

Corruption and Revolution as Structural Foundations for the Fiction of State Interest (raison d'État)

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Abstract: The main thesis of the article is that revolution and corruption are structurally and genetically related to the process of state building (étatisation). Basing itself on Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu's ideas on the state, the article demonstrates that revolution and anti-corruption agitation are derived from a "normative pressure," resulting from the generalization of the fiction of raison d'État. In the conclusion of the article this thesis is considered in the context of recent protest movements in the US and Russia which impose a demand on the "new norm." The fact that the normative initiative shifted from the governments to protest movements suggests that current models of political representation are undergoing a deep crisis.

IN THE SERIES of lectures *On the State*, Pierre Bourdieu recalls the fashionable jargon reigning in sociology when he was beginning his academic career. Love for the word “mutation” was universal. It was talked about everywhere and by everybody: “technological mutation,” “media mutation,” etc. Along with this, Bourdieu says, even the most superficial analysis led to raising the fundamental question of how powerful the mechanisms of reproduction are: what are the reasons for the obstinacy with which societies reproduce themselves in spite of mutinies, rebellions, revolts and revolutions? What made one wonder was not the mechanism of mutation, but the exact opposite—“that order is evidenced so often” [Bourdieu 2012: 258]. In other words, the scientific community was addressing a secondary problem.

This story is enlightening, for it gives a warning: one can take the wrong path already at the stage of defining the problem. Thus it touches on the subject of this article in the most immediate way, which will focus on two topics popular today in the social sciences: corruption and revolution.¹ Both themes have mobilised entire research specialisations that have turned corruption and revolution into self-sufficient subject areas.

And again, “the most superficial analysis” shows that both notions have, so to say, an atmospheric nature. The conviction that these no-

1. The qualification of mass protest and anti-governmental movements as revolutions depends not only on scientific definitions of the notion “revolution” but also on the evolving political conjuncture. That is to say, at the current stage, the activists of the protest movement “For Fair Elections” emphasize the principally non-revolutionary character of the movement, interpreting revolution as a threat to society, an undesirable but possible result of the confrontation between the roused civil society and the rigid, authoritarian political regime of power. Their refusal to self-identify as revolutionary, nevertheless, does not answer the question of the definition of the movement’s character.

tions have solid and tangible thematic foundations is explained by three risky but unavoidable tendencies at work in science.

We will call the first tendency *profanation*: the intensive circulation of notions of corruption and revolution in science happens under the obvious pressure of mass media, and to a large extent they derive from public discussions.

We will term the second tendency *state fiction*. The social sciences continually reproduce a logic which threatens their very existence—a political-administrative logic, within which a problem is formulated and perceived just as the state interest (directed toward crafting a solution) requires. Working within the logic of state order, in the name of achieving political operationality, scientific research risks seeing and thinking of corruption and revolution in the same way that the state sees and thinks of these themes.² Science obtains an applied character, whereas its analytical apparatus is artificially simplified.

Finally, we will define the third tendency as the development of an *autonomous complex*. The singling out of corruption and revolution as autonomous objects of analysis to some extent continuously engenders the danger of their transformation into political universals governed by virtually autonomous dynamics and objective laws. What helps to overcome such a realistic understanding of the research object are Cartesian doubt and radical nominalism—such a method of description that attentively respects the rules according to which heterogeneous symptoms are grouped, framed as a unitary “malady,” as one essence. However, good old Cartesianism, always suspecting the research object to be illusionary, proves itself a fairly difficult task. But the only alternative to such Cartesianism appears to be the belief in the existence of an object only insofar as it is researched and discussed.

