

THE INDIVIDUAL BASES OF POLITICAL TRUST: TRENDS IN NEW AND ESTABLISHED DEMOCRACIES

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ABSTRACT

The expansion of democracy in the world has been paradoxically accompanied by a decline of political trust. By looking at the trends in political trust in new and stable democracies over the last 20 years, and their possible determinants, we claim that an observable decline in trust reflects the post-honeymoon disillusionment rather than the emergence of a more critical citizenry. However, the first new democracies of the 'third wave' show a significant reemergence of political trust after democratic consolidation. Using data from the World Values Survey and the European Values Survey, we develop a multivariate model of political trust. Our findings indicate that political trust is positively related to well-being, social capital, democratic attitudes, political interest, and external efficacy, suggesting that trust responds to government performance. However, political trust is generally hindered by corruption permissiveness, political radicalism and postmaterialism. We identify differences by region and type of society in these relationships, and discuss the methodological problems inherent to the ambiguities in the concept of political trust.

During the last 25 years, democracy has been adopted as a political system in many societies previously ruled by non-democratic governments or one-party regimes. Democracy has thus expanded its scope as a form of government in the world. This trend started in southern Europe in the mid-1970s, and was then followed in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The fall of communism (1989–1991) broadened this wave of democratization in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics. Today, the number of societies ruled by a democratic government is larger than ever. Paradoxically, our results show that political trust, understood as citizens' confidence in political institutions, has declined in the new democracies during the last two decades and does not seem to have increased in the established ones either.

This paper was originally presented at the 58th Annual Conference of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), Nashville, TN, May 15–18, 2003. The article was first submitted to *IJPOR* April 13, 2004. The final version was received January 19, 2005.

It has been argued that this decline is part of a unique trend of political skepticism and civic disengagement, which ultimately will affect the quality of 'global democracy' (Putnam, 2002). Trust is especially important for democratic governments since they cannot rely on coercion to the same extent as other regimes. During periods of economic turmoil, for instance, democratic stability requires citizens to have sufficient trust in economic and political institutions to accept temporary economic straits in return for the promise of better conditions in some uncertain future. But when one trusts, one forgoes the opportunity to influence decision making on the assumption that there are shared interests between the individual who trusts and the trustee. The same factors that drive the increasing functional importance of trust also constrain the extent to which people can participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Consequently, declining rates of confidence in political institutions may be a reflection of an increasingly sophisticated citizenry, and a desirable democratic outcome (Hardin, 1999; Warren, 1999; Mishler & Rose, 1997). Mishler and Rose concisely summarize this double-edged element inherent to political trust: 'Democracy requires trust but also presupposes an active and vigilant citizenry with a healthy skepticism of government and willingness, should the need arise, to suspend trust and assert control over government' (1997, p. 419).

This double-edged element is fundamental to understanding the meaning of the global decline in political trust and its implications for democracy. We contend that the decline reflects different dynamics and has differentiated effects in established democracies on the one hand, and in new ones on the other. While in the former the decline is associated with a significant intergenerational value change that has taken place among post-war cohorts, it is part of a more general post-honeymoon trend in the latter—a trend which also includes a decline in political participation.

An erosion of respect for authority that has come with the development of post-materialist cultures has characterized young cohorts in industrialized nations for more than three decades: When people no longer worry about their survival, they do not need to cling unquestioningly to the authorities they hope will ensure their survival. Instead, as material well-being increases, trust in political institutions and elites is likely to decline as publics begin to evaluate their leaders and institutions by more demanding standards (Inglehart, 2003; Offe, 1999; Patterson, 1999). A strengthening of pro-democratic orientations, at the same time, has characterized this intergenerational value change (Dalton, 2002; Klingemann, 1999). Younger generations show greater tolerance toward diversity, in particular, and a stronger internalization of democratic principles, in general. We expect, therefore, these two convergent forces, the shift in value priorities *and* the increasing attachment toward democracy, to interact strongly with the decline of political trust in established regimes.

