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**TRENDS IN POLITICAL TRUST IN NEW EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES:
DECLINE OR INCREASE? – IMPLICATIONS FOR ESTABLISHED DEMOCRACIES**

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Abstract: It has been widely agreed that political trust is declining – that people are less and less confident in state institutions. However, most empirical studies are based on survey data collected in the United States or in Western Europe, which implies that political trust has been predominantly researched in the context of established democracies. Only a few scholars have studied political trust in new democracies, even though previous research has suggested that the levels of trust differ significantly between new and established democracies. Thus, this paper investigates political trust in recently consolidated states, focusing on central and eastern European countries as well as southern European countries, in order to provide some insights into the state and development of trust in new democracies. The main objective is to examine trends in political trust after regime transformations, using survey data from the EVS/WVS. Previous studies have claimed that an exceptional emergence of political trust takes place after transformations from autocratic to democratic regimes (a “honeymoon” period), which is followed by a sharp decline. Although this study reveals that the “honeymoon-hypothesis” can be supported in general, it can also be shown that the development of trust differs with regard to the institutions people trust. These findings will be contrasted with the declining political trust in established democracies.

In diverse domains, for example, in the economy, sociology, political science, and public life trust is a key concept. As Citrin and Luks put it “[t]rust [...] is the word on everyone’s lips” (2001: 9). When political scientists deal with trust, they frequently focus on the issue of declining political trust, linked to the assumption of a general disenchantment with politics. Though most scholars agree that political trust is declining, that people are less and less confident in state institutions (Gabriel et al. 2002: 185-6; Newton 2008: 244-5; Norris 1999c: 227), the majority of their empirical studies are based on survey data collected in the United States or in Western Europe. The common ground of these countries is that their democracies were established a significantly long time ago. This means that political trust has been predominantly researched in the context of established democracies. Although previous research has suggested that levels of trust differ drastically between new and established democracies (McAllister 1999: 194-5; Gabriel 2008: 197), only a few scholars have studied political trust exclusively in new democracies. This seems even more peculiar, when considering the relatively high presence of new democracies in the world.¹ Moreover, the sources of political trust have been researched in detail over the past years; most scholars agree that both cultural and institutional factors explain political trust (cf. Campbell 2004; Denters et al. 2007; Mishler/Rose 1997, 2001, 2005; Rohrschneider 1999). Researchers have failed, however, to consider whether a decline of trust has occurred in all countries.

Against that background, this paper investigates political trust in recently consolidated states, focusing on central and eastern European (CEE) countries as well as southern (SE) European

¹ According to Freedom House, in 1974, nearly 30 percent of all existing states could be judged as democracies; nowadays, 45 percent operate with a democratic political system. Consequently, there have been large system transformations, smoothing the path for democracy in a multitude of cases. At present, these political systems can be described as new democracies. The increase in democratically governed states has been facilitated by the famous third wave of democratization (cf. Huntington 1991), including transformations in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Europe.

countries, in order to provide some insights into the state and development of trust in new democracies.² Since the countries under consideration disposed of different legacies, this paper will distinguish between post-authoritarian and post-totalitarian communist regime types. It will be argued that each legacy has an impact on the development and stability of political trust. However, the main purpose of the present study is to identify general trends of political trust after regime transformations. It will be examined whether there is a general decline of trust in these nations, as indicated in studies conducted in established democracies (Gabriel et al. 2002; Newton 2008; Norris 1999c), or whether the development of political trust in new democracies follows different paths, as suggested elsewhere (Catterberg/Moreno 2005; Weil 1989).

The paper begins by briefly discussing trust in political institutions. In this context, the uncontested relevance of political trust for democracy will be discussed, together with the counter-intuitive lack of a theory of trust. It then outlines how scholars of trust encounter the subject theoretically and how political trust can be defined. In addition, it considers whether citizens can distinguish between the different political institutions they are evaluating. The question is answered empirically by running a principal component analysis. The next step outlines previous findings on the development of political trust in established and new democracies, in order to build hypotheses on established facts. The empirical section of the paper starts by illustrating the development of trust in SE and CEE countries, in all cases starting after the transitions to democracy. In the concluding section, the general findings are discussed in light of previous studies, and suggestions for further research are proposed.

THE RELEVANCE OF POLITICAL TRUST

Even though an appropriate theory is not available, most scholars agree on the effective relevance of political trust in democratic systems. The widespread argument for its importance is “the commonplace view that without commitments by citizens, government cannot gain obedience from citizens” (Hardin 1998: 10). According to this argument, political trust ensures the functioning of democratic institutions (Chanley et al. 2001), reduces transaction costs (Braithwaite/Levi 1998), and removes the need to justify every decision

² The SE countries under consideration are Greece, Portugal, and Spain. The studied CEE countries are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Rumania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Since most of the previous findings on the development of political trust in new democracies are based on case studies from Eastern Germany, this area will be included in the analysis as a special case. Since all countries were a part of the third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991), their general conditions (e.g., time of transition, EU-membership) render a combined observation possible.

made (Tyler 1998). Furthermore, institutions like parliaments or political parties represent some of the most important links between citizens and governors (Norris 1999a). Especially in new democracies, political trust is eminently necessary; at the same time, this need causes some critical issues. For instance, CEE countries are shaped by a climate of distrust (Diamond 2002; Marková 2004). Since most citizens have lived their entire lives under non-democratic regimes, they “have a good reason to distrust political and social institutions” (Mishler/Rose 1997: 419), and they must learn how to trust after a system change. In addition, trust in political institutions is based on a fundamental knowledge about democracy, but these citizens have no experience with democracy and its procedures. Therefore, political trust in new democracies is exclusively orientated towards the future (e.g., hope for a better life in the democracy’s future), and that makes it unstable and risky. This causes possible constraints to the system’s stability during the process of consolidation.

