

BETWEEN THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY: ANTI-CORRUPTION DISCOURSE OF MOVEMENTS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN RUSSIA

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Abstract: *The main objective of the article is to define the main strategies of discourse of an anti-corruption civil society (ACS) and to analyse functioning of its main models, which are presented by the activity of three organisations: The All-Russia People's Front, the Transparency International–Russia, and the Anti-Corruption Foundation. For this analysis, we selected the content analysis and critical discourse analysis of anti-corruption investigations and used other documents demonstrating the organisations' activities. According to the research results, all three models exist in Russia but their correlation is asymmetric. All-Russia People's Front acts on behalf of the state as the main anti-corruption agent. Transparency International presents itself as a part of the global anti-corruption movement based on the principles of professionalism and political independency. The Anti-Corruption Foundation declares that state authorities are corrupt and therefore cannot fight against corruption using adequate measures. The asymmetry of the models presented is determined by the lack of checks and balances in the country, where the state presents itself as the single agent of curbing corruption and creates fictive anti-corruption civil society.*

Key-words: *corruption, civil society, anti-corruption organisations, movements, state, content analysis, critical discourse analysis*

1. Introduction

The problem of corruption is a complex phenomenon with multiple causes and effects, as it takes on various forms and functions in different contexts. Corruption is traditionally defined as abuse of public power for private gain. The definition of corruption varies depending on different approaches and types of corruption. In this article, we will focus on the political corruption that can be described as “a hidden exchange between public agent and a third party” (Della Porta, Vannucci 1999, 17) that violates public trust and

effectiveness of political institutions (Wedel 2012). Such exchanges can involve not only public officials and heads of public enterprises as the main agents, but also other persons and groups that are indirectly involved in different sorts of corruption deals (bribes, cartels, conflicts of interests, etc.). The sociological approach to corruption includes the differences in cultural traditions and values in different countries. Some authors recognise the correlation between corruption and social conditions, and the level of democracy (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013; Karklins 2005; Rothstein 2011). According to them, corruption can be considered as a problem of collective action, especially in a context of systemic corruption (Rothstein 2011, 231). In this case, systematic corruption becomes a self-sustained phenomenon where the corruption behaviour “facilitate the emergence of new norms” (Della Porta, Vannucci 1999, 255) and lead to more and more corrupt institutions and standards. Corruption turns into the vicious circle, and the majority of anti-corruption measures appear to be ineffective or even can be substituted by imitation of anti-corruption activity that in reality can promote or hide further corrupt practices.

One of the necessary mechanisms of anti-corruption policy is controlling corruption through civil society involvement. At the same time, there are some problems with the civil society participation in anti-corruption work. For instance, according to the World Bank, there is an overwhelming lack of legitimacy and credibility for civil society when dealing with governance in fighting corruption (Civil Society Involvement 2014).

For these reasons, the social movements and actors combatting corruption and their functions in this activity need to be systematically analysed.

Anti-corruption mechanisms and politics work both on domestic and international level, in public, non-governmental and private sector. There are some difficulties in identifying these actors and relationships between the international and domestic, state and civil society agents. The anti-corruption civil society includes two main aspects. Broadly, it includes “individuals and groups outside the public sector” (UNCAC 2004, art. XIII). This aspect includes not only different sorts of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community and business associations, but it also presupposes participation of citizens outside formal organisations (The World Bank’s Strategy 2006, 17) In this aspect, the anti-corruption civil society may also include active individuals, journalists, local activists, etc. The other aspect, the “narrow” one, refers to the so-called “institutionalised civil society” (Holloway 2002) that includes anti-corruption NGOs and other formal organisations and associations specializing in anti-corruption issues.

The general role of civil society is defined as its large contribution in building trust in society (Putnam 1993) and creating democratic culture (Foa, Ekiert 2017; Themudo 2013) The main functions of ACS include the following areas: research and other related activities; advocacy works in some corruption cases; raising public awareness about corruption issues; proposing action plans for fighting corruption; monitoring government activity and decisions; providing leadership to remove corrupt leaders at national and local levels, etc. Carr and Outhwaite (2011) generalized these types of activities into four large groups: (1) raising awareness; (2) stakeholder engagement; (3) research; and (4) advocacy and monitoring.

The anti-corruption roles and effects of civil society in its narrow and broad aspects are determined by different factors depending on the social, economic, and political situation in the specific country, and need to be analysed by taking these factors into account. For this reason, the main objective of this article is to define the main strategies of discourse of Russian anti-corruption movements and organisations.

As a country with long traditions of corruption, Russia is a good example of different sorts of anti-corruption organisations and movements that try to fight corruption, especially on the high political level. At the same time, last non-democratic changes put the civil society's functioning in this sphere to inconvenience if it criticises the existed political elites that become less and less transparent and accountable. As a result, civil society's anti-corruption activity is controlled by the state. However, some movements continue their activity despite of the state pressure.

For our research, we have chosen the three most famous Russian organisations specialising in anti-corruption investigations and presenting different forms of anti-corruption movements – state-linked, international and domestic. In order to study their discourse, we will use quantitative (content-analysis), and qualitative (critical discourse analysis) methods. Amongst the issues that we identify as particularly important to be investigated are as follows:

1. The anti-corruption investigations are usually aimed at political elites' and public officials' corrupt behaviour that enables the tension between the state and civil society organisations.
2. Results and impacts of these investigations depend on the organisations' status and their relations with the state. These relations, in their turn, are associated with certain Russian social and political circumstances.

