

# THE STATE AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION. THE EVOLUTION OF STATEHOOD: EARLY STATE – DEVELOPED STATE – MATURE STATE<sup>1</sup>

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Despite the fact that the state is one of the most studied institutions in society, many issues in the theory of state evolution remain controversial and, in some respects, unresolved or insufficiently explored, including such fundamental questions as: What is the state as such? When and at what level of societal development did it emerge? What main stages of evolution has it undergone as a form of social organization? In particular, the problem of the evolution of statehood, and the possibilities and conditions for the transition from one stage of statehood to the next, have been insufficiently explored. Accordingly, the causes of the rise and decline of ancient, medieval, and modern states have not been adequately studied theoretically within the context of social evolution. This article attempts to outline the general line of evolutionary development of statehood. This article presents a theory that explains the evolution of the state and statehood, as well as the conditions for the transition from one stage of statehood to a higher one. The theory covers all stages of political evolution: from the beginning of politogenesis to modern states and supranational entities. It reveals characteristics that distinguish pre-state polities from early states. Political anthropology and social theory often attempt to “modernize” ancient and medieval states by ascribing characteristics of modern states to them. On the other hand, Henri J.M. Claessen and Petr Skalnik’s popular theory distinguishes only two main stages of statehood: the early state and the mature state, thereby overlooking the states of the industrial era. Our theory proposes a three-stage scheme: early state – developed state – mature state. This article describes in detail the criteria for each stage type, variations within each type, and characteristics

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of the transitions from one type to another. A basic definition of the state and the definitions of early, developed, and mature states are provided.

**Keywords:** state, early state, developed state, mature state, pre-state polity, early state analogue, chiefdom, politogenesis, stategenesis, sovereignty, world order.

## 1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

This article presents a theoretical framework that reveals the logic of the evolution of the state and statehood. This theory covers all stages of political evolution, from pre-state polities to modern states. It describes the primary politogenesis, which leads to the emergence of early states and their analogues in the form of alternative types of polities. The following evolutionary types of statehood are distinguished: early, developed, and mature states, and there are provided their characteristics. Due to the extensive nature of the presented theory, it is impossible to provide a complete and grounded analysis of many important aspects in this article (for more details, see: Grinin L.E. 2004, 2008, 2008a, 2009, 2012, 2017; Grinin A.L. 2019, 2019a; Grinin, Korotayev 2012).

## 2. ON THE STAGES OF STATEHOOD EVOLUTION

Before analyzing the evolutionary stages of statehood, it should be noted that political anthropology lacks a universally accepted definition of the state, which creates significant difficulties and renders the discussion less productive when each participant draws their own understanding of what constitutes a state. For this article, we will use our own definition of the state. It serves as a foundational framework and allows us to construct a system of definitions for the evolutionary types of state, including early, developed, and mature states.

**The state** is a category designating a system of specialized institutions, organs, and rules that secure internal and external political life of a society; this system is an organization for maintaining power, administration, and order, separated from the population that must possess the following characteristics: a) sovereignty (autonomy); b) supremacy, legitimacy, and the reality of power within a defined territory and a set of people; c) the ability to coerce its subjects/citizens to fulfill its demands, as well as alter relationships and norms.

This definition is the basis on which we provide a system of definitions for stadial types of state.

When analyzing the development of statehood within historical process they usually distinguish two main stages: the **early** state and the **mature** state. This division is undoubtedly rational and productive. It is no wonder

that many scholars directly or indirectly support this approach and took part in the elaboration of *the early state* project (Claessen, Skalník 1978a, 1981; Claessen et al. 1985; Claessen, Velde van de 1987, 1987a, 1991; Claessen, Oosten 1996). However, Claessen and Skalník limited their scheme of the development of statehood to the evolution of only *pre-capitalist non-industrial* states (Claessen, Skalník 1978, 1978a, 1978c, 1981). Consequently, the concept of the **early – mature** states needs important additions. The reasons for this are as follows:

1. The transition to a new stage of state development is impossible without considerable changes in production system. On the other hand, revolutionary changes in production, in their turn, will sooner or later require profound changes in the structure of the state. It would be more than strange to assume that the industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries did not bring about major changes in the organization of the state. Meanwhile, the scheme of the *early – mature* state in no way reflects these changes.
2. If according to the logic of Claessen-Skalník theory the first mature states, according to the widespread view, emerged already in ancient times (in Egypt) or at the turn of our era (in China)<sup>2</sup>, then, how should we classify the European states of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, not to mention the modern states? Should they also be considered as mature states or already as super-mature ones?
3. The European states of the 19<sup>th</sup> century differed greatly from the complex, politically centralized monarchies of the late antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period (which are themselves already clearly superior to early states) in a number of other characteristics, particularly in the level and culture of governance, development of law, and relationship between the state and society<sup>3</sup>.

Consequently, taking into account the obvious differences between industrial and pre-industrial states, it becomes obvious that it is necessary to distinguish not two, but three stages in the development of statehood. Therefore, we came to the conclusion that it is necessary to “insert” the stage of a *developed state* between the early and mature states. This would create not two main stages of statehood development – the early and mature states – but three: 1) the *early state*; 2) the *developed state*; 3) the *mature state*. So, we had to significantly refine the concept

<sup>2</sup> In any case, in the articles of the volume “The Early State” (Claessen, Skalník 1978b) on Egypt and China (Janssen 1978: 213; Pokora 1978: 198–199), the early state in Egypt corresponds to the period of the Old Kingdom (before 2150 BC), and the era of the early state in China is interpreted as the period before the formation of the Qin Empire (before 221 BC).