Despite its importance for democracy and its pronounced research interest, a theory for political trust suitable for empirical work has not yet been developed (Hibbing/Theiss-Morse 1995; Bernstein 2001; Gabriel 2002). So far, most studies on trust in political institutions have referred to general approaches relative to the legitimacy of political systems. These extensive approaches frequently end in “confounding analyses of political trust” (Owen/Dennis 2001: 209). The most commonly used approach for studies on political trust is Easton’s theory of support for political systems (Easton 1965, 1975), which was primarily to understand macro phenomena but was later used to answer individual-level research questions.³ More recent studies on political trust examine two dominating approaches (cf. Braithwaite 1998; Uslaner 2002): The rational or cognitive approach, and the affective, emotional, and thus non-cognitive perspective.

Rational or cognitive trust is based on knowledge about preceding performance; it is responsive to beliefs about the trusted and to the likely outcomes of a trusting relationship. Valerie Braithwaite (1998) characterized these two dimensions as ‘*exchange trust*’ and ‘*communal trust*’. The latter type is based on emotions towards the object. These emotions emerge from shared values and norms and are demonstrated by social connectedness, group loyalties, and common identities. Although exchange trust is frequently described by the pattern “*A trusts B to do X*”, “*A trusts B*” (a more statement) is true for communal trust. The two trust components refer to different levels of stability. Since it is linked to specific experiences with the object of trust, exchange trust is not terribly stable, whereas the broader

³ Critical examinations of Easton’s approach, such as those offered by Fuchs (1989), Westle (1989), and Norris (1999b), have sharpened the concept. For the limited purpose of studying political trust, however, the concept of political support seems too widespread.

communal trust is enduring. The two dimensions of trust are not exclusive; rather, they are necessary for balancing eventual mutual shortcomings. However, the measurement of the trust dimensions is a major problem. Most cross-national studies (e.g., the World Values Survey, Eurobarometer, or European Social Survey) ask only a single question in order to glean information on the motivation of trust. Therefore, the new conceptual approaches may be theoretically meaningful, but their integration in the current research seems rather challenging.

A DEFINITION OF POLITICAL TRUST

Since political trust is clearly linked to the concept of trust, the general concept will first be defined in order to differentiate among various types of trust in a next step. In a broader sense, trust is, compared to behavior, a type of attitude. It can be defined as a positive orientation of people towards objects; it is based on specific standards and expectations (Gabriel et al. 2002: 52). According to Levi (2004), three different types of trust can be distinguished:

1. Personal trust: a matter of relationship between two or more definitely concrete persons.
2. Interpersonal trust, also called social trust or generalized trust: trust towards a broader group of people (e.g., towards neighbors, friends, or strangers) or towards large groups (e.g., people of the same nationality). Social trust is an important feature of social capital (cf. Putnam 1993, 2000); it forms a kind of social relationship based on prior and future experiences as well as respect for values and norms.
3. Political trust or confidence⁴: trust towards institutions or organizations in general.

Though the differentiation between social trust and political trust is not entirely clear, the most important difference is political trust's orientation towards institutions (and the general idea the institution represents), whereas social trust is orientated towards people (Gabriel 1999: 202). Thus, political trust does not refer to horizontal relationships between people but rather to vertical relationships between citizens of a state and their political authorities or institutions. It is therefore based on systems, rules, and procedures (Newton 2008: 243).

⁴ Throughout the literature two terms are used to describe citizens' attitudes towards state institutions: *political* or *institutional trust* (e.g., Hetherington 1998; Miller 1974; Miller et al. 2004) and *political* or *institutional confidence* (e.g., Lipset/Schneider 1983; Newton/Norris 2000). There is no clear standard, either theoretically or conceptually, for using one term or the other. In short, whether they speak of *trust* or *confidence*, scholars study citizens' attitudes towards state institutions. In the present study, the term *trust* will be employed.

Furthermore, political trust can be orientated towards either political authorities or genuine political institutions:

“Confidence in authorities means that they are perceived as the group’s agents, that the group members identify with them [...]. Confidence in the political institutions means that the group believes either that these institutions produce authorities who are its agents or else produce favorable decisions regardless of the particular incumbents” (Gamson 1968: 54).

Since trust in political authorities is affected by specific political events or personal scandals, this study will focus on the institutions of the state. In addition to the broader differentiation between trust towards political authorities and trust towards political institutions, the latter can be further subdivided on the basis of the institutions’ functions within a political system. For instance, the police forces are supposed to maintain order in society, checking whether people obey the society’s established rules, while the courts penalize the violation of those rules. On the contrary, representative institutions (e.g., political parties, the parliament, or the government) are only involved in political issues. Contrary to earlier research, most scholars now agree that representative institutions are important in a political system, whereas regulatory institutions are more important in the daily lives of the citizens of a state (Gabriel et al. 2002: 192). Hence, the present study of popular trust takes into account both institutions of trust; the usage of these trust indicators will be outlined in the following chapter.

TRUST IN REGULATORY AND REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS

It is easy to assume, that trust in representative and regulatory institutions is driven by different mechanisms; hence, most scholars seek to analyze them separately (cf. e.g. Denters et al. 2007). However, it is unclear whether citizens distinguish between the various institutions. This issue has been discussed very controversially and the current findings cannot be interpreted without ambiguity. This chapter addresses the decision either to use an index of trust (i.e., combining all institutions), or to deal with the institutions separately, a determination that is crucial for the analysis.

