TRUST/DISTRUST AS FACTOR OF CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL REALITY

Irina Glushko, Don State Agrarian University
Irina Lavrukhina, Don State Agrarian University
Andrey Polomoshnov, Don State Agrarian University

ABSTRACT

The paper shows the possibility of creating the 'trust/distrust' concept. Trust and distrust are studied as actors of social constructing and as means of political communication that allow conducting social and cultural dialogue between the government and the people. The content of trust/distrust is considered from the perspective of their political significance in the context of this dialogue as well as from the perspective of their influence on political communication in formation of the desired model of reality.

Keywords: Concept, Trust/Distrust, Government, Social and Cultural Dialogue, Political Communication, Political Advertising.

INTRODUCTION

The unique definition of trust/distrust seems to be rather complicated as the specialists studying the phenomenon of trust, its nature, causes and consequences tend to remain within their professional and disciplinary frameworks. Nevertheless, there are two general approaches. The first approach considers trust as an individual phenomenon connected with the consciousness. The focus here is laid on social and psychological characteristics of an individual, while the study of the phenomenon begins from the everyday life. Trust is defined as a psychological trait of a mature personality under certain circumstances, as a component of human relationship, as a peculiar proneness, an attitude of an individual reflecting positive view of life. Distrust is the opposite individual's state.

Being a phenomenon of individual consciousness, trust/distrust synthesizes resource components emotional (as an attitude connected with a certain way of the view of life), moral (as self-awareness of personality based on imperative of right and virtue), and cognitive (as the knowledge of reliability and security of a situation and/or the object of trust forming the basis of a social and practical action resulting in decrease of risks and losses).

The second approach studies trust dialectically interacting with distrust as phenomenon of social reality. It is based on cultural components (rules, values, norms and symbols), and trust is represented as a social depersonalized attitude. Trust is considered as a cultural component of society, a characteristic of interpersonal communication, a precondition for formation of social entities and small groups.

As social reality trust/distrust acquire communicative and behavioural components. Emergence and development of trust is the process of realization of its inner properties in outer characteristics peculiar to communicative and behavioural social practices.

Accordingly, these approaches should form the basis of the operational definition of the fundamental trust concept, considering its multidimensionality and transitivity of the individual into the social and vice versa.

In this case trust is represented as a complicated phenomenon of emotional and moral nature, constructed by the individual human consciousness and simultaneously as a social phenomenon existing at different levels of social reality, acquiring certain historical and social as well as cultural forms and types in the process of its existence.

Ambivalent nature of trust implies distrust as a necessary condition for existing of trust by itself, because trust is always manifested in unity with and opposition to distrust. Distrust plays the role of an imminent element of the trust system having cognitive (awareness of unreliability of the partner), emotional (the feeling of suspiciousness) and behavioural/activity (careful action avoiding a risk) substantive aspects (Ridout & Franz, 2011).

Conceptual analysis of social processes allows revealing the mechanisms of formation/destruction of a certain phenomenon of trust and social sphere of trust in general, revealing different extent (degree) of trust which remotes/approximates it to distrust. The conceptual basis of studying trust/distrust includes the parameters of investigation of its social and practical content at three basic levels: interpersonal, organizational and institutional, as well as general social (social and cultural), where trust exactly performs communicative and activity functions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In social and humanitarian science there is a tradition to consider trust as a notion, but not as a concept. The conditions of disciplinary pluralism cause the need for development of categorical construct of trust which is effective at studying trust as multidimensional phenomenon. In this regard one may suggest conceptual schemes forming the notional matrices for studying trust. Cognitive content of trust may be studied through the conceptual scheme "trust credit confidence truth" (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). It is supplemented with a communicative component, because trust is always manifested in interaction with other people. Here the other conceptual schemes are constructed, such as: "Trust in self in other people in the world" and "understanding trust harmony". It results in formation of a notional matrices for discussing trust as a multidimensional phenomenon.

On the basis of the categorical construct of trust it is apparently possible to form the trust concept, while considering that distrust is a problematized element of the trust system, it is also possible to form a wider trust/distrust concept. In our opinion, its development will allow overcoming one-sidedness and fragmentary nature of studying the phenomenon of trust and distrust.

Development of philosophical concepts has begun relatively recently and is complicated by the discrepancies in understanding of their nature. Different authors see rather distinguished theoretical constructions under concepts, use concepts alongside with such notions as 'discourse', 'view of life', 'complex cogitative image', 'operational unit of thinking verbalized in the process of communication' (Howard & Parks, 2012).

