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Social Distrust: Paradigms of Analysis, Sources, Functions (Towards Formulation of a Problem)[1]

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Abstract. This article attempts to overcome a traditionally negative perception of *social distrust* by examining this phenomenon in different perspectives and identifying its primary sources and functions through a socio-cultural lens. To achieve this, it analyzes three dimensions of distrust: *cognitive*, *emotional*, and *behavioral*, defining this phenomenon as encompassing knowledge, suspicion, and caution. The article specifically focuses on social dimensions of distrust, rather than its psychological aspects. Four analytical paradigms of distrust are discussed: *economic*, which is based on Francis Fukuyama works; *psychological*, which includes Erik Erikson and Vladimir P. Zinchenko among others; *sociological* that features contributions by Georg Simmel, Nicklas Luhmann, Anthony Giddens, among others; and *philosophical*, with references to Karl Jaspers, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud. The findings of the research suggest that distrust can be considered at least neutrally only within the sociological and philosophical paradigms. The article further explores social sources of distrust, including mechanisms of social group formation, processes of socialization, and epistemological sources such as skepticism and ideology. It demonstrates the dynamic nature of *distrust boundaries* in modern societies, as well as the varying standards of *trust* and *distrust* between traditional and contemporary contexts. In addition to that the article identifies four primary functions of distrust: *historical*, *cognitive-reductionist*, *controlling*, and *integrative*. The article highlights the pivotal role of *distrust* during periods of societal crisis and examines the unique characteristics of *trust* and *distrust* within Soviet society, and it questions the role of *distrust* in contemporary Russian society.

Keywords: social distrust; trust; research paradigm; sources of distrust; functions of distrust

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The phenomenon of *social distrust* in post-Soviet society is one of the most pressing yet underexplored issues in social theory. Notable scholars such as Francis Fukuyama, Peter Sztompka, Adam Seligman, Tatyana P. Skripkina, Vladimir P. Zinchenko, and others (Fukuyama 2004; Seligman 2002; Skripkina 2000; Sztompka 2002; Zinchenko 1998) have dedicated their work to analyzing various aspects of the phenomenon of *trust*, while *distrust* has been often considered a secondary and negative phenomenon. However, the realities of *perestroika* and post-Soviet society indicate that *distrust* is not only a powerful stimulator of social changes, but also a dominant characteristic of mass consciousness in contemporary Russia. From this perspective, to develop a regional version of the theory for social distrust appears to be quite necessary. To achieve this, it is essential to define main paradigms of theoretical analysis for this phenomenon, allowing us to identify its specifics, boundaries, and prospects.

Definition of Distrust

Distrust, as a complex social phenomenon, encompasses *cognitive*, *emotional*, and *behavioral* aspects. Cognitively, distrust involves recognizing the unreliability (or unpredictability) of a partner[2]. This means understanding that the interaction partner may not fulfill their obligations, may use received information (resources, connections, etc.) solely for their own interests, may manipulate others, or may have hidden motives for their behavior. This cognitive aspect of distrust can apply not only to individuals but also to social groups, institutions, organizations, and society as a whole. Additionally, distrust can extend to nature, particularly when humans equip their environment with various protection systems against natural elements.

Emotionally, distrust can manifest as a belief in human imperfection and the dominance of negative qualities, such as insincerity, deceitfulness, and malice in a person's behavior, which can be accompanied by dissatisfaction and pessimism. Distrust can be a conscious or unconscious attitude, either individual or collective, characterized by suspicion towards others and a tendency towards self-isolation. The ultimate goals of such orientations, whether desired or forced, depend on specific historical conditions and cultural traditions. These goals can range from a state of perpetual struggle, reflecting human nature (e.g. "war of all against all", "happiness in struggle", etc.), to various forms of loneliness (e.g. "in the crowd" – D. Riesman, "in the forest" – H.D. Thoreau, etc.).