The three aforementioned tendencies—profanation, administrative fiction and the development of an autonomous complex—manifest themselves most distinctively in current Russian discussions on corruption. Mass media is inclined to associate with corruption an ever increasing list of social and political problems: all the various defects of the state machinery, problems of low economic growth and effectiveness, criminality and the criminalisation of all law enforcement bodies, the problems of domestic urbanism and urban development, the au-

2. The state, of course, cannot “see” or “think.” The famous quotation by James Scott, “seeing like a state,” successfully highlights the constitutive and fictive nature of the “state’s glance,” translating a complex and fanciful social hieroglyph into “a demonstrative and administratively more convenient format” [Scott 2007: 19].

thoritarian and non-democratic character of political institutions, systemic problems of education and public health services, terrorism in the North Caucasus, the rudimentarily developed moral consciousness of officials, etc. All these and other problems, in some way or another, have become linked to corruption. Ultimately, the connection of corruption with this infinite list of problems acquires the character of “unnecessary connection,” an “autonomous complex” requiring a specific policy. An illusion emerges that it is possible to cope with all these issues of different natures and histories through the implementation of a well-planned and consistent anti-corruption policy. Just a few trifles are lacking—political will and a correctly formulated strategy of fighting evil.

Discourse on corruption has turned into an active component of social and political crisis; it exerts more and more impact on its evolution. The exceptionally successful slogan of the protest movement, “Away with the party of swindlers and thieves!,” firmly tied the “big” discourse on corruption with the “great” discourse on revolution.

The expectation of change is high. We are witnessing the decline of the party system constructed under Putin, the charisma of the country’s political leaders is fading away, new political leaders have emerged, the protest movement has developed suddenly and almost out of nowhere. However, there is another, more monolithic and nearly immovable dimension of which Bourdieu has spoken—“the force of the social world which lies in the orchestration of unconscious, mental structures. For there is nothing more difficult than changes in these mental structures by means of revolution. For this very reason, revolutionary projects, concerned with the creation of the new man, fail so often” [Bourdieu 2012: 145].

Perhaps the terms “unconscious” and “mental structures” used by Bourdieu look outdated in today’s context. We do not insist on using them. However, we will focus on those inert political and social schemes of a collective action that reproduce the social order in spite of revolutions and upheavals.

This article argues that corruption and revolution are fixed aspects of the state’s development, state-building, or what is sometimes called the process of *etatization*.³ In other (more drastic) words, revolution and corruption are *structurally*⁴ inherent in the state, and for this rea-

3. We preferred the word “etatization” because in the Russian language its literal translation—“statism”—is tightly associated with the alteration of forms of ownership—from private to state ones.

4. It is customary to speak of structural corruption as either a characteristic of

son the deepening of the process of etatization is inevitably accompanied by the strengthening of corruption and the intensification of protest and revolutionary movements. Works by Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu will help us substantiate this thesis.

On the State

Revolution and corruption are connected with each other not only in terms of discourse but also genetically. It is exactly after the French revolution that the political idea of governmental power enacted by the people and executed only in the interests of the people significantly gained ground and acceptance. And it is precisely this new and democratic belief that historically served as the basis for the criminalisation of corruption [Stessens 2001: 891]. The Napoleonic Code first defined the corruption of civil servants as a crime in 1810, prescribing criminal penalty for abuse of power. The French revolution clearly distinguished between private interest and public duty. In addition to that, it also made the claim that the former should not influence the latter [Stessens 2001: 905].

Napoleon's administrative innovation, introducing the distinction between the private interests and public duty of officials, was perceived as a discriminatory step. Its rationality was not as obvious as it might seem today, for civil servants continued to live relying on "private" sources of income and not at all on wages. Salary, as the system of remuneration for officials, emerged only in the middle of the 19th century, after it was first introduced in England. Thus, the division between the private pocket and the public treasury is a fairly recent phenomenon.

Napoleon's reform could not have been successful if it did not rest upon a relatively new idea that captivated the imagination of the masses—the notion of state interest (*raison d'État*). Modernity rests upon the obviousness of the distinction between private and public interests, assuming that to a greater or lesser degree this distinction has always been made. We will omit a most interesting story of the emergence of the concept of "state interest" [Foucault 2011: 313–404; Foucault 2004: 245–318]. It should be noted, however, that Foucault and Bourdieu tried to define the reality of what we call the state on the basis of the genesis of this concept.

Both Foucault and Bourdieu consider it possible to talk about the state only on condition of overcoming the narrowness of the institu-

young, forming states or in relation to the historical forms of states developed before the French and American revolutions [Tiihonen 2003: 31].

tional approach. The state cannot be reduced to the establishments in which it manifests itself, to legal norms and codices, to apparatuses of violence, etc. In short, it cannot be reduced to what applied political science and economic science can point to and say “this is the state.”

