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ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

**Las raíces filosóficas de la dicotomía confianza/desconfianza
en las estructuras de los poderes públicos contemporáneos***
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Resumen

Este artículo analiza los principios fundamentales de la confianza, que son de naturaleza filosófica. La dicotomía confianza/desconfianza revela el contenido de las relaciones sociopolíticas y permite especificar el nivel de consentimiento y conflicto de los actores activos. Esta dicotomía contiene tanto un elemento de creencia como un componente de respuesta psicológica y actitud racional ante el problema del bien y el mal. La confianza es un consenso entre el público y las autoridades. Las autoridades son tan públicas como abiertas y responsables, así como las élites son responsables de sus actividades profesionales. En una crisis, una serie de normas y principios se desplazan o incluso se pervierten por completo; tanto que adquieren rasgos manifiestamente grotescos y carnavalescos. La confianza en estas figuras públicas disminuye hasta su mínimo o incluso se transforma en su contrario. En las estructuras de los poderes públicos contemporáneos, la dicotomía confianza/desconfianza desempeña el papel de factor que determina el éxito o el fracaso, la victoria o la derrota. La práctica política demuestra que el poder público está en constante retroceso desde sus raíces filosóficas, establecidas en el mundo antiguo (Platón, Aristóteles). Se sabe que la confianza de la sociedad en las autoridades va hacia la confianza del propio gobierno en su pueblo. Cuando el gobierno confía en su pueblo, se comporta con más seguridad y decisión y, por el contrario, un bajo nivel de confianza o su ausencia total amenaza con un conflicto de intereses.

Palabras clave: dicotomía, confianza/desconfianza, autoridad y sociedad, élites, conflicto.

Abstract

**Philosophical roots of trust/distrust dichotomy in the structures of
contemporary public authorities**

This paper discusses the fundamental principles of trust which are of a philosophical nature. Trust/distrust dichotomy reveals the content of socio-political relations and allows specifying the level of the consent and conflict of active actors. This dichotomy contains both an element of belief and a component of psychological response and rational attitude to the problem of good and evil. Trust is a consensus between the public and the authorities. Authorities are as public as they turn out to be open and responsible, as the elites are responsible for their professional activities. In a crisis, a number of norms and principles are shifted or even completely perverted; so much that they

acquire demonstratively grotesque and carnival traits. The trust in such public figures decreases to its minimum or even changes into its opposite. In the structures of contemporary public authorities, the trust/distrust dichotomy plays the role of the factor that determines success or failure, victory or defeat. The political practice shows that a public authority is a constant retreat from its philosophical roots, laid down in the ancient world (Plato, Aristotle). It is known that the trust of society in the authorities goes towards the trust of the government itself to its people. When the government trusts its people, it behaves more confidently and decisively, and, on the contrary, a low level of trust or its complete absence threatens with a conflict of interests.

Keywords: dichotomy, trust/distrust, authority and society, elites, conflict.

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1.- Introduction

When it comes to some philosophical roots, the specific metaphysical principles of the problem under consideration are meant and the deep awareness of the roots leads to understanding their essence. The category of the good is the very deep foundation in the trust/distrust dichotomy which has been assessed as the "core" of social being since the times of Plato and Aristotle.

Like characteristics of the good, the trust/distrust dichotomy specifies people's attitude to the circumstances that are especially significant for them. The public nature of democratic power makes it particularly dependent on public approval and consensus within an elite group itself. Publicity for authorities means to be discussed and accepted by the majority. Besides, an approval never equals 100 per cent in politics. Even under totalitarianism, there are still a certain percentage of those who disagree with the opinion of the vast majority. Consequently, the approval/disapproval dichotomy is permanent and variable.

For a primitive man, trust is a guarantee of safety to enter the cave, knowing that there is no saber-toothed tiger. Little has changed in the human psychology since that time. Trust is the absence of a security threat and a guarantee of the good, not harm; trust occurs when there is no threat or danger; trust is a guarantee to avoid negativity; it is the belief that a person deals with the truth and that no one tell lies to them. Trust provides for constructive dialogue, interaction, security and mutual respect. Distrust

means threat, the possibility of harm and the striving to avoid this in order to prevent unwanted mistakes.

Trust is a resource that needs to be properly used by both the authorities and the public itself. The resource is very specific and therefore always requires a delicate treatment. This delicacy is expressed in the increased ethical activity and a humanistic approach in assessing the political reality.