3. The government imitates anti-corruption civil activity by using state-linked civil society, and tries to control other civic agents fighting corruption.
4. In these conditions, other anti-corruption civil society organisations (domestic and international) try to build ties with the state by using specific strategies and forms of activity that are presented in their publications.

Accordingly, the main research questions are as follows:

- What are the main focuses of different organisations' anti-corruption investigations and evaluation of their impact? What factors can explain similarities and differences between the organisations' activities?
- How does each organization present its own relation with the state? How does it depend on the status and type of organization?

This paper is structured into three main sections as follows. Following this introductory section, we will examine the situation with anti-corruption civil society around the world and consider the three main types of ACS. The second section of the paper is a presentation of methodology of research. The third section focuses on the main dimensions and results of different organisations' anti-corruption investigations. After that, we will review the main strategies of civil society's anti-corruption discourse. The final section contains the concluding provisions.

2. New challenges for anti-corruption civil society

It seems to be obvious that the government of any country should consider anti-corruption civil society (ACS) as an independent monitoring tool of their activity. However, in fact, certain deviations from this ideal model are in evidence that could demonstrate different agents' authoritative resources and different forms of ACS's interrelation with the state institutions.

Civil society is broadly defined as a system of groups, organised as a source of political or social power, independent from the government, which serve the function of promoting citizenship (Hudson 2003), fostering collective action based on horizontal ties and social trust (Putnam 1993). Civil society is also defined more narrowly as non-government, non-commercial or public organisations (NGOs). The relations with the state are crucial for civil society organisations because they are intended to protect rights of different social groups, and to maintain the system of checks and balances between the state and society. However, these characteristics often hardly apply to post-soviet

countries where the governments do not have sufficient political will to have independent partners, and citizens are not ready to be engaged in civic dialogue and policy making. Researchers agree that Russian civil society is one in which the state is more closely related to civil society than in other countries (Grzegorz and Kubik 2014). The Russian civil society's dependence from the state has increased over the past years and put obstacles for democratic processes in Russia. The sphere of anti-corruption work is the most problematic area in such conditions, because it needs to be "truly independent" from the government to make it more transparent and accountable (Buxton and Konovalova 2013).

The weakness of the civil society in Russia is explained by the lack of "bottom-up" initiatives, which are considered to be a part of soviet legacy (Cook and Vinogradova 2006) and by the blurry line between political and civil spheres (McFaul and Tryger 2004; Chebankova 2013). In 2017, only 4.8 percent of citizens were members of civil society organisations (Rossija v cifrah 2018). CSO activities in Russia are mainly focused on social issues – assistance to disabled people; prevention of social orphanhood; work in orphanages. Advocacy and environmental organizations today are in an absolute minority. According to the data of the monitoring of the state of civil society, the proportion of Russians participating in at least one NGO activity decreased from 19 to 16% from 2009 to 2015 (Doklad o sostojanii grazhdanskogo obshhestva 2017). Since 2011, programs of support for socially oriented non-profit organizations have appeared at the federal level and in a number of regions. On the other hand, there is an opposite tendency to increase control and pressure on the activities of NGOs working primarily in the human rights field. The most notable and widely discussed step in this direction was the adoption of amendments to legislation introducing the status of "foreign agents" for NGOs (Informacionno-analiticheskij bjulleten'... 2016). Since 2005, NGOs' activity is supported by the government in the form of President's grants. However, majority of money was given for the charity or social projects (Kolomiets 2017).

In our research, we will study anti-corruption organisations that present themselves as a part of civil society or movement aiming to fight against corruption in Russia. For the sake of classification of ACS, we will consider three models (Holloway 2002, Moroff and Schmidt-Pfister 2010): (1) state-linked civil society, which is created or absorbed by the state institutes or ruling parties; (2) international civil society as the main provider of anti-corruption policy around the world, and (3) traditional "bottom-up" model of "domestic" civil society.

The first model is characteristic of the countries with weak civil society, e.g. post-communist countries or countries with authoritarian regimes. ACS should have sufficient social resources to successfully confront with current corrupt elites. Otherwise, such elites, being more resourceful and powerful, could suppress them. As a result, NGOs may be absorbed by the state institutions or ruling parties. The impact of civic activity in this model also depends on the characteristics and level of collaboration with governmental structures and on the state's political parties will to move in the same direction with civil society. Andersson and Heywood (2008) admit inevitable complications in breaking the "vicious circle" of corruption in the countries where it is strongly embedded in economic and social life. Anti-corruption rhetoric in such situation turns into the tautology, because "monitoring devices and punishment regimes should be largely ineffective since there will simply be no actors that have an incentive to hold corrupt officials accountable" (Persson, Rothstein, and Teorell 2013, 450).