Without going into details and significantly simplifying the issue, it can be observed that for them the state is not so much a reality delineated by institutions as a principle of political action, differentiation and knowledge. For Foucault, the state presents the embodiment of a strategic scheme. He calls it “the regulatory idea of politics,” “the very essence of the state,” “the principal of reading reality” and also “the objective (objectif) of the political mind,” which gives the state a projective and even utopian dimension [Foucault 2004: 263, 294–295].

Bourdieu expresses himself even more radically, calling the state the embodiment of an illusion:

The state is such a well grounded illusion that it exists by virtue of the fact that we believe in its existence. This illusionary reality, although collectively acknowledged through consensus, is a place which a whole number of phenomena refers to—academic and professional titles or the calendar. It is precisely this mystical reality, existing in consequence of its manifestations and collective belief in its existence, that is the principal of its manifestations [Bourdieu 2012: 25].

Both Foucault and Bourdieu define this fictitious and illusionary something by analysing the concept of “state interest” (*raison d’État*), characterising it as the “principle” of the intelligibility of public or political space. They discern the state not in the “physics” of establishments and institutions, not in “obvious” material forms, but in the “implicit” ideal plan behind them—in symbolic, cultural and “mental” structures. From this viewpoint, the symbolic dimension turns out to be more inert and fundamental in relation to the institutional dimension and spontaneous changes in the balance of power in political life.

<...> the state interest (*raison d’État*) in its essence is, I would say, something <...> conservative, preservative (*conservatoire*) [Foucault 2004: 263].

The state can be defined as the principle of orthodoxy, that is, as a hidden principle that can be discerned only in manifestations of public order, simultaneously understood as physical order, opposite to disorder, anarchy and, for example, civil war. The hidden principle picked out in manifestations of public order is understood as physical and symbolic simultaneously [Bourdieu 2012: 15].

Articulating the solidity and inertia of the symbolic, Bourdieu corrects Max Weber's definition of the state. The state, he says, is a monopoly on violence. But this violence is symbolic insofar as "a monopoly on symbolic violence is the condition upon which a monopoly on physical violence as such is enacted" [Bourdieu 2012: 14].

The concept of the state, understood as a principle of a fictitious, imaginative, illusionary and symbolic nature, appears to be utterly inconvenient for applied political and economic sciences. It is inconvenient because this plan of the symbolic is resistant to control. It is exceptionally difficult to find in this scheme of "the implicit" and "the unconscious" a place for the subject-reformer.

What advantages are there in an approach aspiring to overcome the institutional perspective? Transcending institutions, one can see them as elements of a more general order and also focus on the technologies of power that define the logic of institutional multiplicity. We can describe here the following example from Foucault: a mental hospital has its own institutional density, constitution and premises allocated rationally and according to necessity; however, it is the consequence of a more general and external project—"societal hygiene" directed to the whole of society [Foucault 2004: 174].

Bourdieu also repudiates the institutional approach calling the notion of "apparatus" a Trojan Horse of functionalism:

The educational system, the state, the church, political parties and labour organisations are not apparatuses but fields. A fight between agents and institutions happens inside a field, following norms and rules defining this playing space <...>. Those who reign in this game on the given field acquire the position allowing them to make it work for their benefit, but they always have to reckon with the resistance, contestation, demands and claims of "politicians" or their subjects [Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 78–79].

Transcending functions, one can compare the initial project of some institution with what has been achieved as a result of its establishment. This been said, the general economy of power remains in focus—the utilisation of these institutions by agents, which as a rule differ from the intended function and programme.

Having freed the problematics of the state from the narrowness of the institutional perspective, Foucault and Bourdieu discover unexpected structural and historical connections. Both of them, each in their own way, pay attention to the structural and genetic connection of corruption and revolution with the state interest (*raison d'État*). Every step on the road to the advancement of the state interest (*raison d'État*),

including complex policy given the name of “modernisation” in our time, irrevocably collides with reactions and resistance, the origins of which at first glance seem to be different: with protests, mutinies, upheavals on the one hand, and the growth of corruption on the other.