Generally, scholars argue over whether respondents distinguish between different institutions. On the one hand, it has been shown – on both theoretical and empirical grounds – that studies of political trust must distinguish between regulatory and representative institutions, referring to the different functions they perform in a political system (c.f. Gabriel et al. 2002; Rothstein/Stolle 2008). Theoretical arguments and empirical evidence point toward distinguishing between three objects of political trust (cf. Denters et al. 2007): actors in a representative party democracy (e.g., political parties or politicians), institutions in a liberal

democracy (e.g., the parliament), and regulatory institutions (e.g., the police or the justice system). On the other hand, scholars state that respondents do not distinguish between different institutions (Rohrschneider/Schmitt-Beck 2003; Zmerli/Newton 2008). In recently established democracies in CEE countries, for instance, people “tend to evaluate institutions along what is fundamentally a single continuum” (Mishler/Rose 1997: p. 433). Hence, it seems that citizens of new democracies, especially, are unable to differentiate between the state’s major institutions, with which they have so little familiarity or experience.

In a nutshell, the direction seems to be blurry. Since previous findings do not illuminate this puzzle, one could think of clarifying the question empirically by a principal component analysis. However, the previous literature illustrates vividly that principal component analyses seem not to give an adequate answer to this question. Depending on the data source, the case selection, and the availability of objects of trust in a survey⁵, the findings vary tremendously (see e.g. deviating findings in Gabriel 1999 and Rohrschneider/Schmitt-Beck 2003). Admittedly not only the data the researcher draws on is a factor for variation, but also the particular application of the principal component analysis yields inconsistent findings. Against this background, it seems to be of no use to run own principal component analysis. It will be rather argued, why one should tend to examine each object of trust separately. Instead of using so called trust indices a separate analysis of each object of trust, e.g. trust towards the police, the justice system, and the parliament in our case, is advisable. Using an index implies that important relationships remain undetected because the different sources of political trust vary, depending on the object of trust under consideration (cf. Braun forthcoming, chapter 6; Schnaudt 2010). These findings are supported by the low reliability of trust indices. For example using the present country selection, a regulatory trust index (computed by summarizing trust in the police and trust in the justice system), Cronbach’s Alpha is at 0.65, which points to a rather low reliability (Schnell et al. 2008: 153). This leads to the obvious conclusion that trust in institutions should, ideally, be treated separately. Accordingly, the present study takes into account trust in regulatory and trust in representative institutions, though analyzed in a separate way.

CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

The purpose of the present study is to investigate general trends in political trust after regime transformations. The current research in this field is rather weak; scholars are generally interested in comparisons between new and established democracies, highlighting the fact that

⁵ The ability to distinguish among objects of trust can be only detected by using a more or less complete item battery (cf. Gabriel et al. 2002: 180).

citizens' trust in institutions is much lower in new than in established ones (cf. Braun 2010: 2; Denters et al. 2007: 69-71; Norris 1999c: 226-9). Comparative studies focus on differences among countries at one point in time, disregarding the development of political trust and future shifts that attend the consideration of trends. In new democracies, citizens' attitudes are unsteady, and they vary over time; hence, illustrating the levels of trust among different countries is less useful. Instead, research should consider general trends and shifts over time, in order to learn more about political trust in new democracies. So far, research has provided little understanding of how citizens' trust evolves after regime transformations.

It has been shown that general attitudes towards democracy, as well as specific attitudes towards democratic institutions and actors, are more positive immediately after the system transformation than some years later: “[P]olitical trust has declined rather than increased, in newly democratic societies” (Catterberg/Moreno 2005: p. 34). Shortly after a system transformation, citizens are excited by the general idea of a democratic system, but this enthusiasm fades in the course of the time or even reverts into feelings of nostalgia (cf. Dalton 1994: 491; McDonough 1998: 232; Sztompka 1993: 85). Catterberg and Moreno (2005) demonstrate these so called “honeymoon-effects” for a broader country selection, using data of the WVS. Mishler and Rose (1997) prove the effects empirically for CEE countries, using data from the New Democracies Barometer. In both cases, however, the time period under consideration was limited, and the time intervals were rather large; hence, the findings should be handled with care. Since previous research has not drawn a full-fledged picture of the trends in political trust in new democracies, the present study seeks to fill this gap. According to the current research, the major assumption about the development of political trust in new democracies contrasts the fact of a general decline of trust in established democracies.

- HYPOTHESIS 1: The development of political trust in new democracies is non-linear. A period of higher trust (a “honeymoon”) is followed by a subsequent decline of trust (“post-honeymoon-decline”). Thereafter, a stable trust relationship⁶ between citizens and institutions evolves.

Furthermore, it can be assumed that various legacies have differing implications for the development of trust. The countries under consideration experienced two different autocratic

⁶ Though most scholars agree on the necessity of trust for the establishment of stable democratic systems, there is no consensus regarding how much trust is actually required. Exponents of elite-centered approaches assume that high trust between citizens and institutions is an important precondition for the governance of a political system, whereas advocates of a liberal approach consider political trust as a means to control the leading authorities. In the latter line of reasoning, less trust (or, in other words critical distrust) is considered supportive for the political system. Despite these differing theoretical approaches, most scholars agree that both trust and distrust, are preconditions for the functioning of a political system (cf. Barber 1983: 166; Misztal 1998: 245; Sniderman 1981: 27). Ultimately, a “healthy skepticism” (Levi 1998: 96) is required. In terms of percentages, it is, thus, assumed that one half of the population is trusting, while the other half follows the institutions critically.