[2] There are other cognitive approaches to the phenomena of *trust* and *distrust*. For instance, the renowned German sociologist Georg Simmel, in defining trust, considered it to be an intermediate state between knowing and not knowing the person to whom trust is given (see: Ritter J., Gründer K., Gabrieli G. (eds.) 2001. *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* [Historical Dictionary of Philosophy], vol. 11, Darmstadt, Scheidegger and Spiess. P. 987. (in German)). Subsequently, this intermediate state, in our opinion, was captured through the concept of *risk*. In contemporary theories of trust, such as those by Niklas Luhmann and Anthony Giddens, it has become a common thesis to associate the relationships of trust and distrust with a certain degree of risk.

At the same time, *distrust* is inextricably linked with *trust*: any form of distrust inherently implies some level of trust in someone or something, and conversely, trust always involves a certain degree of distrust. Absolute distrust and absolute trust are more the exception than the rule[3].

Behaviorally, actions based on distrust are characterized by caution, a desire to avoid risk, and a tendency to strictly follow instructions. One of the most accurate descriptions of such behavior was provided by the Dutch sociologist Geert Hofstede in his theory of cultural dimensions. Describing cultures with a high level of uncertainty avoidance, which include Belgium, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Peru, Uruguay, France, and Japan, he highlights such features as formalization of business behavior, a high level of aggressiveness, belief in absolute truth, and intolerance of deviations from the norm (Sadokhin 2005: 96-97)[4].

In various spheres of societal life, distrust can manifest in corresponding forms – political, economic, cultural, ideological, etc. The challenge of theoretical analysis lies in identifying the main sources of the emergence and functioning of distrust, as well as determining which of these sources are decisive at a particular historical stage.

Paradigms of Trust and Distrust Analysis

Four main paradigms can be identified within which the phenomena of trust and distrust can be examined.

The Economic paradigm concerns utility and rational choice, here trust is evaluated positively because it enables maximum efficiency in any given activity with minimal costs. Francis Fukuyama's classic work *Trust* examines the cultures of different countries precisely within this aspect. When considering trust in a broad sociocultural context (as social capital, the ability to create horizontal connections, etc.), Fukuyama interprets distrust more narrowly: he equates it with increased *transaction costs* tied to finding suitable buyers or sellers, negotiating contracts, and enforcing them in cases of conflict or deception (Fukuyama 2004: 253). Thus, Fukuyama's thoughtful analysis reveals a common asymmetry found in Western literature on the topic: trust receives positive

[3] In this context, the well-known Russian psychologist Vladimir P. Zinchenko uses the concept of *a centaur*, which simultaneously combines both phenomena trust and distrust. The use of such a concept is apparently based on a binary opposition, suggesting a rigid connection between trust and distrust: any trust in someone or something simultaneously implies distrust towards those subjects or objects that did not fall within the field of trust. However, it is quite possible for intermediate states to exist, where an individual has not yet determined their attitude towards another individual or object. The formal-logical law of the excluded middle does not, in this case, reflect the depth and contradictions of social interaction.

[4] If we compare the characteristics of business and everyday national cultures as presented in various theories, interesting contradictions emerge. For example, the characterization of German culture by Georg Hofstede as having a high level of uncertainty avoidance contradicts the position of Francis Fukuyama, who considers Germany and Japan to be high-trust countries (see: Fukuyama 2004).

evaluation, whereas distrust attracts only negative traits. Such an approach, however, fails to advance a deeper understanding of the causes and functioning of distrust[5].

From the perspective of the economic *management of trust*, distrust is always associated with significantly higher costs compared to trust. This statement holds true when considering a broader socio-historical context, such as stability of the economy and of a political regime. However, in a crisis-driven society, where any form of trust leads to uncontrolled escalation of various risks, distrust can serve as a strategy to minimize those risks and thus become an effective economic approach. Therefore, economic distrust can be interpreted differently, depending on stable or transforming societies. Consequently, it can be seen as legitimate under conditions of societal crisis.