2. Materials and methods

The methodological basis of this paper comprises such methods as dialectics, comparative studies, hermeneutics, semiotics, as well as methods of systematization, modelling and design. As a working hypothesis, the thesis is considered that the level of public trust in authorities directly depends on the quality of the professional competence of ruling elite communities. If the quality decreases, the effect of carnival political culture arises, directly testifying to the destructiveness of the entire considered political system.

The present study is based on a value approach to assessing the authorities' performance.

"Values and value orientations predetermine the basis of the phenomenon of trust in power. The correlation of the deeds of a particular authority with one's own expectations and value orientations is the basis of its identification as "own" or "alien", "close" or "hostile". The degree of conformity of expectations and value positions of individuals towards the real activity of authorities is a measure of their trust in this power. Accordingly, the *trust in power* is defined as *a form of attitude towards its structures and representatives, expressed in cognitive and emotional-sensual assessments of its activities regulated by the thesaurus*" (Grigorenko, 2013: 22).

The issues of the political worldview stay outside the authors' study since this topic requires a special scientific analysis. The problem of destructiveness and the destruction of social harmony is mentioned which also impacts on the formation of the dialectical trust/distrust contradiction. The authors constantly have in mind all these topics and they accompany the present study and the authors address them as needed.

The measurements of the level of public trust and distrust in institutions and authorities, regularly conducted by sociologists, provide the richest empirical material on the basis of which the authors' analytical conclusions are drawn, regarding the current state of affairs. Political sociology allows keeping finger on the pulse of political events and diagnosing the states of the relationship between power and society.

3. Results and discussion

1. Philosophy trust

Traditionally, trust is believed to be the basis of all socio-political institutions. As a rule, trust is considered in dichotomous unity with its opposite - distrust. In the philosophical tradition, one of the main features of trust is the moral behavior of a person, expressing such an attitude of one person to another which proceeds from a conviction of its decency, faith, responsibility, honesty and truthfulness. The opposite of trust is distrust, understood as a state in which a person's sincerity and honesty are doubted. Consequently, *morality is the first means of measuring trust/distrust* in the social environment.

Most often, trust is defined as confidently positive or optimistic expectations about the behavior of another one, and distrust as confidently negative expectations (Hosmer, 1995; Kramer & Cook, 2004). The dichotomy of trust/distrust is described by other dichotomous pairs –“expectations of benefits - expectations of harm” and “expectations of good - expectations of evil”, which directly leads the axiology to ethics that explores the deep foundations of the human race. It is known that in the dichotomy, the balance (balance of powers) is disturbed by the growth of one quality, due to a decrease in the level of another one.

The second criterion of trust/distrust assessment after morality is the axiological assessment of what is happening. The clue between trust and distrust lies in their conflict of goals, interests and values. It is believed that the subject's readiness for enmity or competition causes the anticipation of revenge and generates “preventive” distrust (Kupreychenko & Tabkharova, 2017).

From the point of view of platonism, trust ensures the cooperation and successful achievement of desired goals; it is consent, the voluntary creation of benefit and good; it gives the way to cooperation, union and spiritual unity (in Russian: sobornost). Confidence is a sign of the friendship of citizens and the well-being of the state when everyone is professionally engaged in their business and does it in the *best possible way* (Plato, *AlcibiadesI*, 127b) (Plato, 1990-1994).

Any social contract is based on the trust between its participants to each other. Trust means the absence of malice, cunning, hypocrisy and manipulation by the participants in the social contract. Therefore, the *third criterion* for assessing the trust/distrust dichotomy is personalism, emanating in its judgments from the fact that democracies should be interested in creating a political system focused on respect for a person.

In political terms, the *fourth criterion* for evaluating the trust/distrust dichotomy is the benefit (or harm). Here, the emersion into the world of political subjective expediency takes place where the principles of utilitarianism and pragmatism operate. This is a world of dominating selfish people whose ambitions determine the nature of their assessments and justifications of good and evil.

Finally, the *fifth formal feature* is the legal assessment of reality; the criterion for assessing and verifying the legal reality is a constitutional value. Law acts as an arbiter and assessment of authority legitimacy.

In politics, trust is often replaced by the concept of belief but there is a significant difference between *belief and trust* - when the first one involves an irrational assessment of the reality, then the second one seeks to rely on objective criteria and markers and establish its "mathematical" exact parameters (hence all these sociological surveys and measurements).

The level of trust greatly depends on the awareness and legal competence of citizens. The first one enables accurate determining what truth and what delusion (lie) is, the latter one teaches to act within the law, in case of distrust of the current government. Awareness and competence form the basis of political self-sufficiency.