The State and Corruption

The Marquis de Sade considered the state the most important source of corruption: “Learn Juliette what politics is, conducted by all those who support corruption among citizens at the highest level. While the subject is being consumed by gangrene, while he is weakened by pleasures and debaucheries, he does not feel the weight of his shackles, it is possible to fetter him when he does not suspect it. The real politics of the state consists in increasing the corruption of its subjects tenfold by all possible means” [Sade 1967: 529]. A similar perception of corruption prevails today among Islamic ideologists who believe that it is a consequence of modernisation, of the state’s interference with the business of the Ummah. We encounter it in spaces where the fiction of the state interest has not yet acquired the symbolic might that it requires.

On the other hand, modernisers are convinced that corruption is linked to the hermiticity and impenetrability of the social world for the state interest. Europeans visiting Africa, Bourdieu says, exclaim from time to time: “Oh, these new states are just terrible. They cannot transcend the logic of their household, there is no single trace of state interest.” Such predominance of private interest over state interest is usually called corruption by the modernisers.

The first perspective—expressed by de Sade and the Islamists—is usually connected with moral corruption. The second perspective—the European viewpoint with regard to new African states—belongs to the field of legal norms and directly touches upon the legitimacy of the state. Modern research on corruption most commonly expresses the second perspective, which is not a mere coincidence—these studies, as a rule, incorporate within themselves the outlook of the state [Nuijten, Gerhard 2007: 1]. However, in both cases, corruption emerges where the logic of the state withstands certain social logics of reproduction. The distinction of the perspectives, however, does not solve, but rather dramatises the following question: which order can corruption be referred to—does it belong to the social world as such, habitus, or is it rather the inevitable consequence of etatization, the expansion of state norms, the sovereign’s every attempt to delegate power to the growing apparatus of officials?

Akhil Gupta, who researched corruption discourse in the local media of Southern India, discovered that it is commonly believed that the

behaviour of the selfish bureaucracy pursuing its personal advantage is a deviation from norms and laws established by a “moral center” existing somewhere out there [Gupta 1995: 375–402]. No matter how patriarchal one’s way of life, it does not stop the local population from perceiving the idea of the state as transcendental and not reducible to its corrupt manifestations. From Bourdieu’s point of view, corruption plays the role of the dissociation principle between the real state and the theoretical one, between the state materialised in the functionaries and the state materialised in the central power [Bourdieu 2012: 330]. In Foucault’s opinion, corruption accentuates the utopian and projective plan of the state—the state interest.

The temptation of regression from the state interest (*raison d’État*) to the private interest, “the interest of one’s own household” (*raison maison*), always exists. Bourdieu explains this constant danger by the difficulty of establishing a special state logic requiring “extraordinary” efforts and rules, that is, those rules that destabilise the habitual social order. The habitual world demands that the individual cares about their parents, supports their children, helps their friends, etc. However, the state interest demands from the individual just the opposite: if they give “presents” to the father or the children, they break the public order:

...theoretically, brother, mother, father do not exist anymore in the public world <...>. In the public world (or in the Gospels), we voluntarily renounce ethnic and domestic connections through which all forms of dependency and corruption [manifest themselves]. Thus the formation of the public subject takes place, the definition of which is to serve a reality that is transcendental to local, particular and domestic interests—a reality that is in fact the State [Bourdieu 2012: 407].

The never-ending game in which the state logic involves the social world leads to a radical transformation of social relationships. They become etatized, whereas any opposition to the state at the discursive level is registered as a violation of public order or corruption.

The logic of state interest both relies on the social world and finds obstacles in it. It acquires its support in the commonness of the logics of “*raison maison*” and “*raison d’État*”: the logic of the “household mentality,” fidelity to one’s home, is mastered to the degree to which the household is perceived as a variation of the corporate body (*corpus corporatum*); yet, simultaneously, the same logic of the household moves to a transcendental essence for the agents. The decisive factor in this is the subsequent process when thought is objectified from the point of view of the household, when it is canonised and codified by juridical discourse [Bourdieu 2012: 408].

