

The impact of information technologies on development of archaic state structures

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1. *Problematization of the democratic nature of information technologies*

A lot of articles and books have been written on globalization, and a great number of meetings and workshops have been held in this regard. To some extent it even resulted in a decline of scientific interest in this subject. However, one of the most important aspects of globalization was missed. If globalization is understood as transnationalisation and transcendence of state borders, the question "what is the effect of new information technologies spreading into pre-modern states (states developed to a large extent on traditional and religious grounds)" has been usually followed by the answer that it results in democratization¹. Based on this assumption practitioners in real politics strive to close global digital divide by supporting the design of cheap (one-hundred dollar) computers.

Thus, 2003 (Geneva phase)² and 2005 (Tunis phase)³ UN world summits on the

information society (WSIS) declared as their goal providing Internet access for the poorest people in the world. The goals of Internet accessibility, closing digital gap etc. were confirmed ten years later⁴.

Do technologies, designed in developed states, lead to the same political consequences when being used in pre-westphalian societies? Can we expect the development of democratic processes in authoritarian regimes because Internet is democratic in its nature?

S. Huntington, who introduced the idea of democratization waves, assumed that a wave of a global rise in number of democratic regimes was followed by a backward wave towards authoritarianism⁵. It was really the case during a long historical period of states development in Europe. Does it imply that a European path of development should also be copied by countries in other parts of the world? Perhaps the democratization process as a global development trend is inevitable and universal. People are getting more involved in interaction

with each other and political governance. The question lies in the following: "Should the backward wave be necessarily directed towards authoritarianism?" The latest events, particularly in the Greater Middle East, question this assumption. Countries such as Iraq and Libya that were authoritarian in the past have swayed not towards democracy, as might be expected, but towards growing chaotization⁶ of existed state structures and development of archaic social structures instead. By the way, the very name of the term "Arab spring" which became widely circulated throughout the world, was based on the assumption that authoritarian regimes would fall and be replaced with democracies. It did not work out, and it is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

At the same time, a number of researchers reveal that information and communication technologies (ICT) were widely used to politically mobilize the population, communicate information during the "Arab spring" events. Information technologies (bank cards, e-mail) together with the archaic ways of information communication, raising money were used by Al-Qaida for preparing terrorist attacks⁷. "Islamic state" uses information technologies not only for implementing its plans, but also for recruitment of new supporters. It created even a special unit to work with media, primarily the Internet⁸. It is clear that the "Islamic state" is neither being Islamic, nor a state (in Westphalian terms). It was the very same "fallback" towards archaization after authoritarian regime destruction in Iraq and then in Syria as well. But what caused this "archaization"? Do information technologies that have come to pre-Westphalian states trigger development of ar-

chaic social structures? If not, why these technologies are not rejected by archaic regimes but actively and sometimes skillfully (as it is practiced by ISIS) put into use? And what explains that archaic structures accept so easily information technologies and are able to use them?

It appears that answers to these questions lie in the transformation of the contemporary world unfolding itself on three levels:

1. Political system of the world (Westphalian system).
2. The system of interstate relations and its subsystem – the Middle Eastern subsystem.
3. Political systems of separate states⁹.

Transformation of the Westphalian political system along with the increased influence of non-state actors (tendencies described by J. Nye and R. Keohane)¹⁰ lead to the conditions, when at the second half and at the end of the XX century three groups of states were singled out: 1) primarily post-westphalian ones, 2) primarily westphalian ones, and 3) primarily pre-westphalian ones¹¹.

All these states co-exist today. These states differ in their attitude towards the fundamental institute of modern international relations i.e. sovereignty. The concept of sovereignty has various interpretations in the theory of international relations. S. Krasner outlined four most widespread interpretations¹²: an ability to exert control within state borders (domestic sovereignty); an ability to control processes which cross state borders (interdependence sovereignty), states recognizing one another as independent territories (international legal sovereignty), and an ability to separately determine their do-

mestic authority (Westphalian sovereignty). Westphalian sovereignty is an essential concept to distinguish among Westphalian, pre-Westphalian and post-Westphalian states. Westphalian states hold political autonomy as the most valuable asset for which they can sacrifice all other benefits. Post-Westphalian states recognize the importance of the political autonomy, but not as the utmost one. Political and economic efficiency are considered to be of higher importance than independence in the domestic affairs. To increase their efficiency, post-Westphalian states can share their sovereignty with supranational organizations or non-state actors. EU members are a striking example of post-Westphalian states. Modern pre-Westphalian states in most cases have legal sovereignty, but cannot control their borders and internal affairs because of weak domestic political institutions. Failed states are the most striking examples of pre-Westphalian politics because the political and economic life in such areas of limited statehood is regulated by indigenous and religious institutions¹³.