<sup>3</sup> Some authors, relying on their own understanding, as well as on Max Weber’s definition of the state (Weber 1971), generally believe that generally speaking, the state can only be discussed in relation to European countries of the Modern era, starting in the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries (see, e.g.: Belkov 1995: 178–182). Andrew Vincent (Vincent 1987) also speaks of states starting only from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

of statehood evolution and redefine the key characteristics of each stage. As a result, the scheme of statehood development looks as follows:

- a) the *early*, insufficiently centralized states with an underdeveloped social and class structure, and often an underdeveloped administrative and political structure;
- b) the already established centralized states of the late antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Modern era with a clearly manifested class-estate division;
- c) the states of the Industrial Age, in which estates disappeared, bourgeois and proletarian classes emerged, nations formed, and representative democracy or modern-type autocratic bureaucracy spread<sup>4</sup>.

Within each stage, one can naturally distinguish the sub-stages of the *initial*, *typical*, and *transitional states*. The basic characteristics of these stages of statehood are determined by the middle sub-stage of each stage (i.e., the typical early, typical developed, and typical mature states, respectively). The fact is that, in the first sub-stage (the *initial* state), a polity still has many vestiges and elements from the previous stage, while in the third sub-stage (the *transitional* state), many institutions become already overripe, and signs of a higher stage of statehood emerge.

The main differences between early, developed, and mature states are as follows.

**Early states** differ greatly from each other in many characteristics, especially in the degree of development of centralization, governance, taxation, and legal system. But if we search for similarities between them, in terms of their general differences from states at a higher stage of evolution, an early state is always an *incomplete* state (*organizationally* and *socially*). This incompleteness refers to relations between state and society. See below for details.

**A developed state** is a *formed* and *established* state with almost all the above-mentioned characteristics of a state (including a professional administrative and repressive apparatus, taxation, and territorial division), and it is *centralized*. Thus, many features that may be found in early states but may also be absent, become obligatory in developed states.

The developed state has a much more targeted and active influence on social processes in society. It is closely connected not only with the peculiarities of the social and corporate structure of society, but also institutionalizes these peculiarities in its political and legal institutions. In this sense, it can be considered an *estate-corporate* state. Naturally, different countries reach this stage at different times. See below for more details.

**A mature state** is already the result of the development of capitalism and the Industrial revolution, that is, it has a fundamentally different

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<sup>4</sup> Claessen fully acknowledged the validity of this classification. He wrote: "We greatly appreciate the way in which Grinin augmented and improved our work. With this classification a serious gap in the evolution of the state is closed" (Claessen et al. 2008: 248).

production base. Other differences between the mature state and its predecessors are also very significant. The mature state is based on an established or emerging nation with all its characteristics. That is why such state is more developed in organisational and legal terms, and it necessarily has professional bureaucracy with certain characteristics, and a clear mechanism for transferring or rotating power, as well as a much more developed apparatus for coercion and control, and generally more developed and specialized management institutions.

The very first mature states appeared at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### 3. THE EARLY STATE

#### 3.1. Some characteristics of the Early State

The above-mentioned lack of a generally accepted definition of the state in political anthropology is combined with the fact that there is also no unity in approaches to what actually distinguishes early states from non-state societies, primarily from complex chiefdoms. In academic literature, it is noted that in many cases the differences between complex chiefdoms and inchoate early states are hardly noticeable (Kochakova 1999: 10; Kradin 2008, 2011; Earle 2017; Webb 1975), that they virtually overlap each other in size and complexity level (Webb 1974: 369; Skalník 2017), and that the chiefdoms often prove to be troublesome for scholars because of the disagreement about whether to classify a particular polity as a complex chiefdom or as an early state (Smith 1985: 97). For more on this issue, see Grinin (Grinin L.E. 2017). From this, we have drawn the important conclusion that it is impossible to distinguish stadial differences between complex chiefdoms and a number of other non-state, but fairly large and complex, polities and political entities, since they are at the same stage of development as early states, but differ in their developmental trajectories. Due to the limited scope of this article, we will limit our discussion to a brief summary (for details see: Grinin L.E. 2004, 2017; Grinin, Korotayev 2012, 2017; see also discussion on Robert Carneiro's theory in: Carneiro 2012, 2012a; a number of articles in the special issue of the journal *Social Evolution & History*, 2012, vol. 11, No 2; see: Lozny 2017; Gibson 2017; Kradin 2017; Carneiro et al. 2017).

To address the above-defined theoretical problem, a two-stage methodological approach is necessary. First, it makes sense to divide all pre-state societies and polities into two groups: *stadially* pre-states and *historically* pre-states. The former include those that, given their available characteristics, could never have become even the most primitive states. The latter include those that already possess the necessary parameters (the scope and level of socio-cultural complexity) and, therefore, under favorable conditions, can become a state. However, since these societies

lack certain specific prerequisites for state formation, they develop along their own trajectories and become analogues of early states.

