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Transitional Justice and Social Trust in Post-Communist Countries

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Introduction

A social trust deficit is a widely acknowledged legacy of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Former Soviet Union (FSU).¹ Social trust refers to the type of trustor/trustee relationships individuals have with colleagues, friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens, either directly or within an institutional setting. More narrowly, interpersonal trust, as a type of social trust, is generally defined as the propensity of individuals to trust others or a kind of “pooled cultural capital.”² Interpersonal trust expresses the general trusting propensity of collectives of individuals, loosely bounded by community, nation, state or other intersubjectively understood collective structures. Social trust is used often in place of or to define the concept of social capital³. A lack of social trust is frequently cited as an impediment to democratic consolidation and economic development especially in the post-communist sphere⁴. *Whether* and *how* to address this deficit remain central questions for post-communist states.

There are several reasons to think low social trust in CEE and the FSU should be addressed as a policy problem. First, social trust is low in the post-communist space even compared to other similarly situated countries. Ingelhart’s analysis of cross-national in-

¹ Richard Rose, William Mishler, and Christian Haerpfer, *Democracy and its Alternatives: Understanding Post-Communist Societies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); János Kornai, Bo Rothstein and Susan Rose-Ackerman, eds., *Creating Social Trust in Post-Socialist Transition* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan Press, 2004); and Susan Rose-Ackerman, “Trust and honesty in post-socialist societies,” *Kyklos* 54 (2001):2–3.

² Piotr Sztompka, “Trust, Distrust, and the Two Paradoxes of Democracy,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 1, 1(1998): 20.

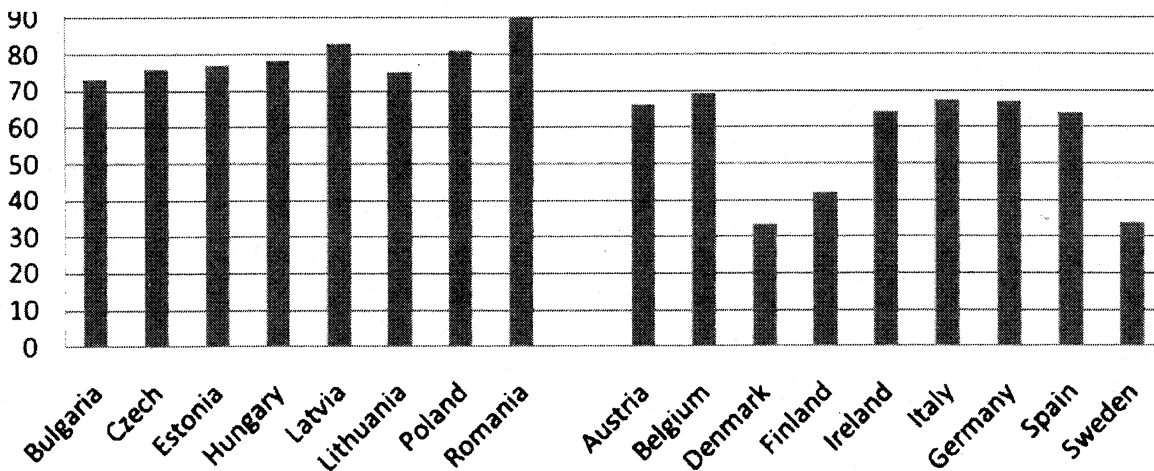
³ Bo Rothstein and Dietlind Stolle, “The State and Social Capital: An Institutional Theory of Generalized Trust,” *Comparative Politics*, 40, July (1998): 441; and Eric Uslaner, “Democracy and social capital,” in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark Warren (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 135.

⁴ Russell Hardin, “Trust in government,” in *Trust in Governance*, eds. Valerie Braithwaite and Margaret Levi (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998); János Kornai and Susan Rose-Ackerman, eds. *Building a Trustworthy State in Post-Socialist Transition* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan Press, 2004); and Tom Tyler, “Trust and Democratic Governance,” in *Trust in Governance*.

terpersonal trust levels revealed that “all 21 of the ex-communist societies rank below all 13 of the non-communist protestant societies” in terms of interpersonal trust; noting in particular that “rule by large, hierarchical, unresponsive, centralized bureaucracies seems to corrode interpersonal trust.”⁵ The lowest levels of subjective well-being ever recorded were in the post-communist space, namely the peoples of Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, which relates to and exacerbates the problem of generalized low trust levels⁶. Overcoming some of these institutional legacies poses social challenges for the post-communist transitions.

Figure 1 presents comparative interpersonal trust data across European states that were and were not part of the former communist bloc. The figure shows the percentage of people who when asked the *World Values Survey* question, “Most people can be trusted?” (A165) responded that “you couldn’t be too sure.”⁷ This is understood to be the mark of generalized distrust in a society. The data are drawn from the 1999 survey wave, grouping former communist countries to the left and non-communist legacy countries to the right. Even a decade after the transition, there is a clear pattern of higher levels of distrust in the former communist countries.

Figure 1.
World Values Survey: Most People Can Be Trusted?
% total Response – Can’t be too careful (1999 Survey Wave)



Second, and perhaps most critically, citizens in post-communist societies themselves cite the importance of reestablishing social trust. Many have even suggested that a culture of distrust plagues these societies, resulting in low levels of interpersonal trust. “One

⁵ Ronald Inglehart, “Trust, well-being and democracy,” in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark Warren (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 92.

⁶ Inglehart, 108–109.