The second model represents "the western donors' model of an NGO" (Holloway 2002, 19). The global NGOs' actions around the world are aimed at raising people's awareness about the harm of corruption and elaborating some tools and knowledge for effective implementation of national anti-corruption policies. The leader among them on a global level is Transparency International (TI) founded in 1993 with branches in over 100 countries. Lately, there has been certain criticism related to international civil society efforts in curbing corruption. It is mainly based on the fact that these efforts create a framework for stigmatising some countries as "corrupt" by measuring the corruption level (e.g. Corruption Perception Index) and ignoring contextual factors and specific national conditions (Andersson and Heywood 2008; Bukovansky 2006; Smiljov and Dorosiev 2012; Gephart 2009.). Authors also have doubts about the positive impact of international anti-corruption campaigns sponsored and controlled from abroad in developing and post-soviet countries, especially through activation of grass-roots movements (Andersson and Heywood 2008; Bukovansky 2006). Researchers point out the neoliberal context of the international anti-corruption organisations' activity and their indirect control over less developed countries by using anti-corruption measures and campaigns (Gebel 2012; Hindess 2005).

The last, third type of ACS is a traditional "bottom-up" model of activity. Such organisations are usually called "domestic NGOs" because they are created initiatively for local or national purposes when corruption creates obstacles for doing business or causes inequality and poverty. These movements include not only civil society organisations and their supporters

but also the representatives of the groups that suffer from corruption most of all (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013). Sampson (2010) considers the groups of local activists, who do not have such developed tools and try to adapt their work to local conditions, in contrast to the international anti-corruption “industry”.

All three models of ACS can demonstrate contention or even confrontation between agents that stay behind different types of civil society: public authorities, international organisations, political parties, business organisations, media, and local activists. “The existing anti-corruption consensus is problematic” (Gephart 2009, 32) because in some post-communist countries the co-existing of different types of anti-corruption agents turns into struggle for the power. In that regard, the main objective of our research is to reveal how these three models of anti-corruption organisations work in Russian social and political circumstances.

Corruption is a big problem in Russia. In 2017, Russia’s CPI rating was 135th among 180 countries with the score of 2.9. Both petty and grand corruption in Russia is the result of soviet legacy and the consequence of lack of transparency and accountability of Russian authorities. Forms of corruption in Russia are undergoing serious changes; corruption is no longer associated with bribery as such. Corruption practices are shifting to a higher level and taking forms of a conflict of interest, violation of prohibitions and restrictions for public and officials, non-declaration of income or illegal enrichment (Percova et al. 2018). In 2018, 75 percent of Russian citizens believed that level of corruption in the country is high; in 2014, 66 percent had such an opinion (Uroven' korrupcii v Rossii 2018).

In 2008, the Anti-corruption Act passed in Russia, and the National Anti-Corruption strategy was introduced by the former President Dmitry Medvedev in 2010. Every two years the National Anti-corruption Plan is updated. According to the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, one of the key areas of its implementation is “ensuring the involvement of civil society institutions in countering corruption” (National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2010). However, we can see very little information about the concrete forms of civil society’s participation in this process in the National Anti-corruption Plans.

After EU enlargement and with Russia actively engaged in different international initiatives, the country has been involved in many global economic, political, social, and cultural projects. One of them was anti-corruption agenda. At the same time, during that period, the government also initiated many projects for studying corruption. Since 2008, Russia has enjoyed some success in creating institutes for preventing petty corruption at the level of ordinary people’s relation with public official in solving everyday

problems. The institutes of public transparency and accountability, hot lines and online systems of whistleblowing were established for state and business organizations. Every municipal authority was subject to organised anti-corruption monitoring and research of people's attitudes about corruption, and their satisfaction of anti-corruption policy (Sostojanie bytovoј korrupcii 2010).

The state's anti-corruption activity during that period was primarily aimed at arresting and prosecuting corrupt officials (mostly heads or employers of regional or municipal administrations, ministries, and governmental agencies). For the past few years, the general number of citizens convicted for corruption offences has increased three times from 2012 to 2017 (Dannye sudebnoj statistiki 2018).

The new age of anti-corruption agenda started after March 2017, when thousands of people went out to the streets for the protest against corruption. Such protests have been led by Alexey Navalny, the head of the Anti-corruption Foundation, and inspired by his movie "Do not call him Dimon". This movie shows the results of the investigation of secret property owned by the Russian Chairman of the Government Dmitry Medvedev. People from 85 cities participated in protest demonstrations, totalling about 150,000 participants, about 1,000 people were arrested afterwards. Any civil society's anti-corruption activity was put on hold. Vladimir Putin said that no anti-corruption organisations and committees will be created in Russia, because their main goal is destabilising political situation in the country (Garmonenko 2017). Over the past few years, Russian government has opposed every international anti-corruption campaign in Russia, and considered global anti-corruption movements as potential threat to national security and a "Trojan horse of subversive foreign powers" (Moroff and Schmidt-Pfister 2010).

The civil society's anti-corruption activity has been marginalised, and even demonstrated as anti-state or extremist. Thus, the role of civil society in anti-corruption activity is very unclear in Russia, and is thinly represented in the laws and regulations. At the same time, there are some anti-corruption organisations and movements that try to fight against corruption in different ways. One of them is anti-corruption investigations that provide "naming and shaming" and raising people's awareness against corruption. This activity has become one of the main tools of Russian anti-corruption civil society.