The breakup of the bipolar international system in the late XX century gave rise to another crisis in international relations. Any suitable configuration is still not defined. Thus, the term "post-bipolar system" is often used. The problem is much deeper than terminological one: it is unlikely that under modern conditions the structure of the new international system can be defined based on the relations between major powers as it previously was the case, not taking into account non state actors.

Finally, the Greater Middle East Region and the very countries of this region were most sensitive to the transformation of the

previous levels since many countries of this region earlier oriented towards the socialist path of development. It goes without saying that the breakup of the bipolar system had a heavy impact on their identity and institutes and thus forced them to seek new meanings. Some of these meanings were found in the archaic structures.

2. *Conditions of the state archaization*

In this article the term "archaic" is used to determine the state of the society previous to the modern one i.e. before shaping up of formal institutions. Thus, archaization of state is a return to informal institutions and practices. The academic literature defines this process as informalization of state, and this phenomenon is relatively well-described in a number of African states¹⁴.

It should be noted that an informal (archaic) constituent is found in many modern and postmodern states. It expresses itself through corruption, mafia, greater influence of security services, state of "emergency" etc.¹⁵ V. Sergeyev and E. Alekseyenkova point out that, for example, «in XX century Italy, "non systemic" politics (mafia, terrorists and corruption networks) was so influential that a systemic policy came to be almost ineffective»¹⁶.

However, if informal, non systemic institutions exceed some critical point, a formal modern state is degenerating into an informal pre-Westphalian one. The key reason lies in demolition of formal state institutions. To stay in power when formal institutions are dying, a government or a governor's policy starts relying on informal institutions, practices and structures:

criminal groups, corruptions, clan, family, ethnic or religious ties, rules and norms. As shown by R. Bates based on African examples, the state is falling apart if the government replaces its army with criminal groups. This leads to state violence delegitimization and, hence, to a death of state.

The reasons for decay or even death of formal state institutions are well researched. In our opinion, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson's¹⁷ neo-institutional work, which gained wide popularity, and Francis Fukuyama's¹⁸ liberal research are the most important research approaches explaining the conditions and causes of an institution's death or of prosperity of a state.

The concept of extractive and inclusive institutions lies at the core of Robinson and Acemoglu's theory. Inclusive institutions allow most of the population to benefit from state development while extractive institutions allow enriching and concentrating political power only for a narrow elite group. Based on the extensive historical material, the authors prove that stable economic development is possible only with inclusive institutions, but these institutions are difficult to establish and often depend on historical accident. States suffer development failures, and they are held still or fall back on account of extractive institutions. It is paradoxical, but the authors show that extractive institutions are standard practice throughout history and at present times. Inclusive institutions are an exception which often depend on historical accident. Institutional change is impeded by the "path dependence". The recent example of Ukrainian nation-building clearly shows how lack of inclusive institutions can hinder state's development¹⁹. But it should

be mentioned that extractive institutions can work as inclusive ones under structural pressure of the international system (for example, the ongoing challenge of migration)²⁰.

J. Robinson and D. Acemoglu's research provides a strong institutional argument for the positive link between democracy and development, yet the authors express it plainly that inclusive institutions must not be necessarily democratic ones. For the first time and accidentally to a large extent, they were formed in England after the Glorious Revolution, which paved the way for the Industrial Revolution. England in the late 17th century was not a democratic state. The authors show that development depends on the institutional context. If this context is inclusive, the development will be stable; if it is extractive – there will be regress instead of development. Extractive states can demonstrate economic growth for short periods of time when the privileged elite starts investing in the economic development of their country, but such states fail over time since growth and development are unstable without inclusive institutions, and the positive development cycle does not come into being. Thus, extractive institutions can cause institutional decay of a state. Most African states vividly represent extractive institutions.