⁷ Online Data Analysis, *World Values Survey* homepage, <http://www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSAalyzeQuestion.jsp>. Last accessed 05/09/13.

of the hallmarks of communist rule... was the perversion of civic society. In place of a sense of community, these 'societies' were instead marked by a mutual distrust between the state and its people, and between the people themselves."⁸ Networks of secret police informers created generalized fear and distrust among citizens. The well documented nature of secret police activities during the communist period, and the post-regime revelations of vast files, in which spying by friends, colleagues, family and spouses were revealed, demonstrated a rational basis for institutional and interpersonal distrust, both during and after the communist period. The perceptions by CEE citizens themselves that their social institutions must be renewed provide solid justification for the design and implementation of social correctives.

Third, social trust is seen as a means of achieving the larger downstream goal of effective, consolidated democracy. Both interpersonal trust and trust in social institutions contribute to or are often considered constitutive elements of social capital. It is the linkages between social trust, social capital, and democracy that preoccupy much of the social trust literature. Almond and Verba's seminal work *The Civic Culture* suggests a direct relationship between cultures of trust and democracy⁹. Cultures of trust have been highlighted by Putnam and Ingelhart as facilitators of democratic stability¹⁰. Therefore there is concern about the stability and vitality of democracy across the post-communist sphere given the low social trust levels and limited social capital. In other words, promoting social trust is a way of supporting democracy.

One way in which countries in the region have tried to facilitate trust-building is through transitional justice policies. Transitional justice measures adopted in the post-communist region include facilitating access to secret police files, vetting public or semi-public office holders through lustration measures, public disclosures of past collaboration, truth commissions, trials, and property restitution measures, to name a few. In particular, lustration, one of the regionally dominant transitional justice measures opted for by almost all countries in CEE and some in the FSU as part of their post-communist transitions, is a specialized form of employment vetting, primarily "the banning of communist officials and secret political police officers and informers from post-communist politics and positions of influence in society."¹¹ In some countries the consequences of this involvement could entail removal from office or position, while in other cases only lying about the nature of that collaboration or involvement is grounds for removal¹². Lustration has been a lightning rod of controversy surrounding both its methods and impact.

⁸ Mark Gibney, "Prosecuting Human Rights Violations From a Previous Regime: The East European Experience," *East European Quarterly* 31, 1 (1997): 95.

⁹ Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (New York: Sage Publications, 1963).

¹⁰ Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Ingelhart, "Trust."

¹¹ Lavinia Stan, ed. *Transitional Justice in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union: Reckoning with the communist past* (New York: Routledge Press, 2009), 11.

¹² Natalia Letki, "Lustration and Democratisation in East-Central Europe," *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, 4 (2002): 530.

The opposing narrative is that transitional justice has no impact, or worse threatens to undermine trust in transitional societies. Retroactive justice measures might transgress rule of law procedures, thereby damaging government trustworthiness. Additionally, problems with the design or the implementation of the transitional justice program could undermine trust rather than enhance it. Transitional justice measures that are overtly manipulated by political parties for personal advantage or used as acts of revenge politics, as documented in Hungary, Albania, and Poland, could poison citizen trust in political parties, public institutions, and government¹⁸.

Transitional justice could also negatively impact interpersonal trust. Claus Offe suggested that transitional justice “may provoke hostile attitudes on the part of those affected or potentially affected by such measures, leading to acts of sabotage, revenge, resentment, and conspiracies on their part. They may even create martyrs, which is even more the case with criminal sanctions applied against key actors of the old regime.”¹⁹ There is also a concern that truth revelation programs could foment distrust. Secret police files contain information documenting how betrayals by friends, colleagues, and even relatives. Revelations about the scope of the interpersonal betrayals could undermine trust²⁰. “Opponents [of lustration] have feared that the general release of the files would unleash a torrent of mistrust and suspicion thereby undermining the hard work of building a stable democracy.”²¹

This perspective highlights a number of ways that transitional justice could undermine trust. Poorly implemented programs or programs fraught with political manipulation could thwart trust building. The revelations from even well designed and well implemented programs could catalyze renewed fear, retraumatization, and distrust. Priscilla Hayner’s work on truth commissions has highlighted this double-edged sword of truth telling, by which the process of revealing the truth can cause substantial trauma to citizens sometimes resulting in the retraumatization of victims²². Hence, the assumption that trust-building will result from well intentioned transitional justice measures is problematic from this perspective.

H2: Transitional justice decreases interpersonal trust.

¹⁸ Csilla Kiss, “The Misuses of Manipulation: The Failure of Transitional Justice in Post-Communist Hungary,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, 6(2006); and Robert Austin and Jonathan Ellison, “Post-Communist Transitional Justice in Albania,” *East European Politics and Societies* 22, 2 (2008).

¹⁹ Claus Offe, “Coming to Terms with Past Injustices: An Introduction to Legal Strategies Available in Post-communist Societies,” *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 33, 1(1992): 198.

²⁰ Author conversation with János Kornai at Budapest Collegium, Hungary, Fall 2002.

²¹ Charles C. Bertsch, “Lustration and the Transition to Democracy: The Cases of Poland and Bulgaria,” *East European Quarterly* XXVIII, 4 (1995):448.

²² Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions* (New York: Routledge Press, 2002), 141.

Traditional trust building mechanisms

Although more widely used now than in the past, transitional justice measures are not typical trust building devices. There are more traditional mechanisms that highlight economic, political or social means of directly and indirectly building trust.