The Psychological paradigm studies the preconditions for individual's trust (Erik Erikson's *basic trust*) in oneself, in other individuals, and in the world to emerge. Within this approach, trust is described as a positive attitude that allows an individual to feel confident and comfortable. How to deal with *distrust* then? Rudolf Schottlander, a German researcher, once pointed out that trust is not self-sufficient, but finds its embodiment in a specific state of mind characterized by peacefulness, feeling of safety, strong unity (Schottlaender 1957: 7). Following this logic and interpreting distrust as a transitional state, one may question the necessity for distrust at all. But why cannot the need for security become a source of distrust? If there is a hostile environment (such as nature or other people), then distrust can become a condition for survival and adaptation. Erikson refers to the existence and development of the sense of *basic distrust* (Erikson 1996: 106), which is a negative reaction to absence or underdevelopment of basic trust. From an individual psychological approach, such a position seems justified. However, when taking a broader historical and socio-psychological context into account, one can hypothesize that distrust may independently emerge as a behavioral motive. In such a scenario, the security of individuals, certain economic, political, and cultural groups (such as parties, sects, and factions) would arise from and be grounded in a completely different psychological foundation.

The Sociological paradigm analyses the relationship between *personal trust*, i.e. trust in other individuals, and *systemic trust*, i.e. trust in abstract systems and social institutions[6]. Nicklas Luhmann considers trust as a mechanism that provides a reduction in social complexity and a form of its existence (Luhmann 2000: 27-38; Offermann 1990: 174). Anthony Giddens discusses the phenomenon

[5] This situation is reminiscent of the *perestroika* period, i.e. the late 1980s, when the "problems of historical memory" were actively discussed, while the phenomenon of historical (both collective and individual) forgetting received little attention. Meanwhile, it is precisely the problem of forgetting that is key to understanding the possibilities and limits of historical memory.

[6] However, Adam Seligman believes that *individual* acts as the focus of any ideas about trust. It is an individual (a person) who bears rights and values, not some social group, i.e. a collective.

of trust in the modern era, defining it as a reduction of risks inherent in certain types of activities. He also clarifies that trust should be associated not just with functioning of social systems, but with their *proper* functioning (Giddens 1995: 49-50). However, why can't distrust be considered in the same way? Don't various systems of social control, cultural prohibitions, taboos, sanctions, and other institutionalized forms of social distrust also serve to reduce complexity and risks? Apparently, the ideological imperative of *positivity*, which features various Western sociological theories, has been transformed into a methodological principle of analysis. And therefore this imperative leads to discrimination against certain phenomena of social life.

Within this sociological paradigm, many other frameworks of analysis are possible, e.g., political ones. Marxist political tradition emphasizes the role of class struggle as a constant source of social and political distrust. In this context, for instance, the selfishness of the ruling classes, economic and political injustice become reasons and stimulators for the development of various negative feelings among other social layers, leading, in particular, to a constant group and individual state of distrust[7].

The Philosophical paradigm encompasses a multitude of different perspectives; however, the phenomenon of distrust can be interpreted within this framework as a consequence of important historical processes, such as the *crisis of modernity* (O. von Bolnov), *alienation* (K. Marx, F. Engels), among others. These approaches not only define the ontology of distrust, but also shape the methodology of philosophical inquiry. In this regard, both Karl Marx's political thought and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis serve as ontologically grounded philosophies of suspicion. Thus, suspicion is legitimized by means of these philosophical traditions, and, as a form of social critique, it becomes an essential tool for analyzing individuals, groups, and societies. One more thing should be mentioned: it is trust that normally provides us with reliability, reciprocity, predictability, and hope, so the lack of *trust* can lead to heightened feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and abandonment, serving thereby as a continual source for the evolution of existentialist philosophy.

Comparing the four paradigms, it becomes evident that mistrust tends to be evaluated more negatively within the economic and psychological frameworks. It is only within the sociological and philosophical paradigms does the possibility arise to consider mistrust in a neutral, if not positive (for instance, functional) way.

Sources of Distrust

If distrust tends to be such a pervasive and widespread phenomenon in all areas of post-Soviet society, a question of its sources inevitably arises. There are at least several possible explanations for this issue:

[7] In our analysis, we omit many other political factors that contribute to the increasing mistrust, such as the rise of crime, both international and domestic terrorism, corruption, and so forth.

- *a historical perspective*, which suggests the existence of political and cultural traditions facilitating the transmission of both collective and individual standards of behavior;
- *a universal (functional) perspective*, which arises from the inherent necessity of distrust in any social sphere and implies the existence of multiple sufficiently autonomous situations that generate this distrust across different historical eras;
- *a political perspective*, which asserts the primacy of political factors in societal life, thereby seeking the roots of distrust in the peculiarities of political interaction and political consciousness.

