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Two dimensions of political trust in Russia[1]

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Abstract

This paper analyzes two dimensions of factors of political trust in Russia. The first is the target dimension (sociotropic vs. egocentric) and the second is the time dimension (retrospective vs. perspective). The study uses microdata from the 2016 Life in Transition Survey (LiTS) of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. We find robust evidence favoring the dominant sociotropic channel of political trust. Thus, individuals, when deciding whether or not to trust the Russian government, are primarily guided by improvements in the external environment. Moreover, we find that the impact of sociotropic factors on political trust depends on the level of government. Improvements in political performance are the most important determinant of trust in the Russian president, while institutional change and economic development are the most important determinants in models of trust for other governmental levels. Finally, we find that individuals who have lost their wealth show more trust than those who have preserved or increased it. However, this effect only works if individuals are optimistic about the future.

Keywords: Political trust; sociotropic channel; egocentric channel; Russia; microdata; Life in Transition Survey

JEL codes: P26, P27, P37

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1. The basics of political trust

Political trust is a key element of a well-functioning political system and a guarantee of political stability. Political trust is akin to other types of trust, like interpersonal trust and trust in social institutions (business, media, etc.). According to one of the most common approaches (trust-as-evaluation approach), political trust is the result of evaluating the efficiency of the state (Keele, 2007; Van der Meer, 2010; Lee et al., 2020). These assessments are made by households, that is, at the microlevel, and determine significantly the political trust. Households evaluate the efficiency of the government based on their perceptions of national economic performance, the level of corruption, the level of redistribution, income inequality (whether the distribution is fair or unfair), of their own well-being, and on how are they impacted by some kind of mass media. Microlevel research data show a positive correlation between political trust and perceptions of national economic performance, a negative correlation between political trust and perceptions of income inequality (Loveless, 2013; Loveless, 2016; Zmerli and Castilo, 2015; Guinjoan and Rico, 2018) as well as a negative correlation between political trust and perceptions of corruption (Wang, 2016; Alemika, 2004). Financial satisfaction is strongly positively correlated with political trust (Catterberg and Moreno, 2006). However, for the household income variable, findings in the literature are inconsistent. Some researchers find a positive correlation between the household income variable and political trust, while others the opposite; this is clarified below. The results of Catterberg and Moreno (2006) show that household income is negatively correlated to political trust in developed democracies and positively correlated in Eastern Europe and Latin America. In the former Soviet Union countries, no significant relationship between household income and political trust is observable. Catterberg and Moreno (2006) explain the cross-country differences in terms of the impact of income on trust by different economic environments in the countries under review. Thus, in countries with high inequality, wealthy households — the "winners" — are more loyal to the political establishment and *vice versa*. The negative correlation between the income and the trust in developed democracies is also found by McAllister (1999). According to his study, wealthy households have a relatively higher level of pretensions, which are often unsatisfied by the state. It increases their critical attitude toward the government and limits their trust. The opposite results are found by Medve-Bálint and Boda (2014). They point out that, in Western Europe (developed democracies), *ceteris paribus*, high income-households are characterized by a higher level of political trust. In contrast, in Eastern European countries, the low-income groups — or the "losers" — manifest more political trust. Goubin and Hooghe (2020) come to similar conclusions. In European countries, the relationship between political trust and household well-being is direct and strong. In addition, the experience of certain ex-Soviet countries suggests that a "reversal" of political trust can occur over time (Malkina et al., 2020). A

redistributive governmental policy and the control of mass media result in shifting loyalties. In 2010, wealthier households showed more trust in the Russian president and central government, but in 2016 the poorest groups of the population were the most loyal. The literature identifies yet another microlevel factor of political trust: social capital. It refers to the level of interpersonal trust in society. Interpersonal trust, as a rule, is positively connected with political trust (Medve-Bálint and Boda, 2014), but in developed societies these connections are often questioned (Kaase, 1999; Catterberg and Moreno, 2006). Finally, we should focus on the interconnection between political trust and the use of the mass media. Since the media include both traditional (newspapers, television, radio, etc.) and relatively new ways of human communication (the Internet and social networks), the impact of using media on political trust can be different. Moreover, the results are sensitive not only to the media type, but also to the sample of countries under review. Thus, Moy and Scheufele (2000) find no statistically significant relationship between newspaper reading/viewing television and political trust in the United States. On the contrary, Ceron (2015) points out that using traditional media to search for and receive news increases political trust in the Italian political establishment. At the same time, the news search and news acquisition through social networks significantly reduces the probability of political trust. Malkina et al. (2020) show that the impact of media on trust depends on the governmental level. Thus, searching for and retrieving news from the traditional media leads to an increasing trust in the Russian president, while searching for and retrieving news through the Internet leads to a decrease of political trust.

Beyond the microlevel factors, political trust can be also influenced by macrolevel factors. National economic performance is a starting point, a basic factor, in the model of political trust. Studies of European countries show that growth rates are positively and significantly related to political trust (Erkel and Van der Meer, 2016; Hooghe and Okolikj, 2020). Unemployment negatively affects trust in Asian countries (Lee et al., 2020). Moreover, some researchers find evidence that fluctuations in trust are synchronized with the business cycle (Hooghe and Okolikj , 2020). Further, the fluctuations of trust are asymmetric with respect to the economic performance (Newton, 2006). It fits into the logic of the theory of prospects (Tversky and Kahneman, 1991): a deep fall in trust during economic crises and disproportionate growth in recovery periods. Another important factor of national economic performance is the income inequality. As a rule, researchers agree that income inequality is negatively related to political trust (Anderson and Singer, 2008; Zmerli and Castillo, 2015; Van der Meer and Hakhverdian, 2017).