First, economic security, material gains, optimism about the future, and levels of education are all associated with interpersonal trust²³. In particular, Inglehart's research demonstrates that material well being is closely linked with higher levels of interpersonal trust. The magnitude of the effect of material factors is disputed. Although Delhey and Newton find evidence to support a relationship between economic well being and trust, they find that subjective measures of well-being and happiness are better at explaining trust than objective ones like income and education²⁴. The converse is that declining material conditions can undermine interpersonal trust. More narrowly, the literature cites a relationship between rising inequality and declining social trust²⁵. Mishler and Rose find less evidence to support these assertions in post-communist countries, arguing "fairness considerations are less important than freedom considerations in affecting citizens' perception of trust in institutions."²⁶ Applying these findings to the post-communist transitions, optimism about the economic future could have an interpersonal trust building effect. Conversely, rising inequality or decreased economic security could adversely impact social trust.

H3: Perceptions of economic well-being and satisfaction with government promote interpersonal trust.

H4: Rising economic inequality undermines social trust.

H5: Corruption or unfair treatment by government undermines interpersonal trust.

Related to this, we apply Inglehart's and Uslaner's findings that life satisfaction, which is partially a function of having material needs met, will impact interpersonal trust. However, this must be approached with caution because the post-communist space retains some unique features. Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer show that subjective perceptions of well-being don't correlate with actual economic figures in the post-communist space early on, as would be expected, although there is hope they could over time²⁷.

²³ Kenneth Newton, "Social and Political Trust," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, eds. Russell Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 355; Mark Warren, ed., *Democracy and Trust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Claus Offe, "How can we trust our fellow citizens," in Mark Warren *Democracy and Trust*; and Inglehart, "Trust."

²⁴ Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton, "Who Trusts? The origins of social trust in seven societies," *European Societies* 5, 2 (2003): 111.

²⁵ Eric Uslaner, *Corruption, Inequality and the Rule of Law: The Bulging Pocket Makes the Life Easy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Bo Rothstein and Eric Uslaner, "All for All: Equality, Corruption, and Social Trust," *World Politics*, 58 (2005).

²⁶ William Mishler and Richard Rose, "Trust, Distrust, and Skepticism About Institutions of Civil Society," *Studies in Public Policy*, No. 252 (1995), 24.

²⁷ Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer, 170.

H6: As life satisfaction increases, social trust increases.

Second, a dominant discourse in the social capital literature focuses on the relationship between engagement in voluntary organizations and interpersonal trust, although the empirical findings are mixed. While Putnam makes a strong case for the relationship between voluntary participation in social institutions, trust building, and democracy, Delhey and Newton's review of the origin of social trust across seven countries found no evidence that participation in voluntary organizations was associated with trust²⁸. This resonates with other empirical studies that limit or reject a relationship between voluntary organizations and interpersonal trust altogether²⁹. Moreover, critiques of the trust building approach assert that certain voluntary organizations, such as those focused on religion, ethnicity, race or gender can actually create "antisocial" capital by excluding others or creating distrust of others, thereby undermining the general trust in society³⁰. The theoretical debates and empirical evidence supporting the trust building properties of voluntary social organizations yield mixed results. To support the particular goal of this project, which is to assess the impact of transitional justice on trust, I will narrow the scope of inquiry and simply test whether we observe a relationship between trust in social institutions and interpersonal trust, and whether that relationship is affected by lustration and transitional justice measures.

H7: More trust in social institutions increases interpersonal trust.

Third, institutional competence, fairness, and trustworthiness are also presented as social trust builders. Rothstein and Stolle demonstrated a direct relationship between trust in institutions of "order," meaning institutions like the courts, police, judiciary, and civil service that are tasked with impartial implementation of the law, and generalized trust. However, this relationship doesn't hold with other more politicized public institutions, such as political parties or parliament, which are assumed to be partisan³¹. Offe thinks trustworthy public institutions can enhance interpersonal trust by creating an institutional space that reduces risk³². Both Levi's and Rothstein's work suggests the state might play an important interpersonal trust building role because of its capacity to monitor laws, sanction violators, and promote information and guarantees³³. Taken

²⁸ Putnam; and Delhey and Newton, 110.

²⁹ Newton, 353; and Dietlind Stolle, "Clubs and Congregations: The Benefits of Joining an Association," in *Trust in Society*, ed. Karen Cook (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001).

³⁰ Margaret Levi, "Social and Unsocial Capital: A Review Essay of Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*," *Politics and Society* 24 (1996); and Bo Rothstein, "Social Trust and Honesty in Government: A Causal Mechanisms Approach," in Kornai, Rothstein and Rose-Ackerman, *Creating Social Trust*.

³¹ Rothstein and Stolle, 454–456.

³² Offe, "How can we trust," 71.

³³ Margaret Levi, "A State of Trust," in *Trust in Governance*, eds. Valerie Braithwaite and Margaret Levi, 77–101 (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998), 95–6; and Rothstein, "Social Trust and Honesty," 16.

together, these authors suggest trust in the state and public institutions could have positive, indirect effects on interpersonal trust; in other words, trust in the public or political sphere spills over into the social sphere.

H8: An increase in the trustworthiness of public institutions and the government positively contributes to social trust.

In sum, this section explicated several testable hypotheses regarding indirect and direct social trust building mechanisms. Reducing inequality and promoting economic growth could enhance interpersonal trust. Promoting institutional trust could also promote social trust. Changing the competency and fairness of government could contribute to social trust. The next section turns to our central task, testing whether transitional justice affects social trust while also controlling and testing for these other possible relationships.