Fluctuations in trust have, however, been subjected to essentially different dynamics in new democracies. As surveys conducted there at the time of transition as well as several years later show, the enthusiasm for the arrival of democracy seems deflated, reflecting a pattern similar to the honeymoon periods in presidential approval ratings (Inglehart & Catterberg, 2003). In many countries, transition to democracy motivated aspirations of civil, political, and economic rights. As a result of these new demands, higher standards for evaluating governmental performance emerged after regimes had changed. In a significant number of cases, however, basic needs of vast segments of the population have not yet been met—partly due to the distributional effects of dramatic economic transformations. This increased people's skepticism. We expect the erosion of political trust in new democracies, therefore, to be more closely linked to disillusionment and disaffection rather than to the emergence of a more critical citizenry.

The objective of this paper is to analyze individual bases of political trust in society. We use the distinctive dynamics sketched above precisely as a frame to identify some of these determinants both in new and established democracies, studying their differences and commonalities. We first examine trends in political trust over time. Then we build a model of political trust. We use data from several nations included in at least two of the four waves of the World Values Surveys (WVS) and the European Values Surveys (EVS), which were conducted between 1981 and 2000. Finally, concluding remarks round off the empirical findings.

MEASURING POLITICAL TRUST

Ambiguity seems inherent to the concept of political trust. In fact, one of the main problems in the literature is the unclear differentiation between trust in political institutions and evaluations of government performance, leading to serious operationalization problems. This has been evident since the 1960s (Easton, 1965; Miller, 1974), but there are few efforts for clarification. Instead, much of the recent literature uses political trust and trust in government performance as interchangeable notions (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2001; Nevitte & Kanji, 2002).

The U.S. literature, based on the National Election Studies (NES) indices, emphasizes elements of ethics, honesty, and integrity of governmental officials and legislators: (1) 'How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right...?' (2) 'Do you think that people in government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes...?' (3) 'Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?' (4) 'Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are crooked...?' In our view this operationalization seems to have some endogeneity in it, raising the question of the extent to which components (2), (3), and (4) explain component (1).

In this paper, as mentioned above, we refer to political trust as citizen's *confidence* in political institutions, using the question '*For each of the following organizations, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them?*' Conceptually, therefore, our approach is more similar to the one developed in the comparative literature, but we have incorporated new elements of analysis related to questions of integrity as a component of political trust, in particular, the issue of corruption.

Our focus is on political institutions rather than government performance, but it is clear that confidence in such institutions reflects people's evaluations of the political environment. One of our main findings is that political trust has declined, rather than increased, in newly democratic societies. A possible explanation lies in a natural process of post-honeymoon disaffection among the new democracies' publics. Without doubt, legislators and bureaucrats, party leaders and union representatives are among the most noticeable political actors in democratic polities, along with the executive representatives: presidents and prime ministers. However, an operationalization of trust in government based on questions about political actors may make the concept more sensitive to government performance. Based on data availability and comparability, our paper focuses on political trust as a function of confidence in legislative bodies and governmental structures, that is, in parliament and congress, depending on the case, and the civil service.

ABOUT THE DATA

The WVS and the EVS have been conducted in about 80 societies in different waves of interviews between 1981 and 2000, including new and established democracies, as well as non-democratic countries. The first wave took place in 1981–83, followed by a second in 1990–91, and then a third in 1995–96. The recent fourth wave was conducted in 2000–01 and includes, for the first time, predominantly Islamic societies. Detailed descriptions of this unique dataset can be found in several books and sourcebooks (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart, Basáñez & Moreno, 1998; Inglehart, 2003; Inglehart, Basáñez, Diez-Medrano, Halman, & Luijkx, 2004), and the raw data and documentation can be obtained from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), at the University of Michigan. More information can also be retrieved from World Values Survey (n.d.).

Although the entire dataset is much broader than what we use in this paper, the necessity that data and questions be available for the same countries at, at least, two points in time reduced the number of countries for our analysis to 37 for our descriptive analyses, and to 26 countries for our multivariate analyses. Each national representative sample includes about 1,000 interviews, though

sample sizes vary from country to country. We employed weighting techniques by population size for pooled analyses.¹

TRENDS IN POLITICAL TRUST

Political trust has been declining in most societies. This decline is very significant in many new democracies, but a moderate decrease can be observed in established democracies, too. Let us take a look at the confidence in some political institutions among the mass publics during the last two decades. Legislative bodies, either parliament or congress, depending on the case, are common components of democratic rule. Still, confidence in these legislative institutions has declined in many new democracies, a decline that is particularly sharp in the first survey taken after regime change.