To our mind, the philosophical understanding of the nature of concepts in some way differs from the linguistic and culturological as well as cognitive and psychological one.

We see as the most appropriate linguistic and culturological understanding of concept the 'cultural-mental-linguistic' formation, a clot of culture in human consciousness, a 'bunch' of ideas, notions, knowledge and associations. Concepts are not only thought, they are experienced. (Stepanov, 1997).

Inside of the formed conceptual schemes concept functions in the mode of understanding explanation. "Concepts are seldom directly correlated with the subject area corresponding to this scheme. Rather on the contrary, they are the means that organize in their kind of integrity the ways of vision ('setting', construction, constituting) of the reality. In this sense they have a certain ontological 'fullness' distinguishing them from constructs representing just cognitive instruments that allow transferring from one level of theoretical work to another (with the change of the languages of description) and in this role they may not have any ontological 'fullness'. Through the schemes of conceptualization and operationalization, concepts in science are subjects to 'development' into the system of constructs ensuring (ideally) their bringing to the empirical level of research." (Gritsanov, 1999).

The social and philosophical trust/distrust concept is first based on the multidimensional vision of trust as a reality and second on the synthesis of content of disciplinary approaches in social and humanitarian science. A developed concept may be used as a methodological instrument and a basis for effective methods of qualitative analysis of trust in the social systems undergoing transformations. First of all, it may be used as a practical mechanism in behavioural and communicative social practices and a factor of constituting and constructing a social reality. Secondly, the 'trust/distrust' concept explains the way the system of formalized (including institutionalized) and unformalized barriers and borders of trust and distrust is formed in society. The more complicated a society is, the more complicated forms and institutions it has, on one hand performing a protecting function and reinforcing trust; on the other drawing the borders of trust and playing the role of its opponents.

More complicated and diverse modes of trust are formed in interactions between 'we' and 'they', which may sometimes replace productive social and practical activities by converted forms (social mimicry, blatant lie, hypocrisy and imitation).

In such situations the 'trust/distrust' concept being situational and bent to a social context, regulates the social relations. As the mechanisms of it there are first 'insertion' of new content into the existing 'old' legal as well as social and cultural forms of social relations and interactions, and, second, construction of new social and cultural, economic, political and legal schemes in the form of the system of formalized and unformalized barriers and borders of trust in the society.

Apparently, the extent of trust and distrust being the most important characteristic of the social consciousness may play the role of a key factor of social development exacter the actor defining social expectations and human behavioural strategies. This social actor ensures transition of the emotional and moral state of trust/distrust experienced by an individual human consciousness to the plane of sociality where trust/distrust take part in constructing the frame of social reality and acquire certain social and practical content (McNair, 2011).

This thesis may be seemingly well illustrated in the context of the oncoming election campaigns 2016-2018 in Russia, by the content of the modern political process/cases in the USA after election of the new president and even by the anti-doping scandals in sport.

But first of all, we would like to clarify the issue of cause and effect relationship of

trust/distrust and the constructed social reality. The most transparent for these purposes is the approach studying trust from the perspective of its political significance in the context of the dialogue between the government and the people. Interpersonal trust, probably even expanded in a wider social interaction to the category of 'confidence', may be interpreted as one of the bases of civil society.

The Russian social and humanitarian science also raises this question considering political space as a special sphere of cross-cultural interactions, first of all as information communications. According to E. F. Makarevich, communicational influence is built by formula 'trust power of image strength of information flow' and has a purpose of changing social opinion and human behaviour under the influence of mass communications. The confidence in the source of information "multiplies the power of the broadcasted messages. The informational influence is connected with the result of the people's assessment of the subject of communication process by criterion of trust/distrust in it" (Makarevich, 2015).

However it must be recognized that understanding of communication as a universal process of transformation or transition of information on the basis of trust/distrust is not capable of fully explaining the nature of the communication processes in the political sphere of a society. We believe it is possible to represent political communication as a social and cultural dialogue between the political contractors, particularly, the government and the people with the purpose of forming trust in the power structures.

RESULTS

In order to highlight political communication in the general flow of cross-cultural interactions, let us pay attention to its peculiarities. Basically, we see the political criteria of communication as follows:

- Communicative processes in the sphere of public authority,
- Peculiarities of the agents of the political communicative processes,
- Special substantive aspects of the information interactions.