Data and Methods

Countries

This paper focuses on twelve countries in the post-communist space that have either opted for or rejected lustration policies and/or transitional justice programs as part of their post-authoritarian transitions. These include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. Table 1 lists the countries in the study and provides details about their lustration policies. The sample includes countries with a variety of approaches to both transitional justice in general and lustration in particular, as well as a range of socioeconomic and political conditions. There are countries that were and were not part of the USSR and are or are not currently EU members, thereby providing variation in country groupings and historical and current political alliances. There is also a range of economic experiences post-transition, thereby providing variation in political and economic conditions across the country sample.

Lustration Measures

The coding of lustration and transitional justice measures is highly controversial, reflecting the country specific nature of program assessments, and the problems placing specific programs within a broader comparative context. Table 1 shows the results of a coding scheme in which the programs are organized according to whether lustration was compulsory and wide (4), narrow and voluntary (3), largely symbolic (2), or non-existent (1). There are many factors used to determine the categorization of the countries along these criteria, including the degree to which the laws are wide or narrow in scope, fairly and consistently implemented, subjected to politicization or manipulated by political parties against their opponents, overturned by parliaments, Constitutional Courts,

and/or presidents, and actually implemented in a manner reflecting their design and purpose. While no single factor trumps all the other considerations, the degree to which the laws force compulsory institutional change as opposed to limited or voluntary change is a primary variable. Augmenting the institutional change factors are symbolic change measures and moral cleansing practices. These are also considered in the categorization of lustration programs, reflecting the important moral cleansing goals of the laws. The focus is on creating a relative categorization strategy, comparing the regional experience with lustration and emphasizing institutional and symbolic change measures.

TABLE 1.

Classifying the Countries by Lustration Measures

WIDE and COMPULSORY INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE Required Bureaucratic Change and Public Disclosures (4)	NARROW and VOLUNTARY INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE Public disclosures with voluntary Bureaucratic change (3)	PRIMARILY SYMBOLIC CHANGE Limited and/or Informal Vetting through public disclosure (2)	NO CHANGE/ SYMBOLIC OR INSTITUTIONAL (1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lustration laws passed and implemented • Some screening of individuals (either public or private sector or both) • Some removal from office or positions • Employment penalty for previous collaboration or regime involvement • Early timing of measures confers legitimacy to their symbolic moral cleansing intent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lustration or lustration type laws passed; • Some implementation but limited scope of positions; • Political manipulation leads to implementation problems; • Limited bureaucratic change; • Emphasis on symbolic truth telling, paired with some bureaucratic change; • Limited penalty for disclosures since not forcefully removed from office; • In some cases, penalty only for lying about collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to implement lustration laws that are passed; • Lustration laws passed but repeatedly vetoed, not adopted, or declared unconstitutional; • Minimal removal from office; • If laws in place, emphasis on symbolic truth telling without bureaucratic change • No penalty for disclosures of collaboration, since shaming about past not effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lustration laws either never passed or passed but not implemented; • Active rejection of lustration; • Files sealed and remain closed; • Even memory politics efforts limited or hindered; • Avenues for revisiting any form of transitional justice are closed;

<p>WIDE and COMPULSORY INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE</p> <p>Required Bureaucratic Change and Public Disclosures (4)</p>	<p>NARROW and VOLUNTARY INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE</p> <p>Public disclosures with voluntary Bureaucratic change (3)</p>	<p>PRIMARILY SYMBOLIC CHANGE</p> <p>Limited and/or Informal Vetting through public disclosure (2)</p>	<p>NO CHANGE/ SYMBOLIC OR INSTITUTIONAL (1)</p>
<p>Czech Republic – 1991 – longest and most comprehensive program in region. Police vetting expanded in 2007 and increased file transparency; but active lustration largely ended.</p>	<p>Hungary – early but limited lustration; narrowly focused on president and parliament in practice although laws were broader; some removal from public office and public truth telling; citizen fatigue with lustration concluded use of laws.</p>	<p>Bulgaria – several lustration related laws (1992, 1997, 2002), but minimal lustration of public officials; focus on academics and scientific institutions; no real lustration of political elites. Public disclosures started in earnest in 2009.</p>	<p>Albania – several lustration related laws passed (1995, 1998), but no real implementation; 2008 lustration law declared unconstitutional; no <i>de facto</i> lustration.</p>
<p>Latvia–lustration and citizenship laws (1994, 1995); mixture of anti-Russian policies and lustration; actively vetted individuals from local and national elections; vetting for public sector positions.</p>	<p>Poland – multiple starts and stops to lustration, caught in cycles of political manipulation (1989, 1992, 1997, 2006); some implementation in practice; expansive round of lustration launched 2006; multiple constitutional court rulings block and amend laws; continued popular calls for vetting.</p>	<p>Romania – much lustration debate but no agreement on laws; symbolic rulings by CNSAS but little lustration in practice; 2006 expansive lustration program to enact “real” lustration; Constitutional Court blockage of laws 2008; continued citizen support for laws.</p>	<p>Russia – Parliament made lustration a criminal offense in 1991; lustration bill proposed 1992 but set aside. No public identification of KGB collaboration; general file access denied but since 1991 selected individuals have access.</p>
<p>Estonia – 1992 oath of conscience to disclose past; 1995 citizenship criteria used as vetting tool for public positions; truth telling about past complicity becomes forced disclosure of collaboration.</p>	<p>Lithuania – several lustration laws (1991, 1999); 1999 grants period of confession with no employment penalties, after grace period then both private and public sector employment bans for lying about past; some individuals removed and prevented from taking jobs; delayed lustration; politicized implementation.</p>	<p>Slovakia – 1991 Czechoslovak lustration law expired without implementation; no formal lustration law; 2004 some files published; stormy history of rejecting memory institute; but once institute in place did work to disclose info about citizens and complicity.</p>	<p>Ukraine – After Orange Rev in 1995, two lustration bills proposed and rejected by both President and Parliament. Secret archives remain closed. 2005 purge of opposition not lustration. No accountability for past</p>

