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Crisis of the Society and its Contemporary
Challenges (example of fundamentalism)

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20th and the beginning of 21 centuries have been filled by optimistic and pessimistic, apocalyptic and utopian predictions for a decline of social, society crisis, civilization crisis, the end of history, and clash of civilizations. These predictions were promoted by such versatile phenomena as communistic experiment in the Soviet Union, two world wars, the termination of «cold war», transition to a postindustrial society, neo-colonialism, and also formation of a new sociality in the conditions of transition of mankind from not complete modernist to postmodern.

The concept of «post secular society» was offered by Jürgen Habermas who declared beginning of the post secular society's epoch. He believes that modernity is not cancelled by postmodernity, but dialectically «overcoming» by it. Postmodernity retains the major secular achievements of modernity: freedom of worship, separation of church from the state, autonomy of a person. However modernity has appeared not finished and consequently the postmodern is deprived prospects of independent existence. Because of it in the postmodern culture secular mixes up and intertwines with religious¹.

Apocalyptic tendencies from time to time were inherent in representatives of modernity (Oswald Spengler, Arnold J. Toynbee), however postmodernists more actively, than representatives of other scientific approaches to a society explanation, put forward assumptions of the end of the social².

Certainly, it does not mean disappearance of social as that, but essential change of our representations about it in connection with dying off of out-of-date forms of sociality. Jean Baudrillard believes that our contemporaneity is a mass society as implosive phenomenon, «not mastered by any traditional practice and any traditional theory, and may be in general by any practice and by any theory». Having neither the past, nor the future, the masses have no real history. They function as a huge black hole absorbing and destroying culture, knowledge, power and social. The society consisting of them loses rationality and social loses sense³.

The masses wish shows, they are interested only in signs, game of symbols which are not possessing sense, existing in simulation sphere in space of inexpressible social or in space where social already is not present. Social becomes simulation, simulacrum of social. The reality of public life turns into hyper reality in which simulacra dominate as self-sufficient and not sending signs to anywhere. The person lives in the sign-symbolical environment designed by him. The present world economic crisis can be treated as the first global crisis of hyper real economy.

Globalization has made total a market principle of the organization of a social life. The market competition becomes universal, checking on a survival all social relations and institutes in various societies. Globalization puts problems for subjects, as well as for objects of this process, therefore various societies sharply react to it – western and eastern, South and North societies. As Peter Grechko writes, «the contemporaneity bears with itself settlement, conveniences, cosiness of life and simultaneously – uncertainty,

¹ HABERMAS, Jürgen – *The Future of Human Nature*. Moscow: Ves Mir, 2002 (in Russian).

² BAUDRILLARD, Jean – *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or the End of Social*. Ekaterinburg: 2000 (in Russian).

³ BAUDRILLARD, Jean – *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities...*, p. 7, 8, 15.

insecurity, discomfort of life. Some do not maintain its historical pressure; they are lost before its novelty and desert – far away from «nightmare of progress», in conservatism, traditionalism, involuntarism»⁴.

Fundamentalism becomes one of noticeable forms of such escape from the global contemporaneity in various societies. Fundamentalism is usually interpreted as a set of ideas in which the conscious protest of traditional culture against modernization processes is made. At the same time, fundamentalism is modernity's product. It draws attention to itself by the facts of destructive behavior of its radical followers, shown in extremism and terrorism. Because of this fundamentalism frequently is identified with terrorism, medieval obscurantism and fanaticism.

The word «fundamentalism» was originally applied in the USA in second half of the XIXth century to the characteristic of some Christian groups formed by orthodox representatives of evangelic church (Calvinists, Presbyterians and Baptists), and then antidarwinists at the beginning of the XXth century. Only later this concept began to be used by the western researchers studying Islam, Judaism and other religions. In modern conditions it is used at the description of theoretical and practical activity of a set of religious and political movements and organizations – Christian (Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox), Judaic, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist. Involvement into it of representatives of many societies makes fundamentalism the global phenomenon.