Paradoxically as it is, the growth of the state's power, its institutions and establishments, appears to be an obstacle on the way to establishing the fiction of *raison d'État*. The need for the continuous expansion of the state puts the nominal sovereign⁵ in a position of compromise. He considers the cost of retaining his authority and its delegation. However, the growth and sophistication of society inevitably leads to the amplification of control structures. The expansion and building of the state is performed at the expense of the differentiation of governmental bodies. The sovereign power is compelled to delegate part of its functions to the ever-increasing number of authorised officials; the enlargement of the amount of managerial branches expands opportunities for abuse. And now "every authorised official can do for himself as much as the king does for himself." For this reason, Bourdieu assumes, the best thing is to imagine "the process of the state's development <...> in terms of reproduction through fission" [Bourdieu 2012: 433]. And it is precisely this process of delegation that inscribes corruption into the very structure of the state, into the logic of its formation. In other words, the potential for corruption is multiplied as the sovereign power reproduces itself upon both branching and delegating functions.⁶

The growth of the state by means of delegation holds a risk linked to the depersonalisation of the sovereign and the dissolution of the power's charisma in the midst of the growing mass of authorised officials. This risk is compensated by what Bourdieu calls "institutional hypocrisy" or "permanent schizophrenia." What he means by it is the central and universal trait characteristic of both the sovereign and the whole army of its bureaucratic clones—"impersonation," or the mode of speaking on one's own behalf as well as on behalf of the state body. This mode is expressed in the trope of *prosopopeia*, the example of which is Louis XIV's famous aphorism "I am the state," or Medvedev's relatively recent statement, "I do not speak in retorts but announce sentences <...>. Everything I say is moulded in granite," made on 25 September 2009 during a conference on innovation.

In Bourdieu's model, impersonation has a fairly natural duality: the appropriation of the universal furthers its very universalism. In other words, abuse of power supports the state interest (*raison d'État*). And the state interest, in turn, becomes a stake in the conflict of a variety

5. The sovereign itself is an authorised agent. For example, an absolute monarch is authorised by his "rule" to conduct dynastic policy [Bourdieu 2001: 146].

6. One should take into account that Bourdieu presents only the scheme of statehood's formation in modernity. In real history, delegation could have been performed not in the form of authorisation but through the creation of alliances, for example with financial groups, by the sovereign.

of private and public perspectives. In the shadow of the universal state interest, a whole number of exchange operations take place between the bureaucrats and the notables acquiring capital—these are the biggest transactions on which the state service rests. And it is not necessary that the exchange is expressed in monetary equivalent; respectability can also be exchanged. The contestation of the universal and the involvement of a variety of authorised officials and different social groups in its contestation turn the state into a space for political rivalry. For this reason, the very conflict gives its meaning to the process of growth and strengthening of the state as the principle, as the logic of state interest. And then an opportunity arises that even a war song “directed against the falsehood of the law and kings, a song that ultimately engendered the first form of revolutionary discourse, turns into the administrative prose of the state” [Foucault 2005: 98].

The State and Revolution

“Before the French revolution, corruption was a phenomenon almost approved by the constitution” [Tiihonen 2003: 4–5]—this thesis, although not very original, indicates that we must take a closer look at the connection between corruption and revolution. Bearing in mind the very recent past, as Tiihonen notes, following many studies on corruption, there was a boom of academic publications touching upon this topic in the 1990s. The focus of the boom fell mostly on former socialist states in which revolutionary changes had just taken place and new state formations were emerging.

Twenty years before the French revolution, the literal meaning of the term “revolution” was rather metaphorical. In its first meaning, it referred to the rotation of the celestial bodies, but, according to the *Dictionnaire of the French Academy*, “revolution” meant “changes happening in public relationships and social affairs in a figurative sense only” [*Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française* 1765: 443].