3. Methodology

We have selected three organisations corresponding to the three models of anti-corruption civil society organisations functioning. The first one includes

the so called “official” or state-linked organisation actively supported by the state: All-Russian People’s Front “For Russia” (APF) implementing a project “For honest procurements” (Za chestnye zakupki 2018). This organisation manifests itself as “social movement”, and “a new form of institutionalisation of political participation and civic activism that is supposed to be a mediator between the state and civil society” (Kandyba 2015). The organisation was founded in 2011 at the Vladimir Putin’s initiative. Despite their positioning as an innovative form of organisations, they share similarities with the soviet time’s Pioneer and Komsomol organisations and the youth movement “Nashi” as a quasi-civil society organisation (Hemment 2012; Heller 2008). We can call this organisation a “state-linked movement” because it has direct relation to the President. At the same time, its representatives outline their distance from the state and informal character of their functioning. Among their activities (volunteering, patriotic, ecological etc.), this movement conducts anti-corruption investigations in the sphere of public procurement. This organisation is a good example of integration into the “vertical power” arrangements (Ljubownikow, Crotty, and Rodgers 2013) and Russia’s GONGOs (Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisations) as an “ersatz social movement” (Hemment 2012; Robertson 2010; Cheskin and March 2015). The most famous international anti-corruption organisation is presented by Russian TI-chapter (TI). It was founded in 2000 and, among other forms of activity, has been conducting anti-corruption investigations for the last three years. The domestic part of anti-corruption movement is presented by the Anti-corruption Foundation (AF) led by oppositional politician Alexey Navalny. This NGO lays emphasise on the totally corrupt state system, where majority of top-level officials, including the President, are closely connected with business or have undeclared property and incomes.

At the first stage of the research, the content analysis of anti-corruption investigations was conducted. The web-documents (publications on the organisations’ web sites) containing the results of corrupt cases investigations and corrupt individuals’ ‘naming and shaming’ have been analysed (totally 455 documents from January 2015 until April 2018.)

The following categories were taken for this analysis:

1. Year of publication
2. Actors of corrupt behaviour or interaction (agent/client)
3. Benefits for actors
4. Organisation’s actions following the result of investigation
5. Consequences of investigation and their evaluation by authors
6. Types of evidence and materials used for the investigation

The number of publications of every organisation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of publications and their percentage in a year

Year	AF	TI	APF	Total
2018	8 (8.5)	7(7.3)	15(5.7)	30 (6.6)
2017	30(31.9)	56(58.3)	70(26.4)	156(34.3)
2016	37(39.4)	20(20.8)	92(34.7)	156(34.3)
2015	19(20.2)	13(13.5)	88(33.2)	145(31.9)
Total	94(100)	96(100)	265(100)	455(100)

Source: Author.

At the second stage of our analysis, we have applied the method of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to the anti-corruption discourse. There are two main features of CDA: its intensity in studying social problems and studying inequality and power (Van Dijk 2001). The anti-corruption discourse reproduces many agents and their interactions, which can also make the anti-corruption discourse the subject matter of CDA. The main research question of our study is: how does anti-corruption discourse present civil society institutions aimed at implementation of power of different sorts of actors, and what strategies are used for that? This fairly general question needs to be concretised. For that purpose, we have taken different anti-corruption organisations' documents (anti-corruption investigations, materials from their web-sites, social media, informational booklets, reports, toolkits, speeches, and interviews in the public media of Russian nongovernmental anti-corruption organisations and their representatives (572 documents).

The important direction of CDA is the implementation of strategies of the discourse. They can be used for different purposes and must have some connection with and the logic of the "positive self-presentation and the negative presentation of others" (Wodak 2011, 49). The strategy can be defined as the conceptual project of actions and practices directed or adapted for the achievement of political, social or cultural purposes by using some linguistic options (Fairclough 1992, 64). The first level of analysis includes *referential strategies*, "by which social actors are constructed and represented" (Wodak 2011, 49). On this stage, it is also necessary to show the different actors' point of view on corruption, its reasons, and the main ways of its curbing.

Another objective is to find out the principles, strategies and directions of the participants' relationships and roles (Van Dijk 2009). We will call them

the strategies of legitimising (KrosravNik 2013, 199). Legitimation includes verification of actors' activities and creates behavioural models that are based on certain view of the world. In our study, we will consider how the anti-corruption organisations explain their activity and justify their objectives.

What can be found out as a result of the analysis? It can be the logic of the discourse and certain relations between the actors, their behaviour and ideas. Van Dijk defines this construct as "topoi" (a worldview), specific social knowledge presented in strategies, oppositions and in perspective. (Van Dijk 2009, 83-85). Topoi can be defined as interrelated propositions that guarantee compliance with the intended regulations, rules or ideas (Wodak 2011, 50). At this stage, we evidence the "positive self-presentation and the negative presentation of others"; in other words, the "topoi" structure shows how the anti-corruption discourse presents the main actors' positions and their relations of power in the anti-corruption field. As a rule, the "corruption/anti-corruption" opposition can imply different meanings and agents that "tend to negate and substitute each other in the course of political struggle" (Kajsi 2014, 38).