However, as we have shown, many analogues differ from stadially pre-state polities in the same characteristics. Therefore, another operation is needed: to identify specific features and attributes that distinguish the early state from its analogues. These will no longer be stadial, but rather administrative-political characteristics of single-level polities. We have identified such features that distinguish early states from their analogues (Grinin L.E. 2004, 2017). They are:

- 1) special properties of supreme authority;
- 2) new principles of governance;
- 3) unconventional and new forms of regulating social life;
- 4) redistribution of power, that is, the ability to redistribute authority through the center.

Thus, these four features mean that the state differs from its analogues in the following aspects:

- greater complexity of administrative organization;
- greater transformative activity;
- ability to enforce the fulfillment of its demands and change relations and norms according to its objectives and interests;
- greater reliance on formal, legal, administrative, that is, non-traditional grounds;
- the principles by which people are recruited to serve the state may be different, but they are never limited only to the special position of a person in the kinship system<sup>5</sup>.

Based on the above, we can conclude that **the early state** is *a category used to designate a special form of political organization of a relatively large and complex agrarian society (or a group of societies/territories) that determines its external policy and partly its social order; it is a power organization: a) that possesses supremacy and sovereignty (or, at least, autonomy); b) that is able to coerce the ruled to fulfil its demands; to alter important relationships and to introduce new norms, as well as to redistribute resources; c) that is based (entirely or mostly) on such principles that are different from the kinship ones.*

In this definition, we have not specified that the presence of such characteristics as administrative and repressive apparatus, taxes, and a territorial division are essential for an early state. The fact is that in many,

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<sup>5</sup> Moreover, such a state can be different, not necessarily monarchical, and especially not just with a sacred king, as Claessen and Oosten believe (Claessen, Oosten 1996; Claessen 2016). The form of the early state could be democratic, and in different forms of democracy – popular or aristocratic (Grinin L.E. 2008b), although opponents of this idea tried to declare them non-state on the basis of the fact that Athens and the Roman Republic were non-monarchical states (see: Berent 2004, 2006; Shtaerman 1989; for our arguments about deficiency of such an approach see: Grinin L.E. 2008b; see also: Hansen 1998, 2002; Van der Vliet 2005).

perhaps even most, early states, these characteristics are not fully evident (see below for more details). However, in our view, this is far from a “deficiency” of early states, but rather entirely natural for this stage of state development. Those early states that have all these characteristics are more likely exceptions among early states than the rule, distinguished by their development. Therefore, in our opinion, these three characteristics in total are essential for characterizing the next evolutionary type of state — the developed one.

### 3.2. The early state as an incomplete state

So the analysis of the characteristics of the early state suggests that, broadly speaking, it is **incomplete**. *This incompleteness* generally means that the system of relationships between the state and society contains certain constraints that hinder the further stadial evolution of early states. This limitation implies *a connection between the state and society, which retrospectively (from the perspective of the evolutionary potential of a system), appears inadequate compared to what we see in higher stages of development in similar systems*. It is not surprising that many early states never achieve development, and those that do typically undergo such a transition through severe crises and catastrophes, causing a profound restructuring of the entire system.

This limitation manifests itself in various ways. Sometimes, the political form of an early state appears to be loosely connected to society. In such cases, the state superstructure was, figuratively speaking, almost indifferent to whom it governed. Take Central Asia, for example, where borders remained undefined for thousands of years and constantly shifted depending on purely military circumstances and the luck of the subsequent conqueror (this was also very typical of the Middle East as a whole and North Africa). Consider medieval Europe from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, when vast territories were easily passed from one ruler to another, from power to power through marriages and divorces of rulers, and through inheritance.

Europe of that time exemplified a political system with a weak administrative structure. However, there were instances when society and the state became “misaligned” and “incongruent”, and when political power had a developed administrative and bureaucratic apparatus that could be relatively easily superimposed across different territories. This was the case in Mesopotamia, where states often shifted borders, sometimes expanding and sometimes disintegrating, and dynasties changed repeatedly. Yet the principles of statehood remained essentially the same. Bureaucracy could easily build itself over any territorial configuration.

But in some early states, this limitation, on the contrary, manifested itself precisely in the fact that the connection between the state and society was too close, meaning that a particular form of government was only suitable for a specific society. As a result, it proved incapable

of necessary qualitative transformations. A vivid example is the organization of Greek city-states, which failed to transform even when faced with the loss of independence<sup>6</sup>.

Based on the above and many other facts, I have identified two main types of discrepancies between the political and social structures of ancient and medieval states.

Quite often, early states had weak administrative and repressive apparatuses. Sometimes this weakness was combined with primitive social stratification, as, for example, in the barbarian kingdoms of Europe at the beginning of the Middle Ages. But it also happened that estate-class relations were quite clearly defined, while the administrative apparatus was weak or “non-bureaucratic”, as can be seen in Athens, Rome, and other states, where professional administrators either were absent altogether (positions were filled by rotation or by lot), or they were unpaid and elected for short terms (see: Grinin L.E. 2008a; Hansen 2002).