regimes in the past: authoritarian leadership in SE, and totalitarian or post-totalitarian communist⁷ rule in CEE. Scholars of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes (cf. Friedrich 1957; Linz 2000) have defined specific criteria in order to distinguish one from another; the regime types differ mainly in regard to political and societal pluralism, mobilization, and ideology. Since legacies have implications for the development of democratic consolidation (Linz/Stepan 1996), it can be assumed that citizens' trust in democratic institutions may be affected equally. Therefore, the assumptive main differences that form crucial factors for the development of democracy in general and political trust in particular will be outlined briefly. First, authoritarian regimes in SE developed modern and capitalist economies, whereas post-totalitarian communist regimes had centrally planned economies. Accordingly, in CEE, regime transformation had to take place in both the political systems and the economic systems. In contrast, SE's transformation was more profound (cf. Barnes 1998: 122-6; von Beyme 1996: 155-8). Second, the development of a civil society, mobilization, and political pluralism was feasible, albeit in a restricted way, in authoritarian regimes, but not in totalitarian ones. In a nutshell, citizens of totalitarian regimes were only allowed to shape public life if permitted or encouraged by state institutions, whereas the institutions of authoritarian regimes were not equally present in every domain of public life (cf. Linz 2000; Linz/Stepan 1996). The distinctive features of each regime type showed clearly that certain structures in authoritarian regimes (e.g., capitalism) were more conducive to democracy. On the other hand, civil society in authoritarian regimes was less affected than society in post-totalitarian communist regimes, which leads to the following assumption:

- HYPOTHESIS 2: Political trust evolves with a greater delay in post-totalitarian communist than in post-authoritarian regimes. A stable proportion between trust and distrust will be achieved later in post-totalitarian communist countries.

TRENDS IN POLITICAL TRUST IN NEW EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES

This study's theoretical assumptions will be tested using empirical data from various data sources. In particular, the *European Values Study/World Values Survey* (EVS/WVS)⁸ will be

⁷ Historically, scholars have distinguished primarily between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Recent scholars, however, have introduced a more explicit classification (cf. Linz 1975, 2000; Linz/Stepan 1996), in order to take into account features of both regime types. Since totalitarian regimes in CEE seemed contrary to the original theory, changeable, these countries no longer fit into the category of totalitarian regimes; rather they were placed in a new category called post-totalitarian communism. This type displays both totalitarian and authoritarian features, without converging entirely to the authoritarian pole (Merkel/Puhle 1999: 65). On the contrary, post-totalitarian communist regimes are definitely distinguishable from authoritarian ones because a totalitarian past leaves noticeable marks on the society, in terms of economic and political structures as well as specific memories (Linz 2000: 246).

⁸ The World Values Survey (WVS) is a large-scale, cross-national, and longitudinal survey research program on human values. It originates from the European Values Study (EVS). So far, four waves of the

considered, filled with data from different *Eurobarometer* (EB) studies as well as studies specific to country groups, namely *Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe* (CDCEE) and *Political Culture of Southern Europe* (PCSE). Using empirical data from different data sources is generally challenging in terms of applying different methods for data collection and aggregation (cf. Braun 2006: 12-29), and in terms of deviating question wordings in different surveys. Therefore, the indicators for political trust used in these surveys are presented in Figure 2. Differences in the wording⁹ and¹⁰ scaling of the answers are striking; however, for a time frame spanning more than 30 years, it is almost impossible to draw exclusively on comparable data (data collected continuously over time). Generally, no major deviances can be identified among these surveys, and the trends of political trust will be interpreted critically in order to discern mere data artifacts from substantial changes over time.

EVS (1981, 1990, 1999/2000, and 2008) and five waves of the WVS (1981-84, 1989-93, 1994-99, 1999-2004, and 2005-07) have been published. Since both studies issue mostly integrated datasets, the term EVS/WVS will be used when referring to either one of the studies. For further information on the studies see <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org> or <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>.

⁹ The major difference relates to the usage of the terms “confidence” and “trust”; while the EVS/WVS asks for “how much confidence” the respondents have, the EB surveys ask “how much trust” the respondents place in each institution. Instead of asking about trust or confidence, the PCSE asks “how much sympathy you feel”, and older EB studies (1994-96) query “To what extent do you feel you can rely on each of the following institutions to make sure that the decisions that are taken by this institutions are in the interest of people like yourself?”.

¹⁰ In most surveys, political trust is assessed by using a 4-point-scale (cf. EVS/WVS; CDCEE). In EB studies, however, a 2-point-scale is used, and the PCSE uses a 10-point-scale. Although different scaling methods may influence the response behavior, this seems less problematic in this case, since no solution comes with a mid-category, that allows the respondents to answer without deciding whether they trust or distrust the institution.

Figure 1: Indicators of political trust

Survey	Question wording	Value lables	Institutions of trust
European Values Study/ World Values Survey (EVS/WVS) I - VI (1981; 1989-93; 1994-99; 1999-2004; 2005-07; 2008)	I am going to name a number of organisations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?	(1) A great deal, (2) Quite a lot, (3) Not very much, (4) None at all	Parliament, Justice System, Police
Eurobarometer (EB) (1994-96)	To what extent do you feel you can rely on each of the following institutions to make sure that the decisions that are taken by this institutions are in the interest of people like yourself?	(1) can rely on it, (2) cannot rely on it	Parliament
Eurobarometer (EB) (2000-08)	I would like to ask you about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it, or tend not to trust it?	(1) tend to trust, (2) tend not to trust	Parliament, Justice System, Police
Candidate Countries Eurobarometer (CCEB) (2000-04)	I would like to ask you about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it, or tend not to trust it?	(1) tend to trust, (2) tend not to trust	Parliament, Justice System, Police
Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe (CDCEE) (1990-92)	In order to get ahead, people need to have confidence and to feel that they can trust themselves and others. To what degree do you think that you trust the following totally, to a certain point, little or not at all?	(1) totally, (2) to a certain point, (3) little, (4) not at all	Parliament, Police
Political Culture of Southern Europe (PCSE) (1985)	Now I would like to know what you think of some groups, institutions or countries. Using a scale from 1 to 10 can you tell me how much sympathy you feel for them?	(1) no sympathy...(10) much sympathy	Justice System, Police