Trust has its upsides and downsides: the upside involves *sobornost (spiritual unity)* when there is complete agreement; the downside is *gullibility* fraught with the threat of deception and manipulation by an unscrupulous partner. The latter becomes a transitional condition of trust in its opposite form, which disrupts the balance of power to a negative result. When trust disappears, everything disappears. Distrust stabilizes the inflation of relations, plunges everyone and everything into a state of disintegration, destructiveness and degradation.

It should also not be forgotten about the situation of the "balance of forces" when both of these values (trust and distrust) are in the "balance of forces". This is the time of doubt and indecision. Situations when no one can give a definite answer (neither "yes" nor "no"). Such situations can develop into turning points of history and often do this when any violation of such balance can tip the scales in one direction or another. An example here is the so-called tradition of "secret history" when the number of those who doubt and those who unconditionally believe in "conspiracy theories" is approximately equal (Stone & Kuznick, 2014).

2. Psychology of trust/distrust

In psychology, trust means an open relationship between people that contains confidence in the decency of another person (subject). The trust/distrust dichotomy has the most important influence on the initial phase of personality formation ("the cornerstone of personality viability"), developing confidence or uncertainty in it and success or difficulties in its socialization.

It is generally accepted that trust does not always represent positive expectations. The sincerity of relationships can increase the trust of relationships, but if a person initially does not trust another person, then even the good coming from them can be perceived and assessed as insidious and malicious intent (Garfinkel, 2009). Suspicion can be the first step towards destroying both trust and distrust. Everything depends on how the subject assesses the prospect of the good. The formula for this relationship is encrypted in such proverbs as "Free cheese can be found only in a mousetrap" and "Beware of Greeks even they bring gifts". It is positive and negative expectations that become the line between trust and distrust:

"the expectation of the good (a sign of trust) including the form of censure, restriction or punishment (these expectations can hardly be called positive), as

well as the expectation of harm (a sign of distrust), including the form of undeserved reward, adulation, suppleness, etc.” (Kupreychenko & Tabkharova, 2017: 55).

In this regard, researchers distinguish the specific functions of trust and distrust. Due to trust, a subject interacts with the world, experience and transforms it and themselves. It is the trust that creates the conditions for experience, exchange and interaction of a subject with the outside world. Distrust also contributes to the protection and isolation of the subject and their socio-psychological space. This also shows the protective function of distrust. Thus, one of the signs that can separate trust and distrust is “the orientation towards exchange and interaction and the orientation towards protection and isolation” (Kupreychenko & Tabkharova, 2017: 55).

Psychologists divide the trust/distrust dichotomy into two groups: 1) the factors for assessing the positive/negative prospects of potential cooperation or interaction (interest in trust, value of trust, expectation of the good as a result of trust); 2) the factors for predicting the success of building the trust relationships (predicting the possibility and ease/difficulties of the trust building process) (Kupreychenko & Tabkharova, 2017).

In the psychology of trust/distrust, an important role is played by an emotional reaction to current events. Emotions are able to play a cruel joke in assessing the situation. In political history, there are a lot of examples of how the emotional over-excitement of politicians and the public led to fatal erroneous decisions. Historians still cannot accurately assess the results of those fatal reactions.

Both ethical standards and aesthetic values contribute greatly to the development of trust. The French writer Anatole France stated that *we tend to believe everything said, especially when it is said in a nice way*. The beauty of the constructions of political rhetoric might be mesmerizing and uplifting. On occasion, the beauty of words supersedes the true meaning of what is said. The public find themselves under the hypnosis of their leaders who convince the society of their rightness by the force of their eloquence and they believe them. That belief is a kind of trust, a fanatical trust. Such trust of the public in their leaders is observed in the history of totalitarian states.

In the authors’ opinion, there is one more important feature of the dichotomy under discussion. The trust/distrust dichotomy has a certain border zone (frontier) where their signs are blurred so much that it is sometimes impossible to determine “what is what”. This is a state of doubt when black can seem white and evil actively pretends to be the good and pushes it to the periphery of relations. Ignorance and uncertainty mix all signs of trust/distrust and the subject is simply lost in their assessments. Such a state of uncertainty is possible to be prolonged and act either as a catalyst for conflict or on the contrary as a safety valve that relieves the tension in the relationship.

