

Public Trust and Confidence in U.S. Government

Raisin cookies that look like chocolate-chip cookies are the reason I have trust issues.

Paradox of American government:

---Public distrust and cynicism despite unprecedented health and living conditions

If we are doing so well, then why do we feel so badly? Possible reasons for decline of public trust and confidence in U.S. government:

1. Perhaps the high level of trust before 1964 was an anomaly.
2. Legacy of 1960s and early 1970s, especially Vietnam War, urban riots, assassinations of JFK (1963), MLK (1968), and RFK (1968), and Watergate.
3. The rise of television. Almost 90% of U.S. households had a TV by 1960.
4. Rise of a critical investigative media since the 1960s.
5. Increased government activity might produce mismatches between performance and our expectations of performance—
 - A. Some people believe government always does too little; others believe it always does too much
6. Positives can produce negatives, such as an aging society causing crises for Social Security and Medicare.
7. Rise of the “culture wars” since 1960s has destroyed feelings of consensus about values and types of behavior.
8. Rise of insecurity and reduced trust in all institutions and relationships.
9. Mistrust breeds mistrust.

Demographic Change in America

Aging of America

Hispanicization of America

Classic Views of Government

- A. Government is a necessary evil
- B. Government is a necessary good
- C. Government is an unnecessary evil

Some Key Ideas of the Protestant Reformation

1. Monotheism reasserted (i.e., drive out Mary, saints, and icons)
2. Return to Hebrew Bible / Old Testament
3. Literacy and education of the people
4. Human equality before God
5. Individuals have God-given rights
6. Covenant and consent as bases for
 - A. Marriage and family
 - B. Church congregation
 - C. Civil government
7. Right of revolution

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)

Italian political philosopher, who wrote *The Prince* in 1532 and also *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius* in 1517.

1. Revival of republicanism via Roman republican values
2. Church rule is tyrannical
3. The ancients (e.g., Plato and Aristotle) were wrong
4. Christian virtues are vices for good government
5. An armed citizenry is needed to defend its republic

6. “Since there cannot be good laws without good arms, I will not consider laws but speak of arms.”
7. Fear is always better than affection in citizens. Machiavelli believed that “one can say this in general of men: they are ungrateful, disloyal, insincere and deceitful, timid of danger and avid of profit.... Love is a bond of obligation which these miserable creatures break whenever it suits them to do so; but fear holds them fast by a dread of punishment that never passes”