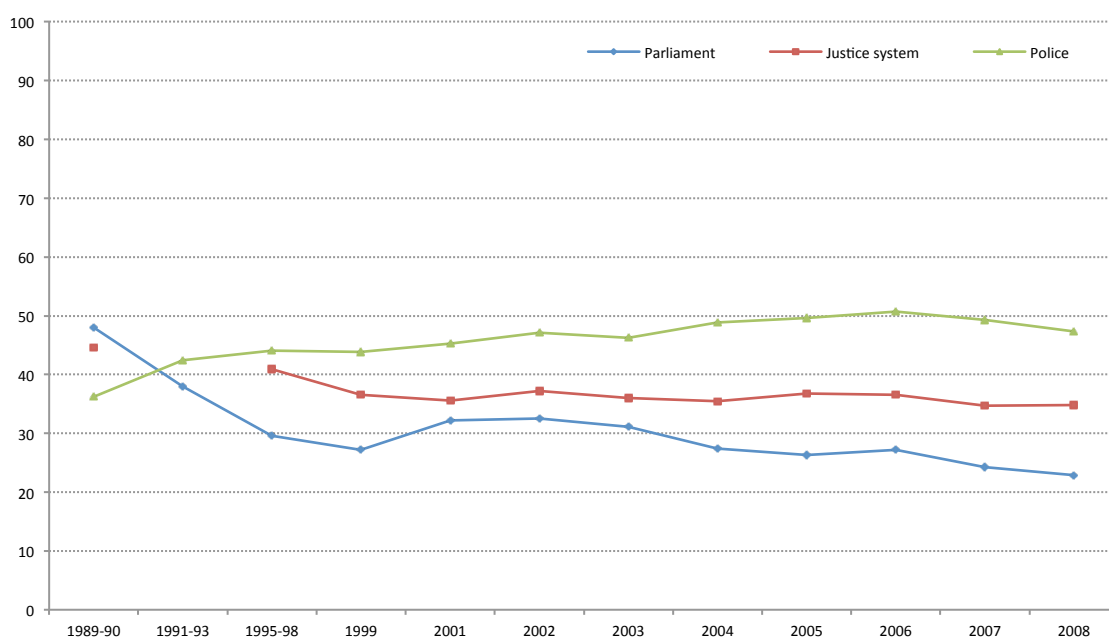
The relevant time span for examining general trends of political trust in new democracies begins after the regime transformation, and the endpoint lies in the present. Regime transformations are separated, theoretically, into a period of transition and a period of democratic consolidation. During a transition, the actual transformation takes place, formal democratic criteria are established, and the formal grounds for a democratic consolidation are established (cf. Linz 1990: 28); only thereafter can democracy be consolidated. The description of political trust before that point, in the early transformation period, is not useful because institutions are unstable, and accordingly respondents' evaluations are unsteady. Hence, the starting point of the investigation period is the successful completion of the transition to democracy. Scholars of system transformations have presented various criteria for whether and when the transition to democracy has been completed successfully, but most of them agree that the government must be elected democratically (Merkel/Puhle 1999: 105). Consequently, the investigation period begins between 1974 and 1978 in SE and between 1989 and 1993 in CEE. According to the results of the principal component analysis, trust in regulatory and representative institutions will be included in the analyses.¹¹ In order to trace a

¹¹ Trust in the public administration seems not to fit in the general picture. In order to avoid biased results, it will be omitted in further steps of the analysis. Moreover, trust in the institutions of civil society will be not considered. These institutions are the most trusted in new democracies; since they were not as involved in the autocratic regime, they did not need to assume responsibility in the same way as the other actors of

consistent evolution of trust over time, this study will focus on trust in the parliament, the justice system, and the police. As stated earlier, trust in the latter institutions is equally important for the functioning of a political system, because it represents the absence of an exit-option (see also Gabriel et al. 2002: 192).

First, the analysis examines whether political trust is influenced by “honeymoon-effects”. In order to illustrate trends in trust the responses have been dichotomized wherever more than two response alternatives were available. For example, in the case of the EVS/WVS, the response alternatives “a great deal” and “quite a lot” have been summarized, in order to display high trust in contrast to low trust. Trust and distrust will be presented by percentages. Theoretically, the highest level is thus 100 percent of trust, and the lowest is 0 percent (i.e. complete distrust).¹² Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the trends of citizens’ trust in the parliament, the justice system, and the police in both country groups.