3. Political trust/distrust dichotomy

In the structures of contemporary public authorities, trust/distrust turns out to be the cornerstone which the public well-being and the strength of the construction of the

power vertical is based on. Trust gives rise to the willingness of people to observe and strengthen the common rules of conduct. At the same time, the opinion of the public is not only won by the authorities (as in the case of democracies) but also achieved through manipulation and falsification (as it is often observed in totalitarianism). The main goal of all such actions is to achieve order and harmony in the political space of social existence.

The category of trust itself has a value characteristic and is largely shaped by the historical traditions of a particular society. The experts draw attention to the fact that in different socio-cultural environments, the levels of trust and distrust of authorities differ significantly. The socio-cultural mechanism for the trust formation is largely associated with traditions and was created historically. So, it has a value basis (Grigorenko, 2013: 4).

The socio-political trust possesses two equal values: the first one is trust/distrust of society in its authorities and the second one is trust/distrust of authorities themselves in their society (Dugin, 2018). From the ratio of these two parameters, the formula of specific trust/distrust between authorities and society is built. Consequently, the case in point is mutual trust (or distrust) of the society power.

In the socio-political life, much depends on whether the public believes in the virtues of their rulers or considers them a bearer of evil. Even Desiderius Erasmus in his treatise "The Education of a Christian Prince (written almost simultaneously with "The Sovereign" by N. Machiavelli) declared that the correct education of the sovereign changes into a guarantee of moral policy. The hope of victory over evil melts if a ruler manifests *ridiculous thoughts and ignoble wishes* (Erasmus, 1936). It is dangerous to trust and help such rulers since there is a threat of despotism and tyranny. For justice, it is worth reminding that Erasmus himself wrote his moral exhortations to the German emperor Charles V of Habsburg and the English king Henry VIII who both did not meet his hopes and destroyed them with their miserable (despotic) reign.

It should be specially noted that italic *ridiculous thoughts and ignoble wishes* are the core of those elite communities that have the vices of carnival political culture. Trust is formed from knowledge (belief) that the subject of power formulates and makes a decision themselves. On the contrary, the level of distrust to such authorities only increases in the absence of such a conviction. As a result, this poses the issue of the moral appearance of authorities and their moral assessment by the society with or without meaning to.

It is even unknown who actually makes political decisions in the West nowadays. However, it is obviously that they are not those who officially rule. Those who officially rule decide nothing, understand nothing and say nothing. They only voice the decisions of the "deep state". The so-called "decision-making centers" are not always located at the official residence address of authorities. As a rule, shadow structures are removed from the zone of public policy into the sphere of informal relations. The case in hand is "deep state" and "deep influencing elite".

It is fundamentally important for the government itself to know which groups of citizens are less gullible about its policies, which helps it timely to adjust its policies and direct the resources to increase the level of trust among these segments of citizens (Petruk, 2017).

Trust promotes the activity towards humanistic solidarity and affirmation of spiritual unity in planning the image of the future. In the absence of trust, alternative and deviant forms of activities arise (corruption, suspicion, caste and hostility) that contribute to the development of a destructive understanding and evaluation of the social view of the world (Scott, 2005). Thus, a necessary condition for the existence of tolerance is the trust of the citizens in their authorities.

Distrust causes tensions that pave the way for conflicts. Lack of trust gives rise to suspicion of malice, hostility and harm that worsen the situation. This threat can be prevented by reducing the level of distrust of government and its specific representatives. The popularity or unpopularity of politicians leads to the growth or decline of trust in the society. Distrust means disunity and disagreement, trust means union and agreement. Any spiritual unity is based on trust. Russia is a country of spiritual unity. The spiritual unity (sobornost) is the basis of Russia's well-being. It is also important to remember that the government itself is to trust to its people. The last Russian Tsar Nikolai II was always convinced that the Russian people loved him and supported him. It is known from the political Russian history of the 20th century what all his naivety led to. Charles I, the king of England from the House of Stuart, and Louis XVI, the French monarch of the Bourbon family, were naive in their political affairs too.

Trust deficit is able to activate the destructive tendencies that may lead to tragic results or bring to life carnival political traditions (comic perception and satirical assessment of the unreasonable actions of authorities). Manipulative political technology opens up wide scope for this kind of distortion. The political carnival is a world of deceived deceivers.

4. Deficit of trust in public authorities

It is generally accepted that the lack of trust in public authorities produces some problems in the construction and functioning of the "healthy" legal democratic society. There is a problem with the public liability of representative bodies for their violation of law and order. In political history, the problem of forming and increasing public confidence of population in relation to all branches of government runs like a red thread. So, the main problem is the lack of trust and the growing level of distrust of authorities.