Analyzing the political development, Fukuyama discerns three key institutions: the state, rule of law and democracy. According to Fukuyama, political development means institutional change and evolution of the relations among these institutions. Taking into consideration that these three institutions cannot be developed simultaneously and are formed rather gradually, the key question for Fukuyama is

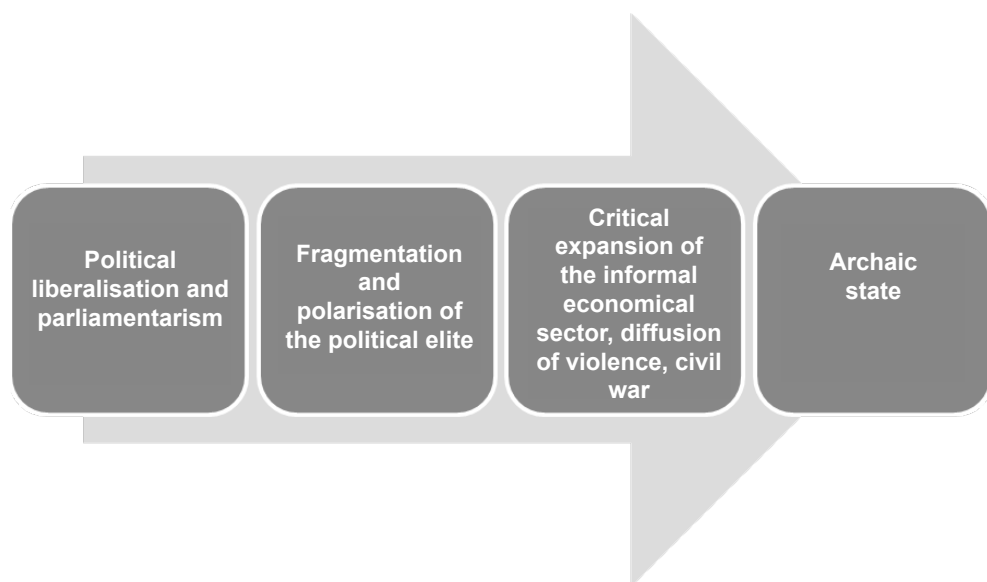


Fig. 1

the chronological superiority of these institutions and its impact on stable positive development²¹. Following his mentor S. Huntington, who proved it as early as in 1968, Fukuyama believes that such supremacy belongs to the state²². Based on the historical analysis starting from Industrial Revolution to present day, Fukuyama confirmed this hypothesis and specified that meritocratic bureaucracy is the key state institution for further political and economic development. In other words, democracy can be developed only on the basis of strong state institutions. Otherwise, as history shows, the state will be significantly falling behind the leaders at best, and if worst comes to worst – it will suffer a state failure.

State failure can happen because electoral democracy without strong state institutions and national identity will likely lead to internal conflicts and even civil war. The examples of African states show that liberalization of political life which is expressed, as

a rule, in parliamentarianism leads to fragmentation and polarization of the political elite, the prevailing majority of which tries to keep others away from the following elections. The effective state institutions minimize the power fight between elites, and under weak institutions, there is room for political violence diffusion which degenerates a state into an informal, archaic structures and can finally lead to its collapse.

The logical archaization sequence of state caused by democracy is represented below (refer to fig. 1). It should be emphasized that extractive state institutions combined with political liberalization lead to state archaization.

This chart demonstrates that the political liberalization may sometimes lead to state archaization i.e. to negative consequences both for the society and elite. The violence in the archaic state is not monopolized, the return to Hobbes' natural state of war of all against all takes place.

3. *Internet as an archaization trigger*

As historic studies show, new technologies and political process always had a mutual impact on each other²³. The modern phase of information communication technologies development among which the Internet takes a special and more significant place was not an exception. Today, interactive Internet media are of special importance among information communication technologies: blogs, social and peer-to-peer networks (known as Web 2.0). Users are no longer passive information recipients but active creators who often give a serious fight to leading media companies. Development of social media and formation of Web 2.0 shape up the modern-day appearance of the Internet and global information society on the whole.