4. Anti-corruption investigations in Russia: the main dimensions and results

The results of content analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The results of content analysis (percentage from the total amount of cases)

	AF	TI	APF
Agents of corruption			
Representative of federal authorities	56.4	20.8	1.1
Representative of regional (local, municipal) authorities	29.8	63.5	55.1
Representative of public (municipal) enterprises	8.5	18.8	38.9
Individual(s) associated with authorities	23.4	7.3	0.1
Representative of business	2.1	0	6
Representative of NGOs	0	1	0
Types of corrupt behaviour			
Misappropriation of goods	34	2.1	1.5
Abuse of power	2.1	10.4	0.4
Bribery	4.3	0	0

Conflict of interest	17	28.1	1.1
Money laundering	3.2	4.2	0
Cartel, collusion	22.3	13.5	8.7
Embezzlement	2.1	3.1	0
Revolving doors	4,3	15.6	0.4
Proceeds concealment	31.9	17.7	0.4
Discrepancy between property and income	17	3.1	0.4
Irregularities in public procurement	30.9	29.2	30.9
Offshore manipulations	8.5	7.3	0
Expensive purchases in public procurement	6.4	7.3	61.5
Ineffective use of the state budget	4.3	5.2	6.7
Consequences of the organisation's actions			
Case filed	7.5	5.2	3.8
Party in fault convicted	2.2	3.1	1.9
No response	8.6	8.3	3.8
Agent denies its involvement	6.7	3.1	1.5
Prosecution refused	8.6	6.3	4.9
The case is under official verification	4.3	3.1	9.6
Resignation	2.2	7.3	0.4
Recognition of misbehaviour	6.5	16.7	32.1
No information about consequences	55.9	53.1	54
Evaluation of consequences of investigations			
Excellent	3.2	12.5	22.3
Positive	18.1	16.7	18.5
Not clear	63.8	54.2	54.7
Negative	14.9	16.7	4.5
Evidence used in investigations			
Documents	69.1	84.3	-
Video from drone	39.4	1.2	-
Photo	47.9	8.4	-
Testimony	2.1	-	-
Social media materials	9.6	3.6	-
Media	13.8	25.3	-
Analytical materials	13.8	43.4	-

Source: Author

The main agents (subjects of corrupt behaviour) of anti-corruption investigations are public officials of different levels. In AF's investigations these are federal public officials – ministers, deputies, members of government, and Administration of the President. TI's and APF's investigations are conducted with respect to the representatives of regional and municipal authorities and public enterprises.

The most popular type of corruption is related to irregularities in public procurement. The main sphere of AF's interest is misappropriation of goods (estate, lands, public money, luxury cars, or yachts). This organisation also often investigates cases of financial crime, proceeds concealment, land capture and appropriation of public property. TI is mostly interested in cases concerning conflicts of interest, and APF – in expensive and luxury purchases during the procurement.

The main objective of anti-corruption investigations is “naming and shaming”, drawing attention to the facts of corruption. For this reason, the main form of the organisations' activity is publication of information related to corrupt behaviour. In our research, we marked the “publication” variant only in case if it was the only form of the organisation's activity following the results of investigation. Such actions prevail in AF's materials. First of all, it is explained by the fact that this organisation often publishes materials about high-ranking public officials or politicians, therefore appealing to public authorities could be ineffective. Indeed, 30 percent of “only publication” results are usually connected with high-ranking corrupt agents. Another reason could be insufficient amount and quality of evidence of corruption. APF prefer to appeal directly to the agent's organisation because they act on behalf of the federal authority and can expect to succeed. TI often appeals to the Antimonopoly Service and Prosecution Authority. In most cases, the consequences of investigation are not clear or not presented. APF receives the largest fraction of feedbacks on their appeals in comparison with other organisations. As a rule, such feedback represents the admission of misconduct and does not always lead to specific sanctions. APF as a state-linked organisation has the biggest number of successful outcomes. In most cases, they involve recognition of misconduct and cancellation of public procurement.

The evaluation of investigation was identified as excellent if the case was closed. It means that suspicious deal was cancelled, the party in fault was convicted or fired, etc., and the authors are very satisfied with the outcome. Positive evaluation was given in case if misconduct was recognised but no decision was rendered. Negative evaluation means that there was no reaction or refusal regarding the appeal. Such outcomes are more popular in TI's and

AF's publications. APF as a state-linked organisation has the largest number of successful outcomes. In most cases, they involve recognition of misconduct and cancellation of public procurement.

Evidence of corrupt behaviour are not presented in APF's documents. The most popular evidence in the TI's and AF's investigations are the documents, including extracts from the registers of property, links to the public procurement webpages, other specialised materials, certificates, and the organisation's correspondence with public authorities. AF mostly uses video and pictures received from drone or satellite maps. TI's experts more often use analytical materials containing detailed investigations. They also refer to journalists' anti-corruption investigations.

5. The main strategies of anti-corruption discourse

At first, we divided Russian anti-corruption discourse to three types, according to the specific of anti-corruption organisation: official (APF), international (TI), and protest (AF). Referential strategies demonstrate the understanding of corruption, forms of fighting against corruption, and organisations' role in this process. APF position themselves as a leader of anti-corruption investigations that unmask mostly regional or local authorities' misconduct in public procurement. Although they act on behalf of the President, APF's representatives call themselves "public controllers" and highlight wide public support of their activity: *"Not only the amount [of successful cases] rises but also participants improve as professionals. Anybody can become an activist... But the main feature that is common for all of them is unindifference"* (Prihodko 2017). They tend to explain corruption by the lack of control and good governance on the local level, and underline success of their activity in preventing luxury purchases or any irregularities.

