On the Stages of the Evolution of Statehood*

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The state has passed along a great evolutionary path, whose analysis is an important task for political and historical anthropology, as well as for various other social sciences. Unfortunately, there are still no generally accepted approaches either to the definition of the state as such or to the definition of polities that can be designated as early states; and moreover, some anthropologists deny this stage of statehood, confusing it, in my view, with complex and super-complex chiefdoms and their analogues (on such approaches see Grinin 2017; see also Kradin 2008, 2011), or consider as non-state entities those polities and poleis that do not fit the characteristics of a developed state, for example, ancient Athens (Berent 2004; see criticism of such approach in Grinin 2008a; see also van der Vliet 2005).

When analyzing the development of statehood, those who recognize the stage of an early state, following Henri J. M. Claessen and Peter Skalník (Claessen and Skalník 1978a), usually distinguish two main stages within the historical process: the *early* state and the *mature* state. This division is undoubtedly rational and productive. However, Claessen and Skalník limited their scheme of the development of statehood to the evolution of only *pre-capitalist non-industrial* states (Claessen and Skalník 1978b: 5). Consequently, the concept of the *early–mature* states needs important additions. The reasons for this are as follows:

1. It would be more than strange to assume that the industrial revolution of the eighteenth – nineteenth 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.

Recommended citation: Grinin L. E. On the Stages of the Evolution of Statehood. *Social Evolution & History*, Vol. 24 No. 2, September 2025, pp. 157–161. DOI: 10.30884/seh/2025.02.12.

2. If 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), then, how should we classify the European states of the eighteenth and nineteenth 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 nineteenth century differed greatly from the complex politically centralized monarchies of the late antiquity and the Middle Ages in a number of other characteristics, particularly in the level and culture of governance, the development of law, and the relationship between the state and society.

Consequently, taking into account the above-mentioned 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. They are:

a) the *early*, insufficiently centralized states with an underdeveloped social and class structure, and often underdeveloped administrative-political structure;

b) the already established centralized states of the late antiquity, the Middle Ages and of the New Age with a clearly manifested class-estate division;

c) the states of the industrial age, in which the estates disappeared, the bourgeoisie and proletariat classes appeared, nations were formed, and representative democracy spread.

Therefore, I propose to consider the evolution of statehood not in terms of two main stages of statehood development – early state and mature state, but in terms of three: 1) the *early state*; 2) the *developed state*; and 3) the *mature state*. Of course, each stage of the evolution of statehood lasted quite a long time and went through its own internal developmental stages (for more details, see Grinin 2008b, 2017).

THE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EARLY, DEVELOPED AND MATURE STATES

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 define similarities between them in terms of their general differences from states at a higher stage of evolution, then an early state is always an incomplete state (organizationally and socially). In most cases, this incompleteness was expressed in the most direct sense, since many early states often did not have a full set of the most important features of a state, or did not de-

velop all or some of them to a satisfactory degree. This applies primarily to such attributes of statehood as a *professional apparatus of administration and repression, taxation, territorial division, and the degree of centralization and written law*. However, in some early states (e.g., the Third Dynasty of Ur, the late 3d millennium BCE, or Hammurabi in Mesopotamia, the 18th century BCE) there was an opposite disproportion. Although the administrative apparatus and bureaucracy were quite powerful, they were built on the society that was not sufficiently developed in social and ethnic terms.

A developed state is a state that is *formed* and *established* and has almost all of the above-mentioned attributes of a state (including a professional apparatus of administration and repression, taxation, and territorial division), and it is *centralized*. Thus, many features that could be found in the early states, but which could also be absent, become obligatory in the developed states.

This type of state was already the result of a long historical development and selection, which proved that the state is much stronger when its institutions are organically linked to the social structure of the society and when they are at the same time dependent on the social order and support it. A developed state is not only closely connected with the peculiarities of the social and corporate structure of society, but institutionalizes these peculiarities in its political and legal institutions. In this sense, it can be considered an *estate-corporate* state.

Of course, different states entered this stage at different times.

A mature state is already the result of the development of capitalism and Industrial revolution, that is, it has a fundamentally different production basis. Other differences between a mature state and its predecessors are also very significant. The mature state is based on an established or emerging nation with all its characteristics; it necessarily has professional bureaucracy with certain characteristics (see, e.g., Weber 1947: 333–334), and a clear mechanism for the transfer or rotation of power.

On the basis of the above said, we can make a very important conclusion that *in antiquity and the Middle Ages there were no mature states*, but only early and developed ones. The very first mature states appeared at the end of the seventeenth – eighteenth centuries.

The stage of a mature state is associated with the formation of classes of entrepreneurs and hired workers and *the creation of a class-corporate state*. For the European developed states, this process was completed in the nineteenth century.

The most important characteristics of this new social structure already in the middle and second half of the twentieth century were:

– the formation of the so-called middle class, which gradually became the leading class in terms of numbers;

– the growing importance of social legislation and laws limiting the polarization of society into rich and poor (such as high income taxes, inheritance taxes, *etc*.);

– the increasing importance of factors that had not previously played a leading role in the national and state factors: gender, age and occupational group characteristics.

During the twentieth century, social policy underwent very considerable changes. *The state gradually transformed from a class state into a social state, i.e. a state that actively pursues the policy of supporting the poor and the socially vulnerable, and limits the growing inequality.* This process began at the end of the nineteenth century and became more pronounced in the period after the First World War and even more so after the Second. And since then this trend has only strengthened and developed.

When the USA and a number of Western European countries became *welfare states and mass consumer societies* in the 1950s and 1960s, this essentially meant that a mature state had acquired certain features that were not entirely characteristic of it and had begun to evolve into something new. At the same time, class distinctions became increasingly blurred. In our view, all these features are no longer characteristic of a mature state, nor are the numerous social guarantees for the population.

There are also other things that are not typical of mature states. Among them, a completely new and extremely important phenomenon is particularly indicative – the partial renunciation of sovereignty by many countries with regard to their internal fiscal, customs, penal and social policies, the right to wage war, *etc*., in connection with voluntary membership in regional and global organizations, the recognition of the supremacy of world law over national law. It is also worth noting the creation of various supranational organizations and their growing importance.

We can therefore assume that we are entering the final stage of the era of mature states, which will be replaced by a new stage of political evolution. In the distant future, we can think of a supranational and suprastate stage of evolution. But that is still a long way off. So it

is still precipitate to bury the state. All the more so as a counter-wave of strengthening national sovereignty has begun.

FUNDING

This research has been supported by Russian Scientific Foundation (project № 23-00-00535)

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