O'Reilly²⁴, who proposed the term Web 2.0, highlighted 7 key principles on which the new phase of the global network development is based. The following five have a political meaning: 1) The Internet is becoming a key platform for political discourse; 2) political use of the Internet forms network users' collective identity; 3) value of data exceeds the value of the software and technical infrastructure; 4) fast transformation of public policy resulted from the use of social media; 5) distribution of political content by means of different apps²⁵. Thus, the interactivity of information communication technologies has a significant impact on the political process both within a state and at the level of the transnational political environment²⁶. The Internet has come to be a platform for political participation and political discourse^{27 28}. Information communication technologies play a role of extra-parliamentary political activi-

ty by providing opportunities for new forms of political participation which would be impossible without them.

Studies show a complex way of interaction between the Internet and the dynamics of social movements²⁹. The Internet creates conditions for global communication; thanks to it, network communities can be created without time and space limits³⁰. For example, the Muslim organizations (even radical one) in UK promote their agenda through public meetings and forums as well as Internet sites, chats and private conversations³¹. The above trends run counter to the Westphalian political system of the world. The current information communication technologies easily cross state borders and question the state's ability to control political communications. It is a common practice that states not only control political communication but also serve as a source of developing political discourses. States strive to remove destabilizing discourses from the information space and at the same time to strengthen the national identity by means of political communication. As noted by B. Anderson, any nation is «an imagined community»³², and for this reason the state's role in creating and maintaining the identity is extremely important. Hence, the control over political communication is a key condition for the state to have political stability and ensure legitimacy of the current regime.

Information technologies is an effective tool for organizing massive protests aimed at changing a political regime or political policy of a state as well as shifting the current political elite. The first studies on the influence of information technologies and Internet on the protest movement came to light in the early 1990s. Among the cases

under study were the Zapatista movement in Mexico, anti-globalist actions known as "Battle in Seattle", and later a global anti-war movement during the war in Iraq and anti-government protests during the 2004 electoral process in Spain. The studies have mentioned that the Internet fosters collective actions thanks to reducing organizational and coordinating costs, and thereby making it easier to shape transnational network structures³³.

The Internet shapes a new transnational and digital public sphere having an impact not only on the course of protest movements but creating prerequisites for them and possibilities for further peaceful settlement. Unfortunately, as mentioned by A. Ross, former adviser of the US Secretary of State and one of the proponents of using social media in the diplomacy, – new technologies are much more effective in destroying political institutions rather than shaping new, stable political structures in those states where Facebook and Twitter revolutions occurred³⁴.

The spread of the Internet into states with weak extractive institutions and without developed identity is a threat to its existence. Being a favorable environment and a tool for organizing and coordinating a protest movement, the Internet makes it possible to democratize an authoritarian regime from the bottom up through protests and massive movements. The Arab spring is a living proof of this destructive role of information technologies. Most studies of massive anti-government protests in Egypt and Tunis have come to the conclusion that there is a link between an effective use of Internet technologies and the success of protest movement. The authors also noted that in addition to coordination and com-

munication the Internet media provide an opportunity for interaction of the protesters with the global audience, which is a strong factor for success of the movement. The fast Twitter and Facebook internationalization of protest attitudes has given rise to massive supporting movements among Internet users around the world, which other states had to take into account later – and what was the key for protesters' success³⁵.

Thus, the above mentioned state archaization chart should be added with another component – the Internet, which is essentially a trigger for uncontrollable democratic bottom-up transition. It leads to state archaization under the conditions of the extractive state institutions and a lack of uniform national identity. This conclusion is proved by the events of the Arab spring and in particular the Libya case.

4. *Libya archaization*

Libya is a pre-Westphalian extractive state i.e. the political and economic institutions of this state are arranged in such a way that the privileged elite benefits from its existence, and the rest of population have no stimulus for vigorous economic or political activities. Furthermore, A. Stepan and J. Linz describe Libya as a sultanate regime³⁶. Under this regime, the privileged elite consists normally of the sultan and his family, and the whole state, state budget, institutions, structures etc. are regarded by the sultan as his property and his Court which he rules at his discretion. Sultanate regimes, as classified by M. Weber, are the extreme case of patrimonial states. In other words, sultanate regimes are the extreme

case of extractive states, therefore, they are the first candidates in line for archaization. Certainly, Gaddafi wasn't absolutely free, he had to suppress contradictions among different tribes of Libya. Nevertheless, Stepan and Linz claim that among all Arab spring states Libya was closer than others to the conditions of a perfect sultanate regime.