Often, such “incomplete” early states merely built themselves into society, limiting themselves to military and redistributive tasks, collecting tribute, duties and taxes, without penetrating into the depths of life. For example, Ancient Rus’, many nomadic states, and a number of African states were such states for a long time. A young power would often nourish a powerful stratum of new nobility, which ceased to respect the state that fostered it and began to shape social processes to meet its own interests. A striking example is the titled nobility of medieval Europe, which converted allotments, granted in exchange for services into private property, enslaved peasants, deprived kings of taxpayers and warriors, and ultimately reduced kingdoms to mere nominal entities. Somewhat similar processes took place in many other countries since ancient times (e.g., about China during the Western and then Eastern Zhou eras, starting from the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC see: Vasiliev 1993: 187–189; see also: Kryukov 1974: 14–15). It is no coincidence that there are supporters of theories of “eternal feudalism”, and the presence of feudal formations in antiquity.

It is not surprising that the *typical* stage of an early state often turns out to be a period of feudal fragmentation. Therefore, it is quite reasonable to assert that “political fragmentation in the era of early feudalism was not a sign of a state’s weakness, but rather its natural state under those circumstances: it was a hierarchical alliance between vassals and lords based on a system of personal connections, the predominant form of social relationships in that society” (Gurevich 1970: 60).

In small (and to some extent medium-sized) states the size of their administrative apparatus was typically underdeveloped and disconnected from the population. After all, at such a scale, many issues were effectively

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<sup>6</sup> Such social and political instability was characteristic not only of Greek city-states, but also of medieval city-states in medieval Italy. It was not for nothing that they said that “Florentine law lasts from evening till morning, and Veronese law from morning till noon” (Batkin 1970: 240).

resolved by means other than state orders or control (e.g., by private individuals, through the direct expression of the will of the population; or through the involvement of tribal, professional, or social groups in certain matters).

Large early imperial states that emerged through conquest inevitably disintegrated or declined sharply in size. Empires rarely remained powerful for more than a hundred years. The repeated rise and fall of Assyria in the 13<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC is a clear example of this (see: Sadaev 1979). But even when a state was militarily strong enough to hold provinces within its orbit for a long time, it was usually not developed enough to truly integrate its various components. There was an imbalance between the statehood of the center and its outlying regions. States such as the Roman and Carthaginian republics, for example, were not integrated systems, but rather conglomerates of lands. They maintained a system of special ties between the center and each people, each region or territory. Some enjoyed more rights and others had fewer rights; some were treated almost equally to the victors, while others were treated very harshly.

**The second possible variant of early state incompleteness is the opposite of the first and is found less frequently.** Such states had a developed bureaucratic administrative apparatus. However, it coexisted with an underdeveloped social structure and ethnic characteristics, operating in a society without sufficiently clear social stratification (i.e., clearly defined classes or estates, or more or less mature land ownership relations). Moreover, it was precisely this excessive administrative apparatus that could hinder the emergence of a more developed and stable social system.

This was the case, for example, in Sumer during the Third Dynasty of Ur (21<sup>st</sup> century BC); in Egypt during the Old Kingdom; and in the Inca Empire. Therefore, we can consider that in these states, bureaucracy, for all its organizational significance, acts to some extent as an external superstructure over society, similar to how a military nobility and its retinues supersedes it in other states. Only the methods of exploitation and influence over society differ among these elites.

While weak governments would sometimes fail to sufficiently mobilize a country's resources, hampered by arbitrary actions of nobles and governors, this early bureaucratic state, on the contrary, could suppress society, attempting to restructure it entirely to serve its own purposes. The state thus assumed the role of primary administrator of resources, organizing and overseeing production and distribution. Such state excessiveness arose primarily in subsistence economies, as was the case, for example, in the Inca Empire. However, obsessive "accounting and control" could also occur in societies with certain levels of commodity-money relations, if tribute in kind predominated in the state. After all, the collection, storage, transportation, and distribution of goods are more difficult and heavier than dealing with money.

And the more relationships were regulated, the more control the state sought, replacing quite effective non-state traditional (e.g., family, community, religious) and market mechanisms. Therefore, the rulers themselves did not consider the state apparatus and its functions to be redundant. On the contrary, such a totalitarian state could experience a need for ever more controllers and supervisors, believing that its problems arose precisely from insufficient accounting. For example, one of the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur in Mesopotamia, Shulgi (2093–2046 BC), issued a personal decree ordering to enrol more children to schools, including those from low-ranking and non-official families (see: Yemelyanov 2003: 85–86), since there was a chronic shortage of officials to oversee everything. It is not surprising that the kings of this dynasty left behind the largest number of written documents (including clay tablets), which recorded everything up to the dove dished out<sup>7</sup>.

Therefore, we discuss the redundancy of such isolated early states from an evolutionary perspective, as these models ultimately proved ineffective and reached a dead end. Future developments demonstrated that monitoring everything was an impossible task for the state. It was no coincidence that, with the development of a market economy, attempts to create “state communism” ceased, although relapses into total state control did occur later, for example, in Ptolemaic Egypt.

## 4. THE DEVELOPED STATE

### 4.1. Preliminary remarks on the analysis methodology

We should clarify that some early states might have some of the characteristics of developed states (such as writing, a professional bureaucratic and punitive apparatus, codified law, etc.), but they do not have *the full set* of minimum characteristics of developed states (see below about this). For a state to qualify as developed, it must possess all these characteristics. Therefore, they must be compared on the basis of their possession of this **full system of minimum characteristics**.