TI's representatives highlight the broad scope of the corruption issues that their investigations deal with (Higher School of Economics 2017). They believe that only civil society can fight against corruption effectively. "We have to state: up to date, neither authority, nor media, nor supervisory bodies, nor legal system can actively fight against corruption in Russia" (TI-Russia, n. d.). However, some of their actions are a success: regarding their requests to the authorities, some actions are being taken by the authority to impose liability on the persons who try to use budget money or property for private benefits (TI-Russia 2017). TI's views of the causes of corruption focus on the lack of authorities' political will in the implementation of anti-corruption legislation: "It is like hourglass: successful fight against corruption only takes place where political will meets public will. Nowadays, we have a lot of public

will and enough political will but they are moving towards each other very slowly, stumbling over every stone" (Azar 2017). Another reason for corrupt misconduct is the authority's unawareness of the necessity to comply with international law and collaborate with international community.

The Anti-Corruption Foundation investigates the corruption "among high-ranking Russian government officials" (Anti-Corruption Foundation, n.d.). Their investigations are aimed at finding out top-level Russian authorities' events of misconduct, incomes or property hidden from the public. The main targets of their activity are the senior-most officials of the Russian authority: the Chairman of the Government Dmitry Medvedev, the Prosecutor General Yury Chaika, the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation Sergei Shoigu, etc.

Anti-corruption Foundation points out the totally corrupt nature of the state system, where majority of top-level officials are illegally connected with business and have undeclared property or incomes. The main cause of corruption, according to Navalny and his colleagues, is existence of two different systems of law enforcement: elite system, where crimes and corrupt practice remain unpunished; and mass system, where people feel unprotected from uncontrolled actions of the authorities and liberal construction of the law. Corruption is robbing people: "No big deal, they will write off other two billion from our pockets. Small change, really (although in normal countries, these two billion are enough to build a decent stadium" (Navalny 2017).

Legitimation strategies show the ways of self-presenting and justification of anti-corruption organisations' activities. Organisations use different arguments of importance of their own activity. APF tends to use "state" and "patriotic" arguments: its representatives try to show themselves as assistants of public authorities in fighting against corruption. They refer to their leader Vladimir Putin who said that "sooner or later, public officials will have to learn how to live with public control" (All-Russian People's Front 2017). They characterise the Russian authority as the main corruption fighter, and Vladimir Putin as the main decision maker about the fate of high-ranked corrupt officials: governors, ministers, local authority representatives, etc. The All-Russia People's Front's activists created a series of cartoons, where Putin has meetings with corrupt officials, and they suddenly disappear thereafter (Ivanickaja 2016). The representatives of the Russian authority also underline the importance of "civil society" in preventing corruption; at the same time, they point out that not entire civil society can be helpful in this field. For instance, Sergey Naryshkin, Head of the Foreign Intelligence Service, said: "The main task of the authority at every level is not only to listen

to the information communicated by unindifferent citizens, but also to involve in anti-corruption activity patriotically and, I have to insist, constructively oriented activists” (All-Russian People’s Front 2017).

The TI’s self-legitimation is based on a “global argument” as their connection with the international anti-corruption movement. For this reason, their activities are presented as using professional and experienced tools and best practices developed internationally. TI’s leaders call themselves “representatives of international Think Tanks” (Pustovaja 2016). At the same time, they admit the existing complications with the implementation of international tools in Russian realities, and some limitations determined by their “foreign agent” status in recent years. In spite of it, they insist on their independent position from the state and any political players. “It is necessary to understand for what reasons we maintain an independent position from the authorities. This is very important: meetings with authorities should not lure into their orbit and circle; otherwise, people will stop trusting any non-profit organisation... We do not claim to be an authority, it is not our aim” (Pustovaja 2016).

Unlike TI, the Anti-corruption Foundation presents itself as politically oriented opposition to the existing corrupt elites. In his publications, Navalny encourages to support him in the election, join protest actions against the corrupt authority, because, in his opinion, only changing incumbent political authorities can help curb corruption in the country. Thus, this organisation tries to force not only anti-corruption but also “political mobilisation” (Cheskin Ammon, and March 2015, 262), and sometimes its leaders enjoy a big success, especially in the anti-corruption protests in March 2017.

The topoi of discourse is a conceptual model of anti-corruption organisations’ self-presentation that is best manifested in oppositions to “others” or “discursive construction of ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Wodak 2007, 205). The most popular “others” for our organisations are not only corrupt agents mentioned above, but also the state and other anti-corruption organisations. In this regard, the most important question is the existence of “anti-corruption consensus”, mutual understanding of different agents regarding anti-corruption activity.