The contribution of this paper to the literature is manifold. First, we separately consider microlevel factors of political trust into those that relate to sociotropic attitudes of agents and those that relate

to egocentric attitudes of agents. In the first case, an individual makes a decision to trust or distrust relying on the external environment and, in the second case, considering personal well-being. Thus, we determine the first dimension of individual choice — target dimension. Secondly, we conditionally differentiate retrospective and prospective attitudes of agents. In the first case, individuals undertaking political actions think about past and current environmental conditions (internal, egocentric and external, sociotropic), while in the second case, they are guided by expectations. Thus, the second dimension of individual choice we analyze is time dimension. This approach is often used in papers adressing political voting and democracy support (Krieckhaus et al., 2013; Reutzel, 2020), but it is new with regard political trust. Moreover, we are the first to apply this analysis in relation to Russia, using a variety of econometric approaches, including those aimed at addressing the endogeneity problem (instrumental variable approach). Finally, we analyze the impact of sociotropic/egocentric and retrospective/prospective attitudes of individuals on trust in general and trust at different levels of the Russian government. This is particularly relevant for countries with asymmetric or hierarchical models of political trust, like Russia.

The study is organized as follows. In section 2, we briefly formulate the idea of dividing the political trust factors into two dimensions: sociotropic/egocentric factors and retrospective/prospective factors. We also review the existing studies, identifying the starting points for our research and formulating hypotheses. In section 3, we analyze the Russian context of political trust. In section 4, we not only describe the data and variables used but also present the model specifications. In section 5, we point out the potential concerns of the analysis. In sections 6 and 7, we present and discuss the main results obtained, respectively.

2. Two dimensions of political behavior

Assumptions

As mentioned above, individuals evaluate the efficiency of the government based both on their perceptions of the external environment (transformations in the economy, politics, and institutional sphere) and by looking into their own wallets. The first channel of political trust is called sociotropic, while the second is egocentric. Thus, the first dimension of agents' political choice is the target dimension. When the individual decides whether to trust or not in a way that digresses from his own economic well-being, he expresses sociotropic attitudes. If the individual is guided only by egocentric attitudes, then trust is a function of personal welfare. One can assume that an increase in personal well-being is followed by an increase in political loyalty (reward-punishment hypothesis). On the other hand, individuals making decisions to trust or distrust can either consider the past and present achievements of government or follow expectations, that is, considering the

future. The first approach is retrospective, while the second is prospective. Correspondingly, the second dimension of agents' political choices is the time dimension. The level of trust of a retrospectively thinking individual is a function of his past and current well-being (both personal and national), while the level of trust of a prospectively thinking agent is a function of his expected well-being.

Target dimension

Researchers examining the relative strength of sociotropic and egocentric ways of influence on political behavior conclude that former prevails over latter. Thus, when undertaking certain political actions, individuals primarily take into consideration the external environment (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981; Feldman, 1982; Anderson, 2000; Clarke et al., 2004; Duch and Stevenson, 2008; Nadeau et al., 2013; Krieckhaus et al., 2013). There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon. The first argument refers to various manifestations of the responsibility locus (Feldman, 1982). For example, the literature describes instances when individuals demonstrate an internal responsibility locus or economic individualism when an individual's well-being is improving. The second argument relates to the fact that individuals perceive the world as interconnected (Lockerbie, 1992; Kiewiet and Lewis-Beck, 2011). If the national economic performance improves, the personal economy will also probably be improved (Krieckhaus et al., 2013). In other words, the manifestation of sociotropic attitudes does not equal the altruism manifestation in its pure form. Individuals think more broadly than within their own pockets when making political choices. Following the previous results related to other countries, we also test the hypothesis about the dominance of agents' sociotropic attitudes (further hypothesis 1) in the models of political trust in Russia.

Time dimension

Let us discuss the role of agents' retrospective and prospective attitudes in political choice models. Prior to the publication of Kinder and Kiewiet (1981), political science was dominated by the view that retrospective egocentric attitudes of voters are decisive in voting — the retrospective pocketbook voting hypothesis (Fiorina, 1981). In other words, when casting political votes, individuals look back, with the past referring to the contents of their own wallet. Despite its logical slenderness and persuasiveness, the retrospective pocketbook voting hypothesis has only lax empirical support in U.S. electoral data (Markus, 1992). Subsequently, Kinder and Kiewiet (1981) propose and verify the retrospective sociotropic voting hypothesis. Thus, the predominant retrospective nature of agents' attitudes was no longer questioned in the political choice. However, growing interest in the topic has encouraged research. However, results obtained in these studies

contradict the existing results. For instance, Clarke and Stewart (1994) and Lewis-Beck (1997) prove that both retrospective and prospective attitudes of agents matter. The studies of Price and Sanders (1995) on the UK and of Lockerbie (2008) on U.S. shows that prospective economic attitudes dominate. In other words, individuals cast political votes by thinking about the future of the economy rather than about the economic past. Two years later, Campbell, Detrey, and Yin (2010) come to the exact opposite conclusion analyzing the U.S. presidential elections. They find that only retrospective attitudes are important. Finally, one of the most extensive academic studies, comprising 165 surveys in 19 countries, focuses on the predominant role of retrospective attitudes (Duch and Stevenson, 2008).

In this paper, we try to determine whether agents' retrospective or prospective attitudes dominate in models of political trust. Taking into account the polarization of opinions in the literature, we take the results obtained in pioneering research of Kinder and Kiewiet (1981) as a starting point. Thus, we hypothesize that retrospective attitudes will dominate prospective attitudes in models of political trust in Russia (further hypothesis 2).