At the same time, Libya was archaized more than other Arab spring states even before the revolution. Archaization of almost all state structures, formation of revolutionary committees (quasi-party structures), making the Koran a main law, emergence of such political institutions as revolutionary leader, revolutionary leadership of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (they were officially out of state structures, but in reality they had a direct impact on the decision-making) – all that was a peculiarity of Jamahiriya state system structure as a result of sultanate regime. Having declared as early as in December 1978 about his resignation of all positions, M. Gaddafi remained an actual head of state and Supreme Commander-in-Chief having a sole right to make laws, convene extraordinary sessions of People's Supreme Committee where his addresses were a program of legislation activities. The authoritarian mechanism of making decisions on critical aspects of national governance really manifested the role of M. Gaddafi and the role of Jamahiriya government authorities.

Gaddafi was not paying special attention to control over the Internet. It may be explained by the fact that only 4–5% of the population in Libya had access to the Internet when the Arab spring events started. Therefore, the media in the Libyan case have been increasingly used as a

"playground" to cover events rather than as a tool for mobilizing the Libyans. In addition, the content of news reports was monitored by the government³⁷. However, a week before the February events in Libya in 2011, demonstrations organized via the Facebook social network were detected in eastern Cyrenaica, where unverified reports of protest movement suppression on the part of the Libyan leadership appeared later³⁸. During the antiregime protests, Twitter and Facebook played a major role as "platforms" for the organization of mass opposition protests. This happened despite the fact that social networks were blocked in Libya, and by the middle of Spring 2011 the Internet was shut off throughout the country. These restrictions were bypassed with the help of satellite communications. Moreover, some of the anti-regime protest activists moved to Egypt in order to have unlimited access to the Internet and share the information, photos and videos about the situation in Libya. The Contact Group on Libya was established in March 2011³⁹. The Provision with the intention of the Arab satellite broadcasting operators to block Libyan official channels was enshrined in the final text of the document on the results of the May meeting of the Group, and the hope was expressed that other Arab operators will follow this example⁴⁰. NATO had also demonstrated its determination to leave Libya in the "information vacuum", causing their first airstrikes on the state television center in Tripoli and on building of JANA news agency⁴¹.

It should be noted that almost all of the states of the "Arab Spring", as well as Libya, did not pay much attention to censorship in the Internet. So, for example, during the reign of Ben Ali, Tunisia was a lead-

er in Internet accessibility level for broad layers of population in the region⁴². However, during the anti-government protests in 2010–2011, the websites used as tools for mobilization of population were blocked by the state⁴³. In Egypt, in comparison to other Arab countries, media censorship was rather observational in nature. But, during the height of anti-regime demonstrations, there was also a number of blocked sites such as Facebook and Twitter⁴⁴. However, the author of the term “Arab Spring”, an American researcher M. Lynch, when evaluating the role of the media in anti-regime protests, gave the highest estimation specifically to Egypt, noting that “Mubarak gave rise to discontent, Facebook set the date, Tunisia inspired, and the Egyptian people did the rest”⁴⁵. Therefore, the role of the media in the events of the “Arab spring” can be defined as an instrumental but not as the root cause for discontent formation among the Arab population.

From the point of view of the democratization theory, the transition of sultanate regimes to democracy is almost impossible without violence⁴⁶. The classic game model of peaceful democratic transition consisting of four players, in which the moderate members of the authorities and the opposition work together to push the radical pro-government and opposition elements aside, does not work in sultanate regime. As soon as the two moderate parties (from the authorities and from the opposition) reveal themselves, the Sultan will destroy them immediately. Realizing this fact, the radical opposition will become even more radicalized and will rely only on the force of arms and violence

So, the spread of IT into sultanate regimes and the democratization provoked by

them from below will almost inevitably lead to a civil war and state archaization. Studies show⁴⁷ that likelihood of civil war occurrence, in addition to the weak state institutions, is also due to a range of factors, such as the large population, rugged terrain, access to weapons, and the intervention of external forces. In the case of Libya, two of the above mentioned factors worked out: weak state institutions and the intervention of external forces.