The most advantageous approach seems to be the socio-cultural one, which unites elements of the above mentioned perspectives, but primarily emphasizes their sociological aspect. From this point, we can identify the social sources of *distrust*. The first social source of distrust is the mechanism of social group formation, which involves various means of group self-identification and differentiation. A crucial condition for a group's existence is the awareness and acknowledgment of a specific historical mission, such as survival mission, territorial acquisition, profit generation, or gaining power. When each member of the group recognizes this mission, it fosters group solidarity and, consequently, establishes a certain level of trust among the members of this group. This mission both unites members, fostering intra-group trust, and differentiates them from others, leading to inter-group distrust. Members of different social groups find themselves beyond the historical objectives of this particular group and, therefore, cannot reasonably expect to be trusted.

Active group consciousness implies a certain degree of *trust* among members of one's own group and *distrust* toward members of other groups. As a result, various forms of distrust arise, ranging from cultural isolationism to hostility. Similar to trust, distrust also plays a crucial role in the existence and development of social groups. The enduring question reinforces this conclusion: why is trust so difficult to earn and so easy to lose?[8] It seems that if a certain relationship of trust was not constantly accompanied by relationships of distrust, such a situation would be rather impossible. Actual trust is always accompanied by potential distrust. In this aspect, one can further suggest that distrust is a cultural universal manifesting to varying degrees across all societies and cultures.

It is also important to consider the historical perspective. In traditional societies, where individual consciousness is less developed, symbols of trust and distrust were solidified through myths, legends, and similar means. In contrast, in any modernizing society, as the shared understanding of events deteriorates among group members, the processes of secularization of thought and individualization of behavior intensify. Consequently, the boundaries of distrust begin to shift and differentiate within the social group for various reasons. This

[8] Peter Nider identifies two key aspects of the relationship between *trust* and *distrust*: trust develops gradually, whereas distrust can emerge suddenly. Moreover, it is easier for *trust* to deteriorate into *distrust* than for *distrust* to be transformed back into *trust* (see: Nieder 1997: 35).

phenomenon is evident not only in large societies but also in many other social groups. Distrust no longer functions as a safeguard against undesirable cultural and political innovations; but instead it evolves into an inherent characteristic of social behavior.

In this context, the boundaries of distrust can shift; they extend beyond the binary principle of *insiders vs outsiders* to include *the close vs the distant*. *The close* may encompass members of small groups (such as families and clans) as well as various contact circles. Consequently, the measure of a society's development and any type of culture is determined by the ratio of *circles of trust* to *circles of distrust* in the following combinations: trust within the close circle and distrust toward the distant; distrust within the close circle and trust toward the distant; distrust in both the close and the distant circles; and trust in both the close and the distant circles. The overlap of trust between close and distant individuals creates what F. Fukuyama refers to as "high-trust societies"[9]. However, this combination is more an exception than a rule in world history, making it a desirable yet rarely attainable social ideal.

The second social source of *distrust* involves the very process of socializing individuals within specific groups and cultures. During both primary and secondary socialization, people happen to internalize various cultural norms and values. To recognize these norms means to adopt willingly certain attitudes toward yourself, others, social groups, society as a whole, and nature. Upbringing and educating within a particular culture help establish certain *standards of trust* that become self-evident over time. This sense of self-evidence fosters *trust* in the society and culture in which an individual was raised, and this is one of the key goals of socialization. The phenomenon of ethnocentrism, for example, arises from this trust in one's own society and native culture. However, any standard inherently excludes things that do not align with accepted norms, which can create coercive or repressive atmosphere: exclusion breeds distrust towards anything that falls outside the standard.

In addition to standards of *trust*, individuals also learn standards of *distrust*: what and whom they should be wary of in certain situations. Educational and upbringing processes promote a cautious attitude toward what is deemed dangerous or forbidden in that culture. As outcomes of socialization, standards of trust and distrust often appear to be unconscious, manifesting as *blind trust* or *distrust*, or simply vague. Therefore, socialization seems to shape specific standards of trust and distrust. Meanwhile, personal and group experiences can lead to adjustments in these feelings of trust and distrust.