APF demonstrates close cooperation with the state and the President as its main advantage: “Our main advantage is an opportunity of a direct contact with the journalists and activists, and the same time, a direct contact with our leader Vladimir Putin” (Vinokurov 2017). The main corrupt agents are usually “light-fingered public officials” (All-Russian People’s Front 2015a) evading the policy of budget saving. “In the context of regional budget cuts, authorities should do everything to pursue the procurement as effectively as possible,

sparingly, saving budget funds and ensuring the quality of work" (All-Russian People's Front 2015). At the same time, the organisation's opposition to corrupt public officials is emphasized by the local authorities bullying APF's activists (Pervoe antikorrupcionnoe SMI 2017). In November 2015, Vladimir Putin personally promised to support the activists (All-Russian People's Front 2017). The efficiency and achievement of real results are demonstrated as the main advantage of APF's activity, in contrast, for instance, to AF (Svobodnaja pressa 2017). APF works "systematically", "carefully", "hard", "effectively", "and professionally". AF's investigations, in APF representatives' opinion, are "populist", "unconstructive" and do not have sufficient evidential base.

The main TI's aspects of disagreement with the state are their status of a "foreign agent" and the lack of public trust as a result of the restrictive policy towards international organisations and civil society as such. "Russian government has undermined the credibility of civil society institutions, and it will take a considerable amount of time to fix it." (Otkrytaja policija 2016). TI opposes its activity not to the state in general but to specific aspects of the state policy that violate Russian and international laws, principles of transparency and accountability. The leaders of the organisation point out the professional and scientific base of their anti-corruption work. They think that the hard evidence is the main advantage of their work, especially in comparison with AF. *"Yes, he [Navalny] makes mistakes, and blunders... But Navalny has already announced that he wants to be the President, so he has another objective now..."* Elena Panfilova, the founder of TI-Russia, noted that the TI's job is "digging trenches" and "not going over the top" as Navalny does (Nemcova 2017). Hard day-to-day work with data is the most important part of anti-corruption activity.

The context of AF's activity is determined by the direct opposition to the state because of the odious person of Alexey Navalny and his scandalous investigations related to the representatives of the Russian elite. The opposition to them is clearly presented in the materials. Their authors usually oppose poor ordinary people to the rich authority. "About thirty percent of people in this country earn less than 25 thousand roubles per month. In other words, poverty reigns in the country. And we have this remarkable public oil company "Rosneft", the head of which bought a yacht for 8.6 billion roubles as a present to his wife, and is building a house for 3.8 billion roubles" (Navalny 2017a).

Among other anti-corruption organisations, AF approves of TI's activity most of all; some of AF's investigations refer to TI's materials and admit their usefulness (Gimadi 2017). At the same time, Navalny criticises APF for being a "fictive" civil society that receives money from unclear sources and just

imitates anti-corruption activity. He points out that AF is not only a real anti-corruption civil society organisation but also the leader of political opposition that have many supporters. “This regards the efficiency of authority and opposition. 455 million [APF’s budget for 2015] out of nowhere is gone God knows where against 28 million from private sponsors [AF’s budget for 2015] that have been spent on clear projects noticed by media and people” (Navalny 2016). The results of the discourse analysis are presented on the Table 3.

Table 3. Strategies of anti-corruption discourse

Strategy discourse	Category	Official discourse (APF)	International discourse (TI)	Protest discourse (AF)
Referential	Causes of corruption	Actions of ‘negligent’ officials that spend public money under conditions of budget economy	Lack of the state’s political will, weak collaboration with international civil society in fighting against corruption	Corrupt political elites appropriating public goods
Legitimation	Values, principles of activity	Patriotism, efficiency, implementation of the national anti-corruption policy	Professionalism, political independence, using international ‘pills’ for fighting against corruption	Combating the corrupt authority, mobilisation for protest actions, public support
Topoi	Relations with the state in fighting against corruption	Collaboration, assistance by using administrative resources in working with local authorities	Attempts of dialogue, watchdog activity, supporting local activism, pressure from the state (foreign agent)	Confrontation, political opposition, unmasking corrupt officials

Source: Author

Every organisation positions itself as a ‘real’ anti-corruption actor by using specific arguments for this role (Table 3). APF presents itself as a state assistant in fighting against corrupt regional and local officials and points out the efficiency of this work. TI is present themselves as a team of Think Tanks and representatives of international anti-corruption movement and insist on a hard-day-to-day work for changing values and building a system of check and balances with the state. AF criticises a high-level of the Russian

authority's corrupt behaviour, their incapability to fight against corruption, and tries to mobilise people for protest activity. However, open confrontation with the state significantly limits the impact of its investigations.

The main differences in the three types of anti-corruption discourse are based on the main forms of relations with the state: collaboration or even merging, attempts of dialogue, and opposition (Table 3). However, this triad is unbalanced. The state prefers to imitate civil society participation in fighting against corruption by using quasi-nongovernmental institutions modelled on civil society organisations and put aside independent or international NGOs.