Certainly, such difficult phenomenon as fundamentalism cannot be reduced to one of its aspects, for example, to extremism. Fundamentalism shows itself in theological discussions, cultural creativity, conflicts of values and of political ideologies, in political life. For designation of these processes, except the concept of fundamentalism, such concepts as religious revival, puritanism, integrism, revivalism, religious radicalism are widely used. They reflect aspiration of supporters of fundamentalism to return to spiritual sources, to roots, to reach unity of the society on the basis of religious values, to revive «true» religion and to recreate on its basis the society.

Fundamentalism is inherent not only to traditional religions, but it is also shown in activity of new religious movements and sects. Except religious also exists secular fundamentalism. It is possible to rank to fundamentalism such secular phenomena as social movements (the right – and extreme Left, ecological, feministic) and political movements (Marxist, liberal fundamentalism).

For fundamentalism is characteristic adherence of a group of people to certain idea which they protect, use for criticism of the present and suggest to realize in practice. In this sense fundamentalism represents one of kinds of cultural creativity, interpretation of the phenomena, production of knowledge, finding of sense of social existence. Fundamentalists live in mythological time, tensely perceiving rupture between once taking place «Golden Age» and the present which, on their belief, represents result of degradation of ideal model. Representations about history and progressive social development, generated by the European Enlightenment in process of demythologization and secularization of the world picture, are rejected by them.

⁴ GRETCHKO, Piotr – Temporal multi-layered social: Modernity as a challenge. In *Social: roots, structural profiles, contemporary challenges*. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009, p. 317. (in Russian).

Therefore the more is distinction between an ideal and reality, the more conviction of fundamentalists in their correctness and in desire to find someone guilty and to return the society into a former condition according to the slogan «the Future in the past». The appeal to spiritual awakening and revival makes a basis of fundamentalist ideology. The religious fundamentalism is born from aspiration to «original» religion and to overcoming of «corrupted» religion. It is necessary to consider also the context of modernity in which fundamentalist movements were appearing, – secularization, and loss of traditional religious and moral values. For unhistorical and traditional religious fundamentalism societies of modernity and postmodernity are initially unacceptable and are represented by recourse in comparison with «Golden Age».

Fundamentalism's mythology is closely connected with its irrational traditionalist orientation obviously excluding possibility of its own bases' reflexion. In the modern world fundamentalism is fruitless in divinity and apologetics, but it is easily mobilized for «defense of faith» by practical actions. Without ability to reflexion, self-criticism and irony the archaic culture being at contact to other, more developed culture, comes off second-best, loses its world outlook definiteness. Situation in many Third World countries serves as an example of such painful transitive condition. Nevertheless in more developed societies also there can be a conflict between more and less developed subcultures. In case of inability to solve such conflict, the concrete culture can get under fundamentalism influence. If the fundamentalist culture refuses to work on adjustment of dialogue and passes to active protection of the traditional bases of culture, it switches off itself from the basic current of a life and marginalized. Thus it protects values which already as a whole are unusual for its own society. It cannot lean against this society, but is ready to promise the radical decision of all problems to those individuals who see possibility of own adaptation in fundamentalist community and find set of adherents.

One of the major global tendencies of social development of mankind at the end of the XXth – beginning of the XXIst centuries is active use by individuals, peoples, population of whole regions – ideas of religious and civilization unities as bases of cultural identification. These ideas also can be used by fundamentalist movements.

There is variety of fundamentalist movements connected first of all with distinctions in ontological representations, in the importance of political aspect and in historical experience. But between its separate kinds deep similarity is observed: their essential part is aimed at the statement of religious nature of modern societies. Disintegration in the end of the last century of world socialist system has resulted, besides other, in destruction of ideological contradiction between liberalism and socialism. Without it the considerable part of the mankind rejecting liberalism, has appeared in a situation of loss of hope of justice celebration in earthly life. Sharp disproportions in economic development and aggressive penetration of the western mass culture have practically deprived the Third World countries of possibility to overcome cultural and political rupture, to keep civilization foundations. In these conditions the huge negative potential of social energy has been collected which cannot be realized through model of rational adaptation to the globalized contemporaneity in the situation of unequal partnership. The requirement has become aggravated for change of value system at level of elite and population. So, in consciousness of inhabitants of the Middle East the dominating role starts to pass from nationalism to Islamic religious identity, frequently radical one.