According to Anthony Giddens, there are four contexts for the generation of trust in pre-modern societies: *kinship relationships*, *local communities*, *religious cosmologies*, and *traditions* (Giddens 1995: 129-133). The transition to

[9] An example of this kind of distinction can be found in the classical framework of the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, who identified *society* (*rus*. общество) and *community* (*rus*. общность) as the primary types of social groups (see: Tönnies 2002). However, for the purposes of this research, the concepts of *circles of trust* (*rus*. круги доверия) and *circles of distrust* (*rus*. круги недоверия) based on the sociological notion of a *contact circle* (*rus*. контактный круг) are more operationally relevant.

modern society (i.e. *Modernity*) is associated with the emergence of trust in abstract systems, such as symbolic and expert systems. In this context, the above mentioned sources of trust gradually lose their binding power. This trend was already evident in Soviet society, characterized by a cultivated trust in *the collective* – specifically in labor groups, the Communist Party, trade unions, schools, etc. Consequently, trust in oneself, as well as in relatives and friends/acquaintances, resulted from trust in broader social (sub)systems. People were expected to place greater trust in others than in themselves, leading to an overarching trust in society that was accompanied by a certain distrust of oneself. *Extended family* in its various forms was considered more significant than one's own nuclear family. Additionally, these circles of trust existed within a so-called *hostile environment*, where external and internal enemies were playing an important role. As a result, *trust* was always under threat and required reinforcement and validation.

Apart from social sources, it is also possible to identify *epistemological sources* of distrust as specific cultural phenomena. The first epistemological source of distrust is *skepticism*, which is the refusal to accept anything on faith, i.e. anything based on dogmas and without evidence. Thus skepticism, as a traditional strain of European philosophical and social thought, has much in common with scientific modes of reasoning. Indeed, science itself embodies organized skepticism, as it encourages doubt regarding the phenomena of the surrounding world. It demands that individuals should not rely solely on their senses or the assertions of others, but instead verify every claim through experiments and systematic observations. When coupled with certain historical and technical factors, skepticism could become a foundation for creativity and innovation in modern societies.

However, when examining the role of skepticism in the development of European culture, it appeared to be a rather contradictory phenomenon. In its cultural manifestations, skepticism leads to what Karl Jaspers defined as *the disenchantment of the world*, wherein "ultimately, doubt has diminished the creator God, leaving only a mechanized image that can be understood through the natural sciences" (Jaspers K. 1988: 93; Sloterdijk 2001). On the other hand, skepticism fosters qualities such as tolerance, self-improvement, caution, unity with others, and honesty – the qualities eloquently articulated by Yuriy A. Tikhonravov. According to him, *tolerance* involves an equitable approach to all perspectives, *caution* is manifested in actions with the most predictable outcomes, s*elf-improvement* focuses on personal development, *unity with others* necessitates the coordination of one's experiences with those of others, and *honesty* finally establishes reliable conditions for collaborative understanding[10]. Thus, a systematic, methodically reflected, and clearly articulated form of *epistemological distrust* grounded in skepticism can become a prerequisite for cultivating a deeper and more comprehensive trust in society and humanity.

[10] Tikhonravov Yu.V. *Drevniy i novyy skeptitsizm* [Ancient and New Skepticism], available at: http://www.skeptik.net/ism/new_skep.htm (accessed May 15, 2007). (in Russ.).

The second epistemological source is *ideology*. It emerges from the awareness and justification of social-group distrust. Karl Mannheim, in his classic work *Ideology and Utopia*, notes that "the concept of ideology was directly prepared by the feeling of distrust and suspicion that individuals typically experience towards their opponents at any given stage of historical development" (Mannheim 1992: 92). He also emphasizes that a hallmark of any ideology to emerge as a specific system of views is the acquisition of a *methodical nature* by distrust.