As already stated, I sought to highlight the key features when comparing early and developed states, based on the middle stage of their development (i.e., the *typical* state of each stage); whenever possible, I ignore any remaining archaic elements or phenomena characteristic of a higher stage. After all, in the final stages of each stage of statehood (the *transitional* state), various aspects emerge that are no longer characteristic of it. This indicates preparation for the transition to the next stage. On the other hand, during the initial phase of any stage of statehood, many features from the previous stage remain. Therefore, depending on the task, one can

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<sup>7</sup> The outstanding level of the state bureaucratization in the Third Dynasty of Ur in Mesopotamia gives some arguments to regard this state not only as a transitional early state but also as incomplete analogue of an initial developed state.

emphasize both the similarities and the continuity of the process and its key moments. For example, the Roman Republic under Octavian Augustus (late 1<sup>st</sup> century BC — early 1<sup>st</sup> century CE) grew into an empire. It is logical to consider this period as the beginning of the Roman state's transformation from early to developed. It is easy to point out the enormous similarities between the late Republic and the early Principate, as well as the important differences between these eras, which would later become increasingly evident — that is, the emergence of imperial power. But it was only in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD that the Roman Empire clearly and vividly demonstrated the features of a developed state: "...a hierarchical system of estates and the hereditary attachment of people to their jobs and status, a vast and ramified police-bureaucratic apparatus, the 'theocratic' power of the emperor, and the existence of state religion that was compulsory for all subjects and sanctioned the official ideology" (Shtaerman 1968: 659; see also: Petrushevsky 2003).

#### 4.2. General characteristics of a developed state

First of all, it should be noted that a developed state is more organically integrated with society; more precisely, the state becomes its natural form, although the process of adaptation could be uneven and painful. The path to this was long and difficult, as such a state was the result of numerous transformations, coups, disintegrations and consolidations of lands, during which the most successful relationships between state and socio-ethnic structures were selected. For such a state to emerge, on the one hand, significant progress was needed in its political, administrative, and legal structures, as well as in its ideology. On the other hand, it was necessary to achieve a sufficient level of ethnic, social, economic, and cultural development so that a society could become sufficiently socially and ethnically consolidated.

It is extremely important that a developed state is not only closely linked to the characteristics of the social and corporate structure of society, consolidating these characteristics in political institutions, but also influences social processes in a much more targeted and active way.

**A developed state is centralized and mature state** with all the attributes of a state. Such a state emerges through the long-term development of governance and administrative mechanisms, the expansion and professionalization of administrative and other structures, and adaptation of the apparatus to specific tasks. Therefore, many features that may have been present but also absent in early states become mandatory in developed states: a professional administrative and repressive apparatus, taxes, territorial division, and the existence of written law.

Based on the above, we may conclude that **a developed state** is *a category describing the form of political organization of a civilized society (group of societies); it is a centralized organization of power, administration, coercion, and the maintenance of social order is separated from the population*

*in the form of a system of special institutions, positions (titles), organs, laws (rules), possessing: a) sovereignty; b) supremacy and legitimacy and the reality of power within a certain territory and circle of persons; c) the ability to change relationships and norms.*

#### **4.3. Differences between a developed state and an early one**

Below I describe the minimal characteristics identified for a developed state compared to an early state. I tried to make these characteristics more comprehensive, so each characteristic consists of a number of key points.

**A. A developed state has more attributes of statehood, which are also more developed.**

It already clearly and systematically exhibits all the characteristics of a state: a distinct apparatus of governance and coercion, separated from the population, taxes, and a developed territorial administrative division. And beyond this, written law is also a necessary element, along with a distinct written culture of governance, accounting, and control. Such a state cannot be content with a militia, but usually maintains a regular army. It has a more developed system of duties. Archaic duties and revenues (tribute, gifts, poliudie, labor, income from military plunder, or contributions) disappear or play a subordinate role, and taxes become more regular.

**B. A developed state is an estate-corporate state.**

The social structure begins to shift towards being represented by larger social groups rather than a multitude of smaller social strata or socio-territorial units (such as independent cities and temples with special privileges). Ethnically defined peoples are also evident rather than tribal conglomerates or the coexistence of a mass of small affined peoples. As a result, society becomes relatively consolidated in social terms. This consolidation of classes is associated with a reduction in isolation and disintegration of regions and territories, economic unification of society, and closer contacts between representatives of upper classes. However, it is worth mentioning the state's activity in this regard, which aims to legally establish classes and generally make society more rigid and stable and reducing or channel social mobility.

The state, in turn, both in its organization and policies, increasingly clearly reflects the characteristics of its social (and ethnic) composition, actively shaping the social structure of society and acting as a mediator between estates and corporations. The process of a more precise delineation of titles, ranks, and official positions may also occur (in the latter case, especially where the ruling class overlaps with the class of officials ("state-class", as defined by Marat Cheshkov (Cheshkov 1967: 243–245)).

**C. A developed state is necessarily a centralized state and it is generally more stable and stronger than early states.**

A developed state cannot be a political conglomerate, as was often the case with early states. It is not simply a union of territories that

disintegrates as soon as the central power weakens. Of course, even developed states can disintegrate, especially in the initial stages, when the process of centralization just begins. But if this type of state continues to develop, it is inevitably associated with a new and often more long-lasting centralization within the same territory. This is explained by the fact that a developed state is formed in a specific territory that is historically prepared materially and culturally for such unity through a common culture, ideology, writing, developed communications, trade, and a certain standardization, including currency, measures, laws, and other factors.