While in the Western societies a special urgency have got appeals to overcome dissociation and individualism, to spiritualize life the in secularized world, to return to values of a traditional family, to belief in God. Here religiousness strengthening has proved itself in the form of strengthening of conservative moods. This conservatism was basically reaction of the population to painfully negative consequences of globalization. Practically uncontrolled population migration from Asia and Africa to the USA, the Western Europe have led to occurrence of cultural, economic and political problems and complication of relations between the local and alien population. As a result both have addressed to the politicized variant of religion, having seen in it a protection frame from alien cultural influences and social problems. Organizing idea of this search is creation of an image of «Other» and the hatred sermon to it as to the reason of all harm in a society⁵.

Thereupon it is possible to name the present situation in the Western society a collision of fundamentalisms: representatives of the radical Christian (post Christian) population tend to the extremely right ideology, and immigrants-Muslims – to Islamic fundamentalism. It is the conflict of Islamic fundamentalism and democratic fundamentalism which Benjamin R. Barber calls the conflict of «Jihad» and «McWorld»⁶.

Muslims are proving that in the XXIst century anti-Islamism becomes the same prominent feature of the extremely right ideology as was anti-Semitism last century. In the USA there were cases of display of fundamentalism in foreign policy where antagonism to Islam replaced hatred of the USSR. For example, the war with terrorism begun by the American administration after September, 11th, 2001 had theological definition of a war with a certain evil, a holy war. The Christian fundamentalists supporting President George W. Bush, treated terrorism as evil, originating in Islamic fundamentalism. It turned out, that the modern state defined the foreign policy by means of categories of a religious paradigm, biblical world view. Thereby the given state actually from the secular turned in clerical, declaring a crusade against adherents of a different creed, in this case against Muslims⁷.

Certainly, it was the fundamentalist ideological construction in which Islamism has been transformed into simulacrum. As Zbigniew Brzezinski writes, «the accent on terrorism was politically expedient owing to vagueness of this concept. After September, 11th the concept «terrorism» has been brought home to each American mind. As a consequence, there was no necessity to explain neither how «the global war with terror» is conducted, nor how to learn when this war of new type with the imperceptible enemy will be over... Terrorism has replaced the Soviet nuclear weapon as the main threat, and terrorists inspiring fear (potentially ubiquitous and as a whole identified with Muslims) have come instead of communists»⁸.

⁵ Extended recently there is a phenomenon of «hate speech», indirectly reflecting the world of confronting identities, co-existing in a polycultural society and at times is artificially «warmed up» to mutual enmity by political grounds. Malkovskaya, Irina A. – *Sign of communication. Discursive matrixes*. Moscow: KomKniga, 2005, p. 161-166. (in Russian).

⁶ BARBER, Benjamin R. – *Jihad vs. McWorld*. N.Y.: Ballantine Books, 2001.

⁷ PHILIPS, Kevin – *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century*. N.Y.: Viking, 2006, p. 250-262.

⁸ BRZEZINSKI, Zbigniew. – The last sovereign at the crossroads. *Russia in the global policy*. Moscow. N.º 1 (January-February 2006). (in Russian).

Mass media reproducing hyper reality, do frightening the population simulacrum of terrorism in general and Islamic, in particular, by the important means of political manipulations. It leads to that the important political and military decisions (about restriction of the rights and freedoms of citizens, about making strikes on concrete territories, about creation of antiterrorist coalitions) can be accepted as the answer on simulacrum of Islamic terrorism. The declared infinite war without restrictions in time and in means against terrorism (Islamic) can be conducted against simulacrum, instead of the real phenomenon. It serves the elite's control over the population which social energy has already died away and which, as writes Jean Baudrillard, forms «the real masses, being most part of time in condition of uncontrollable fear or vague alarm, on this or on that side of judiciousness»⁹.

Crisis or desocialization of the modern Western society is shown also in that the militarism becomes an essential element of national identity's formation. Using the concept of «spectacle society» Henry Giroux writes that «language of a policy in the increasing measure is mediated by terrorism performance in which the fear and violence became key concepts for comprehension by the individual of the place in a society. ... The law and violence became indiscernible in process of occurrence of societies in the legitimacy crisis, incapable to guarantee protection to the citizens, strengthening «the culture of fear». In these conditions citizens lose the former status of consumers of material products and are organized basically not by means of common responsibility, but common fears»¹⁰.