As a result of civil war and archaization in Libya, the state has substantially disappeared in this country. American journalist, traveling across Libya two months before the Parliamentary elections scheduled for 2012, stated the following:

There is no army in Libya. There is no state in Libya. They exist only on paper. In practice, Libya is still recovering from a Gaddafi's long swirl of power ... What Libya does really have is militias – they are more than 60 different groups, and each enjoys unlimited power on the territory under its control where there are no rules⁴⁸.

The situation in Libya today in 2016 is not much different from the situation in 2012.

Returning to questions put at the beginning of this article about the consequences of spreading information technologies in pre-Westphalian states and a democratic fallback towards authoritarianism, we come to the negative answers to them. Information technologies, in particular Web 2.0., actually stimulate the processes of democratization. But in case of weakness of state institutions these processes are not merely capable to simply throw a state back into authoritarianism but also “informalize” it

or make it archaic, giving rise to civil wars and the destruction of all state institutions. The ambivalence of the Internet stresses the need to take into account the institutional conditions of its spread. The development of these processes is significantly enhanced by transformations of the political system of the world (the Westphalian system) and the system of interstate rela-

tions, which have never been formed after the bipolar system collapse (another question – how it can generally be formed in the present conditions). As a result, the region of the Greater Middle East has proved to be the most susceptible to archaization.

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³ Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. URL: <http://www.itu.int/net/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en&id=2267>.

⁴ WSIS+10 Statement on Implementation of WSIS. Outcomes and the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015. URL: <<http://www.itu.int/net/wsis/documents/HLE.html>>.

⁵ S.P. Huntington, *Democracy's Third Wave*, in «Journal of Democracy», n. 2, 1991, pp. 12–34.

⁶ For more details on the processes of chaotization in the contemporary world refer to: M. Lebedeva, *Sovremennye trendy mirovogo razvitiya: novoe kachestvo mira* [Modern trends of world development: new quality of the world], in M. Lebedeva (ed.), *Metamorfozy mirovoj politiki* [Metamorphoses of world politics], – Moscow, University for Foreign Relations studies (MGIMO), 2012, pp. 9–32 (In Russian).

⁷ See e.g., D. C. Alexander, *Business Confronts Terrorism. Risks and Responses*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

⁸ *ISIS Has a Really Slick and Sophisticated Media Department*, in «Vice News», URL: <<https://news.vice.com/article/isis-has-a-really-slick-and-sophisticated-media-department>>.

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¹¹ M.M. Lebedeva, *Politicheskaya sistema mira: projavleniya «vnesistemnosti», ili novye aktory – starye pravila* [The political system of the world: manifestation of the 'non-systemic' issues, or new actors – the old rules], in M.M. Lebedeva (ed.), *'Privatizatsiya' mirovoj politiki: lokal'nye dejstviya – global'nye rezul'taty* ['Privatization' of world politics: local actions – global results], Moscow, Golden-Bi, 2008, pp. 53–66 (In Russian). M.V. Kharkevich, *Gosudarstvo v sovremennoj mirovoj politike* [The State in the Contemporary World Politics] in «Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta»

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¹² S.D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: organized hypocrisy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999.

¹³ T. Risse (ed.), *Governance without a state?: policies and politics in areas of limited statehood*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2013.

¹⁴ R.H. Bates, *When things fell apart: state failure in late-century Africa*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008. D. Branch, N. Cheeseman, *Democratization, sequencing, and state failure in Africa: Lessons from Kenya*, in «African Affairs», n. 108 (430), 2009, pp. 1–26.

¹⁵ E.S. Alekseyenkova, *Temnyj kolodec vlasti (o granice mezhdru privatnoj sfery gosudarstva i privatnojsfery lichnosti)* [The Dark Well of Power (on the Boundary between the Private Sphere of the State and the Person's Private Sphere)], in «Polis», n. 3, 2008, pp. 148–165 (In Russian).

¹⁶ Ivi, p. 155.

¹⁷ J.A. Robinson, D. Acemoglu, *Why Nations Fail: Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*, New York, Crown Publishers, 2012.

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