**D. A developed state has a more efficient and systemic economic basis.**

In particular, a developed state, unlike an early one, cannot arise without grain farming or solely on livestock farming. Thus, some early African states emerged on the basis of agriculture where grain crops was absent or did not play a predominant role, rather than other crops: yams, bananas, cassava, groundnuts, and so on (see, e.g.: Bondarenko 2001; Roese, Bondarenko 2003). A developed state needs a domestic market, and cannot be dominated by subsistence economy, as was the case with some early states (the Inca Empire, Egypt of the Early Kingdom). At least, there must be some development of exchange relationships. There should be not only specialization in crafts, but also emerging economic specialization (albeit weak) among regions, meaning the formation of an integrated economic entity within the state.

**E. Developed state inevitably forms civilized societies.**

While many early states emerged from barbarian societies, developed states inevitably form civilized societies. Therefore, such states only emerge in regions with relatively advanced civilizations, often based on a dominant ethnic group.

**F. The developed state can be defined as upper classes coercive organization.**

The developed state fits much better than the early state with the definition of a coercive (violent) organization created to allow the upper classes to exploit and keep the lower classes in subjection. In many early states, exploitation did not reach a high level (see, e.g.: Trouwborst 1987: 131; Service 1975).

**G. The presence of a new type of state ideology and/or religion.**

The primitive ideas about royal power (mythical ancestors or supernatural qualities of the tsar, etc.) are replaced by a political ideology in the broad sense of the word. A striking example is Confucianism in China (Vasiliev 1993). However, such an ideology often had some religious disguise, such as, for example, the 16<sup>th</sup>-century concept of “Moscow as the Third Rome”. As a result, the state became sacred in many developed states, as was the case in China and other East Asian countries, according to Alexander Martynov (Martynov 1982: 6–7). This often required an alliance between the state and the official church (see, e.g., with regard to some European states: Le Roy Ladurie 2004: 8).

## 5. THE MATURE STATE

### 5.1. General characteristics

A mature state, in my conception, is already the result of the development of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution, and has a fundamentally different production base. Other differences between a mature state and its predecessors are also very significant. This state is based on an established or emerging nation with all its characteristics. Therefore, it is more developed in organizational and legal terms and necessarily has a professional bureaucracy, as well as a clear mechanism and a prescribed procedure for the legitimate transfer of power. As a rule, constitutions and separation of power are created, and the role of law, especially civil law, increases. In general, legal and judicial systems reach such a level of development and sophistication in mature states that it is difficult to compare them to previous eras. As a result, the most important function of the mature state becomes maintaining not only social, but also ordinary legal order, which was often ignored in developed states. Due to the increasing role of property relations and the establishment of equal citizenship before the law and the abolition of class advantages, the mature state is gradually transformed from a class-estate into a purely class-divided state.

Based on the above said, a **mature state** is *a category used to describe the inherent form of political organization in an economically developed and culturally advanced society in the form of a system of bureaucratic and other specialized institutions, authorities, and laws that ensure the external and internal political life. It is an organization of power, administration, and maintenance of order and social or other inequality, separated from the population and possessing: a) sovereignty; b) supremacy, legitimacy, and reality of power within a certain territory and group of people; c) a developed apparatus for coercion and control; d) systematic changes in relations and norms.*

It is worth noting that while a developed state is defined as an *intrinsic* form of political organization of society (i.e., although it is necessary for maintaining social order, nevertheless, if not for the threat of invasions, the main peasant population could, in principle, do without a state, and especially without a large state), then a mature state is defined as an inherent form of political organization, that is, it is a form without which a society (and the population) can hardly exist.

Certain autonomy is also emerging for the apparatus and the army, which increasingly act as an abstract mechanism for serving society. All this creates the foundation for the formation of civil society.

In terms of the relationship between state and society, and between the state and the individual, we believe it is necessary to discuss the emergence of a new type of ideology, which can be generally defined as **civic**, since it explained the relationship between the individual and the state

from the perspective of a citizen, who has equal rights and responsibilities under law, living in a distinct national-state community. This civic ideology, as a result of revolutions, reforms, and the spread of education, gradually replaced the sacred-traditional ideology of the developed state with its notions of sanctity of monarchical power and the inviolability of the class-based social order. **Nationalism** can be considered the most universal type of civic ideology. Other influential ideologies of the classical capitalism era were liberalism, democracy, revolutionism, and reformism. In later periods, imperialism (as an ideology), communism, fascism, and anti-communism emerged. As a result, the criteria for the state's dignity changed. Now it is not the pomp of the court that matters, but rather the economic power of the nation and a more just social order, and also the standard of living of the population that gradually become the criteria for the level of a state's progressiveness.

In a mature state, the institutions of governance and the apparatus of coercion and control are both more developed and specialized, while in a developed state these bodies and institutions may not always have clearly defined functions. On the contrary, both higher and local bodies often had multifunctional and at the same time were vague in their tasks<sup>8</sup>. And bureaucracy, in the true sense of the word, was generally concentrated only in certain spheres, different for different countries (e.g., tax collection or court systems), but it could be absent and in other areas of life especially at the local government level (for France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century see, e.g.: Malov 1994: 140). Even in China, the bureaucratic apparatus did not penetrate to the lowest structures, and therefore, at the local level, the officials' functions largely fell on representatives of the scholarly-officials, shenshi (see, e.g.: Nikiforov 1977: 211–213).