Figure 2: Political trust in Central and Eastern Europe

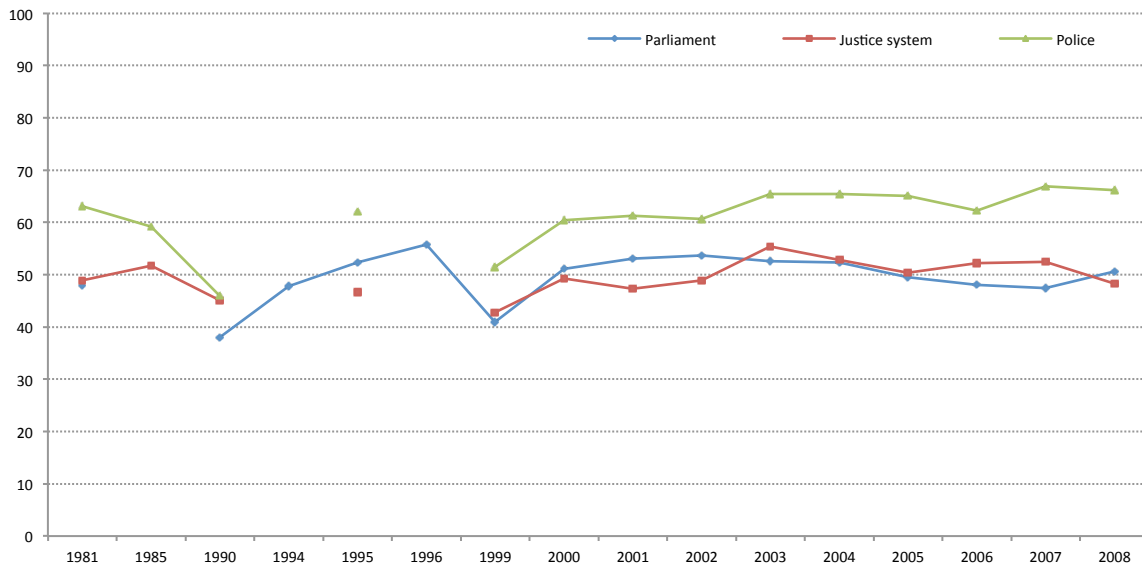


Data source: CDCEE 1; CCEB 2001.1, 2002.2, 2003.2, 2003.4, 2004.1; EB 54.1, 55.1, 57.1, 59.1, 61.0, 62.0, 64.2, 66.1, 68.1, 69.2; EVS/WVS 2, 3, 4. **Notes:** Percentages per country group are presented. Due to lacking data, in some cases not all countries are considered (parliament – 1989-90: without Baltic countries; 1991-93: without Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia, and Slovakia; Police – without Bulgaria, Czech Republic, and Slovakia).

the state. Hence, the description of the development of political trust in new European democracies will be restricted to the representative and regulatory institutions, which are the most important institutions of a democratic state. Representative institutions manage the political process, and the representatives are elected by citizens; institutions like the police or the justice system regulate the political system.

¹² Respondents who did not answer the question or stated “don’t know” are treated as missing values.

Figure 3: Political trust in Southern Europe



Data source: EB 41.1, 42.0, 43.1, 44.1, 44.2bis, 54.1, 55.1, 57.1, 59.1, 61.0, 62.0, 64.2, 66.1, 68.1, 69.2; EVS/WVS 1, 2, 3, 4; PCSE. **Notes:** Percentages per country group are presented. Due to lacking data, in some cases not all countries are considered (1981: only Spain; 1990: without Greece; 1995, trust in the justice system and the police only for Spain).

In CEE, parliamentary trust seems to be subjected to fluctuations, which can be interpreted as “honeymoon-effects”. Immediately after the transition to democracy (in 1989/1990), citizens’ trust in the parliament was rather high; almost 50 percent of the respondents manifested feelings of trust. In the following period, in the mid and late 1990s, trust declined dramatically (down to 30 percent), then increased slightly in order to even out, finally, at a level of 20 to 30 percent. A similar pattern was observed initially regarding trust in the justice system. At the beginning, approximately 45 percent of the respondents expressed trust in this institution, but an incisive decrease of trust (indicating a “post-honeymoon-decline”) could not be observed. Quite the contrary; trust in the justice system seemed to remain relatively stable, at about 35 percent, soon after the transition to democracy. The “honeymoon-hypothesis” can be clearly disconfirmed in the case of trust in the police: In this case, the presented values were very low just after the transition period but then increased steadily throughout the following years, remaining finally stable at about 50 percent.

Compared to this pattern, the trends of political trust in SE were less unequivocal, which can be related to the lack of data in the early phases. The first observations were made five to six years after the transition towards democracy, which means that an important period, the primary period in which “honeymoon-effects” would appear, is missing. Although one can only speculate about the levels of trust during this period, the existence of high trust at the

beginning, followed by a sharp decline, is conceivable with regard to people's views of the parliament and the police. The findings in figure 4 show that citizens' trust in both institutions was clearly higher at the beginning than ten years later. However, the dramatic decrease of at least 10 percentage points was not followed by a stabilization of trust; instead occurred, lasting until the end of the 1990s. Another decrease followed subsequently. Only thereafter was trust in the parliament stabilized at a level of about 25 percent. Trust in the police stabilized at a level of 50 percent. Trust in the justice system in SE countries followed a completely different pattern.