According to data displayed in Table 1, in 19 out of 21 new democracies, confidence in the legislative institutions was lower in 2001 than at the time the country was first surveyed. In 12 of those 19 countries, an especially large decline in confidence was observed in the first survey taken immediately after the country adopted a democratic form of government. In many cases, trust in parliament or congress was higher under the non-democratic government, suggesting that most individuals may have placed a higher value on an institution for what it meant instead of for what it was. In practice, deadlocks and inefficient legislative procedures may have raised citizens' suspicion and dissatisfaction in the newly democratic settings, leading to political crises in some of them, as was the case of Peru under Fujimori, and Russia under Yeltsin.

Confidence in legislative institutions fell, on average, 26 percentage points in Latin America between 1981 (or the first survey thereafter) and 2001, which represents a proportional reduction of 48 percent in the last set of surveys as compared to the first ones. The most dramatic case in Latin America during this period is Argentina, which registered a decrease in trust in congress from 72 percent in 1981, still under the military regime, to 17 percent in 1990. Some Latin American countries experienced a democratic transition in the 1980s, a decade also known for a severe economic crisis in the region. Legislative confidence also fell in Chile (29 percentage points), in Mexico (6 points) and Peru (5 points). This latter country has only two surveys, both conducted after the *Fujigolpe* of April 1992, and it has the lowest levels of trust in congress observed in the region. In Mexico,

¹Note on the validity of the time points chosen to test for the honeymoon hypothesis: The year of regime change corresponds to the year of fieldwork in all new democracies, with the exception of Belarus, Lithuania, and Estonia. Yet our analysis does not require the initial surveys to take place right at the start of regime change but rather near the 'transitional period'—the stage when dramatic transformations in the political arena as well as within society start developing (Linz & Stepan, 1996; Huntington, 1991). In the case of these three former communist nations, even if regime change did not take place until 1992 in Lithuania and Estonia and 1994 in Belarus, they were already affected by the 'Third Wave' when fieldwork was conducted in 1990.

TABLE I Confidence in parliament: Development over time in new and established democracies

	1981-83 (%)	1990-91 (%)	1995-96 (%)	2000-01 (%)	Change between first survey and 2001
<i>New democracies</i>					
<i>Latin America</i>					
Argentina	72	17	14	10	-62
Chile		63	38	34	-29
Mexico	27	34	41	21	-6
Peru			14	9	-5
Mean	50	38	27	19	-26
<i>Former Soviet Republics</i>					
Belarus		29	26	33	4
Estonia		68	42	25	-43
Latvia		71	24	26	-45
Lithuania		65	24	10	-55
Russia		43	21	18	-25
Ukraine			34	25	-9
Mean		55	29	23	-29
<i>Eastern Europe</i>					
Bulgaria		48	42	26	-22
Czech Republic		15	20	13	-2
East Germany		41	16	37	-4
Hungary		84	39	37	-47
Poland		73	31	31	-42
Romania		20	18	18	-2
Slovenia		36	24	24	-12
Slovakia		10	29	39	29
Mean		41	27	28	-13
<i>Other</i>					
South Africa		61	56	44	-17
South Korea	67	34	31	10	-57
Turkey		55	47	44	-11
<i>Established democracies</i>					
Australia	55		30		-25
Belgium	34	42		37	3
Britain	39	46		35	-4
Canada	42	37		37	-5
Denmark	36	41		47	11
Finland	65	33	31	41	-24
France	47	43	39	39	-8
Italy	30	31		33	3
Japan	27	28	24	20	-7
Netherlands	43	53		54	11
Norway	76	59		69	-7
Portugal		37		45	8

TABLE I continued

	1981–83 (%)	1990–91 (%)	1995–96 (%)	2000–01 (%)	Change between first survey and 2001
Spain	47	38	34	47	0
Sweden	44	45	43	49	5
USA	51	42	28	37	-14
West Germany	51	50	28	33	-18
<i>Mean</i>	46	42	32	42	-4

N (per country and survey) = approximately 1,000

Note: Percentages show those saying they have 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot of' confidence. Figures in bold type indicate cases of large decline in confidence after adoption of democratic government.

