

Crisis has become a code word of our time. But the question is—a crisis of what? We are told that it is a crisis of finance, it is a crisis of state, it is a crisis of education—so, it is a crisis of everything. But what does this mean, to be a crisis of everything? A crisis of everything means a systemic crisis. It is a crisis of the social system, and this social system is capitalism.

So, first, a crisis of capitalism, and only secondly, a crisis of civilization, mankind. But what is capitalism? Descartes used to say “define the sense of the words.” My working definition is that capitalism is a complicated institutional system which limits capital in its own long-term and holistic interests, and ensures expansion in space, externalizing the crisis, and exploitation.

The last element is vital, because capitalism, like antiquity, like the slave system, is an expansively oriented system. When in the course of the evolution of capitalism, the global rate of profit was diminishing, capital used to carve out parts of known capital zones, and transform them into the capitalist periphery, the zone of raw materials extraction, and that of cheap labor. But in 1991, with the fall of the socialist camp, including the U.S.S.R., and with the start of semi-gangster type of capitalism in Russia, non-capitalist zones evaporated. Now capitalism is everywhere. It encompasses all the globe. Complete victory.

But every acquisition is a loss.

Now there is no place to expand. Intensification of capitalism is the whole agenda. The problem is that capitalism is an extensively constructed system in principle. Several institutions—the nation state, civil society, politics, and mass education—limit capital’s possibility to exploit the core of the system, in the way, or on the scale it does at the periphery. The institutions I have mentioned externalize exploitation, somewhat compared to the way Solon’s reforms did in ancient Athens.

Lords of the Crisis Rings

I do not want to minimize the level of exploitation in the so-called highly developed countries, but there is a certain limit to it, or, to be more precise, there *was* in the period of 1945-1975. It is no coincidence that the French called this period “the glorious 30 years.” I say

Andrey Fursov

An Asymmetrical Answer To the British Empire

Mr. Fursov’s speech was titled, “The Current World Crisis: Its Social Nature and Challenge to Social Science.”

Dear Colleagues:

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers of the conference, who invited me to speak here.

I would like to start my talk with a quotation from the quintessential British imperialist, Winston Churchill, who, in 1940, wrote in a letter, that “Great Britain was fighting not against Hitler, and not even against National Socialism, but against the spirit of the German people, against the spirit of Schiller, so that this spirit would never be reborn.”

But now we are here, at a conference which was organized by the Schiller Institute, and it is our kind of asymmetrical answer to the British Empire...



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“was,” because since the 1980s, the dominant groups of the capitalist class have been dismantling these protected institutions, the sum, or rather the system of which, constitutes normal and sound capitalism, or its pillars.

During the last 30 years, we have been witnessing the fading away of nation-states, the squeezing of civil society, depoliticization of the political sphere, and deliberate primitivization and weakening of mass education, including higher education. In America, this process took place in the 1970s and '80s; in Russia, we are witnessing it now. But thanks to the socialist foundations, those who are trying to demolish our education are succeeding, but only partly. This liquidation is the essence of the so-called neo-liberal revolution, or rather, counter-revolution: counter not only to the main tendencies of the postwar 30 years, but also to the whole period of European history since the Renaissance.

It is not just a regression; it is counter-progress. It is deliberate counter-progress.

During the last 30 years, we have been living in crisis. And this crisis, the neo-liberal counter-revolution, is man-made; it is artificial, or it has been artificial, because it seems that at the beginning of the 21st Century, the crisis began to go out of control of its masters, of the “Lords of the Crisis Rings.” We can identify this, indirectly, in the conflicts of different segments of the global elite, in the activities of their closed organizations, and in the statements of high functionaries.

Suffice it to recall what [IMF Managing Director] Christine Lagarde was saying in October in Tokyo, at the meeting of the IMF and World Bank, and what the essence of the report of the Morgan Stanley management in June of last year was.

The guiding document of the neo-liberal counter-revolution was the report “Crisis of Democracy,” written at the request of the Trilateral Commission by Samuel P. Huntington, Brian J. Crozier, and Joji Watanuki, in 1975. The document is very interesting. The authors wrote that the only cure for the evils of democracy was not more democracy, but the moderation of democracy. The report argued that, for a democratic political system to function effectively, it usually required some measure of apathy and non-involvement on the part of some individuals and groups. They meant the middle class and upper groups of the working class.

The democratic surge, the report said, was a general challenge to existing systems of authority, public

and private; and the main conclusion was that a diminution of public influence was needed. So, in fact, this document was a reaction to the rise of the middle class and working class, due to industrialization in the 30 postwar years. The solution was very simple: deindustrialization. The deindustrialization of the North Atlantic core, and an offensive against the middle class and working class. And we saw it in Thatcherism and Reaganomics.

Deindustrialization of the West, which began in the 1980s, ideologically has been under preparation for a long time, since the 1860s-1880s in Great Britain. In the 1950s and 1960s, the environmentalist movement was added to it. The environmentalist movement of the '60s was organized by the Rockefeller Foundation, and it was paving the way for future deindustrialization.