Reaction of the Muslim world to the secular Western challenge were 1) modernization as the maximum adaptation of the Islamic heritage to the present with use of Western achievements and 2) fundamentalism as formal return to initial ideal Islam and resolute refusal of alien adoptions. Both of these processes occur in a context of traditionalism, dominating in the Muslim world.

The Islamic fundamentalism draws to itself special attention in the modern world and there is a historical explanation of this. With the beginning of the colonial epoch (XVII-XIX centuries) for the Eastern peoples, including non Muslims, the European colonizers became a symbol of aggression, enslavement, exploitation. All Eastern peoples and religions influenced by the Western invasion, have led struggle against it. But Muslims, longer than others communicating and battling with European «infidels» and more than others accumulated insults on them and claims to them, were especially persistent in the anticolonial resistance, in aversion of all Western. It has left traces on the subsequent character of mutual East-West relations in which Muslims have incurred function of the most consecutive defenders of the Eastern originality, most

⁹ BAUDRILLARD, Jean – *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities...*, p. 16. See also: JAYASURIYA, Kanishka. – «September 11, Security, and the New Postliberal Politics of Fear». *Neprikosnovenni Zapas*. Moscow. N° 6 (4/2004) (in Russian). Similar processes occur in Russia where, according to Alexei Malashenko, «the image of the enemy promptly formed in the Russian society, is obviously painted in religious tones. Islamic threat gradually turns to the main «scarecrow» in perception of which numerous household stereotypes and arising state ideology of opposition to all that seems «alien» intertwine». MALASHENKO, Alexei – «How we see Islam». *Russia in the global policy*. Moscow. V. 4, N° 5 (September-October 2006) p. 117 (in Russian).

¹⁰ GIROUX, Henry A. – *Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism: Global Uncertainty and the Challenge of the New Media*. London: Paradigm Publishers, 2006, p. 2.

irreconcilable opponents of modernization and westernization going from the West, the firmest followers and keepers of religious traditions and cultural heritage.

The disappointment of broad masses of Muslims in ideas of secular nationalism and the Muslim socialism connected with it has begun at the second half of the XXth century because of inability of their carriers which have appeared at the power after achieving of independence by former colonies, to solve essential social and economic problems. Besides, formal independence has not led to economic independence. The young sovereign Eastern states continued to play a role of backward periphery. It was sharply felt by all peoples, and first of all Muslims, as national humiliation, as the underlined aspiration of the West to domination and inequality, including – in the field of a religious life. The Islamic fundamentalism has appeared in these conditions and found its basis in such regions. It represents attempt to «return to sources» of early Islam.

It would be incorrect, as one sometimes does, to put an equal-sign between Islamic fundamentalists and Islamic extremists. Fundamentalists can be quite peaceful people respecting the law and an order, and entirely turned to protection of Islamic traditions, Koran and Sharia observance. However in some cases the fundamentalism enters the realm of politics and generates radicalism, violent ways of its realization as political ideology are used¹¹.

According to Robert Landa, social base of Islamism make marginalized masses of the Muslim world, which have appeared victims of modernization and globalization. «In effect, – he writes, – direct result of these processes of modernization and globalization were fast growth of impoverishment of the East, high rates of peasantry's ruin and plentiful replenishment of social lower strata of east city in huge masses of rural marginals. About half of these persons remain unemployed or without certain employment. That transforms cities, first of all of the Muslim East, into a social powder cellar»¹².

Sociality's destruction is obvious in a number of the Muslim states, recently exposed to active influence from the developed countries. It is possible to reckon Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Pakistan among them. Quite probably such intervention and the subsequent social crisis may take place in Iran and Syria. The Palestinians which till now do not have their state, also is an acute example of destructuration of social. So it is quite reasonable for desocialized Islamic masses, as representatives of the traditional society, return to spiritual sources of their culture. In search of an exit from a social crisis they frequently refer to their social mythology. The oblivion of tradition appears in such cases the reason of failures of the Muslim society and necessity of returning to it is proclaimed. Muslims address to the social ideal of early egalitarian Islam which was, according to fundamentalists, is betrayed to oblivion as a result of infidels' intervention and activities of own corrupted leaders.