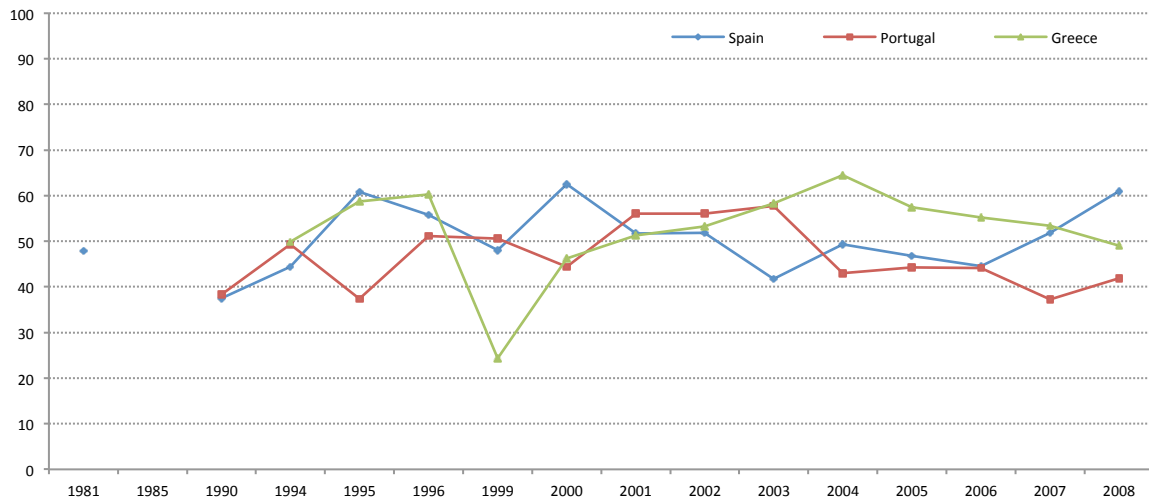
Accordingly, the main question – whether “honeymoon-effects” have an impact on the evolution of political trust in new democracies – can be confirmed in general by the presented empirical results, albeit with reservations regarding the different objects of trust. Although, the trends in parliamentary trust are clearly shaped by higher trust in the aftermath of regime transformations, and then decline subsequently, the overall findings are less clear for people's trust towards the regulatory institutions. This general pattern, which has been deciphered by analyzing trends in political trust (divided by country groups), persists even when examining each country separately (cf. figure 5).¹³ Some developments, however, can be clarified through country-specific observations. As stated previously, parliamentary trust is clearly influenced by honeymoon-effects; in some countries, the development of citizens' feelings towards the justice system is also shaped by higher levels at the beginning, followed by lower levels in the later periods; however, the effects are less dramatic and occur in fewer countries. In contrast, the development of trust in the police allows a definite rejection of the theoretical assumption. With the exception of Lithuania, the trends of trust follow a completely different pattern for the police than for other institutions. Citizens express low feelings of trust towards the acting branch of the rule of law immediately after the regime transformation, but they trust the police increasingly more throughout the course of democratic consolidation. Consequently, trust in the police reaches a relatively high level at the end of the consolidation of democracy.

¹³ The results gained from country-group analyses, using pooled data, may not be appropriate and to answer the research question, since country specific fluctuations are thus ignored. It can be presumed, for example, that democratic consolidation does not occur simultaneously in all countries; the aggregation of the data (i.e. the use of pooled data) could thus cover country-specific trends, which may cast the presented results into doubt. Therefore, the findings will be counterchecked by analyzing the development of political trust in new democracies in each case separately. For lack of space and for reasons of clarity not all figures (including the country-specific findings); rather, only the most obvious case – parliamentary trust – is displayed.

Figure 4: Trends of parliamentary trust in new European democracies (per country)



Table will be continued on next page.



Data sources: CDCEE 1; CCEB 2001.1, 2002.2, 2003.2, 2003.4, 2004.1; EB 41.1, 42.0; 43.1; 44.1; 44.2bis, 54.1, 55.1, 57.1, 59.1, 61.0, 62.0, 64.2, 66.1, 68.1, 69.2; EVS/WVS 1, 2, 4; PCSE.

Notes: Percentages per country are presented.

These findings confirm the results presented by Catterberg and Moreno (2005): “Honeymoon-effects” influence trust in the legislative institutions (the authors examined trust in the parliament or the congress, depending on the country), but it does not affect trust in regulatory institutions (the authors examined trust in the public administration). The findings of the present study show that this pattern is valid in both country groups.¹⁴ According to these findings, it can be assumed that citizens in new democracies hold either positive feelings for the democratic system, together with euphoria for the general idea of democracy, or profound aversions for the former autocratic regime; both possibilities lead to high levels of political trust immediately after regime transformations. That these “honeymoon”-feelings can be proven for parliamentary trust but not for trust in the police seems extremely plausible. Though the parliament is one of the most important and omnipresent institutions of a democratic state, citizens do not share any personal experiences with their parliaments (except for regular but mostly far-off elections). By contrast, citizens experience the police in their daily lives. Regarding political trust, prior studies have stated that citizens tend to evaluate actors and institutions through personal experiences if they interact with these institutions more or less consistently (Gabriel 1999: 206). This explanation seems to apply for the trends of trust in the police. Immediately after transitions, negative feelings predominate because of citizens’ negative individual experiences with the police under the autocratic regimes. In the course of democratic consolidation, however, citizens may begin to perceive the police as a

¹⁴ The validity for the SE countries must be judged critically, because of the lack of data in the early periods after transition. However, no additional studies for all three countries – especially for Greece and Portugal – are available. Future studies may grapple with additional data for Spain, which is currently prepared for publication by the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (Madrid).

positive institution, which leads to higher levels of trust. In contrast, in the case of more remote institutions (e.g., the parliament), individual experience has less impact on citizens' trust than political, societal, and economic changes.

The investigation of the second theoretical assumption, stating that the development of trust is related to each regime's legacy, also reveals differences among the trusted institutions. Once again, the hypothesis can be empirically confirmed only for parliamentary trust, not for trust in the police or in the justice system. As figure 5 illustrates, approximately 15 years after transition to democracy in post-authoritarian SE countries¹⁵, citizens' trust can be estimated as stable, on an average level. Such a stabilization of trust in post-totalitarian countries in CEE, at a comparable stage of democratic consolidation (in the year 2005), has only been achieved in four out of eleven cases: in Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Eastern Germany. These findings will be clarified in figure 6, where the trends of parliamentary trust are categorized by five time periods (each subdivided into five years).¹⁶ „T1 + 20 years“, which marks each case 20 years after its transition, is a particularly interesting point for testing the hypothesis. Even though the data is not ideal for SE, a general trend can be observed. Spaniards and Greeks manifest the highest levels of parliamentary trust during this period. Portuguese respondents rank fourth, behind Estonia. In Spain, parliamentary trust was stabilized approximately 15 years after the transition to democracy, which means that popular trust fluctuated only slightly, on a mean level.¹⁷ In contrast, in CEE, a stabilization of trust did not occur 15 years after the transition to democracy, in the majority of cases.