Table 4. Main oppositions of anti-corruption discourse

Type of the discourse	Positive self-presentation	Negative presentation of others
Official discourse (APF)	Public activists acting on behalf of the President	Neglecting regional or local officials
	Patriotic movement	Foreign agents (e.g. TI)
	Constructive, effective anti-corruption work	Destructive, subversive activity (TI, AF)
International discourse (TI)	Using internationally elaborated effective tools (anti-corruption "pill")	Limitation of international organisations' activity by the state
	Independence from the politics in anti-corruption work	Politically oriented activity (APF, AF)
	Professionalism, scientific base of investigations	Lack of hard evidence in investigations (AF)
	Hard day-to-day work with data	Populism, unjustified heroism (AF)
Protest discourse (AF)	Revealing truth about corruption among the high level authority	Falsification of official information, restriction of social and protest activism (public authorities)
	The bottom-up oppositional movement on behalf of people that suffer from corruption	Stealing goods from citizens by corrupt officials and their inner circles
	Domestic donations from supporters	International (TI) or public sponsoring (APF)
	Effective honest investigations sparking public outcry	Ineffective spending public money for anti-corruption work, imitation of anti-corruption activity (APF)

Source: Author

The main oppositions of anti-corruption discourse are presented in Table 4. They show the lack of dialogue between the main anti-corruption agents.

The official position is more radical in these relations: it perceives other players as enemies that threaten internal and external security. In 2011, the Chairman of the Government and the Head of state-linked party "United Russia" Dmitry Medvedev shared information about an address with the party's activists, and said: "Do not give it [fighting against corruption] away to opposition" (Medvedev 2011). The representatives of the "official" ACS show off their support from the state authority and distinguish themselves from the so-called "non-system opposition" that uses anti-corruption mottos for their political interests or even anti-state efforts. They present themselves as public controllers acting on behalf of the state. Discourse also does not demonstrate a developed mechanism of interaction between organisations, which does not enhance democratic principles in the country.

6. Conclusion

These three parts of the civil society present different agents of the relations on the Russian internal and external arenas. Anti-corruption discourse presents the state's intention to monopolise fighting and prevention of corruption, and to leave all other players behind the scene. A demonstrative example could be the anti-corruption organisations that are "more or less politically oriented" (Holloway 2002, 16), and involved in different political relationships. Corruption is one of the issues that have been raised lately as sensitive and crucial for international and national interests. The anti-corruption issue has become a powerful solution for preserving social capital and social hegemony for different sorts of actors.

This research demonstrates the tendency of a "not successful transition" to democracy in Russia over the recent years resulting in creating "marionette" organisations (Cook and Vinogradova 2006, 34) or "uncivil society" (Cheskin and March 2015, 263) that are entitled to be a flagman of anti-corruption work. The state's restrictive activity against all bottom-up anti-corruption movements reduces the possibility of development of the system of checks and balances in curbing corruption and public accountability in the Russian society.

The situation with Russian anti-corruption civil society is not unique. In some post-soviet and transitional countries, anti-corruption movements and organisations struggle for good governance and accountability, too. Researchers associate these problems with insufficient concreteness of anticorruption projects, low popularity of domestic organisations, insufficient trust to international NGOs, complications in building coalitions with governments, etc. (Mungiu-Pippidi 2010; Moroff and Schmidt-Pfister 2010).

In some Balkan and Caucasian countries, “it is quite alarming to find out that very corrupt governments are the main sponsors of chief anticorruption organisations”. (Mungiu-Pippidi 2010, 24).

At the same time, the significant success in creating civic culture in the post-soviet space is confirmed by people’s actions against corrupt governments and their decisions by ACS’ support. With the beginning of democratic reforms, civil society in many post-communist countries (e.g. Poland and Latvia) actively cooperates with governmental structures and with anti-corruption bodies, and tries to build coalitions with state and business institutes (Gephart 2009). In developed countries (e.g. Sweden, Germany), such coalitions take the form of “policy networks” that discuss and adopt anti-corruption regulations. In the case of Russia, impact of civil society’s anti-corruption activity is low, moreover, because of the state’s reluctance to build relations with different types of anti-corruption agents as well as organisations’ unwillingness to collaborate with each other, the civil society has to be involved into the vertical power relations with the state instead to be its partner and controller. In the situation of weak civil society and rule of law, the government define, which organisations will be allowed to fight against corruption. These “marionette” organisations assist the government to pursue its own policy beyond any international and domestic movements. As a result, the civil society’s role “is to monitor and control society, instead of doing so to the state” (Cheskin and March 2015, 263-264). It is very good demonstrated in our study by All Russian People’s Front’s anti-corruption investigations that are aimed at regional authorities and small public enterprises only. Their strategies as the controllers on behalf of the state usually enjoy success, in contrast to real civil society organisations that criticize the big political and business players. Thus, the state’s battle against protest movements and western influence has turned into paradoxical ‘anti-anti-corruption’ struggle against ‘real’ civil society organisations.

Our research has shown that TI and AF admit limitations of their activity and pressure from the state that ignores freedom of expression and rules of law by stigmatizing them as representatives of “foreign agent” and ‘unsystematic’ opposition. At the same time, they do not present themselves as abandoned outcasts. Everyone keeps acting in accordance with the traditions of ACS: raising awareness, research and advocacy. TI focuses on depoliticization and professionalism, AF – on political opposition and domestic public support. In transitional countries, the current situation with Russian ACS would be perceived as a normal way to democratization and to gradual development of “anti-corruption consensus”. In Russia, such optimistic future can be arguable due to growing totalitarian tendencies,

defiance of international anti-corruption practices and standards, and suppression of pluralism in public life.

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