Source: 1981 to 2001 World Values Surveys.

the most significant decrease was registered after the Institutional Revolutionary Party, also known as PRI, lost its majority in congress in one of the cleanest and fairest national elections until then, in 1997. The PRI had dominated congress for the last seven decades. In 2000, when the PRI lost the presidency for the first time, the Mexican congress was elected again with no majority from any political party.

Former Soviet Republics show an average decline in legislative trust similar to Latin America's: 29 percentage points, equivalent in proportion to a 47 point-loss between the first and the last surveys. The most noticeable decrease in trust is observed in the Baltic republics—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—but the decline is very significant in Russia as well. About 43 percent of Russians trusted their parliamentary institution in 1990, when the country was still under Communist rule. The survey was actually conducted in January 1991, the year that later saw the coup against Gorbachev and then his resignation as Soviet president. By 1995, two years after the political crisis surrounding the Russian parliament, trust in that institution had decreased 22 percentage points (from 43 to 21 percent). The only increase, of about 4 percentage points, was observed in Belarus, where approximately one-third of the public said they had confidence in the legislative body in 2000.

The decline of trust in parliament or congress was less severe in Eastern European new democracies—where transitions from communism were significantly less traumatic. Still, a few of them show decreases as large as—if not larger than—that observed in the former Soviet republics and Latin American nations. Confidence in the legislature was by far highest in Hungary and Poland by 1990, but these nations experienced the sharpest decline after 10 years of political transformations. By 2000, legislative trust in Hungary and Poland had decreased by more than half. With the exception of Bulgaria, where trust in parliament fell by 22 percentage points, the rest of the East European countries where data is available—the Czech Republic, East Germany before and after reunification, Romania and

Slovenia—show moderate and, in some cases, insignificant losses. Only Slovakia registered a significant increase in the level of trust in parliament. New democracies from other regions seem to follow a similar pattern of decline. Turkey, South Africa, and South Korea show a lower level of confidence today than in the recent past, and this is most noticeable among South Koreans.

Unlike the general decline in legislative trust observed in new democracies, established democracies show an ambivalent development. In 16 democratic countries surveyed in 1981 and 2000, there was, on average, a loss of trust in their respective legislatures of about 4 percentage points. The most significant losses were observed in Australia, Finland, West Germany, and the United States. In the latter, the decline in trust is clearly observable in 1995, after the Republican Party gained control of the U.S. Congress in the 1994 elections, framed by Newt Gingrich's 'Contract with America'. This decline in trust among the American public may have some explanation in the government shutdown that came after that election. In 2000, confidence in congress increased again, though not to the level observed prior to 1994, which makes it more likely that Americans' mistrust has something to do with the Gingrich-era Congress.

The observed decrease in legislative trust is less significant in Britain, Canada, France, Japan, and Norway, where trust in parliament fell less than 10 percentage points. Nonetheless, the level of trust currently observed in Norway (69 percent) is much higher than that in Canada (37 percent), Britain (35 percent), or Japan (20 percent). In contrast, legislative trust has increased in Belgium, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Portugal and Spain are part of the third wave of democratization that began in the mid-1970s, but we included them as established democracies for their democratic political systems are the oldest and also some of the most consolidated of the third wave. As a matter of fact, trust in the Spanish parliament had been declining since the 1980s and well until the mid-1990s, following the pattern of other new democracies. However, the last survey, conducted in 2000, shows that Spaniards' confidence in their legislature rose to the same level of 1981, without net gains or losses. The Portuguese legislative branch has gained some trust in the last decade. If more recent democracies will follow the Spanish and Portuguese paths of recovery in trust, we will observe an increase in political trust in these countries in the future. Of course, we will not know this for sure until another round of surveys has been conducted later in the decade.