¹¹ See: ESPOSITO, John – *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002; TIBI, Bassam – *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2002, p. 15-17.

¹² LANDA, Robert G. – *Political Islam: preliminary results*. Moscow: Institute of the Middle East, 2005, p. 22 (in Russian).

One of the major reasons of existence of Islamic radicalism is the neo-colonialist policy of the Western powers and, first of all, the USA in relation to the countries of the Muslim East. The USA do not want to change this policy for reasons of preservation of the prestige and dominating position of the unique super state, not intending to observe equality in relations with other countries. It means that objectively opposition West – Islamic East will be continued, and the Islamic fundamentalism will keep its importance. From the point of view of civilization analysis the Islamic fundamentalism can be considered as a variant of the Islamic civilization's modern answer on a challenge from the Western civilization. This is an aspiration to preservation of Islamic cultural identity in a situation of sociocultural crisis, and also an attempt of overcoming Western globalization by means of own global political project¹³.

It would be error to conclude that fundamentalism is a pure archaic form coming of the remote past. Being guided by tradition and leaning on archaic, it, nevertheless, belongs to and serves the modernity culture. Formation of its identity is caused by the modernity phenomenon, and not just by theological disputes. Destroying tradition, causing a cultural shock, changing the ethical bases of a society – modernity generates fundamentalism. At the same time fundamentalism inevitably appears a product of the modernization, well substantiated reaction to escalating value of non religious, non spiritual factors of social life. Its theorists selectively address to tradition, making a start from, generated by the present, representations about an ideal, and support the position with the direct reference to the Holy Writ (to Bible, Koran), creating arbitrary system of religious values gradation and making innovations (for example, «Islamic democracy»). Oliver Roy considers that islamization is the modern phenomenon expressing globalization and westernization of the Muslim world. Islamic radicals create illusions that they represent tradition though in a reality they express the negative form of westernization, and fundamentalism can act as a westernization tool¹⁴.

It turns out, that the fundamentalist antimodernism is inevitably combined with modernist ideas. They consist in obvious predisposition to formation of totalitarian ideology with elements of rationality, conviction in primacy of policy over religion, vision of prime target in transformation of the central political institutes, readiness to use technological and organizational achievements of other civilizations. Here is the main difference of modern religious fundamentalism from its predecessors. Fundamentalism overcomes the contradiction between religion and ideology at the expense of eclectic connection of belief with reason, revelations with science. «The third World Theory» of Muammar Kaddafi is rather characteristic in this respect.

The role of fundamentalist idea is contradictory as, especially in the radical form, it contains both constructive and destructive beginnings. Fundamentalists often do not differentiate personal and public, rational and irrational, but they can oppose them so that the individual and private do not disappear completely, that political and religious beginnings keep certain autonomy to each other. They are able to evolve towards

¹³ According to Bassam Tibi, opposition of Islam and the West is the conflict of two universalisms or world orders and is frequently treated by both parties as «crusade». TIBI, Bassam – *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2002, p. 15-17. See also: MANDAVILLE, Peter. – *Global Political Islam*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

¹⁴ ROY, Oliver. – *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*. London: Hurst & Company, 2004, p. 15-29.

reformation or even modernization. It usually occurs when appear new, nation-wide scales of responsibility, for example, such evolution occurs in modern Iran¹⁵.

Results of realization of projects, previously looking utopian, essentially differ from an ideal, and such deviations are more evident the more scale and longer a practical life of a project. The fundamentalist model is not only Utopia as it objectively influences search of a rational way of social development, creations of the human future standard models. It allows us to draw a conclusion that the legal fundamentalism can act as the important factor of development of some modern societies.