Countries categorized as *Wide and Compulsory Lustration* programs have a required bureaucratic change or public disclosures central element to them. In these countries lustration laws passed and were actually implemented. There was some screening of individuals as well as removal from office or positions. In essence there was an employment penalty for previous collaboration or regime involvement involving either removal and/or disclosure. The early timing of lustration measures in these countries confers a legitimacy to their symbolic moral cleansing intent as well. The *Narrow and Voluntary Institutional Change* category includes countries that enacted programs with voluntary bureaucratic change components. Lustration laws passed in these countries and there was some implementation of the laws, albeit across a limited scope of positions. Countries in this category experienced political manipulation of the laws, leading to implementation problems, which in the end resulted in limited bureaucratic change. The emphasis on symbolic truth telling, paired with less bureaucratic change meant there was a very limited penalty for the disclosure of past collaboration. Without forceful removal from office there was little to encourage bureaucratic change.

The *Primarily Symbolic Change* category includes countries with limited and/or informal vetting through public disclosures. All countries had lustration or pseudo-lustration laws but implementation remained a problem. Lustration laws were passed but repeatedly vetoed, not adopted, or declared unconstitutional, resulting in minimal removal from office. If the laws were in place, the emphasis was on symbolic truth telling without bureaucratic change. There is no official penalty for disclosures of collaboration, with these countries relying on shaming as a change device. Finally, the *No Change* category includes countries that either failed to pass lustration laws or had no implementation. The files were sealed and remain closed in these countries. Even memory politics efforts were limited or hindered and avenues for revisiting any form of transitional justice were closed. This categorization allows us to compare countries according to their lustration measures and provides a way to test the impact of these measures across the post-communist space.

Truth Commissions

It is of some interest that across the region few countries employed truth commissions as a way to address their communist past. Since truth commissions have proliferated around the world as transitional justice choices, the absence of truth commissions from the CEE experience bears addressing. Lustration programs include a truth telling component via symbolic cleansing and public disclosures. Therefore in some ways there is already an explicit truth telling aspect in the most prevalent transitional justice choice in the region. The "truth telling" has been primarily about the Nazi not Communist past, except for Romania. This further indicates that truth commissions were primarily used to augment the truth telling aspects of lustration not substitute for them. Nonetheless, truth commissions have been enacted by several CEE countries, and they are included in Table 2. The dates of the enactment of truth commissions are provided in

parentheses. Given the paucity of cases, it is not possible to assess the quality of the truth commissions. The simple dichotomy—presence or absence of truth commissions—is included in the models in order to conduct a preliminary assessment of the impact, if any, of this alternative and possibly complementary form of transitional justice.

Table 2.
Truth Commissions

No truth commissions (0)	Albania Poland Bulgaria Russia Ukraine	Czech Republic Slovakia Hungary
Truth Commissions (1)	East Germany (1992) Estonia (1998) Latvia (1998) Lithuania (1998) Romania (2006)	

Does interpersonal trust vary?

A first order question is does interpersonal trust vary? The fragility and/or mutability of interpersonal trust is a topic of some debate, because it directly affects potential policies designed to change or build trust. For example, Uslaner conceptualizes interpersonal trust levels as stable and enduring, not readily reflecting changes in society or government performance³⁴. Cleary and Stokes question the stability of interpersonal trust within countries, showing substantial variability within countries in a way that would not be consistent with interpersonal trust conceptualized as a stable, deeply held set of core national beliefs³⁵. If interpersonal trust or social trust cannot be changed or is highly resistant to direct change, it is hard to make an argument for policies, such as transitional justice measures, designed to enhance social trust. More concretely, if it is very difficult to overcome a low trust equilibrium, something observed in all the post-communist countries, what is the utility of directly targeting social trust? Do national level laws and policies, such as transitional justice measures impact a society's level of interpersonal trust?

One conventional measurement of interpersonal trust is the percentage of people who say that 'most people can be trusted' on the World Values Survey (WVS) standard questionnaire. The WVS also suggests constructing a trust index by taking the difference of the percentage of people who say 'most people can be trusted' from people who say 'you can't be too careful' in order to better capture the interpersonal trust dynamic.³⁶ Both the raw WVS interpersonal trust measure and the constructed WVS trust index

³⁴ Uslaner, "Democracy and Social Capital," 66.

³⁵ Matthew Cleary and Susan Stokes, *Democracy and the Culture of Skepticism: Political Trust in Argentina and Mexico* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), 317–8.