Confidence in the civil service also shows some decline, but not as sharp as the one observed for the legislatures. As shown in Table 2, on average, trust in the civil service decreased 12 points among Latin American nations—with Argentina registering the sharpest fall, 8 points in Eastern European nations, and 5 points in the former Soviet republics. The fall of confidence in civil service in established democracies was, on average, 1 point. The number of established democracies where confidence in the civil service decreased equals the number of

TABLE 2 Confidence in civil service: Development over time in new and established democracies

	1981-83 (%)	1990-91 (%)	1995-96 (%)	2000-01 (%)	Change between first survey and 2001
<i>New democracies</i>					
<i>Latin America</i>					
Argentina	49	7	7	6	-43
Chile		49	45	39	-10
Mexico	23	28	41	20	-3
Peru			14	21	7
Mean	36	28	27	22	-12
<i>Former Soviet Republics</i>					
Belarus		20	46	21	1
Estonia		38	58	37	-1
Latvia		33	42	47	14
Lithuania		51	35	18	-33
Russia		44	44	35	-9
Ukraine			36	35	-1
Mean		37	44	32	-5
<i>Eastern Europe</i>					
Bulgaria		30	42	21	-9
Czech Republic		10	38	22	12
East Germany		40	34	34	-6
Hungary	70	48	50	47	-23
Poland		74	31	30	-44
Romania		30	25	25	-5
Slovenia		40	27	24	-16
Slovakia		9	39	36	27
Mean		35	36	30	-8
<i>Other</i>					
South Africa	48	50	48	44	-4
South Korea	86	60	78	64	-22
Turkey		49	65	61	12
<i>Established democracies</i>					
Australia	47		37		-10
Belgium	41	42		45	4
Britain	46	45		42	-4
Canada	49	49		49	0
Denmark	46	50		52	6
Finland	52	31	33	39	-13
France	49	46		45	-4
Italy	27	25		32	5
Japan	29	33	35	29	0
Netherlands	43	45		37	-6
Norway	57	43	50		-7
Portugal		35		52	17

TABLE 2 continued

	1981-83 (%)	1990-91 (%)	1995-96 (%)	2000-01 (%)	Change between first survey and 2001
Spain	38	34	40	40	2
Sweden	41	40	41	45	4
USA	57	58	45	37	-20
West Germany	32	38	52	38	6
Mean	44	41	42	42	-1

N (per country and survey) = approximately 1,000

Note: Percentages show those saying they have 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot of' confidence.

Source: 1981 to 2001 World Values Surveys.

countries where it rose. In the case of legislative trust, there were more countries showing a decline.

We associate this smaller shift with the fact that congress is a more compact and visible body of government than the more abstract civil service, and also tends to engage in more public controversies with executives bodies. After all, in politics congress is usually more exposed and gets more blame than the civil service.

A MODEL OF POLITICAL TRUST

In this section we develop a multivariate analysis of political trust based on the third and fourth waves of the Values Surveys (1995-2001). As claimed in our introduction and described in the previous section, erosion on political trust is associated with increasing disillusionment in emergent nations, while it is linked to an intergenerational value change in established ones. In this context, special attention is given to attachments toward democratic principles and orientations toward ethical issues, on the one hand, and variations in people's priorities, on the other. Before we go into the results, let us describe the variables and the hypotheses for each variable, as well as the method used for estimation.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

In trying to operationalize political trust we looked at the different variables that represent trust in political institutions, including parliament or congress, the civil service, labor unions, and political parties. As the latter two raised some problems either of comparison (labor unions) or data availability (parties) across nations, we constructed an index of political trust based only on parliament and the civil service. Both of these institutions are common in most democracies analyzed here, new, and not so new. The dependent variable is simply the sum (minus 1) of 'Confidence in Civil Service' and 'Confidence in Parliament,' originally measured using a 4-category scale. The constructed variable is an ordinal

additive index that goes from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates distrust in both institutions, while 7 indicates strong confidence in both. In other words, the lower limit of the index refers to those respondents expressing ‘none at all’ when asked about how much confidence they have in the civil service and the parliament, while the upper limit refers to those respondents expressing ‘a great deal of confidence’ in both. Intermediate values show either ambivalent orientations toward both institutions or distinct attitudes—that is, strong confidence towards one and distrust regarding the other.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

We selected a number of independent variables that are theoretically relevant in studies of political trust: social capital, well-being, democratic attitudes, materialist and post-materialist values, political interest, external efficacy, political radicalism, moral considerations (corruption permissiveness), and socioeconomic factors. Let us review each of these variables briefly and describe the way we operationalize them.