Thus, not only mechanisms of social groups functioning become sources of distrust formation, but also reflexivity regarding these groups, manifested in various ideologies. The awareness and formalization of group interests as ideology give rise to conscious distrust and contribute to formation of a corresponding social identity. This phenomenon was particularly evident in Soviet society. Lev Gudkov, discussing the Soviet concept of *the individual*, notes, "The individual, as a social figure, is constantly forced, like a crab, to be in the shell of basic distrust towards reality... Socially, this can manifest as distrust of others or a characteristic self-loathing, feelings of inadequacy and guilt, constant inner conflict, dogmatic rigidity, and a lack of hedonism and enjoyment of life" (Gudkov 2004: 288). Such distrust is formalized in the form of behavioral rules ("If the enemy does not surrender, they are to be destroyed", if to cite Maksim Gorky), oaths, slogans, codes of conduct, etc. Moreover, ideology acts as a coercive force, thus resolving the contradictions of personal social experience and the conflicting values across various spheres of social life in favor of the principles accepted within it[11]. The forms of this resolution can vary from voluntary to forced trust and distrust.

If ideology is absent in one form or another, or if its influence on the masses is minimal, a situation of ideological vacuum arises, leading to a widespread sense of historical deadlock or catastrophe. This is the current reality of post-Soviet society, characterized by a profound historical distrust that many Russians feel toward both the past and the future. This distrust manifests, firstly, in relation to Soviet society, and secondly, in relation to contemporary post-Soviet society, as indicated by the results of various sociological surveys. In the third place, after a brief romantic period of "friendship" in the early 1990s, certain disillusionment with the West has emerged, specifically regarding the countries of Western Europe and North America. In the fourth place, there has been disappointment in the common utopian dream of a just and rational society. It has become improper to speak of utopia, although utopian ideals and aspirations continue to influence the lives of most people in various forms. Thus, none of these four societal types presents a convincing social ideal for many groups and individuals; therefore, the quest for a *national idea* (a project, a unique path) remains a pressing issue.

[11] Regarding the role of ideology in Soviet society, see: (Zinovyev 1994: 241-267).

The Primary Functions of Distrust

When examining the primary functions of *distrust*, the following points can be identified:

Historical Function

Distrust acts as a bridge between different periods. Negative experience linked to the past dictates specific patterns of behavior in the present. Therefore, distrust primarily connects the past with the present. In contrast, *trust* implies the continuity of certain social ties, linking the past, present, and future. Trust is always future-oriented and associated with hope. *Distrust* is not reliant on hope; instead, it perceives the future as something unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Consequently, in situations characterized by distrust, the emphasis shifts to the present. When it is impossible to predict what the future will hold in a transforming society, focusing on the present becomes both justified and effective.

Cognitive-Reductionist Function

Any form of distrust reduces the actual or potential diversity of behavioral motives to a few real or imagined ones. Thus, in situations of interaction, a distrustful mindset leads to a simplification in understanding the motivations of the other party. However, this gives rise to a peculiar situation, noted by Luhmann, which can be referred to as *the paradox of distrust*: those who do not trust must gather more information than those who do. Nevertheless, among the collected information, the distrustful individual must determine which pieces are the most trustworthy. Consequently, they become more dependent on a smaller amount of information (Luhmann 2000: 93), making them more subjective and vulnerable in this regard.

Controlling Function

When individuals in interaction cannot rely on one another, they must continuously monitor the situation and be prepared for prompt intervention. This requires not only significant effort but also increasingly complex systems of oversight and verification. Systemic distrust necessitates *monitoring the monitors themselves*, which in turn leads to the need for further oversight of those *supervising the supervisors*. Consequently, distrust becomes a legitimate foundation for the development of bureaucratic systems.

Integrative Function

One of the traditional methods of social, and particularly political, integration is the unification of individuals through mistrust of various groups or social institutions. Whether rooted in myth or reality, the perceived threat posed by the "stranger" or the "other" serves to unite citizens of the state, as well as members of political parties or corporations. This political and social solidarity, based on mistrust, was especially characteristic of the Soviet state and society[12]. Applying these considerations to the realities of post-Soviet society raises

[12] When examining the functions of trust, Galina M. Zabolotnaya identifies three primary functions: maintaining the stability and cohesion of society; organizing and balancing social and cultural diversity; and establishing vertical social relationships (see: Zabolotnaya 2003).

numerous questions that necessitate further analysis. Let us outline some of them.