Trust deficit directly depends on moral deficits in the society and especially in the authorities. If the moral aspect is excluded from political practices, then the publicity of authorities becomes legitimately dubious.

In conditions of digitalization, detecting an accurate index of trust in the authorities is of particular importance. The modern system of communication assumes the openness and transparency of authority actions. The flows of information simply overwhelm the political space, giving rise to various reactions of the population and its active part (civil

society). It is known that the “phenomenon of information abundance” generates the phenomenon of “information noise”, a chaotic mixture of truthful and false information from so-called fake sources. The information consumer ceases to filter the information and loses the ability to reliably understand the processes taking place and adequately respond to them. This leads to incorrect decisions (errors) (Kurenevsky, 2019). This state of politics opens up wide possibilities for manipulating public opinion and discrediting opponents.

The government itself is interested in managing the process of developing trust/distrust, directing it as it needs. Political technologists (advertising and image making) get to their job using existing techniques and methods of “organizing trust” (e.g., ensuring the desired outcome in elections).

Electoral democratic cycles lead to a frequent change of ruling elite, which gives rise to the phenomenon of removing the responsibility of one generation of politicians to another. The previously assumed obligations are denied under the plausible pretext of an official change in the vector of policy. This results in both destroying previous agreements and the political reputation of a country. In such countries there is no institution of reputation because politicians often pretend that nothing is happening. The rating of political trust in such authorities always remains at a low level.

Public trust in the authorities is largely determined by the opinion of expert academic community. Scientific support takes responsibility for the development of an adequate perception of objective reality. However, the long-term experience of analysing this kind of work shows that not everything is satisfactory in this kind of assessment by the academic environment. This is primarily deals with the expert pool itself.

It often occurs that a subjectively chosen expert community is biased by certain political and economic forces. The special views of the world created by them to an order (under specific grants) often contrast with the objective reality. Consequently, the portraits of politicians and political processes “painted” by them do not always coincide with the reality since they are often the wishful thinking of the experts. Such experts “successfully fight” with a kind of abstract image created by them. The fake perception of the reality is intensifying. This paves the way for *demonization or sacralization* of authorities. Therefore, the degree of trust in the forecasts of such experts always leaves much to be desired.

Blatant pathos and outright lies have become a sign of public politics. Moreover, a lot of achievements of authorities are exclusively rhetorical in nature and do not go beyond the scope of political literature. Many figures (activists), whose professional experience resides in successful rhetorical exercises, have built their political careers on this. Political sophistry pushes the professional competence and political ethics to the periphery.

The followers of personalism (N.A. Berdyaev, J. Lacroix, E. Munier and others) pointed out that the personal qualities of a politician always draw more attention of the public than their status positions. However, many current politicians have nothing but their status positions. They show a critical deficiency of personal qualities (merits). This

is the diagnosis of the present. The public is unable to accurately establish a measure of such dignity, and therefore accepts their incorrect assessments. The public trusts those who should not be trusted, due to the potential public danger lurking in them.

The exact determination of the scale of such political personalities determines the nature of trust in them. In general, few people are interested in shallow political characters and cause a sarcastic attitude towards them, due to their complete degradation. They turn up in the public environment and disappear without a trace, leaving no trace of themselves. Many nations still argue and still cannot come to a consensus about the role of their great politicians in the world history: the French about Napoleon, the British about Cromwell, the Russians about Stalin, etc. Such assessments allow them to form and refine their cultural and civilizational identity but what ideals the authorities enjoy also determines the composition of their public support or distrust.

The level of trust in democratic institutions directly depends on the quality of democratic values themselves, to what extent democracy is the norm both for society and for political power itself.

4. Conclusion

We live in the age of plummeting trust in the political leaders and global political leadership in particular. The world entered a period of global restructuring associated with the crisis of the unipolar world and the initiation of multi-polarity principle. As a result, carnival political traditions involving the crisis of political elites are intensifying on the edge of this breakdown. The political carnival arises from the inadequate behavior of the government officials who choose false aims and set utopian goals.

The political carnival clarifies the issue of the public's political trust in the ruling elites. The trust relations between the elite and the society are completely destroyed during the carnival ruling. Due to this, the vacuum emerges in the socio-political world filled with empty promises and demagoguery of public sophistry.

Trust in politics is a variable indicating the level of cooperation or conflict in the society and power structures. Therefore, it is necessary to study and take into account both the level of trust/distrust and the speed and the vector of changes in these values themselves. Here, the well-known folk wisdom "there is one step from love to hatred" turns out to be relevant.

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