Organizational and participant aspects of social life, broadly understood as *social capital*, lie at the foundations of most studies on trust (Inglehart, 1990; Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 2000). Our theoretical expectation is that the greater the social capital—more involvement in associations, larger membership in organizations, and, in general, a higher sense of community and social networks—the greater the political trust. We operationalized social capital in terms of the membership in voluntary organizations reported in the surveys, as well as interpersonal trust.

One of the most robust empirical findings in the literature of trust is the latter’s positive relation with economic development and prosperity (Inglehart, 1990; Fukuyama, 1995): The more economic development, the higher the level of interpersonal and political trust. The logic is that, while scarcity produces suspicion and mistrust, well-being increases confidence in others. We operationalized *well-being* as the self-reported levels of financial satisfaction and satisfaction with one’s life as a whole. Our expectation is that these measures should be positively associated with political trust.

Support for democracy is more likely among those who agree with democratic principles. Thus, individuals who hold *democratic attitudes* should be more supportive of democratic political institutions than individuals who express non-democratic views and values. Our theoretical expectation is that democratic attitudes are positively associated with higher confidence on democratic political institutions and, thus, to political trust. We constructed a democratic-authoritarian dimension based on responses to items that portray views toward democratic and non-democratic government (Moreno, 1999, 2001).

The rise of postmaterialist values, those values that emphasize self-expression and quality of life over physical and physiological needs, is a well documented

phenomenon of intergenerational *value change* in society (Inglehart, 1990, 1997). Although postmaterialism is fundamentally pro-democratic, it also reflects elite-challenging views and behavior, as well as increasing dissatisfaction with the established authority in today's democracies (Inglehart, 1997; Nevitte & Kanji, 2002; Inglehart & Catterberg 2003). Our expectations on the influence of materialist and postmaterialist values are mixed, but there is reason to believe that post-materialists, as holders of challenging views to authority, may be likely to express lower levels of political trust.

A 'cynical-view-of-politics' hypothesis would state that the more people know about politics, the more they tend to distrust those involved in it. In contrast, a more psychological and informational approach would argue that individuals' interest is selective, and they tend to hold favorable views about the areas of their interest. Following an approach of selective interests, we would expect that those who express *interest in politics* tend to be those who actually like politics, tend to be more partisan, and be more politically engaged. Our expectation is that the higher the political interest, the higher the political trust.

External efficacy has been used in the past (Easton, 1965; Miller, 1974) as a representation of governmental responsiveness. It is expected that favorable orientations toward political authority are positively related to favorable evaluations of government performance. We measured governmental responsiveness with a variable that indicates whether respondents perceive that their country is run by big interests looking out for themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of all the people. The latter category is used as a proxy of responsiveness. Our expectation is to find a positive relationship between this variable and political trust.

Preferences for revolutionary change in society are expected to be strongly and negatively related to trust in political institutions. Individuals who express political trust are likely to accept the established order to some extent and, if change is perceived as necessary, they are more likely to support moderate reforms, rather than radical transformation. We used an indicator of preferences for revolutionary change as a measure of *political radicalism*. Our expectation is that the higher the radicalism, the lower the political trust.

There is evidence that *corruption permissiveness*—understood as the willingness to justify acts of corruption in society—is negatively related to democratic attitudes and to trust (Moreno, 2002). Using an index of corruption permissiveness based on justification of acts like 'claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled', 'avoiding a fare on public transport', 'cheating on taxes if you have a chance', and 'accepting a bribe in the course of duties', we attempted to establish stronger evidence on the negative relation between corruption and democracy, and, in this case, between the justification of corruption and political trust. Corruption feeds a culture of mistrust. Thus, our expectation is that the higher corruption permissiveness goes along with lower trust in political institutions.