- In Soviet society, there existed a certain level of political and ideological *trust* in the state power hierarchy system, but after *perestroika*, this trust significantly weakened. In post-Soviet society, particularly in the early 1990s, many business initiatives relied on the support of relatives, which in turn elevated the economic and social role of the family. This situation necessitates a thorough analysis, as it gives rise to at least two possible interpretations: a) the strengthening of familial ties indicates a regression to the traditions of a pre-modern society, and b) such connections are characteristic of certain developed countries, such as Italy, France, and China, and therefore reflect the adaptation of Russian both individuals and social groups (in this case, families) to changed economic conditions. Fukuyama uses the term *spontaneous sociability* to describe intermediate social interactions that differ from familial relationships and those within governmental structures; however, this concept still requires further contextualization within specific historical conditions (Fukuyama 2004: 54). The applicability of this term to post-Soviet realities remains somewhat unclear.
- The problem of *distrust* has also intensified in the economic sphere. Financial scams, pyramid schemes, tax evasion, transferring funds to foreign banks, and corruption are just a few manifestations of economic distrust. This issue raises several questions. Firstly, it is unclear whether distrust in the economy stems from behavioral patterns developed in other areas of life or if it evolves autonomously within this sphere. Considering the significant dependence of business on the state, the transition of a considerable portion of the Soviet *nomenklatura* into business, and the characterization of the current regime as *nomenklatura capitalism*, one could argue that, much like in the Soviet era, behavioral patterns from the political sphere are being transferred to the economic realm. Secondly, the factors that might play a stabilizing role remain uncertain. A comparison of the post-Soviet economy with Western economies reveals significant differences in regard of the historical context. Faith in God, which has served as a crucial foundation for both social and economic trust in the West, has little bearing on Russian economic relations. The historical factor is also less influential: unlike Western societies, where the history of a bank, company, or factory can span several centuries and serve as a testament to trust, the post-Soviet economy is characterized by gradual demise of many once-renowned Soviet enterprises and relatively short (10–20-year) lifespan of new ones, which fails to convince many consumers of their reliability. Furthermore, numerous attempts to present certain brands or companies as having existed "since 18…" illustrate a culture of economic simulacra that does not accurately reflect real history.
- *Distrust* continues to be prevalent in the political sphere. This is primarily manifested in a culture of managerial distrust, which is evidenced by

centralization, heightened forms of various controls, an authoritarian management style, and an emphasis on maintaining order rather than fostering innovation (Nieder 1997: 38-39)[13]. If distrust is propagated centrally, can any regional initiatives in politics, culture, or economics effectively counteract this spread?

Let us summarize some conclusions. The phenomenon of *distrust* should be viewed as a significant factor influencing individual behavior and, to varying degrees, an attribute of any culture. In this sense, *distrust* is not simply a derivative of *trust*, but these phenomena exist in a dynamic and dialectical relationship. Every culture and society is characterized by a specific balance between distrust and trust. Distrust tends to come to the foreground during periods of revolutionary change and deep social crises, where it gains cultural legitimacy and becomes economically and politically effective. A social institution of distrust comes into being, when there is a significant need for distrust among large groups of people across various spheres of public life, and when patterns and norms of behavior emerge in response to this need.

In post-Soviet society, there is generally a negative balance between trust and distrust: the lack of trust in the economic and political system is often substituted with trust in individual personalities. However, for trust to develop between partners – be they parties, firms, or others – something else is required, a common element that both parties are willing to trust. In this context, the issues of both *trust* and *distrust* revolve around the selection of intermediaries in social interactions. Therefore, a strategy for overcoming social distrust involves seeking intermediaries, which may include charismatic individuals, political and cultural symbols, ideal (i.e. *utopian*) models of interaction, national ideas, geopolitical strategies, etc.

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[13] The relationship between *trust* and *bureaucracy* is examined in the work: (Offermann 1990). Theories of *political trust* are considered in the article by V.N. Lukin "Political trust in modern civil society: cultural and institutional models" (Lukin 2005).

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