3. Russian context

As previous scientific research on the topic shows, the Russian model of political trust is hierarchical (Malkina et al., 2020). Thus, the upper levels of Russian government (Russian president and central government) are trusted more than the lower ones. The main beneficiary of political support is the Russian president (Terin, 2018). Russia is not unique in this respect because the hierarchical model of political trust is also present in other countries. The regular differences in the levels of household trust in local and central governments (favoring the latter) also exists in China (Li, 2016; Chen, 2017), which is, according to Wu and Wilkes (2017), the result of the political control of the "center," including that of key mass media sources. However, the hierarchical model of trust does not dominate globally. For example, in the United States and in some other developed countries, the population tends to trust local authorities more, those "who are at hand," which fits into the pyramidal model of political trust (Frederickson and Frederickson, 1995; Chang and Chu, 2006). Factors of trust in Russian government (as a rule, concerning the Russian president) are theoretically described and discussed in the Russian and foreign academic literature. Some researchers try to empirically assess the impact of certain factors on trust in Russian government (Malkina et al., 2020; Terin, 2018; Terin, 2020). Malkina et al. (2020) conclude that the impact of microlevel factors on political trust differ between the governmental levels. The main factor in the model of trust in the Russian president is the perceived effectiveness

of the central government. Meanwhile, mistrust in local authorities is based on the perceived level of local corruption.

4. Data and methods

This study is based on data from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), LiTS — Life in Transition Survey. In 2016, the sample data were drawn from a mixed sample consisting of countries where the EBRD operates plus two of developed countries in Western Europe: Germany and Italy (LiTS-III). Thirty-four countries participated in the survey, with about 1,500 households surveyed in each country. Two adult household members (over 18 years old) were interviewed in the LiTS-III survey. The LiTS survey divides responsibility within responding households with respect to its questionnaire. The household head is interviewed for thematic modules 1 and 2 (income, expenses, household assets) as it is assumed they are more informed regarding household financial matters. Next, a randomly selected household member (primary respondent) is interviewed for thematic modules 3-9 (attitudes). In some cases, the head of household and the primary respondent may be the same person. Accordingly, the primary respondent was the observation unit for the LiTS-III survey.

The LiTS data are representative at the national level, so we focus exclusively on sample data for Russia. LiTS data offer the researcher a wide range of sociotropic and egocentric factors, along with potential instrument variables. This makes it possible to obtain relatively reliable model estimates.

How to measure political trust? The choice of dependent variable

The dependent variable in our study is the degree of trust of individuals in various levels of government ($political\_trust$). A key questions in the topic of political trust is how to correctly measure it. There is still no consensus in political science. According to Hooghe (2011), political trust is a one-dimensional phenomenon, where trust is given to the entire political system as a whole. However, the opposite point of view is held by Fischer et al. (2010). According to Fischer et al. (2010), political trust is a multi-dimensional concept because “forms of trust may vary by political institution.”

On the one hand, studies in the LiTS countries (see, for example, Schneider, 2017) indicate that trust in local authorities is explained both by other political trust factors (e.g., trust in the central government) and by factors not related to political trust. In addition, it is previously noted that political trust in Russia is asymmetric and that the influence of various factors on trust differs

depending on the level of government (Malkina et al., 2020). Considering the previous results, we evaluate the multi-dimensional model of political trust. In LiTS data, political trust is measured at all levels of government: from the Russian president to local authorities. The 2016 survey (LiTS-III) asked: "To what extent do you trust the following institutions: the president of the country, the cabinet of ministers (the central government), the regional government, local authorities, etc.?" The answer was given on an ordered Likert scale: from 1 ("definitely do not trust") to 5 ("definitely trust"). There was also an opportunity to refuse an answer to the question ("I do not know"). However, we also take into account Hooghe's remarks (Hooghe, 2011) and evaluate the one-dimensional model of political trust for comparative purposes using principal component analysis (PCA).

Explanatory variables

The LiTS-III survey includes a series of questions/statements to assess how the external environment and personal well-being have changed over the past four years. In other words, we have an opportunity to record the retrospective sociotropic and retrospective egocentric attitudes of individuals.

The sociotropic retrospective channel of political trust is: 1) the current economic situation in your country is better than it was four years ago (variable $economic\_improvments$); 2) the current political situation in your country is better than four years ago ($political\_improvments$); and 3) the current level of corruption in your country is lower than it was four years ago ($institutional\_improvments$). The individual may have agreed or disagreed with these statements in one form or another on a five point scale: 1 "strongly disagree," 2 "disagree," 3 "both agree and disagree," 4 "agree," or 5 "strongly agree." Followed by reward-punishment theory, we expect to obtain positive correlations between the three variables described above and the political trust variable. If individuals believe that the economic, political, and institutional environments have undergone positive changes over the past four years, they are more loyal to the current government in Russia.

Moreover, the manifestation of sociotropic retrospective attitudes can be conventionally evaluated on the basis of individuals' satisfaction with the current national economic situation: 1) in general, I am satisfied with the current national economic situation (variable $economic\_satisfaction$). The individual could agree or disagree with this statement in one form or another.

The egocentric retrospective way of political trust is measured as follows. The LiTS-III survey includes two questions/statements to trace directly individuals' egocentric retrospective attitudes, such as: 1) you (as a household) are living better than you were four years ago ($well\_being$); and 2) you are satisfied with your current financial situation ($financial\_satisfaction$). The individual may have agreed or disagreed with these statements in one form or another.