Socioeconomic factors such as income and education are likely determinants of political trust. Although in many societies there is a strong positive correlation between these two factors, there is an interesting theoretical paradox: Income—as an underlying aspect of class—could be generally linked to support for established authority, while education—as a component of cognitive mobilization—can be negatively related to trust in established political institutions. We also examine the effect of age, gender, and religiosity.

A NOTE ON METHOD

Since the dependent variables are ordinal indices (1 = low confidence in the two political institutions, parliament/congress or civil service, and 7 = high confidence in the two institutions), we use ordered-probit estimations. In the models, we do not analyze pseudo R^2 because they do not necessarily have statistical meaning (Sribney, 1997). To control for fluctuations on the variance across samples, we incorporate robust standard error. We also include dummies per nation and year to control for autocorrelation among a nation's different surveys.

RESULTS

An overview of the results of the multivariate analyses is shown in Table 3. It shows which variable was statistically significant in each group of societies. In the analysis for established democracies, we obtain the largest number of statistically significant variables (9), followed by the former Soviet republics and new democracies of Latin America (7). The analysis for Eastern Europe shows the lowest number of significant variables (6).

Political trust in established democracies is significantly and positively explained by well-being (financial satisfaction), external efficacy (government responsiveness), democratic attitudes, political interest, and religiosity. In contrast, political trust is hindered by postmaterialism, political radicalism, corruption permissiveness, and income. In other words, well-being and good government performance increases political trust, but critical citizens and corruption tend to decrease it. Postmaterialist values are challenging orientations toward established authorities, and one of the manifestations of such a challenge takes place in the form of political mistrust in advanced industrial society. A similar effect is observed in political radicalism and corruption permissiveness: The higher the level of political radicalism, the lower the political trust; likewise, the higher the corruption permissiveness, the lower the level of trust in political institutions. It seems that the more corrupt an individual, the more corrupt he or she expects the government to be, or vice versa (Table 3).

Political trust in former Soviet republics is explained by social capital—measured in this case as interpersonal trust—well-being, external efficacy, and political

TABLE 3 Determinants of political trust: Overview of four world regions

	<i>Six established democracies</i>	<i>Six former Soviet Republics</i>	<i>Eight new democracies in Eastern Europe</i>	<i>Four Latin American nations</i>
Financial satisfaction	+	+	+	+
Satisfaction with life	o	o	o	o
Governmental responsiveness	+	+	+	+
Democratic/authoritarian index	+	o	+	+
Materialism/postmaterialism index	-	o	o	o
Political interest	+	+	o	+
Political radicalism	-	-	o	o
Corruption permissiveness index	-	-	-	o
Interpersonal trust	o	+	+	+
Organizational membership	o	o	o	o
Education	o	-	o	-
Income	-	o	+	+
Age	o	o	o	o
Gender	o	o	o	o
Religiosity	+	o	o	o
<i>N</i>	5,690	6,350	4,770	8,623

+ = significant positive effect

- = significant negative effect

o = no effect

Note: Analysis produced ordinal probit estimations, with robust standard errors. Detailed tables showing actual coefficients can be obtained from the authors on request. Probabilities were obtained using CLARIFY. The dependent variable is an additive index of trust in parliament and trust in civil service.

Nations included: Six established democracies: Finland, Japan, Spain, Sweden, USA, West Germany. Six former Soviet Republics: Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine. Eight new democracies in Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia. Four Latin American Nations: Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Peru.

Source: 1995 and 2001 World Values Surveys.

interest. However, political radicalism and corruption decrease trust. The positive and significant influence of well-being and governmental responsiveness is also observed in Eastern Europe and Latin America, providing evidence that the effect of both is robust across different groups of nations. Unlike its insignificant effect in the former Soviet republics, the democratic–authoritarian index explains trust in Eastern Europe and Latin America. More pro-democratic individuals tend also to be more trusting of political institutions. Interpersonal trust is another common factor in the latter two regions in the expected direction: Individuals who generally trust in other people express higher confidence in political institutions.