Thus it is necessary to make a distinction between the forms of fundamentalism peculiar to modernity and forms inherent in postmodernity. During the modern epoch there is the real struggle of secularism with tradition, therefore fundamentalism has serious political weight. It is more moderated, responsible and frequently merges with conservatism. Absolutely other situation is in the postmodern culture in which the tradition has been overcome and in that quality is perceived by postmodernity more tolerantly. If the tradition also promotes in these conditions to formation of cultural identity it is already post-traditional identity. As fundamentalism cannot already influence real development of the post-secular society in any way, it accepts the most extreme forms, up to the terrorist. Postmodernity leans against pluralism and the tolerance principle. In culture, as well as in the market, it aspires to realize a full spectrum of possibilities, inevitably transforming fundamentalism into its system element. Fundamentalism is compelled to participate in the postmodern project's realization, appearing as only one of narratives, subcultures, language games, simulacra existing on the culture market.

After all, the postmodern fundamentalism is doomed to discredit a role of tradition. According to Alexander Kyrlezhev, it revives tradition in memory, but expels it from life. Tradition for it is entirely virtual: it takes tradition not from reality, but from texts and turns into texts. Using means of a technical civilization for distribution of its ideas, it actually gets to a trap of this civilization. Translations instead of content, a form instead of an idea, define its development. Criticizing a new epoch, it is not capable to produce anything except a slogan, a meeting, a web site. It obviously is not capable to a serious discourse of a modernist style, to scientific work, to meaningful dialogue, to consolidating action¹⁶.

As tradition for it is valuable in archaic shape, in the exotic form, extravagant and virtual it would be incorrect to see in fundamentalism the defender of tradition and the opponent of postmodernity. The basic contradiction of fundamentalism with postmodernity consists in that the last aspires to deprive any set of ideas (religious, political, scientific) exclusive claims for the metanarrative status, for the absolute validity, reducing everything to communication's context¹⁷.

¹⁵ KUDRYASHOVA, Irina V. – Islamic civilization dominant and modern development of Islamic polities. *Political science: new directions*. Moscow. N° 2 (2003) (in Russian).

¹⁶ KYRLEZHEV, Alexander. – Post secular Epoch. *Continent*. Moscow. N° 120 (2004) (in Russian).

¹⁷ From this point of view it is possible to agree with the idea that «postmodernists and the present wave of fundamentalists have arisen not only at one time, but also in reply to the same situation, only on resisting poles of global hierarchy according to at once evident geographic distribution. Appreciably simplifying, it is possible to assert, that postmodernist discourses first of all are turned to winners in the course of globalization, and fundamentalist – to losers». HARDT, Michael; NEGRI, Antonio. – *Empire*. Moscow: Praxis, 2004, p. 146 (in Russian).

There are some aspects of rapprochement of religious fundamentalism and postmodernism. Both of them address to small social groups and are guided not by rationality, but by irrationality. They lean not on universal, but on local. Both these phenomenon address to archaic structures, and in them accordingly dominates collective unconscious over individual consciousness. In this aspect these two extremes, mutually provoking each other converge. Problems which the mankind during an epoch of the postindustrial society faces, demand increase in a role of reason, however the postmodernism and fundamentalism take away to reason ever less a place¹⁸.

The Islamic fundamentalism in the modern mass media functions by a principle of simulation and the imaginary referent, assuming the certain organized phantom community «Muslims» resisting to citizens of the democratic West. The substantiation of this simulacrum is carried out with use of scientific theories, sociological researches, referendums, however more often it serves simulation, instead of referent. These processes are focused on model, instead of on the reviewer. Panic statements that the Islamic fundamentalism causes crisis of the Western society, is, probably, attempt of the western society elite to provide unity of the society at the expense of opposition of «own» to «other», to keep masses in the field of sense, to keep own disappearing sociality. And the masses of the Muslims migrants which have appeared incapable to be integrated into the Western society, fundamentalism gives the chance to create though marginal, but the certain sociality having the right to their own narrative and morals. Thus, from the point of view of postmodernism, fundamentalism can serve one of ways of an exit of crisis of the modern society in which sociality disappears, and population turns into masses. It serves as means for creation both sense of social existence, and demand for this sense.

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¹⁸ MALKOVSKAYA, Irina; POCHTA, Yuriy. – «Fundamentalism: menace or rescue?» In *Social: roots, structural profiles, contemporary challenges*. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2009, p. 360-376 (in Russian).

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