In the modern world complicating the ways of legitimization of government, a great number of experts, analysts, various specialists, publicists, journalists, etc. is involved into the political sphere besides the traditional agents (Fueroghne, 2017). Their activities lead to the change in the traditional state of the political field, so now it starts functioning as a specific field of a public sphere. 'Public politics' is turning into the symbiosis of political action, scientific reflection and mass-media communications. Functioning of communications in the sphere of public politics adds to these processes a property that does not allow considering them as an analogue of interpersonal communication (Luhmann, 1979). It should be taken into the account if we are going to represent trust/distrust as a constituting factor, but not a social and psychological state.

Inclusion of political communication into the sphere of public politics led to significant changes in the political sphere of society by itself. The structure of political activities, the methods of political struggle, the nature of political relationships are currently in many aspects defined by the communicative processes in the society, that are in their turn pierced, it may be

even said 'built' on the basis of trust/distrust between the agents of the activities.

To explain the processes of constructing the reality it is reasonable to use the idea of reification popularized by D. Lukach. The reality constructed by a person in the processes of reification of social institutions is considered as objective reality. Social relationships are represented to be beyond human control, as frozen and changeless as if they were natural, but not anthropogenic. The institutional world being reificated is a dehumanized world and is perceived by a human as an alien reality, but not the result of his/her own productive activities (Koc-Michalska & Lilleker, 2016).

The ability of mass media to rearrange social movements, to focus social attention on a certain political situation and a certain way of solution of tasks is obvious. In this regard, mass media being the most significant channel of political communication undergo constant accusations and reproaches.

In the activities of mass media those properties and relationships are hypostatized, i.e. are considered as independently existing, though they do not exist independently, but are ideologically demanded. That's why the notion of 'social reality' by itself may be entirely considered as ideological.

It becomes obvious that as a factor of modelling social and political semantic field of wide social masses, political communication turns into the means of cross-cultural influence, transfer of value and normative frameworks of one social and cultural entity to another and, thus, is included into the means for ensuring the dialogue between the government and the people. It may be distinctively observed in the attitude towards the mass media during organization of election campaigns. The reason why mass media turn out to be in the centre of combative public debates is evident. Joining the discussion of some or another issue, mass media not only reflect the facts of social life or set the boundaries of public discussion of an event, but also construct the reality by itself, binding the systems of meanings into a semantic field, preliminarily selecting significant and insignificant things from the sphere of reality (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008).

What is the role of trust and distrust in such constructing? Any social constructing is connected with uncertainty which is filled with assessments of the current subject. In this case the extent of trust/distrust defines what the constructing process will be focused on and what objects will be put in the sphere of attention.

Let us consider the process of constructing the social reality in cross-cultural interactions, first of all, in political communications, at certain examples. Thus, after the elections to the parliament in Russia the most popular motive of the speeches of the defeated parties' representatives usually were reproaches in information distortion of the images of these political parties and their leaders, their ban from broadcasting, etc. The trust/distrust emerged at this to the leaders and parties presupposed the nature of the political reality that was at least reflected in the former political institutes.

The same situation emerged in pre- and post-electoral America in 2016. Distrust towards Russia in certain political circles of the USA caused ridiculous, from the perspective of strict logic, political constructs. The new American President D. Trump that was elected by all the people of the USA (otherwise are the democratic institutions in the country no longer effective?) turned out to be a 'Kremlin henchman'. Why did exactly D. Trump become the target for such accusations? According to the official mass media, he does not deserve trust anymore. Russia got

into this political scheme as an apparent political opponent with the highest rating of distrust. The constructing appears to be so powerful, that some serious proofs of this political construct are even not required at all (Cho, 2011).

Or let us show an example of the media frenzy over the hacker attacks' influence on the results of the presidential election in the USA in 2016. The hacker attacks (if they really took place) by their nature are a kind of highly professional intellectual activities. However they are becoming a prioritized way of obtaining the information by 'the country of high distrust' in favor of 'the candidate for President that does not deserve to be trusted in'. For just several weeks after the election, some 'seriously dangerous social and political situation' is modelled in the country based on DISTRUST. The same way TRUST may construct another social and political reality.