We also supplemented the pool of egocentric retrospective variables with variables measuring the household's wealth. We measured wealth on a subjective decile scale. Specifically, respondents were asked the following questions: "Imagine a ladder with ten steps, where the first step (bottom) contains the poorest 10% of households in the country and the tenth step (top) contains the richest 10% of households. Which of the ten steps do you think your household is on now?" ($wealth\_decile$). "Imagine a ladder with ten steps, where the first step (bottom) contains the poorest 10% of households in the country and the tenth step (top) contains the richest 10% of households. Which of the ten steps do you think your household was on four years ago?" Using this information about the past and current decile of wealth of the same households, we can easily identify the so-called outsiders whose wealth has declined over four years (variable $worse^R$). If egocentric attitudes do matter, the outsiders should show less trust in the government than winners (who increased well-being) or agents who maintained the status quo, according to reward-punishment theory.

Finally, as in a number of previous studies of political trust, we include a number of control variables in the econometric model, including age (age_i), gender ($gender_i$), education level ($education_i$), interpersonal trust ($interpersonal\_trust_i$), searching for and retrieving news activity via TV and radio ($TV/radio_i$), as well as searching for and retrieving news activity via Internet ($Internet_i$).

Thus, the specification of the basic (extended) retrospective econometric model is as follows:

$$political\_trust_i = age_i + gender_i + education_i + interpersonal\_trust_i + TV/radio_i + Internet_i + economic\_improvments_i + political\_improvments_i + institutional\_improvments_i + well\_being_i + worse^R{}_i + \varepsilon_i, \quad (1)$$

where ε_i is the model error.

The specification of a restricted (which includes only agents' representations of the economy) retrospective econometric model looks like this:

$$political\_trust_i = age_i + gender_i + education_i + interpersonal\_trust_i + TV/radio_i + Internet_i + economic\_satisfaction_i + financial\_satisfaction_i + wealth\_decile_i + \varepsilon_i. \quad (2)$$

The egocentric prospective way of political trust is modeled as follows. One of the questions about wealth is as follows: "Imagine a ladder of ten steps, where the first step (at the bottom) contains the poorest 10% of households in the country and the tenth step (at the top) contains the richest 10% of households. Which of the ten steps do you think your household will be on in four years from now?" Knowing the current decile of household wealth and households' perceptions of future wealth, we can establish agents expecting worsening wealth ($worse^P$). According to reward-punishment theory, future outsiders should be less loyal to the current government. Hence, the specification of the extended retrospective/perspective econometric model of political trust looks like this:

$$political\_trust_i = age_i + gender_i + education_i + interpersonal\_trust_i + TV/radio_i + Internet_i + economic\_improvments_i + political\_improvments_i + institutional\_improvments_i + well\_being_i + worse^R{}_i + worse^P{}_i + worse^R{}_i * worse^P{}_i + \varepsilon_i. \quad (3)$$

5. Potential concerns

Endogeneity issue

It should be emphasized that modeling the links between political preferences and perceptions of national performance is not a trivial task and requires solving a number of methodological issues. The key one is the endogeneity. On the one hand, the exact direction of causality between the variables is not entirely clear. Are we biased in our thinking about welfare (partisanship bias)? Do the changes in well-being affect political preferences or, conversely, does attachment to the current political leader or party (loyalty) encourage people to think positively about well-being? Evans and Pickup (2010) argue that political preferences are responsible for certain retrospective opinions about well-being. Meanwhile, equally significant studies (Lewis-Beck et al., 2008;

Nadeau et al., 2013) argue directly to the contrary that perceptions of well-being determine the political voice. Endogeneity can also arise for other reasons. For instance, when we overlook an important variable that simultaneously influences both political preferences and explanatory variables (omitted variable bias). It is reasonable to assume that an individual's current preferences depend on his or her past political attitudes. Typically, in cross-sectional data individuals' past political preferences are not record. At the same time, past political preferences can strongly correlate with both current political preferences and perceptions of welfare. If past political preferences are not record, then they fall into a model error (we cannot add past preferences in the regression as a factor variable). Accordingly, the error correlates with the explanatory variables - perceptions of well-being. Thus, endogeneity bias is evident. In this case, the assumption of the orthogonality between the errors and model factors is violated. The coefficient of measuring the impact of perceptions of well-being on the current political preferences turns out to be overestimated. Another source of endogeneity can be the simultaneity bias of political trust and well-being perception: political trust ↔ well-being perception.

How reliable are subjective measures of well-being?

Before proceeding to the direct estimation of equations (1)-(3), let us answer the following question: How well do subjective and objective estimates of well-being correlate with each other? This will allow us later to give a correct interpretation of the results obtained. We begin with a discussion of personal well-being. Previously, analyzing the correlations between objective and subjective metrics of personal well-being in LiTS-II data (2010), Cojocaru and Diagne (2013) note that the subjective decile of household wealth has a weak correlation with the objective household well-being measured by consumer expenses and the asset ownership index. According to the authors, a more reliable subjective assessment of well-being is the individual's satisfaction with his or her financial situation and life in general.

Taking into consideration the results of previous studies, we also analyze the correlation between subjective and objective assessments of personal well-being, using the LiTS-III data for 2016 and for only one country of interest — Russia. Figure 1 presents the distribution of actual net household income by subjective deciles of wealth and the scale of individuals' satisfaction with their financial situation.