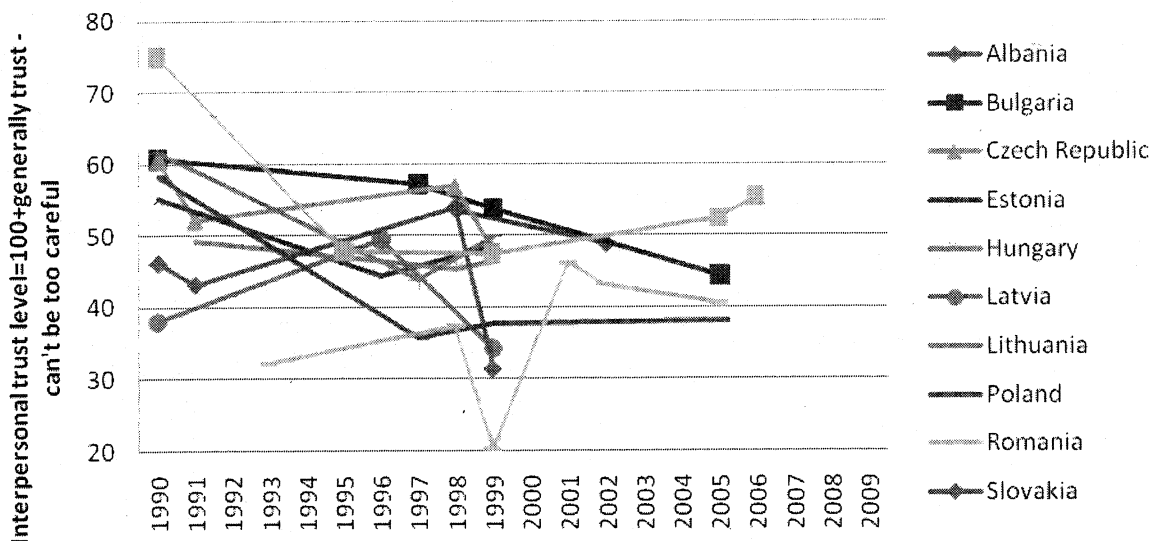
³⁶ It is represented by the formula: trust index = 100 + % most people can be trusted - % can't be too careful.

are used in this analysis. The sample size is small because of the infrequency of the survey and the aggregated nature of the data.

Looking at WVS unaltered measures of interpersonal trust between 1990–2005, there is substantial variation both within and between countries in the region. Lithuania's interpersonal trust measure declined by 19%, the Czech Republic's declined by 20%, Bulgaria's declined 22%, Russia's decreased by 30%, Slovakia's declined by 32%, and Poland's decreased by 35%. This suggests a substantial change in interpersonal trust measures over the post-transition time period. This is consistent with Mishler and Rose's findings that there are substantial differences both within the post-communist countries and between countries in terms of interpersonal trust³⁷.

Using the WVS trust index alternative measure, Figure 2 shows there is substantial variation in interpersonal trust across the region and within countries, although no clear patterns emerge. Trust in Bulgaria consistently declined, while trust in Russia plummeted and then started to rise, and trust in Romania has risen and fallen. There are visible and large between country differences observed over the nearly 30 year time period. Uslaner argues that interpersonal trust is static, and should not be impacted by changes in information or the immediate economic and political environment, however these figures do not support that conclusion. Since interpersonal trust varies both within and between countries, we can explore possible causes for its variation, and use it as a dependent variable for our analysis of a possible impact from transitional justice measures.

Figure 2.
Interpersonal Trust Index World Values /survey



³⁷ William Mishler and Richard Rose, "What are the Origins of Political Trust? Testing Institutional and Cultural Theories in Post-Communist Societies," *Comparative Political Studies* 34, 1 (2001): 45.

Lustration and interpersonal trust

The second order question is do we see a relationship between lustration and interpersonal trust? I turn first to aggregate level data to address this question. Limited regression analysis is possible because of the small overall sample size. The inclusion of many controls, such as trust in government, or institutional trust, or even democracy, dropped the sample size too much to permit reliable statistical analyses³⁸. However, Table 3 provides some limited results using models with simple control variables and testing the impact of lustration measures on interpersonal trust. The models include all twelve countries in our analysis, covering the period 1990–2005. The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions are clustered by country to take into account intra-country variation and trends.

In all three models, lustration measures are not statistically significant predictors of interpersonal trust. Truth commissions were also not robust predictors of interpersonal trust. Although both lustration and truth commissions were negatively signed, again we cannot draw conclusions because of the lack of statistical significance in the models.

Table 3.

Transitional Justice and Interpersonal Trust – National Level (1990–2005)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Lustration measures	-1.07 (1.27)	-1.25 (1.43)	-1.20 (1.12)
Truth Commission	-2.46 (6.04)	-1.01 (5.75)	---
Inequality	.09 (.32)	---	.07 (.32)
Government Effectiveness	---	1.30 (10.14)	---
Economic Growth (GDP change lagged)	.11 (.35)	---	.08 (.33)
Constant	46.64** (11.59)	48.93*** (8.01)	47.13** (11.49)
Adjusted R ²	.04	.04	.03
N	41	36	41

Ordinary Least Squares Regression (OLS) of WVS Trust Index, clustered by country –12 countries included

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

³⁸ Because the dataset is incomplete in terms of annual coverage of the measures, the inclusion of democracy or strength of civil society as controls drops the sample to 30, and the inclusion of corruption drops the sample to 27. Including trust in government or trust in public institutions drops the samples to 6. These sample sizes are too small to provide reliable results, and therefore are not included in this analysis.

It is of some note, that in none of the OLS regression analyses did any of the controls rise to the level of statistical significance either. Economic growth, levels of inequality, and government effectiveness were not statistically significant. This is probably due to the same sample size, which dilutes a possible relationship between some variables traditionally hypothesized to affect interpersonal trust (such as democracy, civil society, inequality, and quality of governance). We will be able to examine these controls using the large N survey dataset, providing additional tests of the possible drivers of interpersonal trust.

In sum, there is no relationship between transitional justice measures – either lustration or truth commissions – and interpersonal trust. They do not have a positive effect and they do not have a negative effect, contrary to the voices that have alternately praised or demonized the measures. As an explicit social trust builder, lustration falls short. The sample size is too limited to draw definitive conclusions here. We turn to the survey data analyses to examine a potential trust impact using more data and a different dataset.