A bright example of trust/distrust as an actor of constructing social reality became 'anti-doping wars' in sport. The modern professional sport can no longer go without stimulating medications. It is reasonable to agree with the statement that the sportsmen's records are directly and in many aspects connected with the victories in the sporting medicine. So why did the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) treat exactly the Russian sportsmen the worst way? Why exactly their ten year old doping tests are rechecked? The answer is apparently connected with the political situation in the world (that was many times pointed at by the sports officials in Russia). Escalation of political uncertainty in the world, the entry of Russia to the international arena as an independent political force and subsequently the conflicts causing trust/distrust between the existing parties are reflected in the 'sport wars'. Notably, the distrust in the suppositions about the situation in the Russian sport was so high, that the use of doping was considered as a part of the national policy. The reports of the WADA officials are not based on reliable evidences of guilt of the Russian sportsmen, but nevertheless they are considered to be official documents. It is strange, but their evidences are not required, because the main evidence is the distrust towards Russia in general.

We are far from the thought based on jingoism, that there are no doping in the Russian sports, but we also cannot suppose that the WADA reports in such strange format without evidences of guilt regarding the sportsmen, for example, from England or France would have caused the same international resonance. The western audience has more trust in these sportsmen (it means to the countries).

Further development of the trust/distrust subject as an actor of constructing requires elaboration of content of the actors of political and communicative processes. As political communication is not an analogue to the interpersonal one, then a peculiar personality takes part in the political and communicative process only as a representative of some social entity. In other words, it is referred to a consolidated actor. The political market has qualitatively different, often opposite competitive programs of political powers. Therewith the visual mass communication means are used, such as TV, Internet, newspapers and periodicals, etc.

DISCUSSION

Recognition of 'social group' as an actor of political communication is however not quite corrects, and is not quite applicable to the analysis of the information space. Social entities as consolidated actors cannot directly participate in the exchanges of political information. In practice, the interests of macro-entities in political and informational space are expressed by

another constructs. Solovyev highlights the following agents of the political information field: Information structures of a state (PR departments and services of various institutions, media offices, etc.); various corporate structures (information departments of parties, social and political movements, formed groups of interests); specialized information structures (consulting and advertising agencies); mass media used for political purpose (regardless of the fact whether they are independent participants of the information market or employed by any other actors); terroristic and other organizations taking in the information space the positions which are not legally accepted; sponsors, media moguls and advertising customers with specific attitudes and the corresponding entries into the information market; various (from the perspective of participation in the political discourse) segments of the society: 'audience' or a sector of politically active citizens keeping constant informational contact with the government; 'the public' contacting with the latter only during intense development of political process; and 'society', i.e., the unity of citizens that almost have no political contacts with the government (Solovyov, 2002).

Such method of structuring the actors of political and communication processes apparently do not reflect all the content of the subcultural matrices of the society, but even institutional subjects of political communication play the role of the bearers of certain cultural traditions interpreting the images of the government, the ways of semiotic-symbolical information also coding social and cultural stereotypes. The actors of political and communication processes reproduce these cultural forms in their activities and also form the new forms. When there are many actors of political and communication processes, trust/distrust acquires a special significance, for example, as one of the social and cultural components of the dialogue between the government and the people.

Recently, such dialogue of the government and the subordinated takes place with the rejection of the population segments not belonging to the elite from direct political dialogue with the elites as a background that characterizes these processes exactly in the aspect of trust and distrust. 'Passive conformism' denoted by the majority of the researchers of the electoral process shows growing indifference of the majority of the population to participation in the political games and distrust in them. The population segments not belonging to the elite refuse of being the actors of the political communications and even of representation of their interests on the political market. Among the possible reasons there are, first, transition of interest to the private sector, second, cynicism about their own participation in the political dialogue and, consequently, distrust in the legitimate political structures.

We guess that this situation only strengthens the cultural contacts by themselves, forcing the political communicators to take on the other methods of political communication. One of the most powerful methods is political symbolization.

The mechanics of the government may generally be explained through the technique of the symbolical forms. Such forms are, for example, political myths, that people apply for as for the latest shifts in critical situations. E. Cassirer wrote that if our reason does not meet our expectation, then we always have the supernatural and the mythical to rely on.

The need of applying for symbolical forms as for 'forcible means' is based on the feeling of loss of the basis for political dialogue with some social group. In the latest Russian history there are many examples of application of 'symbolical weapons': Suggestions about taking the Lenin's body away from the Mausoleum in the periods of crisis, reburial of Nicholas the Second

as the symbol of repentance and recovery of the Russian statehood tradition, dismantling and installation of the historic monuments, etc. Even such important matter of the Church as canonization of the Tsar's family became politically coloured. An example of political dialogue between the elite and the population segments not belonging to the elite at the level of political symbolism acceptance of a previous Soviet anthem as the national anthem of the Russian Federation.