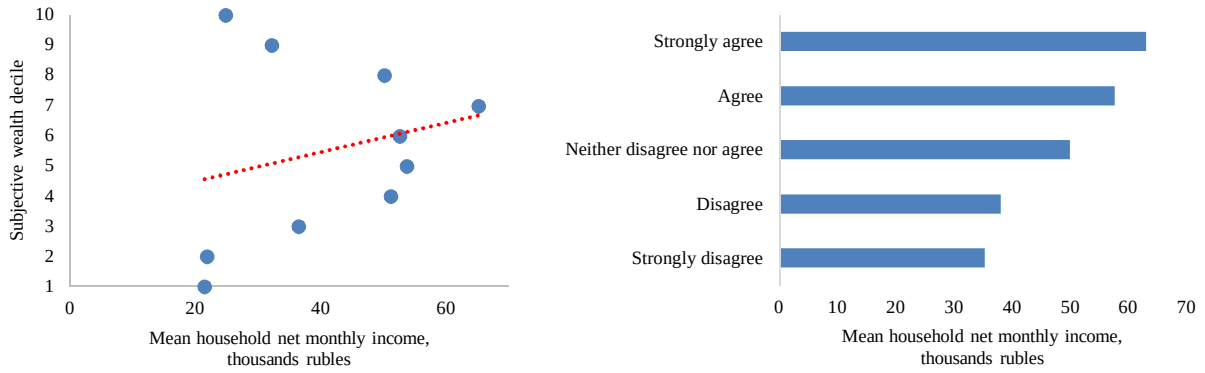

Figure 1: Distribution of actual net household's income by subjective deciles of wealth (left) and scale of satisfaction with financial situation (right)

It is obvious that actual monthly household income increases as one moves along the subjective decile scale of wealth. The only exceptions are the last three deciles (8-10), which can be explained by their low representativeness. Similar results are obtained in the distribution analysis of the variable of actual income on the scale of individuals' satisfaction with their financial situation.

Following the approach of Cojocaru and Diagne (2013) and Ravallion and Lokshin (2002), we estimate the basic specification of subjective pocketbook wealth equations (Table 1). The dependent variables are the subjective decile of household wealth on a scale of 1 to 8 (due to the small representativeness of deciles 8, 9, and 10, we combined the last three deciles into one) and the individual's satisfaction with their financial situation. On the right-hand side of the regression, we include the variable of monthly household income, $\ln(monthly\_income_i)$, and the variable of household size, $\ln(hh\_size_i)$. Both variables are expressed on a logarithmic scale. In view of the fact that the coefficients estimates of the baseline specification regression may be overestimated due to endogeneity, we test the low dimensionality hypothesis (Ravallion and Lokshin, 2002). According to this hypothesis, the subjective economic pocketbook well-being is determined not only by the actual income available to the household but also by other personal factors. These factors may include an individual's age (age_i), gender ($gender_i$), marital status ($married_i$), educational level ($education_i$), health status ($health_i$), and employment status ($unemployment_i$). It is reasonable to assume that, regardless of actual household income, unemployed individuals look into the future with great fear and underestimate their current well-being — the mechanism of transmission through with the expected income starts working (Cojocaru and Diagne, 2013). We should also point out that the coefficient estimates in the extended model may be questionable. The direction of causality between the variables is unclear.

On the one hand, individuals who consider their own health condition positively are more likely to be among those who are satisfied with their current financial well-being. On the other hand, individuals who are dissatisfied with their financial situation are more likely to be negative about their own health condition. We take these concerns into account while testing the low dimensionality hypothesis (Ravallion and Lokshin, 2002). Thus, the specification of the extended model of subjective pocketbook well-being is the following:

$$wealth\_decile_i / financial\_satisfaction_i = \ln(monthly\_income_i) + \ln(hh\_size_i) + age_i + gender_i + married_i + education_i + health_i + unemployment_i + \varepsilon_i. \quad (4)$$

The estimation results of these models are reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of modeling the influence of various factors on subjective pocketbook well-being

Variable	Coefficient estimate (robust standard error)			
	Subjective wealth decile		**Satisfied with the current financial situation**	
	Baseline model	Extended model	Baseline model	Extended model
Logarithm of net actual household's income	0.506*** (0.188)	0.395** (0.180)	0.352*** (0.083)	0.273*** (0.078)
Logarithm of the household's size	0.264 (0.238)	0.238 (0.279)	-0.167 (0.156)	-0.277** (0.139)
Age				
30-55	-	-0.427** (0.195)	-	-0.133 (0.136)
>55	-	-0.626* (0.333)	-	-0.159 (0.160)
<30 = *baseline*	-	-	-	-
Gender				
Male	-	-0.012 (0.177)	-	-0.200** (0.078)
Female = *baseline*	-	-	-	-
Marital status				
Married	-	-0.016 (0.202)	-	0.158 (0.124)
Other = *baseline*	-	-	-	-
Education	-	0.020 (0.084)	-	0.088 (0.056)
Health status				
Very good, good	-	0.231 (0.190)	-	0.415*** (0.147)
Other = *baseline*	-	-	-	-
Employment status				
Unemployed	-	-0.560* (0.315)	-	-0.264* (0.149)
Other = *baseline*	-	-	-	-
R-squared	0.062	0.121	0.058	0.143
Number of observations	1130	961	1124	960

Source: authors' calculations based on LiTS-III data (2016).

Note: *** — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.01; ** — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.05; * — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.1. Baseline identifies the base category selection. Coefficients are standardized.

Based on Table 1, we arrive at several conclusions. First, the inclusion of additional regressors in the specification more than doubles the explanatory power of the models or the coefficient of determination. Thus, we verify the low dimensionality hypothesis according to the selected dependent variables. Strictly speaking, subjective household wealth is not the pure objective wealth. It is some combination of factors (as observed below) determining an individual's sense of the accumulated wealth amount. The same is true about another variable of subjective pocketbook well-being: respondents' satisfaction with their financial situation. This limitation should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

Secondly, the influence of other factors on subjective pocketbook well-being depends on what is used as the dependent variable. We find evidence of a U-shaped dependence of the subjective decile of household wealth on the individual's age variable: representatives of the older age groups feel that they are less wealthy than younger respondents. Unemployed individuals also consider their household poorer in contrast to those who are employed. The remaining individual variables in the subjective decile of household wealth model are not statistically significant. The individuals' satisfaction with their financial situation is significantly influenced by such personal factors as gender of the individual (women are less satisfied with their financial situation), health of the individual (good health increases an individual's satisfaction with their financial situation regardless of their actual income), and employment status.