Survey Data and Interpersonal Trust

The *New Europe Barometer* is a compilation of a series of surveys of citizens in post-communist countries from 1991–2007³⁹. The dataset is in many ways unique because it surveyed citizens about their attitudes toward each other and communist institutions immediately after the transition and continued to survey citizens regularly for almost 15 years. In this way, it is invaluable in capturing a range of trust variables, from public institutions through interpersonal trust dimensions, starting in the post-transition euphoria replete with all the communist institutional legacies, through a series of political, social, and economic transitions. *The New Europe Barometer* includes several survey questions related to interpersonal trust, including the traditional question “Do you trust most people in this country?” (Question 5f). The possible responses are designed to measure “degree of interpersonal trust,” and range from 1 for “completely trusting” through neutral or skeptical, to 7 for “distrustful”⁴⁰. This question mirrors the benchmark interpersonal trust question asked by the *World Values Survey* used previously, and therefore provides an alternative means of testing whether lustration and truth commissions affect interpersonal trust.

Table 4 presents the results of a series of regression analyses using interpersonal trust as the dependent variable. First, we turn to our transitional justice measures. Lustration measures are never statistically significant, irrespective of model specification. The eleven countries included in this data subset cover a range of lustration experiences

³⁹ Richard Rose. *New Europe Barometer I-XV Trend Dataset, 1991–2007*. [computer file]. 2nd Edition. (Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor]), July 2010. SN: 5241.

⁴⁰ The Codebook explains the questions related to interpersonal trust under the series A5.

from wide and compulsory institutional change through symbolic change, as well as the absence of lustration measures altogether. In none of the models is there evidence of a direct relationship, either positive or negative, between lustration and interpersonal trust. This comports with our previous national level findings, leading us to conclude that lustration does not undermine interpersonal trust nor does it improve interpersonal trust through any direct relationships. Truth commissions are also never statistically significant. In none of the models do we see a relationship between transitional justice and interpersonal trust.

Second, trust in social institutions could affect interpersonal trust. To test this hypothesis I constructed a composite of social institutional trust by combining trust in unions and the church⁴¹. We see a strong and consistently positive relationship between trust in social institutions and interpersonal trust, regardless of the additional controls included in the models. More trust in social institutions is associated with higher levels of interpersonal trust, confirming the relationship hypothesized in the literature.

Third, other voices in the trust literature suggest trust in political institutions can spill over into interpersonal trust, either improving or undermining the generalized way citizens trust each other. To test this I used the trust in public institutions composite in the *New Europe Barometer* dataset, comprised of a mean of trust in political parties, the courts, the police, the army and the parliament. There is a consistently and highly significant relationship between trust in public institutions and interpersonal trust. Model controls do not affect the direct relationship between these two forms of trust. In general there are strong and direct trust relationships observed between interpersonal trust and social trust and political trust. Fourth, basic demographic variables were included to see if they affected generalized trust propensities. Age was consistently significant; older people were more trusting than younger people. Gender was also significant with males more trusting than females. Education was not a statistically significant predictor of trust. Education level did not systematically affect trust. Here we see demographics are predictors of social trust.

Fifth, material factors, fairness and inequality considerations are also included as possible explanatory variables. As previously mentioned, there is evidence in the trust literature that fairness and inequality affect citizens' trust propensities⁴². The *New Europe Barometer* survey asked people for their perceptions of government fairness (Question A12f), allowing us to test for a possible relationship. As *Model 4* shows, we do not have evidence that perceptions of fairness affect interpersonal trust. Corruption perceptions are also examined in *Models 3 and 5*. Again we find no evidence that corruption affects

⁴¹ These are the only two social institutions for which data is available in 2004 – the only year with comprehensive interpersonal trust data. I created a composite by taking the mean trust score of each of the social institutions for a given individual in a given year. I use the *egen avg* command in STATA, which treats missing variables as 0.

⁴² Rothstein and Uslaner. See also Bo Rothstein, *The Quality of Government: Corruption, Social Trust, and Inequality in International Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

interpersonal trust, although it was a consistently powerful predictor of political trust. Finally, inequality (*Models 2 and 4*) does not appear to affect interpersonal trust despite contentions that it is particularly salient in the post-communist sphere. In sum, we do not have evidence that material factors, fairness perceptions, or corruption systematically affect interpersonal trust.

Six, the survey also includes questions on attitudes about the past, present, and future. We know from the literature that there is a strong positive relationship between life satisfaction and interpersonal trust, and we find evidence for that in these analyses. *Models 2, 3, 4 and 5* demonstrate a weak but consistent relationship between life satisfaction and interpersonal trust, with those reporting higher levels of life satisfaction also reporting more interpersonal trust. This confirms that post-communist interpersonal trust propensities do comport to some of the attitudinal trends observed in other states. However, opinions about the current regime and the future are not statistically significant predictors of interpersonal trust. Nostalgia was associated with interpersonal trust, or more specifically the lack of nostalgia for the communist past is associated with more interpersonal trust.

In conclusion, neither transitional justice measure was associated with interpersonal trust. Lustration was not a trust builder but it also did not undermine interpersonal trust. Most economic, material, and attitudinal factors also could not explain or predict interpersonal trust. In general, the traditional variables did not explain variation in interpersonal trust. However, there was a consistent and robust relationship between institutional trust and interpersonal trust, hinting at a possible indirect trust building mechanism.