From the point of view of historical and genetic analysis, another expression, coup d’État, was much closer to the contemporary meaning of “revolution,” as Michel Foucault demonstrates. The same *Dictionnaire of The French Academy*, published thirteen years later after the one mentioned above, gives the following definition of coup d’État: “Coup d’État is an energetic and at times violent decision that the Ruler or the Republic obliges to make against those who upset the State” [*Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française* 1778: 472]. There is something unexpected for us in this definition: it turns out that “coup d’État” was accomplished by the very sovereign power; whereas we would rather be in-

clined to identify “those who upset the State,” those who are alienated from power, with the force executing the takeover.

Foucault directly points out this historical perversion in his detailed analysis of “coup d’État” [Foucault 2011: 342–349]. Although he does not give a direct explanation, his analysis implicitly suggests that the “perversion” of the concept’s meaning occurs due to the French revolution. As the most important stage in the harsh struggle over the establishment of the state interest (*raison d’État*), this revolution became the historical triumph of state order. The revolution was merely a military instrument of the Third Estate undertaking the mission of universalisation and etatization. It saw in republican forms a regime of governance that was realising the state interest (*raison d’État*) more adequately than dynastic forms or principles. After the royal government was acknowledged as the force “upsetting the state,” a new semantic standard of the concept “coup d’État,” as well as of revolution, was set. It is from then on that general knowledge associates coup d’État with a forcible transition of political power from one “group” to another, where a revolution is coupled with the revolt of the masses against usurpers.

For that reason, the following conceptual adjustment should be made to the contemporary secular perception: coup d’État, as well as revolution, should be understood not as an inversion of the top and the bottom, when the subordinate group or “the masses” suddenly seize power and become the new leaders, but as the revolt of those strata of the population who are convinced that they are the bearers of the state interest, “*raison d’État*.” “*We fight a king in order to protect the King*”—such was the battle cry of the English Puritans, expressing simultaneously their enthusiasm for a specific normative order and their conviction in the corruption of the royal rule in power. This distinction between the normative and the reality somewhat echoed attempts by lawyers in the late Middle Ages to clearly distinguish between “*the will of the Crown and the wishes of a king*” [Kantorowicz 1997: 18].

In this sense, a higher degree of the social world’s integration into the state, the modes of reproduction of new social groups, can be considered the results of revolution, defined as a revolt against the monopolists and the usurpers of the state interest. Thus it is better not to talk about revolution in terms of an inversion of the “top” and the “bottom,” but rather to stress the fact of the energetic involvement of the urban bourgeoisie and proletariat, who internalised the state interest, in the creation of the state order. Revolution, in such a way, is the result of the democratisation of the fiction of the state interest (*raison d’État*), a social impulse to order rather than chaos. Revolution is the deepening of the process of etatization.

The military might of the Russian Empire afforded the exertion of control over the vast territories of Eurasia. However, it hardly integrated all its inhabitants into the political life or the economical games of exchange that transcend the boundaries of local traditional worlds. It was the October Revolution that managed to significantly raise the degree of integration into the state of both the most remote corners of the empire and the most marginal social strata. The empire did not ask for much loyalty to be shown toward the imperial centre. It was undemanding of the dwellers of Russian villages, remote kishlaks and mountain auls. In return, the Soviet Union greatly raised mobilisation efficiency.

The French and October revolutions were the greatest manifestations of the state and the state interest. The terror before “totalitarianism” engendered by them, is nothing more than an intuitive fear of the state as a practice establishing new relationships between the social world and the government [Foucault 2011: 361]. Both revolutions revealed a potent impulse for transformation of all social relationships—ethnic, family, class, etc.—into state ones; revolution, in such a manner, is structurally inscribed into the state. A successful revolution leads not so much to chaos as to the strengthening of the state order.

The Semantic Collapse and Protest Movements

No matter how “mature” a state might seem, revolution is always a structural possibility. The state, realised in actually existing institutions, will always look incomplete, transient, corrupt and imperfect in comparison with the state interest as an objective and a projective fiction. It follows from the described theology of *raison d’État* that the very cycle of modernity’s revolutionary substitutions of one sovereign by another (the Crown by the sovereign people, dictators or authoritarian rulers by parliaments, one president by another), cannot, by definition, be brought to an end. Revolution will be the fundamental characteristic of politics until societies are dependent upon the logic of *raison d’État*. The Arab Spring, the *indignados* movements in Spain, Occupy Wall Street in the USA and also the Russian protest movement “For Fair Elections”—the very concurrence of these mass protests in different parts of the world can serve as a good illustration.