The effect of corruption permissiveness on political trust is different in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Corruption has a significant effect on distrust in Eastern Europe, but has no effect in Latin America, a world region not only characterized by low levels of interpersonal trust, but also by constant scandals of

government corruption. Latin America is one of the regions with low levels of social capital. For example, the 1995 survey conducted in Brazil showed only 3 percent of respondents saying they trust most people, and levels of membership in voluntary associations no greater than 10 percent of the total population. At the same time, some Latin American nations, like Mexico and Brazil, express relatively high levels of corruption permissiveness (Moreno, 2002).

Income and education have different effects on political trust in different regions. Income, for example, decreases trust in established democracies, boosts it in Eastern Europe and Latin America, and has no effect in the former Soviet republics. It is possible that sharper income differences lie behind these findings. If income inequality is higher, individuals in the upper income levels are more likely to trust the political establishment. Education, on the other hand, has no effect on political trust in established democracies and Eastern Europe, and it is negatively related to trust in former Soviet republics and Latin America. Both structural variables are important in the Latin region, but they have opposite effects: Higher income levels go along with higher political trust, but higher education with lower trust. Since income and education tend to be closely related, how do we interpret these opposite effects? One way to interpret this is that education makes more critical citizens in these settings, but, as mentioned earlier, income makes them more supportive of the political establishment.

In sum, well-being (measured as financial satisfaction), and external efficacy (represented by perceptions about government responsiveness) have robust, positive, and significant effects on political trust across different groups of nations, new and established democracies, all of them with different levels of economic development. One first conclusion is that political trust depends strongly on performance. Among the negative factors for trust, the toleration of corruption proves to be important in all settings analyzed here except in Latin America. Corruption tends to decrease political trust significantly, but this is not the case among Latin American publics. This is a finding that requires further elaboration based on more detailed data tapping attitudes to and practices of corruption.

DISCUSSION

Political trust is an ambivalent concept. Because of its inherent relationship to the performance of political institutions, it is difficult to separate it from evaluations of government. Nonetheless, we have tried to focus on political trust as a concept that reflects not only support for democracy or favorable views about governance, but as a cultural link between citizenry and political institutions. Our examination of trust in legislative bodies and bureaucracies in new and established democracies has brought two findings that need further elaboration. On one hand, political trust has declined sharply in most societies that adopted a democratic form of government in the last two decades, following a post-honeymoon

period of political disaffection. It is not clear yet whether we will observe an increase in political trust in these societies once their democracies are well consolidated. Spain and Portugal followed that pattern, suggesting that other younger third wave democracies might actually experience a recovery of political trust over the next few years. On the other hand, political trust in established democracies has had an ambivalent development, increasing in some countries but decreasing in others. On average, there was a moderate net loss in political trust in these societies.

Among the determinants of political trust, individual well-being proves to have a robust effect across different groups of nations, which means that citizens' confidence in their political system is tied to the system's ability to increase or maintain well-being. In other words, performance seems an inherent element of political trust. Other aspects play a positive role as well: Social capital, external efficacy—which may also be related to performance—democratic attitudes, and political interest, but this is not observable in all groups of nations included in the analysis, suggesting that the impact of these aspects is more limited. Among the factors that hinder political trust, we observed some effects of political radicalism, postmaterialist values, and corruption permissiveness. The reasons why these aspects decrease political trust vary, as does their strength in different types of societies. Postmaterialism, for example, only matters in established democracies, where there is clear evidence that intergenerational value change has taken place in the last thirty years, at least. Corruption permissiveness matters in the post-Communist world, but not in Latin America. This shows that trust is not a function of corruption among the Latin American publics.

In our view, further empirical research should allow us to disentangle the ambiguities of operationalization, but this will only happen if ambiguities in the concept of political trust are clarified. It is difficult to believe that individuals will not use performance as a frame of reference to provide views and opinions about political institutions. However, survey questions and wording may tap whether there is a cultural link between citizens and institutions. After all, previous work on trust suggests that this phenomenon happens not only in times of prosperity, but also, and some times more importantly, in times of hardship (Fukuyama, 1995). In other words, we should include in our surveys' instruments a clearly different way to assess when citizens trust their legislatures and their public officials for what they are and mean to democracy, not just for what they do and how they do it.

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