France can be considered a mature state since the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (the reign of Louis XIV). This fact alone demonstrates the scope of changes in the country's governance that had occurred by that time. By the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there were approximately 8,000 officials in France; by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, their number had grown to 46,000 (Koposov 1993: 180). England can be considered a mature state since the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, that is, sometime after the "Glorious" Revolution, when a new system of public administration began to take shape: constitutional monarchy, a two-party system, and a single-party

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<sup>8</sup> For example, in 16<sup>th</sup>-century France (as was the case in Russia and other countries during similar eras), there existed a "narrow" royal council, whose composition was undefined and whose functions were quite vague. The same can be said about the representatives of the old administration — bailiffs, seneschals, provosts, and governors — with "their extremely vague administrative, judicial and military-administrative competence" (Skazkin 1972: 170–171). "Outside the court and government, classical monarchy was characterized only by a partially and sometimes weakly centralized system of administrative governance" (Le Roy Ladurie 1996). The situation began to change only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, especially under Richelieu.

government. Prussia — since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in both military and civil bureaucratic administration, it had set standards for all of Europe (Parsons 1971). Russia — from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that is, with Alexander I's reforms with the participation of Mikhail Speransky. Japan — since the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (after the Meiji Reforms). The United States became such a state after the era known as “Jacksonian democracy” after President Andrew Jackson (1829–1837), when a two-party system emerged and voting qualifications were abolished.

## 5.2. The main features of a mature state

I have identified the following characteristics of mature states in the middle stages of this phase (typical mature states).

**A. This is an already industrialized or industrializing state** in which a unified economic organism is emerging linked by convenient communications. At the same time, concern for its functioning (transportation, communications, foreign markets) and development gradually becomes an increasingly important task for the state. Military needs also play a significant role.

**B. This is a state with a sufficiently high level of administrative organization** and a developed system of laws or state regulations (as was the case in socialist countries).

**C. A mature state is based on a nation (nations)**, and therefore can only exist in a society with a common national (or supranational) culture. The state concerns with influencing this culture, including control over language, religion, education, etc. Therefore, nationalism (or another ideology of the superiority of the inhabitants of a given state, e.g., their special progressiveness, revolutionary spirit, religiosity, democracy, historicity, etc.) is always present in the state ideology.

**D. This is a class-corporate state**, in which industrial classes gradually begin to play a dominant role (while the role of estates gradually fades, and the role of property relations and position in the state system / party grows). Since class division is primarily economic (see, e.g.: Weber 1971), rather than legal, organizations and corporations are necessary that would express the interests of individual sections and groups within the class (sometimes the class as a whole). These include various organizations and political parties both for workers (see, e.g.: Bergier 1976) and for the bourgeoisie, as well as other social strata.

**E. Widespread literacy.** If widespread literacy was a rare phenomenon in developed countries and sources of information in the form of books were only available to the upper classes, then, in mature states, already in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it became accessible to the masses and the role of media increased. This led to changes in forms, styles, and directions of governance and government contacts with the people.

#### **F. Finally, a mature state relies on new types of intra-societal ties:**

- material ties — a single economic organism and a single market;
- cultural ties — a unified cultural and informational organism;
- national ties — awareness of national unity and the emergence of new symbols of this unity: the nation, the interests of the nation, and supreme interests;
- cohesion based on ideology: the cult of law, constitution, nation (or the cult of the party, idea, or leader);
- cohesion based on participation in national organizations, corporations (trade unions, political parties, movements), and elections.

### **5.3. Transformation of a mature state in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The stage of the mature state is associated with the formation of classes of capitalists (entrepreneurs) and wage workers (proletariat) and the **creation of a class-corporate state**. For developed European states, this process was completed approximately by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and reached its apogee in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since then this structure has been deteriorating. I have already expressed the idea that the more fully legal equality in human rights is established, the more social classes begin to erode and transform into more fragmented and less cohesive groups: strata, layers, etc. (see: Grinin et al. 2023; Grinin, Korotayev 2024). This is precisely what has been happening in Europe since the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This transformation of a mature state is associated with very rapid changes in production, including increased migration, the creation of assembly-line production, growth of education, emergence of a new service sector, transformation of female wage labor into a mass phenomenon, and other factors (see for some of these examples, e.g.: Dahrendorf 1976).

The most important features of this new social structure are:

- the formation of a so-called middle class, which has gradually become the largest in size (Fischer 1987; Tarkhnishvili A., Tarkhnishvili L. 2013);
- strengthening of indicators of social stratification such as education and increased social mobility (Fischer 1987); accordingly, the share of salaried employees increased significantly;
- increased importance of social legislation and laws to limit polarization in society (high income taxes, inheritance taxes, etc.);
- growing importance of factors that have previously not been leading within the national and state framework (they were, so to speak, important for the lower units of society): gender, age, and professional group characteristics.