Saturday, March 5, 2012... The progression of two motorcades across Moscow (one with resigning President Medvedev and the other with newly elected President Putin), cleared from people by the police, engendered an extraordinary strong image—“the President of emptiness” that quickly spread in social networks and mass media. Only a short while before, Vladimir Putin was called “an advocate of statism.” He

was the undisputable and practically only reincarnation of the state interest for the whole population of the Russian Federation. However, on the day of his inauguration, an empty Moscow became the evidence of the just happened semantic collapse—the disassociation of the idea of the state and Putin. Official TV channels greatly enhanced this effect, broadcasting the progression of the two solemn motorcades, isolated from the masses of people.

Emptiness emerged where only recently there had been the body of the sovereign. And this emptiness is endured as an exigent need in the substitution of incumbent President Putin by another body, personifying the supremacy of state power. In the perspective of popular political science, what happened can be portrayed as the result of a series of political mistakes made by the nation's leadership and Vladimir Putin. However, from the viewpoint of the political theology of *raison d'État*, the collapse is yet another piece of evidence of the fact that any body, any technique of representation is inadequate to the state as an objective.

For the protest movement, the inadequacy of representation is expressed in the “obvious” corruption of Vladimir Putin, the ruling party, the oligarchical regime, the whole existing state machine. This obviousness turns for the protest into the foundation of contestation and acquisition of the right to the representation of the state interest.

The semantic collapse that occurred at the turn of 2011–2012 in Russia can be called a purely Russian story, a history characteristic of a country with rudimentarily developed democratic institutions. However, in today's world we also have the opportunity to observe similar processes in developed democratic countries, including the country that is known as the paragon of democracy—the United States of America.

Let us briefly list similarities of the processes taking place.

The particularity of protest movements and the appeal to the universalism of the state interest

In both countries, protest movements revealed their particularity, that is, they were predominantly urban and localised. This was especially evident in the Russian Federation, inasmuch as only a specific group of metropolitan inhabitants took part in the movement. At the same time, protest movements expressed universal demands for a change of the regime in power. Both in Russia and the USA, protesters are dissatisfied with how they are being governed. They characterise the existing regimes of governance as oligarchical. The Occupy Wall Street movement saw the source of power's corruption in the total domination of private corporations and in the privatisation of the state and all insti-

tutions of representative democracy by them. In Russia, the source of corruption is found in the privatisation of the state by a clique or an oligarchical group that reveals in itself an alliance of state officials with the business elite. The utopian perspective of both movements is a new universal order of freedom and justice “for everybody.”⁷

The crisis of political representation

The main appeal of protests is addressed to the operation of representative democracy. The criticism of the American “occupants,” as well as the Spanish *indignados*, is directed against the principle of political representation as such. From the very beginning, the movement’s activists furthered the idea of “direct democracy,” apprehending that with the help of the technologies of representation (party representation, for example), the “System” would try to corrupt and dissolve the movement in traditional political institutions. The movement declared one of its main organisation principles to be the renouncement of political leadership, centralisation and hierarchy. Indeed, the “System” has at its disposal a wide spectrum of opportunities to influence the movement’s leaders: denigration and blackmail, involvement in negotiations for the purpose of co-opting the leaders into the political nomenclature, direct and indirect bribery, etc. The taboo on leadership and centralisation is emphasized especially often; references are made to the direct democracy of the Quakers, ancient Athenians and also the experience of their fellows in arms, the Spanish *indignados*. Some quotations and paraphrases of Deleuze and Foucault can be read in the “occupants” blogs, for example: “A group must not be an organic unity of hierarchised individuals but a generator of continuous de-individualisation.”