Table 4.
INTERPERSONAL TRUST (Survey year 2004; 11 Countries)
OLS Regression Models Using Survey Dataset Specification

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Lustration Measures	-.002 (.06)	-.03 (.05)	.008 (.06)	-.03 (.05)	.02 (.07)
Truth Commissions	.06 (.15)	.36 (.33)	.11 (.20)	.37 (.33)	---
Trust Public Inst Composite (Political Parties, Courts, Police, Army, and Parliament)	.34*** (.02)	.32*** (.03)	.33*** (.03)	.32*** (.02)	.32*** (.03)
Social Trust Composite (unions, church)	.24*** (.05)	.23*** (.04)	.23*** (.04)	.23*** (.04)	.24** (.06)
Age	.004** (.001)	.005** (.001)	.005* (.002)	.005** (.001)	.007** (.002)
Gender (male=1/female=2)	-.10** (.03)	-.11** (.03)	-.10** (.02)	-.11** (.03)	-.10*** (.02)

Education	.03 (.02)	---	---	---	---
Citizen Perceptions of Govt Fairness (1=fair, 4=not fair)	--	--	---	.006 (.03)	---
Corruption Transparency International-CPI	--	---	.07 (.10)	---	.04 (.07)
Inequality <i>2 yr lag, national measure</i>	--	-.06 (.04)	---	-.06 (.04)	---
Life Satisfaction (1=satisfied, 4=not satisfied)	---	-.10* (.04)	-.13 [†] (.06)	-.11* (.04)	-.11 [†] (.06)
Nostalgia (not nostalgic for Communist past)	---	.05* (.02)	.05** (.01)	---	.06** (.02)
Opinion of Current Regime	---	---	.0001 (.0001)	---	---
Views of Future (1=positive, 4=negative)	---	---	---	---	-.01 (.03)
N (number observations subpopulation)	10622	9619	9047	9681	8346
R-squared	.19	.21	.20	.21	.20

Survey data specification across 11 primary sampling units (countries). All countries included except Albania. Total number of observations=72,999.

Standardized regression coefficients (b) reported, with linearized standard errors in parentheses. 95% confidence interval, two tailed [†]p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Source: Rose, Richard. *New Europe Barometer I-XV Trend Dataset, 1991–2007* and author additions.

Conclusion: Reflections on Interpersonal Trust

Since there are vitriolic arguments in the transitional justice literature about the positive and negative implications of lustration on interpersonal trust, this paper used maximal techniques and two different interpersonal trust datasets to test for a relationship. Using two data sources we were able to examine interpersonal trust changes over the period 1990–2005, providing more than two decades of variation in trust and a significant period after the transition in which to observe lustration induced changes. Despite arguments that suggest lustration will negatively impact interpersonal trust, we find no evidence of that here. Additionally, there was no indication that truth commissions, another type of transitional justice mechanism, had an impact on interpersonal trust either. In some ways the lack of an effect is good news, as a non-effect is better than a bad effect. Although it fails to support policymakers' claims about the overall elixir

qualities of lustration, it also does not provide support for the critics' worries about negative downstream implications.

This study demonstrated that interpersonal trust in the post-communist space is quite resistant to direct policy changes. Not only is interpersonal trust unaffected by lustration or truth commissions, but economic material factors also did not appear to impact interpersonal trust. Perceptions of fairness, government effectiveness, levels of inequality, and corruption did not resonate as explanatory variables. Moreover, the attitudinal variables capturing citizens' assessments of the present or future were not robust predictors of interpersonal trust, except for nostalgia and life satisfaction. In general, interpersonal trust is resistant to simplistic policy remedies, although clearly not immutable even in the post-communist environment. There is nothing inevitable about the low trust environment, as was clear with the amount of intra-regional and intra-country variation observed in interpersonal trust.

This returns us to our central motivating question, how to affect social trust? This study demonstrated that we do find consistently strong and positive relationships between trust in institutions and interpersonal trust. More trust in public institutions and/or social institutions is associated with higher levels of interpersonal trust. This is an important finding on its own, since there is so much disagreement in the literature surrounding whether these different forms of trust co-vary in the post-communist space⁴³. These findings hint at possible indirect, trickle down trust effects from trustworthy public institutions, as seen in other non-communist environments. More trustworthy public institutions are associated with more interpersonal trust, therefore improving trust in public institutions presents itself as a policy option for *indirectly* building social trust.

In sum, transitional justice measures were not direct social trust builders, and therefore policy decisions should not be based on the assumed impact of lustration on social trust—either negative or positive. However, this paper hinted at alternative trust building options. If post-communist countries are worried about their interpersonal trust levels, improving the trustworthiness of government and public institutions presents one policy option to address the regional trust deficit. Transitional justice measures might have a role to play in that political trust building process.

Data sources

Corruption Measures –Transparency International. *Corruption Perceptions Index*. Various Years. <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2011/>

Economic Change variable----International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Database*, October 2012. Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund.

⁴³ See Rose-Ackerman, Uslaner, and Rose and Mishler for various arguments over whether the different forms of trust covary in post-communist countries.

- Government effectiveness variable---Teorell, Jan, Marcus Samanni, Sören Holmberg and Bo Rothstein. 2012. *The Quality of Government Basic Dataset made from The QoG Standard Dataset version 6Apr11*. University of Gothenburg: The Quality of Government Institute, <http://www.qog.pol.gu.se>
- Inequality measures--- UN-WIDER (World Institute for Development Research). Through 2006 only.
- New Europe Barometer trust data-- Rose, Richard. *New Europe Barometer I-XV Trend Dataset, 1991–2007*. [computer file]. 2nd Edition. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], July 2010. SN: 5241.
- World Values Survey trust data-- *World Values Survey (1981–2008) Official Aggregate. v.20090901, 2009*. World Values Survey Association (www.worldvaluessurvey.org). Aggregate File Producer: ASEP/JDS, Madrid.

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