The same role was played by the youth culture and different minority movements, and, of course, by derationalization of thinking and behavior. The '80s saw the rise of irrational cults, the deterioration of mass education, and, of course, the supplanting of science fiction by fantasy. The Harry Potter series is a very indicative example, where we see the future, or a picture of reality, where there's no democracy, where there's a hierarchy, and where power is based on magic, not on rational choice.

The Project To Stop History

In fact, the neo-liberal counter-revolution, which organized the redistribution of incomes in favor of dominant groups, and at the expense of the middle class and working class, was part of a much greater geo-historic project, or plot, as you wish: the project to stop history. Because the redistribution of income, and de-democratization of society, demanded a civilizational U-turn, which I call the three Ds: de-industrialization, de-rationalization, and de-population.

This last plays an important role, not only from the economic point of view, or from the resource point of view. It is much easier to control 2 billion people than 7 or 8 billion. The de-population project is financed by the same structures which financed the ecology movement, etc.

The neoliberal counter-revolution was a crisis in itself, but it was intended to be a managed crisis. Yet, in the beginning of the 21st Century, the process seems to be going out of control, as I said; Hegel used to call such situations the perfidy of history.

So, we have a double crisis: one man-made and

planned, and then, a new crisis, a chaotic one.

To deal with the crisis, one has to have will and reason, or rather, first, reason, to understand, and secondly, the will to put reason into action. In our case, reason is social science, but the problem is that social science, in its present condition, is not adequate to the challenges of our epoch. The main agent of social science is the expert, who knows more and more about less and less. And there is a de-theoretization of knowledge. Knowledge is becoming more and more empirical, statistical case studies without theory, without scientific imagination and so on.

First, the disciplinary net of the late 19th Century, which is our inheritance from the 19th Century—economy, sociology, and political science—in fact, doesn't capture social reality as a whole—only parts of it. The basic unit of analysis of sociology is civil society, but if that is shrinking, it means that sociology can tell us less and less about the world we are leaving and the world we are entering.

[The French historian] Fernand Braudel used to say: "Capitalism is the enemy of the market." Rather, capitalism is balanced between monopoly and market, but now we can see that transnational corporate monopolization is pushing the market away.

I would like to remind you about the research by Andy Coghlan and Debora MacKenzie, published in October 2011 on the site of the *New Scientist*. This group of scholars showed that 147 companies, 1% of all companies, controlled 40% of the world economy. This is very indicative. This means that the modern economy, whose basic unit of analysis is the market, conceals more than it shows. Politics and the nation-state are fading away, and this means that political science, with its basic units of analysis—politics and the state—not only cannot adequately conceptualize, but cannot even merely depict real power relations, especially on the global level.

Secondly, there is another serious problem with political science. Real power is usually secret or semi-secret, shadow power. Conventional political science has neither concepts nor methods, to analyze this type of power. The more democratic the facade of the western society was becoming in the 19th and 20th centuries, the less real power it had. This power was channeled into closed clubs, super-national structures, etc.

What I am saying is banal and trivial, but political science in its present condition cannot analyze real power relations. The integration of these structures as

units of analysis in conventional political science will in fact blow it up.

Cognitive Intelligence Organizations

So, a new social science is needed, studying the real world, and not that which professed scholarship defines as real. A new social science with new disciplines, new concepts, a social force which will be able to create such a new type of scholarship, has the best chance to win in the 21st Century, or at least to undermine attempts to cut us off from our European legacy.

It is evident that a new scholarship can be created only by structures of a new type. Which organizations are analyzing reality today? Above all, these are scientific organizations and the analytical branches of secret services, but both are in deep crisis. Today, we are witnessing a crisis of both scientific organizations and secret services—their analytical branches. Scholarship appears not to be able to work with enormous volumes of information and feels awkward in analyzing informational streams. The gap between informational streams, including professional ones, and the standard level of a standard scholar is growing. Instead of scholars, as I said, we have experts who know more and more about less and less.

The whole picture reminds us of the situation of scholasticism at the end of the 15th Century: the miniaturization of research, case studies, and no universal lexicon among different spheres of knowledge. As for the analytical branches of the secret services, they seem to be unable to work in a world where almost all significant information can be found in open sources. And this transforms the whole business.

So, there is a need to create fundamentally new structures. I prefer to call them cognitive intelligence organizations. They must combine the best features of scholarship structures and those of the secret societies. Like the latter, they must analyze the real world, not the imaginary one, paying attention to certain indirect evidence. Social science usually neglects indirect evidence, which is, however, very important.

At the same time, like scholarship, they must concentrate on the laws and regularities of mass processes. Such structures must be not just analytical units, but also organizational weapons in the struggle for the future. I understand very well that it is much easier to pronounce such things, than really to create these organizations, but one must try.

Thank you.