At first glance, it seems that the Russian protest movement stands for the development of institutions of political representation, hoping for the substitution of the corrupt parliament, president and government for non-corrupt ones. An impression is created that the Russian people, dreaming of fair elections, remain “the last nation” in Europe to believe that representative democracy makes sense. Although the “For Fair Elections” movement did not articulate a distrust for representative democ-

7. I am grateful to Michael Urban, a professor of political science at the University of California, Santa Cruz, who drew attention to the fact that today in the USA not only left-wing protest movements are enthralled by the universalism of state interest. Right-wing radical movements just as equally contest with the political establishment over state competences, creating, in particular, subdivisions of the civil police patrolling the Mexican border in order to prevent its violation by illegal immigrants.

racy as such, as a protest mass it constantly resists the usurping of political leadership by professional opposition politicians. The leaders of the protest, accepted by all its participants, turned out not to be opposition politicians but “safe” writers and artists, devoid of imperious ambitions.

The protest ecumenism and “political apathy”

One of the most widespread characteristics given to the Russian protest movement is its “political apathy.” Political apathy is highlighted when it is called “civil,” thus being opposed to the so-called non-systemic political opposition. But the protests in Spain, Greece and the USA are classified in a similar way.

Protesters in different countries have one common message: there are no ethnic, racial or social disputes between us; we are united in thinking that there is an egoistic minority (1%), the authority of which makes our life unbearable; our unanimous rejection of this minority is stronger than our differences in beliefs; we are the 99%.

Social movements do not prevent parties from participation in rallies, yet they consciously avoid any party identification and encourage diversity within the movement. In the USA, there were attempts to engage with the movement representatives of right-wing populism—the Tea Party. Slavoj Žižek, who visited the camp of the “occupants,” advised them not to “fall in love” with themselves and to integrate within their ranks conservative admirers of Sarah Palin.

In Russia, the protests integrated non-systemic left-wing internationalists and right-wing nationalists. And in Egypt, despite fairly successful attempts by the current transitional military power to split the Christians and the Muslims, a considerable part of the Copts nevertheless voted for candidates from the Muslim Brotherhood during the last nationwide election.

The absence of programme requirements

Almost in all countries the protests are criticised for their inability to formulate a list of requirements for government. The absence of concrete requirements for government is portrayed as an expression of the movement’s irrationality.

However, the American “occupants” consciously imposed a ban on the articulation of demands and concrete programmes. Their refusal to make political demands is indicative of the semantic collapse that has taken place—of their refusal to see state institutions as the legitimate bearers of the fiction of *raison d’État*. The protest by the occu-

pants contests and disputes this function: what is the point of making demands before usurpers?

The main objective is formulated by the occupants rather metaphorically or performatively—as the restitution of public spaces to society, the seizure of squares and the building of institutions of direct democracy: “Occupy Everything. No demands. Occupy, occupy, occupy, occupy!..”

An important trait of all movements is their clearly expressed patriotism. International values are expressed by the participants of the movements as often as patriotic ones. In Russia, this tendency was revealed in the polemic on who in fact cooperates with the United States Department of State—the opposition that “sold itself” to the West or the “corrupt” ruling elite that concentrates its capital in offshore territories.

The denial of the legitimacy of state institutions, among them legislative ones, the belief in the impossibility of negotiating with them, reservations about the practicality and meaningfulness of making demands before ruling coalitions—all these emphasise that the protest project is by nature nothing but a request for a new public order, for new foundations of the constitution of society. For that reason it can be argued that in spite of accentuated respect for the Law and appeal to justice, the utopian projection of modern protests ultimately implies not only a fundamental change in the regime of power but also the alteration of the constitutional system. Although protest actions are generally non-violent in character, their objectives reveal the logic of “*coup d’État*,” or a takeover, transcending the current law: “emergency actions in spite of the general law” [Foucault 2011: 342]. They are directed against the prevailing public order, but driven toward the universalisation of the state interest, that is, they take a stand against its usurpation by a narrow ruling clique.

Political rivalry furthers one and the same logic of the state interest and strengthens the positions of the universal inasmuch as the very state turns into an arena for political struggle. In such a way, revolution, as well as anti-corruption agitation, can be considered the derivative of the normative pressure accompanying the process of *etatization*. The request for a new state order and a new norm today comes not from governments but protest movements. The loss of the rulemaking initiative by governments is indicative of the exhaustion of modern models of political representation and of the advance of the epoch of a “new norm.”

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