These findings confirm the hypothesis that it takes longer to establish stable political trust in countries with totalitarian legacies than in countries with authoritarian past. The economic structures and, especially, the less affected civil societies in authoritarian regimes, compared to totalitarian ones, have implications for the stabilization of political trust in new democracies (at least in European democracies and with regard to trust in the parliament).

¹⁵ The results are largely based on Spanish trends in popular trust, because of the partial lack of data in Greece and Portugal.

¹⁶ In CEE „t1“ means 1989-90. For SE, it would mean 1974-75, but no data is available. For CEE, during the period „t1 + 20 years“, data from the *Eurobarometer-Survey* has been used exceptionally.

¹⁷ This general pattern also applies to Portugal and Greece, though the data is less valid.

Figure 5: Trends of parliamentary trust in new European democracies (five categories)

Zeitpunkt	t1	t1+5 years	t1+10 years	t1+15 years	t1+20 years
<i>Spain</i>	-	47,9	-	37,5	60,8
<i>Greece</i>	-	-	-	-	58,7
Estonia	-	33,2	27,0	39,8	38,9
<i>Portugal</i>	-	-	-	38,4	37,4
Slovakia	30,8	-	42,8	25,5	36,7
Slovenia	41,3	35,7	25,3	41,4	33,1
Eastern Germany	40,7	35,6	39,4	29,3	32,7
Rumania	59,6	20,8	19,2	32,7	23,5
Poland	72,6	38,5	33,9	8,6	17,8
Hungary	49,1	39,9	32,5	42,1	16,0
Czech Republic	40,9	-	12,9	19,8	15,0
Bulgaria	48,7	-	27,8	13,9	13,3
Latvia	-	-	27,5	23,2	12,5
Lithuania	-	62,0	10,9	25,4	12,4

Data source: CDCEE 1; CCEB 2004.1, EB 43.1, 44.1, 61.0, 62.0, 69.2; EVS/WVS 1, 2, 4; PCSE.

Notes: Percentages per country are presented; percentages are sorted by “t1+20 years”. Southern European countries are highlighted cursive. ;-’ means, that no data was available.

CONCLUSION

As the beginning of the paper explained, most scholars agree that a general decline of political trust has been occurring. Although this estimation is certainly not false, it is possibly flawed; all major findings in this regard are based on data from the United States and Western Europe that can be identified as established democracies. Previous research has ignored this bias. New democracies are highly present in the world; hence, it is as important to study trends of political trust in newly consolidated countries as in established ones, in order to determine whether a general decline occurred, independently of the political legacy. For this reason, the present paper examined trends of political trust in the new European democracies, which were a part of the famous third wave of democratization. The countries under consideration, thus, included southern as well as central and eastern European countries. Since the country groups dispose of different regime legacies, it has been argued that the development of trust is influenced by each legacy in a singular way. The study considered the assumption that political trust evolves with a delay in post-totalitarian communist regimes (in CEE), compared to post-authoritarian ones (in SE). The main assumption, however, figured that the development of political trust in new democracies proceeds in a non-linear way, in contrast to the observation of a decline of trust in established democracies. According to previous findings (Catterberg/Moreno 2005), the development of political trust in new democracies can be paraphrased by the term “honeymoon”, meaning a period of higher trust that is followed by a sharp decline of trust.

This pattern has been confirmed in general, but one major modification was necessary: The “honeymoon-effects” do not exist for all institutions that citizens can trust. The hypothesis was tested for trust towards the parliament, the justice system, and the police, but only in the case of parliamentary trust has the trend followed the assumption. Possibly the development of trust in legislative institutions depends less on personal experiences than the development of trust in the police; rather it focuses on general factors, concerning the whole society. Another important finding shows, as theoretically presumed that a nation’s legacy has an impact on the development of trust (though once again this holds only for parliamentary trust). The stabilization of parliamentary trust takes more time in countries with totalitarian legacies than in countries with authoritarian pasts, which provides an important hint for the consolidation of democracies. Obviously, post-totalitarian states need to make more efforts to become stable democracies, which confirms a huge amount of literature on the differentiation between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes (see especially Friedrich 1957; Linz/Stepan 1996). During totalitarian regimes, the literature argues, both the civil society, and the fundamental institutions are subjected to an all-embracing state, whereas authoritarian regimes grant at least some minor domains of slight freedom.

Future research should verify whether the identified higher levels of political trust immediately after transitions are a product of citizens’ expectations vis-à-vis the general idea of democracy, the anticipated improvements, resulting from the establishment of a democratic state, or the rejection of the former autocratic regime. If this can be empirically confirmed, then scholars should reconsider whether political trust, based exclusively or predominantly on the rejection of a former regime or on democratic euphoria, can actually form a stable trust relationship between citizens and political institutions. Consequently, further research should consider when, in the process of democratic consolidation, scholars can identify a stable trust relationship. In order to disentangle this problem, it might be useful to return to the outset and revise the general concept of trust. As described much earlier in this paper, a theory of political trust has not yet been developed but most recent approaches deal with two different dimensions of trust: a value-based dimension and a rational one; or, in the words of Valerie Braithwaite (1998), community trust and exchange trust. These conceptual approaches could be used to glean new insights into the specific character of a trust relationship. (E.g., is it relatively unstable, since based on the refusal of the former regime? Is it based on shared norms and values or on rational thoughts?). These considerations are relevant not only for the development of trust in new democracies but also for the trends of political trust in established ones. Scholars should draw on the distinction between community and exchange trust to enlighten their research on declining levels of trust and lead it in a more fruitful direction.

Although both trust dimensions are relevant, it is likely that community trust is more enduring, whereas exchange trust depends on specific evaluations, and hence is unstable. Future research could explore whether the decline of trust has a substantial rationale – if, for example, both trust dimensions (which are needed in a viable democracy) are affected by the decline.

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