Another question worth discussing is how closely objective and subjective estimates of national performance are correlated. Can subjective estimates be reliable indicators of national performance? The results for other countries suggest that there is a perception bias, but it is not critical. In other words, individuals are generally well aware of the state of the national economy (Duch and Stevenson, 2010). We trust the previously obtained results.

6. Main results

In this section, we present estimation results of equations (1)–(3). They are estimated separately for each level of the Russian government and in general for comparison. Table 2 shows the estimation results of the impact of individuals' retrospective sociotropic and egocentric attitudes on political trust.

Table 2: Results of modeling the impact of individuals' retrospective sociotropic and egocentric attitudes on political trust (*political_trust*)

Variable	Coefficient estimate (robust standard error)				
	In general	President	Central government	Regional government	Local authorities
Control variables					
Gender					
Male	-0.085	-0.079	-0.090**	-0.059	-0.054
	(0.125)	(0.088)	(0.089)	(0.089)	(0.091)
Female = *baseline*	-	-	-	-	-
Age					
30-55	-0.096*	-0.083*	-0.070	-0.087	-0.082*
	(0.165)	(0.108)	(0.119)	(0.119)	(0.121)
>55	-0.050	-0.008	-0.049	-0.070	-0.060
	(0.176)	(0.131)	(0.135)	(0.127)	(0.125)
<30 = *baseline*	-	-	-	-	-
Education	0.049	0.013	0.073*	0.032	0.053
	(0.058)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.040)	(0.042)
Interpersonal trust	0.235***	0.228***	0.184***	0.215***	0.185***
	(0.054)	(0.036)	(0.041)	(0.040)	(0.042)
Internet	-0.117***	-0.108**	-0.091**	-0.128***	-0.107***
	(0.032)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
TV/radio	0.014	0.073*	0.014	-0.016	0.011
	(0.054)	(0.040)	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Sociotropic channel					
Positive changes in the national economy	0.097*	0.037	0.092*	0.086*	0.090*
	(0.096)	(0.060)	(0.068)	(0.066)	(0.070)
Positive changes in the political situation	0.036	0.136***	0.046	0.021	-0.061
	(0.075)	(0.048)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.057)
Positive changes in the institutional environment	0.234***	0.124***	0.213***	0.203***	0.248***
	(0.075)	(0.046)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.055)
Egocentric channel					
Positive changes in the household's life	0.134***	0.078	0.142***	0.116**	0.141***
	(0.082)	(0.049)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.059)
Decrease in the subjective wealth decile	0.108***	0.095***	0.122***	0.097***	0.053
	(0.128)	(0.089)	(0.091)	(0.092)	(0.095)
R-squared	0.254	0.185	0.215	0.196	0.188
Number of observations	1156	1184	1182	1179	1179

Source: authors' calculations based on LiTS-III data (2016).

Note: *** — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.01; ** — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.05; * — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.1. Baseline identifies the base category selection. Coefficients are standardized. In general: the first component in PCA is a dependent variable. The first component accounts for about 70% of the explained variation in political trust variables.

Several conclusions can be drawn from Table 2. First, as expected, the sociotropic retrospective channel dominates over the egocentric retrospective channel in all models of political trust, both for the upper and lower levels of government. In other words, individuals, while deciding whether to trust the government or not, primarily consider the public welfare, thus improvements in the external environment. In addition, Table 2 shows that trust in the Russian president is primarily

based on general improvements in the political sphere, while the other sociotropic factors, institutional changes (less corruption) and economic development, contribute less to the model of trust in the Russian president. On the other hand, we find that trust in central government is based predominantly on factors such as institutional changes and economic development, meaning that politics recedes into the background, with the impact of this factor on trust proving to be statistically insignificant. A similar situation is characteristic of the lower government levels, particularly of the regional and local authorities. As for the egocentric channel of political trust, various results are obtained. On the one hand, if an individual observes improvements in the life of his or her own household over the last four years, it will have a significant positive effect on his or her political trust (except for the Russian president). On the other hand, we observe that trust in the Russian government has peculiar connections with changes in the subjective decile of wealth. Less trust is shown by those households whose financial position (in their opinion) has improved or whose *status quo* has been maintained.

Table 2 shows that the control variables also have significant effects on political trust. The active searching and retrieving of information via the Internet has a significantly negative effect on political trust. Searching for and receiving news through traditional media channels (television and radio) has a positive effect on trust in the Russian president. Interpersonal trust has a close and positive connection to political trust.

The results of the estimation of equation (2), which includes only agents' perceptions of the pocketbook and national economy, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of modeling the impact of retrospective sociotropic and egocentric attitudes of individuals on political trust (*political_trust*)

Variable	Coefficient estimate (robust standard error)				
	In general	President	Central government	Regional government	Local authorities
Control variables					
Gender					
Male	-0.054	-0.052	-0.043	-0.040	-0.036
	(0.121)	(0.088)	(0.088)	(0.084)	(0.086)
Female = *baseline*	-	-	-	-	-
Age					
30-55	-0.062	-0.055	-0.042	-0.061	-0.054
	(0.155)	(0.105)	(0.113)	(0.111)	(0.113)
>55	-0.049	-0.012	-0.041	-0.072	-0.055
	(0.172)	(0.129)	(0.131)	(0.122)	(0.124)
<30 = *baseline*	-	-	-	-	-
Education	0.035	0.010	0.051	0.017	0.024
	(0.058)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.039)	(0.042)
Interpersonal trust	0.222***	0.225***	0.170***	0.195***	0.167***
	(0.054)	(0.037)	(0.041)	(0.040)	(0.040)