These drivers have weakened now, but they have already changed the social structure.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social policy underwent profound changes. **The state gradually transformed from a class-based one into a social**

**one, that is, a state that actively supports the poor and socially vulnerable and limits the growth of inequality.** This process began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and became more pronounced after the First World War and even more so after the Second. In fact, the entire first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the war was a struggle over the most important social laws. Ideologies and views on this matter were dramatically altered in many countries by global socio-economic events, such as revolutions, the example of the USSR, global economic crises, and others. This trend only intensified and developed, until Western European and other developed countries became welfare states (for an account of this dynamics of social development, see: Fischer 1987). Enormous changes have taken place in the field of income redistribution. This has been achieved, in particular, through highly progressive income taxes (Fischer 1987) and social assistance for those who found themselves in difficult circumstances. As a result of the development of social programs, tax deductions have increased significantly compared to the period of classical capitalism (up to 50% or more of personal income).

When the United States and a number of Western European countries became **welfare states and mass consumer societies** in the 1950s and 1960s, this essentially meant that the mature state was acquiring certain uncharacteristic features and evolving into something new.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Since the 1960s, profound changes began in all spheres of life, particularly as a result of the Cybernetic revolution (Grinin, Korotayev 2024). In particular, it is worth noting the increasing role of various social movements in Western countries that are not class-based (student unrest, racial movements, youth movements, women's movements, LGBT movement<sup>9</sup>, "green" movements, consumer organizations and similar movements). Class characteristics are increasingly blurred, due to the so-called dispersion of property (see, e.g.: Dahrendorf 1976), and social structure is increasingly determined not only by property ownership, but also by other parameters, including education, fame, and influence. In my view, all these features, as well as extensive social guarantees provided for the population, are no longer characteristic of a mature state.

There are also other developments that are no longer typical of mature states. Particularly significant among them is a completely new and extremely important phenomenon: the partial renunciation of sovereignty by many countries in terms of determining their internal tax, customs, punitive, and social policies, as well as the right to wage

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<sup>9</sup>This movement is forbidden in Russian Federation.

war, etc.<sup>10</sup> This is due to their voluntary entry into regional and global organizations, recognizing the priority of international law over national law (for more details, see: Grinin L.E. 2012a). The formation of various supranational organizations and their growing importance are also worth noting. The revolution in information technologies and artificial intelligence is transforming and will continue to transform the mature state (see: Grinin, Korotayev 2024). The weakening of the American world order and the intensification of the struggle for a new world order have actually halted this process and even significantly reversed it and globalization (see: Grinin, Korotayev 2023; Grinin A.L. 2025). However, sooner or later, it may resume, albeit within the framework of a new world order.

Thus, many of the current characteristics of Western states cannot be unconditionally attributed to a mature state. Therefore, since the 1960s and 1970s, it seems that the United States and leading European countries – Germany, France, the Nordic and Benelux countries (Japan and some European countries in the 1980s and 1990s) – should be viewed as transitional mature states, in which certain characteristics of future political entities (to a significant extent, although the extent to which these are already supranational and suprastate entities) are maturing. This means that they already exhibit certain characteristics that are not characteristic of the state as an organization (for more details, see: Grinin A.L. 2019). Therefore, it can be assumed that the era of mature states is approaching its end, giving way to a new stage of global political development (Grinin A.L. 2019). Though this will not be a rapid transformation and will take many decades.

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<sup>10</sup> However this trend as well as globalization are rapidly moving back now they greatly influenced on state's institutions.

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**ГОСУДАРСТВО И СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ ЭВОЛЮЦИЯ.  
ЭВОЛЮЦИЯ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОСТИ:  
РАННЕЕ ГОСУДАРСТВО — РАЗВИТОЕ ГОСУДАРСТВО —  
ЗРЕЛОЕ ГОСУДАРСТВО**

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Несмотря на то, что государство является одним из самых изученных институтов общества, многие проблемы теории его эволюции, в том числе такие фундаментальные, как: что такое собственно государство? когда и с какого уровня развития общества оно возникает? какие основные стадии эволюции оно прошло как форма организации общества? — остаются дискуссионными, а в ряде отношений нерешёнными или недостаточно разработанными. В частности, проблемы эволюции государственности, возможностей и условий для перехода от одной стадии государственности к следующей разработаны недостаточно. Соответственно и вопрос о причинах подъёма и упадка государств древности, Средневековья и Нового времени теоретически в масштабах социальной эволюции не исследован в необходимой мере. В настоящей статье сделана попытка наметить общую линию эволюционного развития государственности. Представлена теория, которая объясняет эволюцию государства и государственности, а также условия для перехода от одной стадии государственности к более высокой. Данная теория охватывает все стадии политической эволюции: от начала политогенеза до современных государств и надгосударственных образований. Раскрываются характеристики, которые показывают отличия догосударственных политий от ранних государств. В политической антропологии и социальной теории нередко налицо попытки «модернизировать» древние и средневековые государства, приписывая им черты государств эпохи модерна. С другой стороны, в популярной теории Х.М. Классена и П. Скальника выделяется только две главные стадии государственности:

раннее государство и зрелое государство, — в результате из внимания выпускаются государства эпохи индустриализма. В своей теории мы предлагаем трёхстадийную схему: раннее государство — развитое государство — зрелое государство. В статье подробно описываются критерии каждого стадийного типа государственности, варианты в рамках одного типа и особенности переходов от одного типа к другому. Представлены базовое определение государства и определения раннего, развитого и зрелого государств.

**Ключевые слова:** государство, раннее государство, развитое государство, зрелое государство, догосударственная форма правления, аналог раннего государства, вождество, политогенез, стейтогенез, суверенитет, мировой порядок.

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