In the context of social and cultural dialogue the term 'cultural wars' applied to the ideological influences of mass media and wider to the political communication acquires another colouring. Through the actors of the communication process the social cultures are struggling for domination over their value orientations, standards of behaviour, and the ways of interpreting the world and thus carry out 'cultural struggles' for power in the society.

In the context of our study advertising is represented as a special means of social communication, a means of strengthening and maybe formation of trust/distrust. Political advertising performs special tasks of formation of attitudes and stereotypes of the electoral behaviour aimed at increasing the trust in the government (Caramani, 2016).

Despite advertising is focused on certain segments, represented by the groups with various consumer orientations, generally it generates in the society a certain type of consciousness and social behaviour as socially acceptable cultural model. In accordance with the certain style of consumer behaviour the identity of social actors is constructed. Political advertising in comparison with the commercial one not only distributes the social and cultural models of life and forms the fields of sights for various social groups, but also denotes the parameters of the dialogue between the political elite and the people. Through the construction of video- and audio sequence of advertising clips, trust/distrust in some or other subjects and events is generated.

Using political advertising as an example one may demonstrate as, first, trust/distrust in political agents is generated, and then with the help of such trust/distrust the desired social and political reality is constructed and suggested (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 2010).
Analysis of the TV political advertising shows that it is an organized message applied to a certain audience, including with the purpose of increasing trust and minimization of distrust in government. The communicative scheme of the message is subordinated to the final goal the necessity of voting for a certain party at the election.

Generation of trust in political parties and their leaders is performed by the advertising on the threshold of the election. It accentuates their capability of solving the relevant problems, points at the positive results of their activities and certain achievements, and focuses on personal and professional traits of the politicians (such as honesty, commitment, professionalism, experience, power). Therewith negative image of the competitors is generated through pointing at their lack of necessary professional skills and/or presence of negative personal traits.

CONCLUSION

Based on the generated images of trust/distrust the desired reality is constructed, explicitly revealing the mechanisms of the dialogue between the government and the people presenting in various formats. The leading parties appear to be the active subjects with high reliability (trust) destined to become "the benefactors" for the people which defines the

dependent role of the latter. The poor situation in the country is connected with the wrong actions of the competitors which are not to be trusted in.

The trust is institutionalized in the attempts of 'uniting' the people with the party advertised. The principles uniting government and the people are usually the ideas of patriotism and responsibility for the country's future. In the political programs the planed actions are implemented through the use of 'we' pronoun, which is called up for positioning the trust between the government and the people.

REFERENCES

Bennett, W.L. & Iyengar, S. (2008). A new era of minimal effects? The changing foundations of political communication. *Journal of Communication, 58*(4), 707-731.

Caramani, D. (2016). *Comparative politics.* Oxford Univ Press.

Cho, J. (2011). The geography of political communication: Effects of regional variations in campaign advertising on citizen communication. *Human Communication Research, 37*(3), 434-462.

Fueroghne, D.K. (2017). *Law & Advertising: A Guide to Current Legal Issues.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Gritsanov, A.A. (1999). *The concept. The Newest Philosophical Dictionary.* Minsk: *The Book House*. Available from: http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/dic_new_philosophy/623/КОНЦЕПТ.

Howard, P.N. & Parks, M.R. (2012). Social media and political change: Capacity, constraint and consequence. *Journal of Communication, 62*(2), 359-362.

Koc-Michalska, K. & Lilleker, D. (2016). Digital politics: Mobilization, engagement and participation. *Political Communication, 34*(1), 1-5.

Luhmann, N. (1979). *Trust and Power.* Chichester: John Wiley.

Makarevich, E.F. (2015). On the effectiveness of communication effects. *Knowledge. Understanding. Skill, 1*, 106-127.

Mazzoleni, G. & Schulz, W. (2010). "Mediatization" of Politics: A challenge for democracy? *Political Communication, 16*(3), 247-261.

McNair, B. (2011). *An introduction to political communication.* Taylor & Francis.

Ridout, T.N. & Franz, M.M. (2011). *The persuasive power of campaign advertising*. Temple University Press.

Solovyov, A.I. (2002). Political communication: To the problem of theoretical identification. *Political studies, 3*, 13-14.

Stepanov, Y.S. (1997). *Constants. Dictionary of Russian culture. Experience of research.* Moscow: School of Languages of Russian Culture.

Tufekci, Z. & Wilson, C. (2012). Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations from Tahrir Square. *Journal of Communication, 62*(2), 363-379.