Internet	-0.155*** (0.030)	-0.109*** (0.022)	-0.117*** (0.022)	-0.176*** (0.021)	-0.158*** (0.022)
TV/radio	0.042 (0.047)	0.096** (0.035)	0.036 (0.032)	0.012 (0.032)	0.033 (0.032)
Sociotropic channel					
Satisfied with the present state of the national economy	0.289*** (0.073)	0.208*** (0.044)	0.310*** (0.051)	0.238*** (0.050)	0.248*** (0.054)
Egocentric channel					
Satisfied with the current financial situation	0.146*** (0.068)	0.054 (0.044)	0.130*** (0.049)	0.154*** (0.047)	0.165*** (0.049)
Subjective wealth decile	-0.039 (0.030)	-0.104** (0.021)	-0.079 (0.020)	-0.017 (0.023)	0.046 (0.022)
R-squared	0.247	0.167	0.217	0.199	0.202
Number of observations	1252	1294	1287	1282	1278

Source: authors' calculations based on LiTS-III data (2016).

Note: *** — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.01; ** — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.05; * — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0-1. Baseline identifies the base category selection. Coefficients are standardized. In general: the first component in PCA is a dependent variable. The first component accounts for about 70% of the explained variation in political trust variables.

The results presented in Table 3 show that satisfaction with the performance of the national economy is a more important determinant of political trust than personal well-being (satisfaction with the current financial situation of the household and the subjective decile of household wealth). Thus, the predominance of the sociotropic channel over the egocentric channel in the models of political trust in Russia is obvious. There are some other interesting results. The influence of the egocentric channel (satisfaction with the current financial situation of the household) increases when moving from the upper to the lower levels of government. In other words, the responsibility for improvements in the pocketbook economy of households is mostly entrusted to the lower levels of government. Further, it is evident that the upper and lower government levels have different loyalty groups. The Russian president is more trusted by the lower deciles but the trust in local authorities is shown by the upper deciles or wealthy groups; however, this effect is not statistically significant.

Table 4 reports the estimation results of equation (3). Due to space limitations, the coefficient estimates are presented only for the egocentric variables.

Table 4: Results of modeling the impact of retrospective sociotropic and retrospective and prospective egocentric attitudes of individuals on political trust (*political_trust*)

Variable	Coefficient estimate (robust standard error)

	In general	President	Central government	Regional government	Local authorities
Egocentric retrospective channel					
Positive changes in the household's life	0.149*** (0.082)	0.094* (0.051)	0.160*** (0.060)	0.123** (0.059)	0.163*** (0.059)
Decrease in the subjective wealth decile	0.202*** (0.140)	0.151*** (0.107)	0.193*** (0.105)	0.177*** (0.099)	0.157*** (0.107)
Egocentric prospective channel					
Expected decrease in the subjective wealth decile	0.255*** (0.274)	0.185*** (0.157)	0.192** (0.192)	0.238*** (0.201)	0.254*** (0.192)
Mixed egocentric channel					
Decrease in the subjective wealth decile*expected decrease in the subjective wealth decile	-0.277*** (0.310)	-0.139* (0.199)	-0.215*** (0.221)	-0.269*** (0.229)	-0.316*** (0.225)
R-squared	0.278	0.202	0.235	0.216	0.216
Number of observations	1035	1058	1055	1054	1053

Source: authors' calculations based on LiTS-III data (2016).

Note: *** — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.01; ** — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.05; * — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.1. Baseline identifies the base category selection. Coefficients are standardized. In general: the first component in PCA is a dependent variable. The first component accounts for about 70% of the explained variation in political trust variables.

Several conclusions can be made based on the results in Table 4. First, we observe that those individuals who have increased their wealth or have maintained *status quo* show less trust than those who have lost it. This is in line with previous results. Moreover, those individuals who have negative expectations (expecting less well-being) also show more trust than those who are optimistic about the future. Interestingly, past negative experiences have a positive effect on trust only if individuals are optimistic about the future, otherwise the negative experience "hits" political trust, mainly in the central government and the lower government levels.

Instrumental variable (IV) approach

One of potential limitation of our approach is endogeneity. It is reasonable to assume that the perception of improvements in the external environment depends on the past and current government policy. For example, the perception of corruption in the government (sociotropic variable, $corruption$) depends on the perception of the anti-corruption initiatives ($corruption\_fight$) and on the individuals' perception of the judicial system. If individuals believe that the judicial system is corrupt ($court\_unofficial\_payments$), it affects their perceptions regarding corruption levels. Therefore, we assume that the sociotropic variable $corruption$ is a linear combination of the $corruption\_fight$ and $court\_unofficial\_payments$ variables.

On the other hand, the perception of government effectiveness (sociotropic variable, $government\_performance$) closely correlates with individuals' perceptions of the national economic performance and the development of the legal state and civil society institutions. As the variable of respondents' satisfaction with the national economic performance cannot be considered as an exogenous instrument for the variable $government\_performance$ (as proved by Sargan's test results), it is not included in the model specification as a control variable. As a result, the sociotropic variables of perception of central and local government effectiveness ($government\_performance$) are a linear combination of the variables law and order (law_order), freedom of speech ($freedom\_speech$), peace and stability ($peace\_stability$). To sum up, we have:

$$corruption_i = corruption\_fight_i + court\_unofficial\_payments_i + \varepsilon_i; \quad (5)$$

$$government\_performance_i = law\_order_i + freedom\_speech_i + peace\_stability_i + \varepsilon_i; \quad (6)$$

