularly painful for the prospects of the new opposition movements. Organising demonstrations of tens of thousands is one thing. Transforming this into meaningful political power, however, needs a strong social base and considerable support on a national level. As long as the opposition cannot address its potential supporters, their objective of gaining strength is limited. My research showed that in contemporary Russia, the “new middle class” of young, highly educated city-dwellers is probably not a social group of considerable potential for the opposition.

This in turn increases the leeway of the authorities. It is relatively easy to *rule* as long as there is not even a considerable social group to *divide*. Moreover, evidence suggests that there is a considerable part of society which has a general tendency to trust the incumbent. These people can form a social base for the regime even in a potential “time of troubles”.

In short, the situation of the opposition movement is tough, at least considering its potential social support. My study highlights the weak empirical evidence of the “new middle class” narrative. It should be important for all actors of Russian politics to realise that as of today, the “new middle class” might be a product of wishful thinking. If the new movements waste too much effort on building on a social basis that is practically non-existent, or at least not sympathetic towards their goals, it might risk the waste of all the potential within the new movement. This thesis, however, can do little to offer a remedy for the opposition. This is

partly because its focus was largely to test the hypothesis of an emerging “new middle class”, but not to scrutinize all society with respect to all potential issues to identify a meaningful political cleavage. It is true however, that both theoretical and empirical findings suggested that the role of cleavages in contemporary Russian society might be severely limited.

This thesis has two important limitations; both are a direct consequence of data availability. First, my analysis is based on data from some 7-11 months before the demonstrations took place. Even though publicly available aggregated trend lines suggest that no substantial changes occurred in institutional trust levels in these 7-11 months, yet all findings should be understood as reflecting the situation in the society as of early 2011. Reproducing the analysis with more recent data that can reveal the effects of Putin’s return to the presidency and the emergence of the new opposition movements is highly desirable and an important task for further research.

The second limitation imposed by the data is the lack of Russia-specific indicators. While the ESS data allows some insightful comparative outlooks on post-Communist trends, it lacks variables on issues that are not relevant for other European countries. Future research should incorporate factors like trust in the president, personal support for leading political figures, support for the opposition movements, attitudes towards the elections etc.

Regardless of these limitations, I firmly believe that my research has contributed to the literature. It gained knowledge on the social grounds of the opposition movements and provides important recommendations for the successful development of their endeavour. It went beyond the existing literature on political trust in Russia by scrutinizing heterogeneity and even if it could not identify any meaningful social cleavages in contemporary Russia, some interesting findings justified the efforts and highlighted their importance. It also demonstrated that a wide range of statistical tools can be effectively combined to answer complicated research questions. Finally, the theoretical, empirical and methodological

knowledge obtained by this thesis should form a solid basis for further research on Russian politics in particular and state-society relations in a non-democratic context in general. There is yet much to discover in both fields.

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