We incorporate control variables and individuals' egocentric attitude variables, including the subjective decile of household wealth and an individual's satisfaction with his or her present financial situation, into the final retrospective econometric model:

$$political\_trust_i = age_i + gender_i + education_i + interpersonal\_trust_i + TV/radio_i + Internet_i + wealth\_decile_i + financial\_satisfaction_i + corruption_i^* + government\_performance_i^* + economic\_satisfaction_i + \varepsilon_i. \quad (7)$$

Here $corruption_i^*$ and $government\_performance_i^*$ are the instrumented values of corruption perception and perception of government performance. The model estimates are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Results of modeling the impact of retrospective sociotropic and egocentric attitudes of individuals on political trust ($political\_trust$)

Variable	Coefficient estimate (robust standard error)					
	President			Local authorities		
	Perceptions of corruption (President, prime-minister, officials in his office)	Perceptions of central government performance	Trust	Perceptions of corruption	Perceptions of performance	Trust
	First-stage		Second-stage	First-stage		Second-stage

Control variables						
Gender						
Male	-	-	-0.063	-	-	-0.048
			(0.098)			(0.095)
Female = *baseline*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Age						
30-55	-	-	-0.036	-	-	-0.043
			(0.116)			(0.121)
>55	-	-	-0.026	-	-	-0.046
			(0.141)			(0.135)
<30 = *baseline*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Education	-	-	0.040	-	-	0.069*
			(0.051)			(0.046)
Interpersonal trust	-	-	0.194***	-	-	0.138***
			(0.041)			(0.043)
Internet	-	-	-0.106**			-0.161***
			(0.025)			(0.024)
TV/radio	-	-	0.092**			0.054
			(0.041)			(0.035)
Egocentric channel						
Subjective wealth decile	-	-	-0.124**	-	-	0.022
			(0.024)			(0.023)
Satisfied with the current financial situation			0.001			0.114**
			(0.051)			(0.055)
Sociotropic channel						
Perceptions of government performance	-	-	0.163***	-	-	0.183***
			(0.299)			(0.202)
Perceptions of corruption	-	-	-0.157***	-	-	-0.181***
			(0.163)			(0.228)
Anti-corruption perceptions	-0.431***	-	-	-0.306***	-	-
	(0.099)			(0.110)		
Perceptions of bribes in courts	0.118*	-	-	0.124**	-	-
	(0.068)			(0.053)		
Law and order	-	0.056*	-	-	0.170***	-
		(0.036)			(0.033)	
Freedom of speech	-	0.102***	-	-	0.089**	-
		(0.036)			(0.042)	
Peace and stability	-	0.033	-	-	-0.026	-
		(0.035)			(0.031)	
Satisfied with the present state of the national economy			0.144***			0.192***
			(0.055)			(0.060)
Test for weak instruments (F-statistics)	47.773***	22.897***	-	37.286***	37.238***	-
Sargan-test (p-value)	-	-	0.660	-	-	0.849
R-squared	0.118	0.082	0.218	0.090	0.104	0.291
Number of observations	588	996	951	789	1283	944

Source: authors' calculations based on LiTS-III data (2016).

Note: *** — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.01; ** — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.05; * — the coefficient is significant at the level of p <0.1. Baseline identifies the base category selection. Coefficients are standardized. Shaded boxes indicate key egocentric and sociotropic variables.

The results shown in Table 5 highlight the dominance of the sociotropic retrospective channel in the models of trust in the Russian president and local authorities. There are also some other important results. First, a significant positive influence of the variable of satisfaction with the financial situation is registered in the model of trust in local authorities. However, the same is not observed in the model of trust in the Russian president. Secondly, the less wealthy groups of population show more trust in the Russian president. Finally, the attention should also be paid to the effects of control variables. Interpersonal trust positively affects trust in the government, the

searching and retrieving news via the Internet affects trust in the government negatively, while the searching and retrieving news via traditional media affects trust in the government positively, but only in the model of trust in the Russian president.

7. Discussion and concluding remarks

The results obtained at the microlevel strongly indicate the predominance of sociotropic attitudes of individuals in the models of political trust in Russia. In other words, in making a decision to trust the government or not, individuals primarily consider the improvements observed in the external environment. It is consistent with the dominant point of view in political science. Like other studies, we explain the obtained result not by the altruism of Russian society, but by the fact that individuals think more broadly, not just about their own wallet, when expressing their own political position.

Considering the effects of the egocentric channel on political trust, we come to the following conclusions. First, we find that an individual's satisfaction with their financial situation and improvements in the living conditions of their household positively affect political trust. The only exception is the model of trust in the Russian president. In addition, we find that households that have lost some of their wealth (outsiders) show more trust than those who have preserved or increased it. However, this effect is observed only if individuals are optimistic about the future. If individuals have lost some of their wealth and expect further stagnation of their well-being, their level of political trust is significantly reduced. Thus, a prospective egocentric channel dominates in the models of political trust. This does not allow us to verify hypothesis 2. Finally, we find compelling evidence of the reward-punishment theory, according to which outsiders criticize incumbent politicians for failures in personal welfare. However, this is only true for the central government and the lower levels of government.

Finally, we find that trust factors depend on the level of government. Improvements in political performance become the most important sociotropic determinant of trust in the Russian president. It makes sense: a key constitutional duty of the Russian president is to preserve the country's sovereignty. Political performance ranks third in models of trust for other government levels; the most important sociotropic determinants are institutional changes and economic development. Thus, the effective management of political trust requires a different emphasis depending on the level of government. We also find that the upper and lower levels of Russian government have different loyalty groups. Low-income groups show more trust in the Russian president. Traditional and more progressive media outlets have different effects on political trust. The searching and

receiving news via the Internet decreases political trust in all authorities, while searching and retrieving news via television and radio increases trust in the Russian president.

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